

Where Did My Black Folk Go? The Exclusion of Black Males From American K-12 Classrooms

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Dedication

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WHERE DID MY BLACK FOLK GO? THE EXCLUSION OF BLACK MALES FROM
AMERICAN K-12 CLASSROOMS

ABSTRACT

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Few studies have sought to understand the lived experiences of Black males being excluded from K-12 classrooms. This qualitative study explored the punitive tools and approaches that have removed Black males from American K-12 classrooms, hindering their academic achievement and disproportionately sending Black males onto a one-way path to prison. This study centered the voices of racialized Black males as a way to clarify the lived experiences of unequal interactions within the school to prison pipeline. Considering the hyper-surveillance of Black males in schools and the normalization of school resource officers to criminalize Black males, too little research centers on the experiences of Black males who are suspended or imprisoned.

In this dissertation, I used Critical Race Theory (CRT) to analyze racial disparities in out-of-school suspensions among Black male students and the criminalization of Black males in the classroom. The study took place in a public U.S. school district with the pseudonym of Winfield School District. I interviewed ten students to assess their experiences with being suspended and the impact it has on their academic achievements and the criminal justice system. The findings

revealed that racial disparities in out of school suspension has led to the school-to-prison pipeline among Black males. Recommendations include: (1) White teacher recognition of their own racial identities, particularly teaching Black males, and examination of roles as potential allies in dismantling racism in schools; (2) Require schools to provide professional development for White teachers to use alternative approaches to zero-tolerance policies and practices and (3) School district development and implementation of consistent, equitable out-of-school policies so that existing racial and ethnic disparities are not maintained.

Introduction

Policies and procedures that govern public education in the United States have created a system of control and punishment that excludes Black male students from the American K-12 classroom (Fitzgerald, 2006). This system is a byproduct of a historical continuation of slavery developed to criminalize Black males (Fitzgerald, 2006). The ideology that creates and maintains the landscape of exclusion for Black males in education is the working mechanisms of racial oppression achieved through discipline-influenced educational policies. This systematic framework that unjustly creates and maintains the control and punishment of Blacks in a racial caste system is the White racial frame. The White racial frame is a concept that generates a set of racialized ideas and stereotypes that influences narratives, images, and emotions that capture the imagination of members of society inclinations to discriminate (Feagin, 2013).

This historical belief system is composed of the pro-White subframe (White superiority) whose ideology is to control the anti-Black subframe (Black inferiority). The White racial frame belief system is amplified by institutional racism, and the oppressive measures it constructs through interpersonal relationships, policies, procedures, and laws (Feagin, 2013). Non-Black ethnic groups are encouraged under the White racial frame to engage in discriminatory acts (e.g., hate crimes and assault) (Feagin, 2006) to control Black communities while Black children are removed from school (Feagin, 2013).

Various forms of abuse and mistreatment through discipline is a normalized experience for Black males student in education. From the moment Black children enter school, they are dehumanized and criminalized (Love, 2016). As a recent public example, on March 2017, a video of a police officer choking a young Black male in a Pittsburgh high school office went viral (Abadi, 2017). As media coverage continues to highlight police brutality against

minoritized Black communities, Black children are subjected to humiliation through excessive punishment from the police (Love, 2016). In the Pittsburgh example, the police officer enacted violence as a method of discipline. Over the past century, such humiliation and violent attacks formed through a historical system of social control have been common for Black males, reinforced by the implementation of zero-tolerance policies.

Adopted from the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 (U.S. Department of Education, 2005), zero-tolerance is a federally funded policy that mandates predetermined consequences or punishments for specified offenses (Skiba 2000). The law mandates educational institutions to expel students who bring a firearm to school, but more common infractions include mandatory consequences for a variety of disruptive behaviors (e.g., talking back to the teacher, truancy, tardiness) identified by individual institutions (Skiba, 2000). Since implementing zero-tolerance policies, Black male students have received more frequent, harsher treatment than White students (e.g., being suspended and expelled) (Welch & Payne, 2010). Prior to zero-tolerance, however, The Children's Defense Fund (1975) (as cited in Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010), "first brought the issue of racial disproportionality to national attention, showing that Black students were two to three times overrepresented in school suspensions compared with their enrollment rates in localities across the nation" (p. 59).

In particular, Black males have been identified as a subgroup that is more likely to be removed from school and receive harsher penalties for minor offenses than their White counterparts (Petras et al., 2011). For instance, Black male students have been sent out of the classroom for minor infractions (e.g., not having the proper attire for P.E., having their head down in class and not having proper school supplies). The minor infractions are linked to a detention referral (DR) and or suspension (Fitzgerald, 2006).

Deviant acts that diverge from White-conceived proper behaviors give support to the White racial frame, which uses surveillance to control Black students' social behavior (Fitzgerald, 2006). While under surveillance, students are placed under a radar, heightened by the sensitivity of administrators and staff, to cautiously wait for Black male students to academically or socially fail to justify their methods to exclude Black males from the classroom (Fitzgerald, 2006). Some administrators take surveillance a step forward by looking up public records of family members to find criminal activities to create a reputation of a student to further discipline. Since the Supreme court ruling of *New Jersey v. T.L.O.* (United States Courts, 1985) student constitutional protections are limited (Nance, 2016). For instance, before searching, resource officers do not need to show probable cause (Nance, 2016). The ruling allowed school officials to use intense surveillance methods to criminalize behaviors. When student behaviors are criminalized, students find themselves at greater risk of interaction with the criminal justice system (American Civil Liberties Union, 2017). This hyper-surveillance causes Black males to fail out of school (Fitzgerald, 2006).

The study focused on how punitive tools and approaches have removed Black males from U.S. K-12 classrooms, hindering academic achievement and disproportionately sending Black males onto a one-way path to prison. Using Critical Race Theory (CRT), I explored the impact of zero-tolerance policies on Black male students' educational experiences and outcomes through interviews using a counterstorytelling method. Moreover, I centered the voices of racialized Black males as a way to clarify the lived experiences of unequal interactions within the school to prison pipeline. The objective was to investigate the phenomenon of Black males in Winfield Schol District (WSD). I was interested in understanding if Black male students who have been suspended in WSD think they are being funneled into the school to prison pipeline? If so, how do

they describe this process? An additional research question centered on the impacts Black male students enrolled in WDS think suspensions have on their academic trajectory. These questions ultimately guided this research process, aligning with a critical race theory framework.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, I used Critical Race Theory (CRT) to analyze racial disparities in out-of-school suspensions among Black male students. Delgado & Stefancic (2017) define CRT as a “movement and collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power” (p. 3). CRT race-based epistemology challenges policies that are centered on White supremacy, which affects the participation of Black male students in classrooms (Harper, Patton & Wooden 2009). Critical Race Theory frameworks typically consist of five tenets: (1) the permanence of racism; (2) counter-storytelling; (3) interest convergence; (4) Whiteness as property; and (5) the critique of liberalism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). I used three tenets to analyze racial disparities that exclude Black male students from American K-12 classrooms: (1) the permanence of racism; (2) counter-storytelling; and (3) interest convergence. I chose to use these three tenets as opposed to others because to illuminate and combat roots causes by structural racism, I had to first provide a foundation for why Black male students are being suspended and why there is an interest in silencing their behaviors. The permanence of racism provided the racial power dynamics background that created the policies and practices that cause disproportionate suspensions amongst Black male students. Counter-storytelling allowed me to hear from the voices of Black males who have been suspended. Lastly, interest convergence provided me with underlying factors that contribute to and maintain disproportionate disciplinary practices amongst Black males.

Permanence of racism. The first tenet is based on the idea that racism is always present in every social configuring in U.S. society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). For instance, Blacks and Latinos who seek the opportunity for fair education, housing, loans, and/or jobs are denied equitable opportunities more often than their White counterparts (Delgado, 2017). CRT suggests that public and educational policies in the U.S. are used as tools to manage racial inequalities to maintain or enhance White dominance (Gillborn, 2013). The White racial frame has further led public education policies to rely on conceptions of “color blindness,” defined by the CRT as insisting on equality and treating all people equally rather than examining the criminalization of minority groups and historical wrongdoings (Gooden, 2012).

Zero-tolerance policies are tools used to maintain a racial hierarchy supported by institutional practices (Solórzano, Allen, & Carroll, 2002) that have led to the exclusion of Black students from K-12 classrooms and higher education participation (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009). When zero-tolerance policy uses biased and racially influenced practices to suspend Black male students more than their White counterparts, the related loss of instruction time for Black male students leads to opportunity gaps and higher dropout rates (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009). This exclusion is also tied to higher unemployment rates, poverty, and disproportionate incarceration rates (Bound & Freeman, 1992). Thus, CRT considers zero tolerance as a racially influenced policy created to provide a bias in school discipline to keep racial hierarchies intact (Sullivan, Larke, & Webb-Hasan, 2010).

Another example of how racism is normalized is the criminalization of Black males in schools and in U.S. society. Love (2016) suggested that “school practices and police officers are slowly killing Black children by murdering their spirits through intentional actions, physical assaults, and verbal stabbings” (p. 2). For example, in 2016, a Black male student in Baltimore

was slapped and kicked by a school officer because the student was accused of trespassing and was asked to leave school grounds (Fenton, 2017). In a 2017 example, a Black male student in Pittsburgh was choked and tasered multiple times by a school officer (Abadi, 2017). These incidents are ordinary acts of violence against Black males, further reflecting criminalization outside of the classroom but still on school grounds.

A further example demonstrating racism as being normalized in U.S. society is the criminalization of Black males outside of schools. For instance, in 2017, Johnnie Jermaine Rush, a Black man from North Carolina, was tasered and beaten because he was accused of jaywalking (Caron, 2018). Similarly, Richard Hubbard III was beaten during a traffic stop in Cleveland (Bromwich, 2017). Criminalizing Black males has led to the deaths of Keith Lamont Scott, Terence Crutcher, Philando Castile, Alton Sterling, and Samuel Dubose. All of these Black males were victims of police brutality. CRT frames these experiences as the normalization of criminalizing Black males as a way to maintain White dominance in society.

Police brutality is an extension of the White racial frame that solidifies racism's link to the criminalization of Black male students outside of the classroom. Police brutality is linked to the criminalization of Black male students outside of the classrooms, by labeling Black males as dangerous and by linking poverty with racialized crime (Heitzeg, 2015). Dorfman (2001, as cited in Heitzeg, 2015), suggested that as the media creates unrealistic fears of Black people and other people of color, the public begins to accept and perhaps applaud racial profiling by the police, racialized sentencing differences, and disproportionate imprisonment for both youth and adults of color (Dorfman & Schiraldi, 2001; Glassner, 1999; Walker et al., 2012; Welch, 2007). For instance, Officer Darren Wilson proclaimed that shooting victim Mike Brown looked like a demon, using a racist ideology of a "Black man as dangerous and sub-human," to justify killing

Mike Brown in 2014 (Chaney, Cassandra, Robertson & Ray, 2015). These violent, anti-Black incidents normalize racism, aligning with contributing factors that have led to the exclusion of Black male students out of American classrooms.

Counter-storytelling. The second CRT tenet used to frame this study argued that counter-storytelling is a strategy to help Black and Brown individuals communicate their experiences with racism and the legal system, by applying their own unique stories from a minoritized perspective (Delgado, Stefancic, & Harris, 2017, p. 9). While majoritarian stories draw on the implicit knowledge of the dominant group (Delgado & Stefancic 2000), they also distort and silence the experiences of the dominated (e.g., people of color, and in particular, Black males). The use of counter-storytelling in this study helped analyze K-12 American public education climates that deny Black male students' stories of racism. This study focused on Black male students' experiences with systematic, institutionalized racial violence in the classroom and their communities.

A movement to center Black voices that counter institutionalized racism and racialized violence is Black Lives Matter (BLM) (Khan-Cullors, Garza, & Tometi, 2013). BLM is an organization that uses counter-storytelling to resist the normalization of racism, while also strengthening Black stories and Black voices (Khan-Cullors, Garza, & Tometi, 2013). For instance, in *When They call you a Terrorist* (2018), Khan-Cullors narrates the stories of Black men and their experiences with police brutality, while also centering voice to interrupt the process of mass incarceration and the criminalization of Black men. She writes, "It was from behind the gate that I watch the police roll up on my brother and his friends; they make them pull up their shirts and turn their pockets inside out" (Khan-Cullors, 2018, p. 16). Khan-Cullors continues, "after the encounter, my brother would not speak a word, and he will remain in

silence in a way we often hear the silence of rape victims” (p. 16). She reveals that after the first encounter with the police, a cycle of arrest had begun for her brother, further forcing her mother to move to another area; as stories are muted, Black males continue to be criminalized; thus they are unable to escape from the constant controlling and punishment by the police.

Given the stories of police brutality on Black male students and the alarming excessive force used, Solórzano & Yosso (2002) argue that the power of White privilege in constructing stories about race distorts and silences the experiences of people of color. For instance, when Black males are killed, the media uses coded language such as “thug” and related negative imagery to describe the justification for the killing (Smiley & Fakunle, 2016). For example, returning to the 2014 killing of Mike Brown, Alexandra Jaffe (2014), in a CNN article reports that former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee said that ‘Mike's killing could have been avoided if he didn't act like a thug.’ Such statements are rooted in the experience of White privilege and in the construction of stereotypical stories about Black males to justify killing through negative imagery. By failing to look at the experience of Black males who have been criminalized through television and social media, White majoritarian stories continue to silence the oppressed (Solórzano & Yosso 2002). Therefore, it is important to listen to and foreground narratives of Black male students when working toward understanding racial disparities in out-of-school suspensions among Black male students, as well as their exclusion out of American K-12 classrooms and into the criminal justice system.

Interest Convergence. The third CRT tenet, interest convergence, is a strategy used to advance racial justice of minorities only when it serves the interests of White elites (e.g., political stakeholders) psychically & materially (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Interest convergence principles are a matter of systemic interests and a loss–gain binary (Milner, 2008). For example,

a dominant group (White elites) has to negotiate and give up something for interests to converge with oppressed Black communities (Donnor, 2005). Systemic interests occur when the group in power controls the convergence and change process (Milner, 2008). Moreover, Whites may support social justice policies and practices and yet still believe in injustice as long as the policies do not alter the status of whites and advance their self-interests (Bell, 1980, Castagno & Lee, 2007).

The loss-gain binary occurs when Whites lose something of great importance to them, including their linguistic status, to advance an agenda (Milner, 2008). For instance, the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision was framed as a racial advancement in education due to the Supreme Court declaring that segregated schooling was unconstitutional (Zamudio, Russell, Rios & Bridgeman, 2011). Whites felt a need to desegregate schools only because of the foreign policy interests of providing people of color civil rights (Zamudio, Russell, Rios & Bridgeman, 2011). While Whites lost the opportunity to maintain white-only schools, they maintained their social status through the use of race-based standardized assessments and vocational tracking to keep their dominant status (Browne-Marshall, 2019). According to Jay (2003), since the policy of desegregation in education, “institutions and schools, through their organization, structure, and curriculum (both formal and hidden), have aided in the maintenance of white hegemony (p. 7).

The loss of Black schools and busing of Black and brown children out of their neighborhoods created a sense of loneliness for students of color (Browne-Marshall, 2019). In addition to keeping white hegemony status in schools, Black students were expelled and kicked out in the interest to imprison more Black and Brown students. For instance, the school to prison pipeline has been amplified through the promotion of private businesses and governments to

profit off the incarceration of Black students' who are arrested or expelled from school (Porter, 2015). Porter (2015, as cited in Gopnik, 2012) found that "the prison system has become a very profitable business venture in America's modern, capitalistic society" (p. 59). Porter (2015) explained that "it is hard to imagine any greater disconnection between public good and private profit: the interest of private prisons lies not in the obvious social good of having the minimum necessary of inmates but in having as many as possible, housed as cheaply as possible" (p. 60). Governments on the state level, who are facing shrinking budgets, are finding ways to increase revenue by investing in deep labor pools in prisons to cut costs (Porter, 2015). Moreover, large domestic corporations benefit from investment in U.S. prison labor (Porter, 2015).

As domestic companies continue to benefit from cheap, forced labor, many states engage in unjust practices funneling more children behind bars (Porter, 2015). Private prisons achieve this goal by supporting the cycle of Black students being arrested at school by police officers (Porter, 2015). As Black students' are funneled into the prison system, private prison companies are lobbying to create stricter punishment (Melber, 2013). For instance, many private prison companies engage in lobbying activities at both the state and federal levels by spending millions on campaign contributions for political candidates who allegedly promote zero tolerance in education legislation and mandatory sentencing for many non-violent offenses (Porter, 2015). These efforts by private prisons to capitalize on cheap labor have shifted the focus of the government from providing quality education to promoting mass incarceration (Porter, 2015), maintaining the principle of interest convergence to benefit the status of White communities.

Researcher Positionality. Because of CRT's capacity to clarify Black male exclusion from the classroom, counter-storytelling is an important element in shaping the study and clarifying my own experiences. I am a Black male who works as a College Preparatory Advisor

helping college-bound students navigate the college application process. During my years working in this position, I have seen the disappearance of Black male students applying to college due to being expelled or their increased incarceration in the criminal justice system. These incidents help me reflect on my disappearance from the classroom.

My first encounter with being suspended took place just a few months into my freshman year at Alief Taylor High School when a lapse in judgment turned my life upside down. One morning in October, I brought pills to school, stuffed in my backpack. I knew bringing pills to school was against the rules, but I had never been caught at school before, so I did not see any problem. After 15 minutes of waiting in line for security clearance to enter my school, I was arrested for having drugs, and I was later expelled from school. Expulsion had never before crossed my mind, especially for having drugs.

I was expelled and could not step foot on school property or attend school-sponsored events. I had to meet with my high school vice-principal and dean of students twice a week while also going to an alternative school for at-risk youth for a month for me to be reconsidered for enrollment. Going to the alternative school was inconvenient since the location was 20 miles away. After being reinstated for enrollment at Alief Taylor High School, suspensions continued to happen, and the more I got suspended, the more I fell behind, to the point that showing up to class meant spending the day being lost or leaving class to walk the halls.

Many of my other friends have gotten kicked out of school for drugs, but never the White students. My sister was another victim to expulsion, and she was expelled for fighting and was given two choices: be expelled from school or voluntarily withdraw. She dropped out of school on May 2, 2004. On June 2, 2015, my life had changed when I had to write a letter to my sister's first parole hearing. "Dear Members of the Court, inmate 5678920 of Plane State Texas Women

Correctional facility,” my letter began. Those days left me broken. While re-entering the collegiate classroom, I now notice that I am one of the only Black people here. Where did all my Black folk go? Why are we not present in the classroom? Why am I so broken?

My personal experience is not unique; many Black males have experienced feeling foreign in a classroom because of zero-tolerance policies that punish Black students more harshly than similarly situated White students. Zero-tolerance disciplinary policies exacerbate racial disparities in out-of-school suspensions among Black male students (Children’s Defense Fund, 1975), and continue our exclusion from American K-12 classrooms (Bottiani, Bradshaw, Mendelson, & Graham, 2017). My experience is relevant to this study because Black students make up 35% of students suspended, and more than 50% of Black students who are suspended were involved in school-related arrests or referred to law enforcement (U.S. Department of Justice & U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

Review of The Literature

Before reviewing the literature on how punitive tools and approaches have removed Black males from American classrooms, hindering academic achievement and disproportionately sending Black males onto a one-way path to prison, it is important to define the terms discipline and systemic violence briefly. In this analysis, discipline is understood as an act of an administrator or teacher punishing a student for disruptive behavior that breaks a rule created by the teacher or the school system (Webster Dictionary, 2018). Historically, discipline has been used to bring the impulse conduct into harmony of the ideology of the master (Adams, 2000). Discipline can be interrelated with and part of the cause of violence (Adams, 2000). When students do not submit themselves to mainstream ideologies in schools, teachers use punishment

to get students to conform. This conformity is built to negate Black men in society through systemic violence.

Systemic violence is any institutional practice that adversely impacts groups or individuals psychologically, mentally, physically, and economically (Watkinson, Epp & Watkinson, 2005). Systemic violence can take the form of colonized knowledge that forces marginalized communities to assimilate into a preordained set of curriculum and standards that reflects a White, wealthy reality (Carnoy, 1974; Darder, 1991). When students are incapable of reaching the preordained standards, they are removed from school or remove themselves. Systemic violence procedures have prevented some students from learning, thus harming their educational attainment (Watkinson, Epp & Watkinson, 2005). This form of procedure is not a new phenomenon; the origins can be traced to practices that adversely affect students, such as zero-tolerance policies.

In what comes next, I examine literature that clarifies the school to prison pipeline, White racial frame, disproportionality, punishment, surveillance, and highlight the importance of Black voices in understanding Black male exclusion.

School to Prison Pipeline

The school to prison pipeline refers to the collection of education, public safety policies, and practices that disproportionately funnel Black males out of public classrooms and into the criminal justice system (Dancy, 2014). Zero tolerance policies directly support the school to prison pipeline (Archer, 2009; Dancy, 2014). The zero-tolerance policy, as stated before, is a mandatory or predetermined punishment for minor infractions (e.g., lateness and dress code violations) that includes suspensions, expulsions for specific offenses and ends in an arrest or referral to the juvenile justice system (Durr & Brown, 2016). The phrase zero tolerance was first

used to combat federal drug seizure policies (e.g., the war on drugs) in the 1980s (Skiba & Knesting, 2001). In the 1990s, in response to reducing youth violence with school shootings, K-12 school districts implemented zero-tolerance policies to deter perceived threats to school safety (Skiba & Knesting, 2001; Heitzeg, 2009).

Racism and imprisonment have been used to historically justify the removal of Black males from the classroom and into prison. Since the *Brown vs. the Board of Education* ruling, there was an interest in White people to remove Black children from schools (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The interest manifested after the Brown decision because the ruling threatened the foundation of white supremacy to use destructive stereotypes of Black intellectual inferiority and fears of Black male sexuality (Ramsey, 2019). As White power and privilege were threatened, White communities began negotiating with city developers to construct new schools in predominately-white suburban neighborhoods, to force Black students to operate under their rules (Erickson, 2016).

Indeed, while the Civil Rights victory of *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954) sought to improve opportunities for Black students in education, the victory instead sent a message that White educators were intrinsically better than Black educators (Hudson & Holmes, 1994). The implementation of *Brown* in public education gave way for institutions to be controlled by Whites and ignored Black faculty and staff already in the school system (Irvine, 1988). Hudson & Holmes (1994) argued that the intended consequence of the “loss of African American teachers in the post-Brown era emerged the widespread belief among new White teachers that Black students could not learn, and that, if they did learn, they could never master critical thinking skills” (p. 390). One consequence of such white supremacist thought was the funneling Black males into the school to prison pipeline (Hawkins, 1994).

The school to prison pipeline escalated when school administrators push Black males out of K-12 classrooms by placing them on out-of-school suspension, expulsion, transfer them to alternative schools or have them arrested by school resource officers (American Civil Liberties Union, n.d.). The pattern of transferring Black males into alternative pathways facilitated failure because alternative educational settings rarely prepared students to return to their regular schools, thus locking Black males into a direct pathway into the criminal justice system (American Civil Liberties Union, n.d; Fitzgerald, 2006). For Black males who wound up in state custody, their lives continued with run-ins with the criminal justice system (Alexander, 2012).

White Racial Frame

Zero-tolerance policies and practices that exclude Black male students from American classrooms can be traced back to the White racial frame. The White racial frame is a concept that generates a set of racialized ideas and stereotypes that influences members of society to have anti-Black narratives and images (Feagin, 2013). This historical belief system is based on the pro-White subframe of White superiority to control and punish Black males (Feagin, 2013). The White racial frame is amplified by institutional racism (e.g., interpersonal relationships, policies, procedures, and laws). The White racial frame also uses non-Black people of color to align with White racialized ideas and stereotypes to engage in discriminatory acts (e.g., hate crimes, assault) (Feagin, 2006), which punish and exclude Black males out of K-12 classrooms (Feagin, 2013). For instance, in 2011, 3,465 hate crimes were reported to US law enforcement agencies; seventy two percent of the hate crimes were anti-Black offenses (Fitzgerald, 2015). As the White racial frame operates to control Black males, equally important is its usefulness to divide other marginalized groups who might help against anti-Black frames (Fitzgerald, 2015).

The intent of the White racial frame is to normalize racism and to maintain White dominance (Feagin, 2013). This is done primarily through criminalizing Black males (Fitzgerald, 2015). Studies of criminalization have a rich history in (Dilulio, 1996) myth of the super-predator, a theory about the prediction of Black juveniles committing violence against Whites. In this study, criminalization is a crime control paradigm in which policymakers and school administrators communicate on managing the problem of Black male student deviant behaviors (e.g., surveillance, police tactics) (Garland, 2001; Hirschfield, 2008). Criminalizing Black males in education draws from fears in a society that paints vivid pictures of the Black male as a criminal problem (Simon, 2007; Mowen, 2017). In her seminal study, Ferguson (2000) demonstrated how racialized narratives and stereotypes are internalized by school staff to think Black male students facing discipline are uncontrollable and bound for jail. Black males are viewed less like students and more as potential criminals (Hirschfield, 2008). Because of this, schools systematically treat everyday Black male behavior as a criminal activity, normalizing racist policies, and practices that exclude Black males from American K-12 classrooms (Ferguson, 2000; Fitzgerald, 2015).

Racial Disproportionality

School suspension has disproportionately led to negative outcomes for Black male students. Since the Children's Defense Fund reported on the racialized exclusionary discipline practices (Children's Defense Fund of Ohio, 2012), subsequent studies have confirmed that in American K-12 schools there is an overrepresentation of Black male students being suspended or expelled (Skiba, Michael, Nardo & Peterson, 2002). Black male students are suspended at rates three times higher than their White counterparts (Skiba, Michael, Nardo & Peterson, 2002). According to the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (2015), among 9,000 students aged 12

to 16 surveyed, 35% had experienced at least one suspension (Shollenberger, 2015). Nearly 67% of Black boys had been suspended, compared to 38% of White boys (Shollenberger, 2015).

Researchers also found that from 1995 to 2003, the chance of Black students being suspended increased, whereas the probability for White suspensions remained relatively stable (Krezmein, Leone & Achilles, 2006).

Although some researchers have found differences in behavioral issues between Black and White students (Hosterman, DuPaul & Jitendra, 2008), other research suggested even when Black males are accused of the same offense; Black males receive harsher punishment than their White counterparts (Lewis, Butler, Bonner, & Joubert, 2010). Black male students are also more likely to be disciplined for minor offenses that rely on the judgment of teachers and administrators, like disrespect towards educators (Skiba et al., 2002). Although mandated rules play a role in who gets suspended, other contributing factors include administrator attitudes towards discipline, particularly of Black male students (Skiba et al., 2015).

Deeply embedded in American society, racism negatively affects the quality of White teacher relationships among Black students (Carter, 1992). White middle-class teachers who occupy positions of power in educational settings develop behavioral expectations for others based on their cultural norms (Monroe, 2005). White teachers work from within a hegemonic, Western, epistemological framework, which often fosters negative racial ideologies towards Black students (Boykin, 1992). This non-cultural synchronization perception (of White teachers not understanding the salience of culture) causes a clash between cultures, overwhelmingly, affecting personal interactions and social understanding towards their Black students (Fitzgerald, 2015).

These perceptions have been shown to affect Black males' participation in American K-12 classrooms (Fitzgerald, 2015). For instance, Black students are more likely to be disciplined for minor offenses for not having proper school supplies and talking back to the teacher, tardiness, and truancy (Morrison & D'Incau, 1997; Fitzgerald, 2015). White teachers regularly interpret Black students' behaviors as inappropriate (e.g., overlapping speech as disrespect, play fighting as authentic aggression, and ritualized humor as valid insults) when the actions are not intended to be so (Weinstein, Curran, & Tomlinson-Clarke, 2004; Monroe, 2005). These infractions are common reasons for teachers to criminalize and write disciplinary referrals, further excluding Black males from classrooms (Monroe, 2005).

In the U.S., there is a disturbing pattern of Black males spending more time in a disciplinary space (e.g., principal office, dean's office, alternative discipline settings) than in the classroom (Ferguson, 2000). Also, disciplinary spaces are an extension of the school to prison pipeline where judgment is passed about the students' future (Ferguson, 2000). In one study, Black male students voiced that there is a need for strong teacher-student relationships to achieve academic success (Shaunessy & McHatton, 2009). However, some of these students voiced that teacher overreaction to student behavior affects the teacher-student relationships. The mediated tendency to link Black males to aggressive behavior and negative imagery led some teachers to misinterpret and overreact when Black males engage in normal adolescent behaviors (Rome, 2004). One study conducted on Black male experiences at high school showed that some teachers treated Black males differently because they had negative perceptions of them (Caton, 2012). Negative perceptions of Black males in schools are extended through criminalization and the use of hyper-surveillance (Fitzgerald, 2006).

Surveillance

Black males are formally subject to control through surveillance, a tool utilized by White society to monitor the activities of those deemed outsiders (Black males), and who could potentially influence power (Fitzgerald, 2006). In schools, surveillance (e.g., metal detectors and security cameras) is used to control the behaviors of Black males (Fitzgerald, 2006). White society also maintains control by designing and structuring buildings that resemble prisons (Fitzgerald, 2006). This architect structure is called Panopticon (Gallagher, 2010). Panopticon means all-seeing. Its structure in prison resembles a watch-tower that views a ring of cells that can be viewed by the supervisor (Gallagher, 2010). Panopticon is most useful as an ideal model of power (Wood, 2007). In schools, the panopticon is mirrored by cameras set up in halls and the middle of the school commons area. Architect Jeremy Bentham believed that institutions use panopticon building design to maintain order and control through observation (Welch, Haggerty, Wilson, & Smith, 2011); the panopticon can motivate prisoners (students) to police themselves (Fitzgerald, 2006). This type of surveillance instills the fear of being observed and judged to minimize disciplinary actions (Fitzgerald, 2006).

In the United States, young Black men are burdened with a presumption of guilt and are labeled criminals at birth (Davis, 2017). Marking Black males as criminals has influenced a racial narrative in every societal institution, especially the criminal justice system (Davis, 2017). The process of marking Black males as criminals is important to the function of the White racial frame (Alexander, 2011). For the White racial frame to achieve the political goals of White supremacy, Black males must be criminalized before they are formally subject to control. (Alexander, 2011). One of the ways this control is enacted is through security offices in schools. For example, schools with higher percentages of Black students are more likely to employ school resource officers or other security personnel (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998).

The visual presence of the police who patrol schools in uniforms with guns, pepper spray, and batons at their waist merely reinforced students' belief that the police are there to criminalize Black behavior and alienate Black students instead of fostering cooperation (Davis, 2017).

Black males have a long history of being criminalized. Before the "War on Drugs" (Hudson, 2011), during the institution of slavery, the image of Black males was of blissful ignorance and juvenile (Smiley & Fakunle, 2016). These characteristics were portrayed in many movies and songs (e.g., *Birth of a Nation*, *Blackface*, *Uncle Tom*, *Gone with the Wind*, *Song of the South*) (Smiley & Fakunle, 2016). For instance, D.W Griffith's racist film, *Birth of a Nation* (Griffith, 1915), provided historical justification for the disfranchisement of Blacks (Mintz, 2012), by portrayal of Black men as unintelligent and violent and the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) as a heroic force that would reestablish the government (Smiley & Fakunle, 2016). These depictions of Black males reflected an interest in controlling the Black body and mind by creating the idea that slavery was best for Black people (Smiley & Fakunle, 2016). Also, Charles H. Smith (1893) proclaimed that Blacks were more prone to violence and aggressive behaviors; this statement became part of the racist ideology that justified the use of excessive force on Black males (Nolen, 1968; Litwack, 2004).

Viewing Black males as juvenile became significant, moving into the early 20th century when fear was reinforced by depictions of Black men as criminals (Smiley & Fakunle, 2016). The driving force behind Black men being seen as criminal savages was the expansion of the War on Drugs (Mauer, 2002). The War on Drugs was used as a vehicle to legally criminalize and funnel Black males into the criminal justice system (Alexander, 2011). Racial bias in the War on Drugs policy was reinforced by political and media elites, who targeted Black males as super-

predators (Davis, 2017). For instance, Princeton professor John Dilulio Jr developed the super-predator theory to describe Black males as juveniles and street criminals (Davis, 2017).

News media used racialized techniques such as episodic framing to reinforce the message of Black males as criminals, encouraging police to use forceful tactics (Gross, 2008; Hudson, 2011). Many examples of episodic framing can be seen through criminal records that are revealed to broadcast media after someone is killed, encouraging viewers to associate the conduct in question with the individual, rather than the broader social milieu (Gross, 2008). In the 1990s, a public opinion poll on the fear of juvenile offenders revealed that the public substantially overestimated the likelihood of being victimized by a person of color (Moriearty, Perry, Carson & William, 2012).

Children as young as thirteen and fourteen are still being tried as adults and being sent to prison for long sentences to keep off the impending Black threat (Davis, 2017). More troubling is the racialized influence of the lingering super-predator myth on the minds of the police and the public to control Black behavior (Davis, 2017). Young Black males are more likely than older Black male adults to be in contact with the police and under surveillance as they play in the streets, gather in public spaces, ride around in cars, and talk loudly at school (Taylor, Turner, Esbensen, & Winfree, 2001).

Methodology

Growing up in Houston, Texas, police are known to surround urban neighborhoods that occupy Black males. I witnessed my uncle get arrested three times for standing on the corner in 1996. Eight years later, I would experience the same arrest in my neighborhood. The racialized trend of monitoring Black bodies is both systemic and something I have navigated. My own experience provides personal and professional justification for the analysis of Black male voices.

Thus, CRT's counter-storytelling tenet was used to examine the lived experiences of Black male students who have been suspended in the Winfield School District (WSD) (a pseudonym).

I used storytelling as a method to help Black male students make meaning of their experiences (Delgado, Stefancic, & Harris, 2017). Three sources support this counter-storytelling method: (1) interviews with Black males being suspended; (2) examination of existing literature on the topic; and (3) discussion of my positionality as a Black male with experience of being suspended (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). The first source of data is gathered from individual interviews and focus groups conducted with Black male students from three WSD high schools. I searched through themes and concepts and highlighted quotes related to suspension and other challenges in the school to make sure their voice is being heard throughout the text (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). I then looked at the concepts related to national data on suspension rates for Black males to draw connections. Finally, I added my professional experiences related to being suspended. I relied upon counter-storytelling because minoritized communities have always told stories. For Black communities, Black slaves told stories in song, and in letters to describe their pain and sufferings (Boskin & Dorinson, 1985). For Black communities, storytelling is used as therapy, telling our own experiences of historic oppression, leading to healing and liberation (Delgado, 1989). This process of centering Black voices is essential in understanding and supporting minoritized Black communities.

Guiding research questions included:

RQ1: Do Black male students who have been suspended in WSD think they are being funneled into the school to prison pipeline? If so, how do they describe this process?

RQ 2: What impacts do Black male students enrolled in WDS think suspensions have on their academic trajectory?

Study Design

Data collection included two focus group interviews and ten individual interviews with Black male students who were suspended or expelled during the 2017-2018 year in the Winfield School District. These interviews were based on CRT-informed methodology that suggested creating safe spaces for Black male students to share their experiences is essential when centering the voices of those who are silenced and excluded by structural racism (Knaus, 2014). As a College Preparatory Advisor in the WSD, I conducted 2-hour-long focus group interviews and ten 30-45-minute individual interviews to capture the experiences of Black males who have been suspended.

I started by conducting individual interviews first, to inform the focus groups on how Black male students collectively felt about beginning funneled into the school to prison pipeline. Semi-structured interviews (See Appendix A) with individual participants guided the counter-storytelling of Black males in WSD; the students were asked to talk about their experiences before being suspended, their thought processes while on suspension, and their return to the classroom. All individual interviews were conducted prior to focus group discussions, which in turn informed the types of questions asked in the focus groups.

The two focus group interviews consisted of ten Black male students who have been suspended in the 2017-2018 school year in the Winfield School District. The interviews focused on the differences in disciplinary experiences, as well as the cumulative impact on Black males who have been suspended from school (See Appendix B for focus group interview questions). Additional questions examined their racialized experiences across their K-12 experiences, and interactions within the criminal justice system. Further questions assessed their racial consciousness. All focus group interviews took place in the Winfield West High School

conference room, while individual interviews took place in the researcher's office at the school. Each of the settings allowed for an in-depth conversation on sensitive subjects and experiences.

Participants/Recruitment

I sorted through 150 Black male students from three Winfield School District high schools, from 14-18 years of age, who were suspended multiple times during the 2017-2018 school year. Access to the list of suspended Black male students was gained through the WSD Dean of Students and approved by Winfield School District administration. WSD provided an excel spreadsheet based on a data report that identifies students based on the type of offenses, attendance and discipline infractions, academic indicators (such as GPA), and race. Ten students were randomly selected by drawing names to avoid discrimination by age, social, economic background, religion, health, and disability status of potential participants. These randomized sorting methods were based upon Miles and Huberman (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

I reached out to the randomly selected students via email to explain the study and the purpose of participation (see Appendix D). For any student under the age of 18, both parents and the students signed the consent forms (see Appendix E). To participate in this study, students had to be enrolled in a WSD high school, between the age of 14-18, speak English, identify as being Black or African American males, and must have been suspended by a Winfield School District High School. Once the student agreed to participate in the research study, we met in my office, and I read aloud the Consent for Participating in a Research Study Form (see Appendix C).

The consent form advised students that their interviews will be audio-recorded and then transcribed. I answered all the questions students had about the consent form. Once each participant signed the consent form, I provided a copy and kept the original consent form in a safely secured file cabinet. I then assigned a code to the consent form. This code represented the

participant. Lastly, before I started interviewing participants, I asked each participant why they wanted to be interviewed and examined their future goals.

Data Analysis

During each interview, I used a smartphone to record each conversation. After the interview, I then listened to the audio-file and transcribed the conversation (Knaus, 2014). Transcription consisted of notes, and each individual's notes being compiled into data sets, and each participant coded notes for three sets of themes (Knaus, 2014). After participant validation of transcripts, all identifying information, including references to schools, educators, other students, and geography, was altered or deleted and pseudonyms were assigned. I then summarized interview topics for themes, using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes within and across interviews (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). A parallel analysis was used to code the two focus group interviews (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

CRT served as an analytical tool to contextualize Black male students' experiences with race and racism and helped create student narratives that convey both specific experiences concerning suspensions and counter-storytelling examples (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). To use CRT as an analytical tool, I used the first tenant permanence of racism as a base to discuss race and racism in all aspects of the research process (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). I then used counter-storytelling to challenge the discourses on race and gender by showing how these elements intersect to affect the experiences of students of color (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). The challenges used to explain the experiences were transcribed and highlighted in themes.

Findings

This section presents themes from detailed analyses of transcribed field notes. The first part describes participant profiles, including demographic background, school activities, future

goals, and why students participated in this study. The second part describes themes that emerged from the analysis and participant responses that align with themes. I discuss findings that specifically relate to research questions.

Participant Profiles

The following profiles offer an introduction of the participant's personalities and goals, while Table 1 summarizes demographic information. All participants lived in the same school district.

Table 1.

Participant Profile

<u>Pseudonym</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>School</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Suspended/Expelled</u>	<u>Incarcerated</u>
Jason	15	WWHS	10th	Suspended	Yes
Matthew	17	WWHS	12th	Suspended	No
Andrew	17	WWHS	11th	Suspended	No
Mark	17	WWHS	11th	Suspended	No
Luke	15	WEHS	9th	Suspended	Yes
John	17	WHS	10th	Suspended	No
James	18	WHS	12th	Suspended	No
Job	16	WEHS	10th	Suspended	No

Nathan	15	WHS	9th	Suspended	No
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Jason was a 15-year-old at the time of the study. He is energetic, smart, and thoughtful. He is originally from Arkansas and moved to Winfield School District at age 11 with his family in search of better educational opportunities. He is a multi-sport athlete. He has dreams of being an MLB baseball player in the future and wants to attend UCLA. Jason participated in the study because he wanted to share his experience of being suspended in the Winfield School District.

Matthew was an 18-year-old senior at the time of the study. He loves to joke, read, and shop. He is a native of Sudan and also moved to Winfield School District at the age of 11 with his family. He participates in many school club activities and plays basketball for his school. Matthew's future goal is to attend a local community college. Matthew participated in the study because he also wanted to share his experience of being suspended and to share insights as a first-generation African in the Winfield School District.

Andrew was a 17-year-old junior at the time of the study. Andrew is laid back, shy, and very protective of his friends and family. He is originally from Seattle and moved to Winfield School District two years ago. He is a multi-sport athlete who participated in many clubs and activities at WWHS. He has dreams of going to a local community college to study business like his two aunts. Andrew participated in the study because he believed White people did not want to see him win, and they just wanted to discriminate because they think that they were better than people of his ethnicity. He also mentioned that White people own everything, and they wanted Black people locked up through the preschool to prison pipeline.

Mark was a 17-year-old at the time of the study. He is a very energetic, self-driven, problem-solving young man. He is originally from Seattle and is a Guinean native who moved to

Winfield School District as a youth. He loves basketball and plays on the WWHS basketball team. He has dreams of playing basketball in the NBA. Mark participated in the study because he wanted to know why Winfield School District suspended Black students more than others.

Luke was a 15-year-old at the time of the study. He is a very quiet, reserved individual. He is originally from Chicago and moved to Winfield School District last year. Luke did not participate in any activities at his school but did play flag football at a local YMCA. Luke's future goals include becoming a lawyer. Luke wants to attend Loyola University Chicago and is very determined to make it happen. Luke participated in the study because he wanted to learn how other Black students are being punished in the Winfield School District.

John was a 17-a-year-old sophomore at the time of the study. He loves to hang with friends and is very friendly and caring. John is originally from California and moved to Winfield School District last year. He loves to hang with his girlfriend and work on homework together and attend sports games. John's future goal is to graduate high school and get a job to help his mom out with bills. John said, "that his mom is the most important person in the world" and wants to do everything to make her happy. John participated in the study because he wanted to share his frustration on how Black males are suspended in the Winfield School District.

James was an 18-year-old fifth-year senior at the time of the study. He is a very intelligent, strategic thinker, who loves to read and hang with friends. He was born in Winfield. James does not participate in any school activities. James' future goal is to graduate. James participated in the study because he wanted to share his experience of being suspended and to talk about why it is so hard to graduate as a Black male.

Job was a 16-year-old senior at the time of the study. Job loves to rap, read, and write poetry. He is originally from Chicago and moved to Winfield School District two years ago. He

does not participate in any school activities. Job's future goal is to attend a local community college to continue his education. Job participated in the study because he wanted to share his experience with racism and the inequality of being suspended in the Winfield School District.

Nathan was a 15-year-old senior at the time of the study at Winfield High School. He loves to joke and tells people he could be stubborn. He is originally from Winfield. He does not participate in any school activities but loves to play football with friends. Nathan's future goals are to attend UW and play football. Nathan participated in the study because he wanted to share his experience of being suspended and why things are not fair in the Winfield School District.

THEMES

In this section, I presented an analysis of recurring themes common to the lived experiences of Black male students who have been suspended in the Winfield School District. The three themes that emerged from the participants' interviews include (1) Making Sense of Suspension, (2) Educator Racism, and (3) The School to Prison Pipeline. In what comes next, I discuss each of the themes and provided an analysis of how each theme connects to the other two themes, ultimately clarifying why Black males are disappearing from the K-12 classroom. I also provide participant responses to each theme.

Theme One: Making Sense of Suspension

In this section, I clarified participant stories that led to a suspension and their emotions about the suspension in the Winfield School District. This theme encompasses what occurred for Black male students to be suspended. For Black male students in this study, their stories appeared to be similar in response to why they were suspended. Black male students were suspended for various reasons that included the suspicion of an illegal substance, having illegal substances, fighting, play fighting, and being late to school. The following examples illustrated

the participants' stories that led to a suspension. Mark, was suspended for the suspicion of using an illegal substance, described his experience as the following:

Reason for Suspension. After Mark was suspended, due to the suspicion of smoking weed on school grounds, he was later suspended again after a drug test showed THC molecules were founded on his fingertips but not in his system: therefore, he was suspended again for possession of marijuana. Though expressed in separate individual interviews, Jason's experience ran parallel to Mark's story about being suspended because of the suspicion of using an illegal substance.

Mark: When I got suspended, it was for me, apparently smoking weed before coming to school. But that was not the case. When I came to school, I felt like they didn't let me explain myself. After returning from suspension, I got suspended again even after my tests have shown that I haven't been smoking.

Jason: I was in class, and somebody put some weed in my backpack without me knowing about it. The P.E. teacher walked into the locker room and grabbed my backpack and told me to come here. They opened my backpack, and it smelled like straight dope. They walked me to the office and tested me to see if I was high and smelled my fingers to see if they smelled like weed. Then, they told me, "just because you have it on you, you can get suspended," even though it wasn't in my body. So, I got suspended for a couple of days.

While Mark and Jason were suspended for the suspicion of using an illegal substance, Luke spoke of how a teacher's perception of horse playing (e.g., messing around, goofing around, and pulling pranks) led to him being suspended.

Luke: Alright. So, there was this one instance where a couple of friends and I were joking around, and we were playing, we were play fighting. However, out of all the people play

fighting, a teacher picks me out to send me to the office because I was hitting my friends hard. They later suspended me for roughhousing.

The Winfield School District policy stated that running, sliding, and horseplay in halls cannot be tolerated at any time when students are in the building, reflecting a zero-tolerance approach.

Horseplay is not allowed on campus, and any disruption of a regular school day can lead to a suspension. For one participant, it appeared transportation was the cause for suspension. John, a student at WHS who had issues with getting to school because he had yet to learn how to travel on public transportation to school, described his experience:

John: Back in my freshman year, they gave me in-school suspension for showing up to school late. I didn't know what that was about cause it was like the first month or two of school and new to the school.

Student Feelings

Rules and punishment for Black male students varied based on how the principals at each particular high school punished each student. The students had similarly experienced being treated harsh and unfair during their suspension. The following examples illustrate the participants' stories about how they felt about being suspended.

Mark: Before the principals gave me my consequence for fighting, I tried to explain myself, but I would always get cut off. It made me feel like there's no point in me even coming to school.

What Mark expressed in this quote is how the school principal did not allow him to explain himself. Mark felt that after being silenced, he never had the opportunity to express how he felt when he is in trouble. This silencing led him to contemplate not coming back to school. Though expressed in separate individual interviews, Jason had experienced similar issues in the principal

office: "I told the principal what happened, but they don't ever listen to a student side that gets in trouble." Expressed in separate individual interviews, John also experienced similar issues to Jason, and Mark, in that when he tried to explain his side of the story on an incident with his principal, he felt like his voice did not matter:

John: I asked my principal and the Dean of Students why am I being suspended, and they told me it's for showing up to school late. I just moved here and didn't have reliable transportation to get to school, so the time I would get here would vary. But at the latest, I would only be like 10 minutes late to class. So I was given an in-school suspension.

John's point was that the school principals did not take into account that some students may face transportation issues. These issues may cause a student to come to school late, but to John's point, it should not warrant a suspension. Matthew experienced parallel problems as his other participants had, in that he was not allowed to explain an incident from his point of view that led to him being suspended. Matthew expressed that he felt silenced and insignificant and not respected because he was suspended after being attacked by another student.

Matthew: If the principals respected and listened to me, they wouldn't have suspended me for three days, they would have given me lunch detention or in-school suspension. But they suspended me for interacting with a fight. I was not interacting; I was just talking back to him because he had just smacked me across the face in front of the whole school. That's not ok! When I came into the administration office, I sat down respectfully. But they still suspended me, and it makes me mad.

Matthew's point was that he should not have been suspended for not fighting back. Matthew believed that there should have been some other form of retribution for someone who was attacked by another student. Luke shared similar frustrations that Matthew experienced with

being suspended. Though expressed in separate one-on-one interviews, Luke expressed that he was treated unfairly after play fighting with friends and not being able to express himself: “I felt like I was being treated unfairly because we were all doing it. The principals did not give me a chance to say anything. They just skipped straight to suspending me.”

Matthew, who also felt like he was treated unfairly because the principals did not listen to his story before suspending him for interacting in a fight at school, shared: “It makes me mad, it makes me feel like I should have gone back and fought him to prove myself. Because he came back the same day after the fight.” What this quote showed is that Matthew was mad for being treated unfairly after being suspended for interacting in a fight when the other student who was in the fight was not suspended. Matthew felt like he should have fought the student since he already got suspended for not fighting. This incident prompted Matthew to share another incident that happened at his school during an MLK day assembly. Matthew shared that during his school MLK assembly, the Black Student Union (BSU) sang the Black nation anthem in honor of their cultural heritage. During the song, a White teacher commented on Black students standing up during the anthem. Matthew stopped himself from pushing back against racism (i.e., responding to the teacher) because he felt like he would be suspended again if he did stand up for himself.

In contrast with Matthew not wanting to push back against racism because of his fear of getting in trouble, Andrew followed his comments and shared his indifference towards not wanting to push back and welcoming suspension as a result of standing up for himself. The following quote expressed in the same focus group interview showed how Andrew talked directly to Matthew about how to stand up against racism from a faculty member. “Fuck being respectful; you got to press people like that, bro. It doesn’t matter, what are they going to do to you? Suspend you for a couple of days?” In responding to Andrew’s comment, Matthew

expressed fear and hesitation towards sharing his feelings about standing up for himself because of the reaction he gets from White teachers who would try to get him suspended. Matthew shared that he has a history of seeing Black male students get suspended for standing up for themselves: “They going to make a big ass scene, and that’s going to reflect on me. The White teachers who I stand up against might go behind my back and tell other teachers that I’m a bad student.”

Andrew disagreed with Matthew and continued to argue that standing up for yourself is more important than grades. Andrew believed standing up for himself, and his heritage is worth getting suspended for. Andrew kept pushing: “You’re worried about your grades, but it’s an assembly on Martin Luther King bro. The nigga who stood for Black people. You going to let a White man talk about him like that?” Matthew disagreed with Andrew on standing up against a White teacher because he believed his reaction to racism would only bring a negative reflection on him. Matthew believed that even if he stood up for all Black people, he would still get in trouble: “If I say something, the consequence is going to reflect on me too.”

As Andrew and Matthew continued to engage in back and forth discussions on how to handle racism and standing up for themselves despite the chance of getting suspended, another student, Mark, in the same focus group interview entered the conversation. Mark understood the importance of the argument and shared this:

Mark: And this is why this argument is perfect. You know why? You have a point, and you have a point anybody in this school; any of these teachers can suspend him like that.

They can say whatever and get him suspended. You should’ve also stood up.

While Matthew agreed with Mark on his statement about any teacher can suspend you, Matthew’s statements emphasized the overall consequence of speaking up for himself and others:

Matthew: Whoever is going to listen to this, this should tell you that we have no option. We can't do nothing. If we say something bad, we are going to get in trouble. We're scared to speak up because of the consequences we will get.

For Nathan, standing up for himself was not the issue, though expressed in separate individual interviews Nathan shared similar feelings to Matthew about his feelings on being suspended: "I can't fight the school system by myself. So, a lot of times, I don't want to be here." Nathan's comments reflected hopelessness due to unfair punishment and the inability to change the school system. Furthermore, this hopelessness would risk his grades because he did not feel like there is a point of being at school.

John also felt like school is an unpleasant place to be; though shared in separate individual interviews, John expressed his feelings of just continuing to put up with the silencing to please his mother:

John: Yeah. That's why I don't want to go to schools in Winfield. But it's my mom that wants me to. I don't want to put a burden on my mom and have her drive me to another school district. That's mileage. So I try to get through not wanting to be at Winfield schools for her.

Treatment During Suspension

These examples demonstrated how Black males felt about being suspended and how they were treated. The result of being treated unfairly has led Black male participants not to want to come to school. The experiences students faced with being suspended and the emotional impact that students suffered; feeling hopeless, fear, angry, all led to impacts on student learning. Many conversations with the students revolved around their experienced of not being helped by their teacher with homework during suspension and that their grades had been impacted after

returning to school. Within the individual interviews, two students voluntarily brought up the impact suspension had on them. Their responses ranged from “I felt held back” (Matthew) to expressing, “I almost dropped out” (Mark). For instance, in the following conversation, Luke shared his thoughts about the impact of being suspended: “When I come back, I will be behind on a lot of things. I felt held back because I didn’t know what most of my classes were talking about cause I was gone for so long.”

Though expressed in separate individual interviews, Jason had a similar story to Luke about the impact of being suspended: “I couldn’t do the work. Teachers didn’t even try to explain what I was supposed to do. Some of the assignments were paper with no instructions.” Jason’s point was that when he was suspended he could not get any help from his teachers, and many of the assignments were unclear, causing him not to do his work. Though expressed in separate individual interviews, Matthew shared similar feelings about teachers not helping him with his work and how being suspended made him want to dropout:

Matthew: When I got suspended, I almost dropped out of school. I almost gave up on school. Like dead ass, because it was hard to catch up on work and the teachers are not going to help you whatsoever, they just going to be like, “The thing was due, and you can’t do it anymore.” Like can I get some help? They be like, “no, just do good on the next project.” Like what is that supposed to mean? Like I’m not even caught up on the last projects, what am I supposed to do?

What Matthew expressed was a cry for help that teachers continued to ignore because they were not examining how their students learned. In a separate one-on-one interview, Mark described how the impact of suspension silenced him and took away his privileges:

Mark: So, when I was getting suspended multiple times at WWHS, it would come to a point where I just would say nothing. I'd just let them say whatever and I'd be like ok, just take me home. Cause whatever I'd say would not matter, in any way. I already got kicked off the basketball team.

Similar to Mark, Nathan expressed how his privileges of eating in the cafeteria and going to the bathroom were taken away after being in a fight:

Nathan: They took my bathroom privileges away so that I cannot go to the bathroom during class. Since the guy I fought and I had the same lunch, the school made me eat lunch in a classroom for two weeks so that we wouldn't be together. I couldn't be in the cafeteria at all for two weeks. Yeah, I can't walk to the bathroom by myself. My teacher has to call a person, or one of my teachers has to walk me down to the bathroom and wait until I come out.

For James, the impact of being suspended looked different than Nathan and Matthews. Being at home made James disengage from doing homework: "I just sit at home, play video games, and maybe do work. Sleep all day, and clean the house." In a separate interview, Nathan shared a similar story to James' on what he does when he is home after being suspended and how he was frustrated with the school system for taking away his opportunity to learn:

Nathan: When I get suspended, I clean the house. I feel like it's unfair because the school system will take away our rights to learn. Just because we have a computer doesn't mean I know what I'm doing or how to do the work. That's the whole reason teachers exist. You've sent me home, I haven't been taught anything in the past 3-4 days, and they still expect me to do the work. How? I don't do anything for school when I'm suspended, because I don't know any of it.

Though expressed in separate interview, John described the impact of being suspended when being home as boring: “I just sit in my house and think about life. My mom is at work, and my siblings are at school, so there’s no one to talk to until my mom gets home.” Jason shared similar experiences to John and Nathan to what he does when he is home from after being suspended: “I didn’t do anything. My mom didn’t even care.”

These examples demonstrated how Black males felt about being suspended and the disengagement they have after not being helped by their teachers and forced to learn in ways that do not reflect how they learn. The result of being disengaged led to their grades being impacted.

Impact on Grades

The following examples illustrated the impact suspension had on their grades.

Both Andrew and Matthew shared how, after being suspended, their grades slipped because of their missed attendance in class:

Andrew: My attendance goes towards my grade, and my grade is dropping. Yea, attendance counts, and it goes towards my grade, and I don’t like missing any days of school because that makes a big impact on my grade. It’s like 70% of my grade right there.

Matthew: I got suspended for three days. And that just ruined my GPA and I had a lot of stuff to catch up on. I had A’s and B’s and C’s., but when I came back to school, I had like two Ds and an F because I missed a lot of assignments. It took me a long time to catch up and to like know what we are doing because, in most of my classes, we just go through different topics a day. Being in class for an hour when the teacher is talking, I learn more, and I’m a visual and hands-on person. So, like, if there’s a lab and I’m not there to do it, it becomes hard for me to understand it just by reading.

What Matthew's quote reflects is that he learns in a way that does not reflect how teachers are teaching him, and because his teachers do not recognize this, he will continue to fail when he is suspended. Mark experienced similar issues with Matthew on how their grades were impacted after being suspended when they are not helped by their teachers: "When I get suspended, and I come back, my grades will always slip. When I come back, my grades would drop by so much because of tests and more stuff that I missed."

What Mark expressed in his quote is that when he is suspended and is not provided help in ways in which he learns his grades slip. James further described the need to catch up on a lot of work after being suspended:

James: Yeah, I had to catch up on a lot. My science class did like 3-4 projects that that week, and I had 2-3 homework assignments due in my other classes. Plus, whatever work my classes were currently doing. That whole experience just sucked. But I ended up having some trouble getting all my credits and wasn't able to graduate on time, so I'm a super senior right now.

For James, the impact of being suspended made him repeat his senior year in high school. This statement is an issue not only because suspension had led James to repeat their same grade but also the lasting impact it had on James feeling embarrassed by his peers because he was supposed to graduate. Also, James continued to struggle with the same teacher, who caused him to fall behind on credits. Nathan, in a separate interview, who also fell behind in his classwork due to suspension, talked about how his teachers did not help him:

Nathan: When I get suspended and miss class time and a bunch of work, my grades went down. My mom would get on me about my grades, but I still could not get caught back

up. The teachers don't help you once you come back. It's just "Here's the work you missed. Do it." No one explains anything.

There was a pattern of students being ignored by their teachers and forced to learn in ways that do not reflect how they learn. What these experiences show is what Black male participants have been saying all along: teachers do not seem to care about their academic success. As discussed in this theme, suspensions led to student's grades being impacted, and because their teachers ignored these students, they were forced to learn in ways that did not reflect how they learn. Also, the students did not feel motivated in their classroom when returning from suspension because many of the students were failing and felt like there was no way to catch up fully, and that made them feel hopeless. Students also felt like school personnel did not respect them, which led to teachers sending them to the principal's office more and not providing detail support for students about when they are suspended. This is a problem because many of the Black male students who fail out of school have a high rate of coming into contact with the criminal justice system. A related finding was that students were afraid to stand up to their teachers because they believe that they will receive harsher punishment. School personnel ultimately contributed to the negative impact on Black male student achievement and the continuously silenced Black male voices. In the next section, I discuss how Black male students made meaning of their experiences with White teachers and racist behaviors.

Theme Two: Educator Racism

This theme, Educator Racism, focuses on how students felt about their teachers' and administrators' racist behavior and unfair treatment. Three out of ten participants talked about how their teachers treated them like trouble makers or how their White teachers were racist towards them. The interaction with teachers and administration is an important aspect of how

students feel about their support systems in school and how they are suspended or funneled into the criminal justice system. In this theme, students told stories about teachers and administrators in their schools, not caring, being judgmental, lacking cultural awareness and not being supportive. For instance, in the following conversation, Mark shared how teachers used his suspension as an example against him:

Mark: They try to use my example of the suspension against me. Like when I come back to school, they would say you don't want to do what you did before. They don't ever talk to me about getting back on the right track and doing what I should do or forget about what I've done in the past.

In a separate exchange, Jason shared his belief in teachers not being supportive of students who have been suspended. He said, "One security officer would state, you should know what you should be doing, he wasn't listening." Jason's comments reflected how resource officers at the school also did not support students and continued to silence them by not listening to their stories. Mark shared a similar experience about not having support from teachers when being suspended and how teachers used his past suspension as an example to control his behavior: "Let's say if I'm in class they'll like to say, if you don't do what you're supposed to do, you will get in trouble like you did before. They would just always bring it up like; I don't know."

Matthew shared the following about teachers and administrators not fully supporting students after being suspended: "Some teachers just don't care. Some just thought I got suspended because I was being a bad kid and that it was my fault." Though expressed in separate individual interviews, Job and Matthew shared similar experiences in that some teachers were not supportive and do not listen to students' stories:

Job: To be honest, I don't think they know how to deal with Black kids in general.

They've never had that experience before. If a Black kid comes and asks for help, they don't know what to do and then don't do anything at all.

James: In an all-White school with all-White students, you hear the n-word all the time coming from people's mouths. And you can't do anything about it because then you "took action" and now you got in trouble. Teachers say, "oh, I hear the word," but don't do anything about it.

The statements by Job and James demonstrate the dismissal of anti-Black racism from teachers and students not reacting to racism in fear of being punished more if they say anything. The dismissal of anti-Black racism normalizes racism in the schools, further silencing Black male students who resist negative narratives. Relatedly, while responding to the racism James experienced at Winfield High, Andrew in a different interview, described his experience with racism in relation to doing the same offense but getting harsher punishment:

Andrew: Say there's a group of White kids and a group of Black kids. The White kids do something similar to what the Black kids did, but they don't get in trouble for it. But the Black kids do and when they get hit on the hand harder.

Andrew continued: "Recently, when I got suspended for fighting, the White kid that I fought didn't get suspended. One of them got in school, and I got three days." Expressed in the same focus group interview, Mark echoed this shared belief on why Black males get suspended more than others:

Mark: The reason why I think they suspend Black males from my experience is because they are racist. Like I said before, I would get in trouble with another student with a

different skin tone than me- and they would get a less consequence than me, than someone with the same thing skin-tone would get punished harsher.

In a separate one-on-one interview, Luke talked about how racism is normalized in his school: “I mean it’s really like everybody already kind of knows that like the race issue is a non-stopping problem.” Jason described racism expressed by administrators: “One the people that go here actually told me that one of the counselors told them that the school is better if Black people were not here because they were causing trouble.”

This example shows how there is an interest in not having Black students in school because of the negative imagery that school personnel has for them. These negative stereotypes are carried into their lack of support that they do not give inside the school building. Mark had similar challenges with racism, this time coming from a teacher. When he did not stand for the pledge of allegiance, Mark’s teacher responded with a racist question:

Teacher: “Would you rather stay where you’re from than be in America?”

Mark: That’s how I knew like...people are racist.” I’m not going to do anything that’s going to get me in trouble, but I told the Dean of Students, nothing happened, the teacher still works here.

This quote is an example of how anti-Black racism is being fostered in the schools and how the normalization of racism continues to silence Black male student's voices. Though expressed in separate individual interviews, Mark continued to share his thoughts on anti-Black racism at WWHS and how Black male students continue to get in trouble regardless if they commit an offense:

Mark: In suspension. No matter what you do, no matter how little it is, and let’s say if you’re arguing or somebody from a different race comes and tells them what you’ve

done, you're going to get in trouble. There's no way to get out of your suspension, no way. Every time I've gotten suspended or I was going to get suspended, the administration never really even thought about, oh, maybe he's right when I explain myself, I've always just gotten suspended.

Nathan described his experience with racist teachers as using their White privilege in ways to show authority: "Teachers and admin kind of act like upper class and feel like they have higher authority because they're adults and they're White." In the same focus group, John shared his thoughts regarding anti-Black racism and punishment as something he just accepts because he knows this is normalized in schools:

John: Principals try to say something in a way that it doesn't sound bad, but deep down I think they don't like us. I'm not just going to say everybody, but there are people here I can tell don't like us. That's why when I get in trouble I don't even try talking or explaining myself. I just accept that it is what it is.

Job shared feeling targeted and how he and other Black males are treated differently than others:

Job: I feel like when Black people get in trouble, I feel like we're targeted and get the worst of the punishments. But when White people get in trouble, they just get a slap on the wrist and get off. Nothing bad happens to them.

While responding to Job's experiences on being targeted and how teachers punish Black students harsher, Nathan shared his thoughts on being labeled and being supervised: "I guess we're known as troublemakers or whatever, because I got suspended. And ever since I been labeled, it feels like the school been watching everything I do." In the same focus group interview, Jason described his experience in direct alignment with Nathan's thoughts of being

targeted and being supervised: “I do think I’m always being watched. My mom tells me that all the time.”

These quotes are examples of how young Black men are burdened with a presumption of guilt and are subject to control through surveillance, as a tool to monitor the activities Black male behavior. Andrew expressed that he felt like he is being targeted because of his past: “Because once you get in trouble, you do it again, they’re already on your back. It’s like a target. Any problem that happens in the school, they’re going to question you.” This example showed how the White racial frame is being used to criminalize Black males to control their behaviors formally. Matthew acknowledged Andrew's feelings about being targeted because of his past: “Honestly, that is kind of true because, like if you have done something in the past, it will go down on your record, and it will affect you, and every teacher can see that.” Mark echoed Matthew and described his experience of feeling targeted:

Mark: Because of my previous records from Cleveland Middle School, at Winfield High School, I felt like I was targeted. They keep reminding me about what I have done. They’ll try to use that as motivation to suspend me.

In the same group exchange, Nathan shared Mark’s feelings: “Some teachers even bring up the suspension in the process of talking to me.” John felt he was being targeted because he was Black and that just being Black, in general, will get other Black people targeted by teachers and administration: “I feel like it’s not just me, its Black people in general. I know there are more people that I know in similar situations that got suspended. And they’re all Black.”

Job who had experienced the same unequal treatment due to racism at his school shared this:

Job: When I hear about people getting an in-school suspension, it's usually White people. Black people usually get sent out of school suspension for a longer time. Back in middle school, one of my friends got suspended for a month for fighting, but this White kid got suspended for a week for the same thing.

In an individual interview, James reiterated Job's thoughts on unequal consequences and said he sees racism as one of the biggest issues of unequal treatment in his school: "Black and White people don't get equal consequences. If a White person smokes in the bathroom they get a day or two of in-school suspension; meanwhile, the Black student gets expelled." Though expressed in separate individual interviews, Andrew's thoughts aligned directly with James and Job in that Black students are punished harsher than their peers because of racism: "They gave me three days. They didn't suspend one of them, but they gave the other one in-school suspension, but they gave me three days. For some shit, I knew about but didn't participate in."

Luke shared a similar experience to Andrew in that school personnel treat Black students unfairly compared to White counterparts:

Luke: When I was suspended not one White person got called to the office, but they suspended me for roughhousing. And to me, I felt like I was being treated unfairly because we were all doing it. But honestly, they just called me. When I got called to the office, they just skipped straight to suspending me. They didn't even listen to anything I had to say. The other student, he only got a Saturday school. But not a suspension, and I was suspended for a week.

Luke continued to say that White students get special treatment: "For instance, if a White kid got in trouble at Winfield high, they would most likely get detention. If a Black kid got in trouble here, they're most likely to get emergency expulsion, or they would get a suspension."

Nathan expressed that his unequal treatment came after an altercation happened at his school between him and another student, and the consequences were not the same:

Nathan: If a Black kid got in trouble at Winfield high, they would most likely get detention. If a Black kid got in trouble here (Winfield East High School), they're most likely to get emergency expulsion, or they would get a suspension.

As discussed in this theme, when Black male students are harassed, disrespected by their school personnel, they have lower expectations for themselves. In many of the reflections, students said teachers and administrators were racist towards Black male students. Student participants felt targeted because of past behaviors, and all participants shared in their experiences that their suspension was not fair when compared to others. These students specifically identified educator racism as reasons for why they were continuously suspended with harsher punishment. This next section examines punishment, where students clarify their experiences with police officers and the criminal justice system, and how these impacted their participation in the classroom.

Theme Three: School to Prison Pipeline

In this section, I present participant experiences within the school to prison pipeline. This theme encompassed Black male student perceptions of how school personnel tried to funnel them into prison. As zero-tolerance policies criminalize Black male students for minor infractions, many students see out of school suspension lead to prison. Students told stories about how school personnel continuously suspend students for longer days to keep them out of school. Once a student is in trouble, they are continuously targeted. For instance, in the following conversation, Andrew shared this about the school to prison pipeline and how students have been funneled into the criminal justice system: "School is just like a prison. You get in trouble once;

you will continue to get into trouble. You are going to end up in jail.” In the same focus group interview, Matthew shared similar feelings to Andrew in that repeated offenses made him want to drop out and give up:

Matthew: Like if you get suspended for five days and return to school for only two days and you get suspended for another ten days, you automatically will fall behind. Once you fall behind, that will not give you the motivation to come to school, and then you going to drop out. I know people who have dropped out for being suspended because they just gave up. Like catching up on grades and stuff is hard, and the teachers are not even going to help you.

In the same interview, Jason described being asked about prison and how his behavior could lead to prison:

One of the teachers asked me, and they were like, “Do you want to be in jail, or do you want to be in school?” I was like, “What kind of question is that?” They were like, “If you keep going down this path, you are going to end up in jail.

Under constant threat of arrests inside and outside the classroom, the young men could neither feel safe nor protected. Many told stories about their interaction with the police and how some student's interactions led to being placed in jail or receiving a charge. For instance, in the following conversation, though expressed in separate individual interviews, Luke shared this about his interaction with the police and the unfair treatment he experienced:

Luke: It was over Spring break, this guy tried to rob my brother and me of like \$50. And then like, we defended ourselves, but then he called the police. And he said that we tried to rob him. But there was a tape and like everything showing that that did not happen. So like, we got out of jail right quick.

Despite evidence of being victims of a robbery, these Black males had to go to jail because young Black men are burdened with a presumption of guilt (Davis, 2017). When Luke was asked about how he felt about being in jail, he responded: “It was crazy like, it’s literally like, picture looking at this wall, but like a tan color with bricks, picture just looking at that wall all day.” In separate interviews, Mark and Jason described their interactions with the police:

Mark: A kid had stolen a pair of shoes from me. I go, and I take those shoes back from him. And they suspend me for a couple of days. And he writes a police report about me saying I stole those shoes, but they see me wearing those shoes before.

Jason: So, my ex had a speaker, and my little brother ran off with it. The next day we all met up, and she asked for her speaker back. I gave her the speaker back, and her parents started chasing me. Her mom and dad were ducked off in an alleyway somewhere. Her mom swung on me and missed; her dad tried to stab me. I took off running. My mom was scared, and she called the police. The story stuck, and even though my little brother took it, I got the charge.

When asked how did it feel while being in jail, Luke shared:

Luke: Just knowing that you’re in there affects your mental. Like being away from my friends, my family, for that long. To me, like in there, it just hurts. Like you don’t know when you’re about to get out. And like you don’t know what time it is. So like, you just be in there for so long. And all you can do is just think, you think about the little things that you missed. To me, like I don’t even like my dog, but I remember like oh, I wish I could be walking her right now. Or like I wish I could just have my mom be yelling at me, take out the trash, or something like that. You just, the littlest things matter the most in there.

Mark described having to attend a class after being arrested to get a clean record:

Mark: After police took the student's side of the story of being robbed, police made Mark go to Seattle University for a restorative justice class. The police had me sit at Seattle University for 6 hours and listen to felons tell me about stuff so I could get that thing off my record.

As discussed in this theme, zero-tolerance policies criminalize Black male students for minor infractions. Many participants felt school personnel targeted them to funnel them into the criminal justice system because school personnel believed that they are troublemakers. Even when students showed evidence that they did not commit a crime, they were sent to jail. Students had mixed interactions with the criminal justice system, where one took classes to get charges off of his record, while others argued that the interactions leading to the police were not their fault. When students are in jail, they feel hurt; they wonder about their family. In many of the reflections, students said teachers and administrators' punishment and feelings contributed to why they felt like they were being funneled into prison.

All students shared repeated stories of being treated unfairly, teachers being racist and how suspension led to their interaction with the criminal justice system. These stories reflected the ideology that zero-tolerance policies created to maintain the landscape of exclusion for Black males in education. As Black males are suspended, they continue to fall behind in work and are less motivated to come to school. In the next section, I discuss these students' experiences from within a CRT lens.

Discussion

This study explored the lived experiences of Black male students who have been suspended in the Winfield School District. The stories of Black male student participants

revealed racial disparities in out-of-school suspension. These students' stories identified racism with White teachers, interactions with police, and their understanding of the school to prison pipeline. The CRT tenets of the permanence of racism, counter-storytelling, and interest convergence were explored to explain the effects that racism has on the participation of Black male students in K-12 classrooms.

The permanence of racism, which CRT identifies as the idea that racism is always present in every social configuring in U.S. society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), showed up in the Educator Racism and School to Prison Pipeline themes. All participants recognized that teacher racism had an impact on how they were excluded from the classroom. This racism led to Black males failing in school and increased their interactions with the criminal justice system through suspensions. The results of this study confirm that punitive tools and approaches removed Black males from U.S. K-12 classrooms, hindering their academic achievement and disproportionately sending Black males onto a one-way path to prison. Though a few males did not have interactions with the criminal justice system, many were disproportionality suspended for minor offenses such as standing up for themselves or play-fighting. Disproportionate punishment of Black students compared to their White counterparts, helps maintain the White racial frame, which normalizes racism to maintain White dominance (Feagin, 2013). Despite racism from teachers, these Black male participants all wanted to continue school to earn a diploma because they wanted to make their families proud by graduating high school and getting a job coming out of school.

Black male students used counter-storytelling, which CRT identifies as a strategy to help Black and Brown individuals communicate their experiences with racism and the legal system throughout the study to talk about the impact of suspension and the racial discrimination they

experienced in school. Given the stories of Black male students, the study captured the power of White privilege in their school's administrative office on how educators distorted and silenced the experiences of Black males during the suspension process. Many participants could not tell their side of the story to their administration and were given a suspension with little to no explanation. Once students returned from suspension, they felt further targeted by White teachers. For example, one student said his White teacher labeled him a bad kid because he was suspended multiple times. This opinion of the White teacher is rooted in the experience of White privilege and in the construction of stereotypical stories about Black males to justify suspension through negative imagery.

Though Black male participants did not continue to stay in jail, there is an interest in why schools suspended Black male students more than their White counterparts. The interest in suspending Black male students is to create a racial caste system that punishes to advance White elites psychically & materially. One participant believed that his White teachers wanted to get Black students out of the school, “they be trying to target. They be trying to get you, bro. They try to get you for nothing” (Mark). This racist mechanism is achieved through the White racial frame used to criminalize black males through negative imagery supporting the cycle of Black students being arrested at school by police officers.

Reflecting on the first research question asking how Black male students think they are being funneled into the school to prison pipeline, participants believed they are being funneled into the prison system because of repeating multiple day suspensions and continuously feeling targeted by teachers. The second research question asked about impacts suspensions have on academic trajectories. Study participants answered that when they are suspended they get no support from teachers. Many of the assigned work given to students during suspension cannot be

completed outside of the school. This is an issue because many of the students who come back to class after being suspended experience being lost and lack the motivation to catch back up on classwork, which in turn causes them to fail.

Returning to Researcher Positionality

As a Black male professional working with Black male students, I have witnessed how the interactions with the criminal justice system have affected Black males who seek to reenter school after leaving detention facilities. For instance, when students are in the criminal justice system, many students do not continue school; this is a problem because once students try to re-enroll in schools, they are behind in credits, and some schools do not work to support Black males who have been arrested. Also, many schools do not allow some students who were arrested to be enrolled in their schools because of behavioral concerns. If enrolled back into school, many of these students are stereotyped as being a bad kid, are hyper supervised, and are questioned more than their White counterparts on offense that they were not involved in. All of these events have resulted in Black males disappearing from classrooms.

Not only does structural racism in policies and practices impact Black male students, but I also been impacted by the presence of racism in the school building. Although I am advocating for the fight against racism, it is taxing to constantly fight for something that should be a basic human right, equality. In my experience, when something negative happens with Black male students, every Black male in the building becomes a reflection of him or her. I have to play into the lateral violence, to show administrative staff that I am nothing like other Black males. This experience hurts me because, at times, I am no longer able to protect my students as I am in protection mode for myself and my job.

Doing this study helped show Black male students that I care and that I want to support them in the fight to talk about their experience with racist policies and practices and teachers. This study also helps to shed light on the experience of students who cannot share their experiences because they are either denied the opportunity to or are in the criminal justice system. Doing this study also helped shift the focus from being a student problem to a larger system-level problem.

Recommendations

While it is important to recognize the racialized policies and practices that exclude Black males from K-12 classrooms, the mere recognition of such policies does not address or dismantle a historical continuation of criminalizing Blacks through control and punishment. I provide recommendations to aid teachers, schools, and school districts in creating alternative approaches and practices to addressing the punitive tools used to exclude Black males from classrooms.

Teachers

For Black male students in the Winfield School District, a major part of their exclusion from the K-12 classroom comes from their experience is associated with racist White teachers who have no understanding of their culture. This has been my experience when working with these students and seeing the causes of why Black males are being suspended from school. What frustrates me is that teachers are so far removed that they blame Black students for why they are not visible in the classroom. For instance, I would hear from multiple White teachers say that Black male students have attitude problems; they are constantly late, Black students do not listen and that Black students do not care. However, I have never heard of how White teachers are being held accountable for trying to figure out why Black male students are disconnected from their classrooms. When White teachers are knowingly racist towards Black males, they are

murdering their spirit (Love, 2016). When Black males' spirits are murdered they are unable to learn because of humiliation and their loss of protection (Love, 2016).

What teachers need to do to interrupt the exclusion of Black males from K-12 classrooms is to create new systems and structures that support creativity, openness, refusal, healing, and subversiveness of abolitionists to eradicate injustice in and outside of the classroom (Love, 2019). Black male students continue to say they do not feel supported and heard when speaking about injustices from suspension. To combat student's feelings of not being heard, teachers must learn to practice Abolitionist teaching. Abolitionist teaching is the idea of being creative and bold to demand and fight for an educational system where all students are thriving and not simply surviving (Love, 2016). Love's notion of abolitionist teaching helps teachers fight against silencing, zero-tolerance policies, and seek to resist and tear down the educational survival complex that hinders solidarity with students and their communities.

For abolitionist teaching to work, teachers must first understand who they are and then what their roles are as potential allies in dismantling racism in schools. The Winfield School District consists of mostly White teachers, who were graduates of the school district and attended similarly predominantly white colleges in the region to finish their education. Many of these teachers have not had many interactions with students of color because of their segregated communities, and their implicit bias learned about Black people (Quereshi & Okonofua, 2017). What I mean by implicit bias are attitudes and stereotypes that affect actions and decisions (Staats, 2015).

Teachers must first recognize their upbringing and effects their norms and values may have on teaching Black students and successfully address and interrupt them. What this looks like for teachers is developing a sense of reflection and questioning by having Black teachers

help teachers ask themselves, “Is the way I’m observing this student behavior affecting outcomes?” “Am I recognizing students’ circumstances when making decisions?” “Am I putting my cultural understanding over what I am interpreting?” Teachers need to recognize that their cultural understanding is part of a White racial frame intended to normalize racism and to maintain White dominance. When teachers have implicit bias, the white rage will come in to reinforce injustice, the practice of asking the questions is meant to interrupt the implicit bias. Once this questioning and reflection are recognized, teachers can evaluate their feelings in the classroom that reinforce anti-Blackness. This practice ultimately aims to dismantle implicit bias (Love, 2019).

Teachers also need to understand their roles as potential allies in dismantling racism in schools for Black males. The teachers who are affecting Black male student experiences in the classroom also impact academic achievements and interaction with the criminal justice system. To see their roles as potential allies in dismantling racism in school for Black males, teachers also need to recognize how they are beneficiaries of racist school oppression and how these benefits help them navigate spaces that Black males who are in intentionally segregated schools do not have. To help teachers recognize their privilege, they need to work towards solidarity with courage’s coconspirators (Love, 2019). This practice helps people recognize their racialized life and their racialized experiences every day, to understand how to engage with other races about justice (Love, 2019).

Another way to dismantle the exclusion of Black males from classrooms is to learn from Black male staff about what students face outside the classroom that may affect how they navigate spaces. Black male staff can help teachers with professional development for working with Black students in the school. Allowing Black teachers to teach teachers and schools how to

operate with Black children will help Black men control classrooms. Also, Black teachers need to be paid more if they are doing this work. Provide Black teachers with the opportunity to teach fewer classes but still give impact to the system by teaching others how to keep Black males in the school building.

Fostering Voice. Lastly, teachers need to lean into discomfort and accept the counter-storytelling of their Black male students. To lean into discomfort, teachers need to find out what their biggest stressors are and learn how to deal with them positively. One stressor Black male students have is being silenced. Teachers must allow counter-storytelling in the classroom for students to reactivate their voices. Teachers who use counter-stories must listen to them because students will not share their experiences if they find their stories are ignored and minimized (Kelly, 2017). A teacher can listen to the stories of Black males and lean into discomfort by asking Black students, “How can I support you?” rather than questioning their truths. Another way to foster voice is to provide students with the opportunity to journal (Anderson et al., 2011). The concept of using a journal lets students share their experiences with different topics and allow teachers to learn about students' feelings. Students of color need a platform to journal about issues that are important to them and impacting them (Foster, 1990). Also, journaling allows white teachers to enter the world of their students (Slee & Jupp, 2013).

Focusing on the stories of Black males will help strengthen their relationships with Black male students and advocate for the classroom to be a space for Black males to be seen and heard instead of excluded. The purpose of this recommendation is to practice dismantling racism. To do that, the recommendation focuses on abolitionist teaching. Helping teachers create new systems and structures that eradicate injustice in and outside of the classroom also empowering Black students and teachers to take back control of the classroom through storytelling and

professional development. The impact of this recommendation will help teachers become accountable by leaning into discomfort, restore justice, and call into question our policies and practices that affect Black male student participation in the classroom (Love, 2019).

Schools

In reference to Bettina Love's (2016) *Wellness in Schools* recommendation, to interrupt the exclusion of Black males from K-12 classrooms, schools must place more importance on student's mental, spiritual, and physical health (Love, 2016). The participants' in this study voiced the negative impact that suspension had on their school experience. Furthermore, their responses supported the student's experience of how disciplinary policies deny support services, such as academic support and social intervention programs for students who are suspended (Canton, 2012).

Many of the concepts in zero-tolerance policies rely on law enforcement personnel to address student behavior in schools, which helps criminalize students. In Winfield School District, for example, students are arrested for fighting and causing disruptive behaviors such as talking back to the teacher, if seen as a treat. The arrest for a minor infraction could be avoided if school administrators like counselors handle the situation. To find alternative approaches for zero-tolerance policies is to recognize and respond to the needs of Black male students instead of punishing them.

Schools need to provide continuous yearly professional development to staff to find out why students are fighting and talking back to the teacher, what stressors are happening inside the school that students are suffering from that may cause serious behavioral incidents. Schools can also create alternative school discipline that minimizes suspensions and instead focuses on

building community partnerships with teachers and students on healing and racist trauma filled practices such as zero-tolerance policy that causes students to act out.

To interrupt the exclusion of Black males from K-12 classrooms, schools need to continue to use cultural competency training. Cultural competency training offers to help schools and individuals become more culturally sensitive and inclusive (Hanley, 1999). Also, cultural competency training will help schools and individuals recognizes that race and culture are important elements of socio-context and create power dynamics (Hanley, 1999). The professional development will focus on being reflective of decision making that negatively impacts black males from staff and administrator implicit biases. Having professional development on wellness practices will help educators understand the familiarities of students who have experienced violence and live in a fight or flight mode to not aggravate Black males through harsh discipline.

What schools also need to do to dismantle reinforce trauma Black males experience inside and outside of school is to hire more Black teachers who are committed to helping educate and empower Black students. When students have Black teachers who care about them and want to empower them, they are more likely to open up and talk about issues at school that they may not want to talk about with a non-Black teacher because they can relate to students in ways that a White teacher cant. This has been my experience when working in the Winfield School District; many Black males will come and talk to me about the racist remarks teachers would say, or the presentations White students will have on slavery and people of color that affects their participation in the classroom. They do not feel comfortable talking to a White staff or teachers because they feel like the teachers or staff will place the blame on them or ignore their feelings.

Having Black teachers who care about Black students at the school can help Black students envision themselves as successors rather than failures because Black teachers will be able to relate to the racism they face and help them navigate the system to success. In all, we need to hire Black staff. To do so, we need to reach out to the community and talk to community leaders who have a passion for increasing the wellness of Black males in school and also wanting to increase the visibility of them in the classroom. Schools have to get rid of certifications that exclude the hiring of community leaders. A school must also challenge districts to create initiatives to pay Black teachers better for the work they do surrounding racism in education and wellness practices.

School Districts

For school districts to successfully address the punitive tools used to exclude Black males from K-12 classrooms, they must develop and implement consistent, equitable out-of-school policies so that existing racial and ethnic disparities are not maintained. To create a consistent, equitable approach to out-of-school policies and practices, policymakers should create a board of community stakeholders to include students, community leaders, and parents that focus on de-criminalizing schools. For instance, school districts can de-criminalize schools by reducing the amount of decision making power resource officers have on handling in-school offenses. Instead of arresting students for fights and the possession of drugs, resource officers will have to follow a mandatory step by step formula that would refer students to counselors to talk about their problems and refer students to an on-site drug/alcohol counselor for students to talk about substance issues. Many of these offenses have caused Black male students to disappear from classrooms because students were previously sent to court instead of the counselor's office.

According to the participants, in many of the reflections students recommended what they felt could be changed in the school district, to successfully address the punitive tools used to exclude Black males from K-12 classrooms is to change attendance policies. Many Black male participants in this study have issues with attending school because many of the students do not live in an area where their school bus can pick them up. Participants in this study have also voiced that public transportation is not a very reliable resource when trying to get to school on time. The reason public transportation is not reliable to some participants is that the students arrive too early for school, and there is no staff at the school upon arrival to open school doors. Second, students arrive too late to campus because of busing time. Instead of suspending students for being tardy, school districts should create practices for schools to send students to the counselor office to see how schools can best support their students on why they are not coming to school and how to get them to school.

Another way policymakers can successfully address the punitive tools used to exclude Black males from K-12 classrooms is to listen to the experiences of Black male students. When educators listen to the counter-stories of Black male experiences in the school district, white stakeholders can understand the problematic practices that are happening in the school that affects Black males and their participation in the classroom. Also, counter-storytelling allows policymakers the opportunity to reflect on student's issues to interrupt the working mechanisms of racial oppression achieved through discipline-influenced educational policies. Moreover, there are a few steps policymakers can take to begin implementing changes after listening to Black male student issues.

To do this work, policymakers can first create monthly focus group opportunities for Black male students to enter a collective space to talk about their experiences with racism in

schools and the zero-tolerance policies. After listening to Black male voices, policymakers in the school district can create recommendations for schools to implement practices that allow student concerns to be addressed and create alternative approaches to school discipline (Love, 2016). School districts should also develop and fund training for White administrators and teachers on cultural awareness, behavioral supports, and mentorship for White teachers teaching in Black spaces (Love, 2016).

Conclusion

While writing this dissertation, I experienced the same racism from teachers and staff in the Winfield School District. In a recent meeting, school faculty and staff were supposed to look over recent surveys sent out to students to answer questions about how they feel about the school climate. After seeing the review, many teachers and staff became upset because many students felt like teachers were racist at the school. When the meeting was opened to let faculty and staff voice their opinions, one staff member said, “Why don't we just lock them up and put them all in cages.” When I challenged what the faculty member had said, I was dismissed by other faculty members. Other faculty members brushed off his comments as if his words were a joke. Since I already have witnessed Black student stories being dismissed when they are in trouble, from their issues with classroom presentations mocking slavery to me, talking to administrators about my issues with racism also being ignored.

At this moment, I knew racism was normalized in my school, not only for students but for Black staff as well. The words from Andrew sums up how many Black males feel in our school buildings, “They were trying to target us. They are trying to get you, bro. They try to get you for nothing.” In closing, to provide support for Black males to navigate the school system, educators must value and uplift them. Educators must challenge racism in schools and interrupt

the normalization to criminalize Black males by changing discipline policies and centering our voices to dismantle systemic exclusion from K-12 classrooms. When reflecting back on the question why am I so broken? because you do not know what its like to be guilty before you are born.

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Appendix A: Face-to-Face Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your experience with being suspended, and how were you treated?
2. What was the cause for the suspension?
3. Do you feel like your side of the story was truly listened to and respected?
4. Do you feel like you were targeted? Do you think the reason for your suspension/expulsion was fair or unfair?
5. What did you do during the time that you were suspended? Did you stay at home? Go to some alternative program?
6. How did you feel when you returned to school after being suspended?
7. How has the suspension affected your time in class?
8. Do you feel like your teacher tried to catch you up on classwork when you returned?
9. Have you ever considered dropping out of school? If so, why?
10. Do you have a record?
11. Have you been incarcerated? If so, how long were you in jail? How was that experience?
12. What other questions should I have asked you?
13. Is there anything else you like to share?

Appendix B: Focus group questions

1. Do schools suspend Black males more than others?
2. If so, why are Black males more likely to be suspended?
3. If you have been suspended, what was your experience? Why were you suspended? How was your experience coming back to school?
4. Are Black males are more likely to be arrested and serve time in the criminal justice system?
Why do you think this is?
5. If you have been arrested, what was your experience?
6. How do you all support each other?

Appendix C: Consent Form for students 18 years old

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

CONSENT TO VOLUNTEER AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT- SHORT FORM

Title of Study: _____

Name of Lead Researcher, Department & Telephone Number:

You are being asked to participate in research. Because the informed consent document is not translated into a language you understand, the English form will be translated for you verbally. Before you agree, the researcher must tell you about (1) the purposes, procedures, and duration of the research; (2) any procedures which are experimental; (3) any reasonably foreseeable risks, discomforts, and benefits of the research; (4) any potentially beneficial alternative procedures or treatments; and (5) how confidentiality will be maintained.

Where applicable, the researcher must also tell you about (1) any available compensation or medical treatment if injury occurs; (2) the possibility of unforeseeable risks; (3) circumstances when the investigator may halt your participation; (4) any added costs to you; (5) what happens if you decide to stop participating; (6) when you will be told about new findings which may affect your willingness to participate; and (7) how many people will be in the study.

If you agree to participate, you will receive a signed copy of this document and a copy of the complete informed consent document in English.

You may contact _____

at phone number () _____ anytime you have questions about the research.

You may contact the UW Institutional Review Board at 206-543-0098 or by email at hsdinfo@uw.edu if you have questions about your rights as a research subject or what to do if you are injured. You may also call collect at 206-221-5940 if you do not otherwise have access to a telephone.

Your participation in this research is voluntary, and you will not be penalized or lose benefits if you refuse to participate or decide to stop. Signing this document means that the research study, including the above information, has been described to you orally in a language you understand, you have had a chance to ask any questions that you have about the study, and that you voluntarily agree to participate.

NAME OF SUBJECT

SUBJECT SIGNATURE

DATE

NAME OF WITNESS

WITNESS SIGNATURE

DATE

Appendix D: Email to Student

University of Washington

E-mail Recruitment Script

Subject Line: Participants being sought for the Black male student experience in Winfield School District research study

Dear Student,

My name is Conrad Webster. I am a doctoral student, in the School of Education at the University of Washington Tacoma, in the Educational Leadership Program. I am contacting you through Winfield school district in partnership with University of Washington Tacoma to access information from state records for research purposes only. I am emailing you to see whether you would consider participating in my research study. The purpose of this research study is to examine the lived experiences of Black male students who have been suspended in the Winfield School District (WSD) * (pseudonym), as well as their perspectives on how they were suspended and or expelled.

If you like to take part in this study, the study will be conducted by Conrad Webster at Winfield High School *. As a participant you would partake in a focus group of 10 males from the Winfield School District *, in addition to one face to face individual interview. The focus group interview will last for one hour, while the face to face interview will last for 30 minutes. You will have the opportunity to review and verify the data and narratives I have collected for accuracy and credibility.

If you are interested in participating, a follow-up email will be sent out for more information. Agreement to be contacted or a request for more information does not obligate you to participate in any study.

If you would like additional information about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you again for considering this research opportunity,

Conrad Webster MPA

Doctoral Student

University of Washington Tacoma

webster9@uw.edu

713-545-0544.

*The real district name will be included in the email

Appendix E: Parent Consent Form**Parental Permission for Participation of a Child in a Research Study****University of Washington****Where Did my Black Folk Go?****Description of the research and your child's participation**

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Conrad Webster. The purpose of this research study is to examine the lived experiences of Black male students who have been suspended in the Winfield School District (WSD) *, as well as their perspectives on how they were suspended and or expelled.

Your child's participation will involve partaking in a focus group of 10 males from the Winfield School District *, in addition to one face to face individual interview. The focus group interview will last for one hour, while the face to face interview will last for 30 minutes. Your child will have the opportunity to review and verify the data and narratives I have collected for accuracy and credibility.

Risks and discomforts

Your child's participation in this study does not involve any physical or emotional risk to your child beyond that of everyday life.

Potential benefits

Your child is not likely to have any direct benefit from being in this research study. This study is designed to learn more about the lived experiences of Black male students who have been suspended in the Winfield School District *. The study results may be used to help other people in the future.

Protection of confidentiality

Describe the extent to which confidentiality of records identifying the child will be maintained. To ensure the confidentiality of the participants, no identifiable variables will be used or reported on throughout the study. Your child's identity will not be revealed in any publication resulting from this study.

Voluntary participation

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You may refuse to allow your child to participate or withdraw your child from the study at any time. Your child will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to allow your child to participate or to withdraw your child from this study.

Contact information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Conrad Webster at Winfield School District * at 713.545.0544. If you have any questions or concerns about your child's rights as a research participant, please contact the University of Washington Institutional Review Board at 206.543.0098 or email at hsdinfo@uw.edu.

Consent

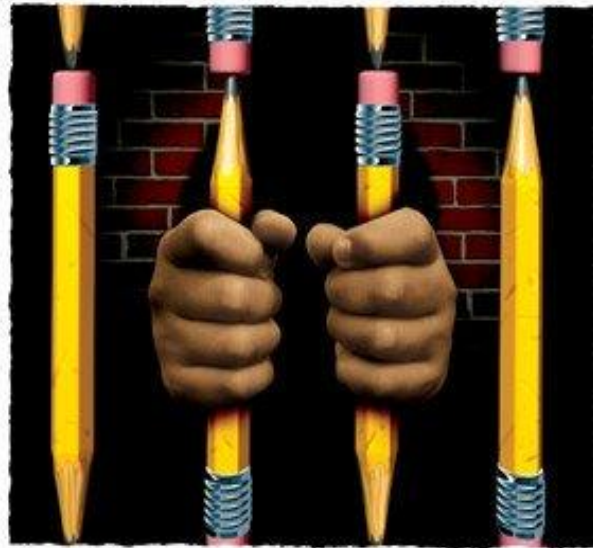
I have read this parental permission form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give my permission for my child to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date: _____

Child's Name: _____ A copy of this parental permission form should be given to you.

Appendix F: Recruitment Flyer

BLACK MALES' STUDENT EXPERIENCE WITH SUSPENSION IN WINFIELD SCHOOL DISTRICT*



X ARE YOU INTERESTED IN SHARING YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH BEING SUSPENDED?

X WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE YOUR VOICE HEARD?

X HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED MAKING SUGGESTIONS FOR POLICY CHANGE FOR SUSPENSION IN YOUR SCHOOL TO IMPROVE INSTRUCTION AND SERVICES?

>>>Please join me in an hour-long focus group conversation this Winter 2019 to highlight Black Male Students' experience with suspension and expulsion in Winfield School District *.

<<<To participate, you must identify as a Black male student enrolled in Winfield School District High School *. If you are interested, please contact Conrad Webster at webster9@uw.edu or 713-545-0544.

*The real district name will be included in the email

Appendix G: Electronic Reminder Email

University of Washington

E-mail Recruitment Script

Subject Line: Participants reminder email for the Black male student experience in Winfield School District * research study

Dear Student,

We recently communicated about the potential for you to participate in my research regarding the lived experiences of Black male students who have been suspended in the Winfield School District *, as well as their perspectives on how they were suspended and or expelled. I am following up to confirm the interview scheduled for (date), (day), (time), and (location).

I sincerely hope that you can make it, and if you need to reschedule, please contact me at your earliest convenience. I have attached the Informed Consent for you for your review. I will also bring two copies with me to the interview.

I look forward to speaking with you soon, and thanks in advance for your contribution to my research!

Best,

Conrad Webster MPA

Doctoral Student

University of Washington Tacoma

webster9@uw.edu

713-545-0544.

*The real district name will be included in the email

Appendix H: Focus Group Email

Focus Group Protocol Script for the Study of

Where Did my Black Folk Go?

"Thank you for coming today!"

"I brought you together so that you could share your experience with being suspended in Winfield School District * for my dissertation titled Where Did My Black Folk Go? This Focus group is designed to ask for your feedback on the lived experiences of being suspended, and are there any common trends amongst the group in which the way you were suspended or expelled from school. I want you to take part in invalidating your experiences through member checking, which provides a level of trustworthiness for my study."

"Please let me know if there is anything that I need to revise or omit that is not factually correct. Also, please share if there is any information included that may cause potential harm, and you wish for it to be removed."

"I am audio-recording this session, and I will take notes so that I can reflect on what you have said, the information provided will not go further than this group. Anything you say here will be held in strict confidence. When you have something to say, please use your pseudonym name each time, the use of the pseudonym is used for your protection. When I am listening to the tape again, I will not be able to see who is speaking, and I'll need to be able to relate comments you made at different times."

*The real district name will be included in the email

Appendix I: Child Assent Form

We are doing a study to learn about why Black male students are being suspended from school.

We are asking you to help because we don't know very much about why kids your age are being suspended from school.

If you agree to be in our study, we are going to ask you some questions about your experience with suspension from school. We want to know if you feel like you were targeted. For example, do you feel like teachers in your building usually suspended Black male students more than others?

You can ask questions about this study at any time. If you decide at any time not to finish, you can ask us to stop.

The questions we will ask are only about what you think. There are no right or wrong answers because this is not a test.

If you sign this paper, it means that you have read this and that you want to be in the study. If you don't want to be in the study, don't sign this paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you don't sign this paper or if you change your mind later.

Your signature: _____ Date _____

Your printed name: _____ Date _____

Signature of person obtaining consent: _____ Date _____

Printed name of person obtaining consent: _____ Date _____

Appendix J: Inclusion/ Exclusion Criteria

Table 1

Demographics Inclusion Criteria

Identity	Gender	Age	School Suspended	Language
Black African American	Male	14-18	Winfield High Winfield West Winfield East	Speak English

Note: Potential participants were screened for inclusion criteria before becoming key participants in this study.

Table 2

Demographics Exclusion Criteria

Identity	Gender	Age	School Suspended	Language
Does not self identify as Black or African American	Does not self identify as male	Is under the age of 14 Is over the age of 18	Did not get suspended at Winfield High Winfield West or Winfield East	Does not speak English

Note: Potential study participants who did not meet the criteria were not included in this study.