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# THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SCHOOL CLIMATE AND SCHOOL DISCIPLINE POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Anna G. Lubiner
*University of Rhode Island*, alubiner@my.uri.edu

# THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SCHOOL CLIMATE AND SCHOOL DISCIPLINE POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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ANNA G. LUBINER

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ANNA G. LUBINER

APPROVED:

Dissertation Committee:
Major Professor: Kathleen Gorman
Margaret Rogers
Diane Kern
Nasser H. Zawia
DEAN OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

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# ABSTRACT

Exclusionary discipline practices are associated with a range of negative student outcomes, both academic and behavioral, as well as a higher likelihood of later school drop-out and involvement in the juvenile justice system. Alternatively, more positive school climate has been associated with a variety of favorable student outcomes including higher levels of academic achievement and fewer behavioral infractions. The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between school climate and exclusionary discipline practices and policies in the Rhode Island public elementary and secondary schools. More specifically the study sought to investigate the association between teacher and student perceptions of school climate and variations in the number of in-school suspensions (ISS), out-of-school suspensions (OSS), and alternative placement programs (APP). Additionally, we examined whether school discipline policies, that is more reactive or more proactive policies, were associated with school climate and discipline practices and whether the type of policy moderated the relationship between school climate and school discipline practices.

Data from 261 elementary and secondary schools were included. Measures of teacher and student ratings of school climate, school discipline practices (i.e., suspensions and alternative program placements) and demographic variables were publicly available through the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) through their website InfoWorks!. School discipline policies were publicly available via school and school district website and analyzed using content analysis.

Significant disparities in suspension rates and perceptions of school climate were found between groups, such that schools that served higher proportions of historically marginalized students (e.g., racial/ethnic minorities, low income) were associated with lower ratings of school climate among students and teachers, and the more frequent use of ISS, OSS, and APP. Bivariate associations indicated that more positive ratings of school climate by teachers and students were significantly associated with lower rates of OSS, ISS and APP and to a great number of discipline policies overall. After controlling for student racial and ethnic composition and school characteristics, student perceptions of school climate remained significantly inversely related to OSS. Contrary to expectations, more proactive and less reactive school discipline policies were associated with higher rates of APP. There were no significant associations between school climate and school discipline policies after controlling for demographic variables. Results of the moderation analyses were inconclusive.

Most notable were our findings that school discipline policies and practices were not aligned. This is critical information as large-scale school-wide interventions are launched to address the disproportionality and overuse of exclusionary discipline practices. It is helpful then to consider who is writing the discipline policies, the degree to which they are implemented and enforced in schools, and to identify the ways in which they can be improved, and aligned with more proactive discipline practices.

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DEDICATION

To my mother

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

> "The great majority of suspensions do not serve any demonstrated valid interests of children or schools. Instead they harm the children involved and jeopardize their prospects for securing a decent education…They have become a crutch enabling school people to avoid the tougher issues of ineffective and inflexible school programs; poor communications with students, parents, and community; and a lack of understanding about and commitment to serving children from many different backgrounds and with many different needs in our public schools."
>
> Children's Defense Fund, 1975, p. 9-10

## Statement of the Problem

The use of exclusionary discipline in schools, referring to practices that remove students from the classroom, has increased exponentially since the 1970's (Losen & Skiba, 2010; Marchbanks et al., 2013). Despite myriad evidence that suggests exclusionary discipline practices (i.e., suspension, expulsion, and/or alternative program placement), are differentially applied and ineffective, schools continue to use these punishments with startling frequency (Fenning et al., 2012; Losen & Martinez, 2013; Reynolds et al., 2008; Skiba & Knesting, 2002; Skiba & Rauch, 2006). Students are suspended and expelled for a variety of behavioral infractions, from mild (e.g., tardiness) to severe (e.g., physical violence), and though expulsions are typically reserved for the most egregious behavioral violations, both suspensions and expulsions have been found to affect disproportionately students from historically marginalized populations (e.g.,

children of color, English language learners, students with disabilities) (Nichols, 2004; Skiba & Rauch, 2006; Skiba, Trachok, Chung, Baker, & Hughes, 2012). An analysis of data by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (2012) found that Black students were three and half times more likely to be suspended or expelled than their White counterparts, while students with documented disabilities were more than twice as likely to be suspended when compared to their typically developing peers. Furthermore, in districts that implemented zero-tolerance policies, that is rigid discipline policies that impose severe punishment for a variety of infractions (e.g., illicit drugs, weapons) regardless of extenuating circumstances, 56% of expelled students were Black and Hispanic despite representing only 45% of the student population (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

Exclusionary discipline practices are associated with a variety of deleterious outcomes, both immediate (loss of school time) and long-term. Students who are suspended or expelled are significantly more likely to drop-out of school and be involved in the criminal justice system (Balfanz, Byrnes, & Fox, 2013; Christle, Joviette, & Nelson, 2005). These findings are made more troubling by research that suggests that such practices do little to curb problem behavior and instead contribute to disparities in student outcomes (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Noguera, 1995; Reynolds et al., 2008).

The use of exclusionary discipline practices by schools is attributable to a constellation of factors. Government and school discipline policies (e.g., Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994, zero-tolerance policies), individual characteristics of the

student(s), neighborhood, community, and family factors, all affect school discipline practices, as well as student outcomes (Casella, 2003; Noltemeyer & McLoughlin, 2010). In addition, researchers have found characteristics of the school environment (e.g., instructional time and curriculum, quality of interpersonal relationships, organizational structure), cumulatively known as school climate, appreciably affect discipline outcomes, particularly among children from historically marginalized groups (Brown, Benkovitz, Mutillo, & Urban, 2006; Ferguson, Hackman, Hanna, & Ballantine, 2008).

**Justification for and Significance of the Study**

**School climate**. There is little debate that the school environment plays a vital role in the development of children (Catalano, Oesterle, Fleming, Hawkins, 2004; Eccles, et al., 1993; Way, Reddy, Rhodes, 2007). While many features of the school environment are relatively fixed (e.g., poverty, urbanicity, and school-size), school climate is comparatively malleable, making it an important area of inquiry (Gottfredson, Gottfredson, Payne, & Gottfredson, 2005; PISA, 2005). School climate generally refers to the qualities and characteristics of the school environment that are reflected in the collective experience of students, faculty and staff. While there is no unitary definition of school climate, most theorists agree that embedded within the construct are the goals, values, norms, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning methods, and the organizational and physical structure of the school (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli & Pickeral, 2009; Hopson & Lee, 2011; Thapa et al., 2013). A positive school climate generally includes: supportive and nurturing relationships among and between students, teachers, and school

administrators; feelings of safety, both physical and emotional; and an emphasis on learning that is supportive and encouraging (National School Climate Council, 2007).

Although positive school climate is not a panacea for structural and social inequality, research suggests it can serve as a protective factor, particularly for vulnerable students, attenuating risk and fostering resilience (Hopson & Lee, 2011). The extant literature finds that positive school climate is associated with a variety of favorable student outcomes, including a narrowing of the achievement gap between students of color and their White counterparts (e.g., Balfanz & Byrnes, 2006; Lee & Burkham, 1989); lower levels of reported substance use (Sznitman, Dunlop, Nalkur, Khurana, & Romer, 2012); lower levels of absenteeism (e.g., Gregory, Cornell. & Fan, 2011; Haynes, Emmons, Ben-Avie, 1997); and fewer risk-taking behaviors (Klein, Cornell & Konold, 2012; LaRusso, Romer & Selman, 2008), when compared to students enrolled in schools with less positive school climates. Collectively, these findings suggest that positive school climate has a widespread salutary effect on student outcomes making it an important area of inquiry for researchers examining school level factors that contribute to variations in student success.

As a result of the promising student outcomes associated with a more positive school climate, social scientists and educators have begun to explore the relationship between school climate and student discipline outcomes (e.g., Gottfredson, Gottfredson, Payne, & Gottfredson, 2005; PISA, 2005; Skiba & Peterson, 2005). Initial findings suggest that a more positive school climate is

associated with fewer and/or less extreme problem behaviors among students (Wang, Selman, Dishion, & Stormshak, 2010; Wilson, 2004), as well as less exclusionary discipline practices employed by school personnel (Gregory, Cornell & Fan, 2011; Mattison & Aber, 2007), which together lead to better student discipline outcomes (i.e., fewer suspensions and expulsions). These data become particularly relevant as the ill effects of exclusionary discipline practices become more widely known (e.g., Duncan, 2014).

**School discipline practices.** The goals of school discipline are generally to maintain safety and order and to foster the development of self-discipline among students (Bear, 2010). Myriad studies suggest that proactive school discipline policies teach and encourage prosocial behaviors are associated with safer schools and fewer behavior problems among students (e.g., Fenning & Rose, 2007; Horner et al., 2009; Rosenberg & Jackman, 2003; Sugai & Horner, 2002, 2006). Despite the evidence, many schools continue to rely school discipline practices that are more reactive (i.e., punitive) and often exclusionary, in nature (e.g., detention, suspension, expulsion) (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Sugai & Horner, 2002, 2006).

Research examining the use of exclusionary discipline practices finds that race/ethnicity, disability status, and socioeconomic status are significant predictors of suspensions and expulsions (Skiba et al., 2012). More specifically, schools with higher proportions of low-income students, and schools with higher proportions of students of color, use exclusionary discipline practices with greater frequency than do schools that serve more privileged populations (Losen & Skiba, 2010; Welch & Payne, 2010). Additionally, schools with more resources (i.e., suburban schools)

are less likely to employ reactive discipline practices than schools that serve historically marginalized populations. However, higher resource schools are more likely to differentially apply exclusionary discipline practices, such that students of color are more likely to be suspended than their White counterparts for similar or more minor infractions (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Skiba et al., 2012; Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008).

Despite this discouraging trend, some schools report fewer discipline problems, lower rates of suspensions and expulsions, and smaller gaps between groups than would be expected given the student population(s) (e.g., Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Bradshaw, Mitchell & Leaf, 2010). In schools with fewer than expected suspensions and expulsions, where school climate has also been assessed, it has been found to be an important predictive factor of less reactive types of discipline practices used by schools (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2005; Christle, Nelson, Jolivette, 2004; Skiba & Sprague, 2008).

**School climate and school discipline practices.** Initial studies examining school climate, discipline practices, and student outcomes suggest that school climate is a small but significant predictor of discipline practices in schools (Gottfredson et al., 2005; Lippman et al., 1996). Studies have assessed both the effect of existing school climate levels on discipline practices (Gregory, Cornell, & Fan, 2011; Mattison & Aber, 2007), as well as rates of suspensions and expulsions after implementation of positive school climate interventions (Barrett, Bradshaw & Lewis-Palmer, 2008; Bradshaw, Mitchell & Leaf, 2010), with promising results. Findings suggests that positive school climate is associated with higher GPA's and

fewer discipline referrals among Black students (Mattison & Aber, 2007), lower than expected suspension rates among all students, and more equal suspension rates between White and Black students (Gregory, et al, 2011).

The research surrounding school climate and discipline referrals and practices is bolstered by studies examining the effects of School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (SWPBIS)[1], a behavioral intervention and prevention model designed to improve school climate and behavioral outcomes. SWPBIS strives to teach and reinforce positive behavior and improve relationships among students, teachers and staff, through proactive discipline policies and procedures (Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010). Schools that have implemented SWPBIS, report improved school climate (Bradshaw, Koth, Thornton & Leaf, 2009; Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2009), decreased numbers of discipline referrals, and fewer out-of-school suspensions and expulsions (e.g., Barrett et al., 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Curtis, Van Horne, Robertson, & Karvonen, 2010; Tobin & Vincent, 2011) post intervention.

Taken together the literature suggests that school climate is an important factor in predicting the use of exclusionary discipline practices in schools. However, school climate is only one factor that affects the use of exclusionary discipline practices. School discipline policies (i.e., written codes of conduct) guide

[1] SWPBIS is also called Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS) and Positive Behavioral Support (PBS) in the literature.

[2] 1n 2013-2014 the term “alternative program placement” was eliminated,

discipline practices and influence the degree to which schools mete out suspensions and expulsions.

**School discipline policies and practices**. School discipline practices reflect, at least in part, the school and school district's discipline policies, typically operationalized as written codes of conduct (Fenning, Golomb, et al, 2008; Fenning, Piggott et al., 2011; Fenning & Rose, 2007). Formally mandated as part of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (2001), schools and school districts have long used discipline policies to communicate expectations and consequences of student behavior (Lally, 1982; Fenning & Rose, 2007). While NCLB (2001) requires school districts to provide broad written codes of conduct regarding student behavior, many schools expand district policies to address the particular demands of their school environment. Despite the overwhelming evidence that school suspension and expulsion are not effective deterrents of problem behavior (e.g., APA, 2008), such punishments continue to be a fundamental feature of many school discipline policies (Fenning et al., 2012). In several content analyses of school and district level written codes of conduct, Fenning and colleagues found that suspension, in particular, was used to address a variety of behavior problems from tardiness to weapons and fighting, with school discipline policies influencing the discipline practices (i.e., number of suspensions and expulsions) of schools (Fenning et al., 2008, 2012, 2013).

While reactive (exclusionary) school discipline policies continue to be promulgated by many schools, there is growing support for more proactive approaches to school discipline policies. Influenced by the Positive Behavioral

Support (PBS) movement, more proactive school discipline policies typically include a clearly stated discipline strategy that reflects a partnership among families, schools and communities (Steinberg, Allensworth, & Johnson, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2014). In addition, proactive discipline policies may address the academic needs of the students, define behavioral expectations and include a positive reward system (Fenning, Theodos, Benner, Bohanon-Edmonson, 2004). Furthermore, such polices tend to be progressive in nature, establishing a continuum of consequences for inappropriate behavior that includes opportunities to teach and learn, and are developmentally appropriate (e.g., community service, restitution), with suspension and expulsion reserved for the most egregious offenses (Rohler, 2008; Sugai, Sprague, Horner, Walker, 2000). The aim of the progressive discipline policies is to provide clarity and to improve consistency in enforcement, thereby reducing discriminatory discipline practices (Roher, 2008; Sugai et al., 2000). The extant literature suggests that such policies are associated with improved student outcomes and fewer disciplinary incidents (e.g., Fenning et al., 2004, 2008, 2012, 2012; Sugai et al., 2000).

**School climate, school discipline policies and school discipline practices**. Although there is research that links school climate to school discipline practice (Gottfredson, et al., 2005; Lippman et al., 1996) and studies that examine the relationship between discipline policies and school discipline practices (Fenning et al., 2008, 2012, 2013), there is a dearth of research that explores the relationship among school climate, discipline policies and school discipline practices. To date, only one study has explicitly explored the relationship among school discipline

policies, school climate and discipline practices. Fenning, Piggott and colleagues (2013) recently examined school discipline policies (i.e., written codes of conduct) and discipline practices in four high schools after the implementation of School-Wide Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (SWPBIS) intervention. The authors found that despite having access to proactive discipline tools via SWPBIS, schools continued to rely on (reactive) zero-tolerance (district-level) discipline policies to guide discipline decisions. While this study suggests that discipline policies may be a stronger predictor of school discipline practices than a positive school climate intervention (i.e., SWPBIS), it is the first study of its kind, suggesting the need for further inquiry

## Purpose

This study aimed to contribute to and build on the existing literature by examining the association between school climate and school discipline policies and practice, and to explore the ways race/ethnicity and SES influence these variables. Based on current research it was expected that school climate would account for variation in school discipline practices. It was predicted that a more positive school climate would be associated with fewer suspensions and alternative program placements. Additionally, school discipline policies were expected to moderate that relationship between school climate and school discipline practices, such that a more positive school climate would be associated with more suspensions and alternative program placements when school discipline policies were more reactive, and fewer suspensions and alternative program placements when school discipline policies were more proactive.

**Research Questions**

1. Is there a relationship between school climate and school discipline practices?

Hypothesis 1A: A more positive school climate was expected to be associated with fewer suspensions (in-school/out-of-school) and alternative program placements.

*Hypothesis 1B*: It was expected that schools that serve greater proportions of students from historically marginalized populations (e.g., Black, Hispanic, low SES) would have a more negative school climate and more suspensions and alternative program placements.

2. Is there a relationship between school discipline policies and school discipline practices?

*Hypothesis 2*. Less reactive discipline policies were expected to be associated with fewer suspensions and alternative program placements.

3. Is there a relationship between school climate and school discipline policies?

*Hypothesis 3*: A more positive school climate was expected to be associated with less reactive discipline policies.

4. Do school discipline policies moderate the relationship between school climate and school discipline practices?

*Hypothesis 4A*: More proactive school discipline policies were expected to change the nature of the relationship between a more positive school climate and school suspension and alternative program placements, resulting in fewer suspensions and alternative program placements.

*Hypothesis 4B*: More reactive school discipline policies were expected to change the nature of the relationship between a more positive school climate and school suspensions and alternative program placements, resulting in more suspension and alternative program placements.

# CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter offers a review of the literature on school discipline and its attendant features. The purpose of this review is to provide an historical and theoretical framework to understand and contextualize school discipline practices, and to explore the ways in which proximal (i.e., school climate, school discipline policies) and distal (i.e., federal and state policies) level factors interact to influence school discipline practices and affect student outcomes.

## School Discipline Background

While the goals of school discipline have remained relatively stable across time, that is to maintain order and safety, to create an environment conducive to learning (Bear, 2010; Dupper, 2010), and to teach self-discipline (Bear, 2010; Dupper, 2010; Osher, Bear, Sprague & Doyle, 2010), the strategies used to accomplish these purposes have shifted with the zeitgeist. Trends in education, including school discipline, are in large part a temporal reflection of society's cultural values and socio-political environment. It is useful then to contextualize contemporary issues in school discipline by exploring the historical trajectory of public education and school discipline.

**Historical trends in education and school discipline**. The 19th and 20th centuries were a time of significant growth in the United States. Manifest Destiny and the Industrial Revolution led to geographic and demographic expansion. Mass immigration swelled cities and magnified economic inequality (Rury, 2013). It was during this period of rapid expansion that publicly funded schools were established,

and compulsory attendance laws enacted, marking the beginning of the modern education system in the United States (Rury, 2013).

From the Post-Revolutionary era through early Industrialization the principle goal of formal education was to produce moral citizens. Dominant pedagogy relied on the Bible to teach students moral virtues in an effort to create an informed and well-behaved citizenry (Kaestle, 1984; Kafka, 2011). Order was maintained by force and fear; control was external and punishment severe, with the teachers having absolute authority (Butchart, 1994; Dupper, 2011). Teachers functioned in loco parentis (in place of parent), a vestige of English common law adopted in U.S. courts. As masters of the classroom, teachers were permitted to use corporal punishment as a means of discipline as long as the punishment was "moderate and reasonable, and not excessive" (State v. Pendergrass (1837) as cited in Bridinger, 1957).

As cities grew and the demand for public education increased, the model of education delivery necessarily shifted to accommodate larger student bodies. Education reformers such as Joseph Lancaster advocated for an elaborate system of surveillance, in which children monitored each other and reported to the teacher. This monitorial model was designed to educate large numbers students and instill in them morality and self-discipline. While Lancaster disapproved of corporal punishment, order was strictly maintained through surveillance, reward, competition and humiliation. Students were ranked and seated according to their position and disciplined by classmates via public shaming (at the behest of the teacher). Lancaster's model transformed the nature of the relationship between

teacher and student; instead of direct and patriarchal, the authority of the teacher was indirect, institutionalized and omnipresent. Lancaster's model fell out of favor with later Progressive-era reformers, though many of his concepts are still evident in contemporary school discipline practices (Butchart, 1995).

Progressive Era education reformers such as Horace Mann, Henry Barnard, and Samuel Hall advocated for a more child-centered approach to education and discipline. While the goal of education remained unchanged, to produce a moral citizenry, the means by which such morality was produced were evolving. Hall, in *Lectures on Schoolkeeping* (1831) identified the "great purpose of education is to cultivate all the powers of the mind, and to lead the young to choose that course of conduct, which will save them from vice, and conduct them in the paths of virtue" (Hall, 1831 as cited in Hogan, 1990, p. 17). These reformers suggested that teachers engage students in learning and promote order through teaching self-discipline through reason (Glenn, 1981; Kafka, 2011)

As the population of the country continued to grow, and compulsory education laws became more entrenched, formal exclusion (i.e., expulsion) became more difficult. Progressive pedagogy evolved to include a therapeutic approach to school discipline, in which 'unteachable' students were placed in self-contained classrooms or therapeutic schools. This approach was largely rhetorical, as teachers and school principals often used 'therapeutic' classrooms to waylay difficult students until they were old enough to leave school (Tropea, 1987). While Progressive pedagogy dominated the professional discourse, in practice many

schools continued to rely on authoritarian discipline practices, including corporal punishment, as a means of dominance and control (Kafka, 2011).

The 1950's were marked by cultural and pedagogical shifts in school discipline. No longer focused on the philosophy of discipline and the long-term development of a well-behaved and moral citizenry, academics concentrated on creating systems and models of discipline, with the short-term goals of school order and safety. It is within this context that modern education policy evolved, and exclusionary discipline rates began to rise (Butchart, 1995).

## Federal Policy Context and Associated Discipline Practices

**Federal legislation and the rise of exclusionary discipline**. While the 1950's saw the Brown v. Board of Education (1954) decision formally acknowledge inequity in education, it was not until the passage of the Civil Rights Act (1964) that schools began to desegregate in earnest. The enactment of the Civil Rights Act (1964) coincided with the passage Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (1965), which significantly expanded the role of the federal government in education. While the ESEA did not ban the use of corporal punishment in schools, it was becoming less acceptable as a form of punishment. As the use of corporal punishment decreased, exclusionary discipline appeared to increase. Greater government oversight and a spate of lawsuits (e.g., Goss v. Lopez, 1975) forced schools to codify their exclusionary discipline policies and track disciplinary incidents. These data eventually served as a baseline for future research (i.e., CDF, 1974; CDF, 1975) (Arum & Priess, 2009; Hansen, 2005).

The Children's Defense Fund (CDF) was among the first to systematically examine the use of exclusionary discipline practices in schools. In two landmark reports, the CDF (1974, 1975) found that children from historically marginalized populations were suspended at higher rates than their peers. Furthermore, children who were suspended were often excluded from school for nonviolent offenses such as insubordination and minor infractions of the school rules. Consistent with later research, the CDF found no evidence that exclusionary discipline improved school safety. Suspensions, however, were associated with a significant loss of school time for the students excluded and higher rates of juvenile delinquency.

**Zero-Tolerance and the criminalization of school discipline.** Zero tolerance policies began to appear in the late 1980's and 1990's. Designed to address issues of school safety and discipline, zero-tolerance policies instituted harsh and exclusionary punishments for a broad range of behavioral infractions. The passage of the (federal) Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 marked the beginning of a period of rapid expansion for exclusionary discipline policies. While the Gun Free Schools Act mandated a zero-tolerance approach to firearms in school, many school districts expanded these guidelines to include a variety of other infractions (e.g., drugs, other weapons, prohibited behavior) (Gregory & Connell, 2009). A study by the American Psychological Association's Zero Tolerance Task Force (2008) found such policies were associated with an increase in the number of suspensions and expulsions, and yet were not associated with a reduction in problem behaviors in schools.

The detrimental effects of zero-tolerance policies were compounded by the increasing use of police officers in schools. In 2004, the U. S. Department of Justice awarded $60 million in grants to school districts and police departments to increase the number of police officers in schools. There was little evidence to suggest that police presence in schools achieves its intended purpose, to improve school safety (e.g., Brady, Balmer & Phenix, 2007). However, research did demonstrate that police presence in schools leads to more student arrests and referrals to the juvenile justice system (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008; Hirschfield, 2008). Predictably, children of color were disproportionately affected; Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) found that in 2009-2010, 70% of students involved in school-related arrests were Black or Hispanic (U. S. Department of Education, 2012).

Despite nearly four decades of research that finds exclusionary discipline practices are differentially enforced and associated with a variety of adverse outcomes (e.g., school dropout, truancy and of course failure) (Balfanz, Byrnes & Fox, 2013), suspension rates have continued to climb, particularly among poor and minority students. A recent study examining racial and ethnic trends in school suspension rates, found that between 1972-3 and 2009-10 the rate of suspension among Black students more than doubled, increasing from 11.8% to 24.3%, with similar relative increases among Hispanic students (6.1% to 12%), however, rates of suspension among Whites students (6% to 7.1%) remained relatively stable (Losen & Martinez, 2013).

**No Child Left Behind**. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (2001), the most recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act,

expanded the role of the federal government in education by mandating that states create measurable performance standards, conduct annual assessments of all children enrolled in public schools, measure schools "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) and impose sanctions on schools that did not make AYP (Dee & Jacob, 2011). While the legislation was specifically designed to encourage schools to attend to children at-risk of academic failure (i.e., low-income students, students of color, English Language Learners and students with special needs), it may have had a paradoxical effect. Schools had strong incentives to produce high-test scores, as funding was tied to AYP, thereby encouraging the removal of low-performing students from schools via suspension or alternative program placement (Klehr, 2009; Mallett, 2015).

**Individuals with Disabilities Acts (IDEA) of 2004**. While legislative trends throughout the 1990's and early 2000's exacerbated exclusionary discipline practices, there were legislative counterbalances, like IDEA. IDEA is comprehensive legislation designed to protect school-age children and ensure access to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Although many features of the legislation are specific to academics (e.g., Individual Education Plans (IEP's)), there are procedural safeguards in place designed to protect students with special needs from being removed from school for long periods of time. More specifically, students who receive special education services cannot be suspended for more than ten days without a manifest determination hearing. Furthermore, schools are obligated to inform parents of their right to a hearing. Despite these safeguards,

students who receive special education services have been found to be suspended at higher rates than their typically developing peers (APA Task Force, 2008).

## Rhode Island Policy Context and Associated Discipline Practices

**Rhode Island school discipline policy**. School discipline polices, mandated by NCLB (2001) and Rhode Island law (R.I. GL § 16-21-21), require each school committee to establish and maintain discipline codes of conduct that comply with a variety of state and federal laws and guidelines. Consequently, all school/district level discipline policies in Rhode Island must include detailed disciplinary approaches to specific behavioral violations (i.e., firearms and other weapons, students with chronic disciplinary issues, attendance and truancy, codes, substance use, bullying and harassment), as well as the grounds for the acceptable use of exclusionary discipline (R.I. GL § 16-19.1 R.I. GL § 16-21.0; R.I. GL § 16-21.2, 2013).

**Suspensions in Rhode Island.** In 2013, the Rhode Island chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) released Blacklisted, a report that analyzed eight years of suspension data (2004-2012) for all school districts in Rhode Island. Findings indicated that Black and Hispanic students were suspended at much higher rates than White students, often for nonviolent discipline infractions such as disorderly conduct or attendance violations. Although Black and Hispanic students were suspended at higher rates than White students at all grade levels, the differences among elementary school students were particularly stark. Black elementary school students were six times likely to be suspended than their White counterparts. While, Hispanic elementary school students were three times more

likely to be suspended than White students. The ACLU report led to important discussions among Rhode Island policymakers and the electorate. In response, the Rhode Island General Assembly passed legislation (H-7287/S-2542O) making it illegal for schools to suspend (out-of-school) students for attendance related infractions alone. The 2012-2013 academic year saw a considerable reduction in the number of overall suspensions. However, a follow-up report by the ACLU (2014) examining data from 2012-2013 school year found that Black and Hispanic students continued to be suspended at much higher rates than their White counterparts. A trend that continued the following year (2013-2014) with Black, Native American and Hispanic students suspended at the highest rates in a decade (ACLU, 2015).

**Exclusionary discipline**. Discipline practices that remove students from the school/classroom, continue to be used with alacrity among public schools in Rhode Island. Exclusionary discipline actions that are captured by Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) and are publically available include: out-of-school suspensions, in-school suspensions and interim alternative education settings (IAES) (formerly alternative program placement)[2]. In 2013-2014 out-of-school suspensions accounted for about half of disciplinary actions (51//%), more than half of out-of-school suspensions were for nonviolent discipline infractions (i.e.,

[2] 1n 2013-2014 the term "alternative program placement" was eliminated, educational plans/program for long-term suspensions are now referred to as "Interim Alternative Education Setting" and are reserved for students with documented disabilities (RIDE, n. d.).

disrespect (31%) and disorderly conduct (21%) (RI Kids Count, 2015; RIDE 2015). Furthermore, while the RI General Assembly passed a law prohibiting the use of out-of-school suspension for attendance infractions alone, schools have continued to use in-school suspension as a consequence for attendance violations. In 2013-2014, nearly 25% (*n*=3,657) of all in-school suspensions were issued for attendance related infractions (RI Kids Count, 2015; RIDE 2015).

**Disproportionality**. Consistent with national norms, historically marginalized groups (i.e., students of color, low-income and students with disabilities) in Rhode Island are more likely to be suspended from school than their more advantaged peers. More specifically, in 2013-2014 minority students comprised 39% of the total student population and accounted for 57% of total disciplinary actions. Similarly, students receiving special education services accounted for 15% of the student population and 30% of the total disciplinary actions (RI Kids Count, 2015).

**Disproportionality and urbanicity**. Since Industrialization urban public schools have primarily served low-income students and students of color (Lippman, Burns, & McArthur, 1996). In Rhode Island this relationship is particularly pronounced. In 2010, the last year for which these data are available, 67% of all minority children, ages 0-18, lived in the four core cities: Providence, Pawtucket, Central Falls and Woonsocket. Furthermore, 65% of all children living in these urban centers were considered poor (Short, 2011 as cited in RI Kids Count, 2013, 2015). Consistent with previous research, students enrolled in these districts represented 29% of the total student population, though 51% of the total discipline

actions in the state (RIDE, 2014 as cited in RI Kids Count, 2015). De facto segregation such as this compounds the effects of poverty by concentrating racial and economic disadvantage within single schools or districts, further depressing student outcomes (Goldsmith, 2011; Rothstein, 2013).

## School Climate

School climate as a broad construct can be traced back to early educational reformers like Perry (1908) and Dewey (1916), however it was not systematically studied until the 1970's (Thapa et al., 2013). School climate, in its current iteration, reflects the marriage of organizational psychology and the effective schools movement (Anderson, 1982). Perhaps due to its disparate origins, school climate lacks formal definitional consensus. However, most theorists agree that embedded within the construct are the goals, values, norms, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning methods, and the organizational and physical structure of the school (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli & Pickeral, 2011; Hopson & Lee, 2011; Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2013). A more positive school climate is generally associated with supportive and nurturing relationships among students, teachers and administrators, and safe physical and emotional environment (National School Climate Council, 2007).

**School climate and ecological and contextual factors.** School climate and its attendant features exist within a complex ecological system, informed by a variety of interactive ecological contexts that include community-level, school-level, and individual characteristics (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Community factors such as poverty, geographical region and racial demographic factors can influence

perceptions of school climate (Kosciw, Greytak & Diaz, 2009). Additionally, school-level variables (e.g., resources, school size, teacher to student ratio) and characteristics of the individual (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation) substantially affect the experience of school climate (Brault, Janosz, Archambault, 2014; Hemphill, Plenty, Herrenkohl, Toumbourou, Catalono, 2014; Koth, Bradshaw and Leaf, 2008).

Such ecological and contextual factors are associated with notable differences in perceptions of school climate. More specifically, community-level factors such as poverty and racial/ethnic demographics are associated with lower ratings of school climate by both students (Gottfredson et al., 2005; Gregory et al., 2011; Skiba et al., 2012) and teachers (Brault, Janosz, Archambault, 2014). These associations are, in large part, explained by school-level factors that are inextricably linked to community-level factors. Most notably, schools that serve greater proportions of students from historically marginalized groups are more likely to have fewer economic resources, teachers with fewer years of experience, greater faculty turnover, and higher student to teacher ratios (Lankford, Loeb, & Wycoff, 2002), all of which are associated with lower ratings of school climate among students and teachers (Thapa et al., 2012).

In addition to community and school-level factors, individual characteristics of students, teacher, and principals are associated with differences in perceptions of school climate. For example, a study by Fan and colleagues (2011) found that students who were Hispanic or Asian were more likely to view the school as less safe and orderly than their White counterparts. Furthermore, male students tended

to view school rules as less clear and fair and teachers as less supportive (Fan, Williams, & Corkin, 2011). Other studies have found that among teachers, more teacher preparation and training is associated with higher quality (more connected) student-teacher relationships (Pas, Bradshaw, & Hershfeldt, 2012; Schonfeld, 2001; Tarter & Horenczyk, 2003). In addition, there is some evidence to suggest that teacher race/ethnicity may be a factor that effects teacher perceptions of school climate (Bevans, Bradshaw, Miech, Leaf, 2007; Pas, Bradshaw, & Hershfeldt, 2012). For instance, Bevan and colleagues (2007) found that non-Caucasian teachers had lower levels of staff affiliation than their Caucasian peers. Finally, principal characteristics, such as leadership style, have been shown to be a predictor of teacher perceptions of school climate (e.g., Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993; Marks & Printy, 2003). A seminal study by Marks and Printy (2003) found that schools with principals who were perceived by teachers as offering more instructional support, encouraging professional growth, and were generally motivating, were associated with higher ratings of school climate by teachers.

**School climate and student outcomes.** Research suggests that a more positive school climate is linked to a variety of improved student outcomes, including higher levels of academic achievement (e.g., Haynes, Emmons, Ben-Avie; Hoy & Hannum, 1997; O'Malley, Voight, Renshaw & Eklund, 2015), lower levels of absenteeism, lower rates of suspension (e.g., Gregory, Cornell. & Fan, 2011; Haynes, Emmons, Ben-Avie, 1997), and fewer problem behaviors among students (e.g., Cornell & Konold, 2012; LaRusso, Romer & Selman, 2008; Wang, Selman, Dishion, & Stormshak, 2010). Furthermore, several studies have found that

a positive school climate serves as a protective factor for students most at-risk (e.g., Christle et al., 2005; Hopson & Lee, 2011). For example, Hopson and Lee (2011) found that a more positive school climate, as measured by student perceptions, was associated with higher grades and better behaviors among students with risk factors associated with poor academic and behavioral outcomes. These findings are bolstered by study conducted by O'Malley and colleagues (2015) that found among high school students, a more positive views of school climate were associated with better academic performance, with the strongest associations found among homeless students and students from one-parent families.

## School Climate and School Discipline Policy and Practices

**School climate and discipline practices.** While research is still emerging, several studies have found that a more positive school climate is associated with the decreased use of exclusionary discipline practices by teachers and school staff (Gregory, Cornell & Fan, 2011; Mattison & Aber, 2007). In a study conducted by Mattison and Aber (2007), a more positive school climate was associated with fewer detentions and suspensions. Similarly, Gregory and colleagues (2011) found that a more positive school climate was related to fewer suspensions, and smaller discipline gaps between Black and White students.

**School climate interventions.** While school climate is influenced by a variety of community and individual level factors that are relatively fixed (e.g., poverty, race/ethnicity), there are a handful of school-wide interventions that have been associated with improved school climate and related student outcomes. For example, a recent meta-analysis conducted by Durlak and colleagues (2011)

examined 213 school-based universal social and emotional learning programs that were, in part, designed to increase prosocial behaviors and foster positive relationships among students, an important aspect of school climate. The authors found that in schools that implemented these interventions, students demonstrated improved social and emotional skills, fewer behavior problems and higher levels of academic performance, when compared to schools that had not implemented such interventions.

**School climate interventions and school discipline practice**s. There have been a variety of school climate interventions that have targeted school discipline practices (e.g., Battistich, Schaps, Wilson, 2004; Bradshaw et al., 2008, 2009, Gonzalez, 2014 as cited in Losen et al., 2015). For example, a recent study by Gonzalez (2014) examined the effects of the systematic school climate intervention that included the integration of restorative justice practices in school discipline practices and policies in the Denver Public Schools. Over six years, Denver schools saw suspension rates drop, the discipline gap narrow and test scores rise (Gonzalez, 2014 as cited in Losen, 2015).

While other school climate and school discipline practice interventions have demonstrated success (e.g., Battistich, Schaps, Wilson, 2004; Gonzalez, 2014 as cited in Losen, 2015), School-Wide Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (SWPBIS) is the most often studied and widely implemented school climate intervention. SWPBIS is a multi-tiered prevention and intervention model that incorporates tiered systems of support using universal prevention strategies (Tier 1), with smaller group (Tier 2) and individualized (Tier 3) behavioral interventions

in response to the needs of students and schools. Designed to enhance school climate and improve student behavior and outcomes, SWPBIS interventions establish clear systems and procedures that reinforce positive behavior, reduce problem behavior, and improve relationships among students, teachers and staff (Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010). Typically, SWPBIS includes simple and well-defined behavioral expectations and consequences, modeling of appropriate behaviors by teachers and school staff, rewards for expected behaviors, and community involvement (Osher, Bear, Sprague & Doyle, 2010; Sugai & Horner, 2006). This intervention model has been associated with improved school climate, reduction in use exclusionary discipline practices, and improved student outcomes (e.g., Bradshaw et al., 2008, Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010; Curtis, Van Horne, Robertson, & Karvonen, 2010; Tobin & Vincent, 2011)

**School climate and school discipline policies and practices.** Although exclusionary (reactive) school discipline policies continue to be used too frequently, there is mounting support for a more comprehensive, preventative and proactive approach to school discipline policies and practice. Reactive consequences, which are strictly punitive in nature and offer no opportunity for teaching and learning, have long prevailed in American school discipline. However, recognition of the adverse outcomes associated with such practices has led to a broader push for the adoption often more proactive discipline policies (Fenning et al., 2008). Furthermore, the adoption of more proactive discipline policies by schools and school districts has been associated with less disproportionality in

school discipline and lower overall rates of exclusion (Barnhart, Frankliln, & Alleman, 2008).

The U.S. Department of Education, recognizing the detrimental effects of exclusionary discipline, has recently launched an initiative to change school discipline practices by altering school climate and school discipline policies through school climate transformation grants. Described as multi-tiered behavioral support framework (e.g., PBIS) designed to improve school climate and student outcomes, in part, by reforming discipline policies and practices in an effort to "address the school-to-prison pipeline—the unfortunate and often unintentional policies and practices that push our nation's schoolchildren, especially those who are most at-risk, out of classrooms and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems" (U.S. Department of Education, Press Office, 2014, September 23). Although there is no data to assess the success of school climate transformation grants, the launch of the initiative suggests a growing awareness of the positive effects of school climate interventions and the relationship of such interventions to the reduction in exclusionary discipline policies and practices.

**Contribution to the Literature**

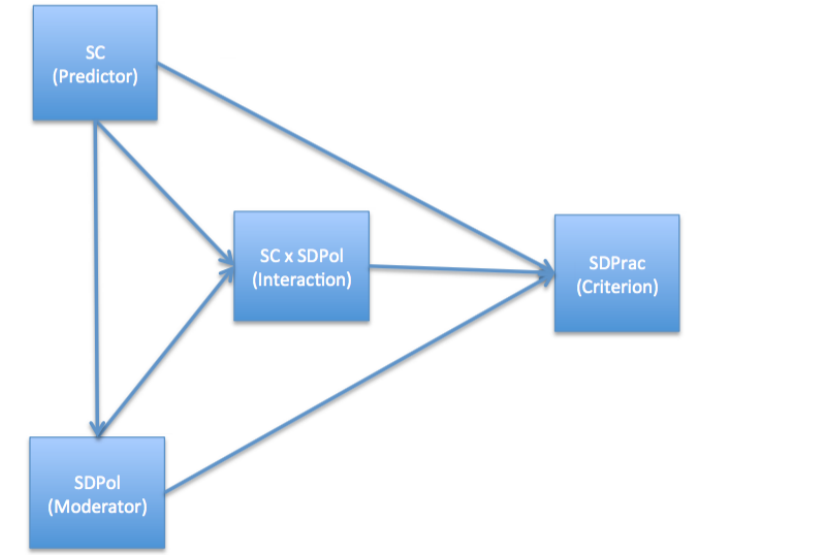
Despite recent efforts to alter school discipline practices and policies by improving school climate, there is a dearth of research that examines the associations among the constructs. While researchers have examined the relationship between school climate and discipline practices, and disciplinary policies and discipline practices, there has been little research that examines the relationships among school climate, school discipline policies, and school

discipline practice. Thus, this study aimed to contribute to an emerging body of literature that identifies school level factors associated with the reduction in use of exclusionary discipline practices, particularly among historically marginalized groups (i.e., student of color, students from low-income families and students with disabilities).

**Conceptual Framework**

As illustrated in Figure 2.1, it was expected that school climate would account for variation within school discipline practices. More specifically, it was predicted that a more positive school climate would be associated with fewer suspensions and alternative program placements. Additionally, it was expected that school discipline policies would predict to school discipline practices, such that more proactive school discipline policies would be associated with fewer suspensions and alternative program placements. Furthermore, it was expected school climate would predict to school discipline policies such that more positive school climate would be associated with more proactive school discipline policy. Finally, it was predicted that school discipline policies would moderate that relationship between school climate and school discipline practices, such that a more positive school climate would be associated with more suspensions and alternative program placements when school discipline policies were more reactive, and fewer suspensions and expulsions when school discipline policies were more proactive.

Figure 2.1. *Path Model for Hypothesized Interactions among School Climate, School Discipline Policies and School Discipline Practices.*




*Note*. SC=School Climate; SDPol = School Discipline Policies, SD Prac =School Discipline Practices

# CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

## Sample

The data used for this study represent Rhode Island's 296 public schools that served 139,383 children in grades Kindergarten through 12, during the 2012-2013 academic year. The schools were managed by 66 Local Education Agencies (LEA's) that included: 32 regular school districts (single municipalities), 4 regional school districts (more than one municipality), 4 state-operated schools (statewide); 1 regional school; and 25 charter schools. As a whole, Rhode Island students were relatively economically diverse, with 46% of students receiving free and reduced lunch[3], and moderately racially and ethnically diverse, with 63% students identifying as White, 22% identifying as Hispanic, and 8% Black (RIDE, 2014).

Although these aggregated data suggest a relatively diverse student body, low-income children and children of color were not represented across all school districts equally. That is, according to levels of urbanicity (i.e., geographic proximity to cities), the 4 urban school districts: Providence, Pawtucket, Central Falls and Woonsocket, served 31% of the total student population in the state, but

[3] Free and Reduced lunch is used as proxy variable for family income. Eligibility criteria for Free and Reduced Lunch is family income that is, respectively, 130% and 185% of the federal poverty income threshold (NCES, 2015). In 2012-2013, the year for which data are examined for this study, the federal poverty guideline for a family of four was $23,050 annually (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2013).

75% of all Hispanic students, 74% of all Black students, 55% of all low-income students in the state (RIDE, 2013; RI Kids Count, 2013).

The final school sample included 261 schools, serving 132,758 students in grades 3-12, represented by 46 LEAS, including 32 regular school districts (single municipalities), 4 regional school districts (more than one municipality), 2 state-operated schools (statewide); and 8 charter schools. Thirty-five schools were not included due to lack of data ($n$ = 28 elementary schools, $n$ = 4 high schools, $n$ = 3 mixed grade schools). Demographic characteristics of the final sample were not significantly different from the initial sample with 46% of students receiving free and reduced lunch, 65% students identifying as White, 21% identifying as Hispanic, and 8% African American (RIDE, 2013).

**Power.** An a priori power analysis was conducted based on multiple regression with 15 variables using an alpha level set at .05, and power set at .80, with an expected moderate effect size ($f^2$ = 0.15). A minimum of 199 schools (participants) were suggested (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). As such a sample of 261 schools has adequate power.

**Measures**

Data for this this study come from two sources: 1) The Rhode Island Department of Education's (RIDE) InfoWorks! website, a data aggregator that includes survey data on student and teacher perceptions of school climate, demographic data, and school discipline data; 2) school websites and school district websites to access and collect school discipline policies.

**Demographic Variables**

Demographic data were collected through Rhode Island Department of Education's (RIDE), InfoWorks! website. Characteristics of each school included school size (number of students enrolled), socio-economic status (measured by percent of students eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch), teacher to student ratio, ethnic (number Hispanic/Latino) and racial composition (e.g., number of White, Black, Asian) of the school by numbers enrolled, urbanicity (urban, urban ring, suburban) and percentage of children receiving special education services. For the purposes of analyses racial and ethnic groups were converted from numbers enrolled to percentage of #'s enrolled.

**Dependent Variable: School Discipline Practices**

Three dependent variables include the number of out-of-school suspensions, in-school suspensions, and alternative program placements.

**Out of School Suspensions (OSS)**. OSS is defined by RIDE as "the temporary dismissal of a student from school by duly authorized school personnel in accordance with established regulation. Students serve their suspension outside of school" (RIDE, n.d).

**In-school suspensions (ISS*).*** ISS refers to "the temporary dismissal of a student from class by duly authorized school personnel in accordance with established regulation. Students serve their time in these suspensions under supervision during school hours" (RIDE, n.d.).

**Alternative program placements (APP).** APP refers to educational plans and placements developed by school districts in conjunction with RIDE for students

who have been suspended long-term (i.e., 10 days to 1-year). Rhode Island law stipulates, "..schools shall provide a continuum of interim alternative educational placement options to continue a student's education while suspended (RI Board of Regents, 2009, p. 25)[4].

RIDE identifies 44 possible behavioral infractions that may result in one of these three outcomes. A comprehensive list of behavioral infractions for which in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and alternative program placement were possible consequences is provided in Appendix A.

In addition, upon request, RIDE provided the author with racial/ethnic discipline data where available. Specifically, discipline practice data (i.e., out-of-school and in-school suspension and alternative program placement) were summed by RIDE and then disaggregated by race/ethnicity. These data were only available for schools where the number of students being disciplined in any racial/ethnic group reached more than 10. Outcome data were available by race/ethnicity for 115 schools (27 elementary schools, 45 middle schools, and 43 high schools), which were aggregated into two groups: 1) Non-Hispanic White 2) Racial/Ethnic Minority.

**Independent Variable: School Discipline Policy**

For the purposes of this study a content analysis (i.e., systematic analysis of text) of each school/district discipline policy was performed with each policy being

[4] In 2013-2014 the term "Alternative Program Placement" was eliminated, educational plans/program for long-term suspensions are now referred to as "Interim Alternative Education Setting" (RIDE, n. d.)

reviewed for behavioral infractions (coded for presence or absence), associated consequences (coded for presence or absence) and the overall discipline orientation. This process resulted in the development of development of three school discipline policy variables: reactive discipline policy, proactive discipline policy, and discipline orientation.

**Behavioral infractions**. A total of 40 behavioral infractions were coded, adapted from RIDE's 44 identified misbehaviors that could result in-school suspension (ISS), out-of-school suspension (OSS), and alternative program placement (APP). Four behaviors were combined (e.g., obscene language toward teacher and obscene language toward student were combined into one category: obscene language). Using the criteria previously established and validated by Fenning and colleagues (2008*),* behaviors were categorized as mild, moderate and severe. The 40 behavioral infractions, categorized by degree of severity of infraction used in this *study* are presented in Table 3.1. Analyses of behavioral infraction by severity reached acceptable levels of internal reliability: Mild ($\alpha$ =. 84), Moderate ($\alpha$ =. 65), and Severe ($\alpha$ =. 82).

Table 3.1. *Behavioral Infraction Categorization by Severity*

| Severity Rating | Behavior |
|---|---|
| Mild ($n$ =16) | Attendance-Cut/Skipped Class; Attendance-Cut/Skipped Detention; Attendance-Left School Grounds; Attendance-Cut/Skipped In School Suspension; Attendance-Tardy/Late; Attendance-Truant; Cheating/Plagiarism; Disorderly Conduct/Class Disruption; Dress Code Violation; Electronic Devices; Forgery-General Staff Disrespect/Insubordination; Loitering; Misuse of Computer; Student ID Violation; Tobacco Offenses (Distribution, Possession, Sale, and Use) |
| Moderate ($n$ = 8) | Bullying; Fighting; Gambling; Hazing/Harassment; Social Exclusion; Student Remarks (verbal argument, profanity); Trespassing/Restricted Area; Vandalism |
| Severe ($n$ =16) | Alcohol Offenses (Distribution, Possession, Sale, and Use); Arson-Assault/Battery; Threat/Intimidation; Bomb Threat; Drug Offenses (Possession and/or Use); Drug; Offenses (Intent to sell); Gang Behavior-Non-violent-Kidnapping/Abduction; Misuse of Fire Alarm-Fireworks/Explosives Offenses; Prejudice/Hate Crimes/Racial Slurs; Sexual Harassment; Sexual Assault/Battery; Theft/Larceny/Robbery; Weapons Offenses (Distribution, Possession, Sale, and Use) |

**Discipline consequences**. Using the criteria developed by Fenning and colleagues (2008) for the *Analysis of Discipline Codes Rating Form-Revised (ADCR-R*), 18 consequences were identified as potential behaviors for coding (Fenning et al., 2008; Horowtiz, 2010). Furthermore, based on this same criteria, the discipline consequences were categorized as either proactive, that is consequences that contained a teaching component, or reactive, consequences that were purely punitive, with no opportunity to teach/learn appropriate behavior (Fenning, et al., 2008, Horowitz, 2010). Table 3.2 lists the 18 behavioral consequences, categorized by proactive and reactive consequence. Measures of internal consistency of the two scales achieved high levels of reliability, Proactive ($\alpha$ =.99), Reactive ($\alpha$ =.99). A copy scoring form used to analyze school discipline policies by consequence is provided in Appendix B.

Table 3.2. *Categorization of Discipline Consequences Included in Policy*

| Category | Discipline Consequence |
|---|---|
| Proactive ($n$ = 8) | Mediation; Restitution; Referral for Learning Supports; Counseling; Community/School Service; In School Interventions; Parent Conference; Home Contact |
| Reactive ($n$ =10) | Social Suspension/Non-academic Privileges; Removal from Class; Detention; Police referral/Attendance Officer; In school suspension; Sent Home; < 10 suspension; >10 days suspension; Alternative Program Placement; Expulsion |

**Independent variables: reactive discipline policy and proactive discipline policy (school discipline policy)**. Each school policy was coded for the presence or absence of each of the 40 behavioral infractions, organized by severity (mild, moderate, severe), and the resultant consequence(s), organized proactive/reactive. For each behavioral infraction present, the associated consequence(s) were coded (yes = 1). Many behavioral infractions had multiple associated consequences, and in those cases, each consequence was coded independently. For example, a student who was disruptive in class (mild behavioral infraction) could face a variety of consequences, including being asked to leave the room (reactive), detention (reactive), a meeting with the teacher (proactive), meeting with the school counselor (proactive). This would result in 1 behavioral infraction (disruptive), with 4 consequences. Consequences were summed across behavioral infractions, by level of severity. Once all school policies were coded, data were aggregated by the type of consequence (reactive/proactive) and severity of discipline. Six categories were established and assessed for internal reliability: Proactive Mild ($\alpha$ =. 92), Proactive Moderate ($\alpha$=. 86), Proactive Severe ($\alpha$ =. 92), Reactive Mild ($\alpha$ =. 82), Reactive Moderate ($\alpha$ =. 77), Reactive Severe ($\alpha$ =. 80). Composite variables for proactive discipline policy and reactive discipline policy were created by summing the mild, moderate and severe categories, demonstrating acceptable internal reliability (proactive, $\alpha$ = .90, and reactive, $\alpha$ = .86). Each school received a proactive policy score and reactive policy score. A table of variables and coding type is included in Appendix B.

**Independent variable: discipline orientation (school discipline policy)**. Discipline orientation was coded along five dimensions identified in the literature as key components of a discipline policy that incorporates School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (Sugai et al, 2000)[5]. These include: 1) behavioral expectations, 3-5 simple statements about expected/desired behavior; 2) teaching expectations, appropriate behavior is explicitly taught; 3) positive reward, an acknowledgement and/or reward for desirable behavior; 4) involvement of key stakeholders (e.g., parents and community members) in creating discipline policy; 5) an overall statement about a progressive approach to discipline. The presence of the first four components were coded (Yes =1, No = 0) codes were used to indicate the presence or absence of each of the first 4 components. The final component, progressive approach to school discipline was scored on a scale of 0 to 2, (0 = not present, 1 or 2 = present) higher scores were achieved for schools that explicitly stated that they used a progressive approach to school discipline and provided a behavior consequence map. Overall, scores for discipline orientation ranged from 0 to 6, with higher scores indicating a discipline policy more aligned with the tenets of SWPBIS. The scale demonstrated acceptable internal reliability ($\alpha$ =.78).

[5] While there are no mandates in the Rhode Island that SWPBIS be incorporated into school discipline policies and practices, nearly half of all schools in Rhode Island have been trained in the prevention and intervention model by the Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities at Rhode Island College (2014), which reports that it has trained over 100 schools in SWPBIS since 2005.

**Independent Variable: School Climate**

**School climate.** School climate was assessed using annual SurveyWorks! survey data collected by Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE). The survey was designed for students, parents, teachers and administrators to monitor the school improvement process[6]. Specific survey items were selected for inclusion based the National School Climate Center's (NSCC) five recommended domains of school climate assessment, including: teaching and learning, safety, relationships, institutional environment and (teachers only) professional climate (Thapa et al., 2012). An initial review of the SurveyWorks! 2012-2013 student surveys identified 43-items from the middle school (MS) and high school (HS) student surveys, 7-items form the elementary school (ES) student surveys that corresponded with one of the four NSCC school climate domains applicable to students. These include teaching and learning (e.g., *My teachers give me clear instructions*), safety (e.g., *I feel safe in the hallways of my school*), relationships (e.g., *My teachers seem to care about me*), institutional environment (e.g., *the desks at my school are the right size for me*). An initial review of the teacher/staff surveys yielded 56-items that corresponded to one of the five school climate domains established by NSCC. Similar to the student surveys, the teacher/staff surveys include: teaching and learning (e.g., *I give special recognition to exemplary work*), safety (e.g., *I feel safe in the hallways of my schoo*l), relationships (e.g*., students talk to me if they're*

[6] The State of Rhode Island mandates that students, parents, teachers and administrators be surveyed each year in order to monitor the school improvement process (R.I. Gen L § 16-7.1-2, 2013).

*having a problem*), institutional environment (e.g., *the school is clean and well-maintained*), with the addition of the professional climate domain pertaining only to teachers (e.g. *morale is good among the staff*).

Items were scored based on how strongly respondents agreed. Teacher (56-items), High school (43-items), middle school (41-items), and 9 (of 25) elementary school items, were scored on a 4-point scale ranging from Never True to Always True, The remaining 16 elementary school items were scored on a two-point scale (Yes/No). Internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) were calculated for all items, with strong reliability scores found within each group: Teachers ($\alpha$ =.95), high school ($\alpha$ = .96), middle school ($\alpha$ =.96), elementary school ($\alpha$ =.88).

Once reliability was determined for items within groups, a total of 9 school climate variables were created and coded (4 student, 5 teacher), for each school. Additionally, given that the elementary school items were fewer, and some items were coded on a different scale (Yes/No), scales were created for each of the 3 levels of schools (ES, MS, HS). Internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) were calculated for each of the 17 scales (Cronbach, 1951). Reliability coefficients for scales are presented in Table 3. Several items were excluded to enhance reliability; a complete list of items included in this study is presented in Appendix C.

Table 3.3. *Reliability Coefficients: School Climate by Group*

| **Group** | **α** |
|---|---|
| ***Elementary School Student Climate ( 4-items)*** | **0.78** |
| Teaching and Learning (9-items) | 0.82 |
| Relationships (8-items) | 0.78 |
| Institutional Environment (6-items) | 0.61 |
| Safety (2-items) | 0.44 |
| ***Middle School Student Climate (4-items)*** | **0.92** |
| Teaching and Learning (12-items) | 0.85 |
| Relationships (9-items) | 0.95 |
| Institutional Environment (12-items) | 0.88 |
| Safety (8-items) | 0.79 |
| ***High School Student Climate (4-items)*** | **0.92** |
| Teaching and Learning (14-items) | 0.95 |
| Relationships (8-items) | 0.85 |
| Institutional Environment (13-items) | 0.88 |
| Safety (8-items) | 0.81 |
| ***Teachers Climate (5-items)*** | **0.84** |
| Teaching and Learning (27-items) | 0.88 |
| Relationships (7-items) | 0.87 |
| Institutional Environment (9-items) | 0.85 |
| Safety (3-items) | 0.80 |
| Professional Climate (10-items) | 0.95 |

With reliability of variables established among each group, four composite scales were created by summing variables within each group, resulting in an elementary school student climate variable, a middle school student climate variable, a high school student school climate variable and a teacher climate variable. Finally, student scales (elementary, middle and high school) were summed together to create an overall student school climate composite variable. Two composite variables were used in analyses to assess school climate, the student school climate variable and the teacher school climate variable.

## Procedures

**School discipline practices.** School discipline practices, operationalized as number of in-school suspensions (ISS), out-of-school suspensions (OSS), and alternative program placements (APP) by discipline infraction per school, were publically available data collected from the RIDE InfoWorks! website between September and December 2014. RIDE organized these data by school by year. Data representing the 2012-2013 academic year were downloaded by school as individual csv files. Data were cleaned and collated in one large excel file and uploaded to SPSS for analyses.

**School discipline policy.** Websites for each school were accessed to examine an electronic copy of the school discipline policy. If the school did not provide a copy of the discipline policy, the district policy was used. When 2012-2013 policies were not available, researchers coded discipline the policy closest in

date after 2012-2013 academic year[7]. Forty-seven percent of the schools (*n* =121) had school level policies, while 53% of the schools *(n* =140), had district level policies.

Each policy was downloaded, policy in varied in length, from 6 pages to 70 pages, and in level of specificity. Once downloaded, content analyses were conducted to examine behavioral infractions and discipline consequences; policies were then coded along reactive and proactive dimensions and discipline orientation.

Coding was completed by the author and an undergraduate research assistant, who received extensive training in the areas of school discipline policies, the role and consequences of discipline in schools, as well as the definitions of all of the variables. Policies were coded in an Excel spreadsheet, which was stored in a shared DropBox folder, and accessible to both coders (the author and undergraduate research assistant). When questions during coding arose, emails were exchanged between the coders and discrepancies resolved. A total of 149 unique discipline policies (121 school level and 28 district level), representing 261 schools were reviewed. Eleven percent of the policies (*n* = 16) were crosschecked for reliability, spread throughout the coding period (November 2014 through May 2015) achieving a 91% agreement rate. The codebook complete with definitions and

[7] In 2012 the Rhode Island General Assembly passed H-7287/S-2542 making it illegal for schools to suspend (out-of-school) students for an attendance related infraction alone. Thus discipline policies dated prior to 2012-2013 were excluded for analyses.

examples, was provided to the undergraduate research assistant prior to the beginning of her training.

**School climate.** Data on school climate came from annual survey data collected by Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) via SurveyWorks!. Developed by WestEd in conjunction with RIDE, SuveyWorks! is an interactive website that acts as a virtual administrator of Rhode Island's Education Survey Suite. Rhode Island's Education Survey Suite was designed to comply with the State of Rhode Island mandate that students, parents, teachers and administrators be surveyed each year in order to monitor the school improvement process (R.I. Gen L § 16-7.1-2, 2013). For purposes of this study, data from surveys administered during the 2012-2013 school year were examined. All procedures were approved by WestEd's Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to data collection (RIDE, 2014).

Three versions of the student survey were developed for targeted age groups with developmentally appropriate language and themes: high school (127 items), middle school (108 items) and elementary school (59 items). The teacher/staff version of the survey was offered to all teachers/staff with instructional responsibilities and included 143 items. While all surveys addressed the same or similar topics (e.g., teacher practices, student engagement, teacher-student relationships), mature content (e.g., sexual activity, sexual orientation) was excluded from the elementary and middle school surveys, and all student health behaviors items were excluded from the teacher survey. The teachers/staff survey included items, not presented on the student survey that specifically addressed professional practice.

The student surveys were conducted online, during the school day and were available in English, Spanish and Portuguese. The surveys were designed to take between 10-20 minutes to complete and was administered between January10, 2013 and March 15, 2013. Similar to the student survey, the teacher/staff survey administered online between January 10, 2013 and March 15, 2013. Average completion time was 24 minutes. Statewide response rates for the 2012-2013 survey were 77.8% for high school students, with 33,301 participating; 89.3% for middle school students, with 27, 173 participating; and 92.3% for elementary school students, with 19,170 participating. The response rate for all teachers/staff (elementary, middle, high school) was 47.9%, with 7,138 participating (RIDE, 2014). All survey categories are presented are presented Appendix D.

Data were gathered from the 272 public schools that participated in the 2012-2013 SurveyWorks! Surveys. Surveys were publically available on RIDE's website from August 2013 through August/September 2014. All surveys for this study were downloaded between May 2014 and August 2014. Survey data for individual schools were downloadable exclusively in pdf format. Once surveys were downloaded, files were converted from pdf to excel using Wondershare software. After conversion surveys were cleaned and relevant data was stored in a master excel document. Of the 272 schools in the original sample, 11 were eliminated due to lack of adequate survey data. The final sample *(N* =261) included 153 elementary schools (grades 4-5), 51 middle schools (grades 6-8), 51 high schools (grades 9-12), and 6 multi-grade schools (3 elementary/middle, 2 middle/high school, 1 elementary/middle/high school).

For the purposes of this study, teacher school climate variables and student school climate variables will be included.

**Analyses.** Data were analyzed using SPSS 22.0. Measures of central tendency (mean, median, mode), variance, skewness and kurtosis were assessed for each independent and dependent variable. Skewness and kurtosis were found to be at acceptable levels ($\leq 2.0$ and $\leq 4.0$) respectively) across all school climate and discipline policy variables (Harlow, 2005). School discipline practice variables (i.e., in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, alternative program placement) exhibited significant skewness and kurtosis. These variables were not normalized, as altering the relative distances between data points would reduce the heterogeneity between schools and limit interpretability (Micceri, 1989).

Descriptive statistics of demographic variables, school climate, discipline policies and practices were examined. Correlations were assessed for associations between each demographic variable and each independent and dependent variable, in order to identify covariates.

School climate, school discipline policies and school discipline practices were correlated with each other to examine the relationships between each of the variables.

***Hypothesis 1A***. The association between school climate (predictor variables) and school discipline practices (criterion variables) was tested using hierarchical linear regression analyses. Each school discipline practice outcome type (out-of- school suspension, in-school suspension and alternative program

placement) was regressed using a two-step model: demographic variables were entered first, and school climate variables were entered second.

***Hypothesis 1B.*** Associations between historically marginalized student populations and school climate and school discipline outcomes were assessed using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with urbanicity as the grouping variable with each outcome variable.

***Hypothesis 2*.** Hierarchical linear regression was used to test the second hypothesis. The relationships between school discipline policies (predictor) and school discipline practices (criterion). School discipline practices (out-of- school suspension, in-school suspension and alternative program placement) were regressed using two-step model: demographic variables were entered first, and the school discipline policies variables entered second.

***Hypotheses 3*.** The association between school climate variables (predictor) and school discipline policies (criterion) were assessed using hierarchical linear regression to test the third hypothesis. School discipline policies were regressed using a two-step model: demographic variables were entered first, and school climate measures entered second.

***Hypotheses* 4A & 4B.** Hierarchical linear regression was used to examine the relationship among school discipline practices (criterion), school climate (predictor), school discipline policies (moderator), and six interaction variables 1) ZProactive* ZTeacher Climate, 2) ZReactive*ZTeacher Climate, 3) ZProactive *ZStudent Climate, 4) ZReactive* ZStudent Climate), 5) ZDiscipline Orientation *ZTeacher Climate, 6) ZDiscipline Orientation *ZStudent Climate). School

discipline practices were regressed using a three-step model with demographic variables entered first, school climate variables and school discipline policies entered second and the interaction variables was entered third. All variables were continuous. The significance level was set at $p < .05$

# CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

## Descriptive Statistics

Key demographic characteristics are presented in Table 4.1. As a whole schools were economically diverse, with 45% of the students eligible for free and reduced lunch, and racially and ethnically diverse with 65% of students identified as White, 20.6% as Hispanic, 7.7% as Black, 3.0% multiracial, 2.8% Asian, with fewer than 1% of students identifying as American Indian/Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. The student to teacher ratio averaged 1 teacher to 10 students. Furthermore, aggregated data identified a near even split between schools that used district level school discipline policies ($n$ = 140) and schools that used school-level discipline policies *(*$n$ = 121).

When schools were examined by urbanicity (i.e., proximity to urban location) differences in demographic characteristics emerged. Suburban school student populations were primarily White (88.8%), with about one quarter qualifying for free and reduced lunch, and lower teacher to student ratios (1 teacher to 9.6 students). In contrast, the majority of students educated in urban schools were students of color, with 52.0% identified as Hispanic, 18.7% as Black, and the majority low-income (80.8% eligible for f/r lunch). Furthermore, the student to teacher ratio was one teacher to every 11.6 students. In addition, suburban schools were more likely to have their own discipline policy, while urban schools were more likely to have district level discipline policies.

Table 4.1. S*chool Characteristics by Geographic Location*

| | **Full Sample** | **Suburban** | **Urban Ring** | **Urban** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *N* = 261 | *n* = 109 | *n* = 80 | *n* = 72 |
| **Student Race/Ethnicity (%)** | | | | |
| White | 65.00 | 88.80 | 71.60 | 20.70 |
| Black | 7.70 | 1.70 | 6.30 | 18.70 |
| Hispanic | 20.60 | 5.10 | 14.00 | 52.00 |
| Multiracial | 3.00 | 2.20 | 3.60 | 3.80 |
| Asian | 2.80 | 1.50 | 3.70 | 3.80 |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | 0.60 | 0.50 | 0.60 | 0.80 |
| Pacific Islander | 0.20 | 0.10 | 0.20 | 0.20 |
| **School Discipline Policy Type (#)** | | | | |
| Individual School Policy | 121 | 81 | 30 | 8 |
| District Policy for School | 140 | 28 | 30 | 64 |
| **Total # of Students Enrolled** | 132,858 | 54,498 | 36,112 | 42,148 |
| **Students with IEP's (%)** | 14.32 | 8.00 | 15.07 | 16.06 |
| **Free/Reduced Lunch (%)** | 45.10 | 23.40 | 43.40 | 80.80 |
| **Teacher to Student Ratio** | 01:10.2 | 01:09.6 | 01:09.7 | 01:11.6 |

*Note.* Percentage is calculated as # of students in group/total student enrolled; School District Policy type refers whether the policy was written/assembled by the school district or an individual school.

**School discipline practices**. Descriptive data for school discipline practices are presented in Table 4.2. Schools reported a similar number of incidents of out-of-school suspensions (OSS) and in-school suspensions (ISS), with fewer

alternative program placements (APP). Despite similar mean scores for ISS (*M* = 60.33) and OSS (*M* = 60.38), the Standard Deviation (*SD* = 2 31.92) and Range (1-2655) for ISS were double and triple, respectively, that of OSS (*SD* = 109.42; Range 1 -727), indicating significantly more variability in the use of ISS between schools. Schools used alternative program placements (APP) as a discipline practice infrequently, with a total 78 instances reported for the 2012-2013 academic year, and subsequently low measures of central tendency (*M* = 0.3, *SD* = 1.52).

Descriptive data of the five most frequently occurring offenses by exclusionary discipline consequence identified differences in the frequency and use of discipline consequences. As a whole OSS was used more frequently for more disruptive behavioral infractions (i.e., assault fighting), while ISS was used more frequently for attendance violations, though there was noticeable overlap (i.e., disorderly conduct, insubordination/disrespect). Alternative program placement was rarely used. However, when it was employed, it tended to be for severe behavioral violations (e.g., threat intimidation, weapons possession). Data are presented in Table 4.2. A complete list of discipline consequences by frequency of behavioral infraction is included in Appendix D. OSS, ISS and APP composite data (i.e., total incidents) were used to test hypotheses.

Table 4.2. *Descriptive Statistics: School Discipline Practices by High Frequency Offenses and Exclusion Type*

| | Total Incidents | *M* | *SD* | Range |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Out-of-School Suspension** | **15941** | **60.38** | **109.42** | **0-727** |
| Insubordination Disrespect | 5133 | 19.67 | 53.88 | 0-618 |
| Disorderly Conduct | 3151 | 12.07 | 37.12 | 0-384 |
| Fighting | 2028 | 7.77 | 15.96 | 0-136 |
| Assault Student | 966 | 3.7 | 6.44 | 0-36 |
| Threat Intimidation | 915 | 3.51 | 6.77 | 0-63 |
| **In-School Suspension** | **15745** | **60.33** | **231.92** | **0-2655** |
| Cut Skipped Class | 3851 | 14.75 | 105.21 | 0-1563 |
| Insubordination Disrespect | 3495 | 13.39 | 78.35 | 0-1103 |
| Cut Skipped Detention | 2275 | 8.72 | 52.88 | 0-727 |
| Disorderly Conduct | 2153 | 8.25 | 38 | 0-358 |
| Left School Grounds | 926 | 3.55 | 17.87 | 0-214 |
| **Alternative Program Placement** | **78** | **0.3** | **1.52** | **0-17** |
| Threat Intimidation | 16 | 0.06 | 0.39 | 0-4 |
| Weapon Possession | 16 | 0.06 | 0.44 | 0-5 |
| Disorderly Conduct | 10 | 0.04 | 0.29 | 0-3 |
| Insubordination Disrespect | 7 | 0.03 | 0.33 | 0-5 |
| Assault Student | 4 | 0.02 | 0.15 | 0-2 |

**Discipline practice by race/ethnicity**. A total of 115 schools provided data that included aggregated school discipline practices (OSS, ISS, and APP combined) by race and ethnicity (Figure 4.1). These data identified differences in the rate of exclusionary discipline practices between the two groups: Non-Hispanic White and racial/ethnic minority students. Data presented in Figure 4.1, includes the rate at which student groups were disciplined based their proportion enrolled in the school population (% enrolled/% disciplined). Racial and ethnic minority students were excluded at higher rates than Non-Hispanic White students across all regions. However, differences in rates of exclusion were particularly pronounced in suburban schools, such that minority student were 1.7 times more likely to be excluded (i.e., OSS, ISS, APP) than would be expected based on their rates of enrollment. White students were less likely to be excluded (.93) than would be expected based on their rates of enrollment. Descriptive statistics by urbanicity by group are provided in Table 4.3.[8]

[8] These data were included in descriptive analyses as they enhanced understanding of findings. They were not, however, included in later analyses as they were beyond the scope of primary hypotheses.

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Figure 4.1, *Overrepresentation of Racial/Ethnic Minority Students in Rates of Exclusionary Discipline by Geographic Region.*

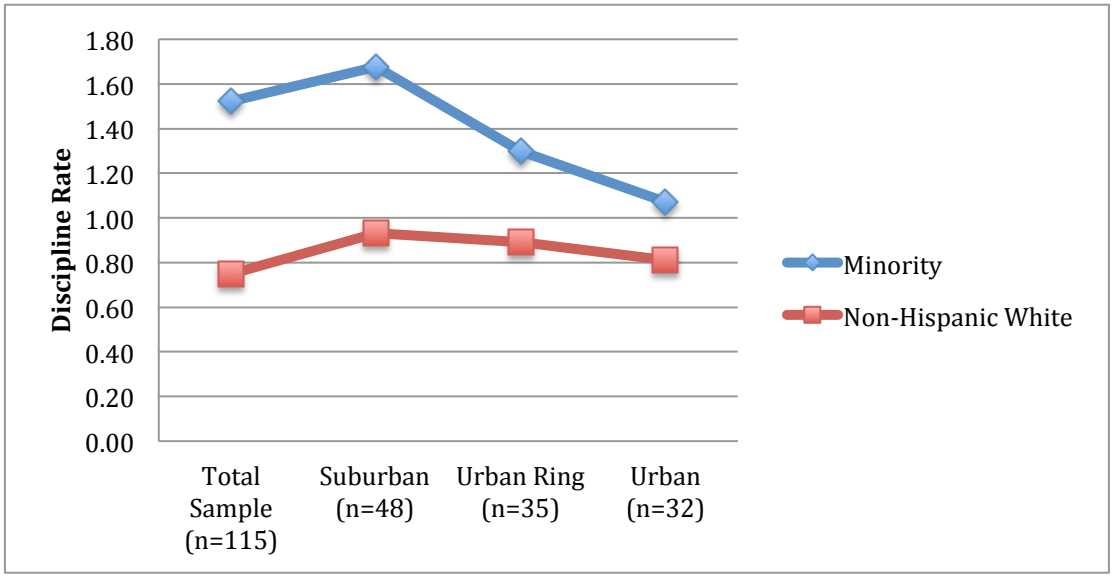

Table 4.3. De*scriptive Statistics: Discipline practices by racial/ethnic grou*p

| | Total Incidents | *M* | *SD* | Range | Total enrollment | Discipline Incidents |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Full Sample (n =115)*** | | | | | | |
| Racial/Ethnic Minority | 14903 | 129.59 | 265.9 | 1-1562 | 33 | 50.26 |
| Non-Hispanic White | 14708 | 127.9 | 210.86 | 1-1243 | 66.24 | 49.61 |
| ***Suburban (n = 48)*** | | | | | | |
| Racial/Ethnic Minority | 1428 | 29.78 | 45.52 | 1-233 | 10.56 | 17.71 |
| Non-Hispanic White | 6597 | 137.44 | 180.75 | 1-833 | 87.93 | 81.81 |
| ***Urban Ring (n = 35)*** | | | | | | |
| Racial/Ethnic Minority | 2761 | 78.89 | 150.3 | 1-805 | 26.44 | 34.32 |
| Non-Hispanic White | 5284 | 150.97 | 215.27 | 1-814 | 73.56 | 65.68 |
| ***Urban (n = 32)*** | | | | | | |
| Racial/Ethnic Minority | 10714 | 334.81 | 412.63 | 1-1561 | 73.83 | 79.12 |
| Non-Hispanic White | 2827 | 88.34 | 246.53 | 1-1243 | 25.7 | 20.88 |

Note: Total enrolment =# of racial-ethnic group/total student enrolled; Discipline incidents = racial-ethnic group disciplined//# of disciplined students

**School discipline policy.** School Discipline policy data are presented in Table 4.4. Schools generally endorsed more reactive consequences ($M$ = 72.92, $SD$ = 48.25) in their discipline policies than proactive ($M$ = 53.64, $SD$ = 54.13), though measures of central tendency, particularly the Standard Deviation, suggested variation across school policies. Descriptive statistics indicated that school discipline policies generally listed more consequences for more severe behavioral infractions as evidenced by the relatively higher means for both proactive ($M$ = 23.55, $SD$ = 25.59) and reactive ($M$ = 35.75, $SD$ = 23.61) consequences for severe infractions. Discipline orientation, the composite of 5 SWPBIS related indicators, was relatively low across schools ($M$ = 2.18, $SD$ = 1.92). A review of the mean scores revealed that most schools endorsed some of the tenets of SWPBIS, though few endorsed all. Composite scores (proactive discipline policy, reactive discipline policy and discipline orientation) were used to test hypotheses.

*Table 4.4. Descriptive Statistics: School Discipline Policy*

| | N | *M* | *SD* | Range |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Proactive Discipline Policy | 261 | 53.64 | 54.13 | 0-184 |
| Mild | 261 | 19.96 | 20.92 | 0-81 |
| Moderate | 261 | 10.13 | 9.07 | 0-37 |
| Severe | 261 | 23.55 | 25.59 | 0-78 |
| Reactive Discipline Policy | 261 | 72.92 | 48.25 | 0-188 |
| Mild | 261 | 23.44 | 18.84 | 0-81 |
| Moderate | 261 | 13.73 | 9.34 | 0-36 |
| Severe | 261 | 35.75 | 23.61 | 0-96 |
| Discipline Orientation | 261 | 2.18 | 1.92 | 0-6 |
| Behavioral Expectations | 261 | 0.44 | 0.50 | 0-1 |
| Teaching Expectations | 261 | 0.27 | 0.45 | 0-1 |
| Progressive | 261 | 0.81 | 0.67 | 0-2 |
| Positive Reward | 261 | 0.34 | 0.47 | 0-1 |
| Stakeholder Involvement | 261 | 0.25 | 0.44 | 0-1 |

**School climate**. Overall, teacher (*M* =14.99, S*D* = 0.97) and student ratings of school climate (*M* =12.13, *SD* = 0.83) were relatively high (Table 4.5). Mean scores for school climate by student grade group were inversely related to grade/age level, such that elementary school students had the highest ratings of school climate (*M* =12.13, *SD* = 0.83) with relatively lower mean scores for older groups.

Composite scores (teacher school climate, student school climate) were used to test hypotheses.

Table 4.5. *Descriptive Statistics: School Climate*

| | *N* | *M* | *SD* | Range | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Potential | Actual |
| School Climate-Student (composite) | 261 | 12.13 | 0.83 | 4-16 | 9.97-13.52 |
| Elementary school climate | 153 | 12.68 | 0.11 | 4-16 | 10.95-13.52 |
| Middle school climate | 51 | 11.61 | 0.51 | 4-16 | 10.18-12.81 |
| High school climate | 51 | 11.02 | 0.53 | 4-16 | 9.97-12.99 |
| School Climate-Teacher (composite) | 226 | 14.99 | 0.97 | 4-20 | 11.82-17.07 |

*Note*: Multi-grade schools were not included in this breakout data, but were included in the total sample.

**Associations between Independent, Dependent, and Demographic Variables**

**School climate and demographic variables.** Pearson correlations were conducted to identify associations between school climate and continuous demographic variables. Both teacher and student ratings of school climate were related to school size, race/ethnicity, disability and income. More specifically, when schools size was smaller, income was higher and fewer students of color attended, teacher and student ratings of school climate tended to higher. Notably, school climate ratings by students and teachers were positively associated with the number of White students attending, such that schools with greater proportions of White students tended to have higher ratings of school climate (Table 4.6).

Table 4.6. *Pearson Product Moment Correlations: School Climate and Demographic Variables*

| Demographic Variables | **School Climate** | |
|---|---|---|
| | Student | Teacher |
| Students Enrolled (#) | -.660** | -.530** |
| Free/Reduced Lunch | -.225** | -.287** |
| Special Education (IEP) | -.217** | -.205** |
| Teacher to Student Ratio | -0.094 | -.291** |
| Asian | 0.07 | -0.007 |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | 0.059 | 0.036 |
| Black | -0.08 | -.149* |
| Multiracial | 0.12 | 0.003 |
| Hispanic | -.165** | -.243** |
| Pacific Islander | -0.011 | -0.013 |
| White | .306** | .276** |

*Note*. *N=261*; all variables are calculated as percentages unless otherwise noted (e.g., teacher to student ratio). Percentages were calculated by # of students in group/total students enrolled; *$p$ <.05, ** $p$ <.01.

A series of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were conducted to identify associations between school climate and the categorical demographic variables, student grade groups and school policy type. The one-way ANOVA demonstrated the effect of student group (ES, MS, HS) was significant for teacher ($F$ (2, *225*) = 28.95, $p$ <. 01) and student ($F$ (2, 261) = 286.89, $p$ <. 01) school climate ratings. Both teacher and student school climate ratings were inversely associated with student grade groups, such that elementary schools were associated with the highest rating of school climate by teacher and students. A One-Way ANOVA

demonstrated no relationship between the between school climate and school policy type (i.e., individual school policy or district policy).

**School discipline policies and demographic variables.** Pearson correlations were conducted to identify associations between school discipline policies (i.e., reactive, proactive and discipline orientation) and continuous demographic variables (Table 4.7). Proactive and reactive school discipline policies were associated with continuous demographic variables. More specifically, more proactive and more reactive school discipline policies were associated with schools with larger student populations, higher rates of students enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program, more students receiving special education services, and more students of color. Proactive, reactive and the discipline orientation variables were positively associated with student to teacher ratio, such that higher ratios of teachers to students were associated with higher scores on all discipline policy variables. Notably, all school discipline policy variables were inversely related to percentage of White students enrolled, such that fewer White students in the student population were associated with more proactive and more reactive school discipline policies and higher scores on discipline orientation. Thus schools with higher proportions of students from historically marginalized populations were more likely to have more school discipline polices that included more consequences overall, both proactive and reactive.

Table 4.7. *Pearson Product Moment Correlations, School Discipline Policies and Demographic Variables*

| | School Discipline Policies | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Demographic Variables | Proactive | Reactive | Discipline Orientation |
| Students Enrolled (#) | .225** | .183** | 0.003 |
| Free/Reduced Lunch | .517** | .410** | 0.042 |
| Special Education (IEP) | .166** | .132* | 0.076 |
| Teacher to Student Ratio | .323** | .257** | .163** |
| Asian | .187** | 0.039 | 0.065 |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | .151* | 0.099 | 0.009 |
| Black | .314** | .334** | -0.064 |
| Multiracial | 0.049 | .173** | -0.081 |
| Hispanic | .525** | .338** | 0.089 |
| Pacific Islander | -0.082 | -0.078 | -0.023 |
| White | -.497** | -.359** | -.122* |

*Note*. *N=261*; all variables are calculated as percentages unless otherwise noted (e.g., teacher to student ratio). Percentages were calculated by # of students in group/total students enrolled.
*$p$ <.05, ** $p$ <.01.

A series of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were conducted to identify associations between discipline policies (proactive, reactive, discipline orientation) and the categorical demographic variables, student grade groups and school policy type. The one-way ANOVA demonstrated the effect of student group (ES, MS, HS) was significant for proactive discipline policies ($F(2, 261) = 4.875$, $p <. 01$), such that proactive policies were associated with higher student grade groups, with high schools having the most proactive policies. District school policy was

significantly associated with proactive ($F(1, 260) = 26.14$, $p < .01$) and reactive ($F(1, 260) = 42.33$, $p < .01$) school discipline policies. More specifically, schools with more proactive and more reactive school discipline policies were more likely to use district created discipline policies than schools with less proactive and less reactive school discipline policies.

**School discipline practices and demographic variables.** Pearson correlations were conducted to identify associations between **sc**hool discipline practices (OSS, ISS, and APP) and continuous demographic variables (Table 4.8). School discipline practices were positively associated with school size (students enrolled), higher poverty rates, larger percentages of students receiving special education services, and higher rates of Hispanic students enrolled. Furthermore, more OSS and APP were associated with lower proportions of Whites enrolled in school. These findings were consistent with hypotheses.

Table 4.8. *Pearson Product Moment Correlations, School Discipline Practices and Demographic Variables*.

| Demographic Variables | OSS | ISS | APP |
|---|---|---|---|
| #Students Enrolled | .613** | .551** | .189** |
| Free/Reduced Lunch | .269** | 0.049 | .225** |
| Special Education (IEP) | .209** | .149* | 0.106 |
| Teacher to Student Ratio | .188** | .172** | 0.065 |
| Asian | -0.004 | -0.068 | -0.001 |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | -0.003 | -0.086 | 0.001 |
| Black | 0.116 | -0.070 | 0.091 |
| Multiracial | -0.069 | -0.054 | -0.061 |
| Hispanic | .238** | 0.022 | .146* |
| Pacific Islander | -0.054 | -0.028 | -0.036 |
| White | -.286** | -0.053 | -.160** |

*Note.* Percentages were calculated by # of students in group/total students enrolled; OSS = Out-of-School Suspension; ISS=In-school Suspension; APP= Alternative Program Placement;
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

A series of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were conducted to identify associations between school discipline practices (OSS, ISS, APP) and the categorical demographic variables, student grade groups and school policy type. The one-way ANOVA demonstrated the effect of student group (ES, MS, HS) was significant for OSS ($F$ (2,*261*) = 45.07, $p < .01$), ISS ($F$ (2, 258) = 16.06 $p < .01$) and APP ($F$(2, 258) = 7.09, $p < .01$), such that all school discipline policies (OSS, ISS, APP) were associated with higher student groups, with high schools having the most incidents of OSS, ISS, APP. A One-Way ANOVA demonstrated no

relationship between the between school climate and school policy type (i.e., individual school policy or district policy).

**School discipline Policy, school discipline practices and school climate**. Correlations between school climate, school discipline policies, and school discipline practices are presented in Table 4.9. As expected school climate variables were strongly correlated with each other ($r(224) = .635$ $p < .01$). Both student and teacher school climate ratings were inversely associated with reactive school discipline policies, such that more reactive school discipline policies were associated with lower ratings of school climate by teachers and students. Contrary to expectations school climate variables were also inversely correlated with proactive school discipline policies, such that more proactive school discipline polices were associated with lower ratings of school climate by teachers ($r(224) = -.227$, $p < .01$) and students. ($r(259) = -.311$, $p < .01$). Furthermore, both teacher and student school climate ratings were inversely correlated with discipline practices, such that schools with lower school climate ratings tended to have higher incidents of out-of-school suspensions, in-school suspensions, and alternative program placements.

Proactive school discipline policies and reactive school discipline policies correlated with each other ($r(259) = .668$, $p < .01$). This is contrary to expectations and may suggest that schools with more proactive and reactive discipline had more consequences overall. Proactive and reactive discipline policies were positively correlated with out-of-school suspensions, such that schools with more proactive policies ($r(259) = .291$, $p < .01$) and more reactive policies ($r(259) = .175$ $p < .01$)

were more likely to report more incidents of OSS, and schools with fewer proactive and reactive consequences were less likely. Finally, proactive school discipline policies were correlated with discipline orientation, such that when proactive discipline policies were higher in schools, discipline orientation (PBIS composite variable) was also higher ($r(259) = .135$, $p < .05$).

Out-of-school suspensions were positively associated with both in-school suspensions and alternative-program placements, such that schools with higher incidents of OSS, were also more likely to report higher incidents of ISS and APP. Similarly, in-school suspension and alternative program placements were positively correlated, such that schools with higher incidents of in-school suspension were more likely to have higher incidents of alternative program placements. Pearson product moment correlations for the independent and dependent variables are presented in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9. *Pearson Product Moment Correlations: School Climate, School Discipline Policies and School Discipline Practices*

| | School Climate | | Discipline Policies | | | Discipline Practices | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Student | Teacher | Proactive | Reactive | Discipline Orientation | OSS | ISS |
| School Climate Teacher | .635** | | | | | | |
| Proactive | -.311** | -.227** | | | | | |
| Reactive | -.203** | -.223** | .668** | | | | |
| Discipline Orientation | -0.002 | 0.074 | .135* | 0.076 | | | |
| OSS[1] | -.626** | -.466** | .291** | .175** | 0.03 | | |
| ISS[2] | -.392** | -.309** | 0.055 | 0.064 | -0.064 | .414** | |
| APP[3] | -.275** | -.162* | .307** | 0.092 | -0.016 | .369** | .141* |

Note: *N*=261for discipline policy and a discipline practice and student school climate, *n* = 226 for teacher climate variable. [1] Out-of-School Suspension, [2] In-school Suspension, [3] Alternative Program Placement
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

## Research Questions and Hypotheses

**Research Question 1.** Is there a relationship between school climate and school discipline practices?

Hypothesis 1A: It was hypothesized that a more positive school climate would be associated with fewer suspensions (in-school/out-of-school) and alternative program placements.

In order to test hypothesis 1A, each school discipline practice (criterion): OSS, ISS, APP, was regressed on school climate (predictor) after controlling for demographic variables using a 2-step model. All demographic variables that met significance in the covariate analyses were entered in Step 1. Teacher and student school climate variables were added as a block in Step 2.

In Step 1 several demographic variables were significantly associated with increased use of out-of school suspensions, in-school suspensions and alternative program placements. Specifically, greater numbers of students enrolled, greater percentages of Hispanic students, and higher student groups (e.g., HS, MS) were significantly related to out-of-school suspensions (Table 4.10). Furthermore, greater numbers of students enrolled were associated with the use of in-school suspensions, as were larger percentages of White students in schools (Table 4.11). Demographic variables associated with alternative program placements included greater percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch and lower percentages of multiracial students (4.12).

School climate variables (student and teacher) were entered in the model next (Step 2) regressed on out-of-school suspensions, in-school suspensions, and

alternative program placements, respectively. After school climate variables were entered, all models remained significant. Furthermore, most demographic variables remained significant in Step-2 with exception of student group, which was no longer associated with out-of-school suspensions. Only student school climate was significantly related to OSS, such that a more negative students ratings of school climate school climate was associated with higher rates of out-of-school suspensions. Neither student nor teacher climate met predictive criterion for in-school suspensions alternative program placement. Thus, hypothesis 1A was partially supported by these results. Results are presented in Tables 4.10, 4.11, 4.12.

Table 4.10. *Hierarchical Linear Regression: Out-of-School Suspensions on School Climate*

| Variables (Referent) | Out-of-school Suspensions | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Step 1 | | | Step 2 | |
| | b | SE | β | b | SE | β |
| Urbanicity | 4.971 | 14.293 | 0.038 | 12.063 | 14.038 | 0.092 |
| School or District Policy | 10.987 | 14.919 | 0.050 | 5.798 | 14.584 | 0.026 |
| # of students enrolled | 0.182 | 0.027 | 0.514** | 0.145 | 0.029 | 0.408** |
| Free/reduced Lunch | 35.572 | 52.029 | 0.089 | -16.849 | 52.634 | -0.042 |
| Teacher to Students (Rate) | -6.368 | 3.649 | -0.120 | -5.771 | 3.633 | -0.108 |
| Students with IEP's | 122.621 | 126.022 | 0.055 | 76.159 | 123.569 | 0.034 |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | 577.984 | 657.113 | 0.049 | 521.234 | 640.899 | 0.044 |
| Asian | -108.550 | 166.383 | -0.036 | -118.348 | 161.915 | -0.040 |
| Black | -16.157 | 71.182 | -0.018 | -25.078 | 69.303 | -0.028 |
| Hispanic | 98.702 | 49.555 | 0.210* | 100.776 | 48.221 | 0.214* |
| Multiracial | -149.734 | 296.325 | -0.034 | -160.090 | 288.454 | -0.036 |
| White | 8.039 | 35.024 | 0.023 | 1.938 | 34.167 | 0.006 |
| Student Grade Groups (ES, MS, HS) | 21.361 | 9.958 | 0.158* | -14.697 | 13.813 | -0.109 |
| *Predictor Variables* | | | | | | |
| Student School Climate | | | | -40.902 | 12.381 | -0.371** |
| Teacher School Climate | | | | -2.995 | 7.547 | -0.027 |
| *F* | 14.414** | | | 14.125** | | |
| *(df)* | (10, 215) | | | (12, 213) | | |
| *Adjusted* $R^2$ | 0.437 | | | 0.467 | | |

**$p$ <.01; * $p$<.05

Table 4.11. *Hierarchical Linear Regression: In-School Suspensions Regressed on School Climate*

| Variables (Referent) | In-school Suspensions | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Step 1 | | | Step 2 | | |
| | b | SE | β | b | SE | β |
| Urbanicity | 59.394 | 36.400 | .201 | 65.123 | 36.820 | .220 |
| School or District Policy | 12.727 | 37.566 | .026 | 8.852 | 37.801 | .018 |
| # of students enrolled | .470 | .068 | .590** | .444 | .073 | .556** |
| Free/reduced Lunch | 4.544 | 131.372 | .005 | -33.360 | 136.898 | -.037 |
| Teacher to Students (Rate) | -3.428 | 9.104 | -.028 | -2.004 | 9.342 | -.017 |
| Students with IEP's | 419.559 | 314.856 | .084 | 395.174 | 317.538 | .079 |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | -717.400 | 1645.088 | -.027 | -820.087 | 1651.440 | -.031 |
| Asian | -137.900 | 415.339 | -.020 | -141.516 | 415.952 | -.021 |
| Black | -285.408 | 177.335 | -.142 | -292.399 | 177.663 | -.145 |
| Hispanic | 87.986 | 123.658 | .083 | 88.968 | 123.827 | .084 |
| Multiracial | 997.307 | 738.783 | .099 | 998.698 | 739.936 | .099 |
| White | 196.791 | 87.398 | .253* | 194.213 | 87.732 | .250* |
| Student (ES, MS, HS) | -3.623 | 24.858 | -.012 | -33.531 | 35.414 | -.110 |
| *Predictor Variables* | | | | | | |
| Student School Climate | | | | -38.428 | 31.800 | -.155 |
| Teacher School Climate | | | | 6.924 | 19.477 | .028 |
| F | 8.849** | | | 7.748** | | |
| (df) | (13, 209) | | | (15, 207) | | |
| *Adjusted* $R^2$ | 0.315 | | | 0.313 | | |

**$p$ <.01; * $p$<.05

*4.12. Hierarchical Linear Regression: Alternative Program Placements Regressed on School Climate*

| Variables (Referent) | Alternative Program Placements | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Step 1 | | | Step 2 | | |
| | b | SE | β | b | SE | β |
| Urbanicity | -.474 | .275 | -.244 | -.456 | .279 | -.235 |
| School or District Policy | .317 | .284 | .097 | .306 | .286 | .094 |
| # of students enrolled | .000 | .001 | .073 | .000 | .001 | .060 |
| Free/reduced Lunch | 3.472 | .993 | .584** | 3.375 | 1.036 | .568** |
| Teacher to Students (Rate) | -.034 | .069 | -.043 | -.021 | .071 | -.026 |
| Students with IEP's | .291 | 2.379 | .009 | .302 | 2.403 | .009 |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | .878 | 12.430 | .005 | .057 | 12.496 | .000 |
| Asian | -1.498 | 3.138 | -.034 | -1.484 | 3.147 | -.034 |
| Black | .719 | 1.340 | .054 | .692 | 1.344 | .052 |
| Hispanic | -.431 | .934 | -.062 | -.432 | .937 | -.062 |
| Multiracial | -13.168 | 5.582 | -.200* | -13.091 | 5.599 | -.199* |
| White | .463 | .660 | .091 | .474 | .664 | .093 |
| Student Grade Groups (ES, MS, HS) | .325 | .188 | .163 | .203 | .268 | .101 |
| *Predictor Variables* | | | | | | |
| Student school Climate | | | | -.194 | .241 | -.120 |
| Teacher School Climate | | | | .107 | .147 | .066 |
| F | 2.702** | | | 2.387** | | |
| (df) | (13, 209) | | | (15, 207) | | |
| *Adjusted* $R^2$ | 0.091 | | | 0.086 | | |

**$p$ <.01; * $p$<.05

*Hypothesis 1B*. It was expected that schools that served greater proportions of students from historically marginalized populations (e.g., Black, Hispanic, low SES) would have a more negative school climate and more suspensions and alternative program placements.

An Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) was used to examine differences between groups relative to urbanicity, the proxy variable that captures much of the variation in the sample relative race/ethnicity and SES based on geographic proximity to the four core cities in Rhode Island. The one-way ANOVA demonstrated the effect of urbanicity was significant for teacher school climate ($F$ (2,*225*) = 9.330, $p$ <. 01) and student school climate ($F$ (2, 261)= 7.30, $p$ <. 01), and OSS ($F$ (2, 261) =11.938, $p$ <. 01) and APP ($F$ (2, 258) = 5.008 $p$ < .01). Post hoc analyses using the Tukey HSD criterion for significance indicated that average teacher school climate ratings were significantly lower among the urban schools ($M$=14.57, $SD$ =1.12) than the urban ring ($M$ = 15.05, $SD$ = .804) and suburban schools ($M$ =15.21, $SD$ = .899). Differences were also found among student school climate ratings, with students from urban schools having significantly lower rating of school climate ($M$ = 11.83, $SD$=. 801) than those from urban ring *(*$M$ =12.26, $SD$ = .824) and suburban schools ($M$ = 12.24, $SD$ = .818). Furthermore, average out-of-school suspensions were significantly higher among urban schools ($M$ =110.2; $SD$ = .149.87) than urban ring ($M$ = 53.19; $SD$ = 110.38) or suburban schools ($M$ = 33.49; $SD$ =5 4.13). Similar results were found within alternative program placements with urban schools having higher means ($M$=. 775, $SD$ = 1.943) than urban ring ($M$ = .075, $SD$ = .568) and suburban ($M$ =.155, $SD$ = 1.62) schools. No

significant differences were found between urban ring and suburban schools. Overall, results confirm the hypothesis, as perceptions of school climate were lower and rates of suspensions and alternative program placements were higher in urban schools.

**Research Question 2.** Is there a relationship between school discipline policies and school discipline practices?

*Hypothesis 2.* It was hypothesized that less reactive school discipline policies were expected to be associated with fewer suspensions and alternative program placements.

In order to test the second hypothesis, school discipline practices (OSS, ISS, APP) were regressed on school discipline policies: proactive, reactive and discipline orientation, after controlling for demographic variables using a 2-step model.

In Step 1 several demographic variables were associated with the increased use of out-of-school suspensions, in-school suspensions, and alternative program placements. Specifically, greater numbers of students enrolled, and higher student groups (e.g., HS, MS) were associated with the increased use of out-of-school suspensions (Table 4.13). Similarly greater numbers of students enrolled was associated with the increased use of in-school suspension, no other demographic were significantly associated with in-school suspensions (Table 4.14). Demographic variables associated with the use of alternative program placements included, greater percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch, lower percentages of multiracial students, and higher student grade groups (Table 4.15).

In Step 2, school discipline policy variables (proactive, reactive and discipline orientation) were entered as a block into the model and regressed on out-of-school suspensions, in-school suspensions, and alternative program placements, respectively. After demographic variables were controlled, all models remained significant. Furthermore, most demographic variables remained significant in Step-2, with exception of student group, which was no longer associated with alternative program placements. Proactive and reactive policies were significantly related to alternative program placement. Contrary to hypotheses, less reactive school discipline policies were associated with increased use of alternative program placements; more proactive school discipline policies were also associated with the increased use of alternative program placement. Discipline orientation was not associated with alternative program placement. Furthermore, no discipline policy variables were associated with out-of-school or in-school suspensions. The results provide partial support for hypothesis 2. Results are presented in Tables 4.13, 4.14, 4.15.

Table 4.13. *Hierarchical Linear Regression. Out-of-School Suspensions Regressed on School Discipline Policies*

| Variables (Referent) | Out-of-school Suspensions | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Step 1 | | | Step 2 | | |
| | b | SE | β | b | SE | β |
| Urbanicity | 6.240 | 12.848 | .047 | 9.303 | 12.971 | .070 |
| School or District Policy | 18.269 | 12.753 | .083 | 22.970 | 13.226 | .105 |
| # of students enrolled | .190 | .026 | .529** | .194 | .026 | .541** |
| Free/reduced Lunch | 49.681 | 44.864 | .124 | 44.151 | 45.256 | .110 |
| Teacher to Students (Rate) | -5.615 | 3.351 | -.105 | -6.204 | 3.439 | -.116 |
| Students with IEP's | 104.507 | 104.669 | .050 | 103.593 | 105.702 | .050 |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | 328.030 | 608.340 | .029 | 185.749 | 617.191 | .016 |
| Asian | -23.075 | 152.454 | -.008 | -84.066 | 155.817 | -.028 |
| Black | -8.928 | 63.026 | -.010 | 13.686 | 64.375 | .016 |
| Hispanic | 38.576 | 31.553 | .094 | 25.252 | 32.811 | .062 |
| Multiracial | -136.056 | 233.171 | -.035 | -58.286 | 237.175 | -.015 |
| White | 1.311 | 18.065 | .005 | 2.484 | 18.328 | .010 |
| Student (ES, MS, HS) | 24.815 | 9.275 | .180** | 24.682 | 9.405 | .179** |
| *Predictor Variables* | | | | | | |
| Proactive | | | | 10.416 | 8.191 | .095 |
| Reactive | | | | -13.590 | 7.435 | -.124 |
| Discipline Orientation | | | | 3.022 | 5.272 | .028 |
| *F* | 17.486** | | | 14.474** | | |
| *(df)* | (13, 250) | | | (16, 247) | | |
| *Adjusted* $R^2$ | 0.449 | | | 0.450 | | |

Table 4.14. *Hierarchical Linear Regression: In-School Suspensions Regressed on School Discipline Policies*

| Variables (Referent) | In-School Suspensions | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Step 1 | | | Step 2 | | |
| | b | SE | β | b | SE | β |
| Urbanicity | 48.245 | 31.287 | .171 | 44.038 | 31.755 | .156 |
| School or District Policy | 1.638 | 30.632 | .004 | 8.639 | 31.745 | .019 |
| # of students enrolled | .438 | .061 | .578** | .433 | .062 | .570** |
| Free/reduced Lunch | -23.951 | 108.680 | -.028 | -16.719 | 109.959 | -.020 |
| Teacher to Students (Rate) | -3.090 | 8.009 | -.027 | -.221 | 8.234 | -.002 |
| Students with IEP's | 314.469 | 250.480 | .072 | 369.987 | 253.346 | .084 |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | -608.448 | 1460.339 | -.025 | -286.069 | 1485.661 | -.012 |
| Asian | -255.793 | 364.691 | -.041 | -209.287 | 373.160 | -.033 |
| Black | -242.600 | 150.587 | -.133 | -270.807 | 154.389 | -.149 |
| Hispanic | 41.221 | 75.459 | .048 | 65.303 | 78.748 | .075 |
| Multiracial | 740.442 | 556.933 | .089 | 675.936 | 567.604 | .082 |
| White | 75.693 | 43.101 | .139 | 63.695 | 43.844 | .117 |
| Student (ES, MS, HS) | -4.080 | 22.182 | -.014 | 1.136 | 22.541 | .004 |
| *Predictor Variables* | | | | | | |
| Proactive | | | | -15.545 | 19.726 | -.067 |
| Reactive | | | | -2.913 | 17.911 | -.013 |
| Discipline Orientation | | | | -13.448 | 12.675 | -.058 |
| F | 9.655** | | | 7.987** | | |
| (df) | (13, 247) | | | (16, 244) | | |
| *Adjusted* $R^2$ | 0.302 | | | 0.301 | | |

**$p$ <.01; * $p$<.05

*4.15. Hierarchical Linear Regression: Alternative Program Placements Regressed on School Discipline Policies*

| Variables (Referent) | Alternative Program Placements | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Step 1 | | | Step 2 | | |
| | b | SE | β | b | SE | β |
| Urbanicity | -.392 | .234 | -.212 | -.232 | .230 | -.126 |
| School or District Policy | .228 | .229 | .075 | .267 | .230 | .088 |
| # of students enrolled | .000 | .000 | .082 | .000 | .000 | .089 |
| Free/reduced Lunch | 2.824 | .814 | .507** | 2.315 | .796 | .416** |
| Teacher to Students (Rate) | -.018 | .060 | -.024 | -.041 | .060 | -.055 |
| Students with IEP's | .141 | 1.876 | .005 | .000 | 1.833 | .000 |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | .641 | 10.940 | .004 | -6.476 | 10.750 | -.041 |
| Asian | -.077 | 2.732 | -.002 | -2.239 | 2.700 | -.054 |
| Black | .499 | 1.128 | .042 | 1.099 | 1.117 | .092 |
| Hispanic | -.292 | .565 | -.051 | -.950 | .570 | -.167 |
| Multiracial | -8.378 | 4.172 | -.155* | -5.135 | 4.107 | -.095 |
| White | .337 | .323 | .094 | .475 | .317 | .133 |
| Student (ES, MS, HS) | .339 | .166 | .178* | .266 | .163 | .140 |
| *Predictor Variables* | | | | | | |
| Proactive | | | | .636 | .143 | .418** |
| Reactive | | | | -.395 | .130 | -.260** |
| Discipline Orientation | | | | -.039 | .092 | -.026 |
| F | | 2.860** | | | 3.752** | |
| (df) | | (13, 247) | | | (16, 244) | |
| *Adjusted* $R^2$ | | 0.085 | | | 0.145 | |

**$p$ <.01; * $p$ <.05

**Research Question 3**. Is there a relationship between school climate and school discipline policies?

*Hypothesis 3.* It was hypothesized that a more positive school climate would be associated with less reactive school discipline policies.

In order to test the third hypothesis, school discipline policies (proactive, reactive, and discipline orientation) were regressed on school climate (student and teacher) after controlling for demographic variables using a 2-step model.

In Step 1 several demographic variables were significantly associated with school discipline policy variables (proactive discipline policies, reactive discipline policies, and discipline orientation). Specifically, more proactive school discipline policies were associated with greater percentages of American Indian/Alaskan Native, Hispanic students, and fewer percentages multiracial students. Furthermore, more proactive discipline polices were more likely to have been written by the school district (Table 4.16). Similar to proactive school discipline policies, more reactive school discipline policies were more likely to have been written by the school district. Furthermore, more reactive school discipline policies were associated with fewer percentages of Asian students (Table 4.17). Teacher to student ratio was the only demographic variable that was associated with discipline orientation such that higher teacher to student ratios were associated with higher scores on discipline orientation (i.e., policies that endorsed more tenets of SWPBIS) (Table 4.18.)

Student and teacher school climate variables were entered as a block and regressed on school discipline policies: proactive, reactive and discipline

orientation. After demographic variables were controlled, all models remained significant, and all demographic variables that were significant in Step 1, remained significant when school climate variables were entered in Step 2. No school climate variable was significantly associated with school discipline policies. Notably, the demographic variable, percentages of students with IEP's, became significant when school climate variables were regressed on alternative program placements. This may suggest that after controlling for school climate, students with IEP's are more likely to be referred to APP. As no models were significant for associations between school climate variables and school discipline policy variables, the null hypothesis could not be rejected. Results for analyses are presented in Tables 4.16, 4.17, 4.18 respectively.

Table 4.16. *Hierarchical Linear Regression: Proactive School Discipline Policies on School Climate*

| Variables (Referent) | Proactive | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Step 1 | | | Step 2 | | |
| | b | SE | β | b | SE | β |
| Urbanicity | -.217 | .137 | -.181 | -.224 | .138 | -.187 |
| School or District Policy | .473 | .143 | .235** | .479 | .144 | .237** |
| # of students enrolled | .000 | .000 | .056 | .000 | .000 | .069 |
| Free/reduced Lunch | .702 | .497 | .192 | .765 | .519 | .209 |
| Teacher to Students (Rate) | .055 | .035 | .113 | .060 | .036 | .124 |
| Students with IEP's | 1.917 | 1.204 | .094 | 2.018 | 1.217 | .099 |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | 15.174 | 6.279 | .142* | 14.902 | 6.314 | .139* |
| Asian | .312 | 1.590 | .011 | .329 | 1.595 | .012 |
| Black | -.063 | .680 | -.008 | -.060 | .683 | -.007 |
| Hispanic | 1.286 | .474 | .299** | 1.282 | .475 | .298** |
| Multiracial | -7.951 | 2.832 | -.195** | -7.881 | 2.842 | -.193** |
| White | -.305 | .335 | -.097 | -.287 | .337 | -.091 |
| Student Grade Groups (ES, MS, HS) | .144 | .095 | .117 | .156 | .136 | .127 |
| *Predictor Variables* | | | | | | |
| Student School Climate | | | | -.013 | .122 | -.013 |
| Teacher School Climate | | | | .059 | .074 | .058 |
| F | | 11.775 | | | 10.184** | |
| (df) | | (13, 212) | | | (15, 210) | |
| *Adjusted* $R^2$ | | 0.384 | | | 0.380 | |

**$p$ <.01; * $p$<.05

Table 4.17. *Hierarchical Linear Regression. Reactive Discipline Policies Regressed on School Climate*

| Variables (Referent) | Reactive Discipline Policies | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Step 1 | | | Step 2 | | |
| | b | SE | β | b | SE | β |
| Urbanicity | .048 | .148 | .040 | .028 | .149 | .024 |
| School or District Policy | .845 | .154 | .414** | .859 | .155 | .421** |
| # of students enrolled | .000 | .000 | .118 | .000 | .000 | .147 |
| Free/reduced Lunch | .247 | .538 | .066 | .379 | .560 | .102 |
| Teacher to Students (Rate) | .006 | .038 | .013 | -.001 | .039 | -.003 |
| Students with IEP's | .554 | 1.303 | .027 | .626 | 1.314 | .030 |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | .676 | 6.794 | .006 | 1.164 | 6.816 | .011 |
| Asian | -3.898 | 1.720 | -.141* | -3.879 | 1.722 | -.140* |
| Black | 1.338 | .736 | .162 | 1.369 | .737 | .165 |
| Hispanic | -.118 | .512 | -.027 | -.122 | .513 | -.028 |
| Multiracial | 1.569 | 3.064 | .038 | 1.537 | 3.068 | .037 |
| White | .003 | .362 | .001 | .007 | .363 | .002 |
| Student (ES, MS, HS) | .156 | .103 | .125 | .279 | .147 | .223 |
| *Predictor Variables* | | | | | | |
| Student School Climate | | | | .167 | .132 | .163 |
| Teacher School Climate | | | | -.048 | .080 | -.047 |
| *F* | | 8.318 | | | 7.304 | |
| *(df)* | | (13, 212) | | | (15, 210) | |
| *Adjusted* $R^2$ | | 0.297 | | | 0.296 | |

**$p$ <.01; * $p$<.05

Table 4.18. *Hierarchical Linear Regression: Discipline Orientation Regressed on School Climate*

| Variables (Referent) | Discipline Orientation | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Step 1 | | | Step 2 | | |
| | b | SE | β | b | SE | β |
| Urbanicity | .010 | .166 | .009 | -.002 | .168 | -.002 |
| School or District Policy | .241 | .174 | .122 | .251 | .175 | .127 |
| # of students enrolled | .000 | .000 | -.151 | .000 | .000 | -.126 |
| Free/reduced Lunch | -.148 | .606 | -.041 | -.029 | .630 | -.008 |
| Teacher to Students (Rate) | .113 | .042 | .238** | .124 | .043 | .260** |
| Students with IEP's | 2.798 | 1.467 | .140 | 2.994 | 1.479 | .150* |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | 6.565 | 7.650 | .063 | 6.018 | 7.673 | .057 |
| Asian | 1.714 | 1.937 | .064 | 1.748 | 1.938 | .065 |
| Black | -1.303 | .829 | -.163 | -1.299 | .830 | -.162 |
| Hispanic | -.647 | .577 | -.154 | -.655 | .577 | -.156 |
| Multiracial | -5.821 | 3.450 | -.146 | -5.682 | 3.453 | -.142 |
| White | -.265 | .408 | -.086 | -.229 | .409 | -.074 |
| Student Grade Groups (ES, MS, HS) | .025 | .116 | .021 | .045 | .165 | .038 |
| *Predictor Variables* | | | | | | |
| Student School Climate | | | | -.031 | .148 | -.031 |
| Teacher School Climate | | | | .116 | .090 | .118 |
| *F* | | 1.825 | | | 1.696 | |
| *(df)* | | (13, 212) | | | (15, 210) | |
| *Adjusted* $R^2$ | | 0.045 | | | 0.044 | |

**$p$ <.01; * $p$<.05

**Research Question 4**. Do school discipline policies moderate the relationship between school climate and school discipline practices?

*Hypothesis 4*A. More proactive school discipline policies were expected to change the nature of the relationship between a more positive school climate and school suspension and alternative program placements, resulting in fewer suspensions and alternative program placements.

*Hypothesis 4B*. More reactive school discipline policies were expected to change the nature of the relationship between a more positive school climate and school suspensions and alternative program placements, resulting in more suspension and alternative program placements.

Six interaction variables were created to test whether school discipline policies moderated that relationship between school climate and school discipline practices. The interaction variables included 1) ZProactive* ZTeacher Climate, 2) ZReactive*ZTeacher Climate, 3) ZProactive *ZStudent Climate, 4) ZReactive* ZStudent Climate), 5) ZDiscipline Orientation *ZTeacher Climate, 6) ZDiscipline Orientation *ZStudent Climate. It should be noted that models were tested as proposed and hypothesized, however no significant relationship was found between school discipline policies and school climate variables in previous regressions. Thus, results relative to interaction effects should be interpreted with caution.

A 3-Step model was used test hypotheses 4A and 4B. After controlling for demographic variables in Step 1, all models (OSS, ISS and APP) remained significant with the addition of the school discipline policy variables (proactive, reactive, and discipline orientation) and school climate variables (student and

teacher) in Step 2[9], and interaction variables in Step 3. When the interaction variables were entered into the model for out-of-school suspensions, (Zproactive *ZStudentClimate) was significantly associated with out-of school suspensions, such when student ratings of school climate were higher and proactive discipline policies were greater, there were fewer out–of-school suspensions. Figure 5.2 illustrates the interaction between school climate and proactive school discipline policies and the associated effect on out-of-school suspensions when school climate is higher (+1 SD) and lower (-1 SD). No other interaction variables were associated with of out-of-school suspension (Table 4.19).

No interaction variables were significantly associated with the use of in-school suspensions when entered into the model in Step-3 (Table 4.20).

When interactions variables were entered into model for alternative program placements (Step 3), two interaction variables were found to be significantly associated with alternative program placements. More specifically, the interaction between student perceptions of school climate and proactive discipline policies (ZStudentClimate*ZProactive), were associated with the less frequent use of alternative program placements by schools, such that when student ratings of school climate were higher and proactive school discipline policies were greater, there were fewer alternative program placements. Figure 5.3 illustrates the interaction between school climate and proactive discipline polices and the associated effect on

[9] Significant associations among demographic variables and independent and dependent variables, Steps 1 & 2, were previously described when hypotheses 1A and 2 were tested.

alternative program placements when school climate is higher (+1 SD) and lower (-1 SD). Notably, contrary to hypotheses, the interaction model suggests that when school climate is lower and proactive discipline policies are fewer, alternative program placements were used less frequently. The interaction variable (ZStudentClimate*ZReactive) was also found to be associated with alternative program placements, such that when school climate was higher and reactive school discipline policies were fewer, alternative program placements were used less frequently. Figure 5.4 illustrates the interaction between school climate and reactive discipline polices and the associated effect on the use alternative program placements when school climate is higher (+1 SD) and lower (-1 SD). Notably, contrary to hypotheses, the interaction model suggests that when school climate is lower and reactive school discipline policies are higher, alternative program placements were used less frequently (Table 4.21). Results partially confirmed hypotheses.

Figure 4.2. *Interaction Effects of Student Perceptions of School Climate and Proactive School Discipline Polices on Out-of-School Suspensions When School Climate is Higher and Lower.*

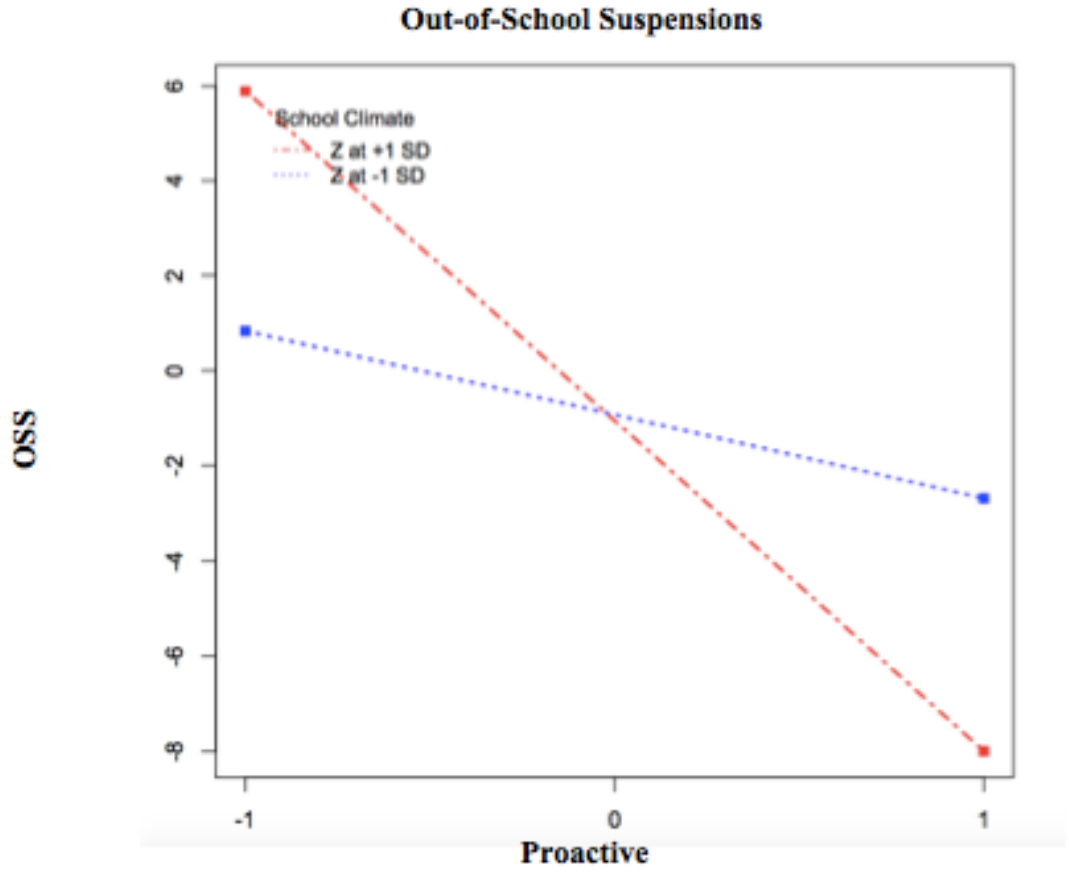

Table 4.19. *Hierarchical Linear Regression. Moderated Regression Analyses Examining the Relationship Between OSS and School Climate with Discipline Policies*

| Variables (Referent) | Out-of-school Suspensions | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Step 1 | | | Step 2 | | | Step 3 | | |
| | b | SE | β | b | SE | β | b | SE | β |
| Urbanicity | 4.971 | 14.293 | 0.038 | 13.633 | 14.244 | .104 | 10.644 | 14.163 | .081 |
| School or District Policy | 10.987 | 14.919 | 0.050 | 9.986 | 15.706 | .045 | 5.781 | 15.445 | .026 |
| # of students enrolled | 0.182 | 0.027 | 0.514** | .150 | .029 | .423** | .158 | .028 | .446** |
| Free/reduced Lunch | 35.572 | 52.029 | 0.089 | -17.509 | 53.057 | -.044 | -6.888 | 52.553 | -.017 |
| Teacher to Students (Rate) | -6.368 | 3.649 | -0.120 | -6.730 | 3.757 | -.126 | -6.163 | 3.706 | -.116 |
| Students with IEP's | 122.621 | 126.022 | 0.055 | 55.967 | 126.108 | .025 | 53.803 | 124.722 | .024 |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | 577.984 | 657.113 | 0.049 | 417.329 | 656.553 | .036 | 345.632 | 647.818 | .029 |
| Asian | -108.550 | 166.383 | -0.036 | -165.568 | 166.379 | -.055 | -136.918 | 166.418 | -.046 |
| Black | -16.157 | 71.182 | -0.018 | -5.425 | 70.947 | -.006 | 18.249 | 71.033 | .020 |
| Hispanic | 98.702 | 49.555 | 0.210* | 95.414 | 49.993 | .203 | 71.942 | 51.158 | .153 |
| Multiracial | -149.734 | 296.325 | -0.034 | -72.579 | 302.247 | -.016 | 90.650 | 303.278 | .020 |
| White | 8.039 | 35.024 | 0.023 | 4.768 | 34.387 | .014 | 7.495 | 34.135 | .022 |
| Student Grade Groups (ES, MS, HS) | 21.361 | 9.958 | 0.158* | -13.168 | 13.969 | -.097 | -19.084 | 13.866 | -.141 |
| *Predictor Variables* | | | | | | | | | |
| Student School Climate | | | | -39.093 | 12.503 | -.355** | -43.164 | 12.313 | -.392** |
| Teacher School Climate | | | | -4.355 | 7.647 | -.039 | -4.437 | 7.789 | -.040 |
| Proactive | | | | 5.756 | 9.059 | .053 | -3.675 | 9.197 | -.034 |
| Reactive | | | | -9.500 | 8.396 | -.088 | -3.608 | 8.401 | -.033 |
| Discipline Orientation | | | | 4.849 | 5.786 | .043 | 7.291 | 5.776 | .065 |
| Student Climate*Proactive | | | | | | | -28.724 | 9.473 | -.255** |
| Student Climate*Reactive | | | | | | | 2.015 | 9.116 | .018 |
| School Climate*Disp. Orientation | | | | | | | 6.944 | 8.458 | .066 |
| Teacher Climate*Proactive | | | | | | | 3.079 | 9.084 | .029 |
| Teacher Climate*Reactive | | | | | | | .712 | 7.785 | .006 |
| Teacher Climate*Disp Orientation | | | | | | | -2.444 | 7.406 | -.020 |
| *F* | | 14.414** | | | 11.815** | | | 9.935** | |
| *(df)* | | (13, 212) | | | (18, 207) | | | (24, 201) | |
| *Adjusted* $R^2$ | | 0.437 | | | 0.464 | | | 0.488 | |

**$p$ <.01; * $p$<.05

Table 4.20. *Hierarchical Linear Regression. Moderated Regression Analyses Examining the Relationship Between ISS and School Climate with Discipline Policies*

| Variables (Referent) | In-school Supsensions | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Step 1 | | | Step 2 | | | Step 3 | | |
| | b | SE | β | b | SE | β | b | SE | β |
| Urbanicity | 59.394 | 36.400 | .201 | 58.105 | 37.309 | .196 | 51.160 | 37.391 | .173 |
| School or District Policy | 12.727 | 37.566 | .026 | 25.200 | 40.338 | .051 | 22.048 | 40.081 | .044 |
| # of students enrolled | .470 | .068 | .590** | .441 | .074 | .553** | .419 | .073 | .525** |
| Free/reduced Lunch | 4.544 | 131.372 | .005 | -11.258 | 137.534 | -.012 | -8.412 | 137.470 | -.009 |
| Teacher to Students (Rate) | -3.428 | 9.104 | -.028 | 1.948 | 9.606 | .016 | 2.676 | 9.571 | .022 |
| Students with IEP's | 419.559 | 314.856 | .084 | 503.484 | 322.446 | .100 | 623.868 | 321.936 | .124 |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | -717.400 | 1645.088 | -.027 | -319.894 | 1685.613 | -.012 | -720.426 | 1682.045 | -.027 |
| Asian | -137.900 | 415.339 | -.020 | -96.848 | 424.930 | -.014 | -208.035 | 429.231 | -.031 |
| Black | -285.408 | 177.335 | -.142 | -322.048 | 181.272 | -.160 | -388.264 | 183.363 | -.193** |
| Hispanic | 87.986 | 123.658 | .083 | 108.911 | 127.979 | .102 | 138.831 | 132.497 | .130 |
| Multiracial | 997.307 | 738.783 | .099 | 685.115 | 771.910 | .068 | 780.273 | 783.194 | .078 |
| White | 196.791 | 87.398 | .253* | 182.158 | 87.913 | .234* | 134.244 | 88.264 | .173 |
| Student Grade Groups (ES, MS, HS) | -3.623 | 24.858 | -.012 | -28.925 | 35.650 | -.095 | -25.267 | 35.761 | -.083 |
| *Predictor Variables* | | | | | | | | | |
| Student School Climate | | | | -39.193 | 31.946 | -.158 | -32.789 | 31.772 | -.132 |
| Teacher School Climate | | | | 10.652 | 19.635 | .043 | 6.593 | 20.160 | .027 |
| Proactive | | | | -25.098 | 23.262 | -.101 | -22.423 | 23.925 | -.091 |
| Reactive | | | | .813 | 21.539 | .003 | -3.692 | 21.811 | -.015 |
| Disciplien Orientation | | | | -20.319 | 14.842 | -.081 | -21.981 | 14.985 | -.087 |
| Student Climate*Proactive | | | | | | | 33.189 | 24.458 | .131 |
| Student Climate*Reactive | | | | | | | -42.216 | 23.583 | -.163 |
| School Climate*Disp. Orientation | | | | | | | 18.819 | 21.821 | .080 |
| Teacher Climate*Proactive | | | | | | | 4.186 | 23.608 | .017 |
| Teacher Climate*Reactive | | | | | | | 27.610 | 20.112 | .097 |
| Teacher Climate*Disp Orientation | | | | | | | 19.312 | 19.172 | .071 |
| F | | 8.849** | | | 6.686** | | | 5.618** | |
| (df) | | (13, 209) | | | (18, 204) | | | (24, 198) | |
| *Adjusted* $R^2$ | | 0.315 | | | 0.316 | | | 0.333 | |

**$p$ <.01; * $p$<.05

Figure 4.3. *Interaction Effects of Student Perceptions of School Climate and Proactive School Discipline Polices Alternative Program Placements When School Climate is Higher and Lower*

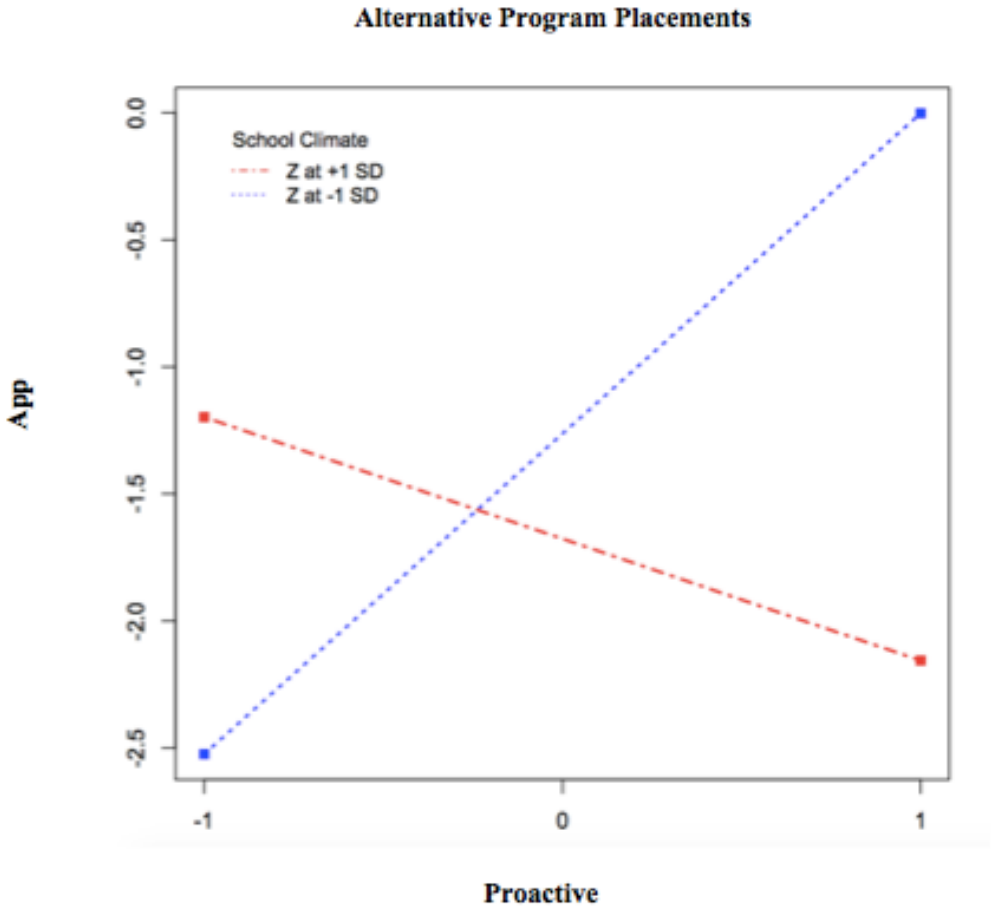

Figure 5.4. *Interaction Effects of Student Perceptions of School Climate and Reactive School Discipline Polices on Alternative Program Placements When School Climate is Higher and Lower*

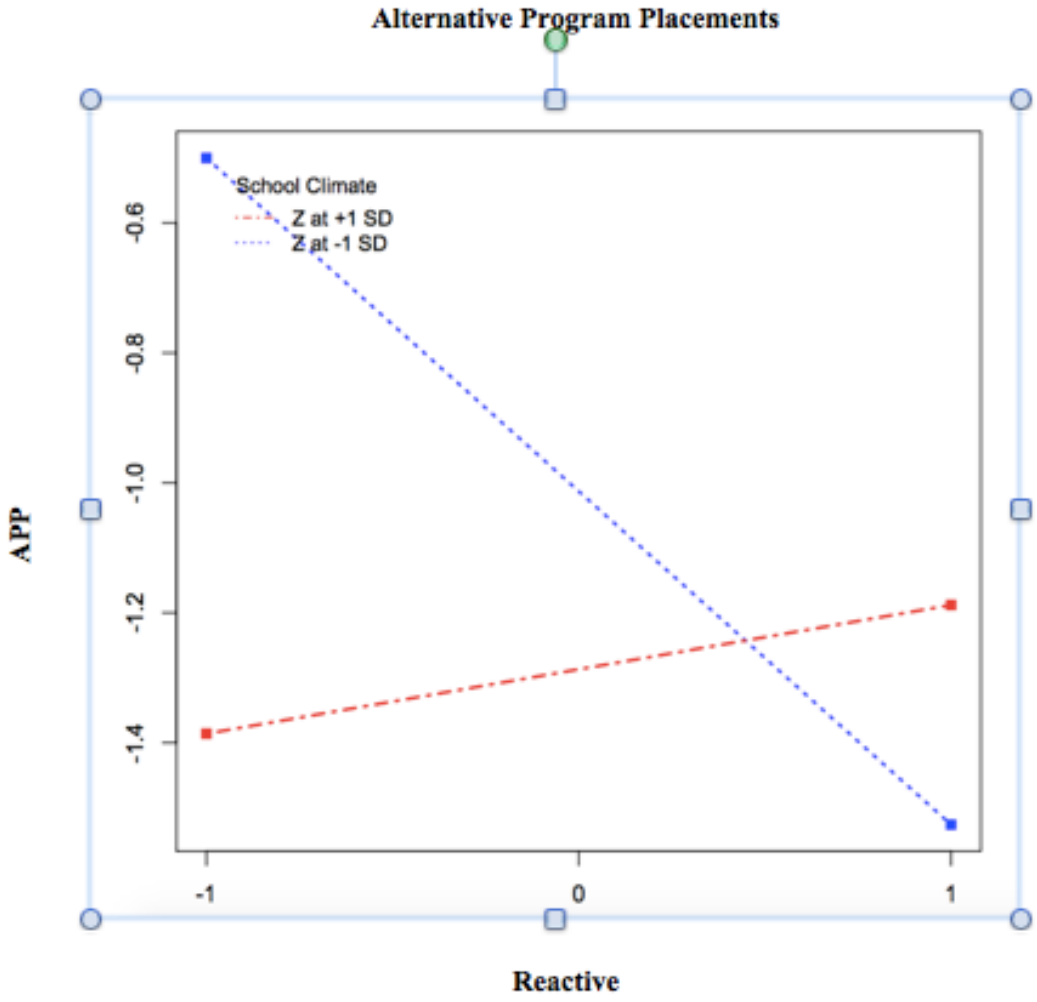

Table 4.21. *Hierarchical Linear Regression. Moderated Regression Analyses Examining the Relationship Between APP and School Climate with Discipline Policies*

| Variables (Referent) | Alternative Program Placements | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Step 1 | | | Step 2 | | | Step 3 | | |
| | b | SE | β | b | SE | β | b | SE | β |
| Urbanicity | -.474 | .275 | -.244 | -.265 | .273 | -.137 | -.367 | .255 | -.189 |
| School or District Policy | .317 | .284 | .097 | .404 | .296 | .124 | .254 | .274 | .078 |
| # of students enrolled | .000 | .001 | .073 | .000 | .001 | .072 | .001 | .001 | .117 |
| Free/reduced Lunch | 3.472 | .993 | .584** | 2.972 | 1.008 | .500** | 3.514 | .938 | .591** |
| Teacher to Students (Rate) | -.034 | .069 | -.043 | -.055 | .070 | -.070 | -.061 | .065 | -.076 |
| Students with IEP's | .291 | 2.379 | .009 | -.648 | 2.363 | -.020 | -.986 | 2.197 | -.030 |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | .878 | 12.430 | .005 | -9.583 | 12.353 | -.055 | -10.911 | 11.481 | -.063 |
| Asian | -1.498 | 3.138 | -.034 | -3.447 | 3.114 | -.078 | -1.993 | 2.930 | -.045 |
| Black | .719 | 1.340 | .054 | 1.363 | 1.328 | .103 | 1.926 | 1.252 | .146 |
| Hispanic | -.431 | .934 | -.062 | -1.428 | .938 | -.205 | -2.146 | .904 | -.307* |
| Multiracial | -13.168 | 5.582 | -.200* | -7.212 | 5.657 | -.109 | -5.234 | 5.346 | -.079 |
| White | .463 | .660 | .091 | .667 | .644 | .131 | .710 | .602 | .139 |
| Student Grade Groups (ES, MS, HS) | .325 | .188 | .163 | .229 | .261 | .115 | .160 | .244 | .080 |
| *Predictor Variables* | | | | | | | | | |
| Student School Climate | | | | -.113 | .234 | -.070 | -.160 | .217 | -.098 |
| Teacher School Climate | | | | .055 | .144 | .034 | .092 | .138 | .057 |
| Proactive | | | | .696 | .170 | .429** | .423 | .163 | .261** |
| Reactive | | | | -.486 | .158 | -.304** | -.327 | .149 | -.204* |
| Disciplien Orientation | | | | -.046 | .109 | -.028 | -.027 | .102 | -.016 |
| Student Climate*Proactive | | | | | | | -.874 | .167 | -.527** |
| Student Climate*Reactive | | | | | | | .473 | .161 | .279** |
| School Climate*Disp. Orientation | | | | | | | -.041 | .149 | -.027 |
| Teacher Climate*Proactive | | | | | | | .036 | .161 | .023 |
| Teacher Climate*Reactive | | | | | | | .164 | .137 | .088 |
| Teacher Climate*Disp Orientation | | | | | | | .014 | .131 | .008 |
| *F* | 2.702** | | | 3.097** | | | 4.552** | | |
| *(df)* | (13, 209) | | | (13, 209) | | | (13, 209) | | |
| *Adjusted* $R^2$ | 0.091 | | | 0.315 | | | 0.315 | | |

**$p$ <.01; * $p$<.05

# CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between school climate and school discipline policies and practices in a statewide sample of public elementary and secondary schools. More specifically the study sought to investigate the role of school climate in contributing to variations in school discipline practices, and to determine whether school discipline policies moderated the relationship between school climate and school discipline practices.

In general we found that student and teacher perceptions of school climate were related to the types and number of discipline practices in their schools, as well as to the discipline policies outlined in their school manuals. Furthermore, discipline policies were related to the number and use of suspensions and alternative program placements. However, many of these bivariate associations were reduced to insignificance once demographic characteristics of students and schools were taken into consideration. Each of the primary findings is discussed in the following paragraphs.

The association between perceptions of school climate by both students and teachers and the use of exclusionary discipline practices was expected and supports prior research (Losen et al., 2015; Gregory et al., 2011; Mattison, 2007). It is not surprising that schools that have a higher numbers of suspensions and/or alternative placements might be perceived more negatively by both students and teachers. Importantly though, other characteristics of schools and students appear to be contributing to these associations. For example, in our schools, school size, and racial/ethnic and socio-economic make-up of the student body were

significantly related to perceptions of school climate by teachers and students, and to school discipline practices. More specifically, we found that schools that served larger proportions of students from historically marginalized populations were more likely to have lower ratings of school climate and greater numbers of out-of-school suspensions and alternative program placements. While these findings are disappointing, they are not surprising as they are consistent with prior research (Brault, Janosz, Archambault, 201; Gottfredson et al., 2005; Skiba et al., 2012).

Perhaps more disheartening were our findings that within schools Non-Caucasian students were more likely to be suspended than their Caucasian peers. The largest discrepancies were found within more affluent (suburban) schools, where Non-Caucasian students were nearly twice as likely to be suspended than their Caucasian peers. Unfortunately, our findings are not unique, as they support the literature (Gregory, Skiba & Norguera, 2010; Fenning & Rose, 2007; Skiba et al 2011).

While the strong associations between demographic characteristics (of students and schools), and school discipline practices and school climate are undeniable, we found that after controlling for demographic variables, student perceptions of school climate remained significantly (inversely) associated with rates of out-of-school suspensions. One interpretation of this finding may be that a more positive school climate can attenuate risk factors associated with exclusion (e.g., minority status), which has been reported elsewhere (Gregory et al., 2011; Mattision & Aber, 2007; Shirley & Cornel, 2011). However, caution is warranted with this interpretation since our data are cross-sectional and we are unable to

assess the direction of effects. It may well be that schools with more positive climates actually result in fewer exclusionary discipline practices, but it is also plausible that schools that use fewer suspensions might have students who perceive a more positive climate. Future efforts to tease out these effects will require longitudinal data and could include interventions that allow for assessing the effects of changes on climate or discipline practice.

Our analyses of school discipline policies yielded equivocal results and raised several questions about the role of discipline policies in general. Interestingly, and contrary to hypotheses, schools that had more proactive school discipline policies also tended have more reactive school discipline policies. As a result, both more proactive and more reactive school discipline policies were associated with lower school climate and greater use of OSS. We interpret these findings to suggest that it may not be the type of discipline policy (that is, proactive or reactive) but rather other factors contributing to the schools' discipline policies. In fact, our data suggest that schools with greater numbers of both proactive and reactive discipline policies served greater proportions of historically marginalized populations and tended to be schools that adopted district level policies rather than to have school-level policies. In theory, policies should drive practice but our data suggest otherwise. It may well be that certain schools/districts have more reasons to adopt disciplinary policies and that these may not be directly consistent or contingent upon practices. A recent article published in the Chicago Tribune, lends credence to this supposition. The story highlights tensions between Chicago teachers and the Chicago school district over recent changes to the school discipline

policies. The Chicago school district amended school discipline policies to reflect a more proactive approach to school discipline in order to reduce suspensions and expulsions However, teachers expressed frustration about these changes, as they reported that they had neither the training nor resources to implement more proactive consequences (Perez, Jr., 2015, February 25). Our findings in conjunction with stories such as this, point to need for further research. One question worthy of exploration is who writes policies and whether those policies are written with the intent to guide actual practice. Anecdotal data suggest that there may be other 'codes of conduct' that set expectations within schools that are not necessarily part of the written policies we examined. Again, future research will need to examine these different aspects of policies to determine how they are understood and implemented within schools.

As part of our exploration of school policies, we attempted to capture evidence of a schools' endorsement of PBIS. PBIS reflects a continuum of supports designed to address academic and behavioral problems through school-wide and more targeted evidence-based interventions (Sugai, 2000). It has been endorsed at the federal level as part of educational best practices (U.S. Department of Education, 2014), and it is included in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as a recommended intervention for students with disabilities (IDEA, 2004). In fact, states receive funding to implement PBIS in schools, and in Rhode Island, more than 100 schools (through grants to school districts) have received funding and participated and in trainings. Our discipline orientation variable was not strongly associated with other variables in our study, and had

relatively low mean scores; this may indicate that school policies had not adopted many of the PBIS constructs. Alternatively, it may be that our assessment of the policies was unable to pick up on these nuances or that the school policies may not be where evidence of the philosophy actually resides. In Rhode Island, the Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities, in conjunction with RIDE and the U.S. Department of Education, has offered grants, training, and technical assistance to school districts to encourage implementation of PBIS interventions. According to the Sherlock Center website, it has trained 11 Rhode Island school districts since 2005. The center employs a train the trainer model, training district level administrators to disseminate information and train teachers at the school level. While the Sherlock Center reports that it trained more than 100 schools in PBIS, the training is indirect and through school district personnel (Paul V. Sherlock Center, 2014). While we were unable to account for differences in school discipline policies as a function of training since data were not available on particular schools, future research could consider examining school policies and practices as a function of their specific participation in PBIS.

Consistent with the literature, positive school climate was associated with fewer out-of-school suspensions (e.g., Skiba et al. 2012, Sugai et al, 2012), which may lead to recommendations that focus on improving school climate. However, our results and the results of many other studies suggest that while positive school climate is associated with more positive student outcomes, the effects are relatively small, when compared to individual and school-level characteristics (e.g., Gottfredson, et al., 2005; Fan, Williams & Corkin, 2011; Welsch, 2000),). Thus, it

begs the question, are there ways to potentiate the effect of school climate interventions to lead to better outcomes? This question is particularly prescient as money is poured in to launch large-scale school climate interventions (i.e., U.S. Department of Education) to reform school discipline policies and practices.

**Study Limitations**

This study examines the relationship among school climate, school discipline practices and school discipline policies in Rhode Island. It includes 36 school districts, 261 schools, serving more than 100,000 children from Rhode Island's 39 cities and towns. Despite the breadth and depth of the sample, its generalizability is limited due to regional differences in education policies, practices and demographic characteristics. For example, in 2012-2013 Rhode Island's student to teacher ratio was higher than neighboring states Connecticut and Massachusetts and its per pupil spending was lower (NCES, 2013), both of which can influence perceptions of school climate.

In addition, while we took a comprehensive approach to coding school discipline policies, it is possible that some features of the discipline policies may have been missed. The purpose of this content analysis was to synthesize a significant amount of data, and that may have made it more difficult to capture all the facets of the policy. For example, some policies included information about parent-teacher conferences and membership in the parent-teacher association. The inclusion of this information may reflect an emphasis on a home-school partnership, which is associated with both school climate and school discipline practices.

Furthermore, about half the schools in our study used district level policies and half used school level policies. While we used the best data available, it is not entirely clear what drives this process. We found differences between schools that adopted district policies as compared to those that created their own school-level policies. Comparing school level policies with district level policies may introduce biases that we were not able to control for and should be considered in future research.

School climate was assessed using data collected by the Rhode Island Department of Education. Participation in the survey is optional and may not be fully representational of students and teachers it the schools. While we know overall that participation among students was relatively high (86.5%) teacher participation was much lower (47.9%), and variability across schools may also reflect differences in climate. Data at the school level limits our ability to identify which students and teachers participated in the surveys and how that participation may have affected our results.

All of the data were culled from existing data sets, and did not include any direct opportunities to validate perceptions of school climate or school policies. Future research might consider incorporating direct observations or interviews, particularly with school leaders who may be responsible for policy development and implementation, to increase the validity of the data. It would be important to validate the extent to which these data represent the experiences in schools.

Finally, there are a variety of school-level and individual factors associated with perceptions of school climate that were not accessed. Culture competencies of

teachers and school administrators, years of teaching experience, teacher training preparation and feelings of self-efficacy are all associated with variations in perceptions of school climate by teachers and students. These factors may have affected measures of school climate and school discipline practices in ways that we were not able to account for.

**Future Directions**

Schools play a critical role in the health and development of our nation's children. The compulsory nature of education in the United States gives schools a unique opportunity to appreciably improve the lives of children, particularly children at risk. While public education cannot eliminate structural inequality, it can attenuate associated risk. This study sought to examine specific aspects of the school environment (school climate, school discipline policies and school discipline practices) and to explore the ways in which these variables interacted with individual, school and community level characteristics, with the aim to identify features of the school environment associated with better outcomes (i.e., fewer suspensions and alternative program placements).

While our findings are consistent with much of the literature, a more positive school climate was associated with fewer out-of-school suspensions. They also suggest many factors associated with inequality (e.g., race, income, school resources) significantly affect perceptions of school climate, school discipline policies, and school discipline practices. Future research should examine ways to further reduce the effects of demographic characteristics on outcomes. One promising area of research suggests that comprehensive services offered within the

school, in conjunction with school climate interventions (e.g., PBIS), can lead to better behavioral and academic outcomes for children most at risk (e.g., Eber et al., 2011; Cook et al, 2015).

Furthermore, this study highlights significant differences in rates of exclusion between White students and students from ethnic/racial minority groups. While changes in the Rhode Island law have resulted in a reduced number of overall suspensions, the disproportionality in rates of exclusion remain (RI ACLU, 2015). Future research should be conducted to examine the ways in which teacher training, cultural competencies, and other school level characteristics may positively affect disproportionality in school discipline.

Finally, This study offers insight into the ways in which school climate, school discipline policies and school discipline practices are both connected and separate from each other. School psychologists, trained in systems level approaches to interventions, can provide important training and guidance to teachers and administrators. The literature suggests that training is a critical component of any successful intervention (e.g., Bradshaw et al., 2012). School psychologist can improve the effectiveness of school-wide interventions (e.g., PBIS) by offering continuing support and training to teachers and staff. Furthermore, our data suggest that school discipline policies and practices are not aligned. It will be important for school psychologists to understand who is writing the discipline policies, the degree to which they are implemented and enforced in schools, and to identify the ways in which they can be improved, and aligned with discipline practices. This will assist in further identifying and codifying behavioral expectations and consequences (an

important feature of SWPBIS) and may help to identify ways in which school psychologists can further support teachers and principals in the implementation of more proactive approaches to school discipline.

APPENDIX A

Behavioral infractions associated with In-School Suspension, Out-of School Suspension and Alternative Program Placement

**Behavioral Infraction**

Alcohol
Arson
Assault of Student
Assault of Teacher
Bomb Threat
Breaking & Entering
Cheating/Plagiarism
Communication/Electronic Devices
Controlled Substances-Possession or Under Influence
Controlled Substances-Possession with Intent to Sell
Controlled Substances-Sale of
Cut/Skipped Class
Cut/Skipped Detention
Cut/Skipped In-School Suspension
Disorderly Conduct
Extortion
Fighting
Fire Regulations Violation
Forgery
Gambling
Gang Activity
Harassment-Sexual
Harassment-Stalking
Harassment-Verbal/Physical
Hate Crimes

Hazing

Insubordination/Disrespect

Kidnapping/Abduction

Larceny

Left School Grounds

Obscene/Abusive Language toward Student

Obscene/Abusive Language toward Teacher

Other

Robbery

Sexual Assault/Battery

Sexual Misconduct

Tardy

Threat/Intimidation

Tobacco-Possession or Use

Trespassing

Truant

Unauthorized Use of Computers or Other Technology

Vandalism

Weapon Possession

School Code:

School Name:

| BEHAVIOR | | PROACTIVE (Yes=1, No=0) | | | | | | | | | | REACTIVE (Yes=1, No=0) | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Present in School Policy (Yes=1, No=0) | Proactive | Mediation | Restitution | Referral for Learning Supports | Counseling | Community/School Service | In school interventions | Parent Conference | Home contact | Social Suspension/Non-academic | Removal from class/time-out | Detention | Police referral | In school suspension | Sent home from school | <10 days suspension | >10 days suspension | Alternative Program Placement | Expulsion |
| **MILD BEHAVIORS** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Attendance-Cut/Skipped Class | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Attendance-Cut/Skipped Detention | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Attendance-Left School Grounds | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Attendance-Cut/Skipped In School Suspension | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Attendance-Tardy/Late | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Attendance-Truant | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cheating/Plagiarism | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Disorderly Conduct/Class Disruption | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Dress Code Violation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Electronic Devices | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Forgery | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| General Staff Disrespect/Insubordination | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Loitering | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Misuse of Computer | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Student ID Violation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tobacco Offenses (Distribution, Possession, Sale, and Use) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Total** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **MODERATE BEHAVIORS** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bullying | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Fighting | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gambling | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Hazing/Harassment | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Social Exclusion | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Student Remarks (verbal argument, profanity) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Trespassing/Restricted Area | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Vandalism | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Total** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **SSVERE BEHAVIORS** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Alcohol Offenses (Distribution, Possession, Sale, and Use) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Arson | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Assault/Battery | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Threat/Intimidation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bomb Threat | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Drug Offenses (Possession and/or Use) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Drug Offenses (Intent to sell) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gang Behavior-Non-violent | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Kidnapping/Abduction | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Misuse of Fire Alarm | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Fireworks/Explosives Offenses | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Prejudice/Hate Crimes/Racial Slurs | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sexual Harassment | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sexual Assault/Battery | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Theft/Larceny/Robbery | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Weapons Offenses (Distribution, Possession, Sale, and Use) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Total** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **DISCIPLINE ORIENTATION** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Behavioral Expectations | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Teaching Expectations | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Positive Rewards | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Key Stakeholders | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Progressive | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Total** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

APPENDIX C

**Teaching and Learning**

Student Survey (High School): 14 items, based on responses to 4-point scale (Never to Always and Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)

1. My teachers give me clear instructions about how to do my work.
2. My teachers give me tough problems to solve.
3. My teachers give me enough time to do a good job on my classwork.
4. My teachers help me catch up after I come back from being absent.
5. My teachers will explain something different ways until I get it.
6. My teachers let things get out of control in class.
7. My teachers ask me to use facts to support my opinions in writing assignments.
8. My teachers ask me to make presentations in class.
9. My teachers ask me to participate in small groups.
10. My teachers ask met to give other students feedback on their workF
11. My teachers keep me interested in class.
12. My teachers inspire me to do my best work.
13. I know what my teachers expect of me.
14. I understand how my schoolwork gets graded.

Student Survey (Middle School): 13-items, based on responses to 4-point scale (Never to Always and Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)

1. My teachers give me clear instructions about how to do my work.
2. My teachers give me tough problems to solve.
3. My teachers give me enough time to do a good job on my classwork.
4. My teachers help me catch up after I come back from being absent.
5. My teachers will explain something different ways until I get it.
6. My teachers let things get out of control in class.
7. My teachers ask me to make presentations in class.
8. My teachers ask me to participate in small groups.
9. My teachers ask met to give other students feedback on their work .
10. My teachers keep me interested in class.
11. My teachers inspire me to do my best work.
12. I know what my teachers expect of me.
13. I understand how my schoolwork gets graded.

Student Survey (Elementary School): 9-items, based on responses to 4-point scale (Never to Always)

1. My teachers give good directions for my work.
2. My teachers let things get crazy in class.
3. My teachers have us work in small groups in class.
4. My teachers give me work that makes me think hard.
5. My give me enough time to do a good job on my classwork.
6. My teachers help me after I miss any school.
7. My will teachers will explain something different ways until I get it.
8. My teachers make learning fun.

9. My teachers make me want to learn more.

Teacher/Staff Survey: 27 items based on a. 4-point scale (Never to Always)
1. I help students develop coping skills.
2. I ask students to make presentations in class.
3. I ask students to participate in small group discussions.
4. I ask students to use facts to support their opinions in writing.
5. I ask students to work in small groups on class activities.
6. I assign students worksheets.
7. I have students use the media center and/or library materials.
8. I provide students with opportunities to revise assignments.
9. I incorporate "real world" learning activities into my instruction.
10. I ask students to provide feedback and comments on each other's work.
11. I provide "hands-on" learning activities.
12. I give special recognition to exemplary work.
13. I inform parents/guardians when their child does something well.
14. I ask students to use computers as a part of lessons.
15. I help students participate actively in community and civic affairs.
16. I teach social skills development.
17. I explain concepts in multiple ways until students show that they understand.
18. I embed memorization skills into my teaching.
19. I allow students to make up work after they are absent.
20. I give students multiple opportunities to improve their grades.
21. I provide specialized instruction for students whenever they progress more quickly than their peers.
22. I provide students with additional instruction whenever they fall behind.
23. I use school or district generated assessment to inform my instruction.
24. I actively promote positive health practices.
25. Students are interested in what I teach.
26. Students are motivated to learn.
27. Students have goals for themselves and their futures.

**Safety**

Student Survey (High School): 8-items, based on a 4-point scale (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)
1. All students are punished equally if they break the same rule.
2. Discipline at my school is fair.
3. I understand what will happen if I break a school rule.
4. Students help make the rules at my school.
5. I feel safe in the hallways of my school.
6. I feel safe when I walk outside of school.
7. When I hear the fire alarm I take it seriously.
8. When I hear the school is in lockdown, I take it seriously.

Student Survey (Middle School): 8-items, based on a 4-point scale (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)

1. All students are punished equally if they break the same rule.
2. Discipline at my school is fair.
3. I understand what will happen if I break a school rule.
4. Students help make the rules at my school.
5. I feel safe in the hallways of my school.
6. I feel safe when I walk outside of school.
7. When I hear the fire alarm I take it seriously.
8. When I hear the school is in lockdown, I take it seriously.

Student Survey (Elementary School): 3-items, based on a 2-point scale (Agree or Disagree)

1. I feel safe in the hallways of my school.
2. I feel safe when I walk outside of school.
3. My school's rules are fair.

Teacher/Staff Survey: 4-items based on a 4-point scale (Strongly disagree to strongly agree)

1. I find discipline policies and practices at this school are effective.
2. Staff applies rules consistently for all students.
3. I feel safe inside my school.
4. I feel safe when I walk outside my school.

**Interpersonal Relationships: Social Supports**

Student Survey (High School): 8-items, based on a 4-point scale (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)

1. My teachers seem to care about me personally.
2. Teachers in my school treat students with respect.
3. Students in my school treat teachers with respect.
4. Students in my school treat each other with respect.
5. I can talk to an adult at my school if I'm having a problem at home.
6. I can talk to an adult at my school if I'm having a problem with my classes or school work.
7. I can talk to an adult at my school if I'm having problems with another student.
8. I have a friend I can talk to about my problems.

Student Survey (Middle School): 9-items, based on a 4-point scale (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)

1. My teachers seem to care about me personally.
2. Teachers in my school treat students with respect.
3. Students in my school treat teachers with respect.
4. Students in my school treat each other with respect.
5. I can talk to an adult at my school if I'm having a problem at home.

6. I can talk to an adult at my school if I'm having a problem with my classes or school work.
7. I can talk to an adult at my school if I'm having problems with another student.
8. There is an adult in the community, other than my parent or guardian, who I can talk to when I have a problem.
9. I have a friend I can talk to about my problems.

Student Survey (Elementary School): 9-items, based on a 2-point scale (Agree or Disagree)

1. My teachers care about me personally.
2. I think my teachers like teaching
3. Students in my school treat teachers with respect.
4. My teachers are nice to me.
5. Kids in my school are nice to teachers.
6. I can talk to an adult at my school if I'm having a problem at home.
7. I can talk to an adult at my school if I'm having a problem with my school work.
8. I can talk to an adult at my school if I'm having a problem with another student.
9. I can talk to a good friend about my problems.

Teacher/Staff Survey: 6-items, based on a 4-point scale (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)

1. Students treat teachers and staff with respect.
2. Students treat each other with respect.
3. Students respect viewpoints different from their own.
4. Students talk to me if they are having a problem at home.
5. Students talk to me if they are having a problem with another student.
6. Students talk to me if they are having a problem with their classes or school work.

**Institutional Environment: School Facilities and Resources**

Student Survey (High School): 13-items, based on a 4-point scale (Never to Always and Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)

1. I do not like to use the school bathrooms because they are smoky.
2. I'm afraid to use the school bathrooms.
3. The school bathrooms are locked during school hours.
4. There is soap to wash my hands in the school bathrooms.
5. My classrooms are about the right temperature.
6. The lights in my classroom are bright enough so I can do work.
7. Most of my textbooks are more than 10 years old.
8. Students in my classes need to share books.
9. The school has enough computers for students to use.
10. The desks in my school are the right size for me.

11. My gym has enough equipment for all of the students.
12. The inside of my school building looks nice.
13. The outside of my school building looks nice.

Student Survey (Middle School): 13-items, based on a 4-point scale (Never to Always and Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)

1. I don't like to use the school bathrooms because they are smoky.
2. I'm afraid to use the school bathrooms.
3. The school bathrooms are locked during school hours.
4. There is soap to wash my hands in the school bathrooms.
5. My classrooms are about the right temperature.
6. Most of my textbooks are more than 10 years old.
7. Students in my classes need to share books.
8. The school has enough computers for students to use.
9. The desks in my school are the right size for me.
10. My gym has enough equipment for all of the students.
11. The inside of my school building looks nice.
12. The outside of my school building looks nice.

Student Survey (Elementary School): 2-items (questions 1 & 2), based on a 4-point scale (Never to Always), 4-items (questions 3-7), based on a 2-point scale (Agree or Disagree)

1. The classrooms are about the right temperature.
2. There is soap in the bathroom to wash my hands.
3. There are enough books for everyone in my classes.
4. The desks in my school are the right size for me.
5. My school looks nice inside.
6. The outside of my school building looks nice.
7. The school has enough computers for students to use.

Teacher/Staff Survey: 9-items, based on a 4-point scale (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)

1. My school has enough space for effective instruction give the current enrollment.
2. The school is clean and well-maintained
3. My classroom is about the right temperature
4. The lights in my classroom are bright enough so students can do their work.
5. Students in my classes need to share books.
6. I have access to up-to-date instructional materials through the school or district.
7. The school has enough computers for students to use.
8. I have sufficient access to instructional technology to support student learning.
9. I have sufficient access to student data to inform my instruction.

**Professional Climate: Teachers and Staff Only**

Teacher/Staff Survey: 10-items, based on a 4-point scale (Strongly disagree to strongly agree)

1. My performance evaluation process is fair.
2. I receive timely feedback about my job performance.
3. I have a good working relationship with my building administration.
4. I have a good w working relationship with other teachers and staff at my school.
5. The building administration is responsive to staff needs.
6. The building administration stands up for staff.
7. The principal treats all teachers fairly.
8. Morale is good among staff in this school.
9. Rules and policies affecting staff are clear.
10. Staff take pride in the school.

# APPENDIX D

| Survey Topics by Category | | Elementary School Students | Middle School Students | High School Students | Teachers |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Demographics** | | | | | |
| | Grade | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | Gender | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | Ethnicity | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | Race | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | Years of Teaching Experience | | | | ✓ |
| | Years of Teaching at this School | | | | ✓ |
| | Full-Time/Part-Time Status | | | | ✓ |
| | Education Attained | | | | ✓ |
| | Primary Role | | | | ✓ |
| | Grades Taught | | | | ✓ |
| | Subjects Taught | | | | ✓ |
| **Teaching and Student Achievement** | | | | | |
| | Teacher Practice | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Use of Technology | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | Components of Grading | | | | ✓ |
| | Homework | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Student Engagement | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Teacher Collaboration | | | | ✓ |
| | Coordination with Other Staff | | | | ✓ |
| | Departmental Meetings | | | | ✓ |
| | Educator Relationships | | | | ✓ |
| | Teams and Advisories | | | | ✓ |
| | Post High School Plans | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | College/Career Readiness | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| **Safe and Supportive Schools** | | | | | |
| | Breakfast | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | Physical Activity | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | Asthma | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | Text Messaging | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | Library Access | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Time Home Alone | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| | Technolgy Use for Entertainment | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | Skipping School | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | School Safety | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Theft | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | Discipline and Equity | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Bullying | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | Teacher-Student Relationships | ✓ | | | |
| | Teacher-Student Respect | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Student-Teacher Respect | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Student Relationships | | | | ✓ |
| | Personal Relationships | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| | Student Violence-Physical Harm | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Alcohol | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | Smoking | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | Weapons | | | ✓ | |
| | Drug Usage | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| | Professional Climate and Evaluation | | | | ✓ |
| | Professional Climate | | | | ✓ |
| | Workload | | | | ✓ |
| | Vision and Input | | | | ✓ |
| | Teacher Decision-making | | | | ✓ |
| | Drug at School | ✓ | | | |
| | Depression | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | Sexual Activity | | | ✓ | |
| | Sexting | | | ✓ | |
| | Sexual Orientation | | | ✓ | |
| **Families and Communities** | | | | | |
| | Parent  Involvement Strategies | | | | ✓ |
| | Parent Involvement | | | | ✓ |
| | Parent-Teacher Communication | | | | ✓ |
| | Parent-Teacher Conferences | | | | ✓ |
| | Parent Engagement | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | Community Support | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Parent Engagement in Post High school Plans | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | Out of School Time | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| **Funding and Resources** | | | | | |
| | Education Technology | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | Transportation | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | School Facilities | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | School Resources | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Staff Devleopment Frequency | | | | ✓ |
| | Desired Staff Development | | | | ✓ |
| | External Support | | | | ✓ |

APPENDIX E

*Out-of-School Suspensions by Frequency of Behavioral Infraction*

| | Total Incidents | M | SD | Range |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Out-of-School Suspensions | 15941 | 60.38 | 109.42 | 0-727 |
| Insubordination Disrespect | 5133 | 19.67 | 53.88 | 0-618 |
| Disorderly Conduct | 3151 | 12.07 | 37.12 | 0-384 |
| Fighting | 2028 | 7.77 | 15.96 | 0-136 |
| Assault Student | 966 | 3.7 | 6.44 | 0-36 |
| Threat Intimidation | 915 | 3.51 | 6.77 | 0-63 |
| Obscene Abusive Language to Teacher | 813 | 3.11 | 7 | 0-44 |
| Controlled Substance-Under Influence | 420 | 1.61 | 4.07 | 0-28 |
| Obscene Abusive Language to Student | 364 | 1.39 | 3.77 | 0-31 |
| Weapon Possession | 329 | 1.26 | 3.77 | 0-46 |
| Larceny | 221 | 0.85 | 1.71 | 0-13 |
| Assault of Teacher | 195 | 0.75 | 1.94 | 0-17 |
| Vandalism | 190 | 0.73 | 1.95 | 0-14 |
| Harassment Sexual | 184 | 0.7 | 1.66 | 0-11 |
| Communication Electronic Device | 162 | 0.62 | 3.94 | 0-60 |
| Tobacco Possession/ Use | 129 | 0.49 | 1.66 | 0-14 |
| Unauthorized Use Computers Tech | 88 | 0.34 | 1.31 | 0-17 |
| Hate Crimes | 80 | 0.31 | 1.18 | 0-12 |
| Alcohol | 70 | 0.27 | 0.82 | 0-7 |
| Fire Regulation | 61 | 0.23 | 0.79 | 0-9 |
| Sexual Misconduct | 51 | 0.2 | 0.66 | 0-7 |
| Trespassing | 48 | 0.18 | 0.89 | 0-8 |
| Controlled Substances Sale of | 46 | 0.18 | 0.78 | 0-10 |
| Harassment Stalking | 41 | 0.16 | 0.7 | 0-6 |
| Forgery | 16 | 0.06 | 0.38 | 0-5 |
| Arson | 10 | 0.04 | 0.26 | 0-3 |
| Bomb Threat | 10 | 0.04 | 0.19 | 0-1 |
| Cheating Plagiarism | 10 | 0.04 | 0.29 | 0-3 |
| Robbery | 10 | 0.04 | 0.26 | 0-3 |
| Sexual Assault Battery | 10 | 0.04 | 0.21 | 0-2 |
| Hazing | 4 | 0.02 | 0.12 | 0-1 |
| Gang Activity | 3 | 0.01 | 0.14 | 0-2 |
| Left School Grounds | 3 | 0.01 | 0.19 | 0-3 |
| Kidnapping Abduction | 2 | 0.01 | 0.09 | 0-1 |
| Controlled Substances-Intent to sell | 1 | 0 | 0.06 | 0-1 |
| Breaking Entering | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Cut Skipped Class | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Cut Skipped Detention | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Cut Skipped In School Suspension | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Extortion | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Gambling | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Harassment Verbal/Physical | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Tardy | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Truant | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |

*In-School Suspensions by Frequency of Behavioral Infraction*

| | Total Incidents | M | SD | Range |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| In-School Suspensions | 15745 | 60.33 | 231.92 | 0-2655 |
| Cut Skipped Class | 3851 | 14.75 | 105.21 | 0-1563 |
| Insubordination Disrespect | 3495 | 13.39 | 78.35 | 0-1103 |
| Cut Skipped Detention | 2275 | 8.72 | 52.88 | 0-727 |
| Disorderly Conduct | 2153 | 8.25 | 38 | 0-358 |
| Left School Grounds | 926 | 3.55 | 17.87 | 0-214 |
| Fighting | 412 | 1.58 | 6.32 | 0-64 |
| Obscene Abusive Language to Teacher | 382 | 1.46 | 6.09 | 0-53 |
| Tardy | 338 | 1.3 | 8.23 | 0-90 |
| Communication- Electronic Device | 328 | 1.26 | 9.82 | 0-134 |
| Threat Intimidation | 247 | 0.95 | 3.97 | 0-51 |
| Truant | 221 | 0.85 | 5.06 | 0-58 |
| Obscene Abusive Language Student | 219 | 0.84 | 2.66 | 0-19 |
| Assault Student | 175 | 0.67 | 2.57 | 0-32 |
| Tobacco Possession Use | 140 | 0.54 | 4.14 | 0-60 |
| Cheating/Plagiarism | 80 | 0.31 | 2.27 | 0-30 |
| Larceny | 79 | 0.3 | 1.22 | 0-12 |
| Unauthorized Use Computers Tech | 70 | 0.27 | 1.6 | 0-20 |
| Controlled Substances-Under Influence | 56 | 0.21 | 1.25 | 0-14 |
| Vandalism | 51 | 0.2 | 0.78 | 0-7 |
| Harassment Sexual | 46 | 0.18 | 0.68 | 0-6 |
| Hazing | 39 | 0.15 | 1.5 | 0-21 |
| Hate Crimes | 38 | 0.15 | 0.81 | 0-10 |
| Forgery | 37 | 0.14 | 0.84 | 0-10 |
| Harassment Stalking | 25 | 0.1 | 0.67 | 0-8 |
| Fire Regulation | 21 | 0.08 | 0.64 | 0-9 |
| Sexual Misconduct | 18 | 0.07 | 0.41 | 0-4 |
| Assault Teacher | 17 | 0.07 | 0.3 | 0-3 |
| Cut Skipped ISS | 17 | 0.07 | 0.46 | 0-5 |
| Trespassing | 17 | 0.07 | 0.44 | 0-5 |
| Controlled Substances Sale of | 9 | 0.03 | 0.35 | 0-4 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Weapon Possession | 8 | 0.03 | 0.17 | 0-1 |
| Alcohol | 7 | 0.03 | 0.24 | 0-3 |
| Arson | 6 | 0.02 | 0.23 | 0-3 |
| Extortion | 6 | 0.02 | 0.23 | 0-3 |
| Kidnapping Abduction | 6 | 0.02 | 0.23 | 0-3 |
| Gang Activity | 4 | 0.02 | 0.17 | 0-2 |
| Bomb Threat | 3 | 0.01 | 0.11 | 0-1 |
| Robbery | 2 | 0.01 | 0.09 | 0-1 |
| Sexual Assault Battery | 2 | 0.01 | 0.12 | 0-2 |
| Breaking Entering | 1 | 0 | 0.06 | 0-1 |
| Gambling | 1 | 0 | 0.06 | 0-1 |
| Other | 1 | 0 | 0.06 | 0-1 |
| Harassment Verbal/Physical | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |

*Alternative Program Placement by Frequency of Behavioral Infraction*

| | Total Incidents | M | SD | Range |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Threat Intimidation | 16 | 0.06 | 0.39 | 0-4 |
| Weapon Possession | 16 | 0.06 | 0.44 | 0-5 |
| Disorderly Conduct | 10 | 0.04 | 0.29 | 0-3 |
| Insubordination Disrespect | 7 | 0.03 | 0.33 | 0-5 |
| Assault Student | 4 | 0.02 | 0.15 | 0-2 |
| Controlled Substances-Under Influence | 4 | 0.02 | 0.12 | 0-1 |
| Larceny | 4 | 0.02 | 0.15 | 0-2 |
| Assault Teacher | 3 | 0.01 | 0.11 | 0-1 |
| Fighting | 3 | 0.01 | 0.11 | 0-1 |
| Harassment Sexual | 3 | 0.01 | 0.11 | 0-1 |
| Cut Skipped Detention | 2 | 0.01 | 0.12 | 0-2 |
| Fire Regulation | 2 | 0.01 | 0.12 | 0-2 |
| Obscene Abusive Language Student | 2 | 0.01 | 0.12 | 0-2 |
| Controlled Substances Sale of | 1 | 0 | 0.06 | 0-1 |
| Obscene Abusive Language Teacher | 1 | 0 | 0.06 | 0-1 |
| Alcohol | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Arson | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Bomb Threat | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Breaking Entering | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Cheating/Plagiarism | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Communication- Electronic Device | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Cut Skipped Class | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Cut Skipped In School Suspension | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Extortion | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Forgery | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gambling | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Gang Activity | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Harassment Stalking | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Harassment Verbal/Physical | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Hate Crimes | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Hazing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Kidnapping Abduction | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Left School Grounds | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Robbery | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Sexual Assault Battery | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Sexual Misconduct | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Tardy | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Tobacco Possession Use | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Trespassing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Truant | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Unauthorized Use Computers Tech | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |
| Vandalism | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 |

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