

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Ethnic/Racial disparities in Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements for Texas Grade 6, 7 and 8 boys: A statewide, multiyear analysis

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**Abstract:** In this investigation, the extent to which Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement assignments differed as a function of ethnicity/race (*i.e.*, Black, Hispanic, White, Asian) for Grade 6, 7, and 8 boys was determined. Archival data were obtained from the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System on all middle school students for the 2011-2012, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 school years. Inferential statistical procedures yielded statistically significant differences for all four school years with below small effect sizes. For each year, in each grade level, a stair-step effect was present. Grade 6 through Grade 8 Black boys received a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement statistically significantly more often than their peers at all three grade levels. Similarly, Grade 6 through Grade 8 Hispanic boys received statistically significantly more instances of a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement than did White and Asian boys. Recommendations for research and implications are discussed along with suggestions for policy and practice.

**Keywords:** disciplinary inequities, Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements, ethnicity-race, Black, Hispanic, White, Asian, Grade 6, 7 and 8 boys

## 1 Introduction

School discipline practices in the United States have generated serious concerns in the past decade<sup>[1,2]</sup>. These concerns are serious in nature due to the presence of racial/ethnic inequities in the manner in which discipline consequences were assigned to students<sup>[3]</sup>. As noted by former-U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan “Nationwide, as many as 95 percent of out-of-school suspensions are for nonviolent misbehaviorlike being disruptive, acting disrespectfully, tardiness, profanity, and dress code”<sup>[3]</sup>. Also documented by the Office for Civil Rights<sup>[3]</sup> is that “the number of secondary school students suspended or expelled to have increased by roughly 40% in the last four decades”. Serious concerns exist about inequities in discipline consequence, concerns that increase each year based on the widespread overuse of discipline

consequences.

Of the 49 million students enrolled in public schools in the United States in the 2011-2012 school year, 3.5 million students received an in-school suspension, 3.45 million students received an out-of-school suspension, and 130,000 students were expelled from school<sup>[3]</sup>. This many students who were removed from the regular classroom setting as a result of being assigned a discipline consequence is cause for concern. In fact, within the last decade, the phrase, School-to-Prison pipeline, has been created to describe the relationship between school disciplinary consequences and later human costs. The School-to-Prison pipeline has been defined by the American Civil Liberties Union<sup>[4]</sup> as the policies and practices that push the nation’s school children, especially at-risk children, out of classrooms and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. Amurao<sup>[5]</sup> reported that the United States spent \$70 billion annually on incarceration, probation, and parole. These monies reflect a 127% increase for incarcerations between 1987-2007, in comparison to only a 21% increase in funding for higher education during the same 20-year period.

With respect to the state of Texas, the manner in which Texas public school systems discipline students is defined and implemented by a larger governing entity within the public school system. School district personnel are pro-

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vided with set procedures for controlling student misbehavior in the classroom. These procedures have been established through the Texas Education Code<sup>[6]</sup>, which consists of provisions to provide a safe educational environment for the entire student body. In the State of Texas, the three major discipline consequences that are assigned to students are in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement. Sustaining established systems of order and boundaries that help teachers maintain an acceptable and safe environment for all children to learn, however, must not come to the detriment of minority students and disproportional disciplinary placements.

For students with persistent and serious misbehaviors, opportunities to an education are compromised. In 1995, the 74th Texas Legislative session passed an educational reform requiring schools to offer students who were expelled from school an Alternate Education Program to continue their education. The establishment of Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program and in-district Alternative Education Program placements met the state's policy to educate these students. For students facing expulsion, parameters for consequences were set into place by Chapter 37.007 of the Texas Education Agency<sup>[7]</sup>.

Even though students are removed from the general campus setting, Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs serve as alternatives to suspensions or expulsions for students who are highly disruptive to the education of other students<sup>[8,9]</sup>. Alternative Education Programs are mandated to maintain the curriculum of students' basic core scheduled coursework during their temporary placement term for the behavior infraction. Offenses defined in Chapter 37 of the Texas Education Code are considered mandatory Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements and discretionary Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements are violations of a school district's code of conduct.

With respect to the empirical evidence regarding inequities in disciplinary consequence assignment by student ethnicity/race, several researchers<sup>[10-12]</sup> have conducted studies in Texas in which they have provided extensive evidence of the presence of inequities. Hilberth and Slate<sup>[11]</sup> analyzed data from the 2008-2009 school year on disproportionalities in discipline consequence assignment to Black and White students. The Texas statewide data they analyzed included 172,551 Grade 6 White and Black students, 175,671 Grade 7 White and Black students, and 175,730 Grade 8 White and Black students. With respect to in-school suspension, Hilberth and Slate<sup>[11]</sup> documented that 32% of the in-school suspensions were assigned to Grade 6 Black students, although only 14.1% of their Grade 6 students were Black. In

contrast, they determined that 14.1% of the in-school suspensions were assigned to White students, although White students constituted 34.7% of Grade 6 students. Results were similar for their Grade 7 students in that 35.6% of the in-school suspensions were assigned to Black students and only 16.2% of the in-school suspensions were assigned to White students, despite Black and White students comprising 14.2% and 35.2%, respectively, of the Grade 7 student enrollment. Grade 8 student results were commensurate with both Grade 6 and 7 findings.

Of particular importance to this article are Hilberth and Slate's<sup>[11]</sup> results for Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement. Of these consequences that were assigned, 4.1% of Grade 6 Black students were assigned to a Discipline Alternative Education Program placement, compared to 1.1% of White students; 5.8% of Grade 7 Black students were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement, compared to 1.8% of White students; and 7.0% of Grade 8 Black students were assigned to a Discipline Alternative Education Program placement, compared to 2.6% of Grade 8 White students. In their investigation, Hilberth and Slate<sup>[11]</sup> used a commonly used definition of disproportionality<sup>[13]</sup>. That is, they compared the percentage of Black and of White students who received a discipline consequence with their proportion of the student enrollment. Using that definition of disproportionality, they established that Grade 6 Black students were assigned Discipline Alternative Education Program consequences almost 4 times the rate of their Grade 6 White peers. Grade 7 Black students were 3.7 times more likely to be assigned a Discipline Alternative Education Program placement than were their Grade 7 White peers. Finally, they determined that Grade 8 Black students were assigned to a Discipline Alternative Education Program placement almost 3 times the rate of their Grade 8 White peers. As such, Hilberth and Slate<sup>[11]</sup> concluded that Black students attending Texas public schools in Grades 6, 7, and 8 were 2 to 5 times more likely to receive a suspension and expulsion than were their grade level White peers.

In a related investigation, Henkel *et al.*<sup>[10]</sup> examined the degree to which scores on the state-mandated assessment, the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Reading and Mathematics tests, differed as a function of in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension for Hispanic, Black, and White Texas middle school students. In their investigation, they analyzed data for two school years (*i.e.*, 2008-2009 and 2010-2011) separately for boys and for girls in Grades 6, 7, and 8. Henkel *et al.*<sup>[10]</sup> established the presence of statistically significantly lower TAKS Reading and Mathematics test scores for Grade 6, 7, and 8 Hispanic, Black, and White boys and girls

who received either an in-school suspension or an out-of-school suspension. Of importance to this article are the numbers of students by ethnicity/race who received these two discipline consequences. The numbers of students they reported who had received these two discipline consequences differed by ethnicity/race.

With respect to the assignment of out-of-school suspensions for the 2008-2009 school year, Grade 6 White boys received 3,386 assignments; Hispanic boys received 10,675 assignments; and Black boys received 6,212 assignments. Concerning Grade 7 results, white boys received 4,259 assignments; Hispanic boys received 12,558 assignments; and Black boys received 6,888 assignments. Grade 8 White boys received 4,606 consequences; Hispanic boys received 13,959 consequences; and Black boys received 6,880 consequences.

For these groups of boys, the numbers of Black and of Hispanic students who were assigned to an out-of-school suspension were disproportionate to their percent of the student enrollment in these grade levels. That is, the percentage of the student enrollment in Texas middle schools who are Black was approximately 14%<sup>[11]</sup> and the percentage of the student enrollment who are White was approximately 35%<sup>[11]</sup>. For all three of the grade levels in the Henkel *et al.*<sup>[10]</sup> investigation, however, Black students received an out-of-school suspension that was two to three times greater than the out-of-suspension rates for White students.

For an extensive review of the literature regarding discipline inequities by ethnicity/race, readers are directed to Jones *et al.*<sup>[12]</sup>. In their literature review, Jones *et al.*<sup>[12]</sup> summarized empirical research investigations on inequities in the assignment of discipline consequences as well as the relationship of discipline consequence assignment with achievement gaps in reading and in mathematics. Jones *et al.*<sup>[12]</sup> contended that inequalities among middle school students by ethnicity/race exist which, in turn, increases the achievement gap perpetuating an ever-growing cultural, social, and academic dilemmas.

## 1.1 Statement of the problem

Inequities in student discipline have been extensively documented<sup>[10-12,14]</sup>. Gottfredson contended that the reasons for the increases in suspension and expulsions in middle schools were related directly to unclear and inconsistent school rules and their implementation. Along with possible discrepancies of student discipline are issues of inequity based on student ethnicity/race and increasing academic achievement gaps after placement. Gregory, Skiba, and Noguera<sup>[15]</sup> reported that lower achievement levels, misbehavior patterns, and poverty could not sufficiently explain the educational gap. Decreasing the

academic gap in achievement is a growing problem for all students and thus an important factor for students placed in alternative education settings due to disciplinary issues.

## 1.2 Significance of the study

In this study, the degree to which differences were present in the receipt of a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement for boys by their ethnicity/race was examined for the 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and the 2015-2016 school years. Specifically addressed were whether inequities were present in Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement for Grade 6, 7, and 8 Black, Hispanic, White, and Asian boys. Given the importance of instructional time for academic success, if students are removed from the instructional setting in an inequitable manner, then concerns arise regarding their civil rights. As such, the outcomes of this study may provide empirical data regarding the degree to which inequities are present in the assignment of this specific disciplinary consequence for Black, Hispanic, White, and Asian boys. Ideally, this research information may aid stakeholders, policy-makers, and educational agencies in reforming discipline programs for boys by their ethnicity/race. Understanding the current disciplinary system and the degree to which inequities might be present are essential if educational leaders are to restructure discipline procedures.

## 1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the extent to which inequities were present in Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements for Texas Grade 6, Grade 7, and Grade 8 boys based on their ethnicity/race (*i.e.*, Black, Hispanic, White, and Asian). By examining Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements for Grade 6, Grade 7, and Grade 8 Black, Hispanic, White, and Asian boys, a comparison across grade levels was possible. Four school years of archival data from the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System were analyzed to determine the degree to which Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements were differentially assigned to Grade 6, 7, and 8 boys by their ethnicity/race.

## 1.4 Research questions

The following overall research question was addressed in this empirical investigation: What is the difference in Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements as a function of ethnicity/race (*i.e.*, Black, Hispanic, White, and Asian) for Grades 6, 7, and 8 boys? This research question was examined for the 2012-2013,

2013-2014, 2014-2015, and the 2015-2016 school years. As such, the extent to which trends were present in the assignment of Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements for Grade 6, 7, and 8 boys by their ethnicity/race was determined.

## 2 Method

### 2.1 Research design

For this study, a causal comparative research design was employed. In a causal comparative method, “the relationship between one or more categorical independent variables and one or more quantitative dependent variables”<sup>[16]</sup> is examined. In this investigation, statewide archival data that were previously obtained from the Texas Education Agency were analyzed. As such, the independent and dependent variables had already occurred and could not be manipulated. For these reasons, the research design used herein was a causal comparative research design<sup>[16]</sup>. The data included Grade 6, Grade 7, and Grade 8 boys by their ethnicity/race and whether or not they had received a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement. Thus, the independent variable of ethnicity/race for boys consisted of four groups: Black, Hispanic, White, and Asian. For each school year (*i.e.*, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, 2015-2016), the dependent variable was receipt or non-receipt of a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement.

### 2.2 Participants

Students for whom data were analyzed were Grade 6, Grade 7, and Grade 8 boys who were enrolled in Texas public middle schools in the 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and the 2015-2016 school years. These data constitute all of the students in the State of Texas who were documented to have been assigned a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement. As such, these data more closely represent a population than a sample. We prefer to use the word, sample, because of the possibility that some incidents were not reported, not recorded, or because errors could have been present in the documentation of this disciplinary consequence. Archival data were requested and obtained from the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System for the last four school years. For the purposes of this study, the following definition is used as defined by Maughan<sup>[17]</sup>. Disciplinary Alternative Education Placement is a discretionary in-district alternative education setting assigned to students who commit non-criminal offenses or persistent misbehaviors,

### 2.3 Instrumentation and procedures

Through submission of a Public Information Request form to the Texas Education Agency, data on Grade 6, 7, and 8 boys by their ethnicity/race were requested. The Texas Education Agency Public Information Management System, in fulfilling this request, provided data for all Texas Grade 6, Grade 7, and Grade 8 boys by their ethnicity/race (*i.e.*, Black, Hispanic, White, and Asian), their gender, their grade level, and whether the student had received a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement. The last four school years of data were requested: 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016. Once the Texas Education Agency provided these data, they were converted into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences data files. Then data were analyzed separately for Grade 6, Grade 7, and Grade 8 boys by their ethnicity/race status.

## 3 Results

To address the research questions regarding Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements for boys by their ethnicity/race, Pearson chi-square procedures were calculated. This statistical procedure was the ideal analysis to calculate because frequency data were present for student ethnicity/race and for Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement assignments for all four school years. A large sample size was available, providing a sample size that was more than five responses per cell. Therefore, the assumptions for using a Pearson chi-square procedure were met for each research question<sup>[18]</sup>. Results will now be provided, beginning with the 2012-2013 school year and with Grade 6 boys and ending with the 2015-2016 school year and with Grade 8 boys.

### 3.1 Results for Grade 6 boys

In the 2012-2013 school year for Grade 6 boys, a statistically significant difference was present in Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements,  $\chi^2(3) = 1117.10$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , by student ethnicity/race. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was below small, 0.07<sup>[19]</sup>. Revealed in the results was the presence of a stair-step effect<sup>[20]</sup> in Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements. Grade 6 Black boys were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement more than 10 and a half more times than Grade 6 Asian boys, three and a third times more often than Grade 6 White boys, and one and two thirds more often than Grade 6 Hispanic boys. Grade 6 Hispanic boys were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program almost two times more often than Grade 6 White boys and six times more often than Grade 6 Asian boys. Grade

**Table 1.** Frequencies and percentages of Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements by Ethnicity/Race for Grade 6-8 boys in the 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 school years

School Year and Ethnicity/Race	Received a DAEP Placement (n, and % of Total)		
	Grade 6 Boys	Grade 7 Boys	Grade 8 Boys
2012-2013			
Black	(n = 1,452), 5.3%	(n = 2,000), 7.3%	(n = 2,398), 8.9%
Hispanic	(n = 3,171), 3.0%	(n = 4,946), 4.8%	(n = 5,963), 5.9%
White	(n = 1,025), 1.6%	(n = 1,627), 2.5%	(n = 2,282), 3.6%
Asian	(n = 38), 0.5%	(n = 42), 0.6%	(n = 58), 0.9%
2013-2014			
Black	(n = 1,276), 4.7%	(n = 1,987), 7.1%	(n = 2,257), 8.1%
Hispanic	(n = 2,811), 2.7%	(n = 4,783), 4.4%	(n = 5,978), 5.6%
White	(n = 953), 1.5%	(n = 1,499), 2.3%	(n = 2,127), 3.3%
Asian	(n = 20), 0.3%	(n = 44), 0.6%	(n = 55), 0.7%
2014-2015			
Black	(n = 1,258), 4.6%	(n = 1,792), 6.5%	(n = 2,216), 7.9%
Hispanic	(n = 2,653), 2.5%	(n = 4,226), 3.9%	(n = 5,748), 5.3%
White	(n = 828), 1.3%	(n = 1,446), 2.3%	(n = 1,967), 3.1%
Asian	(n = 30), 0.4%	(n = 26), 0.3%	(n = 42), 0.5%
2015-2016			
Black	(n = 1,288), 4.7%	(n = 1,745), 6.3%	(n = 2,111), 7.6%
Hispanic	(n = 2,504), 2.3%	(n = 4,026), 3.7%	(n = 5,240), 4.8%
White	(n = 856), 1.4%	(n = 1,287), 2.1%	(n = 1,970), 3.1%
Asian	(n = 13), 0.1%	(n = 34), 0.4%	(n = 37), 0.4%

6 White boys were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement more than three times more often than Grade 6 Asian boys. Frequencies and percentages of Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements for Grade 6 boys by their ethnicity/race in the 2012-2013 school year are presented in Table 1.

With respect to the 2013-2014 school year, a statistically significant difference was present in the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements,  $\chi^2(3) = 955.67$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , of Grade 6 boys by their ethnicity/race. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was below small, 0.07<sup>[19]</sup> and was reflective of a stair-step effect (20) in Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements. Grade 6 Black boys were assigned a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement more than 15 and a half times more often than Grade 6 Asian boys, more than three times more often than White boys, and more than one and one half times more often than Grade 6 Hispanic boys. Grade 6 Hispanic boys were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement nine times more often than Grade 6 Asian boys and almost two times as often as Grade 6 White boys.

Grade 6 White boys were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement five times more often than Grade 6 Asian boys. Delineated in Table 1 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Concerning the 2014-2015 school year, a statistically significant difference was present in the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements,  $\chi^2(3) = 1054.64$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , of Grade 6 boys by their ethnicity/race. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was below small, 0.07<sup>[19]</sup> and was reflective of a stair-step effect<sup>[20]</sup>. As revealed in Table 1, Grade 6 Black boys were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement 11 and a half more times more often than Grade 6 Asian boys, more than three and a half more often than Grade 6 White boys, and almost two times more often than Grade 6 Hispanic boys. Grade 6 Hispanic boys were assigned a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement six and a quarter times more often than Grade 6 Asian boys and almost two times as often than Grade 6 White boys. Grade 6 White boys were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement more than three and a quarter times

more often than Grade 6 Asian boys.

Regarding the 2015-2016 school year, a statistically significant difference was present in the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements,  $\chi^2(3) = 1135.30$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , of Grade 6 boys by their ethnicity/race. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was below small,  $0.07^{[19]}$  and was indicative of a stair-step effect<sup>[20]</sup>. Grade 6 Black boys were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement 47 times more often than Grade 6 Asian boys, more than three and a third times more often than Grade 6 White boys, and more than two times more often than Grade 6 Hispanic boys. Grade 6 Hispanic boys were assigned a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement 23 times more often than Grade 6 Asian boys and more than one and a half times as often as Grade 6 White boys. Grade 6 White boys were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement 14 times more often than Grade 6 Asian boys. [Table 1](#) contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

### 3.2 Results for Grade 7 boys

In the 2012-2013 school year for Grade 7 boys, a statistically significant difference was present in Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements,  $\chi^2(3) = 1400.66$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , by student ethnicity/race. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was below small,  $0.08^{[19]}$ . Revealed in the results was the presence of a stair-step effect<sup>[20]</sup>. Grade 7 Black boys were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement more than 12 times as often as Grade 7 Asian boys, almost three times more often than Grade 7 White boys, and more than one and a half times more often than Grade 7 Hispanic boys. Grade 7 Hispanic boys were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program eight times more often than Grade 7 Asian boys and almost two times more often than Grade 7 White boys. Grade 7 White boys were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement four times as often as Grade 7 Asian boys. Frequencies and percentages of Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements for Grade 7 boys by their ethnicity/race in the 2012-2013 school year are presented in [Table 1](#).

With respect to the 2013-2014 school year, a statistically significant difference was present in the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements,  $\chi^2(3) = 1459.06$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , of Grade 7 boys by their ethnicity/race. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was below small,  $0.08^{[19]}$  and was reflective of a stair-step effect<sup>[20]</sup>. Grade 7 Black boys were assigned a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement almost 12 times more often than Grade 7 Asian boys, more than three times more often than Grade 7 White boys, and

more than one and one half times more often than Grade 7 Hispanic boys. Grade 7 Hispanic boys were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement more than seven times as often as Grade 7 Asian boys and almost two times as often as Grade 7 White boys. Grade 7 White boys were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement almost four times as often as Grade 7 Asian boys. Delineated in [Table 1](#) are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Concerning the 2014-2015 school year, a statistically significant difference was present in the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements,  $\chi^2(3) = 1239.55$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , of Grade 7 boys by their ethnicity/race. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was below small,  $0.08^{[19]}$  and was reflective of a stair-step effect<sup>[20]</sup>. As revealed in [Table 1](#), Grade 7 Black boys were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement more than 21 and a half times more often than Grade 7 Asian boys, almost three times more often than Grade 7 White boys, and one and a half times more often than Grade 7 Hispanic boys. Grade 7 Hispanic boys were assigned a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement 13 times more often than Grade 7 Asian boys and almost two times as often than Grade 7 White boys. Grade 7 White boys were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement more than seven and a half times as often as Grade 7 Asian boys.

Regarding the 2015-2016 school year, a statistically significant difference was present in the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements,  $\chi^2(3) = 1314.57$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , of Grade 7 boys by their ethnicity/race. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was below small,  $0.08^{[19]}$  and was indicative of a stair-step effect<sup>[20]</sup>. Grade 7 Black boys were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement 15 and three-fourth times more often than Grade 7 Asian boys, three times more often than Grade 7 White boys, and more than one and a half times more often than Grade 7 Hispanic boys. Grade 7 Hispanic boys were assigned a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement nine and a quarter times more often than Grade 7 Asian boys and more than one and two third times as often as Grade 7 White boys. Grade 7 White boys were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement five and a quarter times more often than Grade 7 Asian boys. [Table 1](#) contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

### 3.3 Results for Grade 8 boys

In the 2012-2013 school year for Grade 8 boys, a statistically significant difference was present in Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements,  $\chi^2(3) = 1382.68$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , by student ethnicity/race. The

effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was below small, 0.08<sup>[19]</sup>. Revealed in the results was the presence of a stair-step effect<sup>[20]</sup>. Grade 8 Black boys were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement almost 10 times as often than Grade 8 Asian boys, almost two and a half times more often than Grade 8 White boys, and more than one and a half times more often than Grade 8 Hispanic boys. Grade 8 Hispanic boys were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program more than six and a half times more often than Grade 8 Asian boys and more than one and a half times more often than Grade 8 White boys. Grade 8 White boys were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement four times as often as Grade 8 Asian boys. Frequencies and percentages of Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements for Grade 8 boys by their ethnicity/race in the 2012-2013 school year are presented in [Table 1](#).

With respect to the 2013-2014 school year, a statistically significant difference was present in the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements,  $\chi^2(3) = 1330.79$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , of Grade 8 boys by their ethnicity/race. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was below small, 0.08<sup>[19]</sup> and was reflective of a stair-step effect<sup>[20]</sup>. Grade 8 Black boys were assigned a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement more than 11 and a half times more often than Grade 8 Asian boys, almost two and a half times more often than Grade 8 White boys, and almost one and a half times more often than Grade 8 Hispanic boys. Grade 8 Hispanic boys were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement eight times as often as Grade 8 Asian boys and more than one and a half times as often as Grade 8 White boys. Grade 8 White boys were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement more than four and a half times as often as Grade 8 Asian boys (see [Table 1](#)).

Concerning the 2014-2015 school year, a statistically significant difference was present in the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements,  $\chi^2(3) = 1403.57$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , of Grade 8 boys by their ethnicity/race. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was below small, 0.08<sup>[19]</sup> and was reflective of a stair-step effect<sup>[20]</sup>. As revealed in [Table 1](#), Grade 8 Black boys were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement almost 16 times more often than Grade 8 Asian boys, more than two and a half more often than Grade 8 White boys, and almost one and a half times more often than Grade 8 Hispanic boys. Grade 8 Hispanic boys were assigned a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement more than 10 and a half times more often than Grade 8 Asian boys and more than one and two third times

more often than Grade 8 White boys. Grade 8 White boys were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement more than six times as often as Grade 8 Asian boys.

Regarding the 2015-2016 school year, a statistically significant difference was present in the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements,  $\chi^2(3) = 1239.38$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , of Grade 8 boys by their ethnicity/race. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was below small, 0.08<sup>[19]</sup> and was indicative of a stair-step effect<sup>[20]</sup>. Grade 8 Black boys were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement 19 times more often than Grade 8 Asian boys, almost two and a half times more often than Grade 8 White boys, and more than one and a half times more often than Grade 8 Hispanic boys. Grade 8 Hispanic boys were assigned a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement 12 times more often than Grade 8 Asian boys and more than one and a half times as often as Grade 8 White boys. Grade 8 White boys were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement seven and three fourth times more often than Grade 8 Asian boys (see [Table 1](#)).

## 4 Discussion

In this investigation, the extent to which differences were present in Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements for Texas Grade 6, Grade 7, and Grade 8 boys based on their ethnicity/race was addressed. Four school years of statewide archival data were obtained and analyzed from the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System to determine the degree to which Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements were disproportionately assigned to Grade 6, 7, and 8 boys by their ethnicity/race. In all four school years, statistically significant results were present. Strong trends were clearly evident across the four school years and across the three school levels. Across the 2012-2013 through the 2015-2016 school years Black boys were assigned the highest rates of this consequence; statistically significantly more often than were Hispanic, White, or Asian students. Though small effect sizes, consistently around from 0.07 to 0.08<sup>[19]</sup>, were present, a stair-step effect<sup>[20]</sup> was clearly evident. Black boys in all three grade levels received the highest rates of Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements in all four school years. Hispanic boys in all three grade levels received the second highest rates of this consequence in all four school years, followed by White boys and then by Asian boys. A summary of the effect sizes of the analyses of Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement by ethnicity/race for Grade 6, 7, and 8 boys in the 2012-

**Table 2.** Summary of Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements by boys Grades 6-8 for the 2012-2013 through the 2015-2016 school years

Grade Level and School Year	Cramer's V	Effect Size Range	Highest DAEP Rate
Grade 6			
2012-2013	0.07	Below Small	Black
2013-2014	0.07	Below Small	Black
2014-2015	0.07	Below Small	Black
2015-2016	0.07	Below Small	Black
Grade 7			
2012-2013	0.08	Below Small	Black
2013-2014	0.08	Below Small	Black
2014-2015	0.08	Below Small	Black
2015-2016	0.08	Below Small	Black
Grade 8			
2012-2013	0.08	Below Small	Black
2013-2014	0.08	Below Small	Black
2014-2015	0.08	Below Small	Black
2015-2016	0.08	Below Small	Black

2013 through the 2015-2016 school year are presented in [Table 2](#).

#### 4.1 Connections with existing literature

In this 4-year Texas statewide investigation, results were congruent with the results of previous researchers<sup>[14,21-24]</sup> regarding the presence of inequities in the assignment of discipline consequences. In this empirical statewide investigation across four school years of data, Black boys in Grades 6, 7, 8 were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement one and a half to 21 times more often than their Hispanic, White, or Asian peers. Moreover, Hispanic boys in all three grade levels in all four school years received the second highest rates of this particular disciplinary consequence, followed by White boys and then by Asian boys. Accordingly, results were clearly evident of a stair-step effect<sup>[20]</sup>, with respect to consistent disproportionalities in the assignment of Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements.

In previous investigations by Barnes and Slate<sup>[21]</sup>, Henkel *et al.*<sup>[10]</sup>, and Khan and Slate<sup>[22]</sup>, the emphasis was placed on in-school suspension and on out-of-school suspensions. As such, results of this this empirical investigation into a much more severe discipline consequence extend the extant literature. Findings from these studies regarding the presence of clear inequities are congruent with results of this investigation into the assignment of Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements.

#### 4.2 Implications for policy and for practice

Based upon the results of this multiyear, Texas statewide investigation, several implications for policy and for practice can be made. First, educational leaders and school administrators are encouraged to examine in depth the degree to which inequities might be present in the assignment of Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements to their students on the basis of student ethnicity/race. Are disproportionalities present in their school districts regarding the assignment of this particular consequence, similar in nature to the results delineated in this study? By implementing routine audits of disciplinary consequences, educational leaders and school administrators would become knowledgeable about the presence of any inequities that might exist. Based upon that information, they could then either improve their existing discipline programs or implement new ones, should disproportionalities be present. A second implication is for educational leaders and school administrators to extend their audits to other discipline consequences such as in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension. Should inequities be present in those two discipline consequences, then existing discipline methods would need to be modified or new discipline methods be generated.

A third implication is to examine the behavioral history of students who are assigned disciplinary consequences. Do these students misbehave repeatedly over a multiyear period such that they receive several in-school suspensions, followed by several out-of-school suspensions, and then by a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement? If this situation exists, this process would suggest a failure in the discipline methods that were used. A final recommendation is for policymakers in Texas to require a statewide analysis of discipline consequences to determine the degree to which inequities in their assignment are present. Such inequities could be construed as being violations of students' civil rights to have an appropriate and free education.

#### 4.3 Recommendations for future research

Several suggestions for future research can be made based upon the results of this multiyear, statewide investigation. First, researchers are encouraged to examine the degree to which inequities might be present in Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements as a function of student economic status. To what degree are the results delineated herein by student ethnicity/race similar by student economic status? Do inequities exist in the assignment of discipline consequences between students who are economically disadvantaged and students who are not poor? Another recommendation for



future research is to analyze discipline consequences separately for boys and girls, rather than analyzing data for all students. The extent to which inequities in discipline consequence assignment might differ for boys and for girls is not known. A fourth recommendation would be for researchers to extend this investigation to students in other grade levels. Analyzing data at the elementary school level could provide useful information regarding the frequency with which this consequence is administered to young children. Extending this investigation to students at the high school level could also provide valuable information to education leaders and policymakers.

Given the importance of this investigation, researchers are encouraged to extend this study into other states because only Texas discipline data were analyzed herein. The degree to which the findings delineated herein are generalizable to students in other states is not known. In this investigation, only the discipline consequence of Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement was analyzed. Researchers are encouraged to examine other discipline consequences such as in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program placements. More empirical information is needed regarding the presence or absence of inequities in the assignment of these discipline consequences to students based on their economic status, ethnicity/race, or gender. A final recommendation for future research is to examine the reasons why students are assigned discipline consequences. Are students assigned different consequences for the same misbehavior due to their economic status, their ethnicity/race, or gender?

## 5 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the extent to which inequities were present in Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements for Texas Grade 6, Grade 7, and Grade 8 boys based on their ethnicity/race (*i.e.*, Black, Hispanic, White, and Asian). Four school years of archival data from the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System were analyzed. In each of the school years, Black boys were assigned statistically significantly higher rates of Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements than their peers who were either Hispanic, White, or Asian. Furthermore, Hispanic boys also received statistically significantly higher rates of Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements than their White and Asian peers. As such, a stair-step effect<sup>[20]</sup> was clearly present in the assignment of this consequence by student ethnicity/race. Findings of this 4-year Texas statewide investigation were congruent with the results of previous

researchers<sup>[14,21–24]</sup> regarding the presence of inequities in the assignment of discipline consequences.

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