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# The Effects of School Disciplinary Policies on Violence, Delinquency, and Disorder

Ernest E. Zittrouer III

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THE EFFECTS OF SCHOOL DISCIPLINARY POLICIES ON VIOLENCE, DELINQUENCY,  
AND DISORDER

by

ERNEST E. ZITTRouer III

(Under the Direction of Chad Posick)

ABSTRACT

The occurrence of violent and disruptive behavior in schools has been present throughout most of American educational history. The disciplinary policies established to address these behaviors have changed over time, becoming only more severe. The deterrent effect these policies were intended to produce has seen to be minimal, and despite a reduction in violent school victimization since the mid-1990s, schools continue to rely on these harsh policies (Skiba, 2014). This study examines the relationship between incident counts and discipline action counts for Georgia public schools (N = 2,150) for the 2017-2018 academic school year. This research utilizes negative binomial regression models to explore whether the use of different school disciplinary policies will affect the occurrence of violent, delinquent, and disorderly incidents at school. Findings reveal that the use of different school disciplinary policies can both increase and decrease the likelihood of violence, delinquency, and disorder occurring in schools. The results of this study suggest that when controlling for school characteristics, the use of exclusionary disciplinary policies do not deter violence or disruption as intended. This study should prompt Georgia school administrators and policymakers to explore alternatives to harsh disciplinary policies moving forward. Additionally, limitations and implications for these findings are discussed, and directions for future research are provided.

INDEX WORDS: School disciplinary policies, Violence, Delinquency, Disorder, Racial-  
threat theory

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AND DISORDER

by

ERNEST E. ZITTROUER III

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A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in Partial

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Purpose of the Study

The occurrence of violence affects individuals around the globe every day, so much that in the First World Report on Violence and Health, the World Health Organization reported that violence was the leading cause of death among persons aged 15 to 44 (World Health Organization, 2002). Because the number of violent acts had risen across the globe during the 20th century, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared violence a worldwide health epidemic, defining it broadly as:

The intentional use of physical force or power threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation (WHO, 1996, p. 5).

In concurrence with the surge of violence the rest of the world was witnessing, the United States saw a rise in violent crimes among adolescents between the ages of 10 and 18 during the late 1980s into the mid-1990s. During this period, the U.S. also saw a rise in the number of violent acts that were occurring in primary and secondary educational institutions across the country (Butts & Travis, 2002). In 1993, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) classified this surge of school violence as a unique public health problem (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1993). Violence that occurs in schools constitutes this unique type of problem because it affects the primary purpose of school, which is to learn (Gorski & Pilotto; 1993).

American schools mirror U.S. society, and as the attitudes and behaviors of society begin to change, so do our schools (Crews & Counts, 1997). As juvenile crime rates were rapidly

increasing between 1984 and 1993 (predominantly homicide rates), there was a steady increase in fatal and nonfatal violent acts occurring in schools (Butts & Travis, 2002). As several studies have noted, the number of fatal violent incidents was smaller than the number of nonfatal violent incidents during the 1990s (Kachur et al., 1996; Anderson et al., 2001). However, the media attention fatal incidents received compared to nonfatal incidents produced a culture of fear across the U.S. that school violence was rampant, although it was on the decline in the mid-1990s (Kaufman et al., 1998; Addington, 2003). While highly publicized mass murders (such as Columbine, Virginia Tech, and Sandy Hook) are extremely rare, yet painful for both those individuals involved and the community (Kachur et al., 1996; Astor et al., 1999; Anderson et al., 2001; Dinkes, Kemp, Baum, 2009; Hawdon et al., 2015; Musu-Gillette et al., 2017), violence that students are more likely to experience include teasing, bullying, sexual harassment, and other forms of classroom disturbances. These types of disturbances are what researchers consider “low-level” acts of aggression because students are more likely to experience, perpetrate, hear about, avoid, or ignore them daily while at school (Dupper & Meyer-Adams, 2002; Agnich, 2011).

To curb violence occurring in American Schools, President George H. W. Bush and the 50 state governors convened in 1989 to implement the program Goals 2000, which established the U.S. national educational goals to improve student achievement and refocus the objectives of education (Crews & Counts, 1997). The sixth goal of the U.S. national education goals states:

By the year 2000, every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning. The stated objectives are: Every school will implement a firm and fair policy on use, possession, and distribution of drugs and alcohol. Parents, businesses, and community organizations will work together to ensure that schools are a safe haven for all

children. Every school district will develop a comprehensive K-12 drug and alcohol prevention education program. Drug and alcohol curriculum should be taught as an integral part of health education. In addition, community-based teams should be organized to provide students and teachers with needed support (Goals 2000, 1991, p. 2).

Goals 2000 failed to meet expectations, and the U.S. appropriated millions of dollars to eradicate violence, weapons, drugs, and alcohol from schools (Crews & Counts, 1997). At the same time, many schools across the country were introducing “get tough” and “zero-tolerance” policies to curb the increase in crime (Elliot, Hamburg, & Williams, 1998; Skiba, 2000). Skiba (2000) notes that after the inclusion of zero-tolerance policies in schools during the early 1990s, the policies began to harden on particular school disturbances. In the process of cracking down on minor school disturbances, schools across the U.S. were unknowingly creating the school-to-prison pipeline through juvenile court-referrals (Wald & Losen, 2003). Also, the use of corporal punishment is noteworthy since it has been embedded into U.S. culture since colonial times, and, as of 2005, 23 states still deemed corporal punishment as an acceptable form of discipline for school disruptions (Midlarsky & Klain, 2005). As schools continue to grow and the presence of violence and disorder remain in schools, there is a need to examine whether current disciplinary policies have an effect, and if not what can be done to ensure school safety, so that students can learn in a safe environment.

The present study will focus on low-level acts of aggression that occurred in Georgia schools during the 2017-2018 academic school year. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between these low-level acts of aggression and school disciplinary policies. The primary research question being addressed is whether different types of school disciplinary

policies affect rates of school violence, delinquency, and disorder. Along with reviewing the literature on current disciplinary policies, this study will also discuss the definition of school violence, its prevalence in the U.S., and predictors of school violence. This study will utilize data collected by the Georgia Department of Education to examine the prevalence of violence in Georgia schools and the effects of multiple types of disciplinary policies and practices on levels of violence over time. This research will inform policymakers and school administrators regarding what can be done moving forward to reduce violence in Georgia schools.

## CHAPTER 2

### SCHOOL VIOLENCE IN THE UNITED STATES

#### *Defining School Violence*

How researchers, practitioners, and policymakers define school violence is through interpersonal and spatial components. Several researchers have noted that the term school violence implies that the location of “school-associated” violence can occur on school grounds, in school buildings, en route to or from school, or during school-related events (Furlong & Morrison, 2000; Henry, 2000). In general, the term violence is defined as the use of force that results in harm. Furthermore, the term “interpersonal violence” is generally defined as the behavior of a person against another with the intent to cause harm, including the threat to cause harm (Gorski & Pilotto, 1993). According to Henry (2000), in the school context, violence is usually considered in terms of students victimizing other students or teachers through acts of physical harm.

In the 1998 Indicators of School and Crime Safety report, violent victimization was defined as “physical attacks or taking property from the student directly by force, weapon or threats,” in the school building, on school grounds, or the school bus (Kaufman et al., 1998, p. 157). This definition of violent victimization doesn’t specify forms of violence perpetrated by teachers, administrators, and institutions such as the school itself. Elliot, Hamburg, and Williams (1998) defined school violence as the threat of use of physical force with the intent to cause physical injury, damage, or intimidation of another person, excluding the use of physical violence among friends (i.e., pushing and shoving). Henry (2000) noted that many definitions of school violence fail to include forms of verbal and psychological abuse and tend to exclude forms of institutionalized violence such as racism and sexism. Furthermore, these definitions tend to ignore



authoritarian discipline (Adams, 2000), and militaristic approaches to school security (Thompkins, 2000). According to Yogan (2000), definitions of school violence tend to ignore the prevalence and consequences of teacher perpetrated violence on students and administrators perpetrated violence on students and teachers.

The definition provided by Thomas (2006) is detailed and sufficient for this research, and he defines the word violence concerning school as:

Any intentional actions that (a) disrupt the operation of a school's learning program, (b) cause physical harm or psychological distress for students, teachers, and other members of the school staff, and/or (c) destroy property. Violent behaviors can occur within the school, on the school grounds, or near the school. Persons committing violent acts can be students, members of the school staff, or outsiders (Thomas, 2006, p. 1).

In simpler terms, violence is a continuum of aggression ranging from non-physical to physical harm (Agnich, 2011). Now that the term violence in context with schools has been discussed and briefly defined, we must consider the prevalence of school violence in the United States.

### *Prevalence of School Violence*

The surge of youth violence that spanned the United States throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s brought with it a rise in the number of violent acts that were occurring in U.S. public schools (Butts & Travis, 2002). Several researchers note that school violence has been present throughout history; however, the subject was not considered a major problem until roughly three to four decades ago (Aries, 1962; Crews & Counts, 1997; Midlarsky & Klain, 2005). It was not until the 1970s that U.S. public officials began to perceive school violence as a growing concern.

There were two landmark studies commissioned by Congress in the 1970s to investigate the growing concern of school violence: the Bayh Report (1975) and the Safe School Study (1978). The Bayh Report (1975) concluded that American schools were facing serious crimes of a felonious nature inside school grounds. More specifically, the report noted that between the years 1970 and 1973, homicides increased by 18.5%, rape and attempted rape increased by 40.1%, assaults on students increased by 85.3%, assaults on teachers increased by 77.4%, and the number of weapons confiscated by school authorities increased by 54.4% in three years. In 1978, Congress mandated the Safe Schools Study to ascertain the prevalence and seriousness of crime occurring in elementary and secondary schools across the country. What the study found was that roughly 282,000 students and 5,200 teachers were physically assaulted in secondary schools every month (National Institute of Education, 1978).

Despite the concerns listed in the Bayh Report (1975) and the Safe Schools Study (1978), school violence and violence, in general, did not become a major public concern until the rates of violence skyrocketed in the late 1980s and lasted into the mid-1990s (Elliot, Hamburg, Williams, 1998). According to the 1996 Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, in 1982, only three percent of adults considered crime and violence the most pressing issue, but more than 50% did by 1994. By the end of the 1980s, drugs were the most pressing issue facing schools, according to the public (Gallup & Elam, 1988), but by 1994 violence became a top concern (Elam & Rose, 1995). Although the fear of school violence rose during the late 1980s and remained stable throughout the 1990s, the 2000 Annual Report on School Safety reported that crimes against students while at school had been steadily decreasing since 1994 (US Department of Education (DOE) & Department of Justice (DOJ), 2000).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced this surge in youth violence during the late 1980s and early 1990s as a unique public health concern (CDC, 2004). During this period, youth violence increased, and so did the homicide rate for teens (Snyder & Sickmund, 1995; Mercy & Rosenberg, 1998). While the rates for youth violence and homicides were increasing, the rates for other groups were decreasing, and this was in part due to the number of handguns possessed by youth (Katz, 1988; Gorski & Pilotto, 1993; Snyder & Sickmund, 1995; Mercy & Rosenberg, 1998). Throughout this period, homicides became the leading cause of death for persons between the ages of 15 and 24 and the leading cause of death for African American male youth (Fingerhut, 1993; Snyder & Sickmund, 1995; Dahlberg, 1998). This crime wave brought with it an increase in lethality, random violence, and fewer places to feel safe, one of those places being our schools.

A 1995 National Report on Juvenile Offenders and Victims found that in 1991, over half of all juvenile victimizations occurred while on school grounds (Snyder & Sickmund, 1995). The numbers are hard to overlook, but despite the increased fear among the public about school crime, schools are safer than homes, neighborhoods, and communities (Hanke, 1996; Maguire & Pastore, 1996). The National Crime Victimization Survey on School Crime revealed that in 1989, roughly nine percent of students between the ages of 12 and 19 were victims of school violence and that the majority of crime consisted of simple assaults (i.e., cuts and bruises) (Chandler et al., 1998). With an increase in lethality and random violence, many Americans feared school-associated homicides, although they are rare. Kachur et al. (1996) concluded that, between 1992 and 1994, 105 violent deaths occurred on or at school properties nationwide, which corresponds with a homicide rate of .09 per 100,000 students. Another study revealed that, between 1992 and 1999,

the number of single-victim homicides had decreased significantly, but the number of multiple-victim events had increased (Anderson et al., 2001).

DeVoe and Bauer (2010) reported that, during the 2006-2007 school year, 4.3 percent of students reported being victims of any crime while at school. This is a decrease from 9.5 percent from the 1994-1995 school year. Compared to school-associated deaths in the 1990s, the current rate of homicides in U.S. schools has declined (Dinkes, Kemp, & Baum, 2009; Musu-Gillette et al., 2017). Similar to the decline in violent deaths, there has also been a relatively stable decline in violent school victimization (i.e., assault), with roughly 841,100 students experiencing nonfatal violence in the 2013-2014 school year (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017).

The most frequently reported aggressive act, which is a problem for many students across the country, remains bullying (Dinkes, Kemp, & Baum, 2009; Musu-Gillette et al., 2017). Many forms of violence and disruption occur in U.S. schools, but in particular bullying, and sexual harassment occur more often than incidents of weapon possession and drug use (AAUW 2001; DeVoe & Bauer, 2010; Musu-Gillette et al., 2017). Bullying usually occurs in places on school campuses that are out of sight from teachers and administrators (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). According to Vivolo-Kantor, Martell, Holland, and Westby (2014), bullying can occur in two ways, direct and indirect. A form of direct bullying includes physically fighting, while a form of indirect bullying would be spreading rumors. Furlong et al. (1995) note that direct bullying is more prevalent among males, while indirect bullying is more prevalent among female students. Menesini and Salmivalli (2017) reported that, like most forms of school victimization, bullying peaks during middle school and declines throughout high school.

### *Predictors of School Violence*

The literature examining the occurrence of violence, delinquency, and disorder in schools tends to focus on both the characteristics and risk factors for victims and perpetrators. Although it is important to understand why certain students are more vulnerable than others, it is more relevant to the current study to examine the characteristics and risk factors for those that perpetrate these events at school.

Much research that has been conducted to examine the factors that lead to violent behavior in schools as shown that males are more likely to be both the perpetrators and victims (Kingery et al., 1998, Warner et al., 1999; Furlong & Morrison, 2000; Cullen et al., 2008). Furlong and Morrison (2000) argued that male students tend to engage in more aggressive behavior while female students engage in more social aggression (i.e., spreading rumors), which is less noticeable. Additionally, Furlong and Morrison (2000) noted that physical aggressions primarily take place in elementary and middle schools while possession of drugs and weapons and incidents of sexual harassment occur more throughout high schools. The literature examining ethnicity and violent behavior in schools have tended to conclude that there is no large difference in perpetration among racial groups (Warner et al., 1999; Furlong & Morrison, 2000; Eisenbraun, 2007). Warner and colleagues (1999) suggest that violence tends to be perpetrated between students of similar race and sex. Furthermore, Eisenbraun (2007) concludes that it is not membership in an ethnic group that increases the chance of perpetration but the condition that a student is faced with (i.e., low socioeconomic status, learning disability, etc.).

According to Ingersoll (1982), the occurrence of school violence isn't premeditated; it is a spur of the moment reaction to a particular situation. Researchers have concluded that perpetrators of school violence may exhibit signs of poor coping skills, anxiety, stress, depression, and may show symptoms of attention-deficit problems and impulsivity (Farrington, 1988; Gorski & Pilotto,

1993; Dahlberg, 1998). In addition to psychological and social skills, students who show a lack of educational success may also be prone to violent behavior due to poor coping skills (Gorski & Pilotto, 1993). Furthermore, studies have shown that when a student comes from an at-risk family, their chances of committing violence increases (Dahlberg, 1998; Eisenbraun, 2007). Youth who are physically abused at home, influenced by harsh discipline, or rejected are at a greater risk of exhibiting aggression (Dahlberg, 1998). Additionally, Craig and Pepler (1997) examined peer relationships and found that they are key to the developmental process and that, in a majority of bullying incidents, peers reinforce the notion instead of intervening. The more a child is exposed to an unstable household environment or peer group, the more likely they are to display aggression or commit violent acts at school.

The majority of a student's day is spent at school; therefore, it is important to understand how different aspects of a school such as size, location, and physical condition can produce an environment conducive to violence and disorder. Rates of violent victimization differ by school type, where elementary schools have the lowest, followed by high schools, and then middle schools where violence is the highest (Furlong & Morrison, 2000). There is conflicting research on whether or not school location increases the chances of violent behavior. A study conducted by the National School Boards Association (1993) revealed that urban middle schools have higher rates of victimization while Eisenbraun (2007) concludes, "No school should be dismissed from the potential of violence based on its location" (p. 465). The size of schools has also been a focal point in the discussion of violent behavior in schools. According to several researchers, larger schools see a higher rate of violent victimization because of their larger population. Larger schools may seem impersonal, leading to alienation from other students and teachers, which can result in student aggression (Ferris & West, 2004; Leung & Ferris, 2006). Additionally, several studies have

concluded that in schools where the student to teacher ratio is moderate or higher relative to a low ratios, students will have negative attitudes towards teachers, students will have lower academic expectations, and rates of removal through exclusion will be higher (Jimerson et al., 2012; Martinez et al., 2016; Pigott et al., 2018). Furthermore, Eisenbraun (2007) notes that the physical condition of a school may be associated with victimization; that is, the presence of graffiti and broken equipment may produce an atmosphere conducive to violent behavior.

The current chapter describes school violence as an act that may occur on school grounds, in school buildings, en route to or from school, or during school-related events. Generally, definitions of school violence tend to focus on the use of physical force and exclude forms of victimization through verbal and psychological abuse or institutionalized violence through sexism or racism. The surge of violence committed by juveniles during the late 1980s and early 1990s has all but disappeared, although students in school today are more likely to experience or perpetrate minor forms of disruption and delinquency. Although the majority of research focuses on individual predictors of school violence perpetration, school-level characteristics are also important factors in determining why violence is perpetrated in schools. The following chapter will review the literature on disciplinary policies that have come to light after an increase in school violence in the early 1990s, specifically focusing on exclusionary policies, juvenile court-referrals, and corporal punishment.

## CHAPTER 3

### PREVENTING SCHOOL VIOLENCE

An essential legal doctrine to note is that of *in loco parentis* meaning “in place of the parent.” This was considered the backbone of disciplinary policy throughout most of American educational history leading into the 1960s (Kafka, 2011). The doctrine implies that when teachers and principals impose disciplinary action upon a student, they have the student’s best interest in mind, regardless of whether the actual parent agrees. As schools became more professionalized and levels of school violence rose, the doctrine of *in loco parentis* seemed to be abandoned. Researchers have argued that the disciplinary policies that started emerging during the 1970s were intended to limit the discretion of teachers and principals and to prohibit them from tolerating certain kinds of behaviors (Skiba, 2000; Kafka, 2011).

The primary purpose of schools in America is to educate youth. However, throughout most of American educational history, schools have been filled with unwanted violence and disruption that hinder this purpose, and the disciplinary actions to deal with these behaviors have only become more severe. The following sections will review the literature on corporal punishment, exclusionary discipline policies, and juvenile-court referrals and their proscribed effectiveness and consequences they have had on school disruption and student learning. Throughout most of American educational history, corporal punishment was widely used up until the mid-1970s (Midlarsky and Klain, 2005). The use of corporal punishment gave both school teachers and administrators the sole power to distribute discipline. As American schooling began to grow and become more professionalized, this discretion was removed from teachers and administrators and given to school boards and district administrators (Kafka, 2011). What would emerge would be the use of exclusionary discipline policies such as expulsion, out-of-school suspension, in-school suspension, and alternative educational placement. However, during the early 1990s, these



exclusionary policies would be intertwined with zero-tolerance policies, which would take the use of discipline to a whole new level (Kafka, 2011). At the turn of the 20th century, in response to incidents such as Columbine, schools across the nation would turn toward the use of police officers in schools and this would lead to students being referred to the juvenile court system, or what Wald and Losen (2003) called the school-to-prison pipeline.

### *Corporal Punishment*

The use of corporal punishment in schools has been around since Colonial America, during which its primary purpose was to aid the school teacher in maintaining order in the classroom (Midlarsky and Klain, 2005). According to Midlarsky and Klain (2005), to keep order within the classroom, teachers would use threats, intimidation, humiliation, or physical abuse. It is important to note that at the beginning of the 19th century, the use of corporal punishment had been limited to only acts of school violence or inappropriate school behavior, not poor academic performance (Midlarsky and Klain, 2005). The frequency of corporal punishment in schools would drop significantly between 1974 and 1994, when 25 states throughout the U.S. banned the use of corporal punishment in schools (Gershoff & Font, 2016). As of 2017, 31 states have banned the use of corporal punishment in schools, while it is still legal in 19 states—Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Wyoming (Font & Gershoff, 2017). It is evident from the states that still use corporal punishment that a majority are located in the South.

A defining moment in the legality of corporal punishment in schools occurred in 1977 with the Supreme Court ruling of *Ingraham v. Wright*. The Supreme Court ruled that the use of corporal punishment in public schools was not a violation of the Eighth Amendment's cruel and unusual

punishment clause nor the Fourteenth Amendment's due process clause. Gershoff and Font (2016) argue that, at the time of *Ingraham v. Wright*, the Court based its arguments on the fact that corporal punishment was still widely used in public schools and that only two states had banned its use—New Jersey and Massachusetts. The decision in *Ingraham* allowed states to decide for themselves whether or not they would permit the use of school corporal punishment, and in states where it is legal, district superintendents and school principals have the discretion on whether or not to use corporal punishment as a form of discipline (Gershoff & Font, 2016). As of 2016, there were no federal laws or regulations concerning the use of school corporal punishment (Gershoff & Font, 2016).

Previous research findings have been somewhat consistent, reporting that use of school corporal punishment can negatively affect students, and that there are disparities among race, sex, and disability among students who are corporally punished (Gregory, 1995; Hinchey, 2004; Owen, 2005; Dingus & Dupper, 2008; Gershoff, Purtell, & Holas, 2015; Gershoff & Font, 2016; Font & Gershoff, 2017). Owen (2005) reported that the use of corporal punishment in schools could increase immediate compliance, but only when students are hit over and over again. Hyman (1995) argued that the use of corporal punishment could have lasting physical and psychological effects on students, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), development of aggressive behavior, or poor academic performance. By administering corporal punishment in schools, school personnel is legitimizing the practice of violence by using violence to solve behavioral problems (Owen, 2005).

One of the most distinguishing disparities in the use of corporal punishments in schools involves race. Gregory (1995) found that African Americans students were over three times more likely than white students to be subjected to corporal punishment. Font and Gershoff (2017) posit

that racial disparities vary from school district to school district where corporal punishment is administered, and in some districts, White students may be subjected to corporal punishment more frequently than African American students. Their data showed that among schools using corporal punishment who had a student population of mixed racial composition that African American students receive corporal punishment at a rate 2.5 times higher than other students. Gershoff and Font (2016) found that in Georgia school districts where corporal punishment is allowed, racial disparities existed in 26% of them. The American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force (2008) found that there were no differences in the misbehavior between African American and White students; however, African Americans received harsher penalties for these misbehaviors.

Gershoff and Font (2016) also noted a disparity among genders in a majority of the Southern states, still allowing the use of corporal punishment. Skiba, Michael, Nardo, and Peterson (2002) noted that males are twice as likely as females to be referred to the office for a violation of school rules, while Gershoff and Font (2016) reported that males who are referred are four times as likely to experience corporal punishments compared to females. Gershoff and Font (2016) reported that, “children with disabilities are over 50% more likely experience school corporal punishment than their peers without disabilities in 67% of school districts in Alabama, 44% in Arkansas, 34% in Georgia, 35% in Louisiana, 46% in Mississippi, and 36% in Tennessee” (p.10). This finding is troubling because, under the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1997, schools are supposed to provide extra support and assistance to these students, but the data suggest that school administrators are not exploring other options for these students.

According to Gershoff and Font (2016), in some states where school corporal punishment is still legal, state officials will explicitly exempt school personnel from liability under state abuse

laws. In other states, parents are given the option to opt-out of the use of school corporal punishment, “In Georgia, parents may prevent their children from receiving corporal punishment by submitting a signed form at the time of enrollment from a state-licensed doctor asserting corporal punishment would be detrimental to the child’s mental or emotional stability” (Gershoff & Font, 2016, p. 16). Official Code of Georgia Annotated (OCGA) § 20-2-731 states that corporal punishment may not be used as a “first line of punishment” which suggests school officials should seek out other disciplinary alternatives (1964, p. 673). While the use of school corporal punishment is dwindling (Font & Gershoff, 2017), there is still very little evidence on what types of behaviors call for the administration of its use; this study seeks to address the gap.

### *Exclusionary Discipline Policies*

Exclusionary discipline policies include the use of expulsion, out-of-school suspension, in-school suspension, and alternative educational placement. Adams (2000) argued that these policies were attractive to school administrators for three reasons, (1) they provide administrators a way to deal with a large number of disruptive students, (2) these policies provide protection to the large student body, and (3) they give school administrators a sense of power and control. Despite the attractive nature of expulsions and out-of-school suspensions, several court cases during the 1970s challenged their validity regarding student’s due process rights (Kafka, 2011). In 1975, the Supreme Court ruled in *Goss v. Lopez* that students have the right to due process justice even though school is not a court of law. What this meant for schools is that they now had to develop new disciplinary policies to deal with the growing number of disruptions.

In response to *Goss v. Lopez*, schools across the country started implementing in-school suspension (ISS) programs, and they gained traction because they excluded disruptive students from the general population but were still located on school grounds (Adams, 2000). Allman and

Slate (2011) note that ISS programs can vary from school to school, but the majority incorporate the same three components, (1) students are isolated in a separate classroom, (2) a certified teacher or paraprofessional oversees the classroom, and (3) they eat lunch in isolation. In-school suspension programs are thought to deter minor school disruptions such as classroom disobedience, and while they have not fully achieved this, they are still popular among school administrators (Matt & Howard, 2003).

Another exclusionary discipline policy that emerged was the use of alternative educational placement (alternative schools). Kemerer and Walsh (2000) argue that alternative placement practices are used for both serious (i.e., terroristic threats, weapons, drugs) and nonserious (i.e., classroom disobedience) offenses, similar to zero-tolerance policies operate. As the 1980s came to an end, schools started implementing zero-tolerance policies alongside exclusionary discipline policies, and this would strengthen the use of expulsions and out-of-school suspensions.

According to Skiba (2000), at the time of its implementation into schools there was no definitive definition for the term zero-tolerance, its meaning and use have developed over time, but it has primarily been used to send the message that certain types of behavior will not be tolerated by punishing all offenses severely, no matter how minor. With the signing of the Gun Free Schools Act of 1994, “The law mandates a one-year calendar expulsion for possession of a firearm, referral of law-violating students to the criminal justice system, and the provision that state law must authorize the chief administrative officer of each local school district to modify such expulsions on a case-by-case basis” (Skiba, 2000, p. 2). This law would put to rest any notion that the presence of zero-tolerance policies was leaving schools. In *Violence in America's Public Schools: 1996-1997*, Heaviside and colleagues (1998) reported through a national study of elementary, middle, and high school students that 79 percent of all schools had zero-tolerance

policies for violence, and 94 percent had policies for firearms. Although the rates of serious violence have decreased since the 1990s, schools are continuing to implement the harsh discipline policies for minor school disruptions (Kafka, 2011).

The continued use of exclusionary discipline policies intertwined with zero-tolerance policies has had unintended consequences for students (Raffaele-Mendez, 2003; Ryan & Goodram, 2013). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2000), during the 2000-2001 school year, approximately 3 million students were suspended, and 100,000 students expelled. The 2016 Condition of Education report revealed that the nonfatal victimization rate, which includes violent and nonviolent victimization, had fallen from 181 victimizations per 1,000 students in 1992 to 33 per 1,000 students in 2014 (Kena et al., 2016). Even as victimization rates decline and the use of exclusionary punishment rises, Musu-Gillette and colleagues (2017) reported that, in the 2011-2012 school year, 3.4 million students in public schools received an in-school suspension and 3.2 million received an out-of-school suspension. Researchers analyzing the effects of exclusionary policies have found their continued use disproportionately affect African Americans and students with disabilities (Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008; Losen et al., 2015), that they can impact academic performance (Rausch & Skiba, 2005), and that they primarily punish minor incidents (Raffaele-Mendez & Knoff, 2003).

The use of exclusionary discipline policies had disproportionately affected African American students since the 1970s (Hoffman, 2014; Losen et al., 2015). From the beginning, these policies were reserved for severe offenses but are now used to punish minor disruptions that primarily affect African American students. Over time, exclusionary discipline policies have come to affect African American females more than any other group (Smith & Harper, 2015; Annamma et al., 2019). Aud, Kewal-Ramani, and Frohlich (2011) note that while suspension and expulsions

rates for white students have slightly decreased since the 1990s, the rates for African American students have risen. The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (2014) reported that African Americans represent roughly 15% of the total U.S. student population, but they comprise approximately 35% of all students suspended at least once and 36% of students expelled from school.

A study conducted by Smith and Harper (2015) examined suspension and expulsion rates for African American students across thirteen southern states and found that during the 2011-2012 school year African American students comprised only 24% of students enrolled in these states but constituted 48% of all suspensions and 49% of all expulsions in public schools. During the same year, nationally, African American males comprised 35% of all expulsions and 35% of all suspensions among males, while African American females comprised 45% of all suspensions and 42% of all expulsions among females. In the state of Georgia during the 2011-2012 school year, African American students made up 37% of the student population in K-12 schools, but they accounted for 67% and 64% of the state's suspensions and expulsions, respectively. Despite popular belief that out-of-school suspensions and expulsions are supposed to be reserved for dangerous and violent acts, they tend to be used more frequently for minor disruptions that primarily affect African American students (Raffaele-Mendez & Knoff, 2003). Raffaele-Mendez and Knoff (2003) examined what infractions are punished more frequently and found African Americans are punished for disobedience, disruptive behavior, and fighting at a higher rate compared to White students punished for weapons possession and narcotics possession. Annamma et al. (2019) studied the effect of exclusionary policies on African American females and found that out-of-school suspension was the most widely used disciplinary action against them, while the most common infraction against them consisted of classroom disruption and disobedience.

Research examining the effects of exclusionary discipline policies has reported profound impacts on disabled students (Skiba, 2002; Zhang, Katsiyannis, & Herbst, 2004; Losen & Gillespie, 2012; Vincent, Sprague, & Tobin, 2012; Williams, Pazey, Shelby, & Yates, 2013; Sullivan, Van Norman, & Klingbeil, 2014; Losen et al., 2015). Leone, Mayer, Malmgren, and Meisel (2000) reported that disabled students make up roughly 20% of all students suspended in American public schools, but they only account for approximately 11% of the student population. The 2010 Digest of Education Statistics reported that 6.5 million students with disabilities were served by federally funded programs and spent 58% of their time receiving an education in a classroom with their nondisabled peers (Snyder & Dillow, 2011). The Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1997 provides the basic principles guiding the education of disabled students, and disciplinary actions they may confront, with its central tenet being disabled students will be provided a free and appropriate education (Skiba, 2002; Losen et al., 2015). However, there are a fraction of disabled students across the country who are disproportionately affected by exclusionary discipline policies because of their disability and their race.

When it comes to disciplining students with disabilities, there is a disparity among disabilities that are punished more often (Skiba, 2002; Zhang et al., 2004; Sullivan et al., 2014). Skiba (2002) posits that students with emotional disturbances have a higher chance of being suspended compared to their nondisabled peers. One study examined several different types of disabilities (i.e., learning disability, intellectual disability, emotional disturbance, speech-language impairment, and low-incidence disabilities) and found that students with emotional disturbances were more likely to be suspended at least once during the school year (Sullivan et al., 2014). Zhang and colleagues (2004) examined four different categories (i.e., all disabilities, learning disabilities, mental retardation, and emotional disturbance) and reported that emotional disturbance had the



highest exclusion rate out of all four categories from 1999 to 2002. Another disparity researchers have found while examining exclusion rates of disabled students is that African American students are affected at a higher rate (Losen & Gillespie, 2012; Losen et al., 2015). According to Losen and Gillespie (2012), during the 2009-2010 school year for all racial groups, combined 13% of disabled students were suspended at least once compared to seven percent of nondisabled students. Their report found that the suspension rate for disabled students was highest among African Americans at 25%, sixteen percentage points higher than Whites disabled students. Although the population of disabled students remains small compared to the overall student population, more research is needed to address why these students are excluded at a higher rate.

Although demographic factors can tell us who gets suspended, it is essential to understand how the exclusionary discipline policies affect academic achievement and retention. Exclusion can be seen as a temporary solution, but according to Christle, Jolivette, and Nelson (2007), it can be harmful to a student's success. Arcia (2006) notes that students who are suspended will gain considerably less academically, have higher dropout rates, and may have below standard academic performance before the suspension. Gregory, Skiba, and Noguera (2010) argue that students who are frequently suspended or expelled may become less bonded to school, less invested in school rules and coursework, and subsequently less motivated to achieve academic success. Rausch and Skiba (2005) hypothesized that frequent removal of a student might have a negative influence on their learning by reducing the opportunity to learn. They note that even a relatively small number of days missed may create a significant disruption in a student's academic learning because the absolute amount of time spent academically engaged in guaranteeing satisfactory academic results is unknown and may be different for each student. An important area emerging in the research is how exclusionary policies affect schools and school districts economically (Marchbanks et al.,

2014; Marchbanks et al., 2015). Marchbanks et al. (2015) argue that the more instructional time students miss, the more opportunities they will lose learning foundational academic skills necessary for future standardized tests and employment. When students are retained, school districts have to spend funds an additional year; however, if students drop out, they don't have to. But this may cost society in the future because these individuals are not educated (Marchbanks et al., 2015). Exclusion limits the amount of time students will learn academically and can increase their involvement in law-breaking activities, therefore additional research is needed focusing on how to keep students in schools but maintaining school discipline.

### *Juvenile Court Referrals*

The signing of the Gun Free Schools Act of 1994 and the subsequent implementation of zero-tolerance policies for violent offenses blurred the line between traditional disciplinary practices and the law. Furthermore, while the rate of violent incidents was declining in the latter half of the 1990s, the occurrence of the 1999 Columbine High School shooting and its intensive media coverage did little to halt the fear that this could happen at any school (Heitzeg, 2009; Curtis, 2013; Smith, 2015). As a result, in addition to zero-tolerance policies, schools started installing metal detectors, video cameras and hiring school resources officers (Snell, Bailey, & Carona, 2002; Krezmien, Leone, Zablocki, & Wells, 2010). Students' misbehaviors that were once considered disciplinary issues for school administrators were now being criminalized and handled by the juvenile and/or adult criminal justice systems which established the school-to-prison pipeline (Wald & Losen, 2003, Hirschfield, 2008; Heitzeg, 2009; Krezmien et al., 2010; Curtis, 2013; Smith, 2015; Mallet, 2016; May, 2018; Rocque & Snelling, 2018).

The term "school-to-prison pipeline" refers to "the growing pattern of tracking students of educational institutions, primarily via 'zero-tolerance' policies, and directly, and/or indirectly, into

the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems” (Heitzeg, 2009, p. 1). While zero-tolerance policies are likely to push students out of school that does not necessarily mean they will end up in court. According to Krezmien, Leone, and Wilson (2014), two pathways link schools to the justice system. The first path reveals that the use of expulsions and suspensions place students at a greater risk of becoming incarcerated because they are removed from the positive influences of schools and may encounter negative influences (i.e., drugs and alcohol). The second pathway posits a direct link. That is a direct referral to the police or justice system by the school, stemming from the criminalization of student misbehavior once thought to be addressed solely through traditional school disciplinary practices (Krezmien et al., 2014). Rocque and Snelling (2018) argue that this new form discipline seeks to represent school policies that try and minimize risk and control minority populations that are thought to be a danger to purposes of school. In short, this new disciplinology mirrors how the criminal justice system operates.

Smith (2015) argues that the school-to-prison pipeline has been linked to the overreliance of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions. Further, Fabelo et al. (2011) reported that students who have been suspended from school have the highest likelihood of ending up in the juvenile justice system. There have been two studies examining the link between exclusionary policies and prison (Wilson and Krezmien, 2007; Krezmien et al., 2010). Showing support for path one posited by Krezmien et al. (2014), Wilson and Krezmien (2007) found that students who were incarcerated were expelled at more than 200 times the rate of average public-school students. Krezmien et al. (2010) concluded that in a five-state study of juvenile referral rates between 1995 and 2004, that four of the states saw a greater proportion of students referred in 2004 than in 1995. Their findings suggest that schools are paying more attention to student misbehaviors and responding in a way where students are directly sent to the justice system. The continued response to criminalize minor

misbehaviors and refer students to the court has disproportionately affected African American and disabled students and leads to poor academic performance and higher dropout rates (Heitzeg, 2009; Krezmien et al., 2010; Curtis, 2013; Smith, 2015; Mallet, 2016).

Rocque and Snellings (2018) offer two recommendations that may lead to the dismantling of the school-to-prison pipeline, reducing reliance on exclusionary discipline policies and the reliance of states on incarcerating juveniles. Further, the crossover between school discipline and the juvenile court system needs further attention to address the disparities that exist and to protect students from future incarceration. Research examining this relationship tends to rely on its causal connectedness, but moving forward, research is needed on this connection can be dismantled.

### *Current Study*

Throughout much of American educational history, the use of corporal punishment was the primary form of school discipline (Midlarsky & Klain, 2005). However, researchers examining the use of school corporal punishment have found little effects in its use on behavior and have found that it disproportionately affects African Americans, disabled students, and males at a higher rate (Gregory, 1995; Hinchey, 2004; Owen, 2005; Dingus & Dupper, 2008; Gershoff, Purtell, & Holas, 2015; Gershoff & Font, 2016; Font & Gershoff, 2017). Additionally, previous research has concluded that the use of school corporal punishment is intended only to be used for disciplinary action, but there is limited evidence of what infractions it is frequently used for. A decline in the usage of corporal punishment gave rise to the use of exclusionary discipline policies such as expulsion, OSS, and ISS. The inclusion of zero-tolerance policies within exclusionary discipline policies has not had the intended effect of keeping violence and disruption out of our schools (Skiba, 2000). The literature instead reveals that exclusionary policies, such as suspensions and expulsions, have increased the use of law enforcement in schools and have unintentionally

impacted minority students and academic outcomes (Skiba, 2014). An unintended consequence of the implementation of zero-tolerance policies was the school-to-prison pipeline, which criminalizes certain behaviors and pushes students toward the juvenile justice system (Mallet, 2016). To date, one of the most profound studies examining the effectiveness of zero-tolerance policies concerning school discipline was undertaken by the American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force in 2008. The task force concluded that the implementation of zero-tolerance policies in the 1990s and early 2000s did not improve climate or safety and that it may have increased the discipline and academic gaps between white students and minorities and disabled students and their nondisabled peers (APA, 2008).

Through a thorough examination of prior research, the current study has found several gaps in the research:

1. Previous literature has not examined what types of disciplinary actions are used most frequently for minor school infractions.
2. Previous studies have primarily focused on the use of expulsions and suspensions for minor school infractions and not in-school suspensions and alternative educational placement.
3. Previous studies have primarily examined the use of disciplinary actions in urban school districts but not rural school districts.
4. Literature examining the use of school corporal punishment does not provide in-depth data on what minor infractions it is most frequently used for.

The current study will seek to address these gaps in the literature. This study also seeks to address whether school disciplinary policies affect rates of low-level aggression across time by examining disciplinary records for the state of Georgia during the 2017-2018 academic school year.

However, before turning to this data and findings, racial threat is explored as a means of framing racial disparity among school discipline. There has been a plethora amount of studies conducted examining the existence of racial disparities among school disciplinary policies, and the results seem to be confounded. Furthermore, Rocque (2010) posits that a majority of these studies have failed to control for overall student behavior and school characteristics. By controlling for student behavior and school-level factors (i.e., gender, GPA, socioeconomic status), Rocque (2010) found that African American students were still more likely than White students to be referred to the office for disciplinary action. Previous literature has sought to understand why African American students are subject to various forms of social control, and the theoretical perspective of racial threat is of particular relevance to this understanding (Rocque, 2010).

## CHAPTER 4

### THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

#### *Racial Threat*

The racial threat perspective is rooted in conflict theory. According to Quinney (1977), conflict theory posits that a capitalistic class will use its authority to maintain power and control over its subordinate individuals and classes. Within conflict theory, there exists a system of social control which provides the rules on how individuals should or should not behave. This system includes mechanisms of formal and informal control (Akers, 2017). William Chambliss (1968) argues that conflict exists within a society because societal roles have developed competition among groups. Blalock (1967), however, explains that social mobilization, resources, and the percentage of minorities in a geographic area can affect the perceived level of racial threat within that area. Originating from the theoretical framework of "power threat," racial threat theory argues that an increase in minority presence in relation to the majority will lead to an expansion of punitive social controls (Blumer, 1958; Blalock, 1967).

Studies examining the racial threat perspective commonly use a criminal justice framework because of the link between crime, punishment, and race (Welch & Payne, 2018). There is a considerable amount of research lending support to the racial threat perspective through this criminal justice framework while examining a wide range of social control outcomes. Kent and Jacobs (2005) found that in neighborhoods with a significant presence of minorities, the presence of police officers was strengthened. Similarly, researchers have found a positive relationship between the racial composition of a geographical area and police resources (Barkan & Cohn, 2005; Holmes et al., 2008; Stults & Braumer, 2007). Similarly, other studies have found that a greater

presence of minorities is associated with higher rates of arrest (Eitle & Monahan, 2009), executions (Baumer et al., 2003; Jacobs & Carmichael, 2004), and incarceration (Keen & Jacobs, 2009; Wang & Mears, 2010; Feldmeyer & Ulmer, 2011; Feldmeyer et al., 2015). Even with the use of alternative measures, the research shows relatively strong support for racial threat as an explanation for punitive social controls.

### *Racial Threat Within the School Setting*

Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1977) argues that since the establishment of public schooling, schools have acted as agents of social control. Within the framework of social control, school administrators, and teachers enact forms of formal social control because they have the authority to protect students from violence, delinquency, and disorder. However, in recent decades, schools have become increasingly reliant on the use of punitive discipline policies although violent victimization in schools has been declining since the mid-1990s. Furthermore, the use of punitive school disciplinary policies has mirrored those policies used in the criminal justice system in that they disproportionately affect minorities, specifically African Americans (Skiba et al., 2011). Despite the research supporting the existence of racial disparities among discipline, there had been no studies before 2010 examining whether racial threat could be a possible determinant for the increasing reliance of punitive disciplinary policies (Welch & Payne, 2010).

Welch and Payne (2010) were the first to examine racial threat within schools to determine whether the racial composition of students predicts greater use of punitive policies. Recently, there has been a substantial amount of research supporting the hypothesis that a larger student body composed of black students will be associated with the use of more punitive school discipline policies (Payne & Welch, 2010, 2012; Rocque & Paternoster, 2011; Peguero & Shekarkhar, 2011;



Anyon et al., 2014; Bekkerman & Gilpin, 2014; Roch & Edwards, 2017; Hughes et al., 2017; Mowen & Parker, 2017). Additionally, recent studies have found after controlling for individual, classroom, and school influences schools with a large percentage of black students are more likely to implement punitive exclusionary policies, such as immediate expulsion and calling the police (Welch & Payne, 2012; Irwin et al., 2013; Anyon et al., 2014; Mowen & Parker, 2017). Welch and Payne (2010, 2012) also found that in schools where there is a larger percentage of black students' schools are less likely to use restorative practices or restitution techniques. More recently, studies have begun to examine racial threat with Latino/a student's regarding their racial composition in schools. These studies also find that a higher percentage of Latino/a students in schools results in the use punitive discipline policies and fewer forms of restorative discipline (Peguero & Shekarkhar, 2011; Irwin et al., 2013; Mowen & Parker, 2017; Welch & Payne, 2018).

The research has shown strong support for the racial threat perspective by finding that schools use more punitive and less restorative practices when the racial composition of the school is majority black. Furthermore, the results remain robust even when controlling for types and levels of victimization, and factors such as socioeconomic status and gender of students (Welch & Payne, 2010, 2018). As Welch and Payne (2012) point out, this suggests that punitive punishment may be issued for reasons beyond students' misbehavior in the classroom. The research focusing on racial threat indicates that trends in school punishment mirror those of the criminal justice system and that they may stem from the same reason. While we know that racial threat in school affects the use of punitive exclusionary policies such as suspension and expulsion, there is a gap in the literature examining its effect on corporal punishment and court referrals. Therefore, the current study will analyze this gap to understand further the racial disparities that exist among school disciplinary policies.

## CHAPTER 5

### METHODOLOGY

#### *Study Purpose*

The current study is exploratory given the lack of research examining how different school disciplinary policies affect types of school violence, delinquency, and disorder. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship that exists between school disciplinary policies and low-level acts of aggression. The research question being addressed in this study is whether different types of school disciplinary policies affect rates of school violence, delinquency, and disorder. Overall, this study seeks to contribute to a growing body of literature on school violence and disruption and to inform school administrators and policymakers what can be done to reduce violence in Georgia schools moving forward.

#### *Data Sample*

The current study examines data that includes incident counts by schools and discipline action counts by schools for the 2017-2018 academic school year for the state of Georgia collected by the Georgia Department of Education. The 2017-2018 academic school year was selected because it was the most recent data available from the Georgia Department of Education on school incidents and school disciplinary actions. The data in this study focuses on incident counts, and disciplinary action counts for 2,150 public schools in the state of Georgia.

#### *Dependent Variables*

The Georgia Department of Education during the 2017-2018 academic school year collected data on 36 types of school incidents ranging from fatal to nonfatal. The current study will

focus on 22 of those incidents, leaving out fatal incidents because, as Dupper and Meyer-Adams (2002) report, students are more likely to experience low-level acts of aggression while at school. Incidents defined as weapon possession of a handgun and weapon possession of a rifle or shotgun were computed as weapon possession of a firearm because the occurrence of these events was rare. Additionally, incidents of disorderly conduct and student incivility were computed as student misconduct and incivility because the terminology in both definitions is very similar. These incidents were grouped into four categories to allow for easier analysis, (1) Drugs, Alcohol, and Tobacco Incidents, (2) Violent Incidents, (3) Property Incidents, and (4) Misconduct Incidents. The definitions of these incidents are provided in Appendix A and are defined using a general definition from the National Center for Education Statistics found from the Georgia Department of Education's 2017 Discipline Matrix. Table 1 below includes school-level statistics of incident counts for the 2017-2018 academic school year. There was a total of 441,325 incidents that occurred across all four categories. It is interesting to note that while some schools had a large number of these incidents occur some had zero occurrences.

*Table 1. School Level Statistics of Incident Counts, 2017-2018 School Year*

Incident Category	Total Count	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Var	SD
Drugs, Alcohol, and Tobacco Incidents	15,131	0	199	7.04	247.93	15.75
Violent Incidents	90,234	0	382	41.97	2990.64	54.69
Property Incidents	11,007	0	273	5.12	157.71	12.56
Misconduct Incidents	324,953	0	1652	151.14	40208.71	200.52

### *Independent Variables*

During the 2017-2018 academic school year, there were sixteen different forms of disciplinary action for school violations in the state of Georgia. In the current study, this disciplinary list is shortened to include only corporal punishment, expulsion, out-of-school

suspension (OSS), in-school suspension (ISS), alternative educational placement, and juvenile court referrals. These six practices are briefly defined below.

Corporal punishment refers to paddling, spanking, or other forms of physical punishment imposed on a child (Civil Rights Data Collection, 2014). According to OCGA § 20-2-730, all area, county, and independent boards of education shall be authorized to determine and adopt policies and regulations relating to the use of corporal punishment by school principals and teachers employed by such boards (1964, p. 673).

Out-of-school suspension (OSS) is when a student is temporarily removed from his or her regular school for at least half a day for disciplinary purposes to another setting (e.g., home). A short-term suspension of a student may last ten school days (two weeks) or less. A long-term suspension of a student lasts at least ten school days (two weeks) but not beyond the current school quarter or semester (Georgia Department of Education, 2017).

In-school suspension (ISS) is the temporary removal of a student from his or her regular classroom(s) for at least half a school day but remains under the direct supervision of school personnel. Direct supervision means school personnel is physically in the same location as students under their supervision (Georgia Department of Education, 2017).

Expulsion refers to actions taken by the local educational agency of removing a child from his or her regular school for the remainder of the school year or longer. This includes both expulsions with and without educational service (Civil Rights Data Collection, 2014).

Alternative educational placement is a public elementary or secondary school that addresses the needs of students that typically cannot be met in a regular school program. The school provides nontraditional education, serves as an adjunct to a regular school, and falls outside

of the categories of regular education, special education, or vocational education (Civil Rights Data Collection, 2014).

Juvenile court referrals are related to zero-tolerance policies where school disruption, no matter how severe, is disciplined. In these situations, the incident is already predisposed as criminal, and the student is introduced to the juvenile justice system, and in some instances, the adult criminal justice system (Heitzeg, 2009).

*Table 2. School Level Statistics of Discipline Actions, 2017-2018 School Year*

Discipline Action	Total Count	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Corporal Punishment	5747	0	262	2.67	13.8
Out-of-School Suspension	179941	0	1001	83.69	119.1
In-School Suspension	300334	0	1577	139.69	229.89
Expulsion	174	0	16	0.08	0.57
Alternative School	8065	0	102	3.75	9.2
Juvenile Court Referral	939	0	47	0.44	2.54

### *Control Variables*

To control for other potential predictors of school disciplinary administration and how school demographic characteristics affect the rates of violent, delinquent, and disorderly incidents occurring in schools, this study includes measures of school size, school location, sex, race, and disability status in the analysis. School location was coded as 1 = rural, 2 = urban, 3 = town, and 4 = suburban, with “rural” being the reference category for school location. School location data was retrieved from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), and urbanicity was measured using NCES locale classifications and criteria (2015). School size was coded as 1 = less than 500 students, 2 = 500-2499 students, and 3 = 2500+ students with “small” being the reference category for school size.

When controlling for gender, only the percentage of female students in a school was included to account for collinearity if the percentage of male students would have also been

included. Furthermore, recent literature has concluded that females, especially African American females, have become disproportionately affected by exclusionary policies in the past decade (Smith & Harper, 2015; Annamma et al., 2019). The current study will control for race/ethnicity by including the percentages of White, African American, Hispanic students, along with a combined group of other races. Previous literature has examined that disabled students are more likely to be punished more severely while at school (Losen et al., 2015); therefore the percentage of disabled students will be included as a control variable. Using the Georgia K-12 Student Discipline Dashboard, I augmented the dataset to analyze the number of students who identified as either female, White, African American, Hispanic, or another race, and disabled.

### *Hypotheses*

Based on prior research presented in previous chapters and the dearth of research on how different disciplinary policies affect the rates of different types of school violence and disruption, the following hypotheses emerge:

H1: The use of corporal punishment will decrease the occurrence of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco incidents, violent incidents, property incidents, and misconduct incidents at school.

H2: The use of exclusionary policies (i.e., OSS, ISS, expulsion, alternative school) will increase the occurrence of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco incidents, violent incidents, property incidents, and misconduct incidents at school.

H3: The use of juvenile court referrals will decrease the occurrence of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco incidents, violent incidents, property incidents, and misconduct incidents at school.

### *Analytic Strategy*

Studies examining crime data rarely adhere to the assumptions of an Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression that the dependent variable is continuous, normally distributed with a linear relationship to the independent variables. Piza (2012) posits that crime incidents are usually distributed as “rare event counts,” meaning the data usually consists of smaller values than larger ones and that the most commonly observed value is zero. To account for the assumptions, Poisson and negative binomial regression models are designed to analyze count data. However, they differ in their assumptions that the conditional mean and variance of the dependent variable. A Poisson model assumes that the conditional mean and variance have an equal distribution, while a negative binomial regression model accounts for “overdispersion,” that is the majority of the outcomes will have a variance larger than the conditional mean. Table 1 reveals that the variance for all four discipline categories is higher than their conditional means, respectively. Below, Figures 1 through 4 show the distribution of each incident category, and as suspected the distribution is not equal but skewed.

Furthermore, from the graphs, it may seem as if the categories have an excessive number of zeros, but after running a frequency table, I found only the category of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco incidents (56%) has a high number of zeros. Allison (2012) suggests that although the data may contain a high number of excess zeros it does not mean a zero-inflated variation of the Poisson model is needed. Additionally, the use of a negative binomial regression will show coefficient outputs in log form, but analyzing Incident Rate Ratios (IRRs) is much easier. The use of an Incident Rate Ratio can show the effect of an independent variable on the dependent variable in terms of a percentage increase or decrease (Piza, 2012). Therefore, the current study will use a negative binomial regression with the count coefficients in Incident Rate Ratios to examine the occurrence of school incidents in relation to school disciplinary policies.

Figure 1

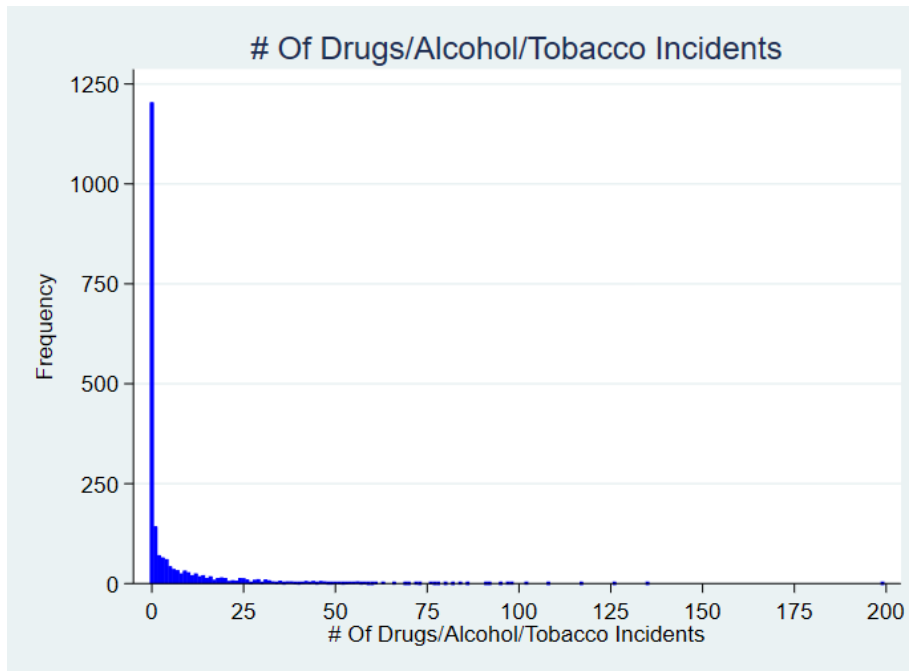


Figure 2

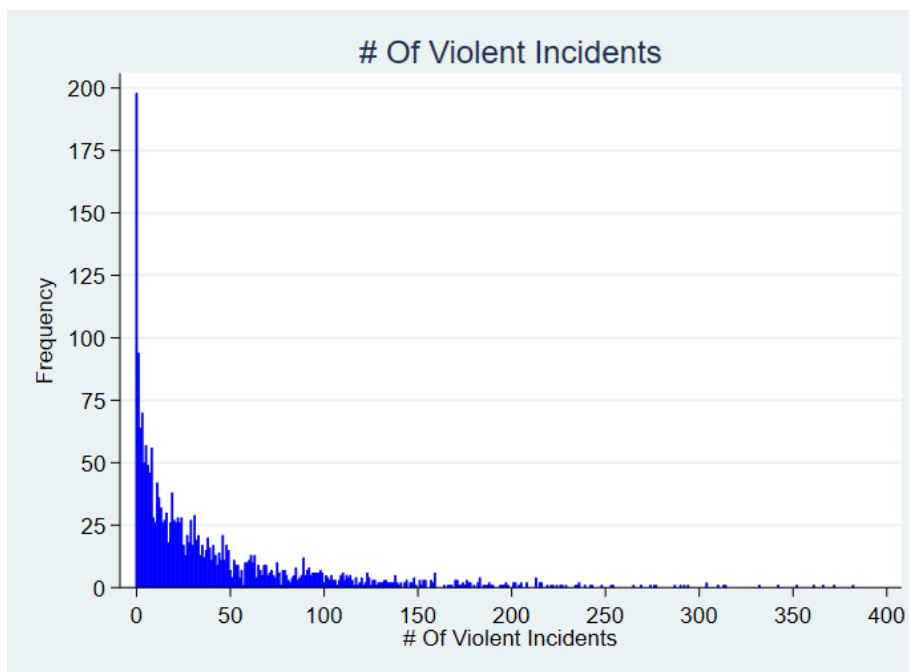




Figure 3

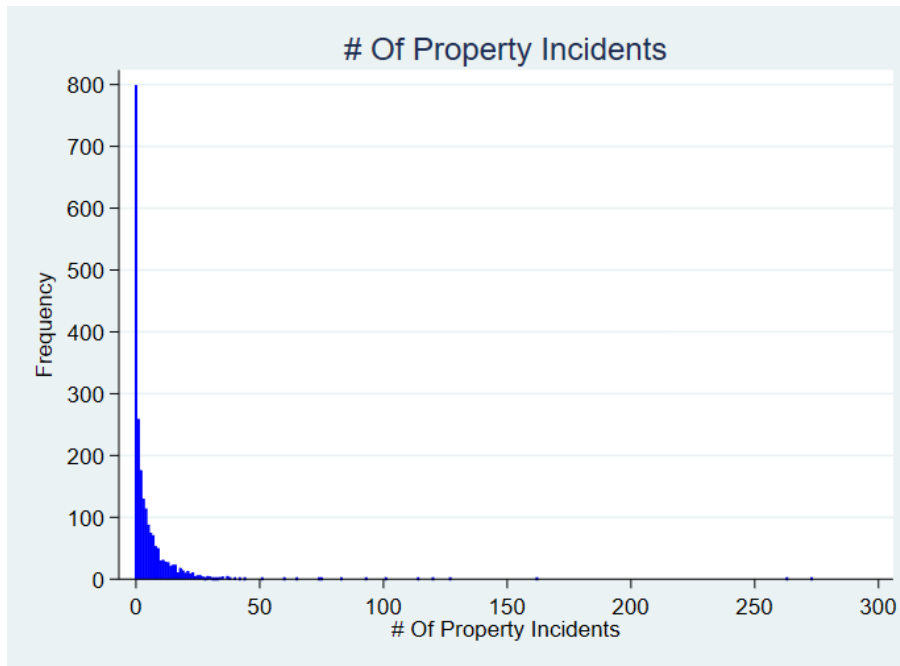
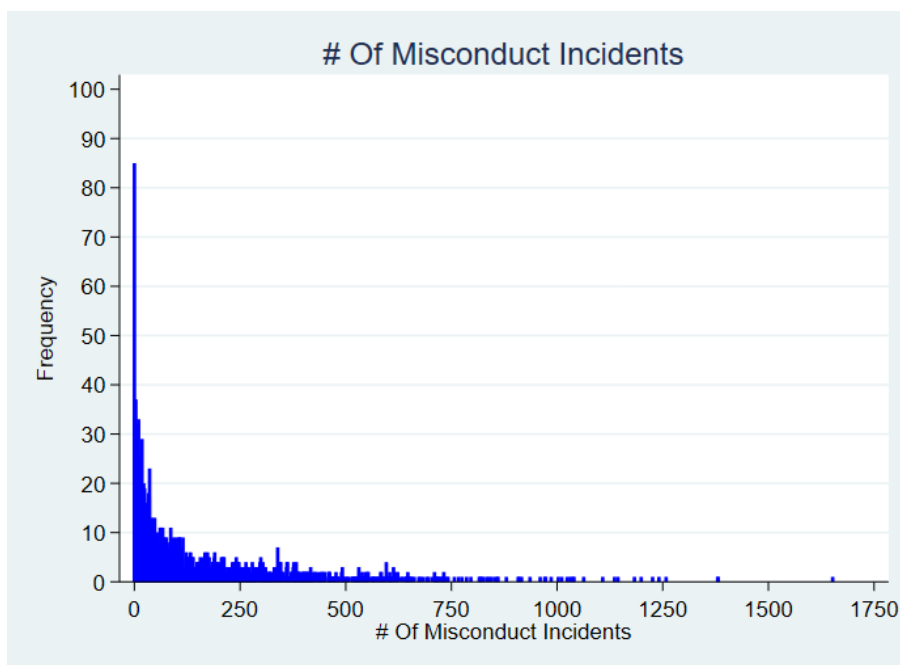


Figure 4



## CHAPTER 6

### RESULTS

A series of negative binomial regressions (NBRs) examine the relationships between school incidents of violence, delinquency, disorder, school demographic characteristics, and school disciplinary policies. The NBRs are presented with the incidence rate ratios (IRR) for effect sizes and standard errors. An IRR with an estimate greater than 1 indicates an increased rate of either a drugs, alcohol, and tobacco incident, violent incident, property incident, or misconduct incident at school for every 1-unit increase in the independent variable. The first model in Tables 3-6 examined the effects that disciplinary policies have on the occurrence of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco incidents, violent incidents, property incidents, and misconduct incidents. The second model furthers this examination by adding school variables for school size, school location, and demographic percentages of the sex, race, and disability status.

Table 3 examines the relationship between disciplinary policies and the rate of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco incidents. Model 1 shows that five out of the six policies had a statistically significant effect. The model reveals that the likelihood of a drugs, alcohol, and tobacco incident occurring at school decreased when corporal punishment was used (IRR = .989,  $p < .05$ ). Additionally, the likelihood of this incident occurring increased by 33.7 percent when expulsion was used (IRR = 1.337,  $p < .05$ ). When school demographic characteristics are included in Model 2, the same five policies remain statistically significant, and their effects remain in the same direction. Additionally, schools coded as being medium or large in size have large effects on the occurrence of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco incidents while the percentage of disabled students decreases these incidents as the population of disabled students goes up in a school.

*Table 3 Negative Binomial Regression Results With Reported IRRs for Drugs, Alcohol, and Tobacco Incidents*

	Model 1		Model 2	
	IRR	SE	IRR	SE
<b>Disciplinary Policies</b>				
<i>Corporal Punishment</i>	0.989**	0.0034	0.990**	0.0030
<i>Out-of-School Suspension</i>	1.002***	0.0004	1.005***	0.0006
<i>In-School Suspension</i>	1.004***	0.0003	1.002***	0.0003
<i>Alternative School</i>	1.072***	0.0086	1.045***	0.0068
<i>Expulsion</i>	1.337**	0.1424	1.256**	0.0995
<i>Juvenile Court Referral</i>	0.981	0.0246	0.988	0.0187
<b>School Characteristics</b>				
<i>Medium</i>	-	-	2.753**	0.2825
<i>Large</i>	-	-	2.442**	0.7488
<i>Urban</i>	-	-	1.132	0.1557
<i>Town</i>	-	-	0.933	0.1176
<i>Suburban</i>	-	-	1.057	0.1222
<i>Female</i>	-	-	0.997	0.0113
<i>White</i>	-	-	1.136	0.1510
<i>African American</i>	-	-	1.107	0.1471
<i>Hispanic</i>	-	-	1.115	0.1483
<i>Other</i>	-	-	1.086	0.1444
<i>Disabled</i>	-	-	0.954***	0.0062
	Likelihood-ratio =		Likelihood-ratio =	
	711.84		1047.49	
	p < .001		p < .001	

\*  $p < .10$  \*\*  $p < .05$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 4 shows the relationship between disciplinary policies and the rate of violent incidents. Model 1 only reports two statistically significant predictors, OSS and ISS. When OSS (IRR = 1.007,  $p < .001$ ) was used, the likelihood of a violent incident occurring increased by 0.7 percent. The model suggests that there is no difference in the occurrence of violent incidents when ISS is used (IRR = 1,  $p < .001$ ). The results for Model 2 show that in addition to OSS and ISS being statistically significant, the use of alternative school, expulsion, and juvenile court referrals also have significant effects. Out of those five policies, only the use of expulsion is suggested to

decrease the occurrence of violent incidents (IRR = 0.938,  $p < .01$ ). The size of a school (i.e., medium and large) were both statistically significant with schools consisting of more than 2,500 students more likely to decrease the number of violent incidents that occur in school (IRR = 0.554,  $p < .05$ ).

*Table 4 Negative Binomial Regression Results With Reported IRRs for Violent Incidents*

	Model 1		Model 2	
	IRR	SE	IRR	SE
<b>Disciplinary Policies</b>				
<i>Corporal Punishment</i>	0.998	0.0117	0.998	0.0016
<i>Out-of-School Suspension</i>	1.007***	0.0003	1.004***	0.0003
<i>In-School Suspension</i>	1.000***	0.0001	1.001***	0.0002
<i>Alternative School</i>	0.997	0.0039	1.008**	0.0036
<i>Expulsion</i>	0.951	0.0397	0.938*	0.0346
<i>Juvenile Court Referral</i>	1.015	0.0117	1.02*	0.0107
<b>School Characteristics</b>				
<i>Medium</i>	-	-	1.141**	0.064
<i>Large</i>	-	-	0.554**	0.1095
<i>Urban</i>	-	-	1.02	0.0753
<i>Town</i>	-	-	0.912	0.0644
<i>Suburban</i>	-	-	1.026	0.0645
<i>Female</i>	-	-	0.995	0.0074
<i>White</i>	-	-	1.005	0.0214
<i>African American</i>	-	-	1.014	0.0216
<i>Hispanic</i>	-	-	1.006	0.0215
<i>Other</i>	-	-	1.004	0.0216
<i>Disabled</i>	-	-	0.998	0.0021
	Likelihood-ratio = 1062.80		Likelihood-ratio = 1118.41	
	p < .001		p < .001	

\*  $p < .10$  \*\*  $p < .05$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 5 examines the relationship between disciplinary policies and the rate of property incidents. Model 1 reveals that three of the disciplinary policies were found to have a statistically significant effect on the rate of property incidents. The model reveals that the likelihood of a

property incident occurring at school decreased when corporal punishment was used (IRR = .990,  $p < .001$ ). The model also suggests that likelihood of a property incident occurring increased when either OSS (IRR = 1.003,  $p < .001$ ) or ISS (IRR = 1.002,  $p < .001$ ) were used.

*Table 5 Negative Binomial Regression Results With Reported IRRs for Property Incidents*

	Model 1		Model 2	
	IRR	SE	IRR	SE
<b>Disciplinary Policies</b>				
<i>Corporal Punishment</i>	0.990***	0.0024	0.993**	0.0023
<i>Out-of-School</i>				
<i>Suspension</i>	1.003***	0.0003	1.003**	0.0004
<i>In-School Suspension</i>	1.002***	0.0002	1.002***	0.0002
<i>Alternative School</i>	0.999	0.0051	0.998	0.0047
<i>Expulsion</i>	0.973	0.056	0.969	0.0500
<i>Juvenile Court Referral</i>	0.982	0.0143	0.975*	0.0127
<b>School Characteristics</b>				
<i>Medium</i>	-	-	1.662***	0.1301
<i>Large</i>	-	-	2.858***	0.6792
<i>Urban</i>	-	-	1.342**	0.1379
<i>Town</i>	-	-	0.957	0.0964
<i>Suburban</i>	-	-	1.365***	0.1194
<i>Female</i>	-	-	0.997	0.0087
<i>White</i>	-	-	1.036	0.0322
<i>African American</i>	-	-	1.035	0.0323
<i>Hispanic</i>	-	-	1.036	0.0323
<i>Other</i>	-	-	1.041	0.0326
<i>Disabled</i>	-	-	0.993**	0.0031
	Likelihood-ratio =		Likelihood-ratio =	
	713.68		771.68	
	$p < .001$		$p < .001$	

\*  $p < .10$  \*\*  $p < .05$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

When school characteristics are added in Model 2, corporal punishment, OSS, and ISS remain statistically significant, and juvenile court referral becomes significant at  $p < .10$  level. The effect of corporal punishment, OSS, and ISS remain the same while the likelihood of a property incident occurring decreases by 2.5 percent when juvenile court referral is used. Model 2 also

reveals that school size increases property incidents (Medium, IRR = 1.662,  $p < .001$ ; Large, IRR = 2.858,  $p < .001$ ), school location increases property incidents (Urban, IRR = 1.342,  $p < .05$ ; Suburban, IRR = 1.365,  $p < .001$ ), and the percentage of disabled students in a school decreases property incidents (IRR = 0.993,  $p < .05$ ).

*Table 6 Negative Binomial Regression Results With Reported IRRs for Misconduct Incidents*

	Model 1		Model 2	
	IRR	SE	IRR	SE
<b>Disciplinary Policies</b>				
<i>Corporal Punishment</i>	1.011***	0.0017	1.007***	0.0014
<i>Out-of-School</i>				
<i>Suspension</i>	1.004***	0.0002	1.003***	0.0003
<i>In-School Suspension</i>	1.003***	0.0001	1.003***	0.0001
<i>Alternative School</i>	0.990**	0.0034	0.996	0.0029
<i>Expulsion</i>	0.968	0.0386	0.969	0.0311
<i>Juvenile Court Referral</i>	0.982*	0.0096	0.997	0.0085
<b>School Characteristics</b>				
<i>Medium</i>	-	-	1.103**	0.0533
<i>Large</i>	-	-	0.509***	0.0875
<i>Urban</i>	-	-	0.928	0.0583
<i>Town</i>	-	-	0.951	0.0581
<i>Suburban</i>	-	-	0.842**	0.0435
<i>Female</i>	-	-	0.997	0.0066
<i>White</i>	-	-	0.985	0.0181
<i>African American</i>	-	-	0.988	0.0182
<i>Hispanic</i>	-	-	0.979	0.0181
<i>Other</i>	-	-	0.975	0.0181
<i>Disabled</i>	-	-	0.991***	0.0018
	Likelihood-ratio =		Likelihood-ratio =	
	1576.85		1734.89	
	$p < .001$		$p < .001$	

\*  $p < .10$  \*\*  $p < .05$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 6 reports the relationship between disciplinary policies and the rate of misconduct incidents. Model 1 shows that five of the six disciplinary policies have a statistically significant effect. When either placement in alternative school (IRR = .990,  $p < .05$ ) or a juvenile court referral

(IRR = .982,  $p < .10$ ) is used, the rate of misconduct incidents is expected to decrease. The model suggests that the likelihood of a misconduct incident occurring at school increases when corporal punishment (IRR = 1.011,  $p < .001$ ), OSS (IRR = 1.004,  $p < .001$ ), and ISS (IRR = 1.003,  $p < .001$ ) are used. After including school characteristics in Model 2, only corporal punishment, OSS, and ISS were found to have statistically significant effects, and their effects resembled those found in Model 1. Additionally, Model 2 reveals that school size affects the occurrence of misconduct incidents (Medium, IRR = 1.103,  $p < .05$ ; Large, IRR = 0.509,  $p < .001$ ), school location decreases misconduct incidents (Suburban, IRR = 0.842,  $p < .05$ ), and the percentage of disabled students in a school decreases property incidents (IRR = 0.991,  $p < .001$ ).

## CHAPTER 7

### DISCUSSION

Since the breakout of a school violence epidemic in the early 1990s, schools across the nation have spent an enormous amount of their time and resources, ensuring their environment remains safe for students and teachers. Between then and now, a variety of different school disciplinary policies have been implemented, but their effect on reducing violence and disruption in schools has been minimal. Furthermore, there is a gap in the literature examining how the use of school disciplinary policies might help perpetuate the occurrence of violence and disruption in schools. Given the need to address this gap, the purpose of this study was to address the following research question: Do different types of school disciplinary policies affect the rate of school violence, delinquency, and disorder? Overall, the results indicated that while controlling for school characteristics, the use of school disciplinary policies can both increase and decrease the occurrence of violent, delinquent, and disorderly incidents at school.

While it was hypothesized that the use of corporal punishment would decrease the occurrence of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco, violent, property, and misconduct incidents, this hypothesis only received partial support. Examining the use of corporal punishment while controlling for school characteristics, a negative association was found between its use and the occurrence of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco incidents, and property incidents. Meanwhile, a positive association was observed between the use of corporal punishment and misconduct incidents, and while corporal punishment decreased violent incidents, the relationship was not significant. These findings provide insight that corporal punishment is used for a variety of different school incidents, something not examined in previous studies. Furthermore, the positive relationship between the use of corporal punishment and misconduct incidents is somewhat surprising given that corporal



punishment has been used as a type of punishment for inappropriate classroom behavior throughout most of American educational history (Midlarsky & Klain, 2005). Additionally, the small effect the use of corporal punishment has on school incidents may be because Georgia Code (1964) does not allow for the use of corporal punishment as the first line of punishment.

The majority of the results showed support for hypothesis 2 that the use of exclusionary policies (i.e., OSS, ISS, expulsion, alternative school) would increase the occurrence of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco, violent, property, and misconduct incident at school. The use of OSS, ISS, alternative school and expulsion all have positive associations with the occurrence of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco incidents. An alarming finding is that for every use of expulsion, the likelihood of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco incidents occurring increases by 25.6 percent when controlling for school characteristics. This finding is interesting given that during the early implementation of exclusionary policies in the late 1990s on the projected goals was to eradicate drugs and alcohol from schools. The results for property incidents occurring revealed positive associations with the use of OSS and ISS.

Similarly, there were positive associations between the occurrence of misconduct incidents and the use of OSS and ISS. These findings suggest that the use of OSS and ISS are not producing the intended deterrent effect they were implemented for. The results reveal that the use of OSS, ISS, and alternative school have positive associations with the occurrence of violent incidents, while the use of expulsion is suggested to decrease the likelihood of violent incidents occurring by 6.2 percent every time it is used. These findings are of particular interest, given the relationship between exclusionary discipline and zero-tolerance policies. The proponents of this relationship produced a “get-tough on crime” sentiment to reduce violence in schools; however, violence began to drop before the heavy implementation of exclusionary policies. Furthermore, nonviolent

incidents remain stable in schools and as this study reveals the use of exclusionary policies does not provide deterrence but increases the likelihood of these incidents occurring.

The results only partially support hypothesis 3, that the use of juvenile court referrals would decrease the occurrence of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco, violent, property, and misconduct incidents at school. While the use of juvenile court referrals did decrease the occurrence of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco incidents and misconduct incidents, the relationships were not statistically significant. These findings are somewhat surprising given that previous literature has concluded that the use of juvenile court referrals now criminalizes student behavior that was once considered behavior to be punished by the teacher (Wald & Losen, 2003; Mallet, 2016). In line with hypothesis 3, there was a negative association between the use of juvenile court referrals, and the occurrence of property incidents, incidents that occurred less often than others analyzed. Finally, the findings reveal that the use of juvenile court referrals are expected to increase the occurrence of violent incidents by two percent every time they are used. While violent incidents in schools have been decreasing since the mid-1990s (Musu- Gillette et al., 2017), the use of strict disciplinary policies, such as juvenile court referrals, were expected to decrease the occurrence of violence in schools instead of increasing their odds.

The current study explored racial threat theory as a means of framing racial disparity among school discipline. Previous studies have found that after controlling for individual, classroom, and school influences, schools with a larger percentage of African American or Hispanic students are more likely to implement punitive exclusionary policies (Payne & Welch, 2012; Irwin et al., 2013; Mowen & Parker, 2017; Welch & Payne, 2018). The current study analyzed the overall percentages of student races in schools (i.e., White, African American, Hispanic, and other) as control variables and found that in each model, their effect on the occurrence of violence,

delinquency, and disorder in schools were statistically insignificant. The results suggest that the current study lacks support for racial threat theory and the hypothesis that schools with a higher percentage of African American students are more punitive. Despite previous literature outlining racial disparities among the use of school disciplinary policies the current study suggests that the racial composition of a school does not affect the use of these punishments on the occurrence of violent, delinquent, and disorderly incidents. However, this study does reveal that the use of these policies can both increase and decrease the likelihood of these incidents occurring, suggesting that even without racial composition being significant, schools should explore the use of alternative disciplinary policies. Finally, if the racial composition of a school is not a significant predictor of the occurrence of violence, delinquency, and disorder then schools disciplinary policies that have tended to mirror the criminal justice framework of punishment (i.e., disproportionately affect minorities) should be reexamined.

#### *Limitations and Future Research*

Although exploratory in nature, this study is not without limitations. First, the data in this study was cross-sectional, thus limiting the ability to establish causality between the relationships over time. Future research should examine the use of school disciplinary policies over multiple school years to obtain more robust results on how these policies affect the occurrence of violence, delinquency, and disorder in schools. Second, because this study used a cross-sectional design, it is hard to establish temporal ordering. In short, it is difficult to tease apart whether disciplinary practices are a cause or an effect of violence, delinquency, and disorder occurring in schools. Third, the study only examined public schools within the state of Georgia—it did not examine private or state-operated schools. Additionally, examining the use of school disciplinary policies across the country would allow for different patterns to emerge and allow for a diverse set of school

characteristics to be included. Fourth, I categorized the school incidents collected by the Georgia Department of Education into four groups, therefore limiting the analysis to only focusing on how school disciplinary policies affected the occurrence of these groups and not the incidents individually. Lastly, this study did not differentiate between school levels. Furlong and Morrison (2000) have noted that victimization tends to be lowest for elementary schools, followed by high schools, with the highest rates occurring in middle schools. Future research should attempt to differentiate the use of school disciplinary policies between school levels, therefore, broadening the options school administrators and policymakers have in disciplining students. In addition to these limitations, future research may want to examine whether school demographic characteristics affect the occurrence of violence, delinquency, and disorder in schools.

### *Implications*

Several policy implications arise from the results of this study. First, Georgia policymakers and school administrators should consider eliminating the use of corporal punishment in schools. Although the results suggest its use decreases incidents of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco and property incidents, the effects are relatively small (i.e., 1.0 percent and 0.7 percent). Further, it has no significant effect on reducing violent incidents, and the results suggest that it increases the occurrence of misconduct incidents. The findings do, however, support Georgia Code § 20-2-731 (1964) that corporal punishment is not to be used as the first line of punishment. Additionally, it was the third least-used policy of the school year. In light of the findings, policymakers and school administrators should increase training for teachers focusing on classroom behavior management.

Second, policymakers and school administrators for the state of Georgia need to reexamine the use of exclusionary disciplinary policies. The research suggests that disciplining students with exclusionary policies is not likely to change their behavior and that they do not make schools safer

(Raffaele-Mendez, 2003). Policymakers and school administrators should focus on school-based programs and policy-based interventions. Some school-based programs that have received strong evaluations include Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (see Horner et al., 2014; Bradshaw et al., 2015) and the Safe Responsive Schools project (see Skiba et al., 2006). Program-based interventions like these focus on building social and emotional skills and improving student behavior, all while decreasing the use of exclusionary practices.

In the last decade, several studies have recently called for the discontinuation of punitive disciplinary policies in favor of restorative justice practices (Brown, 2017; Payne & Welch, 2018; Gonzalez et al., 2018; Augustine et al., 2018). Restorative justice programs tend to focus on preventing future offenses through conflict resolution or peer mediation practices as opposed to punitive disciplinary practices (Fronius et al., 2019). Furthermore, restorative justice programs can be implemented through schoolwide positive behavioral interventions and supports programs (Fronius et al., 2019), while Gonzalez et al. (2018) argue that schoolwide restorative justice programs are the most effective at reducing negative student outcomes. Additionally, Fronius and colleagues (2019) suggest that the use of restorative justice programs in schools can lead to reductions in the use of punitive disciplinary practices and student misbehavior (see Hashim et al., 2015; Gregory & Clawson, 2016; Augustine et al., 2018).

On the other hand, implementing policy-based interventions at the district-level or even school-level can help reduce minor infractions. Individual schools could adjust their student codes of conduct to remove harsh disciplinary sanctions for minor infractions (see Sartain et al., 2015). Overall, policymakers and school administrators should start to focus on alternative preventive measures that can detect behavioral problems sooner and provide these students with resources so that they can succeed.

### *Conclusion*

The primary purpose of schools in America is to educate youth; however, throughout most of American educational history, schools have been filled with unwanted violence and disruption that hinders this purpose. To deal with these behaviors, schools have implemented a variety of disciplinary policies, which have had a minimal effect (Skiba, 2014) but have become more severe, despite a decrease in the number of violent and nonviolent behaviors in schools. The present study examined whether the use of different school disciplinary policies affected the occurrence of violent, delinquent, and disorderly incidents in Georgia public schools. In sum, it was found that the use of different types of school disciplinary policies could both increase and decrease the likelihood of violent, delinquent, and disorderly incidents occurring in schools. The finding that has the most policy implications is that the use of OSS and ISS both has positive relationships with all four incident categories examined, suggesting they do not provide the deterrence factor they are thought to. Understanding not just how the use of school disciplinary policies affect the occurrence of school violence and disruption, but why they are so heavily relied on will go a long way in helping reform educational disciplinary policies. This research is important because it informs school administrators and policymakers in the state of Georgia that not all disciplinary policies deter violent, delinquent, and disorderly incidents. Furthermore, it should prompt these officials to examine alternatives to harsh school disciplinary policies moving forward.

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APPENDIX A  
School Incident Definitions

Incident Type	General NCES/Federal Definition
Alcohol	Violation of laws or ordinances prohibiting the manufacture, sale, purchase, transportation, possession, beverages or substances represented as alcohol. Students under the or consumption of intoxicating alcoholic influence of alcohol may be included if it results in disciplinary action
Battery	Intentional touching or striking of another person to intentionally cause bodily harm. <b>(Note: The key difference between battery and fighting is that fighting involves mutual participation.)</b>
Bullying	A pattern of behavior, which may include written, verbal, physical acts, or through a computer, computer system, computer network, or other electronic technology occurring on school property, on school vehicles, at designated school bus stops, or at school related functions that is so severe, persistent, or pervasive so as to have the effect of substantially interfering with a student's education, threatening the educational environment, or causing substantial physical harm or visible bodily harm
Breaking & Entering – Burglary	Intentional touching or striking of another person to intentionally cause bodily harm. <b>(Note: The key difference between battery and fighting is that fighting involves mutual participation.)</b>
Disorderly Conduct	Any act that substantially disrupts the orderly conduct of a school function, substantially disrupts the orderly learning environment, or poses a threat to the health, safety, and/or welfare of students, staff or others. (Includes disruptive behaviors on school buses)
Drugs (Expect Alcohol and Tobacco)	Unlawful use, cultivation, manufacture, distribution, sale, purchase, possession, transportation, or importation of any controlled drug or narcotic substance, or equipment or devices used for preparing or using drugs or narcotics; or any medication prescribed to a student or purchased over-the-counter and not brought to the office upon arrival to school
Fighting	Mutual participation in a fight involving physical violence where there is no one main offender and intent to harm <b>(Note: The key difference between fighting and battery is that fighting involves mutual participation.)</b>
Larceny Theft	The unlawful taking of property belonging to another person or entity (e.g., school) without threat, violence or bodily harm. <b>(Note: The key difference between larceny/theft and robbery is that the threat of physical harm or actual physical harm is involved in a robbery.)</b>

Robbery	The taking of, or attempting to take, anything of value that is owned by another person or organization under confrontational circumstances by force or threat of force or violence and/or by putting the victim in fear. <b>(Note: The key difference between robbery and larceny/theft is that the threat of physical harm or actual physical harm is involved in a robbery)</b>
Sexual Harassment	Non-physical and unwelcome sexual advances, lewd gestures or verbal conduct or communication of a sexual nature; requests for sexual favors; gender-based harassment that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational or work environment
Sex Offenses	Unlawful sexual behavior, sexual contact without force or threat of force, or possession of sexually explicit images; can be consensual
Student Incivility	Insubordination or disrespect to staff members or other students; includes but is not limited to refusal to follow school staff member instructions, use of vulgar or inappropriate language, and misrepresentation of the truth
Threat or Intimidation	Any threat through written or verbal language or act which creates a fear of harm and/or conveys a serious expression of intent to harm or violence without displaying a weapon and without subjecting the victim to actual physical attack
Tobacco	Possession, use, distribution, or sale of tobacco products on school grounds, at school-sponsored events, and on transportation to and from school
Trespassing	Entering or remaining on a public school campus or school board facility without authorization or invitation and with no lawful purpose for entry. <b>(Note: The key difference between Trespassing and Breaking &amp; Entering-Burglary is that Trespassing does not include forceful entry into the school building.)</b>
Vandalism	The willful and/or malicious destruction, damage, or defacement of public or private property without consent
Weapon (Knife)	The possession, use, or intention to use any type of knife
Weapon (Handgun)	Possession of a firearm that has a short stock and is designed to be held and fired by the use of a single hand; and any combination of parts from which a firearm described above can be assembled. <b>NOTE: This definition does not apply to items such as toy guns, cap guns, bb guns and pellet gun</b> [Pursuant to Gun-Free Schools Act - Public Law 107-110, Section 4141]

Weapon (Rifle/Shotgun)	The term "rifle" means a weapon designed or redesigned, made or remade, and intended to be fired from the shoulder and designed or redesigned and made or remade to use the energy of an explosive to fire only a single projectile through a rifled bore for each single pull of the trigger. The term "shotgun" means a weapon designed or redesigned, made or remade, and intended to be fired from the shoulder and designed or redesigned and made or remade to use the energy of an explosive to fire through a smooth bore either a number of ball shot or a single projectile for each single pull of the trigger. [Pursuant to Gun-Free Schools Act - Public Law 107-110, Section 4141]
Weapon (Other)	The possession, use, or intention to use any instrument or object that is used or intended to be used in a manner that may inflict bodily harm (does not include knives or firearms)
Dress Code	Violation of school dress code that includes standards for appropriate school attire
Possession of Unapproved Item	The use or possession of any unauthorized item disruptive to the school environment