

Differences in Discipline Consequences for Infractions by Student Economic Status: A Multiyear Investigation

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ABSTRACT

In this multiyear investigation, the most frequently committed student misbehaviors were determined and then the most common disciplinary consequences that were assigned as a result were identified. These misbehaviors and consequences were calculated separately for middle school students who were economically disadvantaged and students who were not economically disadvantaged. Middle school students in poverty committed similar misbehaviors to middle school students not in poverty for all four years of data that were analyzed. Differences were evident in the type of disciplinary consequences that were assigned to these two groups of middle school students. Students in poverty were assigned at least twice the number of exclusionary consequences as students not in poverty. Middle school students not in poverty were more likely to be assigned consequences that were less likely to affect direct classroom instruction.

Keywords: Discipline Consequences, Economic Status Inequities, Middle School

INTRODUCTION

Inequities in exclusionary discipline consequences by student ethnicity/race have been well documented for decades (Pyne, 2019; Skiba et al., 2012). More recently established has been the disproportionate assignment of students in poverty to exclusionary discipline consequences (Henkel, 2015; Kahn & Slate, 2016). The use of exclusionary discipline consequences targets students in poverty and may further impede the academic performance of these students (Cholewa et al., 2018). Of importance is that the American Academy of Pediatrics (2013) determined that exclusionary discipline practices are ineffective and recommended the use of such discipline only as a last resort.

After the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 was passed, school administrators increased their use of zero-tolerance policies for criminal offenses that occurred in schools (DeMatthews, 2016). In the past decade, investigations about the effects of zero tolerance policies have increased (Mallett, 2016). The negative effects of such policies include excessive loss of learning time (Fabelo et al., 2011), and disproportionate effects on low-income, Black, and Hispanic children (Skiba et al., 2011).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The U.S. Department of Education reported for the 2014-2015 school year the effects of poverty on rates of discipline consequences. Noted in the report was that students in poverty were much more likely to receive out of school consequences which leads to a lack of access to highly qualified educators and curriculum than their peers who were not in poverty. Over the past 25 years researchers (Coleman & Slate, 2016; Skiba et al., 2002) have consistently provided evidence of inequities in the assignment of exclusionary discipline consequences to students in poverty. Butler et al. (2012) documented that students of color, especially Black boys from low-income populations, are at an increased risk of being assigned to exclusionary discipline assignments. Skiba et al. (2002) and Gregory et al. (201) both established that students in poverty were substantially more likely to be assigned to an exclusionary discipline consequence than were their peers who were not in poverty. Poverty status is a contributing factor to an increase in suspension, dropout rates, and incarceration rates (Harlow, 2003). In a more recent study, Butler et al. (2012) concluded that poverty, which is one of the greatest predictors of student suspension, contributes to the loss of learning time.

With respect to the state of interest for this article, Texas, Tiger and Slate (2017) analyzed data on Grade 4 and 5 students to determine the extent to which exclusionary discipline assignments differed as a function

of student economic status (i.e., Extremely Poor, Moderately Poor, Not Poor). These three economic status groups were defined by whether or not students qualified for the free lunch program, qualified for the reduced-price lunch program, and did not qualify for either the free lunch program or the reduced-price lunch program. Tiger and Slate (2017) established that Grade 4 boys in poverty were assigned to an in-school suspension more than three times more often than were Grade 4 boys who were not living in poverty.

Tiger and Slate (2017) also analyzed out-of-school suspension data on Grade 5 boys in the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. In the 2013-2014 school year, Grade 5 boys who were living in poverty were assigned more than three times more often to an out-of-school suspension than were Grade 5 boys who were not in poverty. In the 2014-2015 school year, Grade 5 boys in poverty were assigned to an out-of-school suspension more than twice as often as were Grade 5 boys who were not living in poverty.

In another Texas investigation, Schlitzberger (2018) addressed the relationship between student misbehavior and discipline consequence that was assigned in the 2013-2014 school year by student economic status (i.e., qualified for the free lunch program, qualified for the reduced-price lunch program and, did not qualify for either the free lunch program or the reduced-price lunch program). Schlitzberger (2018) documented that the two groups of students in poverty were assigned to two times as many in-school suspensions for violations of the code of conduct than were students who were not economically disadvantaged. Students who qualified for the free lunch program were assigned to an in-school suspension for fighting almost three times as often as were students who were not in poverty. With respect to the use of controlled substances, students who qualified for the free lunch program were 15 times more likely to be assigned to an in-school suspension than were students who qualified for the reduced price lunch program and five times more likely to be assigned to an in-school suspension than were students who were not in poverty.

Schlitzberger (2018) also examined out-of-school suspension and its relationship to student misbehavior by their economic status. In the 2013-2014 school year, students who qualified for the free lunch program were assigned to an out-of-school suspension for violations of the student code of conduct four times as often as were students who were not in poverty. Concerning fighting, students who qualified for the free lunch program were assigned to 11 times as many out-of-school suspensions than were students who qualified for the reduced-price lunch and five times as many out-of-school suspensions as students who were not economically disadvantaged. Students who qualified for free lunch were 12 times more likely to be assigned out-of-school suspensions as students

who qualified for reduced price lunch and four times more likely to be assigned out-of-school suspensions as students that did not qualify for free or reduced price lunches. Finally, students who qualified for free lunch were five times more likely to be assigned out-of-school suspension for assaulting a school district employee as students who did not qualify for free or reduced price lunches.

In a recent Texas investigation directly related to this article, Griffin (2022) analyzed data about exclusionary discipline consequences by the economic status of Grade 4 and Grade 5 girls in the 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020 school years. Griffin (2022) established the presence of disparities in the assignment of exclusionary discipline consequences by student economic status. In all four school years, Grade 4 girls who were economically disadvantaged were assigned more than two times the number of in-school suspension days than were Grade 4 girls who were not economically disadvantaged. With respect to Grade 5 girls, girls who were economically disadvantaged were assigned more than five times the number of in-school suspension days than were Grade 5 girls who were not economically disadvantaged.

In another research investigation directly related to this article, Miller (2021) analyzed whether inequities were present in the number of days assigned to exclusionary discipline consequences as a function of student economic status in the 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2017-2018 school years. With regard to Grade 9, in 2015-2016, Black boys who were economically disadvantaged were assigned 1.25 more in-school suspension days than Black boys who were not economically disadvantaged and Hispanic boys who were economically disadvantaged were assigned 0.62 more in-school suspension days than Hispanic boys who were not economically disadvantaged. In 2016-2017, Black boys who were economically disadvantaged were assigned 1.31 more in-school suspension days than Black boys who were not economically disadvantaged and Hispanic boys who were economically disadvantaged were assigned 0.71 more in-school suspension days than Hispanic boys who were not economically disadvantaged. In the 2017-2018 school year, Black boys who were economically disadvantaged were assigned 1.49 more in-school suspension days than Black boys who were not economically disadvantaged and Hispanic boys who were economically disadvantaged were assigned 0.72 more in-school suspension days than Hispanic boys that were not economically disadvantaged. Miller (2021) documented the presence of clear inequities in the assignment of exclusionary consequences to both Black and Hispanic students who were economically disadvantaged in all three school years evaluated.

In another Texas investigation, Lopez (2021) analyzed the degree to which inequities existed in the assignment of Disciplinary Alternative

Education Program placements by student economic status for Texas Grades 6, 7, and 8 students in the 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years. Lopez documented that in 2012-2013 Grade 7 Black students who were extremely poor were assigned 6.6% of the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements whereas Black students who were not economically disadvantaged were assigned 3.4% of the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements. White students who were economically disadvantaged were assigned 3.9% of the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements whereas White students who were not economically disadvantaged were assigned 1.0% of the placements and Hispanic students who were economically disadvantaged were assigned 4.1% of the assignments whereas Hispanic students who were not economically disadvantaged were assigned 2.1% of the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements. This trend continued throughout all four school years.

In another Texas analysis, Khan and Slate (2016) analyzed the effects of ethnicity/race on the percentage of Grade 6 students who were assigned an out-of-school suspension. Grade 6 students who were Black, Hispanic, and White and living in poverty were assigned to more out-of-school suspensions than their peers who were not in poverty. The greatest discrepancy was noted with Black students in poverty. Grade 6 Black students living in poverty were assigned to 21.3% of the out-of-school suspension when compared to Grade 6 Black students not living in poverty who were assigned to 9.7% of the out-of-school suspensions.

In a recent Texas investigation, Harkrider (2020) analyzed the degree to which differences existed in the assignment of exclusionary discipline consequences for Grades 5 and 6 students. In the 2015-2016 school year, Grade 5 Black boys who were poor were assigned to almost one more day, on average, to an in-school suspension than were their Grade 5 Black peers who were not economically disadvantaged. Grade 6 Black boys who were economically disadvantaged were assigned to almost one and a half-day more, on average, to an in-school suspension than were their Grade 6 Black peers who were not economically disadvantaged.

In the same school year, Grade 5 Black girls who were economically disadvantaged were assigned to over one half-day more, on average, to an in-school suspension than were their Grade 5 Black peers who were not economically disadvantaged. Grade 6 Black girls who were economically disadvantaged were assigned to almost one day more, on average, to an in-school suspension than were their Grade 6 Black peers who were not economically disadvantaged. In the 2015-2016 school year, Grade 5 Hispanic boys who were economically disadvantaged were assigned to almost one half-day more, on average, to an out-of-school

suspension than were their Grade 5 Hispanic peers who were not economically disadvantaged. Grade 6 Hispanic boys who were economically disadvantaged were assigned to over one half-day more, on average, to an out-of-school suspension than were their Grade 6 Hispanic peers who were not economically disadvantaged. In the same school year, Grade 5 Hispanic girls who were economically disadvantaged were assigned to almost one half-day more, on average, to an out-of-school suspension than were their Grade 5 Hispanic peers who were not economically disadvantaged. Grade 6 Hispanic girls who were economically disadvantaged were assigned to more than three-fourths more, on average, to an out-of-school suspension than were their Grade 6 Hispanic peers who were not economically disadvantaged.

Not present in the existing research literature are the specific misbehaviors that students who are economically disadvantaged commit for which they are assigned a discipline consequence. The question that arises from this lack of research is about whether or not differential discipline consequences are assigned to the same misbehavior for students who are economically disadvantaged when compared to students in the same peer group who are not economically disadvantaged. Focused upon in this article will be the extent to which inequities might be present in the assignment of exclusionary discipline consequences to the same misbehavior by student economic status.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the degree to which disparities were present in the assignment of disciplinary consequences to students in poverty when compared to students who are not in poverty. The most common misbehaviors committed by students of poverty were examined, and then the specific discipline consequences that were assigned to them were addressed. These misbehaviors and discipline consequences were analyzed to ascertain whether inequities were present by the economic status of students. These analyses were conducted for students in middle school (i.e., Grades 6 through 8) in a single Texas school district.

The following research questions were addressed in this article: (a) What are the most common misbehaviors committed by middle school students in poverty and by middle school students not in poverty?; (b) For these most common misbehaviors, what are the most common discipline consequences assigned as a result?; and (c) What trends are present in discipline consequence assignments by student economic status across school?

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

A causal comparative research design was present in this article (Johnson & Christensen, 2020). Data on White, Black, and Hispanic students who had been assigned a discipline consequence were analyzed. Data on Asian students were not included because they are infrequently assigned to exclusionary discipline consequences. Descriptive statistics were used to identify the most common student misbehaviors assigned for frequent student incidents. It is important to note that using a causal comparative research design does not allow for definitive cause and effect relationships to be determined (Johnson & Christensen, 2020).

Participants

Participants in this study were middle school students (i.e., Grades 6 through 8 students) designated as economically disadvantaged and students who were not designated as economically disadvantaged in a suburban Houston school district. All students had been assigned a discipline consequence during the 2016 -2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020 school years. Under the Texas Education Agency guidelines, students are identified as economically disadvantaged if they were eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program (Texas Education Agency, 2019b). For this study, students who receive free or reduced meals were identified as students who were economically disadvantaged, and students who were not eligible to receive free or reduced meals were identified as students who were not economically disadvantaged.

The data included middle school students who had been assigned to a discipline consequence. Discipline data analyzed herein were obtained from the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System. Data were then imported into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences software program for analysis.

RESULTS

Data Analysis

To determine the most common misbehaviors committed by middle school students, descriptive statistics were calculated, separately by student economic status and by school year. Once the most common misbehaviors were identified, then descriptive statistics were generated for the most common disciplinary consequence that was assigned to each misbehavior. Results will now be described.

Research Question One

The first research question was focused on the most common misbehaviors committed by middle school students who were economically disadvantaged and by middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. All students had previously been enrolled in a northwest suburb in Houston, Texas in the 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020 school years. Table 1 contains the descriptive statistics for middle school students in the 2016-2017 school year. In the 2016-2017 school year, middle school students who were economically disadvantaged committed 3,612 tardy violations, a number that was one and one-half times the number of tardy violations committed by middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. Middle school students who were economically disadvantaged had 2,792 class disruptions, more than 1,000 more class disruptions than middle school students who not economically disadvantaged. Middle school students who were economically disadvantaged had 1,034 Failure to Attend Detention misbehaviors, which was more than four times the number of Failure to Attend Detention misbehaviors as middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged.

Table 1: Most Frequently Committed Misbehaviors for Middle School Students by Their Economic Status in the 2016-2017 School Year

Misbehavior	Economically Disadvantaged		Not Economically Disadvantaged	
	<i>n</i>	Rank	<i>n</i>	Rank
Tardy	3,612	1	2,090	1
Disruption of Class	2,792	2	1,707	2
General Misconduct	1,582	3	1,268	3
Failure to Attend Detention	1,034	4	276	10
Absent W/O Permission	825	5	327	8
Bus Inappropriate Behavior	671	7	602	4
Disrespect to School	595	8	371	5
Noncompliance	675	6	313	9

As revealed in Table 2, middle school students who were economically disadvantaged in the 2017-2018 school year committed 5,496 Tardy violations, which is two and one-half as many Tardy violations committed by students who were not economically disadvantaged. Middle school students who were economically

disadvantaged had 2,792 class disruptions, more than 1,000 more class disruptions than middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. In regard to the consequence of general misconduct, middle school students who were economically disadvantaged committed 1,582 violations, which is at least 300 more violations than students who were not economically disadvantaged. Middle school students who were economically disadvantaged committed 1,034 Failure to Attend Detention, which was more than four times the number of violations committed by middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged.

Table 2: Most Frequently Committed Misbehaviors for Middle School Students by Their Economic Status in the 2017-2018 School Year

Misbehavior	Economically Disadvantaged		Not Economically Disadvantaged	
	<i>n</i>	Rank	<i>n</i>	Rank
Tardy	5,496	1	2,080	1
Disruption of Class	2,536	2	1,306	2
General Misconduct	1,566	3	978	3
Failure to Attend Detention	457	11	121	16
Absent W/O Permission	850	6	388	7
Bus Inappropriate Behavior	758	7	507	5
Disrespect to School	878	5	508	4
Noncompliance	948	4	506	6

Descriptive statistics for the 2018-2019 school year are delineated in Table 3. Middle school students who were economically disadvantaged committed 2,670 tardy violations which is more than two and a half times the number of tardy violations committed by middle school student who were not economically disadvantaged. In regard to general misconduct, middle school students who were economically disadvantaged committed 1,534 violations which was more than 500 violations more than students who were not economically disadvantaged. Middle school students who were economically disadvantaged had 1,038 noncompliance violations which was more than twice the number of noncompliance violations as students who were not economically disadvantaged. Unauthorized area violations by middle school students who were economically disadvantaged were almost five times more often than students who were not economically disadvantaged.

Table 3: Most Frequently Committed Misbehaviors for Middle School Students by Their Economic Status in the 2018-2019 School Year

Misbehavior	Economically Disadvantaged		Not Economically Disadvantaged	
	<i>n</i>	Rank	<i>n</i>	Rank
Tardy	2,670	1	1,030	2
Disruption of Class	2,445	2	1,195	1
General Misconduct	1,534	3	1,015	3
Unauthorized Area	1,172	4	297	11
Noncompliance	1,038	5	403	7
Disrespect to School	952	6	549	4
Absent W/O Permission	903	7	435	5

Table 4 contains descriptive statistics for middle school students for the 2019-2020 school year. Middle school students who were economically disadvantaged committed more than two times the number of Tardy violations as students who were not economically disadvantaged. Noncompliance violations committed by middle school students who were economically disadvantaged were more than three times the number of violations committed by middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged.

Table 4: Most Frequently Committed Misbehaviors for Middle School Students by Their Economic Status in the 2019-2020 School Year

Misbehavior	Economically Disadvantaged		Not Economically Disadvantaged	
	<i>n</i>	Rank	<i>n</i>	Rank
Tardy	2,132	1	930	1
Noncompliance	1,626	2	564	2
Absent W/O Permission	1,260	3	465	4
Unauthorized Area	1,183	4	405	5
Disrespect to School	1,131	5	490	3
Violation of Student Code	517	6	346	6
Fighting – 2 Offenders	509	7	218	9

Middle school students who were economically disadvantaged had 1,260 absent without permission violations which was almost three times the

Table 5: Most Frequently Assigned Consequences for Tardy Violations for Middle School Students by Their Economic Status in the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 School Years

School Year and Consequence	Economically Disadvantaged %	Not Economically Disadvantaged %
2016-2017		
Administrator Conference	3.6	4.8
Detention After School	45.2	35.9
Lunch Detention	24.2	31.1
In-School Suspension	12.5	8.4
Out-of-School Suspension	0.7	0.2
Detention Before School	6.6	14.6
Saturday School	5.0	2.3
Parent Conference	0.7	1.1
2017-2018		
Administrator Conference	13.5	23.0
Detention After School	30.4	29.1
Lunch Detention	41.9	32.2
In-School Suspension	5.1	4.0
Out-of-School Suspension	0.1	0.0
Detention Before School	4.3	8.6
Saturday School	3.8	1.5
Parent Conference	0.2	0.1

number of absent without permission violations committed by middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. Middle school students who were economically disadvantaged committed 509 fighting violations which was more than twice the number of fighting violations committed by middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged.

Table 5 contains descriptive statistics for tardy violations for middle school students in the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years. In 2016-2017, middle school students who were economically disadvantaged were assigned exclusionary consequences and Saturday Detention more often than middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. In-School Suspension was assigned more than 4% more often for middle school students who were economically disadvantaged than middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. Middle school students who were economically disadvantaged were assigned Saturday School more than twice as often as students who were not economically disadvantaged. Lunch Detention was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged more than 7% more often than middle school students who were economically disadvantaged. Middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged were assigned Detention Before School more than twice as often as middle school students who were economically disadvantaged.

In the 2017-2018 school year, middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged were assigned Administrative Conference almost two times as often as middle school students who were economically disadvantaged. Detention Before School was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged more than twice as often as it was assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged. Middle school students who were economically disadvantaged were assigned Lunch Detention 9% more often than middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. Saturday School was assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged more than twice as often as it was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged.

Descriptive statistics for Tardy violations for the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school years are revealed in Table 6. In the 2018-2019 school year, middle school students who were economically disadvantaged were assigned Lunch Detention almost twice as often as middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. Middle school students who were economically disadvantaged were assigned to an In-School Suspension 2% more often than middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. Out-of-School Suspension was assigned to

Table 6: Most Frequently Assigned Consequences for Tardy Violations for Middle School Students by Their Economic Status in the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 School Years

School Year and Consequence	Economically Disadvantaged %	Not Economically Disadvantaged %
2018-2019		
Administrator Conference	1.6	1.2
Detention After School	38.9	47.6
Lunch Detention	31.2	18.6
In-School Suspension	18.6	16.7
Out-of-School Suspension	0.2	0.0
Detention Before School	7.0	13.9
Saturday School	0.0	0.0
Parent Conference	0.2	0.4
2019-2020		
Administrator Conference	1.2	1.6
Detention After School	51.6	48.5
Lunch Detention	16.7	16.2
In-School Suspension	15.2	13.8
Out-of-School Suspension	0.1	0.0
Detention Before School	11.4	14.5
Saturday School	0.7	0.8
Parent Conference	0.4	0.4

middle school students who were economically disadvantaged but it was not assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. Middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged were assigned Detention After School 9% more often than middle school students who were economically disadvantaged. Detention Before School was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged almost two times as often as it was assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged. In the 2019-2020 school year, middle school students who were economically disadvantaged were assigned Detention After School 3% more often than middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. In-School Suspension was assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged 3% more often than it was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. Middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged were assigned Detention Before School 3% more often than middle school students who were economically disadvantaged. Lunch Detention and Administrative Conference were assigned equally to both middle school students who were economically disadvantaged and students who were not economically disadvantaged.

The second student misbehavior addressed was Disruption of Class. Table 7 contains descriptive statistics for middle school students for the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years. In the 2016-2017 school year, middle school students who were economically disadvantaged were assigned to an In-School Suspension 2% more often than middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. Middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged were assigned Lunch Detention 5% more often than middle school students who were economically disadvantaged. Out-of-School Suspensions were assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged 2% more often than it was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. Middle school students who were economically disadvantaged were assigned Saturday School three times more often than middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged.

In the 2017-2018 school year, middle school students who were economically disadvantaged were assigned to an In-School Suspension 10% more often than middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. Administrative Conference was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged more than 4% more often than it was assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged.

Table 7: Most Frequently Assigned Consequences for Disruption of Class for Middle School Students by Their Economic Status in the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 School Years

School Year and Consequence	Economically Disadvantaged %	Not Economically Disadvantaged %
2016-2017		
Administrator Conference	12.5	12.8
Detention After School	14.7	14.3
Lunch Detention	9.7	14.3
In-School Suspension	35.6	23.4
Out-of-School Suspension	5.2	3.2
Detention Before School	4.2	10.6
Saturday School	2.9	0.9
Parent Conference	3.1	4.4
2017-2018		
Administrator Conference	13.0	17.4
Detention After School	15.4	14.9
Lunch Detention	17.0	16.7
In-School Suspension	31.0	21.7
Out-of-School Suspension	3.9	2.7
Detention Before School	2.9	7.3
Saturday School	2.9	0.8
Parent Conference	4.6	5.7

Lunch Detention was equally assigned to both middle school students who were and who were not economically disadvantaged. Middle school students who were economically disadvantaged were assigned Saturday School three times as often as middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. Detention Before School was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged more than two times as often as it was assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged.

Table 8: Most Frequently Assigned Consequences for Disruption of Class for Middle School Students by Their Economic Status in the 2018-2019 School Year

School Year and Consequence	Economically Disadvantaged %	Not Economically Disadvantaged %
2018-2019		
Administrator Conference	12.4	17.6
Detention After School	19.9	15.8
Lunch Detention	15.5	17.4
In-School Suspension	29.1	19.1
Out-of-School Suspension	4.4	3.2
Detention Before School	3.1	5.0
In School Detention	3.1	6.2
Parent Conference	3.0	5.2

Descriptive statistics for Disruption of Class for the 2018-2019 school year are delineated in Table 8. Administrative Conference was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged 5% more often than it was assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged. Middle school students who were economically disadvantaged were assigned In-School Suspension 10% more often than middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. Out-of-School Suspension was assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged almost

twice as often as it was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. Middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged had In School Detention more than twice as often as middle school students who were economically disadvantaged. Lunch Detention was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged 2% more than it was assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged.

The third misconduct addressed was General Misconduct. Revealed in Table 9 are the descriptive statistics for the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years. In 2016-2017, non-exclusionary consequences were assigned more often to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. Administrative Conference and Detention Before School were assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged at least 2% more often than was assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged. Out-of-School Suspension was assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged more than twice as often as it was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. In addition, In-School Suspension was assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged 6% more than it was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. Saturday School was assigned twice as often to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged as it was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged.

In the 2017-2018 school year, Administrative Conference was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged 3% more often than it was assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged. Middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged were assigned Lunch Detention at least 10% as often as it was assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged. Exclusionary consequences such as Out-of-School Suspension were assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged almost twice as often as it was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. In-School Suspension was assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged more than 6% more often than it was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. Isolated Instruction was assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged more than twice as often as it was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged.

Table 9: Most Frequently Assigned Consequences for General Misconduct for Middle School Students by Their Economic Status in the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 School Years

School Year and Consequence	Economically Disadvantaged %	Not Economically Disadvantaged %
2016-2017		
Administrator Conference	11.1	12.4
Detention After School	11.0	15.3
Lunch Detention	13.9	18.3
In-School Suspension	33.1	27.0
Out-of-School Suspension	7.3	3.6
Detention Before School	2.4	3.8
Saturday School	2.0	0.8
Parent Conference	7.2	5.2
2017-2018		
Administrator Conference	9.6	11.9
Detention After School	12.5	11.2
Lunch Detention	18.9	28.0
In-School Suspension	25.0	19.3
Out-of-School Suspension	5.4	3.6
Detention Before School	1.5	3.9
Isolated Instruction	11.9	5.4
Parent Conference	8.9	5.4

Descriptive statistics for General Misconduct for the 2018-2019 school year are presented in Table 10. Middle school students who were economically disadvantaged were assigned Detention After School almost twice as often as middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. Lunch Detention was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged more than 5% more often than it was assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged. Middle school students who were economically disadvantaged were assigned In-School Suspension 5% more often than middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. Out-of-School Suspension was assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged more than twice as often as it was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged.

Table 10: Most Frequently Assigned Consequences for General Misconduct for Middle School Students by Their Economic Status in the 2018-2019 School Year

School Year and Consequence	Economically Disadvantaged %	Not Economically Disadvantaged %
2018-2019		
Administrator Conference	12.5	14.5
Detention After School	10.9	6.5
Lunch Detention	18.0	23.5
In-School Suspension	30.5	25.5
Out-of-School Suspension	6.1	2.9
Detention Before School	1.9	4.4
Isolated Instruction	8.2	5.4
Parent Conference	4.9	5.2

Table 11 contains descriptive statistics for Noncompliance for middle school students in the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years. In 2016-2017, middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged were assigned Detention Before School more than three times as often as middle school students who were economically

Table 11: Most Frequently Assigned Consequences for Noncompliance for Middle School Students by Their Economic Status in the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 School Years

School Year and Consequence	Economically Disadvantaged %	Not Economically Disadvantaged %
2016-2017		
Administrator Conference	7.6	3.2
Detention After School	9.3	10.5
Lunch Detention	7.2	14.4
In-School Suspension	35.8	30.0
Out-of-School Suspension	19.6	11.5
Detention Before School	2.4	7.0
In School Detention	3.6	9.9
Parent Conference	4.5	4.2
2017-2018		
Administrator Conference	7.5	13.2
Detention After School	10.7	11.2
Lunch Detention	13.0	9.8
In-School Suspension	24.1	24.2
Out-of-School Suspension	11.5	8.2
Detention Before School	2.5	5.0
Isolated Instruction	14.5	7.2
Parent Conference	8.1	9.6

disadvantaged. Lunch Detention was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged two times as often as it was assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged. Middle school students who were economically disadvantaged were assigned In-School Suspension 5% more often than middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. Middle school students who were economically disadvantaged were assigned Out-of-School Suspension almost twice as often as middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. Detention Before School was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged more than three times as often as it was assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged.

In the 2017-2018 school year, Administrative Conference was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged almost twice as often as it was assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged. Lunch Detention was assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged 3% more often than it was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. Middle school students who were economically disadvantaged were assigned Out-of-School Suspension 3% more often than middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. Detention Before School was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged twice as often as it was assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged. Middle school students who were economically disadvantaged were assigned Isolated Instruction twice as often as students who were not economically disadvantaged.

Descriptive statistics for Noncompliance for the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school years are presented in Table 12. In the 2018-2019 school year, Administrative Conference was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged more than 5% more often than it was assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged. In-School Suspension was assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged more than 13% more often than it was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. Middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged were assigned Lunch Detention 3% more often than middle school students who were economically disadvantaged. Detention Before School was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged more than three times as often as it was assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged. Middle school students who were economically disadvantaged were

Table 12: Most Frequently Assigned Consequences for Noncompliance for Middle School Students by Their Economic Status in the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 School Years

School Year and Consequence	Economically Disadvantaged %	Not Economically Disadvantaged %
2018-2019		
Administrator Conference	10.6	15.1
Detention After School	10.8	10.5
Lunch Detention	9.6	12.5
In-School Suspension	40.9	27.6
Out-of-School Suspension	11.3	5.9
Detention Before School	1.9	4.6
Isolated Instruction	5.3	6.1
Parent Conference	3.9	5.1
2019-2020		
Administrator Conference	13.7	16.9
Detention After School	14.3	13.2
Lunch Detention	6.8	8.8
In-School Suspension	27.4	22.7
Out-of-School Suspension	9.1	8.3
Detention Before School	2.0	5.2
Isolated Instruction	5.2	4.1
Parent Conference	7.1	8.6

assigned Out-of-School Suspension more than twice as often as middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged.

In the 2019-2020 school year, In-School Suspension was assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged more than 5% more often than it was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. Middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged were assigned Administrative Conference 3% more often than middle school students who were economically disadvantaged. Detention Before School was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged more than twice as often as it was assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged. Middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged were assigned Lunch Detention 2% more often than middle school students who were economically disadvantaged.

DISCUSSION

In this multiyear article, the degree in which disparities existed between consequences assigned to specific misbehaviors was addressed for the 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020 school years. Descriptive statistics were calculated to ascertain the most frequently committed student misbehaviors. Once identified, then follow up descriptive statistics were calculated to identify the most common disciplinary consequences that were assigned to each misbehavior. These analyses were conducted separately to answer the research questions by student economic status in each of the four school years.

The most common misbehaviors for middle school students were Tardy, Disruption of Class, General Misconduct, and Noncompliance. In the 2016-2017 school year, the most common discipline consequences for middle school students who were economically disadvantaged were In-School Suspension, Out-of-School Suspension, Lunch Detention, and Detention After School. Middle school students who were economically disadvantaged were assigned In-School Suspension at least 5% more often than middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. In addition to this, middle school students who were economically disadvantaged were assigned Out-of-School Suspension more than twice as often as middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. In contrast, middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged were assigned Lunch Detention more than 5% more often than middle school students who were economically disadvantaged.

In the 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020 school years, consistent trends were evident. In regard to tardy violations middle school

students who were economically disadvantaged were assigned Detention After School, In-School Suspension and Out-of-School Suspension more often than were middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. Middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged were assigned Lunch Detention Administrative Conference, and Detention Before School more often than middle school students that were economically disadvantaged. For Disruption of Class, General Misconduct, and Noncompliance. Middle school students who were economically disadvantaged were assigned In-School Suspension and Out-of-School Suspension more often than middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. Administrative Conference and Detention Before School were assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged more often than it was assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged.

Connections to Existing Literature

In this multiyear analysis, results were similar to several previous researchers (e.g., Griffin, 2022; Schlitzberger, 2018; Tiger & Slate, 2017) who documented that consistent disparities were present in the assignments of exclusionary discipline to students who were economically disadvantaged than to those students who were not economically disadvantaged. Griffin (2022) established that in all four years of data that he analyzed, Grade 4 girls who were economically disadvantaged were assigned more than two times the number of In-School Suspension days than were Grade 4 girls who were not economically disadvantaged. Additionally, Schlitzberger (2018) documented that students who were economically disadvantaged were assigned to two times as many In-School Suspensions for violations of code of conduct than were students who were not economically disadvantaged. Tiger and Slate (2017) established that Grade 4 boys in poverty were assigned to an In-School Suspension more than three times more often than were Grade 4 boys who were not living in poverty. Results for this study delineated herein were congruent with the results of previous studies in which students who were economically disadvantaged are more likely to receive exclusionary disciplinary consequences than students who were not economically disadvantaged for similar misbehaviors.

Implications for Policy and for Practice

As a result of this study, implications for changes to policy and practice can be determined. First, with respect to current campus discipline practices, campus administrators need to review the effectiveness of their

disciplinary consequences. Numerous previous research studies have connected students who were economically disadvantaged to the need for additional learning opportunities. Current discipline practices may exclude students who were economically disadvantaged from receiving much needed direct instruction. Additionally, practices on catching up students when missing school work needs to be reviewed to ensure that students are not missing learning opportunities.

Secondly, district and campus leaders must connect with the community. In many cases the percentage of parent/community involvement is reduced with respect to students who were economically disadvantaged. District and campus leaders need to reach out and connect with parents and community members to ensure that individual student situations are understood and accounted for. It is up to the district to realize that all students are not educated the same way and individualized plans may need to be developed to connect with every student.

Finally, the adults in the education system must be properly trained to provide instruction to all students. An important part of this training needs to be in how to reach different types of learners. Students who were economically disadvantaged may need specific strategies and supports that other learners may not need to be successful. School district leaders must recognize the efforts needed to provide training and support to campus leaders and all educators in the system. Individual student data must be analyzed throughout the year to provide opportunities for immediate intervention if needed.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based upon the results of this multiyear analysis, several recommendations can be made for future research. First, the data analyzed in this article were from a single school district in the greater Houston area. To determine if the results might be generalizable, studies need to be developed with data throughout the State of Texas, especially in areas of the state that are not suburban. Second, data from other grade levels should be analyzed to ascertain the generalizability of the results in this study. For this article, only data on Grades 6 through 8 students were analyzed. In future studies it would be advantageous to determine if the results were consistent with elementary studies and high school results. Third, researchers are encouraged to analyze state level data which can then be compared data from other states. Fourth, researchers are encouraged to conduct inferential statistics to determine whether the differential assignment of consequences in this study were statistically significant. An additional opportunity for research would be to conduct a qualitative study

to determine why a discrepancy between assignment of consequences by economic status exists.

CONCLUSION

In this multiyear investigation, the most common student misbehaviors committed by middle school students were identified. Then, the most common disciplinary consequence assigned a result were determined. These determinations were made separately by student economic status (i.e., economically disadvantaged, not economically disadvantaged). Four years of data (i.e., 2016-2017 through 2019-2020) from a Texas suburban school district were analyzed. The most frequent misbehaviors across all four years were Tardy, Disruption of Class, General Misconduct, and Noncompliance. In almost every case, students who were economically disadvantaged were assigned to a higher percentage of exclusionary consequences than students who were not economically disadvantaged. For instance, in all four years, middle school students who were economically disadvantaged were assigned a greater number of In-School Suspensions than were middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. Additionally, in all four years, Out-of-School Suspensions were assigned to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged more than twice as often as it was assigned to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged. Middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged were assigned consequences that typically do not affect direct classroom instruction, such as Detention Before School. The assignment of Detention Before School was two times more often to middle school students who were not economically disadvantaged than it was to middle school students who were economically disadvantaged.

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