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The Effects Of The Dallas Independent School District Code Of Conduct On LGBTQ Young Adults Of Color

Antoinette McIntosh

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THE EFFECTS OF THE DALLAS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT CODE OF

CONDUCT ON LGBTQ YOUNG ADULTS OF COLOR

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THE EFFECTS OF THE DALLAS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT CODE OF

CONDUCT ON LGBTQ YOUNG ADULTS OF COLOR

ABSTRACT

This study explored the past lived experiences of LGBTQ young adults of color (ages 23-28) who were affected by the DISD Student Code of Conduct while attending high school. This study sought to discover the experiences, behaviors, and expectations that LGBTQ youth of color had in relation to the DISD Code of Conduct. This study used a qualitative phenomenological method with data collected from purposeful sampling of six LGBTQ young adults of color who attended DISD high schools and were suspended and/or expelled due to the zero tolerance nature of the student code of conduct. Inductive reasoning was used as it is based on learning from experiences. In addition, patterns and similarities are observed in order to reach conclusions (Kakulu, Byrne, & Viitanen, 2009).

Questions for all participants focused on individual perceptions of student discipline, school engagement, academic achievement, mental health and well-being and the juvenile justice system. The study found that LGBTQ youth of color experienced low student engagement, involvement in recreational drug use, low academic achievement, and involvement in the juvenile justice system due to being suspended and/or expelled. The study provides information that will shed light on the importance of why high school administrators and teachers should make the appropriate investments into LGBTQ youth of color in order to cultivate a school

environment of inclusiveness. Schools must establish clear comprehensive policies which add

clauses that take into consideration the intent of the action and if the student acted in self-

defense. The effects of suspensions and/expulsions require closer examination and inquiry in

order to ensure that the educational opportunities of LGBTQ youth of color are protected.

Keywords: school discipline, zero tolerance policies, academic achievement and drop-out,

suspended student demographics, mental health and well-being, DISD Student Code of Conduct

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Student Codes of Conduct are public school discipline policies used in grades K-12. Historically, some Student Codes of Conduct contained language of a zero-tolerance nature. By the late 1990s, 79% of U.S. schools instituted zero tolerance policies (Kang-Brown, Trone, Fratello, & Daftary-Kapur, 2013) resulting in mandatory punishments around the country to address unwanted behaviors in school (Skiba & Knesting, 2002). Under the zero tolerance nature of Student Codes of Conduct, students have been suspended, expelled, or referred to the juvenile justice system for a wide range of behaviors, from bringing a weapon to school to smaller infractions such as smoking, possessing aspirin, and/or causing general disruptions (Teske, 2011). The concept of zero tolerance is meant to "punish students harshly regardless of the severity of the infraction, the existence of mitigating circumstances, or the context in which the conduct occurred" (Mitchell, 2014, p. 272).

In the 1960s, before written Student Codes of Conduct were mandated, public school administrators began to use in-school and out-of-school suspensions as methods of reducing student misbehavior (Adams, 2000). In the 1970s and 1980s, public schools were federally required to provide due process rights to students who were assigned school suspension for a short amount of time or expelled, due to the rulings in *Goss v. Lopez* (1975). The rulings of *Goss v. Lopez* specified that schools must have due process protections for students that are suspended and expelled. Prior to a suspension or expulsion, a school must provide the student notice of the basis upon which they are punished and provide them with an opportunity to respond.

In the early 1990s, federal and state laws influenced the implementation of strong school discipline policies. The Gun Free Schools Act of 1994 introduced as part of the Improving America's School Act 1994 (U.S. Department of Education, 1994), states that all states receiving federal funds, "must have laws in effect requiring local educational agencies to expel for at least one year any students determined to have brought weapons to school" (Gun Free School Act, 1994, para. 2). According to the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) Office for Civil Rights (OCR) (2014), nearly 3.5 million students were suspended or expelled in the 2011-12 school year as a result of school discipline policies, resulting in time away from the classroom and missed instructional time (OCR, 2014). The data reflected that black students were suspended or expelled at three times the rate of white students, while black girls were six times more likely than white girls to be suspended. In addition, Black students were 2.2 times more likely to receive a referral to law enforcement or be subject to a school-related arrest as white students. Consistent with the OCR (2014) report that Black students were more likely to be disciplined through law enforcement, Burdge, Hyemingway, and Licona (2014) found that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) youth of color were subjected to increased surveillance, policing and biased application of policies in schools.

On any given day, an estimated 57,000 youth are in correctional facilities or in juvenile detention, with hundreds of thousands more on probation (Bird, 2016). It is mentioned by, Mallory, Sears, Hasenbush, & Susman (2014), in the U.S., it is estimated that half of all LGBTQ youth are "at risk" of being arrested or entering juvenile and criminal justice systems because they are impacted by individual factors such as anti-social behavior, family factors like caregiver mistreatment, peer factors such as peer rejection and school factors like poor academic performance. George (2011) research indicated that LGBTQ students were more likely than their

non-LGBTQ peers to be removed from school as a result of enforced zero tolerance disciplines, which might ultimately push them into the juvenile detention and criminal justice system.

Statement of the Problem

The Student Code of Conduct is required by state law and is intended to promote a positive learning environment and safe schools (DISD Student Code of Conduct, 2010). Unfortunately, research has shown that school safety has not decreased since the inception of zero-tolerance language in Student Codes of Conduct and these enforcements have not had an impact in keeping schools safer (Skiba et al., 2014). According to research by GSA Network (2004), LGBTQ youth of color have been pushed out of schools, experienced severe emotional, psychological and academic trauma, and have been disproportionately represented in the juvenile detention and criminal justice systems. In 2014, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and the ED issued non-regulatory guidance that was intended to assist public elementary and secondary schools administer student discipline without discriminating on the basis of color, race or national origin (U.S ED's Office for Civil Rights & U.S. DOJ, 2014). The report noted that youth of color were disproportionately impacted by expulsions and suspensions. In addition, suspended students were less likely to graduate on time and more prone to future suspensions, repeating a grade, dropping out of school, and becoming involved in the juvenile justice system. (U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights & U.S. Department of Justice, 2014).

In 2015, Randi Weingarten, the former president of the American Federation of Teachers wrote an editorial in the American Educator acknowledging fault in supporting zero tolerance policies for several years. The American Federation of Teachers is a union of professionals that supports fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for students. In the editorial Weingarten (2015) stated that zero

tolerance policies in schools have been a failure. She went on to mention that the intent of zero tolerance policies were to make schools safer and discipline fairer. However, in practice, zero tolerance policies didn't assist in providing safer and more welcoming school environments (Weingarten, 2015).

Mitchum and Moodie-Mills (2014) suggested school resource officers who police schools might be:

> Ill equipped to understand and manage the unique issues impacting LGBTQ youth and, as a result, unfairly criminalize what is otherwise normal adolescent behavior, or they respond in a punitive manner to emotional issues that are best addressed through counseling. (p. 18)

In many cases, regardless of the context of the behavior zero tolerance discipline was applied, and the punishment was automatically school suspension or expulsion. Himmelstein and Bruckner (2011) used data from the national longitudinal study of adolescent health and found that in some instances school administrators and security resource officers treated students as the aggressor solely based on non-gender conforming clothing and physical appearance. In other instances, LGBTQ students received differential discipline and harsher punishments because staff viewed LGBTQ students as anti-authoritarian or disruptive (Burdge et al., 2014). Another national study conducted by GLSEN (2016a), of 7,898 LGBTQ students between the ages of 13 and 21, revealed that 39.8% LGBTQ students (two out of five) reported experiencing at least one suspension and/or expulsion. 46.7% of LGBTQ Black students, 44.1% of LGBTQ Hispanic students reported to have receive disciplines at school, compared to 36.3% of LGBTQ White students and 35.2% of LGBTQ Asian students. Based on these findings, GLSEN (2016b)

concluded that the use of harsh and exclusionary discipline policies like Student Codes of

Conduct, has contributed to higher dropout rates for LGBTQ students.

Since the enforcement of Student Codes of Conduct, expulsions for all students have

increased; however, LGBTQ youth of color numbers have drastically increased, potentially

pushing large numbers to the criminal justice system (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). In

addition, research has shown that students who have been suspended or expelled have a reduced

likelihood as young adults to enroll into a four-year college or university (Gregory et al., 2010).

It has been reported that they also experience mental health, behavioral, or other personal

challenges as young adults due to suspensions and expulsions (Gregory et al., 2010).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the lived

experiences of LGBTQ young adults of color (ages 23-28) who experienced suspensions or

expulsions based on the DISD Student Code of Conduct while attending high school. While

several qualitative studies have been conducted exploring the effects of school discipline

policies, no studies to date have been found that explored and described the lived experiences of

LGBTQ young adults of color and school discipline policies. Hence, there was a need to explore

the context of the lived experiences of LGBTQ young adults of color in order to discover the

values, behaviors, and expectations that they had in relation to school discipline policies. This

study was important as findings from this research will have the capacity to impact future

disciplinary strategies and yield a better understanding of LGBTQ students of color behaviors

and the lasting impact that the zero-tolerance nature of Student Codes of Conduct had on

LGBTQ students of color life. Thus, it was the intent of the researcher that the end result of this

study will invoke changes in discipline policy.

The U.S. Department of Education (2014), the American Bar Association (2001), the American Academy of Pediatrics (2013), and the American Psychological Association (2008) were in opposition of zero tolerance policies and the criminalization of in school offenses. They all have issued policy statements urging zero tolerance policy reforms, which allowed more flexibility in applying punishments on a case by case basis. In 2012, Laurel Bellows, the president of the ABA, submitted a statement before a U.S. Senate Committee for a hearing on the school-to-prison pipeline. In addition to confirming the ABA's disapproval of zero tolerance policies, Bellows suggested policy proposals to "end harsh school discipline, provide full procedural protections in disciplinary hearings, end the criminalization of truancy and disability-related behavior, and implement strong civil rights monitoring and enforcement" (Hirji, 2018, p. 2).

LGBTQ youth of color and the DISD Student Code of Conduct were explored in this study because prior to the Student Code of Conduct reform in 2013, a study conducted about Texas school districts' over- reliance on police officers and juvenile probation to address low-level school-based behaviors, revealed overly-punitive school disciplines for youth of color (Fowler, Craven, Wright, Rose, & Johnson, 2016). From 2011-2015 students of color received two to four times as many disciplinary actions as their representation in the DISD student body (Fowler et al., 2016). Even after the reform in 2013, in the DISD 49% of tickets issued by school resource officers were issued to youth of color, who made up about 23% of DISD's student population (Fowler et al., 2016). Although there has been some research conducted to document the effects and lived experiences in relation to school discipline and LGBTQ youth, to date, there has been no research that could be found that explored the past lived experiences of LGBTQ

young adults of color (ages 23-28) who were affected by the DISD, Student Code of Conduct while attending high school.

This study contributed to the current body of literature on LGBTQ youth of color and school discipline policies by exploring the experiences of LGBTQ young adults of color and by revealing what it was like to experience DISD Student Code of Conduct suspensions and/or expulsions in high school. It was important to examine the population in this study to better understand the unique challenges of LGBTQ youth of color and to improve the state of knowledge of LGBTQ youth of color, in order to also lay the basis for further research.

Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of LGBTQ young adults of color (ages 23-28) who experienced suspensions or expulsions based on the DISD Student Code of Conduct while attending high school. Thus, the critical questions framing this research were:

1) How did school engagement influence, effect, or contribute to the lived experiences of LGBTQ young adults of color, while they attended DISD high schools?

2) How did the experience of being suspended and/or expelled based on the DISD Code of Conduct shape the high school experience for LGBTQ young adults of color?

Conceptual Framework

This study built upon two theories, the Student School Engagement Theory and the General Strain Theory (GST). Student School Engagement Theory provided a framework for this study because it conceptualizes how engagement practices influence the outcome of student success and development (Kuh, 2009). A theoretical explanation was also provided by the criminological theory on strain which implies that an individual is naturally inclined to conform

to rules but can be pushed into deviant behavior when the social structure fails to provide legitimate opportunities to succeed (Barlow & Decker, 2010).

Research has shown that school engagement, is associated with positive outcomes including increased academic achievement, decreased classroom behavioral issues, and decreased deviant behavior (Mauseth, 2011). Students that are disengaged from school, nevertheless, have shown harmful effects, one of which is an increased risk of exhibiting deviant behavior (Mauseth, 2011). In turn, this delinquency has been shown to decrease subsequent levels of student engagement, which suggests that student engagement and delinquency are associated in a reciprocal manner (Mauseth, 2011).

Student School Engagement Theory

Student School Engagement Theory examines the fit between a student and the student's school environment (Gallagher, 2013). Student School Engagement Theory is meant to predict student academic outcomes such as truancy, dropping out, academic achievement and nonacademic outcomes such as depression, substance abuse, and delinquency (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). The theory's fundamental principles state that students must be engaged in meaningful learning activities through interaction with others and worthwhile tasks (Fredricks, et al., 2004). Meaningful learning activities through interaction are difficult to achieve if students are suspended or expelled from school due to zero tolerance policies.

Student engagement is defined as an interplay between an individual's behavior, emotions and cognition and their environment (Fredricks, et al., 2004). Others define student engagement as participation in educationally effective practices, which leads to an array of measurable outcomes (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges & Hayek, 2007). Evidence shows that student engagement is a strong predictor of student success (Klem, & Connell, 2004) and that

effective leadership has a positive effect on a student's ability and inclination to the pursuit of knowledge (Silins & Mulford, 2002). Many students who are academically disengaged are found to have poor attendance records, behavioral issues, and low grades. As a result, these students develop a sense of alienation from the school system and feel as if they did not belong. Alarmingly, this sense of not belonging can transfer into adult life (McNeely & Falci, 2004).

Student School Engagement Theory supports the claim that when students are actively engaged in learning, they have improved academic, social and health outcomes and fewer behavioral issues (Thompson, 2013). Thompson (2013), also suggests that suspensions and expulsions should be reserved for the only serious offenses such as murder. The safest schools are marked with high levels of student engagement and strong relationships among students, parents and educators (Thompson, 2013). Although there has been extensive research regarding student school engagement, research still has to explore how Student School Engagement Theory applies to LGBTQ students of color and the effects on their academic performance and behaviors at school as well as mental health outcomes.

General Strain Theory (GST)

Merton's (1938) classic strain theory focused on the inability to achieve culturally accepted goals, and the distribution of legitimate opportunities for achieving them. Agnew's (1992) General Strain Theory (GST), expounded upon Merton's strain theory taking a social psychological approach to explain delinquent behavior. The basis of GST offers an explanation of how negative relationships might lead to negative emotions, which in turn, increases the inclination towards delinquent and criminal behavior (Agnew, 1992).

GST defines strain in three ways, the first refers to relationships that prevent individuals from achieving positively valued goals, which consists of three subtypes the first subtype refers

to the difference between the aspirations and the actual achievements. In particular, Agnew (1992) states that youth aspire to achieve immediate goals such as good grades, popularity and athletic ability; hence, strain should be measured as the gap between their expectations and achievement of immediate goals rather than future goals. As a consequence, youth who expect themselves to be successful in school but who are doing poorly may experience anger or depression which leads to deviant behavior. The second subtype refers to the difference between expectations and the actual achievements Agnew (1992) states that an individual's expectations for achievement is based on past experiences and/or the comparison with the achievements of someone similar to them. Agnew (1992) explains that this subset of strain is likely to create more emotions such as resentment and depression, than the gap between aspirations and achievements. The second subtype refers to the difference between just/fair outcomes and the actual outcome: This strain is based on the individual's understanding of what he/she considers fair (Agnew, 1992).

The second strain refers to relationships in which negative stimuli are presented by others. An example of a negative stimulus is discrimination or a dangerous school environment, students who experience negative stimuli might turn to delinquency in order to escape from the situation (e.g., truancy, or seek revenge against the source, aggression (Agnew, 2006).

Lastly, the third strain applies to relationships in which positively valued stimuli are removed. This can be seen when a student loses a friendship or moves away from a well-liked school or community. An individual that experiences the loss of positively valued stimuli may undergo negative emotions such as anger or depression and may cope with the loss through alcohol and drug use (Agnew, 1992).

Within this framework, all three areas of GST were explored to examine various forms of strain. Subsequently, this study used the GST framework to better understand the aspirations, expectations and lived experiences between LGBTQ youth of color and the possible effects of strain.

Assumptions

This study assumed that the participants would answer the interview questions in an honest and candid manner and understood that full anonymity and confidentiality would be preserved. The criteria established for the sample were appropriate and therefore, assured that the participants had all experienced the same or similar phenomenon of the study. The researcher did not access high school records; hence, it was assumed that participants were honest and had been suspended and/or expelled, prior to 2013, due to the DISD, Code of Conduct. It was also assumed that the participants were willing to participate in this research as participation was voluntary.

Limitations

This study utilized a phenomenological qualitative research approach. Research was conducted with a sample of participants in Dallas, TX; hence, the results only represent a snapshot of the LGBTQ population. While this research assisted in exploring the lived experiences of LGBTQ youth of color and the DISD, Student Code of Conduct, the data obtained were based solely on their perceptions, interactions and memories. When the research was conducted, the Texas Education Agency Public Education, Information Management System database captured: grade level, gender, school, student ethnicity/race, and discipline consequence. Unfortunately, sexual orientation and gender identity were not captured; hence, the

researcher had to take the word of the participants that they had been suspended and/or expelled due to the DISD, Student Code of Conduct.

Participants met all of the following criteria: 1) attended high school in the DISD school district, 2) identify as LGBTQ of color, 3) were between the ages of 23-28 at the time of the study, and 4) had been suspended and/or expelled from a DISD High School, due to the DISD, Student Code of Conduct.

Researcher Bias

The researcher is a LGTBQ advocate and confirmation bias might have occurred if the researcher formed a hypothesis regarding zero tolerance policies and its adverse effects on LGBTQ youth of color (Mathews & Ledet, 2012). It was important for the researcher to conduct interviews controlling her own facial expressions, body language, and tone to reduce bias and remain neutral while interviewing. Also, to reduce researcher bias was important to not elaborate on a respondent's answer to avoid leading them.

Significance

Suspending and/or expelling students from school for problem behaviors is not supported by research primarily because school disciplinary policies have not considerably reduced problem behaviors and may have influenced juvenile delinquency and other negative outcomes for children and adolescents (Sprague, Walker, Stieber, Simonsen, & Nichioka, 2001). There is evidence that LGBTQ students that experience hostile school climates and perceive to have been treated unfairly often encounter academic difficulties, mental health consequences, experience depression, and have suicidal thoughts (Genders & Sexualities Alliance Network, 2012). GLSEN (2016b) also analyzed the various factors that combine to push LGBTQ students out of school,

explaining that LGBTQ students who are disengaged do not feel supported in school, often turn to truancy and/or act out in class which can lead to disciplinary actions.

Mitchell (2014) revealed that students that are suspended or expelled have a much higher likelihood to have contact with the criminal justice system as adults. By removing students from schools or temporarily separating them by way of suspensions, zero tolerance policies are creating a juvenile to adult disenfranchised population (Mitchell, 2014). According to Mitchell (2014), an adult disenfranchised population is one where citizens are deprived of rights because of their interaction with the criminal justice system. They can be deprived of rights such as, the right to vote, the right to sit on a jury, the right to own a firearm, the right to receive public housing, and the right to obtain occupational licenses.

This study aimed to inform the creation of more supportive school climates to meet the needs of LGBTQ youth of color in schools. School climates for LGBTQ youth of color consists of several factors such as the presence of harassment, acts of discrimination, gendered bathrooms, and discriminatory policies (Wimberly, 2015). The information gathered in this study also hopes to be useful to assist educational leaders and policymakers on the degree to which disproportions might exist in the assignment of discipline consequences. It is desired that educational leaders and policymakers will be able to use the findings of this study to determine whether additional changes might be warranted in the discipline policies used in schools in Dallas, TX and throughout the U.S.

<div align="center">**Definition of Terms**</div>

Binary Gender System- A social system that requires that everyone be raised as a boy or girl (dependent on what sex one is assigned at birth), which in turn forms the basis for how one is educated, what jobs one can perform (or is expected to perform), how one is expected to behave,

what one is expected to wear, what one's gender and gender presentation should be, and who one should be attracted to/love/marry, etc. (GSA Network, 2004).

Coping- Cognitive, emotional, and behavioral strategies used to minimize one's negative feelings (Agnew, 1997).

Gender non-conforming- Refers to people who do not follow other people's ideas or stereotypes about how they should look or act based on the female or male sex they were assigned at birth (Irvine, 2010).

GST- General strain theory, is an established criminological theory; (Agnew, 1997).

Heteronormativity-The belief that people fall into distinct and complementary genders (male and female) with natural roles in life. It assumes that heterosexuality is the only sexual orientation or only norm (Laterz, 2013).

LGBTQ-Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questionable.

The school-to-prison pipeline, or STPP-This refers to a set of school policies and practices that push students away from education and onto a pathway toward juvenile detention and the prison industrial complex; The term addresses a student being marginalized in school and/or driven out of school prior to graduation. It differs from the term "drop-out" in that it acknowledges the multiple school-based conditions and forces at play in marginalizing students in the classroom and in school as well as pressuring students to leave school prematurely (Anyonet al., 2014; Irvine, 2010).

Strain- General Strain theory (GST) identifies strain as relationships in which the individual is not treated as he or she wants to be (Agnew, 1997).

Student Non-discrimination Act- (SNDA) This act prohibits public schools from discriminating against any student on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation or

gender identity. In addition, SNDA prohibits discrimination against any student because of the actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity of a person with whom a student associates or has associated. Further, retaliation for lodging a complaint of discrimination is prohibited (Campaign, n.d.).

Title IX- Federal civil rights law that states no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance (Title IX and Sex Discrimination, 2015).

Youth-For purposes of this study youth is defined as ages 13-17.

Young Adults- For purposes of this study young adult is defined as ages 23-28.

Zero-tolerance Policies-A school or district philosophy that mandates predetermined consequences or punishments for specific offenses. Generally, results are suspension or expulsion from school, regardless of circumstances and/or without due process procedures (Heaviside, Rowand, Williams & Farris, 1998).

Conclusion

Public education should be based on the principle that every child is of equal and countless value (George, 2011). Unfortunately, research has shown that LGBTQ youth experience disproportionately higher rates of exclusionary school discipline and involvement with the criminal/juvenile justice system and lower high school graduation rates than their peers (Anyon et al., 2014). Supporting this claim, a national longitudinal study examining non-heterosexual youth in grades 7 through 12, found that youth reporting same-sex attraction are at a higher risk for school expulsion and criminal justice sanctions than their heterosexual peers (Himmelstein & Bruckner, 2011).

Students affected by Student Codes of Conduct that are pushed out of school are less likely to have access to meaningful education and work opportunities (Redfield & Nance, 2016). Furthermore, students who are no longer in a school system put stress on families and communities and can undergo mental health problems (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). Mitchell (2014), also suggests that students who are suspended regularly, for long periods of time, or have been expelled, are likely to have lower levels of academic success and are at increased risk of never returning to school again and/or falling into criminal activity as they reach adulthood.

There is a need for our schools to create safe, welcoming climates to help LGBTQ youth of color persist and be more engaged in school. In addition, schools should offer positive reinforcement such as building on the quality of relationships students have with their teachers and restorative justice which is likely to increase the level of school engagement for LGBTQ youth of color (Mauseth, 2011) enabling them to be productive citizens after graduation or once they leave school. Mitchell (2014) defines restorative justice as the manner of handling offenders by focusing on the bottom line of settling the conflict and resolving the underlying problem(s) which caused it. The approach to restorative justice allows students to learn from their mistakes and help them examine how their actions might have caused fear in classroom and/or with school personnel. Hence, restorative justice allows teachers and school administrators to engage in teachable moments and address behavior that violates the Student Code of Conduct (Mitchell, 2014). In addition, restorative justice allows schools to handle deviant behavior in a way that addresses the root causes rather than the symptoms.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 2 is organized into seven main sections. The seven sections are: background and overview of zero tolerance policies, review public schools and zero tolerance policies, review school discipline inequalities towards LGBTQ youth and youth of color, look at the evolution of the Student Code of Conduct in Texas, provide an overview of the ties between the Student Code of Conduct and the juvenile justice system, take a deeper look at the representation of LGBTQ youth of color in the juvenile justice system, provide an overview of LGBTQ mental health and well-being issues, review academic achievement, and lastly provide a definition of the theoretical frameworks, including General Strain Theory and Student School Engagement Theory that are used as the foundations for this study.

History of Zero Tolerance Policies

Zero tolerance is a phrase that was introduced into U.S. culture during the early 1980s, shortly after President Ronald Reagan introduced to the nation the war-against-drugs campaign. In 1983, the first use of the term zero tolerance was recorded in the Lexis-Nexis national news database when the Navy reassigned 40 submarine crews for suspected drug use (Henault, 2001). The concept of zero tolerance grew to be applied to policies to punish all state and federal drug offenses, no matter how insignificant the offense (Henault, 2001). These policies are based on the concept of deterrence as they assume that severe punishment would be an effective correctional policy to deter or reduce crime (Saeler, 2015). The U.S. Customs Agency quietly halted its zero-tolerance policy in response to serious concerns of due process and fairness surfaced after a Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute research vessel loaded with sophisticated

scientific equipment, was seized for a marijuana cigarette found in a seaman's cabin (Fritsch, 1988). This zero-tolerance seizure drew widespread public and congressional criticism which incited the U.S. Customs Agency to swiftly back away from some cases involving small amounts of drugs (Fritsch, 1988). However, at this point, the zero-tolerance concept ignited and was being applied to other facets of society such as homelessness, sexual harassment, environment issues, and public schools (Skiba & Peterson, 1999).

In the 1990s, a major focus ensued on the prevalence of violence in schools (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). School districts in California, Kentucky, and New York were the first to enforce zero tolerance programs to discipline disorderly students (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). These discipline programs, called Student Codes of Conduct, were enacted to promote school safety in the wake of highly publicized incidents of school violence such as gang violence, mass shootings, and drug-related instances (Cuellar & Markowitz, 2015). In an effort to protect students, Student Codes of Conduct mandated that minimal disciplinary actions be referred to police officers and that they were to patrol the halls with military-style security tactics to address misbehavior (Cuellar & Markowitz, 2015). Schools mirrored the zero-tolerance state and federal laws and instituted their own mandated Student Code of Conduct, disciplinary policies that suspended students from school for behavioral infractions such as threats of violence, weapons possession, and drug possession (Skiba et al., 2002). In the 1970s and 1980s, there were no written Codes of Conduct; however, public schools had the requirement of providing due process rights to students who were assigned school suspension for a short amount of time, or to students who were expelled.

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights defines zero tolerance policy as, "a policy that results in mandatory expulsion of any student who commits one or more

specified offenses (for example, offenses involving guns, or other weapons, or violence, or similar factors, or combinations of these factors)" (Office of Civil Rights, 2014, p. 2). Due to strict adherence to zero tolerance guidelines, students have been suspended for bringing a plastic knife to school for lunch, or sharing pain medication (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). In February 2001, the American Bar Association adopted a resolution which was in opposition of zero tolerance policies suggesting that the policy pays no, "regard to the circumstances or nature of the offense or the student's history" (Potts, Njie, Detch, & Walton, 2003, p.16). Other reasons given for strict adherence to the policy included deterring misconduct and limiting legal liability by treating all occurrences equally (Casella, 2003).

Recently, strong opposition to zero tolerance policies has influenced important reforms in school disciplinary practices (Ritter, 2018). For example, in 2012, Chicago Public schools enacted a policy that reduced the length of student suspensions (Sartain et al., 2015). In the 2015-2016 school year, the Miami-Dade school district in Florida, banned all out-of-school suspensions (O'Connor, 2015). Also in 2015, 22 states and the District of Columbia revised laws to, "require or encourage schools to: limit the use of exclusionary discipline practices; implement supportive (that is, non-punitive) discipline strategies; and provide support services such as counseling, dropout prevention, and guidance services for at-risk students" (Steinberg & Lacoe, 2017, p.1).

More recently, in 2017, lawmakers in Arkansas, Maryland, and Texas passed legislation restricting the use of suspensions for K-6 students (Ritter, 2018).

History of Public Schools and Zero Tolerance Policies

In 1994, the Gun-Free Schools Act was passed, and a new chapter of public school student control and discipline was introduced. Before the inception of the Gun-Free Schools Act,

discipline was handled locally, and state legislation only required schools to have suspensions and expulsions policies in place (The Harvard Civil Rights Project, 2000). While schools adhered to the guidelines of the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 (mandatory expulsion for any student who brought a weapon to school), supplemental government funding was provided to school districts (U.S. Department of Education, 1994). According to Gausted (1992), many schools district added more strict discipline policies, as funding was provided based on the state's ratification of zero tolerance disciplines. Researchers unveiled several negative impacts of the stricter policy enforcement, such as students who experience out of school suspensions and expulsions are 10 times more likely to ultimately drop out of high school, hold negative school attitudes, experience academic failure, and face incarceration than those who do not come in contact with zero tolerance disciplines (Lamont, 2013).

Subsequent amendments to the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 challenged school districts to provide services that would meet the individual needs of suspended or expelled students, which often came in the form of alternative education (Pipho, 1998). The Harvard Civil Rights Project (2000), claims school administrators were provided discretionary powers to lessen the consequences for delinquency; however, for most students of color, this was not practiced. By 1997, the U.S. Department of Education and National Center for Education Statistics reported that the majority of U.S. public schools were enforcing zero tolerance policies, and 87% of the disciplines reported involved alcohol use, while 79% dealt with fights between students (Heaviside, Rowand, Williams & Farris, 1998). Between 1997 and 2007, the number of U.S. high schools with armed security guards tripled (Kang-Brown, 2016). Thus, the zero-tolerance element of Student Codes of Conduct, transformed schools from a place of learning to one of punishment (Kang-Brown, 2016).

From 2001 to 2018, the American Bar Association, community-based organizations, social justice organizations, civil rights organizations, and public advocacy groups have all released statements and resolutions exposing the systemic disproportionate impact that students of color face in school systems that rely too heavily on zero tolerance policies and policing that criminalize school-based misbehavior (Hirji, 2018).

Inequalities towards LGBTQ Youth and Youth of Color

There are several studies that demonstrate the systematic inequalities faced by LGBTQ youth of color in schools. For example, Anyon et al., (2014) discovered that low-income children, LGBTQ youth, and youth of color are significantly more likely than students of other backgrounds to receive school suspensions, expulsions, and/or referrals to law enforcement as punishment. Heitzeg (2016) examined the U.S. Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), which included data from every public school in the nation (approximately 16,500 school districts, 97,000 schools, and 49 million students). The study found that youth of color are suspended and expelled at a rate three times larger than white students (youth of color 16%, white students 5%). Further research echoed these findings, demonstrating that while youth of color represent 16% of the overall national student enrollment, they make up 27% of students that are turned over to law enforcement and 31% of students that are involved in in-school arrests (Heitzeg, 2016).

Snapp, Hoenig, Fields, and Russell (2014) conducted a qualitative study of 31 LGBTQ youth with a focus on zero tolerance policies and the school-to-prison pipeline. Through focus groups and qualitative interviews, they found that LGBTQ youth feel scrutinized in schools, especially when not conforming to gender norms. According to the authors, this scrutiny resulted in excessive punishment and victimization, which might have been ignored and encouraged by

educators and administrators. The 2015 National School Climate Survey, a national biennial

survey of 10,528 LGBTQ secondary school students, reported that most LGBTQ students did not

report incidents of victimization in school, citing there were doubts about the effectiveness of

doing so. Approximately two-thirds of victimized LGBTQ students (67.2%) in the survey

expressed the belief that school staff would not do anything about the harassment when reported

it, and that they didn't believe the actions of staff would effectively address the victimization that

they were experiencing (Kosciw, Greytak, Giga, Villenas & Danischewski, 2016).

In the same 2015 National School Climate Survey, it was reported that school policies

and practices have contributed to negative experiences for LGBTQ students and made them feel

as if they were not valued at school. When the surveyed students were asked about direct

experiences with discriminatory policies and practices at their school (66.2%) they answered that

they had personally experienced discriminatory policies and practices (Kosciw, et al., 2016).

Skiba et al., (2014) looked specifically at the relationship between zero tolerance policies

and LGBTQ youth. Their research argues that increasing punishments create unintentional

burdens for LGBTQ students, families, and communities. In a study that examined hostility

harsh treatments, and security searches, towards LGBTQ youth, researchers found that 41% of

LGBTQ youth of color were verbally assaulted by school security personnel, 39% LGBTQ youth

of color felt they were treated harshly by school officials because of their LGBTQ identity, and

57% LGBTQ youth of color were more likely to be searched by security (Lambda Legal, 2012).

Moreover, the data that has emerged from zero tolerance policy research has overwhelmingly

failed to demonstrate that school exclusion and increasing levels of punishment keep our schools

and streets safer (Skiba et al., 2014). Rather, the data reveal that suspensions, expulsions, and

increased use of school resource officers act as risk factors for a range of negative academic and

life outcomes such as failure to achieve goals, homelessness, victimization, bullying, and discrimination (Skiba et al., 2014), which will be examined in this study.

It has been pointed out that LGBTQ youth actually face harsher sanctions by school administrators even when committing similar offenses (Hunt & Moodie-Mills, 2012). According to the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (2014), discipline cannot be based on race and cannot be justified by more frequent or serious misconduct by minority students. Hunt et al., (2012), argue that when faced with the unique challenges of LGBTQ youth our nation's schools, law enforcement officers, district attorneys, judges, and juvenile defenders are not equipped to manage the experiences. Hence, LGBTQ youth have been subject to harsh punishments that fail to take into consideration if a student was defending himself or herself. For example,

> Jewlyes Gutierrez, a 16-year-old transgender student of color attending Hercules High
> School in Hercules, California, was involved in a schoolyard fight that reportedly
> stemmed from long-term bullying, was recently charged with misdemeanor battery.
> Despite video footage capturing the altercation of Gutierrez defending herself against
> three other teenagers, she was the only student to be criminally charged. The other three
> students involved only received out-of-school suspensions. (Takeo, 2014, p. 1)

The Evolution of the Student Code of Conduct in Texas

In 1995, the State of Texas adopted the Safe Schools Act, more commonly referred to as Chapter 37 (Bickerstaff, Leon, & Hudson, 1997). Chapter 37 requires that each school district adopts an annual Student Code of Conduct that outlines the conditions under which a student might be suspended, expelled and/or transferred to a juvenile justice alternative education program (JJAEP) placement facility. Although this study covers participants who attended DISD

high schools from 2008-2013, it is important to note that in 2013, as a result of the increasing use of the criminal justice system to deal with misbehavior in schools, Texas legislature created SB 393 which added a less strict subchapter to the Student Code of Conduct (Texas Senate Bill 393, 2013). Prior to 2013, a school resource officer who became aware that a student committed a Class C misdemeanor at school had the option to write a citation for the offense and the student would have to appear in court. SB 393 revised this subchapter to state that any school with a resource officer must develop a system of graduated sanctions that might be required to be imposed on a student before a complaint is filed in criminal court for the offenses of disruption of class or disorderly conduct. Depending on the factors, including the age of the student and nature of the criminal activity, school officials could still seek criminal prosecution by submitting a sworn statement to the courts (SB 393, 2013). It must be noted that SB 393 only reformed the zero-tolerance nature of Student Codes of Conduct.

The Dallas Independent School District's Student Code of Conduct annually complies with state law as delineated in Chapter 37, Safe Schools Act, and Texas Education Code (2007). The Student Code of Conduct, as adopted by the Dallas ISD Board of Trustees, specifically, DISD categorizes offenses as Level I, II, III, and IV Offenses. Level I-violations of classroom rules, level II- suspension and/or optional removal to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP), level III-mandatory placement in a JJAEP, and level IV-expulsion (Dallas Independent School District, 2017).

Examples of level I offenses- violations of classroom rules are subject to, but not limited to the following disciplinary consequences:

- After lunch or after school detention
- In school suspension

- Out of school suspension

- Disciplinary alternative education placement and placement in a JJAEP.

Examples of level II offenses- such as cheating, classroom disruption, profanity, dress code violations are subject to, but not limited to the following disciplinary consequences:

- Suspension

- Removal to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP)

- School-administered probation

- In-school suspension

Examples of level III offenses- such as assault (Class C), bullying, possessing a toy gun, look-alike gun, pellet gun, or stun gun, stealing, and threats are subject to, but not limited to the following disciplinary consequences:

- Off-Campus Disciplinary Alternative Education Program

- Out-of-school suspension for up to three days

- Dallas ISD Police and Security Services Department notification

- Withdrawal of privileges, such as participation in extracurricular activities and eligibility for seeking and holding honorary offices, and/or membership in school sponsored clubs or organizations

- Withdrawal or restriction of bus privileges

Examples of level IV offenses-such as aggravated robbery, alcohol possession, assault (Class A), lewdness, and felony conduct are subject to, but not limited to the following disciplinary consequences:

- Dallas County Juvenile Department referral

- Emergency placement to in-school suspension pending an assignment to Off-Campus Disciplinary Alternative Education Program

- Mandatory extracurricular activities restriction

- Dallas ISD Police and Security Services Department notification

- Outside social services agencies referral

While the disciplinary actions in place seem to be equitable, in Texas, data was collected on several types of disciplinary actions such as in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, referrals to JJAEP, and expulsion. A review of the data shows disproportionately high disciplinary action rates for students of color and males (Montecel & Goodman, 2017). It was reported in 2014-15, that Black students represented 13% of Texas' public school enrollment; however, they accounted for 25% of the students receiving in school suspensions (Montecel & Goodman, 2017). Hispanic students represented 52% of enrollment and 50% of students receiving in school suspensions. In contrast, White students represented 28% of Texas' public school enrollment, but accounted for 21% of students receiving in-school suspensions (Montecel & Goodman, 2017). In comparison with in-school suspensions, in 2014-15, Black students accounted for 35% of students receiving out-of-school suspensions, Hispanic students 49%, while White students received 14% suspensions (Montecel & Goodman, 2017). Specifically, for the 2012 DISD school year, there were 6,329 referrals to the Dallas Juvenile Justice Department, of the 6,329 referrals, 2,836 referrals (44.81%) were African-American and 2,717 referrals (42.93%) were Hispanic (Dallas County Juvenile Board Agenda, 2013). As seen in Table 1, zero tolerance policies have likely contributed to the high attrition rates of Black students and Hispanic students in Texas public schools.

The 2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11 2011-12, and 2012-13 dropout rate was calculated using the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) dropout definition. Using the NCES definition, a dropout is defined as,

> A student who is enrolled in public school in grades 7-12, does not return to public school the following fall, is not expelled, and does not graduate, receive a General Education Development (GED) certificate, continue school outside the public school system, begin college, or die. (Texas Education Agency, 2014, p. 2)

Table 1

Texas Annual Dropout Rates, High School, 2007-2008 to 2012-2013

School Year	Dropouts	Students	African American	Hispanic	White	Other	Total
2007-08	43,808	1,350,921	5.0	4.4	1.5	1.2	3.2
2008-09	38,720	1,356,249	4.4	3.8	1.3	1.1	2.9
2009-10	33,235	1,377,330	3.9	3.1	1.1	1.2	2.4
2010-11	32,833	1,394,523	3.6	3.0	1.1	1.1	2.4
2011-12	34,285	1,407,697	3.8	3.1	1.2	2.5	2.4
2012-13	31,509	1,428,819	3.3	2.8	1.1	3.1	2.2

Note. Reported by the Texas Education Agency, 2007-2008 to 2012-2013 (Annual Dropout Rate (%) By Group, Grades 9-12).

Limited information is available about school discipline experiences of LGBTQ youth. Although there is a lack of federal data about LGBTQ youth's school experiences, one study in particular has documented that LGBTQ youth, especially girls and youth of color, are more likely to be expelled from school than heterosexual youth for similar infractions (Himmelstein & Bruckner, 2011). The purpose of their national study was to document that LGBTQ youth,

particularly girls, have greater odds than their non-LGBTQ peers to experience school and juvenile justice sanctions. Results emphasize that LGBTQ youth suffer disproportionate educational and criminal justice punishments that are not explained by increased involvement in illegal or deviant behaviors (Himmelstein & Bruckner, 2011).

Ties between the Student Code of Conduct and the Juvenile Justice System

As a result of violating Student Codes of Conduct students are removed from the classroom by means of expulsions and suspensions (Vermeire, DeVuono-Powell, & Merluzzi, 2010). Students subjected to such Student Codes of Conduct are more likely to be connected to future behavioral problems, drop out of school and/or have academic struggles (Vermeire et al., 2010). Bradley and Renzulli (2011), developed the construct of the push out phenomenon, which suggests that disciplinary measures resulting in suspension and expulsion eventually push students to drop out of school. Curtis (2014) builds upon the push out phenomenon, citing that high dropout rates might be attributed to the harsh disciplines forced by Student Codes of Conduct. Thus, it appears that these disciplines might "permanently push youth of color out of schools and add to the school-to-prison pipeline" (Curtis, 2014, p. 1258).

In Texas, a statewide study revealed that students who are suspended or expelled for discretionary violations of the Student Code of Conduct were nearly three times more likely to have contact with the juvenile justice system during the following school year (Fabelo, Thompson, & Plotkin, 2011). The study concluded that the zero-tolerance nature of the Student Code of Conduct is not particularly effective in changing student behaviors or in improving safety, academic, and juvenile justice interactions (Fabelo, Thompson, & Plotkin, 2011).

Cueller and Markowitz (2015) also examined the effects of suspension on youth, arguing that they ultimately lead youth to spend days in the community which could increase the

opportunity to commit crimes. In addition, researchers also concluded that the removal from school could adversely impact a student's engagement, intensify adverse interactions with adults, increase their feelings of alienation, and increases the student's tendency to engage in delinquent behaviors. Their research linked suspension with the possibility of students' dropping out and, consequently, their likelihood of engaging in criminal activities (Cueller & Markowitz, 2015). Another study that aligns with these claims found that once students are suspended and/expelled and are integrated into the juvenile justice system, they hold an increased chance to be integrated into the criminal justice system as adults (Mulvey, 2011). Mulvey (2011) examined 1,354 high school students ages 14-18 who were involved with the juvenile justice system over a time period of seven years and revealed that approximately half of those studied continued to commit offenses, maintained delinquent behavior into adulthood, and entered into the adult criminal justice system.

A nationwide study conducted by GLSEN (2016b) sampled 1,367 middle and high school students. Their findings indicated that LGBTQ students were far more likely to have experienced some type of school discipline when compared to non-LGBTQ student (62.8% vs 45.8%). The results also indicated that LGBTQ students were more likely to: have been called to the principal's office (38.1% vs. 24.8%), placed in detention (45.0% vs. 33.4%), and have been suspended (24.9% vs. 14.5%) (GLSEN, 2016b).

GLSEN (2016b) divided their sample into race and ethnicity, and found that Black, Hispanic, and Multiracial LGBTQ students were substantially more likely to experience school disciplinary action than their White, Asian, and Pacific Islander peers. For example, 46.7% of Black, 44.1% of Hispanic, and 47.3% of Multiracial LGBTQ students experienced discipline in

school, compared to 36.3% of White LGBTQ students and 35.2% of Asian and Pacific Islander students.

Unfortunately, exclusions and suspensions have become the standard for teachers to demand obedience and compliance in their classrooms (Kupchik, 2012). Incidents once referred to the principal's office are now referred to school resource officers which can often lead a student to the criminal justice system (Kupchik, 2012). The Juvenile Section of the Texas Bar writings described this as a paradigm shift in which school referrals now result in records and criminal prosecution for youth ages 10 through 16 (Goodner & Turner, 2010). Luckily, in 2013 for DISD schools, the Student Code of Conduct was revised to read that if a school has a school resource officer, the school must follow graduated sanctions before a complaint is filed in criminal court for the offenses of disruption of class or disorderly conduct. Curtis (2014) still ascertains the argument that the easiest way for students to enter the juvenile justice system is through school referrals, these referrals might result in juvenile or criminal charges, the student placed in detention facilities, and the beginning of a criminal record (Curtis, 2014).

The school-to-prison pipeline that has been credited to pushing youth out of schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice system and has affected over 3 million of America's students (Mitchum & Moodie-Mills, 2014). They report that an unprecedented number of youths are expelled, suspended, arrested, or detained by law enforcement as a result of excessive school discipline policies. Specifically, in the Dallas County Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program, where DISD students are referred, between the months of November 2017 and March 2018, 263 students were referred, of which 84.75% were students of color. It must be noted that sexual orientation is not captured for students in JJAEP.

Student Codes of Conduct are associated with an increased law enforcement presence at school along with metal detectors and person searches which are other forms of deterring deviant behavior (Heitzeg, 2009). In addition, some schools have employed canine units and SWAT teams to perform drug and weapon searches (Heitzeg, 2009). A report entitled Dangerous Discipline examined 72 Texas school district records, as well as county court documents and ticketing information to see how Texas used police in schools from the 2011-12 school year to 2014-15. The report found that Dallas ISD police used force in Dallas schools 204 times in 2014-15, which increased from 106 in 2011-12. The report also found that black students in the DISD, who make up less than a quarter of the district's enrollment, were disproportionately affected by tickets and complaints, court referrals, use of force incidents, and referrals to juvenile probation (Fowler et al., 2016).

LGBTQ Youth of Color in the Juvenile Justice System

When looking at school discipline, one of the more consistent findings has been a high degree of racial disparity in school suspension and expulsion (Skiba et al., 2014). Research by Skiba et al. (2014) examining disciplinary disproportionality in schools, found that since the enforcement of zero tolerance policies, LGBTQ youth of color are over-represented in the justice system, just as they are over-represented in school disciplinary infractions. It can be argued that these "high rates of involvement in the juvenile justice system are a result of LGBTQ youth of color abandonment by their families and communities, and victimization in their school" (Hunt & Moodie-Mills, 2012, pg. 1), which ultimately places LGBTQ youth of color at a heightened risk of entering the school to prison pipeline.

There are currently many studies tracking Code of Conduct discipline disparities based on race, ethnicity, and disability; however, there are still reporting challenges regarding data for

LGBTQ students due to the lack of self-reporting data systems that capture issues of LGBTQ

youth in schools (Morgan, Salomon, Plotkin, & Cohen, 2014). Though, recent research shows

that youth who identify as LGBTQ are over represented in the juvenile justice system. In 2013,

the Center for American Progress, an independent nonpartisan policy institute that is dedicated to

improving the lives of all Americans, estimated that LGBT youth represent from 13% to 15% of

the juvenile justice population nationally; however, LGBT youth only make up 5% to 7% of the

total youth population. The Center for American Progress (2013) study did not include the Queer

population. In addition, Balfanz, Byrnes, and Fox (2015) mention that LGBT youth are more

likely than non-LGBT peers to receive juvenile detention and other harsh punishments for minor

offenses. The study conducted by Balfanz et al. (2015) did not include the Queer population

either.

Specifically, among young adults ages 18-24, LGBTQ make up roughly one in five

people incarcerated in U.S. prisons and jails; half of the prison and jail populations are young

adults of color. A sampling of eight cities and counties was performed by Ashton et al., (2016),

they found that young adults were 8.4 % of the population sampled but were 25% of the jail

population in these communities, 72 % were young adults of color.

Mental Health and Well-Being Issues

Himmelstein and Brückner (2011) found that LGBTQ youth experience high rates of

depression and suicide. They also found that LGBTQ youth are more likely to engage in high-

risk sexual and substance abusive behaviors, carry weapons for safety, and engage in petty

survival crimes which can lead to school and criminal-justice disciplines (Himmelstein &

Brückner, 2011). A study performed by The United States Department of Justice and Education

(2017) analyzed the rates of violent crimes against school-aged youth between1992 and 2016.

Their research found that there were influxes in the years 1992, 2008 and 2016 while youth were out of school due to suspensions and expulsions for Student Code of Conduct violations they were twice more likely to be victims of crimes such as rape, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault (Musu-Gillette et al., 2018). Another study reviewing the implications and consequences of out-of-school suspension and expulsions found that youth who were not in school were more likely to commit crimes, use alcohol and illegal narcotics, carry a weapon, and became involved in physical fights (Lamont, 2013). In the 2013 National School Climate Survey, only LGBT youth were surveyed. It was found that 3.4% of LGBT youth said they did not plan to graduate high school or were unsure if they would graduate. 57% of these students cited their reasons to be hostile or unsupportive school environments. 20% of the LGBT youth in this study that planned on dropping out reported having mental health concerns such as anxiety or depression (Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer, & Boesen, 2014).

According to Lamont (2013), "suspension of school-aged youth with behavioral problems is connected to high rates of depression, drug addiction, and home life stresses" (p.1002). In addition, academic suspension might predispose students with major home life stresses to increased risks of behavioral problems (Lamont, 2013).Moreover, school-aged youth might also be predisposed to "antisocial behavior and suicidal ideation" due to suspensions or expulsions (Sundius & Farneth, 2008, p .7). Success in school depends on a student's ability to interact with teachers and other students in a positive manner. Students who fail to relate to their classmates and adapt to daily school practices cannot reach their full potential (McGinnis, Sprafkin, & Goldstein, 2012). When students have positive prosocial skills, it assists them in making and keeping friendships. Friends are an important part of being resilient and can provide support during times of stress (McGinnis, Sprafkin, & Goldstein, 2012). Students who are

suspended or expelled, have fewer opportunities to develop prosocial skills that can assist in success at school. They can also miss opportunities to develop healthy relationships, interact positively with peers, and learn how to regulate their emotions (McGinnis, Sprafkin, & Goldstein, 2012). It has been suggested to promote pro-social behavior that schools can use consistent positive disciplinary practices that include clear student expectations, integrate value instruction, and encourage cooperative behavior (Kidron & Fleischman, 2006).

Research examining issues surrounding LGBTQ young adults has revealed that the LGBTQ community as a whole is subject to a higher risk for suicide due to harassment, mental health conditions, substance abuse, and lack of peer support. For instance, suicide was found to be one of the leading causes of death for LGBTQ people aged 10–24 (Mack, 2012). LGBTQ young adults are four times more likely to attempt suicide, experience suicidal thoughts or engage in self-harm than non-LGBTQ people (Mack, 2012). Research on LGBTQ harassment has shown that being assaulted or harassed at school might have a negative impact on students' mental health and self-esteem (Kosciw et al., 2014). Research examining young adult addiction, revealed that more than twice as many LGBT young adults (the queer population was not studied) compared to non-LGBT young adults reported using drugs (Maldonado, 2018). In addition, those who identified as LGBT, were more likely to smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol and binge drink. They were also twice as likely to have had an alcohol or drug problem (Maldonado, 2018).

The literature reviewed reveals that the exclusionary aspect of Student Codes of Conduct can have negative effects on a students' emotional and mental health by being excluded from school and criminalized for minor misbehaviors. Students who are suspended or expelled have

been shown to either fall behind in school, drop out, get involved in illicit activities or even turn to substance abuse.

Academic Achievement

A National longitudinal study conducted by Rosenbaum (2018) between 1995 and 2008 examined 60 youth through adulthood, analyzing the outcomes of suspensions on young adults' ages 23-30. Findings revealed that five years and twelve years after graduation suspended youth had lower educational attainment and were at a higher risk to enter the criminal justice system than youth who had not been suspended. Suspension removes students from school temporarily; however, this temporary removal seems to create long-term consequences into adulthood (Rosenbaum, 2018). The study revealed that youth suspended for the first time were 8% less likely to have earned a high school diploma than students who had never been suspended (Rosenbaum, 2018). Black suspended youth were 94% less likely to have earned a BA than students who had never been suspended (Rosenbaum, 2018).Suspended Black students were 20% less likely to have secured a job with retirement benefits and 15% less likely to have a job with vacation benefits than non-suspended Black students (Rosenbaum, 2018). Rosenbaum (2018) concluded that school disciplinary policies have potential long-term impacts into adulthood. Suspensions could induce secondary deviance which causes students to engage in further deviant behavior. During suspension, students might also socialize with more deviant peers and begin to engage in further deviant behavior as a result of these peers.

Similar effects were found in a study conducted by Balfanz et al. (2015), examining the long-term effects of students being suspended in 9th grade. Balfanz et al. (2015), found that student dropout rates increased with the number of suspensions students incurred in 9th grade. Their study included 181,897 students and revealed that 27% of the students studied experienced

out of school suspensions at least once in the 9th grade. Numbers ranged from 32% for one suspension to 53% for student who incurred four or more suspensions; each suspension reduced the probability of high school graduation by 20% and reduced the probability of post-secondary enrollment by 12% (Balfanz et al., 2015).

Further research examining the short and long term consequences of Student Codes of Conduct, found that the act of removing students from their school environment, whether it be a temporarily suspension or a permanent expulsion, results in negative consequences (Mitchell, 2014). More specifically, when students receive out of school suspensions or expulsions, they fall behind academically because they are no longer receiving classroom instruction (Mitchell, 2014). Mitchell (2014) also explains that students who are suspended or expelled are at a much higher risk of dropping out of school completely. Sander et al. (2011) add that youth who are suspended or expelled often are faced with limited academic opportunities and they are substantially more likely to drop out of school as well as face the justice system in subsequent years (GLSEN, 2016b).

Theoretical Framework

Despite evidence that LGBTQ youth of color are disproportionately affected by zero tolerance disciplines and are more susceptible to school suspensions, there is scant research exploring the correlates of delinquency among this group (Arredondo, Gray, Russell, Skiba, & Snapp, 2016). General Strain Theory (GST) identifies victimization as a key influence of youth delinquency and crime (Agnew, 2006). The assumptions of GST suggest that undesirable connections and undesirable experiences might lead to delinquency. Strain theory also proposes that youth are pressured into delinquency by the negative emotional states such as anger that often accompanies the strain they are experiencing (Mauseth, 2011). In an attempt to alleviate

the negative pressure, youth might strive to achieve goals through illegal activities, attacking or escaping from the source of their adversity, and/or might use illicit drugs in an attempt to manage the negative affect (Agnew, 1992). Agnew (1992) also proposes that youth engage in deviant behavior because they attempt to alleviate the hurtful feelings that accompany their negative relationships and the strain they are experiencing. Agnew (1992) classifies three major sources of strain, which can cause deviance: failure to achieve positively valued goals, removal of positively valued stimuli, and presentation of negatively valued stimuli.

The first strain, failure to achieve positively valued goals, is commonly referred to as classic strain and anomie theories (Agnew, 1992). This strain is measured in terms of the disjunction between a student's aspirations and achievements or just outcomes versus actual outcomes. According to GST, lack of achievement can trigger emotions such as frustration, anger, or depression, ultimately leading to actions such as delinquent behavior. In addition, perceived inequity might cause a student to engage in vengeance, anger or deviant behavior, which could lead to crime. Agnew (1992) argues that this strain can be resolved with effective coping mechanisms and an extensive social support network.

The second strain of GST argues that the removal of positively valued stimuli such as withdrawal of love or loss of valued property can result in the onset of strain. This would imply that if a student feared an anticipated loss of positively valued stimuli, they would be more likely to commit school crimes to prevent the loss of the stimuli. It should be noted that a traditional school might be deemed as positively valued stimuli.

The third category of strain involves the inability to legally escape negative or harmful stimuli (Agnew, 1992). GST supports the concept that delinquency is found to occur when an individual is trying to escape the negative stimuli. Instances of negative experiences cover a wide

range of life events that can be considered stressful such as criminal victimization, neglect, harmful relations in school, and with peers. Further research found that strain experienced from adverse school environments was related to an increase in the risk for delinquency (Agnew & White, 1992).

In other studies, GST has been used to explain how students cope with various forms of stress. If there are limited opportunities to cope with stress, students can experience strain which can turn into deviant behavior (Agnew, 1992). With the increased risk of using coping strategies there is an increased risk of negative outcomes for the student (Tenenbaum, Varjas, Meyers, & Parris, 2011). They might rely upon externalized delinquent coping strategies, which comes in the form of aggressive acts committed against others. The student might choose to commit a violent act against the one who represents the source of harm in order to relieve negative emotions resulting from the strain (Tenenbaum, Varjas, Meyers, & Parris, 2011). On the other hand, they might rely upon internalized delinquent coping that might result in the intent to harm themselves to remove them from the risk of strain (Tenenbaum et al., 2011). In addition, they might use non-violent behavior or drugs to cope and suppress negative emotions, rather than addressing the problem directly (Tenenbaum et al., 2011).

GST differs from other theories because it forms the relationship between various forms of life experience, perceived to be negative, and provides an explanatory power that answers the question why various forms of life events, perceived to be negative, might increase the likelihood of various forms of delinquency (Agnew, 2001).

This study will also examine zero tolerance disciplines through the lens of Student School Engagement Theory based on the works of Hazel, Vazirabadi, Albanes, and Gallagher (2014). The authors define this concept as a student's perception of the person to environment fit

between oneself and one's school. In this theory, student school engagement is comprised of three domains: aspirations, belonging, and productivity. The aspirations domain, encompasses a student's commitment to school, based on how worthy the student sees school to be for the achievement of their future aspirations (Hazel et al., 2014). In addition, in order for students to be engaged, they must have the expectation that they can successfully do the work. A students' self-perception is heavily influenced by their perception of others' expectations and the belief in their own ability (Dary, Pickeral, Shumer, & Williams, 2016). The belonging domain reflects a student's alignment with school values, norms, and feelings of membership within their school. In order for a student to be emotionally, socially, and academically engaged, he or she must feel valued, safe and supported in their school environment (Dary et al., 2016). Lastly, the productivity domain is one's demonstration of pro school behaviors, such a completing homework, engaging in school activities and connecting with outside resources to help achieve success at school (Hazel et al., 2014). Student school engagement theory assesses that student engagement is modifiable (Hazel et al., 2014), meaning, the person to environment fit can be affected by various factors in a student's ecological system.

Lam et al. (2014), described student engagement as "a psychological process that mediates the effects of the contextual antecedents on student outcomes" (p. 215). Hence, this hypothesis helps to better understand the connection between relationships with teachers and school environment and academic outcomes. This information is necessary to capture for LGBTQ students of color who often face challenging school environments. Wang and Fredricks (2014) revealed that greater school engagement predicts a lower likelihood of students dropping out of school. Wang and Peck (2013), found that highly engaged students had the greatest likelihood of enrolling in college. Highly engaged students have also shown a relationship to

non-academic indicators, such as a lowered risk for depression (Wang & Peck, 2013), substance use, and delinquent behaviors (Wang & Fredricks, 2014). A phenomenological research method was appropriate for this study as it enabled the researcher to understand how student engagement, as a real-life phenomenon, and school discipline were perceived by LGBTQ youth of color.

Conclusion

Since the implementation of Student Codes of Conduct, there has been controversy about their application and the disparity in which discipline is administered (Skiba, 2014). This literature review aimed to analyze studies that demonstrated the relationships between Student Codes of Conduct and LGBTQ youth of color with the juvenile justice system, mental health and well-being and academic success. It must be noted that LGBTQ youth are a challenging group to study due to a general lack of data because SOGI information is not part of national, state or local student records data collection (Morgan et al., 2014). Also, law enforcement officers are not allowed to ask students to reveal their sexual orientation (Morgan et al., 2014). However, the LGBTQ population is a vulnerable population that must be discussed when speaking about disproportionately affected youth in the juvenile justice system (Morgan et al., 2014). In addition, young adults of color should be closely examined as they overrepresented among the young adults in local jails and prisons (Ashton et al., 2016).

In utilizing General Strain Theory and Student School Engagement Theory, this study offers a framework that challenges educational leaders and policymakers to evaluate how high rates of delinquency and truancy might be generated by the strain associated with inequality and discrimination in the classroom. In addition, student school engagement among LGBTQ students of color might show that they have less of a fit within schools and are therefore less engaged,

hence affecting their academic outcomes. Furthermore, their delinquent behavior might be explained as a reaction to the strain feelings of frustration and a result of their consequent disengagement and opposition to their school's policies (Mauseth, 2011).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of LGBTQ young adults of color (ages 23-28) who experienced suspensions or expulsions based on the DISD Student Code of Conduct while attending high school. The nature of this inquiry was a qualitative phenomenological study of LGBTQ young adults using interviews as the methodology. A qualitative phenomenological approach was selected for this study to grasp the essence of lived experiences of LGBTQ young adults of color (ages 23-28), who attended DISD high schools. The study also explored how these students perceived school disciplinary actions, criminal justice referrals, academic achievement, and/or mental health and well-being issues while in high school. This approach provided the means for identifying the real meaning of human experiences as related to a given phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). The process of a qualitative phenomenological study, according to Creswell (2009), requires researchers to put aside their experiences in order to understand the phenomenon from the perspectives of the participants. Phenomenology also attempts to understand the meaning of everyday situations at an in-depth level. In a phenomenological study, the researcher and the participant work together to "arrive at the heart of the matter" (Tesch, 1994, p. 147). Phenomenological studies have also been explained as seeking to understand and emulate the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of a phenomenon for a person or group of people (Patton, 2002).

Research Approach Rationale

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of LGBTQ young adults of color (ages 23-28) who experienced suspensions or

expulsions based on the DISD Student Code of Conduct while attending high school. Employing phenomenological methods for this research required depicting the essence of participants' lived experiences. Patton (2002) explained that the application of phenomenology is the effort to determine how individuals make meaning from human experiences. While each person's life experience is different, phenomenology allows the researcher to delve into the core of experiences to determine if there are similarities or differences; if similarities are present among the majority of persons surveyed, it can be concluded with reasonable certainty that there is a shared essential quality to their experiences.

The rationale for using a phenomenological approach was to explore the lived experiences through the eyes of LGBTQ young adults of color and their involvement with the DISD Student Code of Conduct. Phenomenology maintains that all knowing is subjective as it is always related to, and constructed by, the person engaged in knowing (Willis, 1999). Therefore, one can only understand a phenomenon by understanding and describing phenomena exactly as they appear in an individual's consciousness (Willis, 1999). The role of the phenomenological researcher is to describe the essence of participants' lived experiences, which is, how a phenomenon appears to them (Willis, 1999).

Qualitative research, "involves the collection, analysis, and interpretation of narrative and visual data (non-numerical) data to gain insight into a particular phenomenon of interest" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 12). Creswell (2009), recommended that qualitative research design take place in a naturalistic setting, the research be interactive, is probing and emerging, the views are holistic, the researcher is sensitive to how the study is shaped, and inductive and deductive reasoning is used.

Research Design

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of LGBTQ young adults of color (ages 23-28) who experienced suspensions or expulsions based on the DISD Student Code of Conduct while attending high school. This study also hoped to generate new insight about possible relationships between the discipline consequences of the DISD Code of Conduct, and its potential connection to criminal justice referrals, academic achievement, and the mental health and well-being of LGBTQ youth of color. This study was conducted at the Dallas Resource Center, a community-based LGBTQ centered organization located in Dallas, TX. The study used semi-structured interview questions (Appendix B) that were asked during face-to face interviews so that participants were allowed the freedom to express individual experiences. This qualitative phenomenological study involved an inductive process of descriptive data collection and analysis to detect patterns and regularities of the participants lived experiences. A strong emphasis was given to understanding the participants' perception of reality through interviews. The interviews allowed the researcher the opportunity to capture experiences, perceptions, understandings, and feelings that the participants lived and experienced with suspensions and/or expulsions.

Six participants were asked open-ended questions, after each interview, responses were analyzed immediately to determine emergent themes. The researcher analyzed and coded each interview until data saturation was reached when there were "no new properties, dimensions, or relationships that emerged during analysis" (Corbin & Strauss, 1998 p. 143).

Research Questions

The following research questions fulfilled the purpose of the current study within the approach, setting, and framework introduced in Chapter 1:

1) How did school engagement influence, effect, or contribute to the lived experiences of LGBTQ young adults of color, while they attended DISD high schools?

2) How did the experience of being suspended and/or expelled, due to the DISD Code of Conduct, shape the high school experience for LGBTQ young adults of color?

Setting

The Dallas Resource Center was selected for the study because it provides services to LGBTQ young adults and it provided private spaces to conduct interviews. The Dallas Resource Center is the home to a variety of community organizations and serves over 60,000 people each year through its programs and services. The Center is the primary LGBTQ and HIV/AIDS service organizations in North Texas. The Center provides dental care, nutrition programming, health insurance premium assistance and support groups designed to empower community members living with HIV/AIDS.

The DISD was the 14th largest school district in the United States and the 2nd largest of school districts in Texas (Texas Education Agency, 2004). The researcher decided to examine the DISD because as found by Fowler, et al (2010) Texas students were increasingly subject to criminal sanctions for classroom misbehavior and issued Class C misdemeanor citations for delinquent behavior in school. Moreover, compared to their overall percentage in the total student population, African American and Hispanic students were significantly overrepresented in DISD school suspensions, out of school suspensions and expulsions (Fowler, et al, 2010). In addition, Fowler, et al, (2016) stated that while it will be necessary to collect more data about

LGBTQ students in Texas, their research has confirmed that LGBTQ students face hostile school environments and are over-represented in the school discipline system (Fowler, et al, 2016). Therefore, the researcher wanted to explore the lived experiences of LGBTQ youth of color and how they experienced disciplines prior to 2013.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Dallas is the home to the 12th largest LGBT population in the United States; hence, the Dallas Resource Center provided an adequate population to sample because it is the primary support organizations in Dallas for the LGBTQ community. The 2010 Census provided data about Dallas' racial and ethnic composition, as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

2010 Census, Dallas' Racial and Ethnic Composition

Race and Hispanic Origin	
ℹ White alone, percent (a)	⚠ 67.2%
ℹ Black or African American alone, percent (a)	⚠ 23.5%
ℹ American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent (a)	⚠ 1.1%
ℹ Asian alone, percent (a)	⚠ 6.3%
ℹ Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent (a)	⚠ 0.1%
ℹ Two or More Races, percent	⚠ 1.8%
ℹ Hispanic or Latino, percent (b)	⚠ 39.9%
ℹ White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent	⚠ 29.8%

Note. U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Dallas city, Texas; UNITED STATES, 2010

*note the population adds up to more than 100%, since a person can now select up to six categories.

Participants/Sample

The Operations Manager of the Dallas Resource Center was contacted to discuss the purpose of the study and gain permission to conduct the study. At the time of the study, the Dallas Resource Center had weekly average attendance rate of relatively 400 members which

varied in age, sexual and gender identity, and race. After approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Operations Manager at the Dallas Resource Center, a study invitation announcement flyer was posted on the information board at the Dallas Resource Center. The study invitation announcement flyer (Appendix A) provided participant requirements: 1) attended high school in the DISD school district, 2) identify as LGBTQ of color, 3) between the ages of 23-28, and 4) have been suspended and/or expelled from a DISD High School, due to the Student Code of Conduct. The flyer included a description of the purpose of the study, specified the time commitment, and the compensation for participation. The announcement flyer also stated that the study was confidential and completely voluntary; the flyer was posted until the interviews were concluded.

Purposeful sampling was utilized to generate information rich data to the point of saturation. Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the "investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 1998, p.61). Participants selected were 23 to 28 years old, identified as LGBTQ, were African-American or Latino, and had been suspended and/or expelled in DISD High Schools due to the Student Code of Conduct. Potential participants were asked to contact the researcher by phone to be pre-screened to ensure that they met the eligibility criteria. During the pre-screening interviews, the participants were asked their age, race, high school attended, sexual identity and if they were suspended and/or expelled due to the DISD Student Code of Conduct. Once eligibility had been established a 30-45 minute face-to-face interview with the researcher was scheduled at the convenience of the potential participant.

Each interview was conducted in a private conference room at the Dallas Resource Center. The conference rooms were isolated from the rest of the building; therefore, ensuring the

privacy and confidentiality of the participants. At the beginning of the interview, each participant's identity was confirmed, they were provided a detailed unsigned consent form indicating voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity. The researcher assigned each participant a unique ID number for data analysis purposes. Participants were allowed to refuse to answer a question; however, this would negate the interview and it did forfeit their chance to receive a $10 Visa gift card. Each face to face interview lasted between 30 to 45 minutes. The researcher deemed that saturation had been assumed after the sixth interview when participant responses were mostly repetitive.

Data

During the data collection process, each interview was audio recorded and notes were taken by the researcher. To ensure accuracy and maintain the integrity of the data, audio-recordings were transcribed using the service provided by quicktranscriptionservice.com at the end of each interview session.

Questions for all participants focused on past lived experiences that LGBTQ students of color had in high school where the DISD Code of Conduct was applied. Each question was asked in succession and responses of all participants were examined and coded on a coding matrix (Appendix E) to determine developing themes. As findings emerged in this study, participant feedback was asked through clarifying questions. Participants were asked to expound upon information presented. Responses were re-stated and confirmed to ensure that participants' words were accurately understood.

Responses were used to explore perceptions, ideas, and lived experiences regarding the DISD Student Code of Conduct while attending high school. An audio recorder was used to document each interview. Additionally, notes were transcribed during the interviews, as a

backup in the event of a malfunction with the audio recording. At the end of each interview the recordings were securely transmitted to quicktranscriptionservice.com, utilizing TLS 1.2 encryption, the highest level of security available. The company strictly follows a non-disclosure agreement where confidentiality is deeply observed. Written notes were stored in a locked file cabinet at the residence of the researcher.

To increase the validity of the data, the researcher performed a member check for each participant. Member checking the "single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 111). As a follow-up, after the transcripts were received the researcher contacted each participant via telephone and provided each participant with a textual-structural description of the findings. During this step, participants were allowed to make any needed adjustments to the textual description, no adjustments were made by the participants.

Analysis

The data analysis began once the interview data were converted to text. Data analysis for the face-to-face interviews was based on Creswell's (2009) six steps of qualitative data analysis. Following Creswell's (2009) analysis procedures, in the first step the researcher prepared the data for analysis by transcribing interviews. Once each interview was completed, the audio-recording was electronically transcribed by sending it to an online transcription service (quicktranscriptionservice.com). Second, after the first interview was transcribed and thereafter, the researcher read through all data to gain a general sense of the information and created a coding matrix (Appendix E). The researcher created the coding matrix in Microsoft Word and created columns to notate brief participant responses for each question. The researcher used the constant comparative method to interpret and analyze data at this stage. The constant

comparative method of data analysis allowed the researcher to begin analysis after the first interview was completed.

As subsequent interviews were completed, the data were gathered, added to the coding matrix and the researcher explored notes, the coding matrix and transcripts constantly paying attention to similarities and differences between interviews (Barney & Strauss, 1967). Third, coding began on the coding matrix. "Coding is the process of organizing the material into chunks or segments of text" (Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p. 270). Fourth, the coding process enabled to generate a description of the participants as well as the categories of themes for further analysis. In the fifth step the researcher decided how the description and themes would be represented in the phenomenological exploration in the memo section of the coding matrix. The sixth and final step involved making an interpretation of the data. The sixth participant in the individual interviews did not provide any new themes. The researcher interpreted this lack of new themes as a confirmation that data saturation had been reached. Data saturation is reached when narratives do not reveal any new information and redundancy occurs (Faulkner & Trotter, 2017). Lastly, an analysis of each interview response was assessed after the interview to determine the point of theoretical saturation in the study. After the sixth interview, the researcher determined no new information was being discovered, obtained and/or discussed by participants (Krueger & Casey, 2009).

In a phenomenological study, the researcher has several measures to ensure this validity. The bracketing process was employed in this study as the researcher avoided making personal judgments throughout the study (Merriam, 2009). In addition, triangulation was utilized in this study. The triangulation technique was developed to increase the reliability and trustworthiness in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). According to Maxwell (2005), triangulation reduces

limitations or biases of a study's conclusions and also allows for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied. In keeping with the various triangulation techniques described, three usages of data collection were employed in this study. The first included the collection of demographic data from each participant, the second method was gathered through a semi-structured interview with each participant. The third method consisted of notes that consisted of documentation of participants' clarifying answers noted during the interviews.

Participant Rights

In conducting this study, there was the need to secure the participants right to privacy; therefore, all interview responses were confidential. All participants received a consent/confidentiality form explaining the rights of research participants. Participation in this study was voluntary, and participants were free to withdraw from the study at any point. The collected notes and consent forms were stored in a locked cabinet and the audio recordings were stored on a password protected computer at the researcher's home. To maintain confidentiality, audio recordings uploaded to the researcher's computer were destroyed by deleting them from the computer's hard drive and paper transcription data was destroyed after the conclusion of the study. Signed consent forms and notes will be destroyed three years after the study was completed.

Potential Limitations

Although there are many surveys that measure school violence, harassment, and SOGI information, there is no uniformed nor comprehensive data on school disciplinary policies and its effects on LGBTQ youth of color (Arredondo et al., 2016). The data collected was specific to LGBTQ young adults of color (ages 23-28) who have attended Dallas Public High Schools and might not be a representative of all LGBTQ young adults of color (ages 23-28) in the United

States. Although other states might have similar policies, each state is distinctive in the laws and regulations that govern local school districts. Specifically, the DISD categorizes offenses as Level I, II, III, and IV Offenses. Level I-violations of classroom rules, level II- suspension and/or optional removal to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP), level III-mandatory placement in a DAEP, and level IV-expulsion (Dallas Independent School District, 2017).

Qualitative studies offer the researcher the opportunity to concentrate on how participants of the study interpret their experiences and provide meaning to their experiences (Merriam, 2009). This study posed a risk to the generalizability of the findings as it detailed the experiences of a single group of participants, that of LGBTQ young adults of color. The experiences described are presented as rich thick descriptions. Creswell (2009) stressed the importance of using rich thick descriptions in order that readers can decide the transferability of the researcher's description. Hence, each element of this study included the process in which participants were chosen, the description of data collection, coding, interpretation, and data reporting. Throughout the findings, participants were recorded in order to capture their experiences. To maximize on the LGBTQ young adult of color participant sample, participant selection included those across a broad range of ages. The rich, thick descriptive cases and diversity of ages of the LGBTQ young adult of color participants provided examples to reference when conducting future research with similar racially diverse populations.

Using phenomenological methods for this research required describing the essence of participants' lived experiences. Therefore, the researcher bracketed any prior beliefs about the phenomenon being studied to not interfere with seeing the elements or structure of the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). In addition, these beliefs were bracketed in the interview development stage to remove any leading questions that might inadvertently endorse the

researchers' position to allow the natural flow of information. As an African American lesbian, the researcher's own experiences were examined to become aware of any viewpoints, personal prejudices or assumptions (Merriam, 2009) to not compromise data analysis. It was important to not prove a point, in this study, but rather allow the data to emerge and utilize the data responsibly whether or not the experiences supported the anticipated outcomes.

Researcher Identity

The researcher is a LGTBQ advocate who lives in Dallas, TX. Confirmation bias might have occurred if the researcher formed a hypothesis or belief and used participant's information to confirm the belief regarding zero tolerance discipline policies and its adverse effects on LGBTQ youth of color (Mathews & Ledet, 2012). It was important for the researcher to conduct interviews controlling her own facial expressions, body language, and tone to reduce bias and remain neutral while interviewing.

Summary

This study used face-to-face interviews to collect data from the sample population of LGBTQ young adults of color (ages 23-28), who had been suspended and/or expelled in DISD High Schools due to the Student Code of Conduct. The interview questions were designed to explore the lived experiences of the participants with the Student Code of Conduct while they attended Dallas Independent Public Schools. This was achieved by asking open ended questions that explored treatments received by teachers and/or school resource officers in high school, disciplines that they had received, academic achievements, mental health and well-being, and involvement in the juvenile justice system (if applicable).

This study was highly contingent on the honesty of the participants and its confidential nature was helpful in easing the fear of participants. The results from the interviews assisted in

exploring the past lived experiences of LGBTQ young adults of color (ages 23-28) who were affected by the DISD Code of Conduct while attending high school. The purpose of the study was clearly communicated to all participants to ensure the study was valid and reliable.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter outlines the findings that detail the phenomenological exploration of LGBTQ young adults of color related to the DISD Student Code of Conduct while they attended high schools in Dallas, Texas. Through the use of in-depth interviews, participants were afforded the opportunity to express their experiences through a first-hand account with out-of-school suspensions and/or expulsions in the Dallas Independent School District between 2008 and 2013. Specifically, participants were able to express their beliefs about their high school experiences as LGBTQ youth of color with specific attention to the role that the enforcement of the Student Code of Conduct played in their lives. Additionally, participants identified key elements that they believed to have been either supportive or suppressive in their high school matriculation.

The research sample included six participants between the ages of 23 and 26 (Table 3). Out of the LGBTQ population, participants identified as lesbian (two participants), gay (two participants), bisexual (one participant), and transgendered (one participant). All participants attended high schools in Dallas, TX. The racial composition of the participants consisted of four African Americans and two Hispanics.

Table 3

Participant Demographics

Participant	Age	Gender	Racial Identity	Sexual Orientation	High School Attended
P1	23	F	African American	Lesbian	Wilmer-Hutchins H.S.
P2	24	M	African American	Gay	Skyline H.S.

P3	25	M	Hispanic	Gay	Carter HS.
P4	24	F	Hispanic	Bi-Sexual	Hill Crest H.S.
P5	25	F	African American	Lesbian	Carter H.S.
P6	26	F	African American	Transgendered	Skyline H.S.

Interview Analysis

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of LGBTQ young adults of color (ages 23-28) who experienced suspensions or expulsions based on the DISD Student Code of Conduct while attending high school. Using in-depth interviews, participants described and made meaning out of their high school experiences as it related to their involvement with the DISD Code of Conduct. Thus, the critical questions framing this research were:

1) How did school engagement influence, effect, or contribute to the lived experiences of LGBTQ young adults of color, while they attended DISD high schools?

2) How did the experience of being suspended and/or expelled, due to the DISD Code of Conduct, shape the high school experience for LGBTQ young adults of color?

This section summarizes the perceptions of six LGBTQ young adults of color (ages 23-28) who were affected by the DISD Code of Conduct while attending high school. The first three (3) questions of the interview extracted the participant's attitude towards discipline while they attended high school. The following six (6) questions focused on the participant's school engagement while they attended high school. The following five (5) questions were geared towards the participant's academic achievements while they attended high school. The following three (3) questions focused on the participant's mental health and well-being while they attended

high school. The last two (2) questions examined the participant's involvement in juvenile justice system while they attended high school.

Question 1: Can you explain your experience of what it was like to be suspended or expelled?

Four of the six participants interviewed stated that they experienced the feeling of being alone and isolated while they were suspended. They expressed the lack of activities to participate in while suspended. Three of the six participants interviewed engaged in delinquent behaviors such as shoplifting, graffiti painting, and/or were involved with taking drugs. P3, a Hispanic gay male stated, "While I was out of school (suspended), I hung out with the wrong crowd and then I started to sell drugs to get extra money." P1, an African-American lesbian stated,

> while I was suspended I remember thinking a lot about how I felt a lot of distrust for my teachers and authority, the school officer was supposed to be protecting me, totally threw me under the bus and the teacher witnessed it all and didn't say nothing about it.

Question 2: Did getting suspended/expelled motivate you to want to work harder in school or did it make you mad at the school/teachers?

All six participants interviewed stated that being suspended and/or expelled did not motivate them to want to work harder in school. In addition, five participants stated that they were angry and did not want to return to school. P1, stated, "It made me mad at the school and the teachers. I was embarrassed to come back because everyone knew what happened." P5, another African-American lesbian stated, "No, it didn't motive me at all. It actually made me more angry and that's why I started skipping school." P2, an African-American gay male stated, "I hated school mostly because of how I was treated. I didn't want to return. I felt school was pointless nightmare." The participants' responses suggest that suspensions may not be a

motivator to work harder with students who have been suspended considering all participants reported feelings of anger instead of remorse.

Question 3: Did you feel that your teachers cared about you when you were disciplined? Why or why not?

There was a consensus amongst participants in this study that they did not feel that their teachers cared for them. The following quotes were selected by the researcher as most representative of the answers to this question. All six participants interviewed stated they did not feel as if their teachers cared about them when they were disciplined. P2 stated "No, because they knew how I was treated, and they didn't do anything about it." P3 stated "No, because they knew exactly what happened, I was only defending myself and they still suspended me." P4 stated, No, my school had over 2,000 students. There were too many students to care about just me. I was just a number."

Question 4: What were your expectations of learning and progressing your education?

Four of the six participants interviewed stated that their main expectations were to graduate. Of the four participants that expected to graduate, only two graduated from high school. The other two participants had varied responses. P2 stated "I expected to learn in school and to be treated equally, which is the opposite of what happened." P6, an African-American transgendered woman stated "My expectations of learning were low, I knew there would be distractions because I started transitioning in the 9th grade and I wouldn't have the opportunity to learn like everyone else."

Question 5: How much time did you devote to school work?

Four of the six participants interviewed stated that they devoted little to very little time to school work, which further shows their lack of engagement in school. P2 stated "I didn't devote

any time to school woke after my suspension." P3 stated "When I first started high school I used to devote a lot of time to school, but I got suspended everything changed, I didn't care much anymore, and my studying fell off." There were two outlier's that answered "About four to five hours, I was determined no matter what even though I didn't want to be there" (P1) and simply "I remember spending a lot of hours on homework" (P6).

Question 6: Did you have any personal goals in school? Did you achieve them?

The answers for this question were evenly divided. Half of the participants interviewed stated that they did not have any personal goal in high schools. The other half of the participants stated that they had personal goals, but none of them achieved those goals. P4, a Hispanic, bi-sexual female stated "Yes, I wanted to be a cheerleader. I was so excited at the thought, but once I got suspended, I was ineligible, and I didn't even get a change to audition." P2 stated "Yes and no, I did really good in middle school and when I got to high school, I wanted to graduate with honors. I didn't achieve that goal because I dropped out."

Question 7: Did you feel safe, valued, and supported in school?

All the participants interviewed stated that they did not feel valued or supported in high school. Half of the participants stated that they felt safe in high school while the other half did not feel safe in high school. P3 stated "I felt safe, because I was good at protecting myself, but I definitely did not feel valued or supported by teachers." P4 stated "I never felt like teachers supported me in school, I brought up a lot of ideas and they acted like they didn't care." P5 stated "No, I didn't feel valued nor did I feel safe at all. Someone always had something negative to say to me. P6 stated "No, no, no, no, I never felt safe, I never went anywhere alone. Although my friends supported me."

Question 8: Did you perceive that your teachers wanted you to succeed?

Four of the six participants interviewed stated that they did not perceive that their teachers wanted them to succeed. P4 stated "Not really, I just felt like another student, nothing special, no special attention or assistance." P6 stated "No, not at all, they acted as if they were afraid of me." Although both P3 and P5 stated that neither one of them felt valued or supported by their teachers, P3 stated "Once I returned from suspension, my teachers seemed to pay more attention to me, so I thought they wanted me to succeed."

Question 9: Did you feel like a contributing member of your school?

Five of the six participants interviewed stated that they did not feel like a contributing member of their high school. P4 stated "No, my school was overpopulated, and I didn't feel like I belonged." P2 stated "No, not at all, I felt very out of place. Nothing for LGBT students" P1 had the same sentiments by stating "We didn't have any clubs, like some of my friends in other districts had."

Question 10: Tell me about your academic performance while attending high school.

The academic performance of the participants varied. Three of the six participants interviewed stated that their grades were average during high school. One of the six participants interviewed, P6, stated "I did very good in high school with grades. I got mostly all A's. I studied a lot." Two of the six participants interviewed stated they received bad grades and after they returned from suspension, their grades declined.

Question 11: Did your teacher give you work to complete while you were suspended? If not, when did you get your work?

All of the participants interviewed stated that their teachers did not give them homework to complete while they were suspended. All participants interviewed stated that they had to catch up on their school work once they returned from suspension. P2 stated,

> As I recall before I was suspended my grades were much better, but after suspension it was awful trying to catch up, time after time I was given tests and I didn't know the material because I had been out of school. You don't know what you're supposed to be learning because they didn't take the time to assist so I just had to catch up.

P3 stated "No, I got really behind with my suspension and I had to go to summer school, so I wouldn't fall behind a grade."

Question 12: What was your attitude towards learning, when you came back to school?

There were mixed emotions for participants regarding their attitude towards learning once they returned to school. Five of the six participants interviewed were either angry and/or did not want to return to school. P3 stated "I wasn't ready to return. I didn't put in the same effort as I did before." P5 stated "I was really angry, because my suspension wasn't fair. I started skipping school. Then I got suspended again for skipping (truancy)." P4 was the only participant that was expelled, and she stated "I was scared to go to an alternative school at first. I didn't know what to expect. I heard about it. I didn't want to look like I was dumb."

Question 13: What are your current academic credentials? High school grad, college grad, etc.?

Two of the six participants interviewed dropped out of high school and did not receive a GED. One of the six participants interviewed received a GED. Two of the six participants

interviewed graduated from high school and one of the six participants interviewed was a college graduate. P1 graduated from the Art Institute of Dallas.

Question 14: Did you drop out or consider dropping out of school?

All of the participants interviewed considered dropping out of high school. Two of the six participants interviewed dropped out of high school. P6 stated "Oh yes, I considered it every single time I was suspended." P2 and P3 both stated, "I considered dropping out of school all the time." P4 stated that "I finished the alternative program, but I did not sit to get my GED. P5 stated "I didn't want to go back to school, so I dropped out. I didn't miss anything with all the drama of school, I was homeschooled."

Question 15: Were you treated with respect by your teachers?

Four of the six participants stated that they felt they were treated with respect by their teachers sometimes. One of the participants that did not feel as if they were respected, P6, stated "No. I wasn't. I got into so many fights because I was bullied, and my teachers kept referring me for suspension even though they knew I was defending myself."

Question 16: What emotions did you experience while suspended and/or expelled?

The participants interviewed experienced a range of emotions from being scared, sad, upset, alone, angry, and hatred. P2 stated "Mostly sadness, and some hatred towards my classmates because I was bullied so badly." P3 stated "I was kinda scared and paranoid a lot because I was selling and using drugs. It really wasn't my thing, but I got caught up and needed to make some money. I was always looking over my shoulder." P4 stated "When I was expelled, I was scared most of the time. I knew it would change my life for the worst. I just didn't know how."

Question 17: Do you feel you have achieved a personal level of success academically, socially, and emotionally?

Five of the six participants interviewed felt they did not achieve a personal level of success academically, socially, nor emotionally. P2 stated "No, no to all of them. I am not where I wanted to be academically, I am a bit socially awkward and I don't think I am fully emotionally stable." P4 stated "No, I am still trying to find my way in life. I am still young, but I wanted to be much further in life." P3 was the only participant that responded "yes" stating "I think I am pretty successful not to go to college, I own my own business."

Question 18: Please describe any involvement that you may have had with the juvenile justice system?

P1 stated "I have been handcuffed several times by the school resource officers. They arrested me and placed me in the back of their car." P2 stated "I was in juvenile for six months, but it was because I was caught with drugs. I was on probation also." P3 stated "I've been arrested a couple of time for selling drugs. I was on probation. That's the main reason why I started my own business, because I couldn't get a job after high school, because I was in the system." P4 stated "Well once I got expelled, I had to go to the juvenile justice alternative education program, which is the juvenile justice system. It's like rehab for bad kids, so we can pretty much still get school." P5 stated "I was arrested for truancy and me and my mom had to go to court."

Question 19: While suspended and/or expelled did you engage any criminal activities?

The majority of the participants' reported engaging in deviant behavior as a result of their suspension while they were out of school. Five of the six participants engaged in either taking or selling drugs. P5 stated "When I was out for skipping school, I smoked weed with my friends

just to kill the time." P2 stated while suspended for at least two weeks I had a lot of time on my hands, so my friends and I took drugs and I was arrested with drugs on me while hanging out on the street. P6 stated "My friends and I smoked weed while we all were suspended. Below, Table 4 shows participants' responses to the interview questions.

Table 4

Participant Responses

Interview Question	Participant (P1)	Participant (P2)	Participant (P3)	Participant (P4)	Participant (P5)	Participant (P6)
1	Alone	Took Drugs, wrong crowd	Delinquent behavior, sold drugs	Isolated and constricted	Alone and delinquent behavior	Alone
2	No, mad	No, very mad	No	No, very mad	No, angry, truancy	No, mad and scared
3	No	No	No	No	No	No
4	Graduation	Get an education	Graduation	Graduation	Graduation	Low expectations
5	A lot	Very little	Little	Very little	Little	A lot
6	Some, no	Yes, graduate	No goals	Cheerleading, no	No, no	Homecoming Queen, no
7	Not safe, not valued	Not safe, not valued	Safe, not valued	Safe, not valued	Not safe, not valued	Not safe, not valued
8	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
9	No	No	No	No	No	No
10	Average	Average	Average	Below avg	Very bad	Good
11	No	No	No	No	No	No
12	Didn't want to	Didn't want to	Didn't want to	Scared	Angry, truancy	Didn't want to

	return	return	return			return
13	College Grad	GED	Diploma	No grad, no GED	No grad, no GED	Diploma
14	No, yes	No, yes	No, yes	Yes, yes	Yes, yes	No, yes
15	No	Sometimes	Sometimes	Sometimes	Sometimes	No
16	Anger, scared	Sad, hatred	Scared, paranoid	Scared	Scared, alone	Bored, upset
17	No	No	Yes	No	No	Not really
18	Arrested, probation	Juvenile Justice	Arrested, probation	JJAE	Arrested, probation	Arrested
19	Took Drugs	Took Drugs	Sold drugs	No	Took drugs	Took drugs

Emergent Themes

The researcher utilized Creswell's (2009) six step process to validate the accuracy of information: raw data was transcribed, the researcher read the data to gain a general sense of the information, coding was performed, categories of themes were developed for further analysis, themes were prepared for a qualitative narrative, and the researcher interpreted the data. First the data were transcribed by sending the recording to an online transcription service (quicktranscriptionservice.com). Next the researcher began the coding process. According to Creswell (2009), coding is the process of organizing the material into chunks before bringing meaning to those chunks. The coding enabled the researcher to generate a small number of emergent themes. The final step in the data analysis, according to Creswell (2009), involves interpreting the data by identifying relevant specific statements or direct quotes that convey the participant's experiences based on the emergent themes. The sixth participant in the individual interviews did not identify any new themes indicating that data saturation had been reached. Data

saturation is reached when narratives do not reveal any new information and redundancy occurs (Faulkner & Trotter, 2017). The four themes that emerged from the interviews included the following: low student engagement, involvement in recreational drug use, low academic achievement, and involvement in the juvenile justice system.

Student School Engagement

Student school engagement is an adjustable factor that can predict student academic outcomes – such as truancy, dropout rates, and grades – as well as nonacademic outcomes – such as substance abuse, delinquency and depression (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Hazel et al., 2013; Wang & Peck, 2013). Engagement is theorized to act as a link between school-related factors and school performance for youth and young adults (Lam et al., 2014). Low student engagement was the foremost theme surfacing from the interviews. The majority of the participants expressed that they had very little motivation to learn or progress their education. None of the participants mentioned that they were involved in school programs, student advisory committees, or student organizations. The participants expressed that many observable engagement behaviors – such as attending class, completing homework, and following directions were not a priority to them. In addition, the majority of the participants voiced that after their suspension they no longer had the desire to return to school. Although most of the participants stated that they felt safe at school, they also stated that they did not feel supported or valued at school. This finding aligns with the Advancement Project & Civil Rights Project (2000), stating that when students are absent from school due to suspension, they become less connected to the school.

Consistent with the Student School Engagement Theory guiding tenets, the participants' perceptions of themselves academically, socially, and emotionally are rooted in each of these

components (Dary et al., 2016). A student's self-perception is heavily influenced by their perception of others' expectations and the belief in their own ability (Dary et al., 2016). The belonging domain of the Student Engagement Theory reflects a student's alignment with school values, norms, and feelings of membership within their school. In order for a student to be emotionally, socially, and academically engaged, students must feel valued, safe, and supported in their school environment (Dary, et al., 2016). Low engagement did not only shape how participants perceived themselves. It did also negatively impact both their current education status and work status. Salient throughout the participants' responses were their perceptions that teachers had a lack of interest in them and did not defend them, when they exercised self-defense. Participants expressed that they felt as if the intent and the circumstances of their offenses were not taken into consideration before they received their punishments.

Recreational Drug Use

The second theme was involvement in recreational drug use. The majority of the participants stated that while they were either suspended and/or expelled they used recreational drugs. This is consistent with the claim from the American Academy of Pediatrics, "suspension of school-aged youth with behavioral problems is connected to high rates of depression, drug addiction, and home life stresses" (2003, p. 1207). Participants' identified various elements that promoted their drug use, such as hanging with the wrong crowd, limited or no supervision, anger, boredom and peer pressure. P2 stated, "I was hanging with the wrong crowd that I called my friends." Four out of six participants stated that friends were their influence in taking drug while they were suspended. P5 stated that "I skipped a lot and drug was something to do with my friends." P6 stated, "It was my older boyfriend's idea." From these lived experiences disclosed by the participants, the General Strain Theory could help understand drug use while suspended.

The General Strain Theory identifies a direct relationship between strain (removal from school) and deviant behavior. It also reveals an indirect relationship through negative emotions and coping factors (e.g., anger, drug use) (Agnew & White, 1992).

Besides influence from friends, boredom was another reason among the participants to take drugs while suspended. P1 stated "I was bored and there was nothing else to do." This statement reinforces P2 experiences, this participant was bored, started hanging with the wrong crowd and did drugs. One participant, P3, shared experiences that were much different, stating, "While, I was suspended, I started selling drugs to make money. I even went up to the school and sold drugs." This statement does not conform to the rest of the experiences providing another insight on participant activities while suspended.

It must be noted that during the times the participants attended high school, marijuana was the most commonly used drug among school-aged children with one in every 19 high school senior using marijuana daily (Johnston et al., 2011). Adolescent behaviors and social problems are monitored in the United States by The National Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS).They reported that from 2005-2011 marijuana use on school property increased (Mack, 2012). Five out of the six participants interviewed stated that they used marijuana.

Low Academic Achievement

The next theme was low academic achievement. The majority of the participants either dropped out of high school or obtained a GED. All participants that were suspended expressed that, while suspended, they did not receive homework to complete. The participants felt as if they suffered academically as a result of their suspension. Participants' expressed that, after their suspension, they were further behind in school and had difficulties catching up. This contributed to their increased likelihood to drop out or having to attend summer school. The participants

reported low to average grade averages as a direct result of their desire to drop out and the inkling to no longer attend school. This finding is consistent with the research of Loschert (2016), who states that school suspensions or expulsions deprives students from instructional time and prevents them from learning because of their mandated absence from school. Although the majority of participants interviewed reported a decrease in grades due to their suspension, other contributing factors such as poor study habits, lack of motivation, drug use, as well as negative peer pressure also played a role. As concluded by Flanagain (2007), a student must be present when the teacher is giving instruction in order for the student to be meaningfully involved. Hence, there is a negative impact on academic achievement for students who are absent from the classroom due to suspensions and/or expulsions. P2 stated,

> I fell so far behind, and when I got back to school, I had to make up work from being suspended. I think my grades wouldn't have suffered if I was there. When I got back, I had a lot of tests and failed all of them. Starting from that point my grades were awful and it never got better.

Involvement in the Juvenile Justice System

The last theme that emerged was involvement in the juvenile justice system. The majority of the participants were involved in the juvenile justice system due to their suspension and/or expulsion. All of the participants stated that they were involved with the juvenile justice system, with half of the participants stating there was no consideration from teachers and/or administrators that their infractions were motivated by self-defense. For example, P1 stated,

> I was very embarrassed when I was arrested, and it was in front of all of my friends. I didn't do anything but defend my girlfriend because she was being disrespected. The

school officer pushed me up against the wall and we had a physical altercation. I was

placed on probation, I had to do community service and anger management classes.

P3 stated,

Someone spit in my face and I got into a physical altercation. Because of that, I was

suspended for like ten days and they gave me a disorderly conduct charge. I went to court

and was on probation for 6 months.

In addition, P5 stated,

I was targeted by a group of people and had to defend myself. I was arrested and charged

with simple assault, I had to take a mug shot. I was treated like a criminal, and it was just

me against them.

From the stories of the participants it can be seen that the enforcement of the code of conduct

relied on the subjectivity and interpretation of the teacher or school resource officer.

Five out of six participants were handcuffed and arrested by school resource officers for

incidents that they believed could have been handled by a teacher. These arrests resulted in five

out of six of the participants having juvenile records for minor offenses such fighting and

truancy. A pattern emerged among the participants interviewed: once they became involved in

the juvenile justice system, they became repeat offenders. Based on this pattern it can be

concluded that once LGBTQ youths are involved in the juvenile justice system, there is an

increased likelihood for them to have future incidents that involve the juvenile justice system.

Summary

This chapter described the findings of the interviews conducted by the researcher for the

purpose of a phenomenological exploration of the effects of the Dallas Independent School

District Student Code of Conduct on LGBTQ young adults of color while they attended high

schools in Dallas, Texas. Through direct quotations, participant responses were used to emphasize major themes that emerged throughout the research. The researcher utilized the constant comparative method to analyze the data. Based on participants' perceptions, four themes emerged. The themes included (1) low student engagement, (2) involvement in recreational drug use, (3) low academic achievement, and (4) involvement in the juvenile justice system.

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of LGBTQ young adults of color (ages 23-28) who experienced suspensions or expulsions based on the DISD Student Code of Conduct while attending high school. This research afforded participants the opportunity to engage in an exploration of experiences that had never been told before, and now have found a platform for being expressed. Participants added how these experiences were unique to them as LGBTQ youths of color. Participants identified various elements that promoted or inhibited their success as students through adulthood. Furthermore, participants were afforded space to communicate their experiences and realities through a first-hand account, to better help them understand their past lived experiences in relation to the DISD Code of Conduct while attending high school. Although participant P1, voiced similar experiences as the other participants, she expressed that while in high school she dedicated a lot of time to studying and homework in addition, she was the only participant who graduated from college.

In the next chapter, each theme is discussed, the implications, recommendations for action and recommendations for further research are offered.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A review of literature in this research study underscored a decrease in school engagement, involvement in recreational drug usage and a decrease in academic achievement for LGBTQ youth of color who were suspended due to the DISD Code of Conduct. As previously reviewed, out-of-school suspensions are meant to deter unwanted behavior; however, studies have suggested that the negative outcomes far outweigh any positive outcomes. Unfortunately, as expressed by the participants in this study, their experiences with suspensions and expulsions have led to academic difficulties, delinquent behavior, drug usage, engagement in criminal activities, and decreased school engagement. This final chapter reiterates and discusses an overview of the current study, provides a discussion of the findings, offers the researcher's final reflections, and shares implications and recommendations for future studies. The emergent themes are reexamined as found in chapter four with regards to LGBTQ young adults of color and the DISD Code of Conduct. The summary and discussion in this chapter center on the research questions that guided this study.

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of LGBTQ young adults of color (ages 23-28) who experienced suspensions or expulsions based on the DISD Student Code of Conduct while attending high school. Four emergent themes were found it this study (1) low student engagement, (2) involvement in recreational drug use, (3) low academic achievement, and (4) involvement in the juvenile justice system.

As previously discussed, suspending and/or expelling students from school for problem behaviors is not supported by research primarily because school disciplinary policies have not

considerably reduced problem behaviors and may have influenced juvenile delinquency and other negative outcomes for children and adolescents (Sprague, Walker, Stieber, Simonsen, & Nichioka, 2001). There is evidence that LGBTQ students that experience hostile school climates and perceive to have been treated unfairly often have academic difficulties, mental health consequences, experience depression, and have suicidal thoughts (Genders & Sexualities Alliance Network, 2012). Through the examination of the past lived experiences of LGBTQ young adults of color, there can be a better understanding of how they perceived the DISD Code of Conduct to be unfair and how they experienced a lack of support from their teachers. This study has identified the necessity for the creation of more supportive school climates to meet the needs of LGBTQ youth of color in high schools.

This study aimed to benefit educational leaders and policymakers in their understanding of and ability to work with LGBTQ youth of color in providing learning environments responsive to their academic, emotional, and social maturation. To explore these topics, the following research questions were posed:

1) How did school engagement influence, effect, or contribute to the lived experiences of LGBTQ young adults of color, while they attended DISD high schools?

2) How did the experience of being suspended and/or expelled, due to the DISD Code of Conduct, shape the high school experience for LGBTQ young adults of color?

Findings for Research Question 1

The first research question was as follows: How did school engagement influence, effect, or contribute to the lived experiences of LGBTQ young adults of color, while they attended DISD high schools? Themes that relate to and answer this question are as follows: (1) low student engagement and (2) low academic achievement.

Low Student Engagement

The participants in this study shared their high school experiences from their perspective as LGBTQ young adults of color. The data analysis process for each set of interview questions led to several findings. First, LGBTQ youth of color had low student engagement while in high school. The participants demonstrated low school engagement through their low-grade point averages, lack of participation with school organizations, and lack of trust and value felt from teachers. Most participants mentioned a low internal drive to succeed and a decreased desire to be in school once they were suspended and/or expelled. Participants in this study also identified a range of emotions as a result of their suspension and/or expulsion such as being dispassionate, bored, angry and sad. These also contributed to their school disengagement. It must be noted that one participant, P1 stated "Once I returned to school, I knew I had to do better so I started to study more."

Gay-straight alliances (GSAs) are student groups that support LGBTQ students in high schools that have spread across North America since the 1980s (Goodenow, Szalacha, & Westheimer, 2006). Goodenow et al (2006) revealed that gay-straight alliances provide a safe space for LGBTQ students and their allies. In addition, schools that have a representation of GSA's have reported lower rates of victimization and suicide attempts and suicidal thoughts. Goodenow et al (2006) also found that LGBTQ students who attend high schools with a GSA have reported more favorable school experiences and less incidences of psychological distress and drug use. According to the participants in this study, having support by teachers or having a LGBTQ alliance would have assisted them in successfully navigating through high school. Participants expressed that they believed having a GSA would have made them feel more included and would have contributed to a more positive school environment. While a LGBTQ

alliance was found to enrich the learning experiences of the participants, it was also found to be an irregular occurrence in all of the participants' high schools.

Some participants had the perception that teachers ignored that they were defending themselves. P5 mentioned that "I was suspended from school because of truancy. I was only skipping school because I was bullied every day." Many participants recalled not receiving the support from teachers that they anticipated. Some participants mentioned that they believed that having support from their teachers would have made a difference in their engagement at school. Based on participants' responses positive, relationships with teachers are imperative because they help in making the student feel safe, and feel more connected in school, which leads to increased academic achievements.

Participants articulated the value of being respected over affirming their sexual identity. Although, the majority of the participants perceived that teachers did not respect them due to their sexual identity. When probed and asked, "did you drop out or consider dropping out of school?" All of the participants stated that they wanted to drop out of school. The National Dropout Prevention Center/Network (NDPC/N) suggested that student engagement is an effective dropout prevention strategy but has the potential to be part of a comprehensive strategy to engage students to fully develop their academic, social, emotional, civic, and career-related knowledge and skills (Dary, Pickeral, Shumer, & Williams, 2016).

Some participants shared that they did not feel a connection with school, they only returned after their suspension or expulsion because they were forced to. P2 stated "I hated school". The participants shared regret for not graduating; however, their lack of engagement and connectedness allowed them to fall into a huge gap in achievement and become a statistic.

As examined in the literature review, student school engagement has previously been shown to correlate with better attendance (Hazel et al., 2013). Findings in this study showed a connection between student school engagement and harassment-based truancy. Several participants reported to be repeat offenders of truancy infractions because of safety concerns due to bullying or harassment which, in turn, increased the likelihood of arrest of the student. House Bill 2398 decriminalized truancy. Prior to 2014 students in Texas could be charged with a Class C misdemeanor for having too many unexcused absences or due to truancy. Students that violated truancy laws were sent to a criminal court without representation, they faced fines of up to $500, court fees and costs, and the possibility of a criminal record. Those students who were unable to comply with a judge's orders also faced the possibility of jail time (Fowler, Mergler, Johnson, & Craven, 2015). According to the participants, truancy was a distinct predictor of low student engagement, low academics, and dropout rates. Participants who were suspended for truancy became involved in the juvenile justice system due to the criminalization of truancy laws and/or illegal activities they engaged in while skipping school.

Low Academic Achievement

Participants articulated a low sense of belonging and motivation after being removed from school due to suspensions and/or expulsions. The participants' responses identified that their lack of school motivation was a strong predictor of their low academic performance once they returned to school. Poor academic performance often feeds a decrease in motivation and student perception of competence, which yields less success academically (Dary, Pickeral, Shumer, & Williams, 2016). The participants' experiences academically were a direct correlation to teachers not always recognizing their value, not providing support nor affirming their worth. The sentiments of most participants were that, had they received more teacher support combined

with a school climate that promoted fairness and respect, they would have focused more on academic achievement.

As previously discussed, the participant responses are consistent with the Student School Engagement Theory that is meant to predict student academic outcomes such as truancy, dropping out, academic achievement, and nonacademic outcomes such as depression, substance abuse, and delinquency (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). The theory's fundamental principles state that students must be engaged in meaningful learning activities through interaction with others and worthwhile tasks (Fredricks et al., 2004). Meaningful learning activities through interaction will be difficult to achieve if students are suspended or expelled from school due to zero tolerance policies.

Findings for Research Question 2

Research Question 2 was: How did the experience of being suspended and/or expelled, due to the DISD Code of Conduct, shape the high school experience for LGBTQ young adults of color? Themes that relate to and answer this question are as follows: (1) involvement in recreational drug use and (2) involvement in the juvenile justice system.

Involvement in Recreational Drug Use

Recreational drug use emerged as an integral byproduct of being suspended and/or expelled. The majority of the participants engaged in drug use or sold drugs to make money, because they were bored due to being home as a result of suspension or because they were pressured by their peers. In fact, P6 stated,

> I was involved in the juvenile justice system because I was arrested for smoking weed while I was suspended. So, I now have a misdemeanor on my record. I was just trying to get away and clear my mind.

Participants shared that boredom was a reason why they took drugs while suspended. Knowing that the participants indicated boredom as a motivation for engaging in drug use provides more reason to investigate the value of school suspensions.

In another instance, one participant said they took drugs while they were suspended because they were hanging with the wrong crowd. This experience is consistent with a study conducted by Shrier, Walls, Kendall, and Blood (2012), which state many adolescents first try drugs to be accepted by friends and to feel independent. The common bond of using drugs joins adolescents together, making substance use an activity to do while hanging out.

The researcher found in this study that the use of recreational drugs was used as a coping mechanism by the participants to remove their thoughts from their current situation. A study conducted by Tenenbaum, Varjas, Meyers, and Parris (2011) to examine the coping strategies of victims of bullying, found that students might use non-violent behavior or drugs to cope and suppress negative emotions, rather than addressing the problem directly.

Involvement in the Juvenile Justice System

The majority of the participants expressed that they felt victimized, which made them defend themselves, act out, or retreat. Unfortunately, their defenses constituted in punishable infractions (e.g., fighting, drug use, truancy). Hence, the very ways in which the participants reacted to their victimization (e.g., truancy to avoid victimization, weapon carriage to protect themselves) placed them at a greater risk for punitive, exclusionary forms of school discipline. Table 5 outlines the infractions that directly resulted in juvenile justice involvement.

Table 5

Infractions

	Participant (P1)	Participant (P2)	Participant (P3)	Participant (P4)	Participant (P5)	Participant (P6)
Infraction(s)	Assault	Truancy	Assault	Aggravated assault	Assault &Truancy	Assault

The majority of the participants stated that their infractions were due to self-defense. P1 was "defending her girlfriend in a fight" and was charged with assault, P2 "skipped school, to avoid bullying, P3 "got into an altercation because someone spit in my face", P5 said "I was targeted by a group of people and I had to defend myself", and P6 "was in several fights, because I was picked on". P4, was the only participant that was expelled due to using a knife on someone during a fight. She did not state it was in self-defense. Due to these infractions and some received while they were suspended, all of the participants were involved in the juvenile justice system.

As previously noted in the literature review, suspension and expulsion from school are correlated with higher rates of subsequent antisocial and illegal behavior, including drug use, increased likelihood of future suspension, and, most relevant for the present study, contact with the criminal justice system (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force 2008; McCrystal et al. 2007; Raffaele Mendez & Knoff 2003; Tobin et al., 1996). As presented in this study, the increased reliance on the Student Code of Conduct in response to student disruption resulted in an increase of referrals to the juvenile justice system for infractions that the participants felt should have been handled in school.

Implications

With this study came the chance to listen to the lived experiences of LGBTQ young adults of color who were suspended and/or expelled due to the DISD Student Code of Conduct (2008-2013). This study added value to the current body of work examining school discipline by building awareness surrounding the unique challenges LGBTQ youth of color faced while they were suspended and/or expelled in high school. This study also chartered new terrain in understanding how suspensions and/or expulsions have contributed to low student engagement, involvement in recreational drug use, low academic achievement, and involvement in the juvenile justice system for LGBTQ youth of color in DISD high schools.

Data from this phenomenological exploration can be used to continue conversation regarding the need for the continuous review and evaluation of the DISD Student Code of Conduct, paying close attention to LGBTQ youth of color. As reported in this study, when students are suspended or expelled, the likelihood increases that they will fail academically, become disengaged, involved in the juvenile justice system and/or drop out of school.

The zero-tolerance nature of Student Codes of Conduct was enacted to promote school safety in the wake of highly publicized incidents of school violence; they deviated to become a tool for disorder. The participants expressed that their teachers were inexperienced in properly handling challenging behavior and situations and referred minor situations to school resources officers rather than solving the problem themselves. Participants perceived that teachers focused on strictly adhering to the Code of Conduct instead of reviewing the circumstances that led up to the infraction. Hence, based on the complaints of the six participants, teachers didn't know how to handle challenging students and over referred to the juvenile justice system. Therefore, schools should invest in strategic intervention programs.

Another implication of this study is based on how students perceived the support of their teachers. The majority of the participants reported not being supported by their teachers. Hence, teachers must make appropriate investments into LGBTQ students and cultivate a classroom environment of inclusiveness and demonstrate their support of them as teachers. Students in this study thought their academic achievement was influenced in part by the support and care demonstrated by their teachers. The majority of the participants contributed their lack of success upon returning to school from suspension to their teachers and the school environment.

While much is left to be explored in the area of LGBTQ youth of color who were suspended and/or expelled due to the DISD Student Code of Conduct, this research is meant to be used as an agent to construct a channel that connects discipline practices to research and, ultimately, to change.

Recommendations for Action

We must recognize that all youth have a right to an education, and the need for sufficient opportunities to learn and grow from their mistakes. As an alternative to schools quickly punishing youth by suspension and/or expulsion we must create schools that are more inclusive and supportive. In addition, schools must address misconduct in a more productive and developmentally appropriate way.

To best help high schools prepare to support LGBTQ students of color, it is important to examine the words of the participants. The participants' lived experiences were used to guide what recommendations, more specifically for LGBTQ students of color. Suggested actions should be directed towards establishing professional development training programs for administrators, teachers, and school resource officers focused on how they can effectively handle situations when dealing with exclusionary discipline policies. Training that teaches staff how to

understand the unique differences of LGBTQ students of color, and training targeted to assist with how staff responds to escalated behavioral issues within the school.

A topic that arose from the participants was a lack of feeling included in school and feeling a part of the study body. It is recommended that DISD schools implement Culturally Responsive Positive Behavior Intervention programs (CRPBI) that will implement culturally responsive practices that result in interventions, perspectives, and instructions which promote equal access to inclusion, learning and success for all students, free from harassment. This framework if introduced to DISD schools would provide an approach that schools can use to promote positive behavior for all students. It is recommended that the CRPBI program include the following instruction to teachers, administrators and school resource officers:

- Appreciate the importance of diverse opinions

- Avoid imposing your own values

- Examine yourself for cultural biases

- Encourage and build on students' cultural strengths

- Ascertain your students' cultural roles; integrate culture into your teaching

CRPBI programs will allow teachers, administrations and school resources officers the opportunity to develop a set of attitudes, behaviors and understandings that allow them to work effectively in diverse atmospheres. According to Bal, Thorius, & Kozleski (2012), CRPBI programs provide a shift from punitive approaches towards focusing attention on diverse designs for learning and student empowerment. CRPBIS re-mediates school cultures to improve the quality of social and academic opportunities (Bal, et al. 2012).

Participants expressed that not being in school made them fall behind in schoolwork, which is a problem associated with school suspension. Consequently, a transitional re-

engagement program may assist in fostering a post suspension transition of understanding and progression in school. Possibly, if the student is provided the opportunity to catch up on school assignments and has a re-engagement meeting upon returning to school, the student may feel less left out and feels like they are part of the student body. In addition, this may aide in decreasing the propensity for LGBTQ youth of color to drop out of school. Transitional re-engagement meetings should include the suggested questions to guide conversations:

- How can we repair any things that were damaged or relationships that were hurt?

- How might the school support better outcomes between you and the school staff?

- How can we assist you in re-connecting academically and socially at school to aim towards your success?

Recommendations for Future Research

While this study has added to the current qualitative research by revealing the voice behind the numbers, there is still much more that needs to be researched. An update on the effects of any new changes of the DISD Code of Conduct, and a review of any implementations of civil rights protecting the human rights to education and freedom from discrimination that may have occurred since 2013.

This study focused on only a small group of LGBTQ young adults of color participants which is too small to be generalizable to the larger population of LGBTQ young adults that have experience with Student Codes of Conduct. Expanding the scope of future studies to additional school districts will aid in hearing the experiences of LGBTQ young adults of color with Student Codes of Conduct and can prove instructive in determining how schooling experiences can be fashioned to better support their maturation.

Expanding the scope of this study to understand the unique challenges that LGBTQ students of color face in high school and how teachers can support them will possibly offer insights into how to successfully assimilate them into high school. This information can prove to be instructive in determining how their high school experiences can be shaped to better support their maturation. Data can inform understandings of LGTBQ students of color development, curriculums and instructional strategies that best support their learning. It is recommended that ongoing teacher training and professional development occurs for all school staff pertaining to the needs of LGBTQ youth of color.

Conclusion

By sharing their experiences, the participants in this study expressed and made meaning of their past lived experiences as LGBTQ youth of color who were affected by the DISD Code of Conduct while attending high school. The participants expressed how they encountered bullying, perceived school disciplinary actions not to be fair, and experienced a lack of support from teachers while in school. Participants also shared that they were involved in deviant behaviors such as taking drugs and selling drugs often leading to juvenile justice referrals. Additionally, participants spoke of how they skipped school frequently to prevent harassment and how - as a consequence of missing school – they were no longer engaged, and their grades suffered. Many participants expressed that they experienced feelings such as isolation, anger, sadness while they were out on suspension. The results of this study have shown that schools should focus on individual student engagement, teacher trainings and development, suspension transitional programs, and a positive school climate to ensure congruence among activities and stakeholders in support of positive behavioral support for LGBTQ youth of color.

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Appendix A

Study Invitation Announcement Flyer

Dear Potential Participant,

I am a doctoral student in the School of Education at the University of New England. I am conducting a research study to explore the past lived experiences of LGBTQ young adults of color (ages 23-28) who were affected by the DISD, Student Code of Conduct while attending high school. I am seeking participants that meet the following criteria: 1) attended high school in the DISD school district, 2) identify as LGBTQ of color, 3) between the ages of 23-28, and 4) have been suspended and/or expelled from a DISD High School, due to the Student Code of Conduct. The interview will contain questions related to academic achievement, criminal justice referrals, mental health and well-being, and experiences of in and out-of-school suspension and expulsions. Interviews will be held during the month of November 2018 and will occur in private conference rooms. Interviews will take approximately 30 mins to 45 mins to complete. The data collected will be kept confidential and securely locked. Although the research will be published, your identity will remain confidential. You will be able to stop participation at any time during the study if you experience any discomfort. You will receive a complimentary $10 Visa Gift Card for completing the interview in its entirety.

Please contact Antoinette McIntosh at amcintosh2@une.edu or at (214) 435-1599 to discuss your eligibility and to arrange an interview.

Thank you,

Antoinette McIntosh

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Pre-screening Interview Questions

1. What is your sexual identity or do you prefer not to disclose?

2. Where you out during high school?

3. What is your racial identity?

4. How old are you?

5. What high school did you attend?

6. Were you suspended and/or expelled due to the DISD, Student Code of Conduct?

7. Please share why you were suspended or expelled.

8. Do you feel as if the suspension or expulsion was fair? Why or why not?

Interview Questions

Student's Attitude towards Discipline:

1. Can you explain your experience of what it was like to be suspended or expelled?

2. Did getting suspended/expelled motivate you to want to work harder in school or did it make you mad at the school/teachers?

3. Did you feel that your teachers cared about you when you were disciplined? Why or why not?

Student's Attitude towards School Engagement:

4. What were your expectations of learning and progressing your education?

5. How much time did you devote to school work?

6. Did you have any personal goals in school? Did you achieve them?

7. Did you feel safe, valued, and supported in school?

8. Did you perceive that your teachers wanted you to succeed?

9. Did you feel like a contributing member of your school?

Student's Attitude towards Academic Achievement:

10. Tell me about your academic performance while attending high school.

11. Did your teacher give you work to complete while you were suspended? If not, when did
    you get your work?

12. What was your attitude towards learning, when you came back to school?

13. What are your current academic credentials? High school grad, college grad, etc.?

14. Did you drop out or consider dropping out of school?

Student's Attitude towards Mental Health and Well-Being:

15. Were you treated with respect by your teachers?

16. What emotions did you experience while suspended and/or expelled?

17. Do you feel you have achieved a personal level of success academically, socially, and
emotionally?

Student's Attitude towards the Juvenile Justice System:

18. Please describe any involvement that you may have had with the juvenile justice system?

19. While suspended and/or expelled did you engage any criminal activities?

Appendix C

Consent for Participation in Research
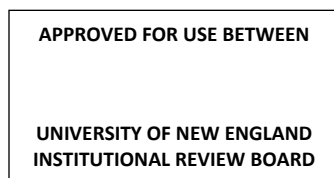
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UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND

CONSENT FOR PARTCIPATION IN RESEARCH

Project Title: A Phenomenological Exploration of the Effects of the Dallas Independent School District Student Code of Conduct on LGBTQ Young Adults of Color While They Attended High Schools in Dallas, Texas

Principal Investigator(s): Antoinette McIntosh

<u>**Introduction:**</u>

- Please read this form. You may also request that the form is read to you. The purpose of this form is to give you information about this research study, and if you choose to participate, document that choice.

- You are encouraged to ask any questions that you may have about this study, now, during or after the project is complete. You can take as much time as you need to decide whether or not you want to participate. Your participation is voluntary.

<u>**Why is this research study being done?**</u>

You have been asked to participate in the research study that to the past lived experiences of LGBTQ young adults of color (ages 23-28) who were affected by the DISD Code of Conduct while attending high school. The purpose is to explore possible relationships between the discipline consequences of the DISD, Code of Conduct, and its potential connection to criminal justice referrals, academic achievement, and the mental health and well-being of LGBTQ youth of color.

Who will be in this study?

You have been identified as a potential participant because you meet all the qualifications as follows:

- Have attended high school in the DISD school district

- Identify as LGBTQ of color

- Were out in high school

- Between the ages of 23-28

- Have been suspended and/or expelled from a DISD High School, due to the Student Code of Conduct.

What will I be asked to do?

Participate in a 30-45 minute face to face interview. You will receive a $10 Visa Gift Card for your participation, you will be free to stop the interview at any time without penalty.

What are the possible risks of taking part in this study?

The potential risk involved in this study is possible emotional distress in recalling adverse events in the participants' life.

What are the possible benefits of taking part in this study?

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study

What will it cost me?

Participants will not incur any costs.

How will my privacy be protected?

The principal will use pseudonyms when interviewing each participant.

How will my data be kept confidential?

This study is designed to be confidential, this means that no one, can link the data you provide to you, or identify you as a participant. Audio recordings uploaded to the researcher's computer will be destroyed by deleting them from the computer's hard drive after the conclusion of the study. A copy of your signed consent form will be maintained in secured cabinet, at the PI's home for at least 3 years after the project is complete before it is destroyed.

What are my rights as a research participant?

- Your participation is voluntary. Your decision to participate will have no impact on your current or future relations with the University.

- Your decision to participate will not affect your relationship with the Dallas Resource Center.

- You may skip or refuse to answer any question for any reason.

- If you choose not to participate there is no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.

- You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time, for any reason.

    o If you choose to withdraw from the research there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.

- You will be informed of any significant findings developed during the course of the research that may affect your willingness to participate in the research.

● If you sustain an injury while participating in this study, your participation may be ended.

What other options do I have?

You may choose not to participate.

Whom may I contact with questions?

● The researchers conducting this study are Antoinette McIntosh, Dr. Dorothy Williams and Dr. Andrea Disque. For questions or more information concerning this research you may contact her 214-435-1599 or amcintosh2@une.edu.

  ○ For more information regarding this study, please contact Mary Bachman DeSilva, Sc.D., Chair of the UNE Institutional Review Board at (207) 221-4567 or irb@une.edu.

● If you choose to participate in this research study and believe you may have suffered a research related injury, please contact Mary Bachman DeSilva, Sc.D., Chair of the UNE Institutional Review Board at (207) 221-4567 or irb@une.edu.

● If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may call Mary Bachman DeSilva, Sc.D., Chair of the UNE Institutional Review Board at (207) 221-4567 or irb@une.edu.

Will I receive a copy of this consent form?

● You will be given a copy of this consent form.

_____

Participant's Statement

     I understand the above description of this research and the risks and benefits associated with my participation as a research subject. I agree to take part in the research and do so voluntarily.

Participant's signature or   Date

Legally authorized representative

Printed name

Researcher's Statement

      The participant named above had sufficient time to consider the information, had

an opportunity to ask questions, and voluntarily agreed to be in this study.

Researcher's signature   Date

Printed name

Appendix D

Site Approval Letter

Appendix E

pproval Letter

SITE APPROVAL LETTER

Dallas Resource Center
5750 Cedar Springs Rd
Dallas, TX 75235

Subject: Site Approval Letter

To whom it may concern:

This letter acknowledges that I have received and reviewed a request by Antoinette McIntosh to conduct a research project entitled *A Phenomenological Exploration of the Effects of the Dallas Independent School District Student Code of Conduct on LGBTQ Young Adults of Color While They Attended High Schools in Dallas, Texas* at The Dallas Resource Center and I approve of this research to be conducted at our facility.

Sincerely,

David J. Rodriguez
Resource Center | Operations Manager
Djr214@myresourcecenter.org
214-521-4410

5750 Cedar Springs Rd., Dallas, TX 75235 / myresourcecenter.org