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TEACHERS PERCEPTIONS AND BELIEFS OF DISCIPLINE IN K-8 CHARTER
SCHOOLS IN POST-KATRINA NEW ORLEANS

by

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Dedication

This research study is dedicated to all the veteran African American teachers that retired from or still work in Orleans parish schools and now post-Katrina charter schools. To all those teachers who lent their voices to this work, your contribution is immeasurable, and I am eternally grateful.

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The process of completing this dissertation has been one of the most arduous and trying times of my life thus far. I have experienced a number of hurdles and obstacles during this doctoral journey. Many have caused me to run the gamut of emotions, but through it all God has never left my side.

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ABSTRACT

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There has been a narrative that has circled the country that the charter school experiment of the entire New Orleans public school system has been a chided success. However, what has been glaringly absent has been the voices of the African American teachers who work or worked in this system post-Katrina in the lower levels of the school system. Though strong opinions and targeted initiatives have been pushed and implemented by the charter schools in New Orleans, one aspect that has been the source of dissension has been the discipline practices. The purpose of this qualitative research study is to explore the perceptions and beliefs of veteran African American teachers of discipline practices in post-Katrina K-8 charter schools. This study is one of the few endeavors to represent the viewpoints of the veteran African American teachers that worked in these charter schools

in the first 10-12 years after the reopening of the schools post-Katrina. Data were collected from these veteran participants through semi-structured open-ended interviews. The study offers recommendations regarding professional development for teachers that are new to the city and diversity committees that include veteran African American teachers. Evaluation of the discipline practices that are used should be continuous and evaluated for improvements.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

African American students are often on the receiving end of hindrances that keep them from both access to quality education as well as equities in discipline. This includes the often-researched unequal school resources (Owens, 2022), or punitive discipline measures (Discipline Revolution Project, 2023; Hwang et al., 2022; American Psychological Association, 2021; Gonzalez, 2012). African American students are the ones that are subjected to punitive discipline practices (Lopez, 2015). Although various discipline practices have been heavily researched in various parts of the country, the way discipline practices and procedures have changed, been implemented, or allowed in New Orleans K-8 charter schools post-Katrina have yet to be deeply discussed from African American teachers' perspectives. This is because according to Sullivan & Morgan, (2010), "Discipline rates in charter schools are more difficult to determine due to a lack of transparency and inconsistency in data" (p. ii). Hurricane Katrina was a catastrophic event that decimated the city of New Orleans and the educational system that previously existed. It is considered one of the most horrific natural disasters in the history of the United States (Sacerdote, 2012). Students were displaced all over the country, from Texas to Tennessee. The adjustment for many of the students and their families in various cities and states outside of New Orleans was too much of a challenge. This challenge included new environments, new cultures, and new ways of life.

According to McClam (2005), the article mentions a student that described her experience from adjusting after Hurricane Katrina in a new place where she was "struggling to keep up in class...and dealing with snide remarks from other kids" (para. 3). In addition, McClam (2005) indicated this about students "the adjustments they have made and the ways they improvise in their new lives seem as wide as incomprehensible as the hurricane effects.

Members of the class of Katrina are aware of the upheaval in their lives: It shows itself in the morning decision of what to wear, of what potential new friends to embrace and which to eye warily” (paras. 8 and 12). With the difficulties that many students and their families faced, many wanted to go home. Therefore, some families eventually returned to New Orleans to a reformed school system that was now primarily charter (Osborne, 2020).

Charter schools have been touted as the answer to much needed change in a city where previously there was a substantial number of subpar schools (Evans et. al., 2019). Moreover, the city is often highlighted to other school districts across the country as a successful reform of school choice and state control over local schools (Strauss, 2018). Even Arne Duncan, a former U.S. Secretary of Education stated Hurricane Katrina was “the best thing that happened to the educational system in New Orleans” (Malveaux, 2010, para. 5). Several research studies applauded the changes of New Orleans Charter schools with comments and sentiments such as: “The city saw a stretch of improvement I have never seen anywhere else” (as cited by Harris in Dreilinger, 2021, para. 8), and “Orleans Parish School Board member Jimmy Fahrenholtz agrees something positive is happening” (Stahls, 2005, para. 10). Despite praises for the post-Katrina school reform, concerns remain about the disciplinary treatment of students because of it.

“Since many of the charter schools started up in New Orleans with strict rules about everything, from how students should sit at their desks to how they should walk down hallways...students who broke these rules – or acted out in other ways – got punished” (Troeh & Falk, 2017, para. 8). Although corporal punishment is banned in most states, it is frequently practiced in the South, and disproportionately on African American students (Gershoff & Font, 2016). This practice of corporal punishment began with the case of *Ingraham v. Wright* in 1977 in Dade County, Florida. This is where it was decided by the Supreme Court that school corporal punishment was constitutional and did not fall within the

confines of cruel and unusual punishment. Therefore, the decision of whether schools should use it was left to the states (Oluwale, 2022). Corporal punishment is an archaic practice in schools that is still allowed and practiced especially in the South (Gershoff & Font, 2016). Since it is a practice that is still legal in the state of Louisiana, although not practiced everywhere in the state, it was pertinent to see if this practice has been used in overhauling New Orleans public schools to a primarily charter school system. Questions about what type of punishment was meted out to these students can truly only be illuminated by observers that were present in the trenches when it happened.

Statement of the Problem

Discipline and punishment have been used in schools to deter what is categorized as problem behavior. The creation of charter schools has been touted as an answer to a myriad of problems in public schools, particularly discipline (Harris, 2015). Methods of discipline were numerous and loosely structured post-Katrina with charter schools first opening in November of 2005 when the city began to rebuild its educational infrastructure. There has been very little research conducted in New Orleans, Louisiana concerning African American teachers' perspectives and experiences who observed discipline of African American students in K-8 charter schools in New Orleans post-Katrina in contrast with pre-Katrina. Their perspective is key to understanding a viewpoint from a demographic of teachers that were left out of discussions about New Orleans charter school reforms and discipline of students. In addition, their frame of reference offered a possible divergence from the media reports, charter school advocates, and the overall all positive narrative of the New Orleans charter school reform and discipline. During the years following the transformation of the New Orleans public school education system from traditional to primarily charter system, there were loose discipline structures, non-existent discipline policies, undefined parameters

for various forms of discipline (i.e., no excuses model) and no accountability or outcry of these practices.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to uncover African American teachers' frame of reference and knowledge of occurrences of various discipline practices of African American students in K-8 charter schools post-Katrina. In addition, this study purported to investigate those teachers' view of corporal punishment and other discipline practices that were practiced in Orleans Parish Public Charter Schools. This included what types of discipline practices were used during the post-Katrina period, and the impact of having a state law in place that allowed corporal punishment but did not define its use. Lastly, the study sought to uncover any impact that teachers felt that novice teachers who were not native had on the discipline and punishment of African American students. The research that was conducted filled the gap with respect to narratives about the charter school movement in New Orleans public schools. It also offered the discounted African American teachers' perspectives and observations of an alternate side of the charter system. Lastly, it included personal narratives with respect to discipline and punishment of African American K-8 students post-Katrina from observations of teachers that had yet to be illuminated in any study to date.

Research Questions

In qualitative research the questions deal with phenomena that are hard to quantify, and therefore would best rely on inquiry that solicits narratives (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Merriam (2009) viewed interpreting the meaning that individuals create is how people decode their environment and the experiences they have in society. The chief research question that guided this study was:

What can we know about the experiences of African American veteran teachers with discipline before and after hurricane Katrina?

Definition of Key Terms

African American: “It refers to individuals who are residents of the U.S.A., usually raised here who are of African ancestry...whose ancestors...were enslaved and brought to the Americas against their will” (Mckay School of Education, BYU, n.d., para. 1).

Charter schools: “A public school that operates as a school of choice that is exempt from significant state and local regulations related to operation and management” (National Charter Resource Center, n.d., para. 1).

Corporal punishment: It refers to the deliberate use of physical pain as a tool to alter or modify a behavior. It includes an extensive array of methods that may include hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, spanking, choking, use of several objects (paddles, belts, sticks, pins), distressing body positions (such as placing in confined spaces), use of enormous amounts of exercise training, or inhibition of urine or stool elimination (Greydanus et. al., 2003).

Veteran teachers: A teacher who has taught for at least more than three years (IGI Global Publishing, 2023).

Significance of the Study

Although there have been a few studies looking at the various perspectives on discipline in schools, with respect to how discipline was practiced and observed post-Katrina in New Orleans public schools there was a large hole as to teachers’ perspectives of the discipline and punishment in New Orleans K-8 Charter schools post-Katrina. There were no studies that have looked at African American teachers in New Orleans post Katrina K-8 charter schools’ vantage point and experience of discipline practices with respect to African American students. Therefore, there is a gap within this topic existed with the perspective of African American teachers who worked in New Orleans K-8 Charter schools post-Katrina, who observed and had experiences with African American students that were subjected to

various discipline practices and punishment. The findings from this study gave voice to an obscured viewpoint of educators who were in the trenches before and after a natural disaster changed the entire infrastructure of the New Orleans public school education system.

Summary

This qualitative study explored the perspectives and lived experiences of African American teachers who were employed in New Orleans K-8 Charter schools post-Katrina with their views on discipline in schools, tools and methods used to alter or modify African American students' behavior, and their observations of what type of discipline African American students experienced. The goal of this research was to add to a limited body of knowledge of qualitative studies that included New Orleans post-Katrina K-8 Charter schools, school discipline and punishment of African American students from teachers' perspectives, and how these measures affected African American students. With the research completed by the Office of Civil Rights, inequities in school discipline practices have been highlighted within the categories of suspensions, and expulsions i.e., exclusionary discipline, as well as school arrests (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, 2021). However, there was a gaping hole of what types of punishment that African American students in K-8 Charter schools post-Katrina were subjected to from teacher perceptions that were not discussed or tracked by numbers outside of only suspension, and expulsions. The research that was reviewed in the next chapter emphasized this type of school discipline meted out to African American students in charter schools with research that offered the framework for its existence.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review was structured to provide historical background of discipline practices, recent discipline focus of gender in public schools, charter school discipline practices, historical information about New Orleans public school system pre-Katrina, charter school reform post-Katrina, discipline practices in New Orleans charter schools post-Katrina, and the theoretical framework that was the context for how discipline of students was channeled through the New Orleans Charter Schools system post-Katrina and the positionality.

Historical Background of Discipline Practices

Discipline of African American students has been a topic of vast investigation for over more than half a century. There is a wealth of national reports that have recorded the prevalence of suspensions regarding disciplinary offenses. Beginning with the Children's Defense Fund (1975) study with the data that was collected it was found that African American students were disciplined at elevated rates in comparison to Caucasian students. The data from this study also denoted that there was bias against students who received punitive zero tolerance discipline (Children's Defense Fund, 1975). In addition, this study also affirmed that minority students were subjected to the largest abuse in the use of suspensions. Other studies substantiated the findings that African American students are disciplined more than other races from recent to historical (Owens, 2022; Toro et al., 2021; Riddle et al., 2019; Costenbader et al., 1998).

Specific federal policy, recommendations, and supportive procedures on discipline practices and classroom management have not been addressed by the last five Departments of Education administrations with respect to the myriad of challenges educators encounter particularly the lack of classroom management techniques (Greenberg et al., 2014, Milner &

Tenore, 2010). The various rearrangements of how school discipline should be handled from the Regan and Bush administrations “war on drugs” continued through the Guns-Free School Act of Clinton’s administration with approval of each adoption of the Improving America’s Schools Act. These government entities permitted inequality in discipline data with protocols that focused on African American students more than other races (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008; Noltemeyer & McLoughlin, 2010; Skiba et al., 2014; Verdugo, 2022).

Some studies also reflect that African American students receive increased discipline even for similar behavioral infractions as students of other races (Ellis, 2022; Okonofua et al., 2015; Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2009). The sum of these studies serves as a confirmation that African American students receive an overwhelming proportion of discipline dispensed in schools across the nation. Okonofua et al., (2015) through the use of two separate experiments within one study uncovered an inclination in K-12 teachers, whom the majority were Caucasian female teachers in the study, to notice misbehavior patterns of African American students more than Caucasian. For this experiment, 57 female teachers were recruited with demographics of 38 Caucasian, 2 African American, 1 Asian and 16 of unknown race. The experiment that was conducted first, the researchers gave the participants disciplinary records from real office-referrals with names that were stereotypically African American (Darnell/Deshawn) or Caucasian (Greg/Jake) and each of the records of the students had incidents of insubordination and class disturbance. After reviewing the files, the participants were asked about their feelings, the punishment they felt the student should receive, and how major was the behavior of the student for the infraction.

The results of the first part of Okonofua’s et al. study (2015) reflected that after two minor behavioral incidents, based on student records that were reviewed of each student, teacher participants that were questioned had some unique beliefs. What was shown in the

responses of those teachers reflected that when a student had a stereotypical African American name the child was more likely to be recommended for more punitive discipline and believed that same child to be the troublemaker after the first behavior infraction (Okonofua et al., 2015). In contrast, none of these beliefs by the same participants that were majority Caucasian held true for the Caucasian students based on their records.

The experiment that was conducted second repeated the conditions of the first one with an added caveat. On this occasion, participants were queried if they could picture if they suspend these imaginary students in the future. Here is where a difference based on race materialized where teachers were more inclined to see themselves suspend students who had African American names like Darnell or Deshawn. The more likely the teachers believed the student was African American, it was more probable that the teachers to think of the misconduct as a pattern.

Reports such as *Breaking Schools' Rules* by the Council of State Governments (2011), offered evidence that African American students and students with disabilities were overly disciplined in Texas schools based on administrative discretion. This was a state-wide longitudinal study that was conducted that followed all seventh graders in the state of Texas for six years and fixated on the actions that resulted in students being taken from their classrooms via in-class suspensions, out-of-school suspensions or placed in Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEP) or Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Programs (JJAEP). It was found in that study that African American students specifically and students with educational disabilities were more likely to be removed from the classroom for infractions in which school administrators could take actions based on their discretion. Moreover, according to Monahan et al. (2014), suspensions and expulsions which were traditionally used for more serious infractions, were now being applied to far less intense infractions, such as disobedience, truancy, and insubordination. In addition, national statistics

reflected that schools were expanding the numbers of students they were suspending for misconduct as a practice of punitive consequences. Reflecting this belief Dunbar (2015) insisted that discipline now is unmistakably punitive instead of restorative (as cited in Potter, et al., 2017).

In another study that was conducted by Mendez & Knoff (2003), it was asserted that “the over-representation of Black males that has been cited consistently begins at the elementary level and continues through high school” (p. 38). In this study it was queried who was suspended and the reasons behind it. It involved the second largest school district in Florida, that served just under 146,000 students (approximately 95% of all students in the district), was selected with a demographic population of 23% White, 18% Black, and 3% Hispanic. The suspension data from the 1996-1997 school year was examined for all (N=142) general education schools in that one school district in central Florida. Data was collected from the district’s Management Information Systems and analyzed. It was found that Black males were more than three times as likely as Hispanic or White males to face suspension, and that Black males were disproportionately represented across all infraction types. At the middle school level, it was found that more than half of the Black male students received at least one suspension that year. This indicated that this was a problem that had beginning remnants in African American males’ younger years and continued into their high school years. This supports the accepted belief that African American males are disciplined more often in schools across grade levels.

A study conducted by Suggs (2017) looked at the data in fourteen K-12 public schools in Region II of Virginia of approximately 65,000 males of all ethnicities to discover if there were differences in suspension percentages between African American males and non-African American males. The researcher looked particularly at the suspension and expulsion data from the years 2011-2014 for all school levels – elementary, middle, and high

in Region II Virginia. It was found that there was a greater proportion of suspensions for African American males than the combination of all males of other ethnicities. This data was supported nationally by the National Center for Education Statistics (2018), when it found for the years of 2013-2014 African American students were four times more likely to receive out – of – school suspensions in contrast to their Caucasian peers and three times more likely than their Latin peers. Additionally, in a public policy brief by Peterson (2021) not only was it found that African American students experienced harsher disciplinary procedures at elevated rates in contrast to their peers in public school, but also that zero tolerance policies were also connected to escalated levels of discipline of African American students. Therefore, in general there is considerable data that suggests an inequity in the discipline of African American students historically and presently.

Recent Discipline Focus of Gender in Public Schools

Although, many studies have almost exhausted findings of the over-discipline of African American males (Blake et al. 2011; Gregory et al., 2010; Losen et al., 2010, Dinkes et al., 2007, Townsend, 2000) there is quite a limited amount of research that examines the discipline of African American females. One such culminating research was completed by Morris (2018), where she explored the often-ignored discipline of African American female students. The researcher finished a study that took nearly three years that reflected how punitive discipline practices meted out to African American female students were based on the relationships between the students and their teachers. Morris (2018) specifically recalled a nationally publicized incident that she cited where a six-year-old kindergartener named Deser'e Watson was handcuffed and arrested at her school for “having a bad tantrum in her Florida classroom” (p. 56) which happened in 2007. Another incident cited by Morris (2018) that happened in 2012 involved another six-year-old named Salecia Johnson in Georgia. She

was also handcuffed and arrested for a tantrum which was decided by school officials that included throwing books, toys, and wall hangings.

Morris (2018) asserted that the discipline practices that African American females received were based on three principal issues: “the perceived bad attitude of Black girls, zero-tolerance policies and other highly punitive school practices relying on instruments of surveillance...” (p.57). A theme that was apparent from the narratives of the African American female examples included in the book involved the multiple ways that students were disciplined based on dress, behaviors, and gender. One of the main components of her research ultimately spoke to the discipline problem amongst African American female students in schools.

Charter School Discipline

Charter schools are schools that “operate as a school of choice that is exempt from significant state and local regulations related to operation and management” (National Charter Resource Center, n.d., para. 1). These types of schools are alternatives to the traditional public school. Regarding discipline all charter schools first were required to report their discipline to the Office of Civil Rights for the data collection year of 2011-2012 (Losen et al., 2016). During that first data collection year it was found that the national average suspension rates for charter schools at the elementary and secondary level for African American students included large disparities between African American and Caucasian students, specifically a 6.6-point racial gap for elementary, and 16.4 at the secondary level (Losen et al., 2016). Also, it was found that more than five-hundred charter schools suspended African American students at a rate that was at least 10 percentage points higher than the rate for Caucasian charter school students (Losen et al., 2016). Therefore, it can be inferred that discipline at charter schools for African American students presents as a problem.

Golann (2021) conducted research at an urban charter school from 2012-2013 that had a “no-excuses approach toward education” (para. 2). The no-excuses model has been seen as both an acclaimed and debatable education reform used to boost student achievement of African American and Latino students (Golann, 2021). In Golann’s research she found that behaviors she observed such as not following directions, making unnecessary noise, putting one’s head down on the desk, being off-task, and rolling one’s eyes” yielded multiple infractions (para. 4). In fact, one student who was a fifth grader accrued two-hundred ninety-five infractions over the course of one school year. Some of the discipline practices involved a punishment called bench “in which students had to wear a special yellow shirt and could not talk to their classmates...” (para. 5). In addition, it was also found that no-excuses charter schools intentionally hired young, novice teachers rather than seasoned professionals with distinctive skills and knowledge (Golann, 2021). Bypassing the more competent teacher in favor of inexperienced ones, implied that a teacher with years of experience was not preferred over one with practically no experience (Golann 2021). Despite this notion, Eisenman et al. (2015) made a contrasting assertion that if a teacher lacks proficient classroom management skills, they will be unable to arrange the classroom setting, institute guidelines and routines, and cultivate bonds with students. These attributes are imperative to adequate discipline in a classroom setting.

Carwin (2018) wrote about both the discipline within charter schools with its problematic practices, and specifically the disproportionate discipline that African American students experienced. He referenced the disciplinary methods that took place at distinctive charter schools across the United States that included: “forcing a kindergartener to wear weighted vests up to eight hours a day, displaying the names of underperforming students on public charts in the hallway....and placing students in solitary timeout in a small, padded room” (p. 52). Carwin (2018) even referred to a practice called “reorientation” that involved

students staying in their classes but being mandated to wear distinct clothing over their school uniform as a form of chastisement. In 2016, the civil rights organization the NAACP demanded increased supervision of charter schools because of the discipline disparity of African American students (Carwin, 2018).

Across the nation the inequity of discipline practices of African American students has been documented. An example of this was recorded at a school in Fort Greene a neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York where a six-year-old African American student was suspended for not having shoes, and not having his shirt tucked in (Joseph, 2016). This ties into the theory called “broken windows” that has been implemented in many national charter school networks (Carwin, 2018). Early leaders in the charter school movement were deeply shaped by this theory, presuming if teachers focused on the small misbehaviors or rule breaking that disorder and could be eradicated (Theisen-Homer, 2020). In this theory a set of elaborate behavioral expectations are put on students for minor infractions such as “hand improperly raised, a shirt untucked, and eyes averted that invite escalating punitive measure of demerits, lost privileges, detention, suspension” (p. 54). Governed by this kind of punitive system African American students are more likely to be disciplined than their Caucasian counterparts, and characteristically disciplined for actions that their Caucasian classmates are not including arbitrary behavioral categories such as insubordination or disrespect (Losen, 2016; Davis, 2014). In contrast, African American teachers show that with respect to behavioral categories of perceived insubordination and disrespect they display compassion for students by managing the classroom, forming purposeful bonds, and showing emotion to earn a student’s respect (Delpit, 2006). This contrast in the approach to discipline between African American teachers and Caucasian ones reflect variation of both student behavior perspectives as well as connections to the students’ cultural norms.

Historical Background of New Orleans Public Schools

The New Orleans public school system pre-Katrina in Orleans parish, was reported to be the 43rd largest in the United States, and the largest in the state of Louisiana with a student enrollment of 64,920 with the overwhelming majority of students (93.5 percent) being African American (Frazier-Anderson, 2008; Sanders, 2018). Prior to Hurricane Katrina schools were extremely divided by race and income (Weixler, et al., 2017). The New Orleans public school district also had years of systemic neglect and abuse including school buildings in disrepair, excessive student exodus, and takeover of most of its 128 schools by the state (Frazier-Anderson, 2008). In fact, since its inception, racism and inequity has plagued the city, even playing a chief part in all decisions about public education in New Orleans from 1841 to today (Sanders, 2018). The city itself was the largest city in the state of Louisiana with a population of more than 460,000 people with 67.8 percent of the residents being African American (Frazier-Anderson, 2008). The Orleans Parish School District was one of the chief employers for people in the city of New Orleans with approximately 7,500 employees (Sable & Young, 2003).

Before Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans school teachers encompassed a considerable amount of African American teachers that outweighed the numbers of most urban school districts at the time. As stated by the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) in 2003-2004, African American teachers made up 15.1% of all teachers in large cities, but 72% in the city of New Orleans (Barrett & Harris, 2015). Although a large number of New Orleans public schools did not meet the state standards, many of the schools improved, with most of them meeting the annual growth plan that was outlined by the Louisiana Department of Education (Sanders et al., 2018). New Orleans “had the highest and lowest performing schools in the state of Louisiana” (Sanders, 2018, p. 42). This information paints a vivid depiction of what

the New Orleans public school system looked like and the state of the infrastructure prior to the devastation of the city by Hurricane Katrina.

Discipline practices were tracked in a limited context during this time period and hardly researched. In 2004, immediately preceding Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, the Office of Civil Rights only looked at counts and percentages of corporal punishment, out of school suspensions, and expulsions. When looking at those categories regarding elementary and middle schools in New Orleans public schools of the 66 schools examined 0% reported using corporal punishment, less than 35% of those schools reported out of school suspensions, and less than 5% with expulsions (Office of Civil Rights Data Collection, 2004). Unfortunately, following the storm of Hurricane Katrina there would be no discipline records to salvage from Orleans Parish School District administrative offices that could be used to add layers of depth to the discipline narrative pre-Katrina. This is because “the administrative offices located on the west bank of the river received extensive wind damage that eventually resulted in water damage from broken windows and leaking roofs” (Sanders, 2018, p. 10). “All educational records were lost to Katrina” (Oblack, 2020, para. 11), so officials had to begin with new records for every student. Therefore, it can be inferred that all print-based records were significantly damaged or destroyed leaving discipline records virtually non-existent with no existence of digital records at that time which is why officials had to start again with new records for students.

Charter School Reform and the New Orleans Public School System Post-Katrina

In May of 2003, the Governor Kathleen Blanco decreed Act 9 which formed the Recovery School District (RSD). It was constructed to take control and convert any school in Louisiana that did not meet the minimum criterion for four successive years, which were schools that were essentially labeled as failing (Lindquist, 2016). In August 2005, following the third deadliest hurricane in United States history, state officials were able to use the

disaster of the storm to reconstitute the entire New Orleans public school system. Countless New Orleans residents were ousted from their homes and in desperate need of resources for basic survival, despite this fact, native stakeholders were not taken into account when the massive school system overhaul happened (Sanders, 2018).

During this time, a massive portion of the city was flooded, with most of the city's public schools being either damaged or destroyed (Sanders, 2018). In fact, some people believed that "turning New Orleans all charter was a national political game that was grounded in the powers-that-be-mostly looking out for their own growth, as opposed to what was in the best interest of children" (Lawson, n.d., para.9). Over the next nine years post-Katrina RSD aggressively transformed schools into charters (Osborne, 2020). Moreover, this process took place with the facilitation of Cecil Picard (Louisiana school superintendent at the time) and support of Governor Kathleen Blanco holding a special legislative session on November 5, 2005, which passed Act 35 (Sanders, 2018). Act 35 "illegally took practically all public schools in New Orleans away from OPSB (Orleans Parish School Board) and put then under the authority of RSD, the state-run district for failing schools" (Sanders, 2018, p. 13).

Charter schools are "a public school that operates as a school of choice that are exempt from significant state and local regulations related to operation and management" (National Charter Resource Center, n.d., para. 1). Louisiana state officials gave a substantial number (107 of 128 schools) of the New Orleans public schools to the Recovery School District (RSD) during this time (Dingerson, 2007). This was largely in part due to state legislative action before and after Katrina as well as supplementary federal and state aid being meted out explicitly for the purpose of forming charter schools (Frazier-Anderson, 2008). In addition, the state demolished the New Orleans Public School system by terminating all teachers and staff, and forming a new, reconstituted system whose chief focus

was on the creation of charter schools (Sullivan & Morgan, 2010). This set the stage for the first experimental takeover of an entire school system of a major city in the country to conversion of an all-charter school system.

An important difference to note was that two neighboring school districts to New Orleans parish schools, “Plaquemines and St. Bernard school systems, both which were operated by white officials, and serve a predominantly white student population were completely decimated by the storm, yet there was no talk of taking them over” (Sanders, 2018, p. 13). Adding more incentive to this process was the \$20.9 million dollar charter school grant given to Louisiana that was announced in September 2005 by the U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings to aid and encourage charter school development in New Orleans (Sullivan & Morgan, 2010, Frazier-Anderson, 2008). In contrast, the federal government proposed no equivalent funding for the recreation of traditional and neighborhood schools in Orleans parish (Dingerson, 2007).

In October of 2005, a testament to a lack of input of stakeholders was reflected when Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco waived state laws that mandated faculty and parent approval for the conversion of a traditional public school to a charter one when most of the city’s families were scattered all over the country (Sullivan & Morgan, 2010). In fact, the student population plummeted from pre-Katrina enrollment of 62,655 to a sparse 11,000 students (Clark, 2006). Moreover, by 2019, the last of the traditional school entity was transformed into a charter system, making it a totality of 100 percent of New Orleans public school students attending charters (Osborne, 2020).

Another layer of the charter school reform and the New Orleans Public School system post-Katrina was the firing of the veteran teachers shortly after Hurricane Katrina. Thousands of teachers were “summarily dismissed” when the Louisiana legislature sought to hand over all but a few (107 out of 128) of the city’s schools to the Recovery School District (RSD)

(Felton, 2017, para. 1). “Following the mass firing there was an influx of young, white, inexperienced teachers, many of them from teacher placement programs such as Teach for America and the New Teacher Project” (Kotch, 2015, para. 11). This decision changed the infrastructure of how the city’s schools were organized with New Orleans becoming a haven for new teachers after the destruction of Hurricane Katrina.

Veteran teachers in the city before Katrina “had an average of 15 years classroom experience...now the majority have less than 5 years” (Felton, 2017, para. 3). There was a unique entity of teachers that replaced the mostly African American veteran teachers post-Katrina, and that replacement included “teachers that were paid less, had less experience, and were more likely to be white and from out of state” (Felton, 2017, para. 5). This change is important because “A 2005 study by Swarthmore researcher Thomas S. Dee found that teachers of a different race than a student were significantly likely to evaluate that student as disruptive, inattentive...” Dee’s work (as cited in Kimmett, 2015, para.47). Adding to the breadth of literature on inadequate pedagogic foundation and race other more recent research also echo’s Swarthmore’s study as teachers of a different race that student evaluated as more disruptive included Redding, (2019), and Starz, (2016). Therefore, there is a considerable gap as to African American veteran teachers’ perceptions of the charter school system with respect to the reform, discipline, and novice teachers in charter schools post-Katrina.

In the summer of 2006, many displaced families returned to the city of New Orleans with plans of enrolling their children in school for the fall of the school year. However, parents had to navigate a complicated educational terrain to register their children for school (Dingerson, 2007). There were no longer any neighborhood schools that children could attend, and no administrative oversight to safeguard that schools were opening in the actual places where families were returning. With this caveat parents really did not have the choice

that many advocates for charter schools often mention as there were now no alternatives to charter schools for parents to select.

Adding to the ambiguity of the charter school reform post-Katrina was the categorization of two main types of charter school models – selective admission and no-excuses charter school models. With this distinction, the charter school movement in New Orleans created vast disparities. An example of this occurred on September 15th of 2005 when there was a board meeting in Baton Rouge by the Orleans Parish School Board that approved a charter application by Lusher an existing K-5 public school that largely served students that were children of professors at Tulane University (Dingerson, 2006). This was a school that was located in the city’s affluent Garden District. Less than one month after the devastation of an entire school system and a city, somehow the line of demarcation with respect to race and class cut swiftly with a charter application approved before the water of Hurricane Katrina had receded in the city. The city was in still under post-Katrina flood waters and there were plans and meetings that took place such as the September 15th, 2005, meeting in Baton Rouge where the Orleans Parish School Board approved a charter application without parents or parish citizen participation.

Adding insult to injury on October 28th, 2005, the Orleans Parish School Board met again granting the establishment of a selective admissions charter school, Lusher Middle and High School, extending the school to 12th grade and giving precedence enrollment to the children of returning faculty members of Tulane University (Dingerson, 2007). As part of the expansion Orleans Parish School Board agreed to turn over Alcee Fortier, which was a virtually all Black high school to Lusher to expand its K-12 charter to two campuses. The families that attended Fortier mostly were not present in the city and were not aware that their school was handed over to Lusher and would become a selective admissions school (Dingerson, 2006). Selective admission charter schools are schools that “maintain criteria for

admission/or retention, based on academic and other qualifications (often grades/or standardized test scores)” (Di Carlo, 2012, para. 1).

No-excuses charter models were also created in the charter school movement post-Katrina with the main objective goal of a no-excuse approach with respect to discipline. This approach is often described as “militaristic” (Golann, 2015, p. 105) with clear and distinct expectations for student behavior, with children’s behaviors both in and out of the classroom settings methodically controlled by extensive rules including the way a student walked, talked, and moved (Dishon & Goodman, 2017). This is evident based on the following statement:

School conditions that are in place at No-excuses charter would have a hard time being implemented at white, suburban, affluent schools simply because parents and administrators would not allow it. In those schools it is understood that the No excuses model borders on child abuse and negatively impacts the morale of children. Somehow, though, these same conditions are good enough, and even said to be beneficial for Black children. (Pajibo, 2022, p. 30)

Furthermore, at No-excuses charter schools, students are controlled rather than educated (Sondel & Boselovic, 2014). An example of this type of charter school model was found at KIPP where an African American teacher who was employed at this charter institution in New Orleans stated that he witnessed “the majority of white teachers and administrators strip Black students of their bodily autonomy” (James-Gallaway, 2022, p. 59). One of the tactics used in no-excuses charter models to control behavior is called MVP. This approach is a behavior management strategy that was in Lee Canter’s No-Nonsense Nurturer Model whereby teachers consistently supervise student behavior “repeating commands meant to control how students move, speak, think, and even learn to ensure 100% compliance 100% of the time” (James-Gallaway, 2022, Goodman, 2013, p. 90). It is here in No-excuses charter

schools that there is a requirement for complete conformity in all aspects of behavior with no consideration for any outward incidents or inward conflict that may impede a student from 100% compliance. It is this type of conformity that served as an impetus for charter school discipline practices.

Discipline Practices in New Orleans Charter Schools Post-Katrina

The New Orleans Charter School system had two dichotomies of discipline following the devastation to the system after Hurricane Katrina: a controlled and severely restricted discipline model or a loosely structured discipline model. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina many charter schools were established with stringent rules about everything – from how students should be seated at their desks to how they traveled down the hallways (Troeh et al., 2017). Unfortunately, students who did not abide by these rules or displayed behaviors that were deemed unacceptable were punished (Troeh et al., 2017). New Orleans became “the proving ground to show that charter schools work, and New Orleans children are the means by which the proof is to be delivered” (Troeh, et al., 2017, para. 2). Interestingly enough, what was glossed over was the trauma and stress of the descendants of the children of Hurricane Katrina. People that were children and teens during Katrina, had their own children, and they were present in these charter schools that were constructed post-Katrina. “New Orleans children show symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder at more than three times the national average, at rates more often found among combat veterans” (Troeh et al., 2017, para. 13). With stressors attributed to the trauma from the impact of Hurricane Katrina, students’ behavioral displays led to subsequent negative discipline practices. There is a large gap between the divide of the well-being needs of students and teachers with respect to school discipline practices.

The second dichotomy of the New Orleans Charter School system post-Katrina was the loosely structured discipline model. While statistics such as large numbers of suspensions

and expulsions often are highlighted when discipline practices are discussed as part of the reform seen in New Orleans Charter Schools Post-Katrina, what was not mentioned or focused on was the other discipline practices that involve physical punishment. This was because schools fail to track data concerning the number of students who are subject to abusive security – such as handcuffing, shackling, or physical assaults... (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2010). This speaks to a noticeable absence of qualitative research that looked at these acts specifically and those loose structures of discipline. With distinct differences in discipline practices in New Orleans Charter Schools post-Katrina there existed a need to bring the lens of teachers who were privy to such practices to the forefront.

Theoretical Framework and Positionality

Understanding the changes and discipline differences that have been carried out in the New Orleans Public School system post-Katrina can be attributed to Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory which has evolved into the bioecological model in which the layers of discipline are embedded. Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory is one of the most recognized with regard to the impact of social environments on human development. It is described as intricate layers of an environment with each having an impact of a child's development (Chen & Tomes, 2005). It includes five systems which are: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and the chronosystem. However, what will be used specifically as the theoretical framework with regard to discipline will be Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model that looks at a child's world with a number of layers.

The first part of the system that was connected to understanding the layers of a child's environment is the macrosystem, which involves the larger social, cultural context that a child is found in. In this context the cultural context of the city of New Orleans and the societal and cultural norms and values that children subscribe to can affect their behaviors as well as what is seen as appropriate and inappropriate in schools. In this case the child, the

school, and teachers and their interaction can influence the child and may cause behaviors to be seen in a positive or negative light depending on the vantage point of the individual carrying out discipline with respect to a child. This speaks to how a child can be impacted by hidden or unconscious bias in teachers, and schools.

Another part of the system of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory is the chronosystem. It specifically refers to shifts and transitions that happen in a child's life with respect to timing (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). As it pertained to this study, the researcher looked at how the post-Katrina experiences had an impact on the children, and how it may have indirectly affected their behaviors as well as the adults who were responsible for them in the school system. This transitory movement was based on the catastrophic event of Hurricane Katrina and what children had adapted and/or were subjected to as they navigated to and from the city, which included how they travelled in the city, and moved to get back to the city of New Orleans to attend school there. Also, this includes the trauma and behaviors that resulted as effects from that transitory period.

Lastly, one of the most important systems as it applied to discipline is the microsystem. This is the system that a child had the most direct contact with that included people – parent and family members, institutions – schools which encompassed teachers, and services that an individual directly relates to in the immediate environment (IGL Global Publishing, n.d.). This is also the level where implicit bias is apparent. In relation to schools, it is implicit bias which explains a core reason that African American students are severely and more habitually disciplined (Ramey, 2015 as cited in Sevon, 2022).

Another theory that was used for this study to explain the discipline practices that have been used in New Orleans charter schools post-Katrina is the broken windows theory. This theory was a criminology theory based on the inspiration of a police administrator from Boston who turned around police departments and eventually used broken windows theory to

do the same in New York City in the late 1980's where crime and lawlessness were rampant (Kelln, 2019). In 1982 the theory was first presented by George Kelling and James Wilson that posited "if a dilapidated building has a few broken windows, it's easy to break a few more. Also, repairing windows soon after they break prevents the manifestation of subsequent illegal behaviors" (Kelln, 2019, para.10). Essentially, this theory affirms that criminal actions are the result of a chaotic environment, and that seeing a building with broken windows communicates implied approval of crime (Hood, 2016). An author by the name of Malcolm Gladwell (2002), further explained this theory in his book *Tipping Point* when he described the broken windows theory based on crime reduction. He believed by cleaning up the streets, people would be less motivated to participate in criminal acts.

In education, the Broken Windows theory when it is practiced in schools becomes the no-excuses discipline approach (Davis, 2014). It has been applied to schools' approach to classroom management and discipline (Homer, 2020; Davis, 2014). The policing theory which stemmed from the broken windows theory in the late 1980's which promoted the stop-and-frisk responses from law enforcement "now underpins the disciplinary system of the education reform movement" (Davis, 2014, para. 4). A number of charter school networks subscribe to the broken windows theory of school discipline specifically from The Achievement First network located in the states of Connecticut, New York, and Rhode Island, Uncommon Schools in Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York, Noble Schools in Chicago, KIPP charter schools across the nation and especially in New Orleans (Davis, 2014). Teacher training programs such as Teach for America promote the no-excuses discipline approach to countless novice teachers (Davis, 2014). According to Davis (2014) he stated that "not only does broken windows discipline permeate the charter movement, it's standard operating procedure in the country's largest teacher pipeline" (para. 15). This standard operating procedure gave rise to control of students' bodies in New Orleans charter

schools. A former dean of a no-excuses charter school in New Orleans wrote an essay where he reflected on how the rules and guidelines he imposed were “stymying creativity, culture and student voice, not to mention students’ bodies” (Green, 2016 para. 48). This gives credibility to the narrative that charter schools are a conduit for the control of children bodies, not necessarily the cultivation of their minds.

The lens of Critical Race Theory served as a guide for the researcher of cultural consciousness as well as positionality in this educational research. This is a theory created by Derrick Bell in the 1970’s who was a law professor at NYU, known as the godfather of the theory along with others Richard Delgado and Kimberle’ Crenshaw (Sawchuk, 2021). It was created in response to the failure of Critical Legal Studies in adequately addressing race and racism in U.S Jurisprudence. The principal idea behind it is that “race is a social construct, and that racism is not merely the product of individual bias or prejudice, but also something embedded in legal systems and policies” (Sawchuck, 2021, para. 5). In education, it was applied first and written about in an article by Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate (Cook & Dixon, 2013). Thus, Critical Race Theory in education looks to explain the stability of racism across education. In fact, there is a more pointed definition with the following:

Critical race studies in education could be defined as a critique of racism as a system of oppression and exploitation that explores the historic and contemporary constructions and manifestations of race in society with particular attention to how these issues are manifested in schools. (Lynn & Parker, 2006, p. 282)

In education, Critical Race Theory is used in K-12 education to detect how race and racism is exhibited in the school setting. It is because “people in society make up the education system, and thus education research and practice are also infiltrated with race and racism” (Milner, 2007, p. 391). In this study, my positionality comes from a Critical Race

Theory lens as context for the manner in which I research this topic, as well as afford unique insights that will be brought into this research process.

Summary

As stated previously in Chapter two, all positive narratives about the charter school movement in the New Orleans public school system was only a one-sided viewpoint with no contrast from individuals that were there physically and within the school structure when it happened. The literature explored and revealed the historical background about the New Orleans school system pre-Katrina, the charter school reform post-Katrina and the discipline practices that are common-place in post-Katrina charter schools. In addition, the Critical Race Theory lens used was sought to explain and provide a counter-narrative that African American teachers used to reflect on their experiences to challenge the numerous accounts and reports of the all-positive narrative with respect to charter schools in New Orleans and their discipline practices. Research in Chapter two presented assisted with solidifying the argument for the lack of African American educators' frame of reference with respect to the discipline and the charter schools reform movement as they observed it. It is because of this forgotten about demographic of individuals that there was a need to bring their voices to the forefront.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative narrative research design was used to explore perspectives and experiences of African American teachers' and their beliefs and perceptions of discipline of African American students in charter schools in New Orleans charter schools post-Katrina. This study sought to understand the unique frame of reference these educators offered with the following question:

What can we know about the experiences of African American veteran teachers with discipline before and after hurricane Katrina?

Qualitative Research Tradition

The methodological theoretical research tradition that was used for this study was narrative inquiry. Narrative research involves an inquisition where researchers describe the individual lives of people, gather information and recount stories about their lives, and record the narratives of their individual experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Since my research is looking for experiences, narrative was the best option to obtain access to a person's intimate world to express their individual experiences. Moreover, personal narratives are an invaluable and practical way to study the experiences of humans in a comprehensive manner, distinct from any other data collection method (Chase, 2008 as cited by Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). According to Cresswell (2012) narrative researchers focus on the experiences of one or more individuals. This study focused on the words, experiences, and perceptions of teachers to examine teachers' vantage point of discipline practices, policies, and definitions of discipline. Therefore, data collection of five individual participants was based on audio recorded and face-to-face zoom interviews as well as audio-recorded telephone interviews based on the ease and location of the participants. The descriptions of the school encounters with respect to

the discipline and punishment of African American students, and through the frame of reference of each participant who was a teacher employed by a New Orleans K-8 Charter school post-Katrina was collected from the participants.

Context of the Study

At the time of this study both the infrastructure and demographics of teachers in New Orleans public schools had changed post-Katrina with the introduction of charter schools as a massive overhaul of the previous system. Pre-Katrina in 2005, New Orleans public schools had a total of 124 public schools with 117 under the Orleans Parish School Board (including one charter), 5 run by the Recovery School District, and two schools that were under independent charters under the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Dreilinger, 2014). Also significant during this time is that according to the U.S. Census Bureau for the year 2000 the New Orleans public school population was 96.1% African American (Cook, 2018). The New Orleans public school teaching staff pre-Katrina was 71% African American according to Tulane University's Education Research Alliance for New Orleans (as cited by Carr, 2015).

Role of the Researcher

In the spirit of self-reflexivity, I acknowledged my standpoint as an African American woman, and native New Orleanian, who is also an educator. I am an individual who both attended and graduated from Orleans parish public schools. I lived and was educated in the same public school system that had been deemed as failing and filled with dilapidated school buildings. I have been educated by some of those same African American teachers that were subjected to the massive firing in favor of the charter school movement post-Katrina. Moreover, despite the negative narrative about New Orleans public schools in the media, I have been able to go on to a successful educational career stemming from that same educational foundation. The connection between myself and

participants was that we had the commonality of being African American and being educators. This afforded me a certain cultural sensitivity with the participants as they were more likely not to view the process as invasive because of the commonality shared. Also, another connection was that I was educated in the New Orleans public school system, and these individuals were educators who taught in the New Orleans public school system and who were also educated in New Orleans public schools. Any familiarity between participants and I was through a common associate that introduced me or that I knew personally as an educator in the city. Therefore, I had a vested interest in uncovering perspectives from a population of educators who have been silenced and given little voice to their viewpoints in reference to what transpired within the Orleans parish charter schools post-Katrina and to overcome potential bias when I had the participants review the themes that were uncovered.

As the researcher of this study, I was responsible for the collection of data, the codification of the information, and its ultimate analysis. In addition, I sought to conduct my interviews in a manner that allowed for both inquiry and the recording of data in the way it was recounted to me. Each participant was informed in advance via e-mail or phone of comparable research questions before the actual interview so that each individual was acquainted with the type of questions I proposed to ask them. As a researcher, I intended to remain as neutral and unbiased as possible utilizing bracketing. This is an approach in phenomenological inquiry whereby the researcher puts aside any beliefs or opinions about the phenomenon that is being researched or what is known about the topic before and during the phenomenological study (Carpenter, 2007 as cited by Chan et al., 2013).

I had a bracketing meeting with a person who had experience in conducting qualitative research. I selected this individual because they were not a part of my research

or the topics of discipline from the veteran African American teachers in Orleans parish schools and charter schools. The meeting was beneficial with ensuring that the questions that I would use could not be answered with yes or no responses without participants expanding on their answers. However, what was similar to the bracketing process in a phenomenological study is called narrative reflexivity. This process of personal reflexivity was achieved through a journal that allowed me to put thoughts, and biases that I had and think about that information. Some of the positions that I examined in that journal prior to data collection involved my own positionality as an African American educator, who had worked with primarily African American students both in Houston and New Orleans. Additional positions I examined included: my rationale for engaging in this research, my own beliefs and inclinations about discipline, culture and race, and possible topics of disagreement that may arise throughout the research study.

I wrote notes in my journal during the research process. One of the entries I made was after I finished a bracketing meeting. The material that I ruminated over after completing my bracketing meeting included the way that a few of my questions were written. Notably, I thought about not only the type of questions I would ask, and how being a native New Orleanian may impact the way that I communicate with other native New Orleans educators. Therefore, it was important that I use the professional context during the interviews and not code switch (alter my language) into the natural dialect and familiarity that people speak with who are from New Orleans. In this setting, I changed between a form of New Orleans dialect or vernacular and standard English during the interviews.

After reviewing my recordings, I was able to be mindful of terms and expressions that was evocative to me. For example, during one of the interviews one African American veteran teacher participant noted how “we knew what some of children were

up against emotionally and mentally on a daily basis versus what the new to the city teachers could grasp”. As a native New Orleanian who is also an educator, it was difficult to hear that there were teachers who did not understand or could not empathize the various circumstances that students faced daily post-Katrina. Reflecting in my journal gave me a safe outlet to explore those feelings from the taxing emotional discussion in on paper. I was interested in the experiences that the participants had based on the information that they provided. Every participant was encouraged to speak freely about the experiences that were had without filters.

If there were any biases that materialized during this study, I noted them. However, I made a concerted effort to subdue any that happened. Due to the common cultural relatability of being an African American, a special education teacher, and native to the city it may have influenced how the participants and I engaged with me being the researcher and possibly shaped the interview process differently. My ultimate goal was to safeguard the accuracy of stories and information from the participants so that the essence of their lived experiences was documented with as much accuracy as possible. This was achieved through the audiotaping and transcription of the interview with participant review to clarify anything that after reading their transcription they felt needed to be addressed or explained further.

Criteria for Selection of Participants

The researcher used purposive sampling to select participants from the African American teachers’ population who were employed in New Orleans K-8 Charter schools post-Katrina and who worked in New Orleans public school pre-Katrina. My goal for this study was to have a total of five to six participants with at least one male (because this will be representative of the proportion of the gender demographic of the African American teaching force in pre-Katrina New Orleans public school). The specific

strategy that was employed was called criterion sampling whereby the choice of a sample was based on some type of predetermined requirements (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). This type of sampling helps the researcher focus and investigate a particularly narrow group or basis, which will ultimately understand the significance for it. Each of the participants met the following criteria: (a) African American male or female who was a certified teacher at least 35 years of age or older in 2005 with at least 5 or more years of experience, (b) employed by a K-8 Charter school post-Katrina, (c) employed by a New Orleans public school pre-Katrina, (d) able to participate in an interviewing process via face to face, zoom or phone (for two 45 minute maximum for initial and follow-up interviews combined). I only considered participants that met all criteria for this study.

Data Collection

The research design used for this study was a qualitative narrative approach. It was utilized to explore the way different people may see and experience a life event differently with the data primarily being collected through in-depth interviews. These interviews were scheduled for a total of 75-90 minutes maximum for initial and follow-up interviews combined. They were conducted either by face-to-face zoom, or via telephone interviews as the chief method of collection. The participants were encouraged to articulate their viewpoint without feeling restricted and in their own vernacular to assist with a more vibrant dialogue. Prior to starting actual data collection, the researcher obtained approval from the University of Houston-Clear Lake's Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS). Following that, participants were contacted via e-mail and phone with an introduction with information regarding the purpose of the study and the process in which interview will be conducted, included was an informed consent form, as well as any information regarding the time commitment to participate in the research. In addition, any information regarding benefits and risks was outlined with

being a participant in this study. Lastly, the researcher ensured that the participants of this study had confidentiality of any personal identifiable information.

Johnson et al., (2012) stated that an effective way to extract information from participants is to have each one recount a specific experience that he or she had and think about it carefully and then tell it to the researcher. To execute this design participants were selected for one-on-one interviews and asked semi structured open-ended questions connected to their knowledge and encounters with discipline and punishment of African American students while being employed in K-8 charter schools post-Katrina. The participants were asked to discuss any experiences they had regarding observations and perceptions of discipline and punishment of African American students in the Orleans parish K-8 charter schools post-Katrina and in Orleans parish public schools pre-Katrina. Therefore, this allowed them to communicate any thoughts that lent itself to themes connected to those occurrences.

Data Analysis

The researcher first had participants tell stories as it applied from the questions that were posed about their individual experiences. Then the researcher used a method titled “Restorying” which is the process in which the researcher collects stories, dissects them for any critical elements, and then rewrites the story to put it in a chronological sequence (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). Next the researcher used an inductive data analysis method to locate patterns of similarities or themes that may exist among the information that the participants give. The data will then be processed and codified into categories for grouping. The information will then be assigned codes to conclude its significance to the research study. The identification of any themes that were found offered the intricacy of a story and added a level of breadth to the understanding of an individual’s experiences. Any themes were included in the retelling of the individual

experiences of the participants or presented as a separate set of information from the retelling. In addition, through the process of deconstruction, interpretation, and reconstruction the researcher utilized those processes to complete interpretive analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This process only began after the interviews were transcribed via Rev.com, a professional online transcription service, and the interviews were carefully confirmed by the audio recordings. Deconstruction was completed through decomposing the data that I carefully reviewed to identify any patterns and shared characteristics that emerged during the sessions. Next, interpretation allowed the researcher to figure out and understand any data that has been coded. Lastly, reconstruction was used to restructure and reframe any notable themes in a way that highlighted any associations and insights that emanated from the interpretation phase. Furthermore, questions were queried that spoke to how and why the events or observations of events shaped the lived experience of the participants. As the researcher I have used both a password protected file and password protected laptop to store, research, and transfer any data electronically that was used for this study. Only the researcher and her committee had access to the data. The data will be kept for a total of three years in an encrypted file electronically on my locked password protected laptop since the research has been completed.

Evidence of Quality

This research study has safeguarded the accuracy and trustworthiness of the conclusions through the utilization of measures that promoted both descriptive validity and dependability while it enhanced the rigor and quality of the study. According to Hayashi et. al., (2019) descriptive validity is when the researcher does not enhance or alter the data, circumstances, and specifics that are conveyed and those that were observed or listened to. The measures used were member checks also known as

respondent validation, researcher's position, and rich, thick, descriptions. Member checks which are also known as respondent validation is a method whereby the interview transcript or debriefing process in which the analysis results are viewed by the participants for agreement (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As it pertains to this study the researcher had a follow-up interview to debrief the participants on what was found and allowed the participants to offer any clarification to anything they said or wished to alter based on my interpretation of their statements.

The second measure that assisted in promoting descriptive validity and dependability was the researcher's position. The researcher's position is also known as reflexivity, which is how the researcher "affects and is affected by the research process" (Probst & Berenson, 2014, as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 249). With respect to this study this process occurred through the careful undertaking of asking myself pointed questions such as "What did I know about this information that I gathered?" and "How did I know what I knew?" In addition, notes were made about comments that participants made in the margins, and my own personal thoughts that I had during the interviews, as well as I continually revised my statements of subjectivity which assisted with addressing the researcher's position for this study. Lastly, rich, thick descriptions assisted with descriptive validity by offering enough description to offer context for the study so that the readers will be able to decide the range that their circumstances are identical to the research context, and therefore if the results can be transferred (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study it was accounted for through ensuring the interviews yielded detailed accounts of what the participants experienced and/or observed in as much detail as possible. This will also allow individuals that read the research to determine the relevance of the findings to other similar contexts or environments.

Data Representation

The findings of this study were represented in a narrative form first by presenting the research question and secondly by the themes found from the research. This part of the research began by reminding the readers of the main research question. Rich details were provided from interviews with participants with in-depth quotes given to explain the themes that were pinpointed. The Bubble Map was used to present any the emerging themes from the participants' narratives. In addition, the voices of the participants' experiences were specifically represented by themes via Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) which is an explanatory presentation of qualitative data (Anderson, 2007). This took place after the researcher reviewed the data and clustered from the transcripts a list of common themes that gave representation to the community of voices across participants.

Summary

In this chapter the justification for using a narrative research design for this study has been outlined, as well as any details and procedures for which this type of research is grounded in. Various features of the research design have been discussed including IRB approval, participant selection, and any data collection procedures used. An account of the raw data will be included from the transcribed interviews, as well as the detailed process of data analysis and interpretation of the information. Lastly, the accuracy and trustworthiness of the findings was discussed including the three measures with respect to validity and reliability.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the collected data from the interviews completed for this qualitative narrative study. The purpose of this qualitative narrative research was to examine African American veteran teachers' beliefs and perceptions of discipline of African American students in K-8 charter schools in New Orleans post-Katrina through their own stories. The qualitative data acquired from the five teacher interviews were used to construct critical narratives. This qualitative study utilized African American veteran teachers' voices to get their perspectives on what they observed in schools regarding students' behaviors and resulting discipline practices. The study's guiding research question was, "What can we know about the experiences of African American veteran teachers with discipline before and after hurricane Katrina?" During the sessions, each individual participant responded to interview questions (see Appendix B), regarding how participants in this study perceived discipline and their beliefs on discipline in pre-Katrina Orleans parish schools and post-Katrina K-8 Charter schools. The information from the participants was generated from semi-instructed zoom and phone interviews with follow up interviews to check for accuracy. The findings of this research provided insightful themes that were frequent throughout the interviews with respect to teachers' perceptions of discipline, practices, and behaviors that were observed in Orleans parish post-Katrina K-8 charter schools.

Narratives of Participants

The participants in this study involved five African American veteran teachers that were all employed in the city of New Orleans in Orleans Parish public schools as teachers pre-Katrina, as well as worked as teachers at some point in the K-8 charter schools in New Orleans post-Katrina. The particular schools in which they worked

spanned across the city of New Orleans, however since each participant were representatives of teachers that worked in the Orleans parish K-8 charter schools post-Katrina, their narratives may reaffirm universal practices and imperfections in the discipline practices of the various charter school organizations. However, their perspectives emphasized their firsthand experiences regarding specific school structures, and complications of practice at their schools as related to the subject of this study. Table 1 contains information in reference to each of the participants that are a part of this study. The aim of the table is to present a framework, to be utilized as a guidepost when perusing their critical narratives. Every participant identified as African American and had varying years of classroom teaching experience. Lastly, all worked in schools where the student population was primarily African American. Pseudonyms were used for the five teachers chosen for this study to protect their identity and follow guidelines with respect to ethical research. The names are as follows: Denise, Laura, Melissa, Tamara, and Tyson. Themes were created by employing an open coding approach with any research bias bracketed.

The use of semi-structured interviews was the structure employed to collect participants' experiences and subsequently complete narrative analysis. This study fulfilled the intention of this research because it supplied a voice to African American veteran teachers who worked in Orleans parish schools pre-Katrina and Orleans parish K-8 charter schools post-Katrina. The narrative structure provided the researcher with the opportunity to collect their experiences through semi-structured open-ended interviews. Table 1 highlights the participants' pseudonyms, race, gender, years of experience including how many in Orleans parish (the public-school systems and individual charter schools in Orleans combined), and age at the study.

Table 1:
Participant Profiles

Teacher	Race/ethnicity	Gender	Years of experience	Age
Denise	Af-American	Female	32 (29 in Orleans)	57
Laura	Af-American	Female	26 (17 in Orleans)	61
Melissa	Af-American	Female	25 (22 in Orleans)	62
Tamara	Af-American	Female	27 (20 in Orleans)	58
Tyson	Af-American	Male	38 (35 in Orleans)	72

Denise

Denise was a 57-year-old native New Orleans veteran educator who still worked in Orleans parish as a classroom teacher in a post-Katrina K-8 charter school and has been in education for over 32 years. Her experience included Language Arts and Reading at the lower elementary level. She also taught English at the middle school level when the schools first opened again in large numbers post-Katrina in Orleans parish schools at a charter school.

Laura

Laura was a 61-year-old semi-retired New Orleans native veteran Orleans parish classroom educator who now works as an adjunct professor at one of the universities in Louisiana. She taught pre-Katrina at the middle school level in Orleans Parish and post-Katrina in a charter school as an eighth-grade teacher with her classroom teaching experience spanning 26 years.

Melissa

Melissa was 62-year-old native New Orleans veteran teacher who worked in education for 25 years at the time of this study. All the teaching experience she had was at the elementary level, in Orleans parish pre-Katrina and post-Katrina teaching experience was mixed with lower grades, and lower-level middle school. The school site where she had most of her experience pre-Katrina was located in Uptown New Orleans with an African American population where she taught all subjects and later moved on to middle school teaching social studies and science.

Tamara

Tamara was a 58-year-old veteran teacher who was raised in the surrounding areas of New Orleans and is still currently active in administration in a charter school system in New Orleans. She began her teaching career in Orleans parish at the age 31 and has over 27 years in education at the high school level where she spent most of her pre-Katrina career at a school located in mid-city New Orleans. In post-Katrina she taught in a charter school for four years at the middle school level before moving into an administrative role.

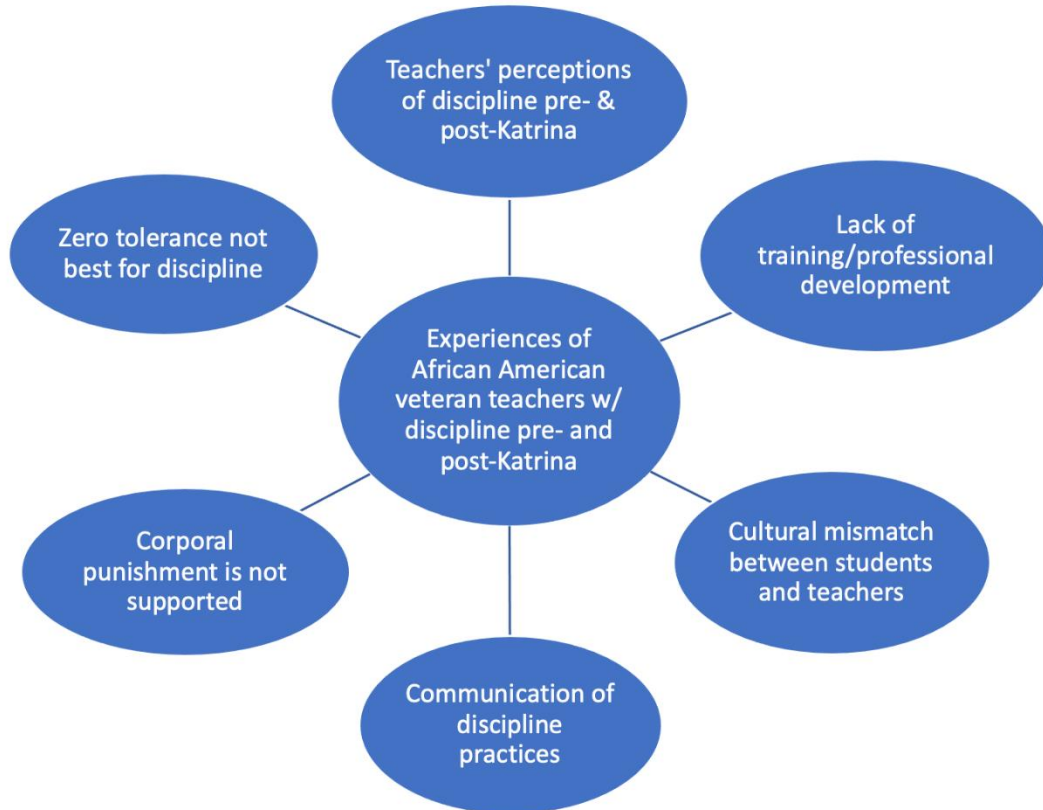
Tyson

Tyson was a retired 72-year-old native New Orleanian veteran educator who still substitutes in schools from time to time. He began his teaching career in the Orleans parish public school as a math teacher at a local middle school located in the Gentilly area of New Orleans. He taught math his entire teaching career of 38 years. He only did a short stint of 2 years in two different post-Katrina charter schools at the middle school level following hurricane Katrina before leaving the city.

Based on the interviews of the five African American teachers, and the reviewing of the transcripts the following themes materialized from the qualitative data analysis: (1) The teachers believed that the pre-Katrina school discipline was more streamlined depending on the type of school vs post-Katrina discipline practices were a mixed bag in charter schools, (2) Teachers believed that lack of training/professional development exacerbated the discipline problems in post-Katrina charter schools, (3) Teachers believed that there was a cultural mismatch between the students and teachers, and (4) Teachers believed that the communication of discipline practices were loosely structured post-Katrina. These themes are highlighted in Figure 1.

Figure 1:

Emergent Themes from the Veteran African American Teachers



The following segment of this chapter supplies the findings from the semi-structured interviews. It is structured based on the shared themes that surfaced from the participants interviews. The objective of this format is to encompass all significant items and frame of references pertaining to the common themes that emerged from the discussions. As several points stemmed from the interviews, there were likely variations in participant connections with the subject matter. That is, each participant might not have had direct experiences with every topic talked about. Consequently, they perhaps

chose not to disclose their viewpoint on the topic under discussion. Similarly, some participants had strong feelings, or perspectives about certain topics that arose contrary to others. As a result, their voice may seem to monopolize a specific theme. For that reason, this section will not contain the perspectives of every participant beneath every theme. Ultimately, the chief intention of this section is to supply the audience with an impression of the naturally occurring conversations that pick up the important aspects. Therefore, the researcher endeavors to give in a singular layout for themes, perspectives and counter narratives answering the research question “What can we know about the experiences of African American veteran teachers with discipline before and after hurricane Katrina?”

The data analysis spawned several themes that were crucial to the main research question that emanated from this research. The experiences and observations of the veteran African American teacher participants were compatible with only limited conflicting examples. The themes that emerged were as follows: Teacher’s perceptions of school discipline practices pre and post-Katrina, lack of training/professional development exacerbated discipline problems, cultural mismatch between students and teachers, communication of discipline practiced were loosely structured, teachers did not support corporal punishment, and zero tolerance was not the best way to discipline.

Teachers’ Perceptions of School Discipline Practices Pre- and Post-Katrina

The experiences of veteran African American teachers with respect to school discipline practices are reflected in the expressions of their thoughts and opinions. Teachers believed that the school discipline practices were more streamlined in the Orleans parish schools pre-Katrina. Yet, post-Katrina veteran African American teachers saw the discipline practices as a mixed bag. According to a few of the teacher participants, the standard practice for students if they were having a minor behavior infraction was to either send the student to a neighboring teacher or deal with them based

on their classroom management practices. As it relates to post-Katrina schools, the teacher participants also felt the type of discipline that took place depended on whether the school was a title one or magnet school. Magnet schools tended to have discipline practices that were no nonsense because they selected their students via admission tests, so they tended not to need harsh discipline practices. This was opposite to the neighborhood schools that had to take any kid that was zoned to the school based on where they resided. The teachers believed that because neighborhood schools were not allowed to select the student they enrolled, they had more discipline problems. When asked about personal experiences or observations of school discipline practices pre-Katrina, Tyson expressed ambivalence about what he experienced. Tyson specifically shared this information:

In comparing the title one middle school [a neighborhood school] I worked in pre-Katrina there were a lot of fights and a lot of disrespecting teachers and stuff and there was no concerted effort to do anything about discipline on a massive scale. In fact, at that school I was called MF so much I jokingly called my mother and asked her did she name me Tyson or MF? It was the regular norm, so it was like common practice – hey it’s going to be somebody or a couple of somebods [*sic*] that are going to act a fool, so you just learned to deal with it. Some of us had decent students so it [discipline] did not require more than basic classroom rules. However, students with more challenging behaviors like fighting or throwing things like chairs or books when they were angry were handled by the administration through suspensions and expulsions if need be. Teachers were the ones in pre-Katrina schools that handled most of the discipline at the classroom level unless it was extreme or involved drugs.

Tamara further substantiated some of these beliefs by stating the following:

I would say pre-Katrina only maybe 10% of my students had ever been suspended for discipline infractions. I think it mostly had to do with the fact I worked at a magnet school that cherry-picked its students and so few students who came were discipline problems. The discipline problems that were at my school were mostly minimal which included things like chewing gum in class or being tardy to class after the tardy bell rang. Most of us gave out detentions at lunch or after school for these frequent, but minor behavior infractions.

However, this is somewhat a contrast to what Tyson referred to with discipline pre-Katrina at his school. Tamara's students according to her, displayed lesser disciplinary acts that did not involve objects being thrown or fights, but rather actions that would not warrant administration input or escalation of discipline as customary. In their pre-Katrina schools, the veteran African American teachers stated that suspensions were used as a discipline practice. However, Tamara focused on more of the classroom discipline practices because at her school the problems were minimal and did not require much administrative assistance.

As it pertains to post-Katrina discipline Melissa asserted:

In the post-Katrina charter schools, some teachers who were new [novice teachers] tried things that maybe worked in other places they came from but tended to cause more problems in the schools here. The trauma that students had suffered from the effects of Katrina [hurricane Katrina] was not considered when students were disciplined. I think for most of the kids the stressors that they had like not having stability at home and a lot of unfamiliarity with the way things worked at school caused students to act out more than normal.

Denise felt that in her post-Katrina charter school experience the discipline was as follows:

Discipline practices were not uniform in my post-Katrina charter school. For example, what happened to students at my school was based on the mood of the day it seemed. If students came in with a mellow mood, a lot of teachers just let them be – didn't bother them and let them sit there if they did not want to participate in class as long as they were quiet. On the other hand, if students seemed to have a short fuse, and acted out some teachers went toe to toe with them and others just kicked them out of their class which often led to suspensions for wandering aimlessly in the hallways. I believe it was because we were all just trying to make it through the day the best way we could.

Laura expressed that in her post-Katrina experience that “I knew that ignoring students acting out was probably not the best thing to do for students that were sometimes unruly, but I did not want to be another teacher that just put students out because how was that going to help, and that definitely wasn't going to change a child's behavior.” She also stated that “telling a student to take a break most of the time did not solve problematic student behaviors any more than yelling did so when I ignored the problem it looked like it caused less confusion.” This spoke specifically to how a veteran African American teacher included herself as promoting a more loosely practiced discipline.

The pre-Katrina discipline practices based on the accounts of most of the teachers seemed to involve a mix of suspensions and sometimes detentions. However, post-Katrina in the charter schools the African American veteran teachers worked in students were suspended or ignored more than in pre-Katrina they felt. Some teachers said that discipline in their school post-Katrina was very stringent with suspensions for everything,

and new or novice teachers kicked students out of the classroom for any infraction they deemed was inappropriate. Tamara mentioned the following:

Because we did not really have many discipline problems then on occasion when it happened an example was made so that everyone knew to stay in line.

Sometimes the whole class was punished when children acted up say in the cafeteria at lunch time. Even through the behaviors might have been minor like students taking the cafeteria food that the students no longer wanted on their trays and just mixing it all together until it looked nasty and not edible and then playing with it. That type of stuff made many of the new teachers in the charter school where I worked punish the whole class. That way it was a lesson for others that the good had to suffer for the bad.

The veteran African American teachers felt that because the new teachers did not have their experience those teachers did their best to manage discipline of students the best way they knew how. That included punishing all students even the students who had not done anything wrong to try to get ensure compliance going forward as veteran African American participant Tamara mentioned. In addition, the veteran African American teachers felt because they experienced many of the same emotional effects of Katrina that they were able to empathize in their discipline practices more than teachers who came into the school system who did not have that experience.

Despite being asked whether they as veteran African American teachers observed any examples of physical punishment being meted out in their post-Katrina charter schools, no teacher made any reference to physical discipline that they personally observed although one teacher mentioned she had heard incidents of a teacher hitting a child. In post-Katrina charter schools where participants worked, the veteran African American teachers felt that many of the discipline practices did not work and only created

more confusion and chaos in the schools. Laura said that “I believe that they-novice teachers of other races and teachers not from the city expected-our kids to be like everybody else in the nation or wherever they came from and tried to use whatever discipline practices and rules they heard worked for at-risk youth.” This supports the view that discipline practices in post-Katrina had significant differences from what was standard practice in pre-Katrina New Orleans public schools.

Lack of Training/Professional Development Exacerbated Discipline Problems

Teachers felt that in post-Katrina K-8 charter schools there were a number of discipline problems in schools because there was a lack of training or professional development for teachers in these schools. Laura stated the following:

I noticed in my post-Katrina school that new teachers’ classroom management skills were the weakest of all the teachers at my school. Alternative certification programs were so short in their preparation of new teachers that were sent here that often those teachers struggled controlling their classes. In fact, I remember a time when this new female teacher was trying to teach her lesson and a male student kept walking back and forth to the trash can to so-called keep throwing trash away. This went on for about 5-10 minutes straight. So, the teacher told the student to go sit down. When she did the student busted out laughing at the teacher and kept doing the same thing – walking back and forth while she tried to teach to throw trash away. The teacher just stood there, and looked like she had no idea what to do before she kept teaching while trying to ignore it. Then she gave up and just sat at her desk. Of course, this was the wrong response. So, then several students started to walk back and forth to the trash to throw trash away. Ultimately, she never able to finish that lesson for that class. See as a veteran

teacher I knew that the student's behavior was done to vex the new teacher to get a reaction of total frustration and get her to stop teaching.

Laura's comments provided an example on how novice teachers struggled with classroom management because there was a lack of training that those teachers possessed to be able to handle disruptions in the classroom.

They stated that teachers in post-Katrina schools did not receive professional development in classroom management. In addition, since many teachers working in post-Katrina charter schools were not certified they did not have the experience or the training to deal with common misbehaviors or extreme ones. The African American teachers said that most of their colleagues that struggled with behavior interruptions in the classroom was because they did not have good classroom management, procedures, and routines in place to reduce discipline problems from happening. An example of this was stated by Melissa:

This was around the time I was teaching second grade [in post-Katrina] in my school. I was on my lunch break, and I could hear the young teacher next door having like a circle time or something like that where the students sat on the floor while she taught using her chart. Then I just remember a child crying and when I peeped in, I saw that teacher tearing up a student's paper where she then pointed for the student to go to the time out chair and sit. She continued to express how disappointed she was in the student's work. I am not sure why she tore up that little girl's work. But I do know that baby was very embarrassed, and I guess the teacher thought by handling it that way that the child wouldn't make the same mistake again.

Melissa's comments serve as an illustration of how a young teacher did not possess the training to handle the situation with the student in a more positive way. Therefore, the incident escalated until the student had an outpouring of emotion and tears.

Overall, the teachers learned much of their classroom management skills in the early part of their career through trial and error and experience pre-Katrina. However, what many observed post-Katrina in their charter school experiences was that teachers said they could see that the type of misbehaviors they saw spanned from verbal interruptions to physical altercations. Three of the teachers specifically stated that often in the post-Katrina charter schools they worked in that classroom misconduct was an everyday event. So, for them, the student behaviors most often did not give rise to alarm, but the normalcy that they were familiar with. That same group of teachers believed that although the school climate was not the best with discipline it was not the worst. Student perceived disruptions were observed to cause more angst for novice teachers. For instance, Denise said the climate at school with students post-Katrina "was a mess depending on the day." She mentioned that "students' behavior was totally emotionally distressed...lot of aggressive behavior and fighting and the inexperienced teachers had no discipline training or experience, so they often did not know what to do when that stuff happened." Laura added another layer of information about the climate when she stated "basically there was a shortage of teachers...period. I taught four classes because of the shortage with sometimes up to 35-40 kids in my class, and still had to handle discipline as effective as I could." She also mentioned, "There was one student that always clenched his fists if work was put on his desk. He would throw books, pencils, flip his desk over...anything that was an outlet to let his frustration out." The behavior displays that students exhibited were the source of either the frustration with the circumstances that

surrounded their home environment or there were no adequate channels for students to express their feelings and thoughts.

According to a few of the teachers, classroom behaviors of being off-task, attention-seeking or avoiding work are what they considered normal student behaviors in schools and that most veteran teachers were able to handle the students discipline wise. For example, Melissa stated that, “Misconduct in the classroom was a daily thing....and teachers arguing back and forth with students only caused it [misbehaviors] to happen over and over again.” Moreover, what some teachers noted was that because students knew how to “push a new teacher’s buttons” they did things they knew would get them kicked out of class. Denise stated that “I know that sometimes I had a young [new] teacher that kicked out several students for talking in class while she was trying to teach and sent them to me all in the same class period”. This evidence therefore supports the narrative that novice teachers were unprepared to cope with routine classroom behaviors because they lacked training and subsequently disciplined students by getting rid of them.

The problems of verbal interruptions or back and forth word exchanges with students were observed as common occurrences that involved mostly African American female students and the teachers as stated by Tamara. Tamara recalled helping a new teacher with a large class she had this to say:

I was helping a new teacher who had a large class because another teacher was on a field trip, so they combined the left-over students to this teacher’s class. So, the teacher was taking the attendance for the students of the teacher that was on the field trip and she made a mistake and mispronounced a girl’s name. The girl student corrected her and said her name the way she said it was supposed to be pronounced. Later in that same class the teacher calls on the girl by name and mispronounces it again. The girl corrected her and said you know my name, get it

right. Instead of apologizing quickly to try to de-escalate the situation the teacher says to the girl well you know what I mean. This only caused a bigger problem between the student and the teacher because after that the girl cussed her out and the teacher then kicked her out of class.

Tyson reaffirms this problem from this statement:

Calling out the answer or not raising hands...is not a huge problem that should be too hard for a teacher to deal with. It is only because non-vet [non-veteran] teachers don't have the experience or the training, so they usually make it worse in the classroom for themselves by either saying something to trigger a student or make them feel disrespected which causes a negative reaction from the student.

Therefore, teachers in general believed that it is because there has been a lack of professional development training in classroom management for teachers in post-Katrina charter schools specifically that discipline problems were increased due to teacher improper responses to student behaviors.

Cultural Mismatch between Students and Teachers

Teachers believed from their viewpoint that in the charter schools they worked in that there was a cultural mismatch between the novice teachers that were alternative certification programs like Teach from America (TFA) or New Teacher Project (NTP) and teachers that were new to the city and the students. When cultural mismatch is used this referred to teachers who were not from the city and did not understand the ways and practices of the people and children of New Orleans. The belief was that this cultural mismatch was the source of the conflict between students and teachers. The teachers said the problem was too many teachers that taught in post-Katrina K-8 charter schools were not from the city of New Orleans and that because of it the values, beliefs, and practices

of students and teachers were vastly different causing much conflict in the classroom.

Tyson affirmed this when he stated the following:

These new teachers looked like they never understood the students because they did not come from where they came from. For example, when this new teacher on the first floor who was always greeted the student spoke to every student that came in her class, but ignored a particular boy, not sure why, he passed her up and made the statement so it's like that and then he answered his own statement and said 4-sho'. She looked at me all confused because she did not get what he meant when he did that. I did, as a native New Orleanian and teacher who had worked in these schools pre-Katrina and now this charter school.

This is evidence of the lack of cultural synchronization as Irvine (1990) asserts that promoting symmetry between school and home environments and integrating those in the classroom will enhance specifically African American students' experiences.

For several of the teachers the unique aspect of being an educator that is from the same city as the students they taught offered a cultural connection that outside teachers struggled to understand and was the source of problematic discipline practices. For example, Laura stated that she observed "times when students nodded at non-native teachers and the teachers just looked at them." This was seen as a level of disrespect because in the city of New Orleans if someone nods to you in passing it is a sign of acknowledgement and to either not respond in kind or speak is seen as disrespectful. Another example of what teachers observed in post-Katrina charter schools that signified a cultural mismatch between teachers and students was correcting students' grammar when it was not necessary and did not hinder comprehension. Melissa offered the following example:

We were at a school wide assembly at my school for something I can't remember what and a male student asked, "Can I go to the bathroom?". The teacher who was not a veteran, nor African American replied, "I do not know, can you?." Now of course we as teachers all know that the statement the student asked was not in-line with correct grammar, however, to not just tell the student go ahead and go or no you can't go right now would have been a more suitable response. This is an example of a cultural disconnect between what is considered respectful and not between the student and teacher. It was not necessarily a teachable moment or a moment where a student at the time needed to be corrected.

Denise added that "New Orleans has a special culture, and it usually revolves around family. And family doesn't necessarily mean blood relation. As veteran African American teachers, we saw these kids as our kids. So, we always dealt with them on the basis of how I would want my kid to be treated at a school." Therefore, having a family-oriented connection offered veteran African American teachers a way to connect and discipline students that the participants felt teachers who were not from the city and novice could not do.

Communication of Discipline Practices Were Loosely Structured Post-Katrina

Primarily all teachers stated that pre-Katrina in the schools they worked in all of them had a student handbook with listings of discipline infractions and the subsequent disciplinary actions and procedures that followed. In addition, students were told at the beginning of the year in assemblies, letters home to parents, and in the classroom what the behavior expectations were and the subsequent disciplinary actions for infractions. Students knew what the classroom and school wide rules were and the consequences for various misconduct. Everything regarding discipline processes and procedures was very formalized from how to write a student up, giving detentions, or how to communicate

with parents. However, what was synonymous with all teachers in the post-Katrina charter schools that they worked in was that none of the schools had an outlined structure where there was a student handbook with behavior rules that was disseminated to students and/or parents. Carrying out the process of disciplining a student whether verbal, written or removal was different depending on who was enforcing the discipline. Teachers said the post-Katrina charter school organizations either assumed teachers knew what to do or seemed to create disciplinary policy as the need arose. Denise stated the following:

In my classroom I had the students' behavior expectations posted so that not only could students see it, but it also served as a reminder of what to do in class. It was written in positive language. For example, I will raise my hand to speak was a posted rule as opposed to do not talk without raising your hand. I found out early on in my career that students responded better to rules that were stated in a positive way rather than negatively. Students tend to rebel and do the exact opposite of what you want when you state behavior rules in a negative manner. In post-Katrina especially many of our students had been through a lot and had been in places where it was a lot of don'ts in their living environment. Adding a pile of behavior rules with don't I felt would not add to helping students with behavioral issues but would communicate another restriction and not build a good relationship. I saw many new teachers kick students out the classroom when they did not know what to do with them and then students just walked the halls or hung out in other classrooms. There was no write up or either no follow-up with repeat offenders of misconduct.

Tyson felt that rules should be few and simple and in his post-Katrina classroom he had no more than five, therefore kids could focus on what was truly important. He stated the following:

I felt you should pick your battles and having too many rules communicated to students would make it impossible to enforce them all. Administration had a hands-off approach to discipline at my school and pretty much expected you, the teacher to handle it. A new teacher next door to me in one of the schools I worked in post-Katrina had students say the classroom rules every morning before class started at the beginning of the year. I believe it was like fifteen rules, which I thought it was way too many. The irony was although the students said the rules every morning, nine times out of ten that teacher ended up screaming at kids because they hardly ever following most of them. Another thing that I also saw I guess you could say informally communicated to students was that disciplinary actions depended on whether the teacher liked a student or not. I know many time in the post-Katrina charter schools I worked in if a teacher liked a student, and they broke one of the classroom rules teachers may pretend they did not hear or see it. An example of this was when female students use to, I call it primp in class [fix or comb hair, looking in the mirror, or putting stuff of their lips]. Female teachers who saw this behavior would either ignore it from the students they liked or keep giving them warnings, but never enforcing a discipline infraction for continual habits of this. However, students that they did not like from past interactions or just because they did not like the student, the discipline would be extreme, and students saw the big difference between the liked student's treatment and the unliked. I would say though teachers had some rules in the class they were

minimal if at all, and the enforcement depended on the likability of the student to the teacher.

These types of displays of differences by teachers with how not only behavior rules were communicated if at all, but how they were enforced substantially made discipline an ongoing problem for classroom teachers at post-Katrina charter schools.

Teachers Do Not Support Corporal Punishment

All five teachers interviewed were emphatically against the practice of corporal punishment in schools because many of them experienced this practice as a child in the Orleans parish school system. They primarily remember it as an experience that they did not have fond memories of. In addition, the times at the beginning of their career that they saw it being used it did not reduce discipline problems or inappropriate behaviors in school. Therefore, although the law had only recently been banned unless parents provided written permission teachers felt the practice placed in the wrong hands could cause irreparable harm to a student. Denise viewed this practice as “archaic.” The following was her belief:

Out of all the discipline practices that exist, I think that corporal punishment not only does not lessen the amount of discipline problems teachers have with students, but it also causes humiliation and embarrassment to students. [pre-Katrina] I specifically remember in my early years seeing students having to hold their hands open in a first-grade class of a next-door teacher for the whole class to get punished because students would not be quiet after recess for the lesson the teacher was attempting to teach. I will never forget the sound of the wooden ruler hitting the open hands of little first graders, even the ones [students] that were known to be for the most part good kids. The shame I saw on their faces

especially of the good kids of having to receive a punishment they probably didn't even deserve and some of the other students laughing when they began to cry.

Adding to the sentiments of Denise, Laura recalled a memory in a post-Katrina K-8 charter school she worked that represented one of the main reasons why she is personally against corporal punishment in schools:

Right after Katrina there were lots of substitutes because schools didn't have enough bodies [teachers] to put in the classroom although the veteran African American teachers had been fired. So, this particular incident was when I had finally got on at a charter school in New Orleans East teaching and there was a sub that was a long-term substitute working at the school. She was fairly young and was from out of town I know because a lot of the areas she was not familiar with when people referred to it conversation. One day she was in her classroom and the students were not listening to her as she was trying to teach at the board. She had a yard stick [ruler] using it to point to the board as she emphasized whatever she was teaching. As I passed her classroom a girl student near her had her head on her desk and seemed to be awake but tuned out. The substitute teacher wacked her on her back with the stick and told her to sit up and pay attention. This made the girl jump up and swing at the teacher causing a big commotion in the class. I ran in to stop the raucous and told the girl to come into my class since I did not have students at that time to calm down. The girl shared with me that she was tired, not sleep, when the teacher was talking at the board. She mentioned that it was hard to focus since she was worried about her mom being able to come back to the city and did not want to keep being moved back and forth between relatives until she [her mom] could find some work here [in New Orleans] again.

In her quote, Laura is referring to how corporal punishment practices put in the wrong hands causes needless harm and is not effective.

Corporal punishment was not a discipline practice that veteran teacher participants subscribed to and ultimately believed that it was not in the best interest of the children. Even though Southern Poverty Law Center (2010) stated that it schools failed to track data on abusive security practices – such as handcuffing, shackling, or physical assault, the veteran teachers primarily did not observe such occasions other than what one teacher stated she heard via hearsay. Ultimately, the teachers did not support corporal punishment in schools.

Zero Tolerance Not the Best Way for Discipline

What exactly are zero tolerance policies? Zero tolerance in schools is defined as “school or district polic[ies] that [mandate] predetermined consequences or punishments for specific offenses” (Education Administration Quarterly as cited in National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2015, para. 1). In this study, four out of five of the teachers did not believe that zero tolerance policies were the best policy for discipline. Specifically, there were many infractions that yielded automatic suspensions such as fighting, and disrespect with policies that were put in place in some of the charter school organizations such as schools run by the Recovery School District. Some of the teachers that worked at one point in schools that were run by the Recovery School District sometimes kept students out for weeks. In contrast, in pre-Katrina Orleans parish schools, students were not suspended for cursing, which was then consider a minor infraction but would either receive a warning or detention. Post-Katrina in charter schools the same behaviors such as cursing, or disrespect often yielded suspensions. Teachers felt that many times there were mitigating circumstances for students perhaps cursing or being disrespectful in the post-Katrina charter schools’ classrooms. Tamara referred to

her experience working in the charter schools shortly after Katrina. She mentioned the following:

Students were suspended it appeared at the middle school I worked at it appeared every time you turned around. Students were suspended for talking smart to teachers. Students were sent home not necessarily suspended on record for dress code violations. I often thought many of the suspensions received were too harsh for infractions such as suspension for writing on a desk. In my pre-Katrina school, a student would just have received lunch or after school detention and required to clean off the desk. Getting put out [suspended] for something that minor was not the best way to discipline that child. However, if the practice would have mimicked the consequence of my pre-Katrina school the child would have received an appropriate consequence, and not lost academic time in the classroom by being suspended for something so minor.

Melissa believed that zero tolerance policies in her post-Katrina schools were frequently too harsh. For example, she said:

A student who was fifteen in the eighth grade had a younger sibling and left school early without permission to pick up little sister from school. The next day he was suspended for leaving campus without permission. Here was a case I felt the mitigating circumstances should have been factored in and the child should have been given some lunch detention instead. Important to know our school did not have any social workers back then so receiving help for that student was minimal. The 15-year-old boy said his sister was only seven and the mom couldn't pick her up from school that day because she had to work. The boy told me that he wasn't going to have his sister waiting by herself because the mom

wasn't there. So, he felt he did what he had to do and gladly took the suspension to get his little sister.

The lone dissenting belief came from Tyson. He said he believed that “zero tolerance had its place.” He said, “for certain infractions like weapons, drugs, or something high level then it is needed. Outside of those type things, even fighting, unless the physical outcome warranted hospital stays due to injuries should be dealt with in a way that doesn't just throw a child out of school.” Denise stated that there were instances she observed with inexperienced teachers not from the city “got frustrated, and went for a lack of a better word, what would be a lower consequence straight to a severe consequence in the disciplining of a student over something minor...a behavior that veteran teachers found was normal for adolescents to do”. In addition, Denise also stated that she felt that those same teachers “seemed to feel and take things personally. And by them taking things personally from kids, they tended to react in a way that was more serious than it needed to be.” Overall, zero tolerance was a discipline policy that most of the veteran teachers felt was not a policy that they felt was in the best interest of the students.

Summary

Chapter four presented a detailed account of the findings from this qualitative study with the focus of the themes that were revealed based on the perceptions the veteran African American teachers had on the discipline in post-Katrina K-8 charter schools. The results were given in the form of quotes, and in an infographic that summarized specific interview statements that were made by the teacher participants. Analyzing the responses from the teacher interviews that were completed for this study yielded four themes. These themes included: post-Katrina school discipline was a mixed bag, lack of training and professional development exacerbated discipline problems,

cultural mismatch with students and teachers, communication of discipline structures were loosely organized, no support for corporal punishment in schools, and zero tolerance is an undesirable choice for discipline. The themes that surfaced from the thematic groupings were then juxtaposed to evoke understanding with regard to the perceptions of veteran African American teacher perspectives on discipline in charter schools in New Orleans. Chapter five presents an analysis of the findings with additional thematic findings, as well as the conclusions, limitations, and recommendations for action and further study.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The purpose of the qualitative narrative study was to explore African American veteran teachers' beliefs and perceptions of discipline of African American students in K-8 charter schools in New Orleans post-Katrina. There was a lack of research in reference to African American veteran teachers' beliefs and perceptions of discipline in K-8 charter schools in New Orleans post-Katrina. Additionally, there was limited research that spoke to the discipline practices in New Orleans charter schools. The primary objective was to acquire further insight into the perspectives of those veteran African American teachers' beliefs and observations of discipline in the charter schools of New Orleans. This chapter examines the significance and purpose of the research that was presented. This chapter will draw conclusions based on the findings, summarize and interpret the findings, offer additional findings from the thematic analysis, discuss the limitations of this research, the implications and the recommendations for action, and recommendations for further study based on the main research question: What can we know about the experiences of African American veteran teachers with discipline before and after hurricane Katrina?

Summary and Interpretation of Findings

The summary of findings from this research focused on the themes that emanated from the veteran African American teacher's perception data that was collected based on the semi-instructed interviews. The themes appeared to saturate the study and attended to the research question: What can we know about the experiences of African American veteran teachers with discipline before and after hurricane Katrina? The themes that were dissected from their interviews yielded critical findings that will be juxtaposed against the literature and discussed. The findings are as follows: (a) teachers' perceptions of school discipline practices pre and post-Katrina, (b) lack of training/professional development

exacerbated discipline problems, (c) cultural mismatch between students and teachers, (d) teachers do not support corporal punishment, and (e) zero tolerance is not the best way for discipline.

In the first theme's findings with respect to the experience of veteran African American teacher perceptions of school discipline practices in pre and post-Katrina schools uncovered the beliefs that primarily noted discipline practices pre-Katrina were more efficient with infractions handled in a clear manner primarily, in addition pre-Katrina discipline practices also varied depending on the type of school that the teacher was associated with either a magnet school or title one/traditional. Pre-Katrina schools that were magnet schools tended to have less discipline problems, while neighborhood schools had more discipline problems because the schools were not allowed to select the students that attended their schools. Research suggests that magnet schools have been found to exact less punishment on students than traditional schools (Kitchens & Broadnax, 2021). The veteran African American veteran teacher participants highlighted that magnet schools were allowed to pick students; therefore, the discipline problems were often minimal, and discipline did not require unnecessary punishment.

Findings from this study suggested that the veteran African American teacher participants viewed the discipline practices used in Orleans parish post-Katrina K-8 charter schools by non-veteran teachers, although not overwhelming horrible, the practices needed significant improvement. Participants in this research expressed agreement with the findings in Troeh et al., (2017) when they asserted that students exposed to trauma may respond to small infractions in an outsized way. Albeit students' behaviors post-Katrina triggered discipline responses from teachers that were punitive or harsh for students who had experienced the type of trauma effects from post-Katrina. However, most of the discipline problems that students displayed post-Katrina was

customary and did not elevate to the level of personal danger or criminal activity. The participants understood what students were going through as they also had to deal with the lack of stability of housing and services, as well as stressors, but they did not have to be subjected to discipline because they were adults.

However, referring to Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological system theory (Chen & Tomes, 2005), specifically the chronosystem within the model spoke to this instance of a non-normative life transition (Hurricane Katrina). The catastrophic event and subsequent lasting impact that it had on the students that experienced its effects and the hardships that were associated with it had an enormous impact on behaviors that were displayed in the classroom in post-Katrina charter schools. Therefore, the discipline that was meted out post-Katrina in many instances to students often reflected a push toward punitive practices and not restorative or empathetic. This was supported by the literature in Chapter 2 regarding the broken windows theory on discipline, which was a no-excuses model that reflected how stringent punishment was often exacted on students for the smallest misbehavior (Hood, 2016). In some of the participants' statements small infractions were handled sometimes swiftly and with harsh consequences that were not necessarily warranted for the student infraction. This led me to believe that there were many over-reactions by novice teachers as a matter of practice.

Veteran teacher participants felt that the trauma that students faced and endured due to Katrina were not considered when they were disciplined. Nor were students receiving any type of mental health considerations because of the effects of the storm and offered more leniency with behaviors that were displayed because of the turmoil they were amid. Trauma history as it pertained to students in post-Katrina charter schools were not factors that were accounted for in the discipline practices at the participants' charter schools. In fact the opposite was true, students' trauma history was ignored.

Reiken (2024) indicated that the “current system of school discipline deems students’ missteps so detrimental that they no longer deserve to learn. It instructs students that accountability looks like punishment and pain...” (para. 3). Instead of taking into consideration the trauma that students had faced post-Katrina, novice and new to the city teachers further exacted punishment by putting students out the classroom which did not serve to address the behavior infractions or stressors that impacted them. Using trauma informed discipline would allow for not only a better way of discipline in schools, but skill development for students to learn how to navigate emotional times in school. The findings are also supported by Ablon & Pollastri (2018) when they state that punitive discipline does not work for students who have trauma and can actually make matters worse. Punitive discipline as the veteran African American teacher participants had referred to focused on the removal from the classroom by kicking students out or sending the student to another teacher. In fact, because students have trauma, they often struggle with the skills to be able to communicate their pain and therefore may act out (Frieze, 2015; Kentucky Department of Education, 2021). As a viable solution using trauma informed discipline as an alternative will eliminate the practice of using discipline in schools as a form of power and control (Ablon, 2020).

Trauma informed discipline practices have begun to be used in some states beginning in 2019, according to the Education Commission of the States (2020). However, when pertaining to charter schools’ trauma informed discipline, it has been mentioned as a method that is utilized in New Orleans. Yet, there is no real data to support that this is practiced and been actually implemented other than anecdotal.

The second theme’s finding was that the veteran teachers felt that there was a lack of training/professional development which exacerbated discipline problems in post-Katrina charter schools. The African American veteran teachers believed that all teachers

especially novice teachers and teachers who were new to the city did not have the tools and skills of good classroom management to be able to reduce the discipline problems and misbehaviors of students. These beliefs echoed the sentiments of support from Chapter 2's literature with Sondel & Boselovic (2014) when it was stated that the post-Katrina charter schools were operated by a teaching staff that were white, younger, and possessed little training and even more minute experience. Therefore, instead of having the skillsets to de-escalate behavior problems in the classrooms the African American participants believed based on observations that often the novice or new to the city teachers would heighten verbal exchanges between students and themselves with back-and-forth banter leading to more disciplinary problems and harsh consequences.

From the vantage point of the veteran African American teachers in this research it appeared that they saw a teachers' general competence was wide-ranging based on the years of experience and in some instances, the type of training a teacher did or did not receive. The participants overall felt that novice or new to the city teachers dealt with a sharper learning curve and their inexperience or lack of training influenced classroom communication and the method in which they decided to address the behavioral challenges of students. In addition, it was also believed by the veteran African American teachers that the novice or new to the city teachers were either not competent or uncertain how to subdue behavior concerns. These outlooks are corroborated by Rosas & West (2009), where it is mentioned that novice teachers are more likely to grapple with classroom management and are considerably less self-assured in their expertise of specific classroom management strategies and information.

The current study upholds earlier findings that teacher training is needed to address classroom management and discipline with respect to student behavior (Baker, 2005; Mayer & Phillips, 2012; Oliver et al., 2011). Moreover, research has also echoed

the sentiments of the participants' belief that lack of training or inadequate preparation of new teachers is the reason for discipline problems at their respective schools as supported by Oliver et al. (2011). Continuous professional development in classroom management is vital for all teachers but particularly for novice teachers. It is clear both as a result of this study and previous research that adequately managing a classroom is more of a challenge for new teachers, who may not have been given sufficient instruction. Due to the lack of training it appeared that novice teachers did not have the skillsets to handle misbehaviors nor redirect students who were sometimes frustrating the teacher. This supports the literature that teacher candidates that are new to the profession have scarce illustration for how to create student centered classroom management methods while certifying students' multicultural resources in the classroom consistently (Greenberg et al., 2014). Therefore, adequate training in classroom management will impact the discipline problems that have become common place in the classroom and will ensure that educators can obtain the instruction and skillsets needed to manage the classroom adequately. It will also assist in helping teachers to avert disruptive behaviors and help them to respond more suitably to inappropriate behaviors that will certainly happen. African American teachers believed that there was a cultural mismatch between students and teachers. This was also the source of many verbal altercations between students and teachers. Teachers who utilize aggression in class may yield initial student cooperation, however they are causing negative long-lasting effects such as additional behavior challenges (Divoll, 2022). Additionally, teachers that as a habit have an aggressive classroom management style establish a succession of increased student misconduct (Bekiari 2016, 2017; Choi, 2021).

In this study, the participants referred to behaviors that were displayed by students most they considered minor as veteran African American native New Orleans teachers,

while other teachers who were either novice or new to the city saw the same behaviors by students warranted an overreacting response. Divoll (2022) highlighted the various situations in a day a teacher encounters, which may cause an emotive reaction which could result in a severe response to a classroom management incident. In spite of daily occurrences that teachers may face due to stress, having a genuine connection to the community and city in which they work will help offer a semblance of comfort of being a part of it and not an outsider. When a teacher takes the time out to learn and immerse themselves in a place not only for work, but to form communal bonds, it generates a level of respect amongst students.

Although research has spoken to cultural mismatch with regard to race/ethnicity and how there is disproportionate discipline because of it (Fuller, 2021), the cultural mismatch that the researcher has discovered in this study specifically refers to the culture of the city of New Orleans. When cultural mismatch or incongruence is mentioned in schools it often refers to the race differences between teacher and student (Fuller, 2021; La Salle et al., 2019; McGrady & Reynolds, 2012; Recknagel et al., 2022) or home and school culture (Nieto, 2005, Ormrod et al., 2019; Saffold & Longwell-Grice, 2008). However, in this study the results highlighted a cultural mismatch that referred to the community and city of New Orleans, not the various other references of cultural mismatch in previous research.

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory, specifically the macrosystem of the theory, the focus is on the cultural elements. As it relates to this study, what was regarded as social norms in the city and charter schools in New Orleans in reference to the displayed behaviors and ideologies, and what permeated through the city's culture, shaped the way students behaved. Many teachers who were not from the city of New Orleans and the culture had been shaped by their upbringing and different societal

cultural norms and values. What was regarded as acceptable and unacceptable with respect to customs, traditions, language was vastly different based on where individuals were raised. This is supported by the research that several researchers found that within the school, particularly the classroom, that a number of researchers ascribe the difference in discipline patterns to racial incongruity or cultural dissonance between teacher/staff and students (Bryan, et al., 2012; Skiba et al., 2011). Depending on where the novice teachers or new to the culture teachers were from, the decision on whether behavior was deemed appropriate was attached to the backgrounds of those teachers. That cultural incongruence was ultimately the source of varying discipline practices that African American students were exposed to. Not understanding the differing cultural norms of students based not on race, but on the culture of the city of New Orleans is what frequently resulted in misunderstandings and misconceptions.

According to Welsh & Little (2018), variation of treatment of teachers and school officials are likely connected to the differences in school environment, school-level factors, such as particular rules, practices, and viewpoints of teachers and principals. The variation of differences of treatment by teachers and administrators towards students that Welsh & Little (2018) discussed was not referring to the types of culture mismatch that the veteran African American teacher participants referred to with regards to the city New Orleans. Their study looked at the factors of the school environment and the school-level factors not the city. The veteran African American teachers who were all native New Orleanians who were born and raised in the city were able to have connections and understanding with their students that novice teachers who were also new to the city and teachers who also were just new to the city struggled to make.

These lack of connections between these novices and new to the culture teachers reflected how connections can impact children specifically their behavior in a major way,

a factor that Bronfenbrenner discussed in the microsystem level of his theory. The microsystem of this theory was based on connections and how the connections between home and school, and school and children have an influence. This segways into the cultural mismatch of the ways and behaviors of students with teachers who were not from the city was often the stimulus for discord and dissension in the classes at post-Katrina charter schools. Moreover, the attitudes or values of what teachers who were not from the city and the culture deemed as disrespectful or inappropriate behaviors from students was a chief aspect of friction that appeared to set in motion both the behavior problems of the students and the subsequent discipline practices of teachers.

According to Divoll (2010), teachers need to be open about the desire to form positive student-teacher connections. This should be a requirement when teachers are not from the community in which they teach in. It would help the relationships between student and teachers to be formed and allow the teachers to cultivate an understanding of the community and city that they work in and the nuances that are common and acceptable. This could assist with reducing disciplinary problems because the students and the teachers will have forged authentic relationships that generate mutual respect. Moreover, this will ultimately curtail inappropriate behaviors and close the gap of cultural mismatch with respect to the community and teachers who are not from the same city and community.

The fourth theme's finding was that communication of discipline practices was loosely structured, and this is what the African American veteran teacher participants referred to by stating essentially there was no school wide plan formally written at the various post-Katrina charter schools they worked in. They all felt that this would have been beneficial because perhaps then students would have been more inclined to abide by the policies and expectations of the various charter schools. Thereby, making discipline

less of an issue since there would have been a format for how certain infractions were handled as well as the process to do so. Communication of the post-Katrina charter schools' policies with students, parents, and teachers in as many ways possible would have yielded a better result with compliance because there would have been a formal document that everyone could be held accountable with regarding discipline. The participants observed that teachers handled or had to attempt to handle the bulk of the discipline incidents that happened.

For a school to run smoothly, and reduce discipline incidents, communication is essential for creating and sustaining a fair school discipline system. All schools have many moving components that can make a school day challenging for both teacher and student. Proactively creating policies and procedures regarding discipline for the school and classroom helps ensure in advance that all students will be treated consistently (Neogov, 2020). When expectations are constructed with clarity and disseminated, there are no surprises. The veteran African American teachers observed that often behaviors that they felt violated an understood classroom or school rule often went unchecked. In addition, they stated behaviors that individual teachers felt were inappropriate or disrespectful were met with severe responses though there was little to no formal written guideline that communicated the responses to inappropriate or certain infractions in the various schools they worked in. This supported the research of Sondel et. al., (2014) in chapter two, that students were often controlled rather than educated.

According to a former New Orleans charter school dean named Ramon Griffin (2014), his daily routine involved chasing African American female students to see if their nails wear polished, if they had color streaks in their hair, following the males to ensure that their hair was not style in a natural way or an uncombed afro. He further stated that none of those things had anything to do with teaching and learning but was

more about making sure the students looked “appropriate for learning” and if not, they were scolded (Griffin, 2014, para. 2). This supports the data that teachers had to deal with the bulk of discipline and the responses to the infractions on their own, and any disciplinary punishments that were enacted had limited to no formal guidelines or support to do so.

In the fourth theme’s finding there was little to no support of corporal punishment as a practice for school discipline by the veteran African American teacher participants with views for pre and post-Katrina. This was evident by the statements of most of the teachers that included the personal observations of this practice being employed in pre-Katrina schools, and only accounts considered hearsay of it happening in post-Katrina charter schools not personal observations. One particular African American veteran teacher participant Tyson changed his views on corporal punishment practices between pre and post-Katrina agreeing in his post-Katrina. Although these teachers do not support corporal punishment in Louisiana the practice is only banned if the parents do not give written parental consent to allow it.

Research has unfortunately revealed that corporal punishment has been utilized as a type of discipline or a practice to increase academic success (Anwar et al., 2021; Divoll, 2022; Sanders, 2018). However, it has been overwhelmingly contradicted as a practice that should be continued in schools due to its correlation to negative social behaviors (Gershoff, 2010; Hicks-Pass, 2009; World Health Organization, 2021) and disparities of what type of student mostly receives this discipline practice (Mathewson, 2022; Morris, 2018; Rollins, 2012). As a practice, if it consistently yielded a significant decrease in inappropriate behaviors, why would these same students need to be punished repeatedly? The attitude toward this discipline practice at one point in time was believed to be a deterrent to bad behavior and would eliminate future occurrences quickly. Despite

decades of research that has shown that physical force does not help kids select positive behaviors, only 27 of Louisiana's 69 school systems have banned corporal punishment while 19 allow its practice as of 2022 (Sullivan, 2023). Even though the participants did not have any direct observation of the practice the fact that it is not totally outlawed everywhere in the state poses the question does it still happen in some instances and is not reported.

Discipline problems in school happen for an amalgamation of reasons including child's individual situations, the school climate, and how educators are trained and supported (Save the Children Philippines, n.d.). In its most recent use corporal punishment has been used in schools as a discipline practice in certain states, yet it is also a practice that has been characterized as unacceptable, crude, and immoral in state-regulated environments (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2019) with its use by teachers communicating emotional harm (Divoll, 2022). School districts in several places continue to permit this practice ignoring the cons admonished by the medical, mental health and sociological communities. Hitting students in schools generates a volatile school atmosphere (FedSDC, n.d.) therefore, with all these factors impacting a student's behavior the belief that corporal punishment will do little to change a student's behavior is the rationale for the disdain of the practice. Frequently, the practice of corporal punishment in schools is employed for trivial or subjective transgressions with possible harm expanding outside of physical and psychologically pain alone. Therefore, echoing other states that have banned corporal punishment as a practice, individual schools and districts should substitute this discipline practice with a more effective and positive method that can be implemented to minimize its use if it is not banned in those spaces.

The last theme's finding was that zero tolerance was not the best way to discipline students was a mantra that seemed to echo amongst the participants with the exception of

the one male teacher participant. He believed it had a place for certain behaviors if they were serious enough, or included violence, but not just for minor infractions. Although most of the participants did not agree with zero tolerance as a discipline measure that should be used, the research in chapter two shows that charter schools' discipline African American students more than they discipline any other race with many national charter school networks having integrated the broken windows theory for discipline (Carwin, 2018).

Despite the one dissenting participant's belief with exceptions, the other participants really did not feel that zero tolerance was the best way for students to be disciplined. It was more the consensus that teachers should try to understand the rationale for behaviors before exacting any type of discipline upon a student. The historical research about zero-tolerance has found that students often are punished for offenses under these harsh and automatic policies, with little consideration given to particular circumstances (Coulson, 2012; Smith, 2001). In more recent times this has caused a changing of the tide of how zero-tolerance policies are viewed by educators. It is the job of educators to give students the tools they need to flourish in life. Teachers are doing a great disservice if the norm is to implement too harsh a punishment for developmentally fitting mistakes or mistakes that have mitigating circumstances. Schools have begun to shift away from exclusionary practices of zero tolerance to additional beneficial or preventative actions of school and classroom management with the intention to reduce discipline problems (Darling-Hammond, 2023).

In today's ideology of PBIS and restorative discipline it is a teacher's responsibility to try to find a more appropriate method to disciplining a student. For this reason, charter school districts should be intentional on how they offer training to not only new teachers but continual professional development for veterans to revisit or alter

their implementation of interventions or practices to decrease lack of compassion toward students and minor behavior infractions attended to as major when not needed.

Additional Findings from Thematic Analysis

Although veteran African American teacher participants made reference to race being a factor off the record in the discipline practices and in the cultural mismatch between teachers and students, they did not want that information reflected back to them in any way. Race was a factor that resonated through several of the African American veteran teacher narratives when interviewed. However, the participants either wanted this very important element to not be included on the record or would only reference it in minute circumstances of the discussion.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations of this study occur in two primary areas. The first one is that the study was limited to a small group of teacher participants due to the very distinct criteria that needed to be met to target this specific population group, their connection of teaching in Orleans parish school pre-Katrina and post-Katrina charter schools as well as the memories of the participants due to the passage of time. Therefore, this research will not be generalizable to other areas across the United States. The probing questions and critical inquiry may have revealed individual biases and illuminated the perceptions of veteran African American teachers' viewpoint of the influx of novice or new to the culture of the city teachers.

A critical note is that although the researcher assured the participants of anonymity, there was still an undercurrent of not being totally transparent on withholding information. This was interpreted based on the actions that four out of the five participants although they voluntarily participated at times asked that I stopped the recording or wanted to speak "off the record".

In some of the participants' stories they held back by giving an overview of circumstances that occurred that they observed but did not want to go into details even when prodded for explanations to get more specificity of the information they had already given. Seeing the reticence happen with some of the participants both influenced the lack of more in-depth information and the participants not wanting to expound on a substantial amount of their responses. In addition, it resulted in the researcher reading the subtle cues of trepidation about some of the veteran African American teacher participants not wanting to go into further detail or concern about disclosing more information.

Although the researcher shared a racial/ethnic identity with the participants to a certain extent I was still considered an "outsider" as a University of Houston-Clear Lake student researcher. In the city of New Orleans there is a struggling economy that exists particularly with respect to African American employment. Therefore, an overwhelming anxiety exists amongst that community and some of the participants that what they disclose can somehow impact them if the anonymity is broken. New Orleans is a very small community based on who you know, and many employment opportunities and connections are based on that cultural practice. It is because some mistrust and suspicion exist between members of the African American community, and these participants specifically, and me as an "outsider" that participants were hesitant to be as forthcoming as they could have been. Despite assurances that their identities would be kept totally confidential, it appeared they still felt concerned about whether their identities might be exposed in some way and only chose to disclose information that they felt comfortable with.

Implications

According to the study by the Children's Health Fund (2010) children uprooted by Hurricane Katrina were four and a half times more presumably to have indicators consistent with serious emotional disturbance than the equivalent demographic that was surveyed in a 2004 national study. Furthermore, numerous students who were primarily African American that were identified as having behavioral challenges were directed to deteriorated public schools, where there was a subsequent outpouring of behavior problems that overwhelmingly showed up in the classroom. These behaviors disruptions were exhibited in post-Katrina charter schools that both novice and new to the city teachers coped with. This is relevant and important despite the elapsed time of the catastrophic event of Katrina and because the ensuing discipline practices that were enacted on students. It ultimately served as a reminder of how subjective transgressions gave way to harsh disciplinary methods. In an effort to focus on far-reaching student infractions, schools throughout New Orleans put stringent codes of conduct in place and mercilessly imposed those new standards (Helton, 2021).

There is an associated connection with the residuals of a different disaster on students based on behaviors that were displayed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequent discipline practices once again impacted African American students for their behavior transgressions whether minor or not in a negative manner. An example of this happened in Louisiana where a nine-year-old African American male student named KaMauri Harrison faced a suspension and possible expulsion for an unloaded BB gun that was in his bedroom during his online school session. He was virtually taking an assessment during his online class during the pandemic when his teacher saw it. Even though there was no danger to the child since the gun was unloaded, the teacher utilized

her authority to exact a severe discipline consequence of a suspension, and possible expulsion.

These types of school discipline practices that are carried out upon students particularly African American ones, appear to be a consistent pattern of disparity that runs rampant in the charter school community. Moreover, across the world, African American people experience the controlling of their bodies, hair and cultural demonstrations (Hines & Wilmot, 2018). In addition, there anti-Black attitudes have seeped into the inner dynamics of American schools (Dumas, 2016, Wun, 2016; Lopez, 2020; as cited in Sevon, 2022). It is the fear of African American youth that reveals the persistence of anti-Black attitudes in educational spaces. Research has shown that African-American students suffer from the “hyperpolicing of their bodies, harsh discipline, [and] pathologizing of Black families and cultures” (Gilborn, 2018; Kendi, 2019, Mosley et al., 2020 as cited in Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021, p. 52). Moreover, in institutions of education there is a continuum of anti-blackness with Black students and their families fashioned as the problem, stigmatized these students endure the burden of harsh school discipline, and their families are not perceived as capable or well-informed (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). It is because of this bias that student’s classroom behaviors are critically analyzed and extend into the walls of school classrooms offering a possible detrimental behavior response to African American students. When anti-Black attitudes happen in relation to schools it is simple to start with looking at teachers (Pearman, 2020). These issues must be identified, grasped, and recognized before steps can be adopted to change.

The urban no excuses charter school model used in certain charter schools, which has in the last five years been criticized in academia for its strict discipline policies, have a tendency to hire “inexperienced young white teachers who are using behavioral control over largely Black/Brown students, often in low-income neighborhoods”, do not lend

itself to how this overwhelming large demographic of teachers do not receive cultural sensitivity training or acknowledge their implicit bias (Harrison, 2022). Instead of either leaning too far in praise or denigration of this model, it is best to examine it at the people level both from the standpoint of working on viable solutions and actually putting them in place to help the students that these schools were created to serve. It is imperative that charter schools and charter school districts add professional development with respect to trauma informed training specifically to make an impact on how students are disciplined. Moreover, to ensure all stakeholders are competent in putting into practice new trauma informed discipline procedures they must receive training in not only what to do but how to do it, so that all students can have the opportunity to have mitigating circumstances taken into account before discipline is meted out to them.

Recommendations for Action

Many teachers have worked in the field of education for a number of reasons. In this qualitative narrative study, the participants who were African American veteran teachers felt that the type of discipline that was meted out to African American students in post-Katrina K-8 charter schools was affected based on the reasons individuals decided to come and work in the schools New Orleans, and that there was a lack of understanding of the students and culture of the city. In addition, tolerance and acceptable discipline practices are an imminent need amongst novice teachers and new teachers to the culture of New Orleans working in post-Katrina K-8 primarily African American enrolled student schools. It is imperative that teachers need to learn and know the culture of the city in which they work in.

One recommendation is to create professional development committees for diversity and inclusion with a strong representation of African American veteran teachers from the city as well as school-based administrators. This committee would work

alongside novice teachers or teachers that are new to the New Orleans culture with the objective to encourage all teachers to look beyond the behaviors that African American students display in the classroom to the core of why students behave in a certain manner to find the best discipline practices to reduce the problematic behaviors as well as forge a deep connection with their students. Novice teachers and new teachers to the New Orleans culture would also receive professional development, mentors, and be provided with strong targeted assistance to understand students. This perhaps would foster these teachers to be open to more positive behavior interventions and implementation of these practices as well as giving a toolbox to use when discipline problems arise. All stakeholders should also have ongoing professional development in trauma informed discipline practices that occur during each school year. The training should not be a one-time preparation, but it should happen quarterly. It is key that charter schools make the emotional well-being a key component in its discipline process, as well as educators building a strong rapport with their students, while acquiring the skills to deal with trauma in students. This will ultimately allow teachers and other staff to have the tools and resources to best help students even when being disciplined.

Another recommendation is that the learning structure for professional development with regards to discipline should include a personalized learning approach. This was deficit discussed by the participants that there was a lack of structured training on discipline of students with appropriate practices. Therefore, it would be best to create an individualized method because all teachers have various learning styles and needs to address their individual gaps in discipline practices to ensure everyone has the amount of specific guidance that is needed to become effective in positive discipline approaches.

Recommendations for Further Study

The findings of this research are not necessarily generalizable to places outside the scope of charter schools in New Orleans. However, there are two specific areas that I recommend for future research on discipline practices in post-Katrina K-8 charter schools. One area for future research is to examine the experiences of administrators and students to obtain their vantage points of discipline practices as they relate both to the gender of the teacher and the student. Perhaps comparing the responses and common themes that the veteran African American teachers had to administrator and student responses may offer insight on to a richer authenticity to the voices of African American teachers' experiences regarding discipline in the charter schools of New Orleans post-Katrina.

More research is necessary to examine the perceptions of veteran African American teachers on the discipline practices of students and the high school level and early childhood levels in New Orleans charter schools and surrounding areas. This study unearthed that veteran African American teachers hold close knowledge of observable behaviors of students and teachers with subsequent discipline practices that were either carried out or administered. Further research should incorporate students and their views as participants and document their outlook and thoughts about school discipline practices. In addition, because of the large numbers of students that are special education students in inclusive settings it would be intriguing to see how special education teachers who push-in or co-teach handle discipline in the charter schools of New Orleans.

Expanding this study to a regional or national option with respect to charter school discipline in other urban areas will offer more credence to not only what is needed by new teachers or teachers that are being enmeshed in a new unfamiliar culture, but also provide a soft landing to well-meaning individuals. Thus, it will assist those teachers that

want to understand students with backgrounds different from theirs, attend to environmental, social, or trauma factors, and take the time to give adequate consideration to those aspects before administering discipline based on normed behaviors of their own personal background and implicit biases. The steps needed to reconcile inadequate teacher responses to student behaviors in charter schools involve engaging in learning cultural competence and understanding. Furthermore, it would be an asset to learn how other teachers of color recognize and handle discipline in these same urban settings with other students of color.

The last layer that would be beneficial for further research would involve magnet charter schools with teachers who are employed their viewpoint on discipline. This is because when charter schools do discuss discipline it only focuses on “school composition and academic achievement, not school discipline” (Kitchens & Brodnax, 2021, p. 1). It would add another aspect of critical analysis in understanding how teachers carry out discipline.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study examined African American veteran teachers’ perceptions with respect to the discipline practices that they observed pre-Katrina and following post-Katrina. The research gave voice to the observations of these participants and the various discipline practices they witnessed and were privy to in their schools. This study also helps to fill the gap in the perceptions of discipline in Orleans parish charter schools, specifically the K-8 level by offering the perspectives from veteran African American teachers who worked in pre-Katrina Orleans parish schools and post-Katrina K-8 charter schools. Several conclusions can be extracted from this study that are worthy of reflection regarding the experiences of African American veteran teachers with discipline pre and post-Katrina. As with any examination of discipline, this study reflects

the school climate as well as of this research including the perceptions of how those teachers viewed discipline practices, in the schools post-Katrina as veteran African American teachers.

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APPENDIX A:
INFORMED CONCENT

Informed Consent Form:

TEACHERS PERCEPTIONS AND BELIEFS OF DISCIPLINE IN K-8 CHARTER
SCHOOLS IN POST-KATRINA NEW ORLEANS

Researcher: My name is Jade Thompson-Myers, and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Houston-Clear Lake. You are invited to participate in a research study investigating the viewpoints and observations of discipline in Orleans Parish public charter schools post-Katrina. You were selected to be a possible study participant because you are a veteran African American teacher who was at least 35 years of age at the time of Katrina and taught in the Orleans parish public school system for at least 5 years at the time. In addition, you also currently teach or taught in a charter school post-Katrina. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be a part of the study.

The study: The purpose of this study is to uncover African American teachers' frame of reference and knowledge of occurrences of various discipline practices of African American students in K-8 charter schools post-Katrina. A second purpose is to look into those teachers' view of discipline practices that were practiced in Orleans Parish Public Charter Schools. If you agree to take part in this study you will be asked to take part in two interview sessions (that include an initial and follow-up interview for clarification of any responses), which will ask you about your experiences, viewpoints, beliefs, and

observations regarding discipline in the schools you worked/work in. The interviews will take approximately 90 minutes to complete total time (45 minutes each for the two interviews combined). You will be asked for basic demographic information, which will be held in strictest confidence.

You will be asked to participate in a follow-up personal interview to further clarify your initial interview responses. If you agree to the interviews, responses will be audio recorded. In addition to the recording, I will take written notes during the interviews. The audio recordings will be kept confidential, in a password-protected file and will not contain any identifying information. In any research reports, you will be referred to by a pseudonym. All recordings and notes will be destroyed (1) year after transcription.

Risks and Benefits: There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you take part in the study.

Compensation: Research participants will not receive individual compensation for participation.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept confidential, to the fullest extent permitted by law. The study will ask for basic demographic information and use pseudonyms as to not link any of the answers from the semi-structured interview questions to your identity. Interview transcriptions will be kept secure for three (3) years after this study ends. Audio recordings will be destroyed (1) year after transcription.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable answering. Your decision to take part in this study will not affect your current or future relations with University of Houston-Clear Lake. If you decide to take part in the study, you are free to end participation in the interview, skip questions, or stop at any time. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Contact and Questions: Jade Thompson-Myers is the researcher conducting this study. I am a doctoral candidate under the supervision of Dr. Janice Newsum, and Dr. Renee' Lastrapes Associate Professor, in the School of Education at the University of Houston-Clear Lake (UHCL). Should you have any questions or would like to speak to me personally, please feel free to contact me via email or by phone.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact Dr. Janice Newsum

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Office of Sponsored Programs by phone at (281) 283-3015 or by email at sponsoredprograms@uhcl.edu. You may also contact the UHCL Institutional Review Board (IRB) by email at sponsoredprograms@uhcl.edu.

Please print a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understand the above information. I have asked questions and I have received the answers. I agree to participate in this study.

Your Name (print)

Your signature _____ **Date**

INVESTIGATOR'S SIGNATURE

_____ **DATE** _____

APPENDIX B:

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR TEACHERS

1. What is your opinion about discipline practices in New Orleans schools Pre-Katrina and Post-Katrina?
2. To what extent do you feel that you, as a teacher, have/had a say in determining discipline practices in your school Pre-Katrina and Post-Katrina?
3. What types of communication regarding rules and discipline practices have been communicated to students?
4. What types of communication concerning rules and discipline practices do you think would be beneficial?
5. What behaviors displayed by students that deemed as inappropriate?
6. How were the inappropriate behaviors handled in your schools?
7. To what extent, if any do you think that school climate plays a role in discipline practices? If so, how?
8. What was the school climate in your school regarding discipline?
9. How were inappropriate behaviors handled in your schools?
10. What is your opinion of zero tolerance policies? Do you think these policies have reduced discipline infractions in your schools? Are there any other policies that were part of standard discipline in your school?
 - b. What are your thoughts on corporal punishment in schools?

11. What role do teachers play in school discipline practices? What roles do administrators play in school discipline practices? What are the roles do you believe teachers and administrators should play in discipline practices?
12. Do you feel there are any additional practices, policies, are observations that were present in your school regarding discipline that we have not discussed? If so, what are they?