

Article

“My Teacher Doesn’t Like Me”: Perceptions of Teacher Discrimination and School Discipline among African-American and Caribbean Black Adolescent Girls

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Abstract: This study examined the impact of perceived teacher discrimination on the school discipline of African-American and Caribbean Black adolescent girls. The findings are drawn from a nationally representative sample of ($n = 410$) African-American and ($n = 193$) Caribbean Black adolescent girls age 13 to 17 ($M_{age} = 15$). Results indicate that perceiving discrimination from teachers was associated with higher school discipline (e.g., *suspension, expulsion, and spending time in a jail, detention center*) for African-American girls. For Caribbean Black girls, higher household income and school bonding was associated with lower school discipline. Older Caribbean Black girls were also more likely to receive higher school discipline. However, perceiving discrimination from teachers was not associated with school discipline for Caribbean Black girls. The developmental significance and implications for future research are discussed.

Keywords: African-American girls; Caribbean Black American girls; discrimination; school discipline

1. Introduction

Suspensions have become the quintessential response to student misbehavior in the United States school system [1–5]. For example, recent data released by the U.S. Department of Education (2018) reports that during the 2015–2016 school year, approximately 2.7 million K–12 students received one or more out-of-school suspensions (OSSs) [6]. These rates have been stable over time; disaggregating national data by gender demonstrates that during the 2013–2014 school year, female students experienced the following: 324,818 received one or more OSSs; 876,918 received one or more in-school suspensions (ISSs); and 20,591 experienced school-based arrests [7]. Among those girls disciplined, Black girls were seven times more likely than White girls to receive one or more OSSs and over three times more likely than White girls to receive one or more ISSs [7]. Studies have found that experiencing school discipline that excludes a student from his or her typical learning environment (*exclusionary discipline*) is associated with long-term education outcomes, such as academic achievement, standardized test scores, contact with the juvenile justice system, and school dropout [8,9].

These exclusionary discipline practices have been linked to a mechanism called the school-to-prison-pipeline, a phenomenon that manifests through academic failure and school dropout [1]; this occurs through disproportionate detentions, suspensions, and expulsions that heighten adolescents’ presence in the juvenile justice system [10]. Although various scholars have examined the role of the school-to-prison pipeline on the experiences of boys of color [11,12], there is a dearth

of empirical literature on the exclusionary school discipline experiences of Black girls [13–16]. Thus, this quantitative study examines the discipline of African-American and Caribbean Black girls and their experiences with teacher discrimination. Ultimately, this study will address the gap in literature by focusing on the ethnic, racial, and gender differences in discipline, among African-American and Caribbean Black adolescent girls, in schools.

2. School Discipline: ‘Between’ and ‘Within’ Group Differences

African-American youth tend to represent all Black adolescents, often portraying them as a monolithic group. For instance, reports on the racialized and gendered experiences of Black adolescents’ educational trajectories and school discipline have used Black/African-American interchangeably, without noting the ethnicity of Black adolescents [13,17–20]. Regarding the little we do know about Caribbean Black adolescents and school disciplinary infractions, Mendez and Knoff (2003) found that Black adolescents were more likely to experience higher suspension rates in comparison to their Caribbean Black peers. Moreover, although Mendez and Knoff (2003) reported the ethnicity of Black adolescents, African-American and Caribbean Black adolescents were combined into one category (i.e., Black), making it impossible to note Caribbean Black students’ experiences within school [21].

While there is a dearth of research on the educational experiences of Caribbean Black adolescents within the U.S. context, studies have addressed Caribbean Black adolescents’ experiences in other countries. For instance, British researchers noted the disproportionate rates of school exclusion among African Caribbean—particularly Black males [22–26]. Within the context of the United States, because of the missed opportunity in examining the between and within group differences, it is difficult to keep track of Caribbean-born adolescents’ educational experiences [27,28]. As a result, the experiences of Black students who are Caribbean, Latino, and/or African are ambiguous.

Additionally, according to Thomas (2012), the migration patterns of Caribbean, or West Indian, immigrants have stemmed from 50 different island countries extending from Trinidad to Cuba [29]. In the United States, among the Black population, Caribbean Black youth are one of the largest subgroups yet, despite having slightly higher educational attainment in comparison to African Americans, their experiences are less often understood [30,31]. Using this information, specific strategies and tools targeted for African-American and Caribbean Black youth, respectively, could improve their academic success. For example, studies that have examined the experiences of African-American and Caribbean Black adolescents have often found that these groups have unique racialized experiences in the U.S. [32–36].

2.1. African-American Girls and School Discipline

Advocates hoping to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline have overwhelmingly focused on boys of color in general, and African-American boys in particular. While it is reported that Black boys are the most likely to be disciplined overall, findings also indicate that Black girls are more likely to be disciplined relative to non-Black girls [13]. This dearth of knowledge may exist in large part due to the misperception that girls pose less of a risk for behavior problems given what we know about their greater academic achievement in comparison to boys [37].

Within the last decade, there has been a rise in reports that have begun to demonstrate the scale, nature, and impact of school discipline on African-American girls specifically. In particular, nonprofit organizations such as the African American Policy Forum, the National Women’s Law Center, and the National Black Women’s Justice Institute have released an array of data and narratives around the impact that school discipline has on African-American girls. Seminal reports on this topic include *Race, gender and the school-to-prison pipeline: Expanding our discussion to include Black girls* [17], *Unlocking opportunity for African American girls: A call for educational equity* [20], *Black girls matter: Pushed out, overpoliced, and underprotected* [13], *Let her learn: Stopping school pushout for girls of color* [18], and *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools* [38]. All together, these reports demonstrate that school discipline has a longstanding impact on African-American girls and their communities.

Empirical work that has addressed school discipline demonstrates that African-American girls are exposed to negative messages about themselves on the basis of their identities as racial and gender minorities. In schools, for example, African-American girls are described as loud and ghetto, which does not align with mainstream views and expectations of femininity [39–41]. As a result, African-American girls' gendered and racialized experiences place them at risk for exclusionary discipline [16]. Previous research suggests that many African-American girls experience schools as sites of both surveillance and violence [16]. Additionally, African-American girls make up the fastest growing suspension rate in comparison to all other students, including males and females [13,42]. Further, current research finds that African-American girls are severely punished in schools for both minor and subjective offenses, such as wearing hairstyles and/or clothing that is deemed inappropriate [37]. These discipline experiences may be informed by perceptions of palatable portrayals of femininity, which are shaped by race- and sex-based stereotypes [18,43,44]. As such, African-American girls' gender expression is rendered inappropriate in school settings, and this directly feeds into the disproportionate likelihood of experiencing exclusionary school discipline [14]. In addition to a rise in school discipline, African-American girls have become increasingly represented in the juvenile justice system over the past thirty years [17]. These findings suggest that empirical research could benefit from attention on how African-American girls' racialized and gendered experiences in classrooms influence the likelihood that they are unfairly disciplined.

2.2. Caribbean Black Girls' Experiences in U.S. Schools

Although Caribbeans, Africans, and African Americans share a minority group status in the U.S., they have different histories and cultures [29,45]. Thus, their school outcomes differ when they are compared with African-American girls. Currently, 1.5 million Black immigrants reside in the U.S. and 60% are Caribbean [29]. As a result, the number of Caribbean children attending U.S. schools has increased, and these students have had to overcome obstacles to obtain their education. For instance, Calzada et al. (2015) found that it is common for educators to have little knowledge about the cultural aspects of immigrant students [46]. Additionally, studies that have examined Caribbean Black adolescents have found unique racialized experiences. For instance, using a nationally representative sample of both African-American and Caribbean Black girls, Thomas, Caldwell, Faison, and Jackson (2009) found that perceived teacher discrimination predicted lower academic achievement [36]. Seaton et al. (2008) found that Caribbean Black youth reported lower levels of self-esteem in comparison to African-American adolescents when experiencing higher levels of discrimination [35]. Butler-Barnes et al. (2018) found that perceived teacher discrimination was associated with lower levels of school bonding for Caribbean Black adolescents [32]. Studies that have examined Caribbean girls' experiences, specifically, have found that Caribbean Black girls had more Black friends and performed better academically than African-American girls [33]. Similarly, ethnic experiences and exclusion have been noted for African-American and Caribbean Black boys [22–26,47], with less attention given to Caribbean Black girls' experiences within school and academic success [48–50]. Our work contributes to the dearth of research in examining between and within variation of African-American and Caribbean Black adolescents contributing to existing literatures on the schooling experiences of Black American girls [51]. Conclusively, distinctions should be made between these two groups to understand how their education is impacted in schools.

3. Guiding Framework

In the current study, we draw on Garcia Coll and colleagues' (1996) Integrative Model for the Developmental Competencies of Minority Children [52]. This model highlights the social position (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, and gender) and environmental experiences (e.g., school, neighborhoods, and healthcare) of adolescents and the impact on developmental competencies. The use of this model in our study focuses on the social positioning of Black American girls and schools as an environment that may promote and/or inhibit positive developmental competencies. For instance, because of Black

American girls' (race/ethnicity and gendered experiences) racialized and gendered status in the United States, we purport that their experiences within school settings shape their educational trajectories. Additionally, based on previous literatures on Black adolescent girls' experiences within classroom settings [51,53–55], we sought to understand how perceived teacher discrimination and school bonding was associated with school discipline.

We also strived to understand the between and within variation of Black American girls by understanding how perceptions of teacher discrimination, school bonding experiences, and the impact on discipline differed based on being African American or Caribbean Black. Mendez and Knoff (2003) found that Black girls were suspended at higher rates in comparison to White and Latina girls [21]. Moreover, the authors noted that, of the Black girls who participated, some reported their ethnicity as African, Haitian, and Caribbean. Lastly, in building on the dearth of research, we examine a nationally representative sample of African-American and Caribbean Black girls, discrimination, school bonding, and school discipline.

3.1. Current Study

Given the gap of research literature on the classroom experiences of ethnically diverse Black American adolescent girls and school discipline, we sought to examine how perceived teacher discrimination and school bonding was associated with discipline at school for African-American and Caribbean Black girls. Based on the previous literatures, school discipline research has been largely focused on boys of color [11,13,24,47]. This study contributes to existing literature on school discipline and classroom practices for Black American girls [13,16,37,51,56]. With regards to school bonding, studies have documented the positive impact of school bonding on adolescents' academic achievement [57–59]. For instance, Rose, Joe, Shields, and Caldwell (2014) found that school integration (i.e., school bonding, school activity participation, and grades) was associated with positive well-being among a nationally representative sample of African-American and Caribbean Black adolescents [60]. Butler-Barnes et al. (2018) found among a longitudinal sample of African-American girls that sense of belongingness ("At my school, I feel like I belong when I am at school") was associated with higher levels achievement motivation over time [61].

In the current study, we hypothesized that perceived teacher discrimination would be associated with higher discipline at school (i.e., suspension, expulsion, and referrals to a detention center) and that reporting higher levels of school bonding would be associated with lower school discipline (because girls feel like they belong). Overall, our study contributes to the dearth of literature by examining the impact of teacher discrimination and school bonding on the school discipline of African-American and Caribbean Black adolescent girls.

3.2. Method Participants

The National Survey of American Life Adolescent Supplement (NSAL-A) was used to examine the between and within differences of Black American adolescent girls [62]. The sample is drawn from the larger adult NSAL sample. The sample is comprised of a national survey of African-American, Caribbean Black and non-Hispanic White adults. The NSAL is a stratified and multistage area probability sample of the U.S. population in the 48 contiguous states [62]. The following outcomes were examined in the NSAL data study: mental health outcomes, stressors, and risk/resilient factors [62]. The research protocol was approved by the Institute Review Board (IRB). Respondents were compensated \$50 for their participation in the research study. Between the years of February 2001 to June 2003, the Survey Research Center (SRC) staff at the University of Michigan administered the survey. The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), as a part of the Collaborative Psychiatric Epidemiology Surveys (CPES), funded the study.

The sample included 603 Black American adolescent girls (410 African Americans and 193 Caribbean Blacks). The sample was weighted and was representative of the African-American and Caribbean Black populations in the United States ranging from the age of 13 to 17 years old. The mean

age for our sample was 15 years of age. Ninety-six percent of the sample was in high school at the time of the NSAL Adolescent Supplement study. The average family income was \$28,000 (approximately \$26,000 for African Americans and approximately \$32,250 for Caribbean Blacks).

3.3. Procedure

The sampling procedures for the NSAL Adolescent Supplement is documented in other publications [35,63]. African-American and Caribbean Black households that included a family dynamic of one adult and at least one child were eligible to participate in the study. A random sampling technique was used to select adolescents. Family households that included more than one adolescent who was eligible to participate in the study resulted in nonindependence for some households. Thus, the adolescent sample was weighted adjusting for nonindependence and nonresponse rates in selection probabilities within households and across individuals. The data was weighted and post-stratified to approximate the national population distributions for gender and age among adolescent participants in the NSAL Adolescent Supplement.

Parental consent and assent were obtained from the adolescent's parent and/or legal guardian and adolescents, respectively. Adolescent interviews were conducted face-to-face using a computer-assisted instrument in their homes. Adolescent interviews that were not conducted face-to-face were conducted either entirely or partially by telephone (approximately 18%). The interviews lasted, on average, about one hour. The response rate was 80.6% for all adolescents (i.e., 80.4% for African Americans and 83.5% for Caribbean Black adolescents).

4. Measures

4.1. Demographic and Control Variable Information

The demographic and control variables used in the current study were household income and adolescent age.

4.2. School Bonding

Adolescents' connection to school was assessed with a nine-item School Bonding Scale. The scale was comprised of nine items. The items included: "Most of my teachers treat(ed) me fairly," "I (care/cared) a lot about what my teachers (think/thought) of me," "I (like/liked) school," "Getting good grades (is/was) important to me," "Homework (is/was) a waste of time," "I (like/liked) my teachers," "I (try/tried) hard at school," "I (feel/felt) as if I (don't/didn't) belong at school," and "Most of the things I learn(ed) in school are unimportant." The scale ranged from 1 = very true to 4 = not true at all. Higher scores reflected more positive school bonding experiences. The school bonding scale was adapted from a scale developed by Simons, Whitbeck, Conger, and Conger (1991) [64]. This scale was also used in previous NSAL-Adolescent studies [60]. The reliability for this scale was 0.71 and 0.63 for African-American adolescent girls and Caribbean Black adolescent girls, respectively.

4.3. Teacher Discrimination

To assess perceived teacher discrimination, a modified version of the Everyday Discrimination Scale was used [65]. The scale is comprised of three items ("Your teachers treat you with less respect than other students," "Your teachers act as if they think you are not smart," and "Your teachers act as if they are afraid of you"). This scale represents a frequency and sum of the number of perceived teacher discrimination reports ranging from 0 to 3 (lowest 0 to a highest 3) and has been used in previous studies [36]. The reliability for the modified version of this scale was 0.67 and 0.78 for African-American adolescent girls and Caribbean Black adolescent girls, respectively.

4.4. Discipline

Discipline at school were measured with three items: “Were you ever suspended from school for a day or longer?”, “Were you ever expelled from school?”, and “Have you spent time in a reform school, detention center, jail, or prison?” These items represent a frequency and sum of the number of discipline ranging from 0 to 3.

4.5. Data Analytic Strategy

MPLUS 7.3 was used in the statistical analyses to calculate the complex design-based estimates of variance. Utilizing MPLUS 7.3 allowed for the use of weighted data and to account for the stratified and clustered sampling design. The weighted data for the national population distributions for gender and age among African-American and Caribbean Black adolescents was post-stratified. Adolescent age ranged from 13 to 17 years of age. Full-Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) estimation was used to account for missing data. First, the univariate and bivariate descriptive statistics were calculated. Second, regression analyses for African-American and Caribbean Black adolescent girls were conducted to examine the hypothesized relationships among age, household income, school bonding experiences, and perceived teacher discrimination on discipline at school.

5. Results

5.1. Descriptive Statistics

The independent and dependent variables are in Table 1. Results indicated that African-American adolescent girls reported higher levels of teacher discrimination ($M = 0.55$, $SE = 0.05$ in comparison to Caribbean Black adolescent girls ($M = 0.48$, $SE = 0.05$). African-Americans girls also had higher reports of school discipline ($M = 0.57$, $SE = 0.04$) in comparison to Caribbean Black girls ($M = 0.38$, $SE = 0.03$). For school bonding, African-American ($M = 3.45$, $SE = 0.02$) and Caribbean Black girls ($M = 3.42$, $SE = 0.06$) had similar means. The bivariate correlations for the independent and dependent variables are in Table 2. For African-American girls, teacher discrimination was associated with higher school discipline ($r = 0.21$, $p < 0.01$). Teacher discrimination was also associated with higher discipline for Caribbean Black girls ($r = 0.22$, $p < 0.01$). School bonding was associated with perceiving less teacher discrimination for Caribbean Black girls ($r = -0.25$, $p < 0.01$) and receiving less school discipline ($r = -0.26$, $p < 0.01$). Similarly, school bonding was associated with perceiving less teacher discrimination for African-American girls ($r = -0.27$, $p < 0.01$) and receiving less school discipline ($r = -0.26$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Teacher Discrimination, School Bonding, School Discipline for Black American Adolescent Girls.

Variables	African-American	Caribbean Black
	<i>M (SE)</i>	<i>M (SE)</i>
Household Income	2.68 (0.06)	2.78 (0.13)
Adolescent Age	14.93 (0.09)	15.53 (0.05)
School Bonding	3.45 (0.02)	3.42 (0.06)
Teacher Discrimination	0.55 (0.05)	0.48 (0.05)
Discipline	0.57 (0.04)	0.38 (0.03)

Note: Data are weighted to be nationally representative. Standard errors are adjusted for sampling stratification, clustering, and weighting of data. Household income is approximately \$25,001 to \$50,000 for both groups.

Table 2. Correlations for Teacher Discrimination, School Bonding, and School Discipline for Black American Adolescent Girls.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Household Income	—	−0.05	0.01	−0.02	0.07
2. Adolescent Age	−0.01	—	−0.07	0.15 *	−0.01
3. School Bonding	−0.04	−0.11 **	—	−0.25 **	−0.26 **
4. Teacher Discrimination	−0.07	0.05	−0.27 **	—	0.22 **
5. Discipline	−0.04	0.08	−0.26 **	0.21 **	—

Note: Coefficients above the diagonal are for Caribbean Black adolescent girls, and those below the diagonal are for African-American adolescent girls. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

5.2. Linear Regression Analyses

5.2.1. African-American Adolescent Girls

Table 3 displays the results for the main regression models predicting school discipline. In addition, the model accounted for about 9% of the variance associated with discipline. The demographics that were controlled for in the model were household income and adolescent age. The findings revealed that school bonding was associated with lower levels of school discipline ($B = -0.43$; $SE = 0.11$, $p = 0.00$). Additionally, teacher discrimination was associated with higher levels of African-American girls' discipline ($B = 0.16$; $SE = 0.05$, $p = 0.01$).

Table 3. Linear Regression Analyses Predicting School Discipline from Teacher Discrimination and School Bonding for African-American Adolescent Girls.

Variables	B	SE	p
Household Income	−0.06	0.04	0.14
Adolescent Age	0.06	0.04	0.10
School Bonding	−0.43	0.11	0.00 ***
Teacher Discrimination	0.16	0.05	0.01 **

Note: ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

5.2.2. Caribbean Black Adolescent Girls

Table 4 displays the results for the main regression models predicting school discipline. In addition, the model accounted for about 20% of the variance associated with discipline. Household income was associated with lower levels of school discipline ($B = -0.17$; $SE = 0.02$, $p = 0.00$). The findings also revealed that older adolescents had higher school discipline ($B = 0.12$; $SE = 0.03$, $p = 0.00$). Lastly, school bonding was associated with less school discipline ($B = -0.72$; $SE = 0.16$, $p = 0.00$). Teacher discrimination was not associated with school discipline.

Table 4. Linear Regression Analyses Predicting School Discipline from Teacher Discrimination and School Bonding for Caribbean Black Adolescent Girls.

Variables	B	SE	p
Household Income	−0.17	0.02	0.00 ***
Adolescent Age	0.12	0.03	0.00 ***
School Bonding	−0.72	0.16	0.00 ***
Teacher Discrimination	0.15	0.09	0.11

Note: *** $p < 0.001$.

6. Discussion

Most of the present scholarship emphasizes the schooling experiences of African-American males [41]. Since Black boys have been the focus of discipline data, this leads key stakeholders to believe that Black girls are not affected by racial obstacles [13]. However, as Murphy, Acosta, and Kennedy-Lewis (2013) report, increased exclusionary discipline targets minority girls and especially African-American girls [66]. Research literature also indicates that exclusionary discipline that removes students from their learning environment can be associated with academic outcomes, juvenile justice system contact, and school dropout [8,9]. Thus, our research is centered on the discipline experiences of Black American girls in schools.

6.1. Teacher Discrimination and School Discipline

In the present study, we explored the impact of teacher discrimination on the school discipline of African-American and Caribbean Black girls. Our findings revealed that African-American and Caribbean Black girls are impacted differently by perceived discrimination in schools. First, we find that when African-American girls perceive discrimination from their teachers, they were more likely to experience school discipline in the form of suspension, expulsion, spending time in jail, and/or spending time in a detention center. These findings corroborate research from the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (2014) [9], reporting that the national average suspension rate for African-American females was 12% between 2011 and 2012, which was approximately three times greater than the national average for all females and two times the rate for White males. Our findings also align with current research indicating that Black girls are the fastest growing group in the juvenile justice system [13]. Overall, African-American girls are more than two times as likely to be referred to law enforcement and four times as likely to be arrested in school [7]. Thus, when discipline data is disaggregated by race and gender, our findings, along with current research, indicate that Black girls are at the highest risk for school discipline.

Contrary to our hypotheses, teacher discrimination was not associated with higher school discipline for Caribbean Black girls. Research indicates that African-American and Caribbean Black adolescents may perceive discrimination differently due to racial socialization and the variations in messages they receive from their family [67]. Since economic and educational opportunities stem from an individual's racial identity in the United States, Americans believe racial group membership holds great significance [68]. As a result, Caribbean Black adolescents are challenged with identifying based on race or ethnicity. For example, Caribbean Black youth who identify as Black Americans perceived increased experiences of discrimination and restricted opportunities [45]. However, those adolescents who identified as Caribbean perceived less discrimination, increased opportunities, and rewards for their work [45]. Immigrant children may be more optimistic in school causing them to lack the awareness of how they are racialized by their teachers. Caribbean Black students who think they have equal opportunities to achieve may lack the knowledge and ability to recognize that they are being discriminated against by educators. In research conducted by Kao and Tienda (1995), the authors reported that recently immigrated populations might believe strongly in mobility for themselves and their families, while later generations might be disenchanted by this belief, which is called immigrant optimism. More specifically, first and third or later adolescent generations, who have mastered English, may have more immigrant optimism than other groups [69]. This finding could be relevant for Caribbean Black girls, who have immigrant optimism, and may not perceive teacher discrimination causing it not to be associated with school discipline.

We also found that older Caribbean Black girls were more likely to report higher school discipline. Previous school discipline research for Black girls indicates that disciplinary consequences increase as girls age [70]; when analyzing the percentage of out-of-school suspensions that Black girls receive the following per grade level: grade 5 (17.4%), grade 6 (23.9%), and grade 7 (25.5%), respectively [70]. Further research could indicate similar findings for Caribbean Black girls. Our findings also indicate that higher income was associated with lower school discipline. Since teachers hold certain expectations

for their pupils based on student characteristics such as race, ethnicity, family income level, and past performance [71], future research should continue to explore Caribbean Black adolescent girls' experiences in K-to-12 settings to better understand the intersection of race/ethnicity, class, and aging.

6.2. School Bonding and Black American Girls

School bonding was associated with lower discipline infractions for both African-American and Caribbean Black girls. Positive relationships with teachers and staff promote a healthier psychological well-being. Research literature indicates that school bonding is a protective mechanism for Black American youth, which can offset the effects of perceived teacher discrimination on academic outcomes [72]. For instance, Bryan et al. (2018) found that school bonding mediated the relationship between perceived discrimination and academic achievement for African-American and Caribbean Black adolescent boys and girls. Butler et al. (2018) found that teacher discrimination was associated with lower levels of school bonding on African-American and Caribbean Black adolescent boys and girls [72]. With regards to African-American and Caribbean Black adolescent girls, Carter et al. (2017) found that having more same-race friends was associated with higher levels of school bonding among early developers [33]. Therefore, our research lends support to previous research stating that African-American and Caribbean Black girls have less discipline when they are bonded to the school. On the other hand, our findings further previous literature by demonstrating the positive impact that school bonding has on African-American and Caribbean Black adolescent girls.

Overall, our research findings align with three previous studies on this topic stating: (1) the perception of teacher discrimination is associated with negative outcomes for African-American adolescents [32,36]; (2) school bonding can buffer against perceived teacher discrimination for African-American students [72]; and (3) older Caribbean Black girls are disciplined more than those in lower grade levels [70]. However, we further this research by disaggregating the data by race and gender, while centering the experiences of African-American and Caribbean Black girls. Our research is able to contribute to the gap within the literature, by understanding the complex experiences of Black American girls and the differences that exist among Caribbean Black girls in the American school system.

6.3. Limitations

Overall, strengths of this study included examining school discipline among a nationally representative sample of African-American and Caribbean Black adolescent girls. We found that adolescent girls' perceptions of teacher discrimination and school bonding were predictive of school discipline. However, in this study there are a few limitations. First, we assessed adolescents' observations of perceived teacher discrimination; however, we did not have information on the racial/ethnic background of the teacher. Future research should consider teacher background to understand how racial biases and stereotypes may shape teacher–student interactions. For instance, cultural mismatch theory suggests that racial stereotyping and cultural mismatch are associated with higher office referrals [73,74]. Pigott and Cowen (2000) found that African-American teachers had more positive views of all their students (higher competencies and fewer problems) when compared to White teachers [75]. These findings indicate that the race of the educator could have significant impacts on the amount of discipline students receive. Additionally, the gender of the teachers was unknown in this study. We speculate that, in addition to considering the social identities of Black American adolescents, researchers should begin to explore the social identities of teachers to further understand teacher–student interactions and school discipline. We also did not know if Black American girls were being discriminated against due to their racial or gender status. For instance, gendered racism (being Black and female) is associated with psychological distress among African-American women [76]. Future research should continue examining the gendered racist experiences of Black American girls and be specific in measurement questions to understand if perceived discrimination experiences stem from Black-American girls because of their racial and/or gendered status.

Another limitation of the study was the lack of information about the school environment (e.g., amount and type of disciplinary infractions). For instance, our research focused on the amount of OSSs the youth received but does not address the amount of ISSs received. When examining the total amount of suspensions, Slate, Gray, and Jones (2016) found that Black girls had approximately 70% ISSs and 30% OSSs [70]. This indicates that analyzing ISSs could provide more information about the types of disciplinary infractions that Black girls receive. This information could also shed light on the negative impacts that ISSs have on Black girls' academic outcomes.

Next, we did not report school climate. For example, schools that value corporal punishment report more punitive responses toward students [77]. Finally, Benner and Graham (2013) found that perceptions of the school climate were associated with perceiving higher or lower levels of discrimination in high school and later on in college [78]. Thus, the inclusiveness or exclusivity of the school climate could impact the amount of discipline students receive.

7. Summary and Conclusions

The implications for this research involve recognizing both the racialized and gendered experiences of African-American and Caribbean Black girls. Instead of viewing Black students as a monolithic group, examining 'between' group and 'within' group differences will aid in providing culturally responsive interventions. Specifically, Black American girls need to be centered in the research literature. As for Caribbean Black girls, their experiences are unique within schools as well. More specifically, because of the perceptions of Black immigrant groups (negative stereotypes—e.g., Donald Trump's offensive comments) centering the experiences of Caribbean Black girls will be especially relevant when creating protective pathways that reduce unfair school discipline practices.

Our work also has implications for teacher training and teacher development. As our findings indicate, teachers play a major role in the academic achievement of students and especially in the lives of students of color. Therefore, culturally responsive teaching is necessary in order to value the racial and ethnic differences of all students in the classroom. During professional development sessions, teachers could learn the appropriate ways to relate to their students rather than evaluating them on White middle-class norms. These norms will never allow students of color to succeed and ultimately lead to their academic failure as some strive to obtain a goal, which they cannot meet. Teachers who are able to better relate to their students can promote their cultural values and teach material that is culturally relevant for all students, rather than just for some students. This could result in increased academic opportunities and success for minority students and specifically female students of color, who are often overlooked, ignored, or severely punished in schools.

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