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Public-school systems are criminalizing our young people: Giving voice to the marganilized

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Public-school systems are criminalizing our young people: Giving voice to the marginalized

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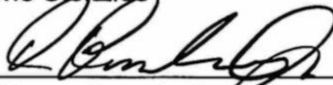
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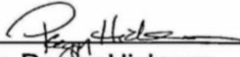
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Dr. Trent McLaurin

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the far too many of my former and current students who have been caught up in the school-to-prison pipeline. You are the reasons why this topic is my passion. Additionally, this dissertation is dedicated to TA. I am eternally grateful to have known you. Thank you for wanting to change how the criminal justice system works, for speaking the truth to those who may have not wanted to hear it, and for bringing light to so many dark places. You are missed. Rest in power.

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Abstract

A phenomenological qualitative study using Critical Race Theory and counter-storytelling was completed to investigate what K-12 public schools should be doing to keep young people out of the school-to-prison pipeline (STPP). This study took place in a large city in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Interviews were completed with former students of the researcher who were previously incarcerated, education professionals, and justice system professionals. Additionally, observations of court systems and document reviews were completed in order to triangulate the findings. Themes emerged around factors that lead to incarceration and the preferred practices to support young people to avoid or escape incarceration.

Keywords: advocacy, childhood experiences, counter-storytelling, Critical Race Theory, funding, policy, power, racism, school-to-prison pipeline, trauma

Chapter 1

Introduction to the Research

Public school systems are not doing enough to support the multitudes of young people who are at risk of being part of the juvenile or criminal justice systems. These public school systems often do not implement evidence-based practices with fidelity in order to adequately support the young people they are charged to educate. Too often school systems point to the poverty or the demographics of the neighborhood to explain why students are being forced into the juvenile and criminal justice systems (Fowler & Vitris, 2012). Public school systems must begin to prioritize the support of young people who are at risk of entering into the justice system. Additionally, and to the detriment of young people, public school systems and the juvenile- and criminal-justice systems often work independently of each other. If these systems would increase their communication and collaboration, it is likely that the support of young people would increase as well.

This chapter will clearly outline the goals and objectives of this dissertation. The hope is to provide justification of the significance of investigating what public school systems should be doing to provide additional support for young people who are at risk of being incarcerated. Moreover, this chapter will provide an introductory discussion for academic, educational, and justice system communities to understand the importance of increasing the support given to young people who are at risk of being part of the school-to-prison pipeline (STPP). Finally, this chapter will review the role that the researcher played in this study.

Background of the Study

There is a civil rights issue that is impacting most urban centers across the United States. Scores of young people, specifically in urban settings, have fallen through the cracks. On any

given day there are approximately 60,000 young people who are incarcerated in juvenile

facilities across the United States (ACLU, 2008). These young people—who are often young

people of color, males, individuals with disabilities, mentally ill, impoverished, and trauma-

exposed students—continue to be marginalized in the public school systems (Houchins, Shippen,

& Murphy, 2012).

Based on the 2017 juvenile court annual report in the state where this study took place,

74.6% of the young people with delinquency allegations in the state involved males. In

comparison to the racial/ethnic distribution of all youth in this state, the representation of Black

Non-Hispanic youth was disproportionate: 14.1% of the total population versus 37.8% of all

delinquency allegations. In 2017, seventeen-year-olds accounted for 26.5% of the juvenile

delinquency allegations, representing the most allegations for any group.

A young person first comes into contact with the juvenile or criminal justice system at the

time of arrest. When a young person gets arrested, the police then have the discretion to either

release the young person with a warning or conclude that there is insufficient evidence to process

them (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2004). Additionally, at the time of

arrest, the case could be diverted out of the system, often into alternative programs. Often, law

enforcement will make this decision of a case being diverted out of the system after speaking to

the victim, the young person, the parents, and reviewing the young person's prior contacts with

the juvenile justice system (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2018). If it is

determined that the case should proceed, the young person can either be sent to a juvenile-

detention facility or released to their guardian (The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency

Prevention, 2004).

After a young person is arrested and it becomes an active case, a detention hearing is held in order to determine if the young person should remain in a juvenile-detention facility until their adjudication, which is the court's determination of guilt or innocence (The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2004). In most states, this detention hearing must happen within 24 hours of the young person's arrest. Following the detention hearing, the young person is given a court date and formally becomes part of the STPP, which is the focus of this study. The subsequent section will provide clarity for the reader around the problem that this study addressed.

Statement of the Problem

There has been ample research around the STPP and the young people who are at risk of becoming part of it. Research around this issue has included, but is not limited to, school disciplinary practices, positive behavior supports and interventions, and community supports (Mergler, Vargas, & Caldwell, 2014; Osher et al., 2012; Wachtel, 2016). Despite this wealth of research, there is a gap in literature that listens to the voices of the young people who are part of the STPP and who have actually lived that experience. There is also a gap that is prevalent in the literature around how school systems and the juvenile and criminal justice systems should interact in order to support young people at risk of being incarcerated or who currently are part of the justice system.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant to the researcher for a variety of reasons. First and foremost, this study is important because the interaction with the juvenile- and criminal-justice systems have negatively and directly impacted numerous students of the researcher. The researcher has worked with a multitude of bright, kind, and hardworking young people who were current or

former students and were part of the STPP. Former students of the researcher have spent years

in adult prisons, some under the age of 18, awaiting trial for charges that were eventually

dismissed. Some of these former students were incarcerated for months while their family

worked to obtain the funds to bail them out for a minor offense. Other former students, whether

they were adults or not, were sent halfway across the state to spend years incarcerated in adult

jails with little or no access to education. Additionally, some former students were shipped to

juvenile-detention facilities in different counties for extended periods of time, away from their

families, communities, and school supports. No matter what the offense or who the young

person was, there was limited-to-no communication between the juvenile- or criminal-justice

system and the public school system regarding where the young people were located or how long

they were to be incarcerated. Additionally, the public school system that was supposed to

support and serve them let them down.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate what public school systems should be doing

to disrupt and dismantle the STPP. The results help to gain an understanding of what policy

changes need to be made in public school systems and within the juvenile and criminal justice

systems. The use of critical race theory and counter-storytelling serve to give a voice to

individuals who have been impacted by their interaction with the juvenile- and criminal-justice

systems.

Research Questions

In order to better conceptualize and then make recommendations for how the public-

school system can dismantle the STPP, this scholarship was guided by the following research

questions:

1. What collaboration should be happening between public school systems and the criminal and juvenile justice systems?

2. What collaboration should be happening between public school systems, young people who are part of the school-to-prison pipeline, and their families?

3. What additional supports should public school systems put into place in order to dismantle the STPP?

Definition of Terms

The terms in the section below are used throughout the study and are related to the school-to-prison pipeline (STPP) and associated topics. The definitions of these terms are meant to be a reference for the reader in order to provide clarity of how the researcher has defined each term.

Counter-storytelling: Counter-storytelling is the idea of hearing the voices of individuals who are not often listened to. According to Solorzano and Yosso (2001), "counter-storytelling is the method of telling the story of those experiences that are not often told (i.e., those on the margins of society) and a tool for analyzing and challenging the stories of those in power and whose story is material part of the dominant discourse" (p. 475).

Critical Race Theory (CRT): According to Daftary (2016), "CRT is unique in that it aspires to empower voices and perspectives that have been marginalized, and encourages a problem to be plated in social, political, and historical context while considering issues of power, privilege, racism, and other forms of oppression" (p.1).

Dismantle: According to the Cambridge Dictionary (2018), dismantle is to "take a machine or something complicated apart, usually to make it unable to work." In the context of

this proposed study, dismantle will reference taking apart the STPP and making it unable to work.

Education professionals: Individuals who work in the field of education in any capacity; educational policy work or within the public school system.

Justice-system professionals: Individuals who work in any capacity in the criminal or juvenile justice system. This could include police officers, attorneys, judges, probation officers, or individuals who work for public interest organizations.

School-to-prison pipeline (STPP): The STPP is a "collection of education and public safety policies and practices that push our nation's schoolchildren out of the classroom and onto the streets, the juvenile justice system, and the criminal justice system" (Archer, 2010, p. 868). These collections of policies and practices include zero-tolerance disciplinary policies, higher rates of suspension for young people of color, not implementing culturally competent pedagogy, etc.

Young person: For the purposes of this study, young people will be defined as school-aged individuals to individuals who are 28 years old.

Role of the Researcher

The researchers' primary professional goal is to support both current and former students and their families in order to keep young people out of the juvenile- and criminal-justice systems. Clarifying the role of the researcher provides context for the reader to develop an understanding of the perspective from which this study was completed. The researcher has had a variety of experiences interacting with the juvenile- and criminal-justice system, as well as working with young people and families who are navigating them.

In her twelfth year as an educator, the researcher has had the opportunity to work in and be exposed to the several public school and public charter school settings. The first exposure to a school population that had a high percentage of young people who were part of the juvenile and criminal justice system was at an Alternative Education for Disruptive Youth (AEDY) School. This school was founded and run by individuals who formerly worked at a court-mandated residential facility for juveniles. At this school, young people were either transitioning out of juvenile justice facilities or were up for expulsion hearings in the city's school district.

Additionally, the researcher has experience working at a comprehensive public charter school as the Transition Coordinator. This school serves approximately 1,100 students from grades 9-12 and considers itself to be a beacon of support to the community it serves. Many of the educators who work at this school are deeply rooted in the work they do there. The mission of this school is that:

> All students learn the academic and personal skills they need to be truly prepared for postsecondary success and able to pursue their dreams. We do this by closing the Opportunity Gap for all students in the community that we serve so that our students make choices that will lead to more life opportunities and a stronger community (Parent-Student Handbook, 2016).

This mission drives the daily decision making and determines the priorities for the school.

Seven years ago, when the researcher first started at this charter school, a zero-tolerance disciplinary policy was being utilized. The suspension rate was incredibly high and young people were getting suspended for minor infractions. Students and families were frustrated that students were being suspended at a high rate and missing valuable instructional time. Often, suspensions did not change behaviors.

Across the charter network and at this school, this is the sixth academic school year of implementing Restorative Practices as part of the disciplinary policy. According to the Parent-Student Handbook at this school:

> [W]e believe that true learning comes from understanding one's responsibility to oneself and to the community. Therefore, we fully embrace a Restorative Practices approach. This school-wide culture system is built around strengthening and repairing respectful and trusting relationships both in the classroom and across the community. Students and staff are expected to demonstrate positive behavior, prosocial thinking, and social-emotional competencies...This concept of honoring the community and the relationships within our community is a foundation of our program and our Code (p. 17-18).

The implementation of Restorative Practices has significantly impacted the feeling of belonging that young people have, decreased the amount of instruction time lost, and increase time students are in school and exposed to meaningful instruction and learning.

In addition to experience at an AEDY school and a public charter school, the researcher has been committed to being a support person for both former and current students who have become involved in the criminal or juvenile justice system. The researcher has been in contact with private and court-appointed attorneys, public defenders, and various public interest advocates. Additionally, the researcher has navigated difficult conversations with judges and district attorneys. This advocacy has exposed the researcher to court settings, prisons, jails, and other court-mandated placements.

As a White female, the researcher must bear in mind that she is in a place of power, particularly with the participants who were her former students. According to Schultz (1997), "Behind discussions of race, class, and gender as boundaries or barriers to research are issues,

often unarticulated and unaddressed, about power" (p. 503). Additionally, previous research has emphasized the need to examine who researchers are in relation to the contexts and people they study (Fine, 1994). With that information in mind, the researcher worked to ensure that former student participants clearly understood the process, were free to share their real thoughts without judgement, felt that their stories were heard and valued, and that all precautions were taken to conceal their identity.

Based on these experiences of the researcher, the researcher has assumptions that individuals in the public school system and the juvenile and criminal justice systems have not done enough to collaborate in order to support young people to keep them out of the STPP. In this researcher's view, public school systems need to increase their supports and communication with the juvenile and criminal justice system in an effort to support young people who are in danger of entering, are currently part of the school-to-prison pipeline, or returning from placement. The hope for this study was to gain information on how public school systems can collaborate to help dismantle the STPP.

Conclusion

This study found six major themes through data collection and analysis. Three themes focused on factors which lead to incarceration: childhood experiences, trauma, and power and racism. The final three themes emerged in regard to the preferred practices to support young people to avoid or escape incarceration: policy, resources, and advocacy.

The following chapters will present the current research around this issue, as well as the methodology for this study. These chapters will give clear context for the study, why this study is important scholarship, and what impact the researcher hopes to make around this issue.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

The objective of this chapter is to ensure that the reader has an understanding of mass incarceration and the school-to-prison pipeline and how these systems impact young people. This chapter will include information around interventions to be implemented in public school systems, the "man" or the justice system, and other institutions that have all worked to incarcerate young people.

Mass Incarceration and the United States

The United States has the highest rate of incarceration in the world (American Civil Liberties Union, 2018. Even though the United States' incarceration rate is at the lowest in the last twenty years, it still incarcerates a higher percentage of its population than any other country in the world (Pew Research Center, 2018). Alexander (2012) blames this systematic incarceration, specifically of people of color, on the United States' War on Drugs. Rather than using positive interventions such as probation, community service, or even dismissing cases, the criminal-justice system has quadrupled the percentage of drug arrests that result in prison time (Alexander, 2012). The 'tough on crime' politics of the 1980s and 1990s fueled an explosion in incarceration rates (ACLU, 2008). According to the American Civil Liberties Union's website (2018):

America, land of the free, has earned the disturbing distinction of being the world's leading jailer. Representing just 5 percent of the world's population, we now hold 25 percent of its inmates...By the close of 2010, America had 1,267,000 people behind bars in state prisons, 744,500 in local jails, and 216,900 in federal facilities—more than 2.2 million people locked in cages.

The fiscal costs and financial impact that incarceration has on the government, in addition to individuals who are incarcerated, their families and communities, are immense. The United States spends over $80 billion on incarceration each year. Annually local, state, and federal governments spend anywhere from $20,000 to $50,000 to keep an individual incarcerated (ACLU, 2008). The American Civil Liberties Union (2008) reports that prison system costs are the second-fastest growing category of state budgets, and prisons now account for 1 out of every 15 state general fund discretionary dollars.

According to Krisberg (2016), the conversation around how to reduce mass incarceration in the United States has reached the highest level of government and "several major philanthropic groups have established reducing mass incarceration as a top priority for their charitable activities" (p. 137). It is not only imperative to make sweeping policy shifts in the executive, judicial, and legislative platforms, but also to work to change mindsets around drug offenders, alternatives to incarceration, mandatory sentencing, and non-violent offenders (Krisberg, 2016).

Not only has the United States become the leader in incarcerating adults, there are now more than 130,000 adolescents, ranging from 10 to 21 years old currently residing in residential correctional facilities (Wexler, Pyle, Flower, Williams, & Cole, 2014). The causal link between "educational exclusion and criminalization of youth is called the school to prison pipeline" (Wilson, 2014, p. 49).

Schools and the School-to-Prison-Pipeline

According to McGrew, (2016) the term *pipeline* was first used in terms of adolescents and incarceration in 1996. This pipeline refers to the "pipeline of youth on the brink of becoming serious offenders" (McGrew, 2016, p. 343). The school-to-prison pipeline (STPP) is

rooted in the idea from the late 1980s and early 1990s that an entire upcoming generation were becoming *super-predators*. Super-predators were defined as "radically impulsive, brutally remorseless youngsters, including ever more pre-teenage boys...who do not fear the stigma of arrest, the pains of imprisonment, or the pangs of a conscience" (Kilgore, 2015, p. 120). This generation of perceived super-predators was being correlated to a rise in violent and drug-related crimes (Wilson, 2014).

The STPP is the "collection of education and public safety policies and practices that push our nation's schoolchildren out of the classroom and onto the streets, the juvenile justice system, or the criminal justice system" (Archer, 2010, p. 868). "It arises from low expectations, low academic achievement, incorrect referral or categorization in special education, and overly harsh discipline including suspension, expulsion, referral to law enforcement, arrest, and treatment in the juvenile justice system" (Redfield & Nance, 2016, p. 14). According to Houchins et al. (2012), the STPP "graphically depicts a diverse group of students with similar characteristics (i.e., underprivileged, of color, disabled, mentally ill, and having poor academic and behavioral experiences) being propelled away from educational opportunities towards criminalization and incarceration" (p. 271).

The Advancement Project (2017) reports that the combination of harsh school policies and the increased presence of police in school have created this pipeline. Out-of-school suspensions and expulsions and school-based arrests for minor incidents have pushed scads of children and youth out of school and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems (Advancement Project, 2017). "This is more than an education crisis; it is a racial justice crisis because the students pushed out through harsh discipline are disproportionately students of

color" (Advancement Project Website, 2017). This harsh school discipline has directly impacted

students who are already at risk of being swept into the STPP.

The purpose of this study was to investigate what public school systems should be doing

to disrupt and dismantle the STPP. This study bore witness to the voices from the individuals

who have been impacted by and been funneled into this pipeline. Additionally, this study

endeavored to gain insight from individuals who work in the systems who have created and

sustained the STPP. Research around this study included interventions to be implemented in

public school systems, the "man" or the justice system, and other institutions that have all

worked to funnel young people into the STPP. The state where this study was conducted has a

"highly decentralized juvenile justice system, characterized by an unusual amount of local

control and experimentation and a very diverse mix of private delinquency service providers to

supplement the public services network" (State Juvenile Delinquency Benchbook, 2017, p. 21).

Young people who enter into the STPP often share similar characteristics (Archer, 2010).

Youth in the STPP are often underprivileged, of color, experienced trauma, diagnosed with

disabilities, mentally ill, and/or have poor educational experiences. There are many variables

that directly contribute to the STPP. Osher et al. (2012) name some of these factors as "adverse

childhood experiences, poverty, racism, parent-child problems, and lack of access to appropriate

health care" (p. 284). It is the job of the public school system to target young people who have

these characteristics and proactively support them to avoid being swept into the justice system.

Many observers, advocates, and educators have crafted terms such as prison track and

STPP to depict a journey through school that becomes increasingly punitive and isolating for the

young people who are part of it (McGrew, 2016). Young people in the STPP are taught by

unqualified teachers, tested on unfamiliar material, retained in grades, put into restrictive special

education programs, regularly suspended, and moved to alternative placements. Unfortunately,

many young people will drop out or be pushed out of school if there is not a safety net of

supports in schools (McGrew, 2016).

The STPP operates directly and indirectly. According to the New York Civil Liberties

Union, schools directly send young people into the pipeline through zero-tolerance policies that

involve the police in minor incidents that often lead to arrests, juvenile detention referrals, and

even criminal charges and incarceration. Schools indirectly push young people towards the

criminal justice system by excluding them from school through suspension, expulsion,

discouragement, and high stakes testing requirements (New York Civil Liberties Union School

to Prison Pipeline Toolkit, 2016, p. 2). Young people are often pushed into the STPP because of

failing public schools, zero-tolerance disciplinary policies, alternative schools, and court

involvement (American Civil Liberties Union, 2008).

Zero-tolerance Disciplinary Policies

One of the largest factors that lead schools to funnel young people into the STPP is the

implementation of zero-tolerance disciplinary policies. According to the American Civil

Liberties Union website (2008):

Zero-tolerance policies criminalize minor infractions for school rules, while cops in

schools lead to students being criminalized for behavior that should be handled inside the

school. Students of color are especially vulnerable to push-out trends and the

discriminatory application of discipline.

Isolated incidents of high-profile school violence have led schools across the United States to

implement zero-tolerance discipline policies. Zero-tolerance discipline policies, which have

caused school discipline to be increasingly punitive, meant that minor classroom disruptions and

common school misbehaviors were criminalized for what formerly warranted a trip to the

principal's office. The increasingly punitive form of discipline, and the rising number of young

people who are suspended or expelled, directly impacted the number of young people who

dropped out of high school (Fowler, 2011).

Public schools across the country, especially those in urban centers, have started to look

and act more like criminal justice centers (Caton, 2012). In Alexander's book, *The New Jim*

Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness (2012), she writes:

> For most people coming out of prison, a criminal conviction adds to their already
>
> problematic profile. About 70 percent of offenders and ex-offenders are high school
>
> dropouts, and according to at least one study, about half are functionally illiterate. Many
>
> offenders are tracked for prison at early ages, labeled as criminals in their teen years, and
>
> then shuttled from their decrepit, underfunded inner city school to brand-new, high-tech
>
> prisons. The communities and schools from which they came failed to prepare them for
>
> the workforce, and once they have been labeled criminals, their job prospects are forever
>
> bleak (p. 150).

Schools need to do a much better job of becoming a place of support for young people in order to

not track them for prison at an early age and become a champion for young people whose

demographic data predict that they will be funneled into the STPP.

School- and Community-based Interventions to Dismantle the STPP

There is a great deal of research around what interventions public school systems should

be using in order to support young people who are at risk of entering into the STPP. Schools are

simply not implementing the interventions that research has proven are effective in order to

support young people who are at risk of entering the STPP. This may be due to a lack of funding, understanding, or a prioritization of resources.

There are a multitude of evidence-based practices that can help to decrease and potentially dismantle the STPP. These evidence-based practices are designed to be implemented within the community, the family, and/or the school. According to Houchins, Shippen, & Murphy (2012), there is an "inexplicable connection between school, community, and incarceration...better prepared professionals can make a difference in the lives of youth in the STPP" (p.271). This section will explore the interventions, practices, and supports that should be implemented within public school systems to support young people who are at risk of entering into the STPP.

The New York Civil Liberties Union's School to Prison Pipeline Toolkit suggests that "investing in education rather than discipline and corrections is a more equitable, effective, and financially sound option" (2017, p.5). Increasing school capacity and funding to serve all young people is a way to support young people who may be forced into the STPP. Student engagement must start early. It is possible to predict which young people will drop out of school, and possibly be pulled into the STPP, based on their engagement in early elementary school (Reschly & Christenson, 2006).

Schools must start to be better at "equipping students with the knowledge and support systems to address the root causes of misbehavior" (Mergler et al., 2014, p. 26). According to Smith and Stormont (2011), "a major predictor for school dropout is school suspension due to inappropriate behavior, and currently more than 70% of the adult prison population is composed of high school dropouts" (p. 15). Rodman (2007) states that "more children will have better life

outcomes if proactive strategies are added to reactive ones in assisting children and youth" (p. 48). Schools should implement proactive strategies in order to combat the STPP.

The first shift in schools that should be happening is a change from zero-tolerance disciplinary policies to restorative-justice disciplinary policies. Restorative-justice disciplinary policies are more proactive than zero-tolerance policies. This move has allowed schools to move away from punitive, zero-tolerance disciplinary policies towards disciplinary policies that not only improve school academics, but also overall school safety and culture.

Restorative Justice Methods

Restorative justice methods, used to address student misbehavior, are similar to that used in the criminal justice system. Restorative practices are branches of social science "that study how to build social capital and achieve social discipline through participatory learning and decision-making" (Wachtel, 2016, p. 1). According to Payne & Welch (2015), restorative justice methods "focus on repairing the harm caused by crime involving offenders, victims, and the community through conferences that often sanction community service or restitution rather than with punishments that encourage recidivism" (p 540).

Restorative practices can be defined in school settings as a set of practices that include methods for preventing infractions in the first place, with an emphasis on an "ethos of care and social and emotional learning" (Gregory, Clawson, Davis, & Gerewitz, 2016, p. 328). The aim of restorative practices is to develop community and to manage conflict and tensions by repairing harm and rebuilding relationships (Wachtel, 2016).

According to the American Civil Liberties Union website (2008), "restorative practices hold students accountable, but are designed to keep the rule-breaker in the community and remediate the cause of the misbehavior to present repeated offenses." This focus on keeping

young people in the school building as part of the learning process is an imperative part of

restorative practices. Restorative practices support young people by helping them stay in school

and miss less instructional time, while still holding them to high expectations. These restorative

justice methods allow educators to be creative in individually assigning consequences that more

directly relate to the actual behavior of the student. Restorative justice practices have reduced

the number of suspensions and expulsions, as well as making a noticeable change in school

climate and culture (Mergler et al., 2014).

Additional Interventions and Supports

Another way to increase positive school culture and decrease the flow into the STPP is to

increase teacher capacity. Teacher understanding of what supports and services are effective for

young people who are at risk for being swept up in the STPP is imperative. According to Osher

et al., 2012, positive student-teacher relationships are an incredibly important variable for

decreasing the likelihood of young people being suspended or expelled. It is important that

teachers have an understanding of student's developmental. Teachers also need to be aware of

how factors such as culture and trauma affect the behavior of the young people that they interact

with during the school day. Osher et al. (2012) stated:

> [A]ll students are more likely to thrive in safe, caring, positive, and engaging learning
>
> environments characterized by positive and supportive relationships among adults,
>
> students, and families, where children's cognitive as well as Social and Emotional
>
> Learning (SEL) are supported and challenged to grow. Students of color who are
>
> economically disadvantaged with social and behavioral challenges are less likely to have
>
> access to such environments, therefore, are the most likely to enter the STPP. Building

teachers' and school leaders' capacities to create and sustain the conditions for learning

and break the STPP is crucial for those students as well as society (p. 290).

It is imperative that teachers have a deep understanding of the variety of factors that young

people bring with them to school on a daily basis in order to support them and help decrease the

likelihood of them entering the STPP. There needs to be space in teacher training programs that

allow educators to learn about who to support the young child.

It is not only important for teachers to have positive relationships with young people, but

it is also important that young people have other positive adults surrounding and supporting

them. In this way, school-based mentoring can be used as an intervention to support young

people who are considered at-risk and who may have factors that increase their chance of being

part of the STPP (Smith & Stromont, 2011). School-based mentoring should also support young

people and their families to access the appropriate supports needed in schools and the

community.

An additional intervention that will decrease the amount of young people in the STPP is

focused around ensuring young people are literate. Large numbers of young people who are

currently incarcerated are "marginally literate or illiterate" (Quinn, Rutherford, Leone, Poirier,

2005, p. 339). Research has shown that incarcerated youth experience significant reading

deficits, reading at an average of 2 years below their non-incarcerated peers (Foley, 2001). In

addition, professionals have started to call the juvenile system the "default system" for youth

who cannot read, write, or spell well (Quinn et al., 2005, p. 340).

Another set of interventions that schools can implement in order to decrease the

likelihood that young people enter the STPP are Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

(PBIS). PBIS is a system of instructional interventions within a school community that are

proactive in establishing clear behavioral expectations and reward young people who follow

those expectations (Mergler et al., 2014). Sugai and Horner (2020) state that "PBIS is not a

specific program or curriculum but instead a multitiered framework for organizing and achieving

capacity to implement effective academic and behavioral practices" (p. 121).

Schools that implement PBIS have decreased their reliance on exclusionary disciplinary

practices. PBIS has been "shown to have other benefits as well, including improved academic

performance, increased attendance, improved school climate, and sense of school safety"

(Mergler et al., 2014, p. 28).

In addition to literacy and positive behavior interventions and supports, schools need to

do a better job of addressing the whole child, their learning and their social and emotional needs.

Social and emotional learning helps children learn critical skills like recognizing and managing

their emotions, building positive relationships with others, and making responsible decisions

(Mergler et al., 2014). Young people who participate in social and emotional learning programs

learn skills in order improve academic achievement and decrease their misbehavior. Social and

emotional learning programs have shown to directly decrease the number of disciplinary referrals

and increase positive school interactions (Mergler et al., 2014).

Individuals who are part of the justice system also have an important role in partnering

with schools to dismantle the STPP. According to Langberg and Fedders (2013), juvenile

defenders can incorporate their clients' education histories and records in order to give judges

context of their client prior to sentencing. Langberg and Fedders (2013) also state:

[I]ncorporation of their clients' education histories and knowledge of education law can

assist a defender in making arguments for diversion from the juvenile system; improving

negotiation; litigating pretrial motions; arguing defenses related to capacity and intent;

making creative dispositional arguments; and obtaining essential educational services for

the client, all of which can reduce the client's chances of further juvenile and criminal

system involvement (p. 653).

Additionally, diversion programs that incorporate a variety of community- and school-based

supports are imperative for youth to participate in instead of directly funneling them into juvenile

or criminal justice placements. In 2014, the city Police Department where this proposed study

took place and the city's Department of Behavioral Health launched a School Police Diversion

Program in collaboration with the city's school district. The city's Police Department is using

this diversion program as an alternative to arrest. The hope of this program is that professionals

intervene with a range of social services and counseling for students—and, crucially, their

parents or caregivers—when children first get into trouble. Collaborating partners include

Family Court, the District Attorney's Office, the Department of Behavioral Health, and the City

Defenders' Association. This program states that "by providing community-based social

services to students as an alternative to arrest, the Police School Diversion Program can address

young people's needs while keeping them out of the justice system, thereby increasing their

chances of staying in school and reducing the risk of future misbehavior" (School Police

Diversion Program, 2019) This collaboration needs to be happening at a much higher rate and

more proactively in order to dismantle the STPP.

Finally, improving the number of alternative education programs is a way that schools

can decrease the number of young people who enter the STPP. Effective alternative education

programs include effective teachers, low teacher-pupil ratio, flexible scheduling, and high-

expectations for young people (Shippen, Patterson, Green, & Smitherman, 2012). In order to

improve alternative education programs, teachers should be trained in a specific set of skills and

strategies to work with young people who are in danger of entering the STPP. A teacher who is highly prepared to work with young people with the potential to enter the STPP is the most irreplaceable factor in positive student outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 1998).

Schools are not implementing interventions and supports to the level necessary to combat young people being funneled into the STPP. Young people of color, with disabilities, who grow up in poverty, and who are exposed to high levels of trauma need more supports from school systems and school systems should be expected to provide them.

The System

Before the United States established juvenile courts and the juvenile justice system, there was not a juvenile delinquent category. Instead, there was an "infancy defense" which was available to children between the ages of seven and fourteen. Additionally, a child under the age of seven was not presumed capable of intentionally committing a crime. Prosecutors could not present evidence to show that individual children in this age group were capable of criminal intent. Additionally, children who were over the age of fourteen could not use the infancy defense at all but instead they were prosecuted and punished just like adult criminals.

During the 1800s across the United States, there was dissatisfaction with this approach. In order to reform this approach, the state that this proposed study will take place in created one of the first "Houses of Refuge" for children. As of 1939, the Juvenile Court Law gives the juvenile court's jurisdiction over children up to the age of eighteen.

The Juvenile Act of 1972 "codified the rights of juveniles to receive written notice of charges against them, to be assisted by counsel, to confront accusers, and to be convicted only upon proof beyond a reasonable doubt" (State Juvenile Delinquency Benchbook, p. 3.1).

Currently, the Juvenile Act of 1972, along with amendments in 1977, 1980, 1981, 1986, and 1989 states the following:

- The 1977 change established 10 years old as the minimum age at which a child could be considered delinquent, and deleted "ungovernable behavior" from the definition of "delinquent acts" so that from then on courts would deal with cases of ungovernability as "dependency" rather than delinquency matters.

- A 1980 law authorized fingerprinting and photographing of juveniles and required that district attorneys receive notice before juveniles in secure custody could be stepped down to a less-secure facility.

- In 1981, and again in 1986 and 1989, the Juvenile Act was amended to relax confidentiality restrictions related to the records of some categories of juvenile offenders.

- The 1986 amendments also for the first time gave victims and their counsel and supports the right to attend juvenile hearings, and prohibited the entry of a consent decree without the district attorney's assent (State Juvenile Delinquency Benchbook, p 3.2- 3.3)

In 2010, over 70,000 young people were detained on any given day within the juvenile justice system across the United States (Southern Education Foundation, 2014). According to data from the U.S. Department of Justice's office of juvenile justice, of the young people detained or committed to the juvenile justice system in 2010, over 41 percent were African American (Southern Education Foundation, 2014). Also in 2007 a, "survey of youth living in residential facilities in the United States reflected the same pattern in which 66 percent of the juveniles were children of color: 41 perfect of the juveniles were African American and 22 percent were Hispanic" (Southern Education Foundation, 2014, p. 7).

In 2016 in the United States, there were 850,500 cases handled in the juvenile justice courts. The vast majority—614,900 cases—were charged to young men. Over half of these cases (480,400) were charged to young people who were minorities. Of the young people who were minorities with cases in 2016 in the juvenile courts, 302,100 were Black (OJJDP Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics, 2018).

Children under the age of eighteen comprise nearly 25% of the state population where this study was conducted. Of the total youth population, approximately 85% are White, approximately 15% are African American, and less than 10% are Hispanic or Asian. Although over half of juvenile court delinquency dispositions in 2001 involved White children, the following statistics were reported for non-White children who were charged in juvenile court: African American children (approximately 30%), Hispanic children (approximately 8%) and Asian children (approximately 1%). The discrepancies of charging young men and young people of color at a higher rate than their White counterparts is consistent across time (OJJDP Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics, 2018) and is yet another reason that schools need to be doing more to ensure that young men of color are not funneled into the STPP.

Currently, in the state where this study took place, the juvenile system is highly decentralized, giving individual counties an unusually high level of local control. Judges in each county decide what facilities young people will be committed to and wherever they go they are still subject to local court custody and supervision.

Juvenile Court Placements

In the state where this study took place, there are over twenty secure-juvenile-detention facilities, three private facilities, and approximately twenty that are operated by individual or multiple counties. According to the overview of the state's juvenile justice system, there are

over 750 beds in these detention facilities, admitting upwards of 20,0000 individuals in a year,

with the average length of stay being ten days.

In addition to county detention centers, there are also state-operated institutions. There

are currently twelve state-operated institutions with a capacity of over 600 beds. Some of these

beds are in Youth Development Centers, Youth Forestry Camps, and Secure Treatment Centers.

In addition, some of these beds are in specialized programs that serve individuals with substance

abuse issues, sex offenders, individuals classified as emotionally disturbed, individuals with

intellectual disabilities, and individuals with dual diagnoses.

Furthermore, in this state, there are over 500 private providers of delinquency services.

These services include "secure placement programs, group homes, day treatment programs,

alternative schools, wilderness programs, shelter and foster care programs, and specialized

mental health, drug and alcohol, and sex offender treatment programs. All of these programs are

privately run but are inspected by the Department of Public Welfare. This means that in a state

of approximately 12 million total people, there over 500 detention facilities and/or providers of

juvenile justice program (United States Census Bureau, 2016).

It is startling that the average cost per year for one youth to be housed in a juvenile

detention center in the United States is on average, $170,820, compared to $11,282 for a year of

high school (New York Civil Liberties Union, 2016). This funding, used cover the costs of

housing, supervising, treatment, and otherwise meeting the needs of youth, makes it clear that

there is a prioritization of incarceration over education.

The Man

Within the juvenile justice system, there is a series of individuals who are involved either

directly or indirectly in the arrest, sentencing, incarceration, and hopefully support of young

people who are part of the STPP. Police officers, defending attorneys, prosecuting attorneys, and

probation officers are just some of the people involved with young people while they are part of

the juvenile or criminal justice systems.

Police officers are often the first individuals who work outside of the school building who

young people come into contact with when they become part of the STPP. Within the city where

this scholarship was undertaken, the police department has over 6,600 sworn members and 800

civilian personnel. The police department, divided into twenty-one police districts, work in over

55 locations across the city and is the fourth largest in the United States.

The city's police department also has a police-assisted diversion program. This diversion

program is offered for "low-level, nonviolent drug, prostitution, and retail theft offenses." The

goal of this program is to divert individuals away from the criminal justice system and instead

addresses issues surrounding access to basic needs and appropriate medical care. This program,

both free and voluntary, is a collaboration between the police department, service providers, and

community residents.

In addition to the police department, young people also interact with attorneys from the

Defenders' Association following their arrest and subsequent participation in the STPP. The

Defenders' Association in the city of the study is an independent, nonprofit corporation that is

"dedicated to the ideal of high-quality legal services for indigent criminal defendants" (City

Defenders' Association Website, 2019). Currently, there are over 200 full time assistant

defenders who represent individuals in adult and juvenile state courts, at civil and criminal

mental health hearings, and as child advocates for dependent and neglected children.

The attorneys in the City Defenders' Association represents approximately seventy

percent of all individuals who are arrested in the city being studied. These individuals are

members of the state's bar. Furthermore, the attorneys who work for the Defenders' Association are not able to have a private practice or participate in political activities.

When young people are first detained, if they are unable to afford a private attorney, they are able to gain access to court appointed attorneys. According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), "the right to counsel for juveniles was established in 1967 with the landmark case In re Gault, 387 U.S. 1, 87 S. Ct. 1428 (1967)" (OJJDP, 2004, p.1). Additionally, young people must have the following protections:

- Provide access to quality (not cursory) legal counsel for all youth in the juvenile justice system; and

- Ensure that juveniles consult with counsel at the outset of the juvenile justice process (before waiving their right to counsel) and at every subsequent step, through post disposition (OJJDP, 2004, p.1).

These protections are in place to ensure that young people are provided with an adequate defense in juvenile or criminal court and avoid self-incrimination (OJJDP, 2004). Regretfully, many minors never fully understand their rights when they enter into the juvenile or criminal justice system. According to the OJDDP (2004), "In some jurisdictions, as many as 80 to 90 percent of youth waive their right to an attorney because they do not know the meaning of the word 'waive' or understand its consequences" (p. 1).

Although rights are in place to protect young people once they are funneled into the juvenile or criminal justice system, many of the defense lawyers lack time, resources, and training. Moreover, the vast majority of defense lawyers, some of them representing young people, "do not confer with their clients in a meaningful manner, research relevant case law,

review files, conduct necessary pre-trial investigations, secure necessary expert assistance, or prepare adequately for hearings, dispositions and appeals" (OJJDP, 2004).

In addition to defending attorneys, young people who are part of the STPP also interact with attorneys in the District Attorney's office. The District Attorney's office employs more than 600 lawyers, detectives, and support staff. According to the District Attorney's website in the city of this study, the office "provides a voice for victims of crime and protects the community through zealous, ethical, and effective investigations and prosecutions."

In addition to the police department's diversion program, the District Attorney's office also has a diversion program that was founded within the last ten years. The District Attorney's office Diversion Courts Unit works to identify cases where offenders can still be held accountable for their actions but through participation in non-trial programming that is focused on preventing further involvement in the criminal justice system. The programs that are part of the Diversion Courts require offending individuals to participate in a variety of requirements including community service, educational and therapeutic programming, and specialized treatment focused on addressing substance abuse and mental health issues.

After young people who have become part of the STPP interact with police officers, defending attorneys, and prosecuting attorneys, they are often subsequently assigned a probation officer. In the city that this proposed study will take place in, there is an adult probation office and a juvenile probation office. Probation can be defined as a "court-ordered period of correctional supervision in the community, generally as an alternative to incarceration. In some cases, it can be a combined sentence of incarceration followed by a period of community supervision" (Office of Justice Programs Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011).

There are almost 200,000 adults on probation in the state where this research was

conducted. Additionally, the probation department in the city being examined supervises

approximately 100,000 offenders and cases on an ongoing basis. Each probation officer has over

approximately 150 individuals on their caseload, making it difficult to support each individual.

In 2008, there were 1.7 million delinquency cases handled in the juvenile courts across

the United States. Of those 1.7 million cases, approximately 34% or 556,300 young people were

placed on probation (Office of Justice Programs Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011). In some

instances, young people are ordered to be on probation after they are convicted in court. In

contrast to this, sometimes young people who have not been formally convicted in court

voluntarily agree to abide by certain probation conditions. Often, this comes with the

understanding that if they successfully complete their probationary period, their case will be

terminated without any formal processing (Office of Justice Programs Bureau of Justice

Statistics, 2011).

According to the juvenile probation office in the city of this study, "justice is best served

when the community, victim, and youth receive balanced attention and gain all tangible

outcomes from their interaction with Juvenile Probation (City Department of Juvenile Probation,

2018). In this city, there are over 30 probation officers who provide direct supervision to

approximately 750 young people with an average caseload of over 20 (City Judicial District

Annual Report, 2016).

Summary

In the United States, mass incarceration is a civil rights issue. According to the Pew

Research Center (2018), despite the fact that the United States' incarceration rate is at the lowest

in the last twenty years, the United States still incarcerates a higher percentage of its population

than any other country in the world. In this same vein, the public school systems and the

criminal and juvenile justice systems have a major issue of not supporting young people who

become part of the STPP. In spite of all of the current research around the STPP, there is a lack

of literature that focuses on the perspective of individuals who have been incarcerated. This

study provides insight to assist in closing this gap in literature by giving a voice to individuals

who were previously incarcerated. Additionally, the hope of this study is to change policy

around the STPP and the actions of schools and the "system."

Chapter Three

Introduction and Research Questions

Based on the Office of Juvenile Justice Programs and Delinquency Prevention (2018), approximately 3,500 youths are being held in juvenile facilities in the state being studied, behind only California and Florida. Additionally, there are approximately 14,500 juveniles housed in adult facilities across the United States (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2000). The largest proportion, roughly 9,100 youths, are housed in local jails, and the remaining youths are housed in adult prisons (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2000).

The purpose of this study was determine how public school systems can work to decrease the number of young people being held in juvenile and adult facilities and eventually to completely break down the school-to-prison pipeline. The overarching research questions of this study are the following:

1. What collaboration should be happening between public school systems and the criminal and juvenile justice systems?

2. What collaboration should be happening between young people who are part of the STPP, and their families?

3. What additional supports should public school systems put into place in order to dismantle the STPP?

Based on the extant literature, public school systems have interventions in place to support young people both proactively and reactively. Examples of these systems of supports include restorative disciplinary practices in place of zero tolerance disciplinary practices, divergent programs that give young people alternative consequences other than an arrest, and trauma-informed interventions (Fowler, 2011; Kupchick, Green, & Mowen 2015; Payne &

Welch, 2015). However, too often, public school systems remain siloed and completely isolated from the criminal and juvenile justice systems and other agencies who support young people outside of the school building.

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach using both Critical Race Theory and counter-storytelling. This chapter includes a discussion on the research type and perspective, the context, the role of the researcher, participant selection, data collection, data analysis, and trustworthiness criteria.

Research Type and Perspective

The following section will describe the qualitative research type that this study implemented, along with Critical Race Theory and counter-storytelling.

Qualitative Research

To provide adequate answers to the research questions, the researcher utilized qualitative research methodologies. Creswell (2013) defines qualitative research as the following:

Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks to inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call to change (p.44).

Using a qualitative approach, the author specifically implemented a qualitative, phenomenological approach. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), "phenomenological approaches seek to explore, describe, and analyze the meaning of individual lived experience" (pp. 17-18).

This study used a phenomenological approach to gain information from individuals who have been part of, exposed to, or work in the juvenile or criminal justice system. The participants were individuals who were previously incarcerated, professionals who work in the public school systems, and professionals who work in the juvenile or criminal justice system or related organizations.

Critical Race Theory

In addition to the qualitative phenomenological approach, this study utilized critical race theory and counter-storytelling. According to Solorzano and Yosso (2001), critical race theory is "an attempt to understand the oppressive aspects of society in order to generate societal and individual transformation" (p. 471-472). Critical race theory recognizes that racism is endemic and moreover that racism is deeply entrenched in the framework of our society (Creswell, 2013; Dixson & Rousseau, 2006). Additionally, the notion behind critical race theory is that "race remains a salient factor in U.S. society in general and in education in particular" (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006, p. 1).

Counter-storytelling. One tenet of critical race theory is counter-storytelling. "Counter-storytelling is a method of telling the story of those experiences that are not often told (i.e., those on the margins of society) and a tool for analyzing and challenging the stories of those in power and whose story is material part of the dominant discourse" (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 475).

Additionally, according to Solorzano and Yosso (2001), counter-storytelling serves four

functions:

> (1) [B]uild community among those at the margins of society by putting human and
>
> familiar face to educational theory and practice; (2) they can challenge the perceived
>
> wisdom of those at society's center by providing a context to understand and transform
>
> established belief systems; (3) they can open new windows into the reality of those at the
>
> margins of society by showing the possibilities beyond the ones they live and
>
> demonstrating that they are not alone in their position; and (4) they can teach others that
>
> by combining elements from both the story and the current reality, one can construct
>
> another world that is richer than either the story or the reality alone (p. 475).

The purpose of using counter-storytelling in this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the

perspective of individuals who were previously incarcerated and what public school systems

could have done to better support them to avoid being part of the school-to-prison pipeline

(STPP). Furthermore, the use of counter-storytelling in this study gave a voice and a deeper

sense of humanity to those individuals on the margins of society.

Context of the Study

The following section will provide context for the demographic data, educational data,

and juvenile and criminal justice system information for the city in which this study was

conducted.

City Demographic Data

This study took place in a Mid-Atlantic state of the United States. The participants live

in or have a direct tie to a large metropolitan city, which will now be known as Westown. Based

on the 2016 United States census, Westown is home to over 1.5 million people.

The racial breakdown of Westown is 44.8% White, 44.2% Black or African American, 0.9% American Indian or Alaska Native, 7.4% Asian, 0.2% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 2.6% Two or More Races, and 14.4% Hispanic or Latino (United States Census Bureau, 2016). The median household income in Westown is $38,253, while 25.4% of the residents in Westown live in poverty (United States Census Bureau, 2016). In 2016, there were over 250 homicides in Westown with a total of approximately 15,000 violent crimes.

Educational System

According to the State Department of Education's 2016-2017 enrollment report, there are over 198,000 students enrolled in Westown's K-12, publicly-funded schools. Of these students, approximately 150,000 students are enrolled in the city's school district and about 50,000 students are enrolled in publicly-funded charter schools.

During the 2016-2017 academic school year, there were around 12,000 students suspended from the city's public school district. Twelve schools in the district suspended 200 of their students during this academic school year. Of these approximately 12,000 students who were suspended, over 1,000 students were suspended three or more times for the 2016-2017 academic school year.

Additionally, incident types are reported to evaluate the number of serious incidents that occurred in a given school over an academic school year. For the 2016-2017 academic school year, there were over 1,000 incidents listed as violent assaults, over 200 drug and alcohol offenses, and approximately 3,000 incidents coded as disorderly conduct.

Criminal Justice System

The state where this research was undertaken has a State Department of Corrections. Additionally, individual counties also have their own county-run prison system. This section gives context behind the state and city criminal justice system that this study occurred.

State criminal justice programs. Within this Mid-Atlantic state, the State Department of Corrections (DOC) is responsible for overseeing 26 state correctional institutions (SCIs), one motivational boot camp, and 14 community corrections centers. The DOC also oversees contracts with nearly 50 contract facilities, housing more than 50,000 inmates and employing approximately 15,000 people.

There is a movement in the state to work to reduce the numbers of individuals who are incarcerated in state-run DOC facilities. The Recidivism Risk Reduction Incentive (RRRI) was created in order to "give eligible non-violent offenders an incentive to behave well while incarcerated and participate in crime-reducing programming during incarceration" (RRRI, 2016, p.2).

According to Act 81 of 2008, the DOC is required to provide the state general assembly with a biannual performance report that provides current descriptive statistics and a performance analysis. The RRRI 2016 Report provided the following highlights:

- Since November 2008, an estimated 20,000 offenders were admitted to the state DOC custody with a RRRI minimum sentence date. This represents 27.2% of all new state DOC admissions.

- An inmate who enters state DOC custody with a RRRI minimum sentence data is recommended between 1 to 2 treatment programs during incarceration.

- The most commonly recommended treatment programming includes therapeutic

  community, violence prevention, and outpatient treatment.

- An estimated 15,284 RRRI-sentenced inmates have been released from state DOC

  custody (RRRI Report, 2016).

City criminal justice programs. In addition to State Department of Corrections

facilities, Westown has a city-run prison system. The Westown Department of Prison System

campus consists of six facilities. One of the facilities is the Alternative and Special Detention

division which is comprised of a central unit and several satellite facilities located on the prison

campus and within the community. The additional campuses consist of the intake center for the

Department of Prisons, a facility for incarcerated individuals with misdemeanors, a facility that

solely consists of female prisoners, and two additional facilities. Individuals who are

incarcerated within the city's prison systems are usually serving a short-term sentence, awaiting

trial, or awaiting sentencing.

Similar to the State's Department of Corrections, the city where this study was conducted

is also working to reduce the population of inmates in their city prison system. A sizeable

amount of funding was awarded to this large urban city through a foundation that "supports

creative people, effective institutions, and influential networks building a more just, verdant, and

peaceful world" (MacArthur Foundation, 2018). The goal of this grant is to reduce the prison

population over a number of years (MacArthur Foundation, 2018).

Participants

The following section will describe the recruitment and sampling methods for the

participants of this study. Additionally, this section will detail the clear inclusion criteria for

each participant group in this study.

Recruitment

According to Archibald and Munce (2015), "participant recruitment for qualitative research is often the most challenging and resource intensive aspect of the study (p. 34). Often times, researchers overestimate the availability of participants and underestimate the time required to find good participants (Archibald & Munce, 2015).

Recruitment for participants who are professionals. In order to recruit the participants who were professionals, either in education or in the justice system, recruitment e-mails were sent. These e-mail addresses were found on public websites of organizations associated with schools or organizations within the justice system, or public interest and non-profit organizations. The recruitment e-mail was brief but included information about how the person was identified to be sent the e-mail, what was involved when they decided to participate, and an overview of any risks or potential benefits. It also let the person know how to inform the researcher if they wanted to participate, not to participate, or where to get answers to additional questions. After one week, if the individual did not respond to the recruitment e-mail, a follow-up e-mail was sent. After the follow-up e-mail, if there was still no response, that participant was removed from the pool of possible interviews.

Recruitment for participants who were previously incarcerated. For this participant group, the researcher hoped to interview individuals who were currently incarcerated and previous students of the researcher. The researcher recruited individuals who were on public court dockets. After finding an initial list based on these public court dockets, recruitment phone calls and letters were sent to this initial list of individuals. The recruitment letter and phone call were brief but included information about how the person was identified to be chosen, what was involved if they decided to participate, and an overview of any risks or potential benefits. It also

let the person know how to inform the researcher if they wanted to participate, not to participate, or where to get answers to additional questions. After one week, if the individual did not respond to the recruitment letter and phone call, a follow-up letter and phone call was sent. After the follow-up letter and phone call, if there was still no response, that participant was removed from the pool of possible interviews.

Sampling

For this study, there were two participant groups. In the selection of participants for this qualitative study, the researcher used two separate sampling methods. For the participants who are professionals, whether they are part of a public school system or work in some capacity in the criminal or juvenile justice system, the researcher used a purposive sampling method. A purposive sample is a "form of intentional sampling used by many qualitative studies to allow the researcher to identify small, specific groups to work with" (Terrell, 2016, p. 264). For the individuals who were previously incarcerated, the researcher used a sample of convenience. Convenience sampling is "a technique that uses subjects who just happen to be at a given place at a given time" (Terrell, 2016, p.257).

Education professionals. This participant group was individuals who currently work directly in a school building or within a school system. All of the professionals have worked within education for a minimum of five years. This group comprised five participants.

The first participant is a high school principal. This participant is a Black male who is in his first year as a principal but has worked in education for eight years. He has two bachelor's degrees, one in Business Management and one in Business Administration. This high school principal has worked on both sides of charter schools. First, he worked for a non-profit organization that did advocacy work so that charter schools can exist and was part of a team that

worked to pass charter legislation. He then left that work and joined charter schools, primarily working in operations, and now as a high school principal.

The second education professional participant is an assistant principal. She is a White woman and has worked in education for sixteen years. Along with her bachelor's degree in English and Spanish, she has her master's degree in secondary education and has earned a principal certification. She currently is a high school assistant principal, specifically in charge of school culture.

An additional education professional participant for this study is a social worker. This social worker is a White woman and has been working as an individual therapist in high schools since 2011. She graduated with an undergraduate degree in psychology and Spanish and earned her master's degree in community and clinical counseling. Additionally, she is a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC).

Another education professional participant is a current high school teacher. She is a Black woman and has worked in education for nine years. She has earned her bachelor's degree in English and her master's degree in urban education. She began her work in the education system through an alternative teaching program and is currently in her third year of law school.

The final education professional participant is a White male in charge of several high schools in an urban charter network. He manages principals and has been working in urban education for sixteen years. He earned an undergraduate degree in communications, a master's degree in elementary and middle years' education, and has a principal's certification.

Justice system professionals. This participant group was individuals who work in some capacity within the juvenile or criminal justice systems. One of these participants works for a youth-led non-profit organization that supports young people who are in adult jails and prisons.

This Black male goes into adult jails and prisons to do art and poetry workshops. He has his high school diploma.

Another participant is a co-director of a non-profit organization that works to support individuals who were given life without the possibility of parole and young people who are being charged in the adult criminal justice system. This White woman has earned her undergraduate degree from a private liberal arts school, her law degree, and has also had subsequent education through an executive education course on non-profit management. She worked in the non-profit sector for a few years after college in public policy. After law school, she worked for a federal judge and has worked in non-profits, specifically juvenile justice reform organizations, for the last ten years.

Another participant is an attorney with experience as a state prosecutor. He also has teaching experience in an urban setting. He was a secondary school teacher for two years after graduating from college with an undergraduate degree in social science. He subsequently attended law school. In addition to working as a state prosecutor for more than five years, he has experience working in the private legal sector at an international law firm.

The final participant is a former deputy police commissioner who worked in law enforcement for thirty years. This Black male spent the last eight years of his career in charge of the patrol operations in the city that this study took place in. He completed a fellowship with a large non-profit organization, working to expand a diversion program. Additionally, he has worked for a non-profit organization that has enabled him to train police officers, continue with diversion work, complete assessments of law enforcement agencies, and policy review.

Individuals who were previously incarcerated. This participant group comprised four individuals who were formerly incarcerated in a State DOC facility or within the City's Department of Prisons. Their incarceration was within the last five years. These individuals were Black men who were former public or public charter school students of the researcher. Additionally, these individuals were all 18 years of age or older at the time of the interviews.

The first individual who was previously incarcerated, Donte (pseudonym), is currently 26 years old. Donte was raised in the city where this study was completed by a single mother following the murder of his aunt. Donte dropped out of high school after his sophomore year and re-enrolled a year later. The researcher first came into contact with Donte when he was attending an AEDY in affiliation with the public-charter school that they work in. Donte was incarcerated during his senior year of high school and released in time to successfully earn his high school diploma. Following graduation from high school, Donte was again incarcerated and held in the city's prison system until he was released after taking a plea deal that included 16 years of probation.

Jahad (pseudonym) is the second participant who was formerly incarcerated. Raised by his single father, Jahad attended the high school where the researcher currently works. Jahad was first expelled from school during his first-grade year. He was continuously in and out of AEDY programs from the time he entered sixth grade through his high school career. The researcher first came into contact with Jahad during his sophomore year of high school when he was moved from an AEDY school to the school that the researcher works in. Jahad did not earn a high-school diploma.

The third participant who was formerly incarcerated is Namir (pseudonym). He was raised by a single mother and lived in a home with approximately 13 family members. Namir

did not have any interaction with the juvenile and/or criminal justice system until after he earned his high-school diploma. The researcher first interacted with Namir when he was a junior in high school.

The final participant who was formerly incarcerated is Anthony (pseudonym). Anthony was also raised by a single mother and first started having difficulties in elementary school. He attended over seven schools during the course of his educational career. The researcher first interacted with Anthony during his sophomore year of high school. Anthony did not earn his high school diploma.

Data-collection Methods

The data for this study were gathered via multiple data-collection methods. Qualitative researchers "seek data that represent personal experience in particular situations" (Stake, 2010, p. 88). According to Marshall and Rossman, qualitative data analysis searches for relationships and underlying themes (2016). The following section will describe the data collection methods that this study used: interviews, observations, and document reviews.

Interviews

Phenomenological interviewing is a "specific type of in-depth interviewing grounded in the philosophical tradition of phenomenology, which is the study of lived experiences and the ways we understand those experiences to develop a worldview" (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 153). This study used a phenomenological interview in order to focus on both the past experience of the phenomenon of interest and the present experience of the phenomenon of interest (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The goal of completing these interviews was to gain first person experience from the participants regarding their participation and roles in the STPP.

Additionally, a semi-structured interview design was utilized throughout this study. During a semi-structured interview, the researcher developed an interview guide that was a list of questions and topics that needed to be covered during the interview (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). During this semi-structured interview, the researcher followed topical trajectories during the interview, but was able to stray from the guide when it was appropriate (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Using this semi-structured interview design allowed the researcher to expand on the type and amount of information that will be collected (Terrell, 2016).

The interviews for this study took place over a one-year period. Each participant participated in one interview that lasted between participate in an interview that lasted a maximum of 40 minutes. The interviews were scheduled and the researcher came prepared with an interview protocol and talking points (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Appendices A, B, & C). The interview protocols allowed the researcher to take notes during the interview regarding the interviewee responses. Data were collected with a written interview protocol and audio recorded.

Before each interview, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and the format of the interview, and each participant was provided with and asked to sign an informed consent form (Appendices D & E). In order to safeguard the confidentiality of each participant, self-chosen pseudonyms were used throughout the entire study. Immediately following each interview session, the researcher saved the recordings and notes to the researcher's personally owned, password-protected computer or on the researcher's personal password-protected phone.

The interviews took place in the order in which young people who have entered the STPP sequentially encounter each aspect of the criminal and/or juvenile justice system. The interviews started with school personnel, specifically the individuals who are responsible for implementing

the disciplinary policies and suspending and/or expelling youth. Following the school personnel,

an interview was completed with participants from the city's police department. After the

interviews with the individuals who work in the justice system. Finally, the young people who

were formerly incarcerated were interviewed.

The interviews were completed in this specific sequence in order to gain a perspective of

the experience of the youth who are being funneled into the STPP. The data that the researcher

gathered were the first-hand experiences of people who have been part of this process and what

interventions and supports can be implemented in order to dismantle the STPP.

Observations

The second method of data collection for this study was observations of the "system."

Observations are key a method of data collection in qualitative studies (Creswell, 2013). The

observations were based on the research purpose and research questions of this study. The

observations were completed in order to describe the process that young people go through and

what policies directly impact that process.

Creswell (2013) defines observations as the act of "noting a phenomenon in the field

setting through the five senses of the observer…the observations are based on your research

purpose and questions" (p. 166). The type of observations completed in this study were a non-

participant/observer as participant observation. During this type of observation, the "researcher

is an outsider of the group under study, watching and taking field notes from a distance. He or

she can record data without direct involvement with activity or people" (Creswell, 2013, p. 167).

The systems that were observed, for the purposes of this study, are defined as any of the

processes that take place in the criminal justice system. These observations were of court

hearings or other court-based meetings. These observations took place during public hearings and did not involve juveniles.

For the observations of the system, an observational protocol (Appendix D) was created by the researcher in order to record information. The observation protocol had two columns in order to take descriptive notes and reflective notes. The descriptive notes included the researchers attempt to summarize what was happening during the observation. The reflective notes section was notes about the "process, reflections on activities, and summary conclusions about activities for later theme development" (Creswell, 2013, p. 169). These observations allowed the researcher to gain a perspective on school policies and how it directly impacted the young people. This was important to determine where the breakdown in supports was happening for young people who are part of the STPP.

Document Reviews

The third and final data collection method for this study, which allowed for triangulation, was document reviews. Document reviews are often used as a form of data collection during qualitative studies (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), "the analysis of documents is potentially quite rich in portraying the values and beliefs of participants in the study" (p. 164). During this study, document reviews of school disciplinary policies and structures that are put into place when suspending and/or expelling young people were completed.

<div align="center">Consent and Confidentiality Procedures</div>

The following section will provide clarity on how the researcher gained consent from all of the participants of this study. Additionally, the following section will clearly state how the researcher implemented the aforementioned procedures.

Consent

During this phenomenological qualitative study, interviews were completed. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), "informed consent is based on principles of individualism and free will" (p. 55). Consent forms were used to ensure that participants understood their right to withdraw from the study, the purpose and procedures of the study, the confidentiality procedures that were implemented, the understanding of possible risks, and expected benefits of the study (Creswell, 2013).

In order for all participants of this study to have the chance to understand the study and give consent, consent forms were created. These consent forms gave a summary of the study, details of length of interviews, and information regarding withdrawal from the study (Appendices E & F). These consent forms were e-mailed or given directly to participants before the interviews were conducted. Any questions from the participants were answered by the researcher and any clarification was given before the participants signed the consent forms.

Confidentiality Procedures

Based on the participants of this study, confidentiality procedures were imperative. In order to ensure confidentiality, consent forms with participant names were stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home. Following the completion of the research study, the consent forms were shredded. Additionally, no other documents held the names of the participants of this study. All e-mails with the participants were on the researcher's password-protected computer. Following the study, all e-mails were deleted. Additionally, all participants were given pseudonyms for the duration of the study.

Data Analysis

According to Creswell (2013), "the process of data collection, data analysis, and report writing are not distinct steps in the process—they are interrelated and often go on simultaneously in a research project" (p. 182). The objective of the interviews, observations, and documents reviews was to understand what public school systems should be doing to disrupt and dismantle the school-to-prison-pipeline. The following section will outline the individual methodologies of interpretation that the researcher implemented.

There are multiple data points that were collected in this study. The responses of the semi-structured interviews from individuals who were previously incarcerated, educational professionals, and justice systems professionals were analyzed differently than the observations and document reviews.

Coding

Coding is the task of organizing and analyzing large amounts of data. Coding is the process of "aggregating the text or visual data into small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code from different databases being used in a study, and then assigning a label for the code" (Creswell, 2013, p.184). According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), "codes are labels that assign symbolic meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study" (p. 71).

Once the coding was completed for this study, the researcher found themes around schools and criminal and juvenile justice systems being disconnected, a lack of support in the school system, and that schools are simply not doing enough to support young people. The researcher found themes around the idea that evidence-based practices are understood by schools

but not implemented with fidelity. Additionally, some themes that emerged were around schools

actually being a part of the problem that systematically funnels students into the justice system.

Triangulation

Triangulation is the "use of two types of research methodologies or data sources to

increase the validity of the study by ensuring the results of each are similar" (Terrell, 2016, p.

267). The researcher's hope was that by gathering information from multiple sources, the

researcher was able to tell the story of a young person that is swept into the school-to-prison

pipeline. The interviews, observations, and document reviews that were completed during this

study assisted to ensure that the researcher was able to gather information from multiple data

sources.

<div align="center">

Trustworthiness Criteria

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This section will outline the trustworthiness criteria that were implemented during the

study. According to Terrell (2016), trustworthiness is "the determination that the results of the

study are the result of a carefully planned, written, and conducted study and were not negatively

interfered with or affected by forces outside of the study" (p. 267). Member checks and peer-

debriefing are the trustworthiness criteria that were implemented during this study.

Member Checks

The first way that trustworthiness was ensured throughout this study was through the

implementation of member checks. Member checks occur when the researcher shares data and

the interpretations of that data with each participant (Creswell, 2013). Each participant was

given a summary of the interviews that were completed with them. This allowed each

participant to give corrections or further insight before the study was completed, and reduced the

possibility for the researcher's potential biases to taint their true meaning (Creswell, 2013).

Peer Debriefing

An additional process that ensured trustworthiness throughout this study was through peer debriefing. According to Creswell (2013), peer debriefing is the process which the "researcher makes arrangements with knowledgeable and available colleagues to get reactions to the coding, case summaries, analytic memos written during data analysis, and next-to-final drafts. Such debriefing helps both for talking through logic and clarity of interpretations and for answering the all-important questions: "Have I got it right?" and "How do I know what I know?" (Creswell, 2013). This peer-debriefing was completed with other doctoral candidates.

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Limitations

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This section will discuss limitations to the study. Limitations are "constraints outside of the control of the researcher and inherent to the actual study that could affect the generalizability of the results" (Terrell, 2016, p. 260). This discussion of limitations demonstrates that the researcher understands there is a reality that there is no perfect research design (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

One limitation of this study was the use of former students of the researcher as participants. These former students may have responded differently to the researcher based on the fact that the researcher was both a White woman and a former teacher. Their responses to the questions may have been worded carefully and the former student participants may not have answered with complete honestly in order to not offend their former teacher. In line with former students responding differently, professional participants may have seen the researcher as having a White savior complex and answered based on that bias. Another limitation of this study around the former student participant group was the lack of demographic information. This was

due to the researcher not asking probing questions about their demographic information,

including special education status and other school based information.

An additional limitation of this study was that the researcher was not able gain access to

the number of participants that were proposed to be interviewed. Individuals who were

previously incarcerated may have chosen to not participate in this study because it did not hold

value to them. Furthermore, a limitation of this study was that participants who are education

professionals may have chosen to not give answers that are fully forthright in order to protect the

organization that they work for or the work that they have done or not done in the past. This

limitation is also true for justice system professionals.

Timeline

The sequence of this study was meant to mirror the experiences of young people who are

part of the STPP. This allowed the researcher to gain a better perspective of the lived

experiences of the young people. In addition to gaining perspective of the young people who are

part of the STPP, this order provided actionable next steps for public school systems.

This study took place over less-than-one calendar year. Observations of the systems,

juvenile and criminal justice system and the public school system took place throughout the

course of the study. Additionally, document reviews also took place during the entirety of the

study. This allowed the researcher freedom to review documents and system processes that

participants suggest to the researcher.

Summary

In summary, this chapter has summarized the research methods for this qualitative

phenomenological study. This chapter has provided important context of the city that the study

took place in as well as details around data collection and analysis, confidentiality procedures,

and how the data were triangulated. The subsequent chapters will detail the research findings as

well as interpretations of the findings and implications for further research. Additionally, data

collection methods have been detailed in order to ensure that the research question was

answered.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate what public school systems should be doing to dismantle the School to Prison Pipeline (STPP). Through the use of interviews, observations, and document reviews, this study gained information to better understand the implications that factors such as childhood experiences, racism and oppression, trauma, resources, policy, and advocacy play on young people being swept into the juvenile and/or criminal justice system.

While this study sought information from professionals who work in the fields of education and the justice system, the stories which most stood out were those of the young people who have been directly impacted by the justice system. Because of this, the voices of the young people and their stories were the focus of the analysis. In this chapter, the researcher presents the themes and related findings that came from the completed interviews, observations, and document reviews. The subsequent section will summarize the research questions and methods that were used for this study.

Study Recap

In this section, the researcher will present the research questions, data-collection methods, and the approach employed for data analysis.

Research Questions and Methods

In order to better theorize and then make recommendations for how the public-school system can dismantle the STPP, this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What collaboration should be happening between public school systems and the criminal and juvenile justice systems?

2. What collaboration should be happening between public school systems, young people who are part of the school-to-prison pipeline, and their families?

3. What additional supports should public school systems put into place in order to dismantle the STPP?

In Chapter 2 of this study, the reader will find a summary of research and other work that has previously been completed around STPP issues and what supports schools should be implemented to dismantle the STPP and/or to support students who are presently part of the STPP. There is, however, a gap in the literature when it comes to hearing the voices of the marginalized that are actually part of the STPP and the people who work to support them across systems. This study addresses steps to potentially close that gap.

This study used a qualitative phenomenological method through the lens of Critical Race Theory and counter-storytelling. A phenomenological approach seeks to "explore, describe, and analyze the meaning of individual lived experiences" (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, pp. 17-18). This study used a phenomenological approach to gain information from individuals, who in some capacity, have had an interaction with the STPP.

Critical Race Theory was used in this study in order to remind the researcher and the readers that racism is endemic and deeply entrenched in the framework of our society. Counter-storytelling was used to ensure that the voices of those directly impacted by their interaction with the justice system were heard. The following section will provide additional context for the demographic data, educational data, and juvenile and criminal justice system information for the city in which the study was conducted.

Context of Study

This study took place in Westown, a large city in the Mid-Atlantic segment of the United States. The individuals who participated in this study had direct ties to the city, living or working in the city at some point in time. This city, similarly to comparable cities in the Mid-Atlantic section of the United States, has a large, city-run public school district and several charter-school networks that serve as educational entities. Additionally, individuals who are arrested in this city are sent to numerous city-run jails, state-run prisons, or held in federal institutions.

Analogous to other large urban cities, a large majority of the population where this study took place lives below the poverty line. The neighborhood where the school is situated, where the researcher teaches, and also where the participants who were formerly incarcerated attended, has a high rate of violent crimes compared to other neighborhoods throughout the city.

Participants

The motivation for this study was based on the researchers' life experiences working in educational systems and supporting students who have been part of the justice system. The participants in this study were chosen because they play some part in the STPP, whether it is through implementation or creation of policy or by being arrested or having interactions with the justice system as a participant. More specifically, the participants are the following:

- Professionals who work in the school system;

- Professionals who work in the justice system or related organizations; and

- Individuals who were previously incarcerated and former students of the researcher.

All of the participants that were interviewed were generally easily accessible and willing to grant interviews. The participants provided thoughtful and thought-provoking insights that can only

come by having lived experiences that have deeply impacted the trajectory of their lives or careers.

Professionals. Individuals who met the inclusion criteria were e-mailed using a recruitment e-mail. Nine individuals—five professional educators and four persons who work in the juvenile- and/or criminal-justice system—participated in the interview process.

It was important to the researcher to interview participants with a variety of experiences and backgrounds. This ensured that the perspectives and information that participants gave were varied and from a wide spectrum of experiences.

For the professionals who work in education, the following individuals were interviewed: a high-school principal, a high-school-assistant principal in charge of school culture, a manager of principals, a high-school social worker, and a high-school teacher. The years of experience for this group of participants ranged from 9-16 years of work within the education system. Four of the participants completed an alternative path to gaining their degrees in secondary education: the High School Principal Participant, the Assistant Principal Participant, the Teacher Participant, and the Manager of Principals Participant. One of the participants had a degree in business and business administration, while the social worker had a degree in their field. Some of the individuals have previous experience in educational-advocacy work, while others have been working in school buildings from the beginning of their careers.

For the participants who work within the justice system, there was a wide variety of experiences. One of the participants, the Lawyer Participant, is a cofounder of a nonprofit that supports young people being prosecuted in the adult system and along with individuals who were given sentences of life without the possibility of parole. Another participant, the Former Prosecutor Participant, worked for two years as a secondary school teacher and for more than

five years as a state prosecutor. The Non-Profit Participant works for a youth-led nonprofit that

goes into jails to do art and poetry workshops for young people who have been charged as adults

and are being held in adult jails. This organization then offers supports in court and after they

return home to ensure success after incarceration. The final participant, the Non-Profit/Police

Participant, is an individual who worked as a deputy commissioner of a large, urban city's police

department. This participant recently founded a nonprofit to enable them to work in the juvenile

justice space, expanding outside of the schools and working across the board in juvenile justice,

around training with police officers, diversion work, and assessments of law enforcement

agencies around their work with juveniles.

     Participants who were previously incarcerated. Young people meeting the inclusion

criteria were invited to participate in this study. The inclusion criteria for this participant group

was that the individuals were formerly incarcerated in a State Department of Corrections (DOC)

facility or within the City's Department of Prisons. Their incarceration needed to be within the

last five years. These individuals were Black men who were former public or public charter

school students of the researcher. Additionally, these individuals were all 18 years of age or

older at the time the interviews were conducted.

     There were a total of four individuals that participated in this study, ranging from 19

years old to 26 years old. Some of the participants were incarcerated as young as 13 years old,

while others did not have any interaction with the justice system until they had earned their high

school diploma. A few participants had recently been released from incarceration while some

were released up to three years ago.

Observations

The second method of data collection utilized for this study were observations of the "system." The observations were based on the research purpose and research questions of this study. These observations were completed in order to describe the process that young people go through, what policies directly impact that process, and to see if any collaboration was happening between systems.

The system, for the purposes of this study, is defined as any of the processes that take place in the criminal justice system. The observations were completed over a three-day period in the municipal criminal court building of the city in which the study took place.

The author created an observation protocol (Appendix D) to record information. The observation protocol has two columns: one to take descriptive notes and the other for reflective notes. The descriptive notes include the researcher's summaries of what occurred during the observations. The reflective notes section contains the researcher's observations about the "process, reflections on activities, and summary conclusions about activities for later theme development" (Creswell, 2013, p. 169). These observations were helpful to triangulate findings from interviews and document reviews.

Document Reviews

For the purposes of triangulation, a third method of data collection was used for this study. Document reviews of school disciplinary policies and structures that are put into place when suspending and/or expelling young people were completed. The researcher found five codes of conduct for students and reviewed each of these. These codes of conduct were easily accessible on the individual school's websites. Each code of conduct was from a large, urban

school district or urban charter school network, comparable in size to the city where this study

took place.

Findings

The following sections describe the findings of this study, which are presented

thematically in relation to the data generated from interviews, observations of the court system,

and documents reviews. The themes that emerged from the data include:

1. The Path to Incarceration

    a. Childhood Experiences

    b. Trauma

    c. Power and Racism

2. Avoiding or Escaping Incarceration

    a. Policy

    b. Resources

    c. Advocacy

These themes are similar to the those listed in the literature review.

When discussing the above findings of this study, it is incredibly important to name and

further discuss that there is danger in a single narrative. Each young person's story is different

and unique and their own. Additionally, each professional participant also has their own

experiences, perspectives, and perceptions of their work. As the High School Principal

Participant in this study stated:

> I think many people look at urban education, look at the students who are in this building
>
> as a monolith. Right? They all come from the same background, same experience. They
>
> all have the same needs. They all have the same issues. And that is 100% not true.

Their needs are vast. Their differences are large. And so I think there's this piece around

really, truly understanding our students, understanding where they want to be.

This idea of a single narrative is something that came up multiple times. In terms of cultural

context, the High School Principal Participant noted that, "I think cultural context and mindsets

and understanding our students, their families, the communities we work in, that all plays out and

manifests in different ways, and I think that work goes a lot further than black and white."

The use of counter-storytelling in this study was incredibly important to the quality and

the reliability of the findings. Additionally, other participants mentioned the power of individual

stories. According to the social worker, "…I became very passionate about the kids, every

person's story. The beginning was just about learning their stories…" Keeping the idea of the

danger that a single narrative portends in mind, the following section will summarize the overall

themes that were illuminated during the interviews, observations, and documents reviews.

Remember, "each of us is more than the worst thing we've ever done" (Stevenson, 2015, p. 18).

Path to Incarceration

This section will discuss themes that emerged from participant interviews, observations,

and document reviews around what leads young people to be involved in the justice system and

experiences and choices that could eventually lead to incarceration. Three subthemes emerged

while the researcher analyzed the data. These subthemes were childhood experiences, trauma,

and power and racism.

Childhood experiences. Throughout the participant interviews, there were several

mentions of childhood experiences that were prominent to individual participants and how those

experiences impacted the trajectory of young people towards the STPP. Jahad (pseudonym), one

of the former student participants, shared the following:

I was real desperate on growing up fast, or more so forced to grow up fast…My dad

worked. It was me and my dad, and my little sister, and my cousin. And my older

cousin. He used to send me to the store and I'm five years old, so I'm walking, I'm

leaving out of our apartments, I'm getting in the elevator going all the way downstairs,

walking out. And the store was probably like a mile…it was a little far, because I used to

have to walk all the way around the apartment plaza just to get out of the plaza. I used to

go to the store, come back with everything that they asked for. I was more advanced as a

child.

Jahad was asked to do errands and other activities that should be reserved for older children or

teenagers. This need was due to the fact that his father needed to be working to support the

individuals that were living in his apartment, and was not necessarily home as much as he would

have liked to be.

Several student participants mentioned poor early-school experiences. Donte

(pseudonym) noted that he remembered everything about school but, "I didn't like it though.

The things I remember is the bad stuff. Because I could never stay in school, always was getting

suspended." Donte, Jahad, and Anthony (pseudonym) all talked about being expelled from

schools or kicked out of school at a young age, before secondary school even began.

Donte spoke of his first interaction with the police and justice system that happened in

middle school. He noted that they used to get in trouble for everything. "Fighting, arguing,

playing, talking too much, a lot of stuff." Donte stated, "Yeah, I was in sixth grade, and we

jumped on a kid, and broke his ribs, and his jaw…that's why we got suspended and expelled."

This early age of getting removed from school had a direct impact on the trajectory of their

school experiences. In addition, Jahad noted that he was expelled from school while he was only

in first grade for taking a cap gun to school that was purchased for him by his cousin's boyfriend. These early experiences often shaped their unsteady educational experiences.

Other participants spoke about the desire to change the childhood and school experiences that some young people have who live in the city that this study took place. According to the Assistant Principal Participant, their decision to work in urban schools was due to "a general desire to change the trajectory of populations that have oftentimes been underserved in terms of education, leading to just opportunity barriers." The childhood and school experiences that students in this city are often times lacking opportunities that other students in other parts of the state and country are given.

For some professional participants, the motivation behind working in particularly poor urban schools was their experiences as children. School choice drastically changed their life outcomes compared to their other family members who went to different schools. According to the High School Principal Participant, "When I look at students who grew up in my zip code and students who went to different schools, the tables that we're sitting at today and our life experiences were drastically dictated by the schools that students went to." Poor childhood experiences seemed to both shape the trajectory of students educational experiences and also formed a negative mindset of schools for them. This factor, because it was something that was experienced across all former student participants, seemed to shape their future involvement in the STPP.

There is also literature around childhood experiences and over-criminalizing youth behavior. Dennis (2017), writes about some behaviors that are only penalized and individuals only being charged for those behaviors if they are committed by youth. For example, behaviors

such as truancy, running away, disobeying parents, curfew violations, and consensual sexual activity (Dennis, 2017).

In addition, based on current laws, young people can be referred to the juvenile and criminal justice systems for behavior that in the past would not have been considered criminal. "For example, two fourteen-year-old boys were charged with assault with a dangerous weapon for, out of boredom, throwing pebbles across the train tracks at another boy" (Dennis, 2017, p. 9). This literature, along with the experiences of the participants, should be kept in mind when schools and other systems are interacting with young people and impacting their childhoods.

Trauma. Throughout the participant interviews, there were an incredibly high number of references to trauma. The American Psychological Association website (2020) defines trauma as an "emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster. Immediately after the event, shock and denial are typical. Longer term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea." Trauma has both a long- and short-term impact for those who experience it. Some of these references of trauma during the participant interviews were direct while others were indirect, perhaps because participants did not have a conceptual understanding of the definition of trauma. It should also be noted that trauma is something that impacts individuals across environments.

Violence, poverty, family incarceration, police interaction, rape, and murders of family, friends, and former students were some of the mentions of traumatic experiences throughout the participant interviews. Vicarious trauma—the trauma that individuals experience because of the trauma that individuals who they directly work with have experienced—is also a topic that emerged throughout the interviews.

There were several incredibly-jarring mentions of trauma made by the participants. For some, the exposure to trauma started at a young age. Former-student participants spoke about clear examples of trauma that had happened to them and twice were able to be incredibly self-reflective and identify that this moment of trauma was they perceived directly impacted them and the trajectories that their lives took. Donte said:

> …[M]y aunt got killed by her boyfriend in my mom's living room. I don't know, after that, I just started being real bad. Because, I was a good kid. I don't know. But, I remember that event, that's when stuff started changing, I remember.

Jahad noted that trauma and the loss of several childhood friends played a large part in his development, stating:

> From the year 2012, when we first started with D, to now, with you guys and…Like, me and my old heads, these are people I idolized when I was growing up. And from the first death to the last death, I don't know if it hurt more or do it like…It's just like, man. It was just piling up. From 2012 to now, we probably lost about twelve to fifteen good people. Twelve to fifteen people that I grew up or that watched me grow up or that taught me something. You know what I mean?

Both Donte and Jahad spoke strongly about the first moment of violent trauma, and how those moments began to define the path that they chose.

The way that trauma manifests itself in the school building and community was a common theme as to why individuals in this study had negative school experiences and negative interactions with the police and justice system, in some ways leading to incarceration. As the High School Principal Participant stated, "I also think that our population here experiences a high level of trauma, and that manifests in different ways in the building." In addition, the High

School Principal Participant had a unique point of view on the lack of resources to support the amount of trauma that occurs. They said:

> So, when you think about the school I work in, and I talked about this very high level of trauma we have. We have four social workers, about 1,100 students, but with that very high level of trauma, that's about 250 to 300 kids per social worker. I don't think they have the capacity to really, truly get into the weeds and really support our students.

Even if schools have a deep understanding of trauma, the supports that students need cannot come solely from social workers. Being a trauma-informed school is also something that has been a focus of a lot of research. According to one study, students managing stress and trauma also need schools that support healing and resilience as children learn and grow (Blitz, Yull, & Clauhs, 2016).

> The Non-Profit Participant also had a different perspective, having worked with young people who have adult criminal justice system interaction and the way that teachers interact with students who have experienced high levels of trauma:

> I think schools should basically get to know that kid before judging that kid, screaming at that kid, yelling at that kid, figure out what's going on with that kid. Figure out what support do they need? Any help they need? Anything…but even in the midst of the moment, if it was a situation, just try to reach back out to that kid and get to know that kid. Connect with that kid.

This perspective, having worked with individuals who are incarcerated, gives a different way of interacting with young people who experience trauma. This participant believes that one of the ways around how trauma manifests itself in school settings is to support young people to get to

the root of the problem, and not just yell at them, but actually figure out what is going on in their

heads and in their lives.

The role of schools in trauma was a collective theme across the participants and within

some of the documents that were reviewed. The Lawyer Participant furthermore noted that

teachers should be trauma informed. They noted that "all teachers should be trained on trauma,

on how to look for manifestations of trauma, how that comes out in a classroom, and how to

them deal with it when it happens." Not only is it important for teachers to be trained in

appropriate pedagogical practices, it is also imperative for them to have an understanding of how

trauma manifests and how to appropriately deal with that in a school and classroom setting.

Furthermore, the Lawyer Participant noted that schools, who serve communities where there is a

prevalence of trauma, have an opportunity to be welcoming and supportive to students. The

Lawyer Participant stated:

> Trauma and childhood experience are very relevant to how students behave, and that
>
> schools have a role to play in addressing that, and receiving it in a way that is healthy and
>
> supportive, and not a punitive and furthering of the school-to-prison pipeline.

Schools must be aware of the role that they have in supporting young people and not be solely

punitive in the way that they support student behavior.

Poverty and family incarceration, additional factors that contribute to trauma, were also

themes that emerged throughout the interviews. According to the Non-Profit/Police Participant,

oftentimes due to the diversion program that was implemented in the city, program participants

are given home visits. During these home visits "they'll go into those homes. There's no gas,

there's no electric. There's a grandmother who's raising five grandkids cause both parents are

incarcerated. Many of the families are single parent homes." This impact of poverty and the

lack of resources is something that schools also need to keep in mind when supporting students who have experienced trauma.

During the court observations, there were indirect mentions of trauma on several occasions. Some individuals who were being prosecuted in court had lawyers who provided mitigation to the court. Mitigation reports are often provided to the courts by defenders in order to humanize the individual being charged. According to the judicial district in the city where this study took place, mitigation can be defined as the following:

- Mitigation can provide specifics about the dysfunction and trauma that a defendant has suffered but that a family is reluctant to talk about. Once the records are there, we have details to use in questioning family members and other persons close to the defendant.

- Records can provide leads to witnesses. It is one thing to have a psychologist or mitigation specialist tell the jury that your client served in Vietnam, or had no shoes to wear to school; a jury finds more credible (and then believes the expert witness more) the testimony of the sergeant from the military or the school teacher who recalls your client coming in with no shoes.

- Records themselves can be evidence, introduced through a competent witness, a family member of the expert, the custodian of records, or the fact witness (e.g., in the example above) the school teacher.

This mitigation is also something that the Lawyer Participant noted in their interview. She noted that part of her job is:

Understanding the larger context in which their lives are operating and their decision making is operating and trying to partner with teachers, with school systems, administrators. When there is a young person who comes in contact with the system, to

reach out to get more information, to find out as much as possible from the people who

actually know this young person, what's going on. That could be teachers, it could be

family members, it could be coaches, it could be any number of people, but to be able to

respond differently and more thoughtfully and in a more nuanced way when young

people are coming into the system.

This information, in addition to creating a mitigation report, is incredibly important when

individuals who have experienced trauma interact with the justice system. This mitigation

ensures that judges and prosecutors understand the stories of the individuals they are working

with and perhaps include ways to support the individuals instead of or in addition to

incarceration.

As the Social Worker Participant noted:

It should also be noted that although trauma is something that deeply impacts young

people but in no way does trauma define them. With the correct supports and services,

young people who experience trauma have the chance to be resilient. The social worker

stated: My whole thing as a therapist, sort of my theory that I sort of rest all things on, is

this idea of resilience. And so we focus so much on trauma, which is true, and it's there.

But I would love to push towards, and then there's also resilience. And I think that if we

could use, even in a disciplinary structure, we could find a way to focus more on their

strengths and push towards what they're capable of, instead of you did this wrong, you

did that wrong.

Trauma is an extensive topic when it comes to individuals who interact with the STPP and there

are many ways that trauma should be taken into consideration when sentencing and supporting

these individuals.

Trauma is a topic that comes up quite a bit in previous research and literature. The

concept of being trauma-informed in schools and across systems is not new. Examples of these

systems of supports include restorative disciplinary practices in place of zero tolerance

disciplinary practices and trauma-informed interventions to address negative student behaviors

(Fowler, 2011; Kupchick et al, 2015; Payne & Welch, 2015).

Power and racism. It would be remiss to not address the role that power and racism

play in the role of young people entering into the STPP, particularly young people of color. This

section analyzes the data that was found around power and racism during interviews,

observations, document reviews, and in previous research.

Power was a theme that was incredibly prevalent during the observations. The moment

individuals walk into the municipal court building, the system took control of every aspect.

Everyone entering the court building must go through metal detectors and put their belongings

through a scanner, very similar to most urban school buildings and during visits to jails or

prisons.

During court proceedings, the individuals present for court or individuals brought in from

the city jails, had absolutely no power over how their proceedings went in terms of length of time

or other capacities. The court dates for individuals who were brought in from the city jails were

often continued to a different date, sometimes with the court sighting defense not being ready

and other times because witnesses in the form of police or detectives did not show up that

particular day. Because of this, those individuals were then sent back to the city jails to wait for

their next court date, often a month or more away.

For the individuals who reported to court, the large majority of them were individuals on

probation. It was far too often that these individuals were sent home with a rescheduled court

date due to any number of reasons. Frequently, these individuals expressed frustration around having to take off yet another day of work because of circumstances that were out of their control. The court, prosecuting lawyers and judges in particular, did not seem at all worried about these concerns. Additionally, some of the participants on probation were incarcerated on the spot due to violations of their probation. Some of these violations, like still trying to find employment, were very minimal and seemed to be something that they needed support for rather than warranting incarceration. This was a great show of power over the individuals that we completely at the mercy of the court.

Power is something that schools and the justice system need to be cautious with how they use it. Particularly, the power that schools have can be the difference between young people entering in the STPP or not. Non-Profit/Police Participant stated:

> Schools have an incredible amount of power when it comes to whether or not students are entered into the STPP…whenever they decide to call a police officer what they've made, the decision is to take that liberty from that child, right? We're going to take that child's freedom away from him or her.

Additionally, schools have a choice around how they use the power that they have over young people and their families. The Non-Profit/Police Participant worded it well when they said:

> You are in charge of that child. And so often times I said, if you looked at it from the lens, if it were my child, would I call the cops to take them away?... and so if they paid more attention to the reality of the impact they have because at the end of the day, every time they call for that child to be arrested, they're feeding the system.

School systems and justice systems must be mindful when interacting with young people and the ways in which they use their powers can be impactful.

An additional way that schools hold power over young people and families is through the policies that many have regarding disciplinary processes. One study that focused on restorative justice practices in schools and the sharing of power across stakeholders, noted that schools sometimes have "knee-jerk" reactions to disciplinary issues in the school buildings (Sandwick, Hahn, & Ayoub, 2019). For example, if an acute incident happens, the schools will "revert to ingrained habits of power and punishment" instead of sticking with the practices of restorative justice (Sandwick, Hahn, & Ayoub, 2019, p. 14).

During document reviews, it was evident that schools have structures in place to predetermine the consequence for students' behaviors. One large urban public school's student code of conduct included a behavior matrix. This behavior matrix did not allow for any mitigating factors, but instead had predetermined consequences. For instance, if a student cheated or plagiarized, it would be an automatic, out-of-school suspension. These predetermined consequences are a way that schools exercise power over young people and should be used with extreme caution.

Power was something that was also mentioned by the Lawyer Participant as something that can be used in a positive way. They stated, "we can create a different way of doing things and kind of experiment with how we could treat folks differently and leverage our privilege and power as lawyers to try to make some change in the system." Aside from power, the impact of racism on young people was also something discussed at length.

It is incredibly imperative to state that racism plays an enormous part of the STPP. As the High School Principal Participant noted, "It is important to name that the school-to-prison pipeline exists, naming that racism and oppression has played out over the last 100, 150, 200 years and it's very pervasive in our communities." This racism is prevalent in the court systems.

To begin with, during the court observations, not one individual who was present for court was a White person. During the proceedings, over the course of three days, all of the individuals being prosecuted during observations in this municipal criminal court building were people of color. Additionally, the large majority of police officers and detectives who were present to provide testimony, were white men.

Aside from the racial disparity of individuals in court, racism also exists in educational settings. According to Blitz, Yull, and Clauhs (2016):

> Classroom teaching does not take place in isolation; it occurs in the context of school climate, and the school exists in the context of community and society. Oppression and privilege are structurally imbedded and affect everyone. The dynamics of oppression and privilege are grounded in social constructions of race, and racism is manifest in the outcome of systems (p. 97).

To build on this idea of racism being prevalent in schools, two of the participants who play leadership roles in schools made very bold remarks around racism and individuals who work in schools who display racist mindsets. The Manager of Principals Participant said:

> I think the silent perpetuator of this is at the classroom level with teachers who don't have a deep belief in kids, particularly poor children of color, who don't have a deep belief in them and maybe pushing them out of their classrooms or pushing them into the system sometimes intentionally, sometimes not intentionally, but it's underpinned by racism and bias and lots of things that kind of plague our world.

Additionally, the High School Principal Participant stated:

> And then I guess the last piece, I would say, is just this piece about diversity and giving students examples of people who look like them who are doing the work. I think every

school, every organization, in any place you go there's a certain level of racist people,

and we need to find them and we need to make sure they don't work here anymore.

Both of these school leaders acknowledged that schools, particularly schools who serve young

people of color, have individuals who work in them who display racist mindsets and how

unacceptable that is. These individuals are often the teachers who are bias and have students of

color disproportionately suspended and in the end, supporting young people to be pushed into the

STPP.

Additionally, racism was a theme that arose during conversations on funding. When

discussing the inequities in funding between city schools and suburban schools, the Manager of

Principals Participant stated that this inequity is "nothing but residue or a very blatant example of

institutionalized racism that has existed…someone designed that and designed that intentionally

and it still exists." This theme of funding will be further discussed in the following section.

Racism and power are also topics discussed in previous literature. Crosby, Day, Somers,

and Baroni (2018) discuss the need for schools to understand the unique perspectives of their

students of color and building a school climate where they feel valued and understood rather than

racially stereotyping or having biased perceptions based on race. Additionally, research has

noted that "race remains a salient factor in U.S. society in general and in education in particular"

(Dixson & Rousseau, 2006, p. 1).

Avoiding or Escaping Incarceration

The subsequent section will discuss the themes that emerged around what public school

systems should be doing to support students to avoid interaction with the juvenile and criminal

justice systems, and feasibly escape incarceration all together. These themes are ultimately what

public school systems should be doing to dismantle the STPP. The three major themes that emerged for this section were policy, resources, and advocacy.

Policy. This section describes the policies in place that impact young people who are part of or in danger of becoming part of the STPP that emerged as a theme when discussing what public schools should be doing to dismantle the STPP. Policy around what disciplinary policies are implemented was a major theme. The use of restorative justice practices over zero-tolerance disciplinary policies was discussed across participant groups. Additionally, the importance of implementing diversion programs was also discussed at length. These subthemes of disciplinary policies and diversion programs will be discussed below.

Restorative justice. Using a restorative approach when implementing school disciplinary policies, in contrast to zero tolerance, was discussed across participants. The implementation of restorative practices versus zero-tolerance disciplinary practices was also discussed in Chapter 2 of this study. The Assistant Principal Participant talked about the current disciplinary policies in that are in the charter network that they work in and how they have evolved over the last eight years. When asked about the current disciplinary policies, she said:

> So I think they're fluid. Our network has gone back and forth a number of times over the course of the last eight years specifically regarding zero-tolerance policies and things such as a continuum between a more restorative-justice-type model and just expulsionary practices. I would say right now our network leans more towards a hard line with things, and by hard line I mean zero tolerance for things and more exclusionary practices. So it is our job on the school-based level to figure out how to decrease the usage of those kinds of disciplinary tactics.

This participant noted that it although the charter network as a whole was leaning towards zero tolerance policies, it is the schools job to ensure that students are being supported and that behaviors are decreasing based on those supports.

Namir (pseudonym), a former student who was previously incarcerated, also noted that change that happened over time at the same charter school the Assistant Principal was referencing. According to Namir, "Discipline when we first got here was jail. When we came in as ninth graders, they set the rules from the beginning…we didn't get no leniency until maybe my junior year it changed." Additionally, former-student participants also referenced times in their secondary education where they had mediations. According to Donte, "After you fight, you had to sit down and talk, and it was confidential, so nobody else know what y'all was talking about…you'd have to sit down with the person you was fighting, and apologize."

Participants outside of school professionals also had information to share regarding the implementation of disciplinary practices and what those policies should entail. According to the Lawyer Participant:

> Generally speaking, both juvenile- and criminal-justice systems need to be more
> restorative and to try to understand context and how, since we're talking about school to
> prison pipeline and young people, like why is it that they are there? Not just saying 'what
> did you do' but 'why did you do it?' and understanding the larger context in which their
> lives are operating and their decision making is operating and trying to partner with
> teachers, with school systems, administrators. And similarly, when events arise at
> school, not having the police be the first phone call or the first reaction or response, but
> trying to talk through what actually is happening here. How can we solve this situation?
> Taking a restorative approach and employing restorative justice as much as possible,

which is beneficial both for the student involved, who would otherwise be referred to the

police, but also for the person who's harmed. These are all things that school have the

power to implement. If they don't have resources for these kinds of things, school

systems should be advocating with policymakers to get more resources to be able to do

this kind of work.

This need to work in a world where restorative justice disciplinary policies are the norm rather

than the exception across systems was important information to gather.

    Diversion. The implementation of diversion programs in large urban cities is one

necessary policy change. Diversion programs were discussed at length during participant

interviews as a way to decrease the number of young people being arrested. It also should be

noted that the Non-Profit/Police Participant was vital in the creation and implementation of a

partnership in the city that this study takes place between the school district and the police

department. According to the Office of Justice Programs website (2020), diversion is:

    …[A] term used to describe intervention approaches that redirect youths away from

formal processing in the juvenile justice system, while still holding them accountable for

their actions. The goal of diversion is to remove youths as early in the juvenile justice

process as possible to avoid later negative outcomes associated with formal processing,

such as increased odds of recidivism, stigmatization/labeling, and increased criminal

justice costs.

There was a common theme across professional participants for the need for a partnership between

schools and law enforcement and consequently, the justice systems. According to the Former

Prosecutor Participant, "…talking from a philosophical perspective, like engagement…a better

school and law enforcement engagement, so that incidents where the school might be reactively

calling the cops and a student get arrested, having a system in place to determine the outcome."

The Non-Profit Participant, noted that "a lot of schools just follow school policy a little too

much…A lot of schools have too many police. Some schools are too structured like a prison."

This need to support young people outside of calling the police and having them present in schools

is important to decreasing the number of negative interactions between young people and police.

In the urban city that this study takes place in there is diversion programming happening.

According to the Lawyer Participant:

> There's also a lot of opportunity for innovative programming like diversion
>
> programming. It's happening here in the city…a huge school-based diversion program
>
> that's had really good results and that's a partnership directly between the police and the
>
> justice system and the schools. There's way more opportunity for that kind of innovative,
>
> but not that all conceptually advanced, just pretty simple, straight forward stuff. To be
>
> saying, this doesn't need to go to the police, we don't need to open a case file, we don't
>
> need to put this kid on a trajectory that we know is going to end poorly, where there are
>
> opportunities and resources that we should be thinking of first.

This diversion work, and partnership between schools and the justice system, is exactly what the

Non-Profit/Police Participant noted. In a notably lengthy, but important quote, he stated the

following:

> So we know that a large number of kids will recidivate, 30%, 40% of them will recidivate
>
> after the first arrest of their lives. And so, you know for me, I think the school districts
>
> have to be more focused and more conscious of what does it mean when I call one of the
>
> most powerful entities in the entire world. I called the officer who can take a child's

freedom away and what that means and the collateral consequences that happen to that

child? I think to be more thoughtful in that process and slow things down and maybe

other things are more effective and find other alternatives. There are so many restorative

models they could be using to enable them to be more effective in reducing this criminal

process…So for me, when I look and say 1600 kids were arrested, 70% of those kids

were being diverted by the district attorney's office after arrest. Right? So for me, I'm

confused. If you don't want those kids, if you don't think they should even go before the

judge, why the hell didn't you tell me? Why does the system absorb these kids knowing

they don't even want them? If you believe that a kid today that I have in custody should

be diverted, then why did you put them through all the trauma and all of the negatives of

the arrest? Let me divert them at the point of contact…Those girls, those young women

that we've been arresting for decades coming into school with mace. You know what, I

don't really need to fingerprint her, photograph her, hold her in the cell block for six

hours…The system should be set up for that kid who that who scares you, not the kid

who makes you mad.

Continuing this work of bridging and connecting the education system, the police, and the

juvenile and criminal justice system is imperative to breaking down and dismantling the STPP.

There is an abundance of previous literature that discusses policy in regards to the STPP

and using restorative justice practices and implementing diversion programs. Students of color

are disproportionally impacted by disciplinary practices (Hill, 2017). Additional literature states

that although the implementation of restorative practices in every school will be different, it is

important because there is a "shift in value placed on been found to support school attendance

and achievement and engage students and families additional support systems to prevent further

involvement in the justice system (Fader, Lockwood, Schall, & Stokes, 2015; Seroczynski & Jobst, 2016).

Resources. The word resources, for the sake of this study, encompasses funding and teacher quality. The subsequent sections will summarize the findings that were illuminated during participant interviews, document reviews, and observations on what resources are necessary for public school systems to dismantle the STPP. These resources include financial implications to improve the outcomes of young people who are at risk of entering into the STPP. Resources also include the need to improve teacher quality in order to keep young people in school and decrease the number of young people being suspended and out of school.

Funding. Funding is a topic that often arises when conversations are had about how to best support young people across the board, but more specifically in urban school settings. This study was no different. This funding discrepancy often leads to opportunity barriers for young people.

For this study, the overarching idea of funding encompasses financial resources, school funds, and access to services for young people and their families. The Manager of Principals Participant stated:

> We are certainly underfunded and it is an absolutely horrible problem that three miles
>
> away, kids in a suburban county, they get reimbursed at $25,000, $27,000 a kid and we
>
> get reimbursed at $9,000 a kid, that is a massive inequity that needs to be addressed,
>
> period.

Additionally, the High School Principal Participant noted:

> I also think about resources, and so the type of money that's given to various schools and
>
> how that plays out. I think about how the community looks at the school, looks at a

community or a…the type of neighborhood setting that plays out in... how do we bring

resources for families and partner with city and state organizations to be able to provide

these outcomes for our students?

This funding disparity can be seen as the root cause of other systematic funding and resource

issues in urban public schools. This leads to large class sizes and often new and inexperienced

educators in classrooms. It leads to a lack of financial resources that should be used to support

young people exposed to trauma and the personnel that need to be present in order to adequately

support young people.

One additional area around the theme of funding that was illuminated in this study was

the idea of using funding that is present in urban public schools in innovative and creative ways.

Several individuals stated the need to alter the staffing model that is currently used in most

school buildings and modify how school personnel are used when thinking about school funding.

The Manager of Principals Participant stated, "We need fewer disciplinarians and school

police officers and more social workers." Additionally, the Lawyer Participant said, "Public

school systems should be investing more in counselors and in support staff and in training on

trauma and trauma informed practice, instead of on school 'safety officers' meaning police, or

other more punitive resources." This staffing change is something that would allow for young

people to be and feel more supported instead of penalized.

In addition to removing school police and disciplinarians, using the funding in school

buildings with top-heavy administration in a new and resourceful way was discussed.

As said by the Manager of Principals Participant:

We can drop a teacher, we can add a teacher, we could, our schools, and by the way,

they're all awesome and we need them, but we have a ton of administrators here. In the

district you gotta have 800 kids to get one assistant principal. Again, I think we utilize

them very well. I think we train them well and we attract great people and it adds value

and our bar is not the school district, no disrespect to them. They run great schools, but

that's not our bar. But I just say that to illuminate this idea of we could do anything we

wanted to do if we believed that it was going to better serve our families, deliver on our

promises and meet our mission.

This idea of restructuring staffing to increase the amount of support was discussed by several

participants. One way of restructuring the staffing model in urban schools is adjust the way that

schools allocate funding. As the Lawyer Participant said, "…there's a lot of underlying

structural choices that we make as a society and how we allocate resources and how we treat

young people of color." One way to be more innovative with the use or funding is to implement

mentorship programming. As the Manager of Principals Participant stated:

So I would say one thing would be identifying mentors for students. I have been reading

more and more about the power of mentorship. I think that already, at least in our

system, our teachers have a lot on their plates and our best teachers do build great

relationships and in some cases serve as mentors for students. But to have dedicated

folks who are really connected to this school who understand our mission and our values

and our programs and what we're trying to accomplish. Not just people who show up

and leave but are really part of the school who are here to wrap their arms around young

people who sometimes need these arms wrapped around them.

Implementing a mentorship program was an intervention that was discussed in the literature

review of this study and is something prevalent in previous research and literature.

An additional way that funding was discussed throughout the interviews was around extracurricular activities, both school and community based, for young people. The Lawyer Participant said:

I think school systems should be devoting more resources to support students, to providing afterschool opportunities like arts, athletics, other extracurricular activities and focusing energies on positive things that are going to support students to stay in school, to not end up in compromising situations where they end up in the justice system.

This school- and community-based programming was discussed on several occasions.

Three of the former student participants discussed football and playing a variety of other sports as a way to be entertained and stay busy after school. Namir stated that he always played football as a child. "I was out of trouble a lot mainly when I was a kid because I picked up football." Jahad was adamant about the lack of organized activities and community based centers for young people to be active in and stay "off the streets." This need for positive activities outside of the school building to keep young people entertained and busy. For instance, Jahad said:

But that Boys and Girls Club, if it was more so for the public…because you could go in there but they going to try to make you sign up and pay. If it was actually an admission-free joint and the kids could actually go in there and feel safe…They just redid the park in my community, but they didn't redo the football field for the kids.

Additionally, Namir stated:

As a child I always played football mainly. I was out of trouble a lot mainly when I was a kid because I picked up football. A lot of my friends played football, too. So that kept us out of trouble…I always played sports and that kept you out of the way.

Jahad discussed that it was during the time that he stopped playing football and being involved in

school and community based activities that he got arrested and was incarcerated. He noted that,

"these kids got nothing to do. They got nobody in the neighborhood to contribute." More

specifically, he noted that community supports are important. Jahad said:

> So something I be thinking I'm nutty, but then I'm like, nah, the oldheads that are
>
> supposed to pave the way or something lilke that, y'all ain't paving the way. Y'all are
>
> not my oldheads. Y'all just older men from the neighborhood. Y'all ain't do nothing for
>
> the community. Y'all ain't do nothing for me whether it was positive or negative. Y'all
>
> ain't never put me on no money or nothing, so I don't respect y'all dudes.

This need to be supported by the people who live in their community is something that former

student participants found was lacking and something that could have supported them to make

better choices.

The need for mentors and community support does come up in research as well.

Communities should be supporting to address "policies in schools and justice agencies that

unfairly affect African American boys. They can respond to the dearth of men in the lives of

boys by recruiting volunteers and supporting those who act as mentors, coaches, and big

brothers" (Barbarin, 2010, p. 86). Moreover, Barbarin (2010) discusses the need for

communities to play positive roles in the long-term development of the young people by

sponsoring enrichment and skill development programs for the young people in their

communities.

Teacher quality. An additional resource for young people to avoid interaction with the

STPP that emerged during this study was access to quality teachers. Teacher quality is

something that can often be a topic of controversy. What defines a quality teacher? Does

experience, educational background, or other factors have the greatest impact on what makes a quality teacher? According to the participants in this study, teacher quality is dependent on several factors.

One aspect of teacher quality is appropriate teacher training. According to the Assistant Principal Participant, if they could change anything about current school policies it would be around teacher training. They noted:

 I think if I could change them, it would be more about teacher training, specifically because I think the vast majority of the disciplinary policies that we have to put in place have to do with supporting really novice instructors, novice in their practices, just in mindset, in just years of experience, etc.

This teacher training would allow teachers to focus on learning in the classroom instead of disciplinary issues. As the Former Prosecutor Participant, who is also a former high-school teacher, noted, "I imagine, you know, teachers at great schools, they feel overwhelmed too. But at the schools where I was teaching a lot of our focus or a lot of our time and our energy was sort of on disciplinary issues." Based on this, teacher training is imperative when ensuring that quality teachers are educating young people who are at risk of entering into the STPP.

In addition to teacher training, the mindset of individuals who work in schools and interact with our young people is essential. According to the Teacher Participant, the mindset of the individuals working at the schools and service the community is vital to teacher quality and a quality education for students, particularly students of color. They stated the following:

So a little history lesson. Prior to reconstruction, there were all-black schools, black teachers, black principals and that was because we were not allowed to go to white schools...And they didn't have a lot of resources. They utilized relationships with

teachers and the community. And all of the child who attended those schools became

successful individuals. And so I think we need to look at that model. Because we may

not have a lot of money, and maybe we will have a lot of money, but utilizing the

community for support. Getting teachers who are about students, mainly teachers of

color, but they don't all have to be teachers of color, right? And I think they also worked

as one cohesive unit. They had one idea and this idea was black kids need a good

education and here's how we're going to do it. And no matter what they had to do to get

it, they did it. I think that would be my dream for my children.

This idea of a school like those that existed prior to reconstruction and having teachers and role

models who look like the young people who they serve is important. One study noted that the

importance of the "recruitment and retention of Black teachers in public schools to improve the

academic, cultural, and social experiences of all students but particularly African American

students" (Milner, 2006, p. 4). The Teacher Participant noted that schools need to hire more

people of color in schools where there is a high percentage of students of color. They noted:

This idea of kids will only believe that they can be what they see, right? So if a child

only sees a black teacher in one of like…one of a slew of 70 teachers you see five. The

thought is not going to be, "Oh, I want to be a teacher because I haven't had that many

black teachers, or teachers of color in my life.

In addition to having role models who look like the young people that they serve, strong

relationships also arose as central to the success of young people.

The theme that emerged most prevalent across the former student participants was the

need for positive relationships with teachers. One study states that, "Teacher-student

relationships are an important part of students' interpersonal context at school that impacts their

academic development" (Martin & Collie, 2019, p.1). This need for affirmative relationships

was illuminated by several former student participants as well as professional participants. All

of the former student participants talked about their relationships with teachers and staff and how

important it was to them as students. Jahad noted that what supported him through school was,

"You guys. Some of the staff. I used to have a lot of melt downs, a lot of bad days, because of

what my neighborhood was going through." The importance of consistency and good

relationships was also noted by the Social Work Participant:

> The biggest downfall for ours is that we don't have consistency across staff, in terms of
>
> holding kids accountable. And so if kids act out more, it's not their fault, in my opinion.
>
> Because they have one teacher that will let them do all the things, and then another
>
> teachers who's really holding that bar. It really sets that teacher, I think, holding the bar
>
> up, for poor relationships.

This need for positive relationships also extended outside of the classroom and the school

building. Jahad, at the end of the interview, stated the following:

> Through my ups, through my downs, and outside of here some teachers were always
>
> supportive. And they know my background, my family and all that, but you know also it
>
> wasn't as much of a hands-on thing. Like, there used to be times when I get suspended
>
> and I couldn't even come back in school, not because I can't come back, because I had
>
> nobody to reinstate me for a week or two straight. So a teacher went out of their way to
>
> help me.

Another student recounted a time when he remembered the school supporting some of his

classmates. Namir stated:

I remember everything from them going to the judge and all that just so he could get his

diploma. When my other friend was missing classes and they didn't know what was

going on with him. They called me, you know what I'm saying? Stuff like that.

This need for relationships that expand outside of the school building, into the community and

across systems was important to the student participants.

Advocacy. According to Culture Partnerships website (2019), advocacy describes a

"method or approach used to change policies and practices, reform institutions, alter power

relations, change attitudes and behaviors and give project work a broader impact." For the

purposes of this study, advocacy will be defined as additional knowledge and supports that are

needed for students and families outside of the school building. Advocacy was a topic that was

cited throughout the interviews on a variety of levels.

One way that advocacy was discussed in the interviews, was around policy advocacy so

that students and families are given choices around what schools they are attending and sending

their students to. Based on interviews, participants agreed that families having educational

choice is imperative to student success. According to the High School Principal Participant:

And so, my school exists for students to be able to receive a quality education and some

educational choices…we have CTE, we have STEM, we have a high level of intervention

and support for students who need these pieces. Just differentiating students, meeting

them where they are, and being able to support their varying needs.

This quote solidifies the fact that students and families gain opportunities when they are given

choices of schools to attend. This is important to be able to support students to make better

choices and stay out of the justice system from the beginning.

Another form of advocacy that was mentioned on several occasions was supporting students who were already part of the justice system. Communication between and navigation of systems was a huge part of the interviews. Anthony stated boldly:

First things first, I really feel like it should be mandatory for the teachers to weave through all the students to find out who's currently going back and forth with court, no matter what their situation is, no matter what they did. Even if you aren't known for being a good student, it's just it'll help them becoming a good student. Because if I'm coming in to court with you, that means I want to see you come out of court…

Anthony had a strong reaction to the need for support while at court from the professionals who supported him in school. The knowledge of schools to know which students are part of the justice system and what supports should be in place because of that, was a clear point that was made throughout the interviews.

Another mention of advocacy for students who are part of the justice came from the Assistant Principal Participant. They said:

I think there's a practice of interacting via letter or character reference or appearance in a courtroom for young people when they have been faced with legal situations. I have written letters. I have sat in courtrooms, and there are a lot of people on our staff that do similar things…I'd like to see what we can do to make that supportive relationship to work on just general differences and changes in trajectories for kids to do better here and make better decisions outside of school.

This communication between systems can sometimes be the difference between whether students are incarcerated in adult systems or juvenile systems. As discussed previously, the education system and the justice system are often siloed and do not communicate well in the effort to

support young people. It can be the difference between students being sent to juvenile detention

centers or being allowed to come home and continue to attend school. Based on the researcher's

experiences, this advocacy in the courtroom, can be the difference between a young person

earning their high school diploma or sitting in adult jail.

An additional way that advocacy was mentioned was supporting students and families to

navigate the justice system and understand their rights as citizens. The Teacher Participant

stated that, "I firmly believe that some of the pitfalls that our students and our families face once

they enter the system is that they don't know the law." According to Jahad, when he got arrested

he believed the following to be true:

> Because I don't know nothing about the legal…Like, I don't know don't take a deal,
>
> don't plead. I didn't know none of that. All they told me was, "Yeah, it's aggravated
>
> assault. They pressing charges, or if you plead, you take a little probation and house
>
> arrest." I'm like house arrest or jail? Like, that's what was in my mind…If I lose, I go to
>
> jail. And they wasn't talking about me going to no little juvenile placement. They was
>
> talking about actually an adult jail, the kid side of an adult jail. It was, 'I'd prefer not.
>
> I'll take the house arrest and all that.' I'm on house arrest, and once they put the monitor
>
> on my ankle, it was like, that was the easiest way for me to go back because now
>
> everything I do…it was like if I go outside and they pick up that I just came outside,
>
> when I go to court, I go back to jail.

For Jahad, he did not see any other option than taking a deal in order to be able to return home.

Neither he nor his family had an understanding of the implications that would occur if he took

the deal and was put on house arrest, and how easily he could now be swept up in the system in

an even-deeper way.

In addition, the Social Worker Participant noted that it is important to "work with outside social workers to collaborate and make sure they're even give fair trials or treated fairly in the judicial system that we have." The Lawyer Participant agreed, stating, "sometimes it's more communication, relationship building with educators and administrators to explain people's situations and make sure that they have available access to education." That communication between systems is something that is an important next step to supporting young people to stay out of the STPP for an extended period of time.

It was noted on several occasions the need for schools to be involved early and often for students who are at risk of entering into the STPP. Advocacy and added supports for students and families after interaction with the justice system was also discussed throughout the interviews. The Assistant Principal Participant noted:

I actually think that those students should be treated more like the way that we treat students with IEPs. So when to say that, I mean they have a case manager. What we're doing and how we're programming for them addresses what they've been through and their specific needs I think both educationally and then just transition programming after high school. The way that schools treat young people who are part of the STPP needs to shift.

Overall, it was noted that school systems need to be doing more for young people who are part of the juvenile and criminal justice systems, both in and out of the school buildings.

Advocacy is also a topic prevalent in previous literature regarding the STPP. Some literature talks about a "justice gap" that aligns with the idea of increasing the amount of advocacy for young people at risk of entering into the STPP. This justice gap is defined as "the difference between the civil legal needs of low-income Americans and the resources available to

meet those needs" (Hill, 2017, p. 230). This gap is why young people and their families lack the

capital to navigate systems and is a major contributor to the lack of attorneys available to

represent poor people, either through nonprofit legal services or through pro bono services

offered by private attorneys (Hill, 2017).

Additional literature discusses the position that juvenile defenders hold when

representing young people who are part of the STPP. Juvenile defenders are uniquely situated to

help dismantle the STPP (Langberg & Fedders, 2013). These juvenile defenders, with an

understanding of their client's history, can advocate on their behalf to get the appropriate

educational programming and supports to help their clients avoid further involvement in the

STPP (Langberg & Fedders, 2013). There is however, a gap in literature, when it comes to the

advocacy from the professionals who work in the school systems.

Public-school systems have much work to do when it comes to supporting the young

people that they serve to avoid being swept into the STPP. Based on the data analyzed by the

researcher and presented in this chapter, the work should start by implementing supports and

services to impact their childhood experiences at a much younger age and increase the amount of

supports that are in place for young people who have experienced trauma. Additionally, there is

work around building cultural competence for the individuals who interact with young people at

risk of entering into the STPP, specifically around the use of power that individuals hold and the

impact that racism has across systems. The way that policy impacts young people at risk of

entering into the school to prison pipeline needs to be examined, along with the way that

resources are being spend and used. Finally, the use of advocacy and supporting young people

needs to be scrutinized to ensure that schools are doing their due diligence to support young

people who are at risk of or currently part of the STPP. The following chapter will include a discussion, limitations, and implications based on this data analysis.

Chapter 5

Discussion, Limitations, and Implications

The school-to-prison pipeline (STPP) is described as a pervasive trend of pushing disadvantaged students out of school and into the criminal justice system (ACLU, 2008). Young people of color are disproportionately impacted by the STPP in comparison to their white counterparts (The Advancement Project, 2017). Furthermore, young people who enter into the STPP often share similar characteristics of being underprivileged, have experienced trauma, are diagnosed with disabilities, have a mental illness, and/or had poor educational experiences.

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to determine what public schools should be doing to dismantle the STPP. The writer listened to the voices of the marginalized and heard the perspectives of individuals who work in both school systems and the justice systems. Counter-storytelling was used for this study because research shows that the voices of marginalized people in educational settings must be heard in order to facilitate true reform and social justice (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). Triangulation was also used in order to present the data in a cohesive way. Triangulation is the "use of two types of research methodologies or data sources to increase the validity of the study by ensuring the results of each are similar" (Terrell, 2016, p. 267). This chapter discusses the findings reported in Chapter 4 and their implications for further research.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this qualitative, phenomenological study, using both Critical Race Theory and counter-storytelling:

1. What collaboration should be happening between public school systems and the criminal and juvenile justice systems?

2. What collaboration should be happening between public school systems, young people who are part of the school-to-prison pipeline, and their families?

3. What additional supports should public school systems put into place in order to dismantle the STPP?

Review of Methodology

This section summarizes the context of the study, the participants, and the methods of data collection that were utilized by the researcher.

Context of Study

This study took place in a state in the southeast section of the United States. The participants all live in or have a direct tie to a large metropolitan city. This city has over 25% of its residents living in poverty (United States Census Bureau, 2016). Approximately 70% of the population of this city are individuals of color (United States Census Bureau, 2016). Over the past few years the rate of homicides has increased 44% between 2013 and 2019. Additionally, this city has a large, city-run public school district, along with several smaller charter-school networks. When residents of this city are arrested, they are sent to numerous city-run jails, state-run prisons, or held in federal institutions.

Participants

This study sought to gain a greater perspective from individuals who work within the education and the juvenile- and criminal-justice systems. Also, this study was completed in order to hear the voices of those who are often not listened to or valued when it comes to issues around the STPP.

Professionals. Nine consenting individuals meeting the inclusion criteria for this participant group contributed to this study. This participant group included individuals who

work directly in school buildings or within school systems, and individuals who work in some

capacity within the juvenile- or criminal-justice systems. Five individuals who work in school

buildings or within school systems were interviewed for this study. Four individuals who work

in some capacity within the juvenile- or criminal-justice systems were interviewed as well.

Participants who were previously incarcerated. Four individuals who met the

inclusion criteria consented to completed interviews for this study. Inclusion criteria for this

participant group included individuals who were formerly incarcerated in a State Department of

Corrections (DOC) facility or within the City's Department of Prisons within the last five years.

These participants were Black men who were former public or public charter school students of

the researcher who were all 18 years or age of older at the time the interviews were conducted.

Data Collection Methods

Interviews. Phenomenological interviews were used for this study. More specifically, a

semi-structured interview design was the first data collection method that was utilized

throughout this study. A semi-structured interview design allows the researcher to expand on the

type and amount of information that was collected (Terrell, 2016). The goal of completing these

interviews was to gain first-person experiences form the participants regarding their involvement

and possible role in the STPP.

Observations. For this study, the second form of data collection was observations.

These observations, based on the research purpose and research questions, were completed of the

"system." For the purposes of this study, the system is defined as any of the processes that take

place in the criminal justice system. The observations took place over a three-day period at the

municipal criminal court building in the city where the study was conducted. Descriptive and

reflective notes, included summaries and observations, were taken using observation protocols
(Appendix D).

       Document reviews. A third method of data collection that was completed for this study
was document reviews. The author reviewed school policies for the purpose of triangulation.
Five codes of conduct for students were found by the researcher. The document reviews were
useful to review school disciplinary policies and structures that are put into place across several
schools from several different cities.

Findings

       The subsequent section will provide a general summary of findings with specific
examples to highlight critical pieces of data. There were six major themes that were illuminated
from data collection and analysis. Three themes were focused on factors which lead to
incarceration: childhood experiences, trauma, and power and racism. Three additional themes
emerged in regard to the preferred practices to support young people to avoid or escape
incarceration: policy, resources, and advocacy. For this study, policy was focused around the use
of restorative disciplinary practices in place of zero-tolerance disciplinary policies and diversion
programs. The findings under the theme of resources focused on funding and teacher quality.
Finally, advocacy was defined as additional knowledge and supports that are needed for students
and families outside of the school building.

The Path to Incarceration

       This section will summarize the three initial themes around what leads to incarceration
for young people. The data to acquire these themes were analyzed from participant interviews,
observations, document reviews.

Childhood experiences. One previous study examined the differences between young people's early or late start to interacting with the juvenile justice system. According to this study, a clear predictor for ongoing, early-criminal behavior is the age of the first arrest (Alltucker, Bullis, Close, & Yovanoff, 2006). Additionally, the involvement of family members in the criminal justice system is also a lead predictor of young people becoming involved in the STPP (Alltucker et al., 2006).

Childhood experiences were mentioned across participant interviews when discussing what leads to incarceration. The lack of adult supervision, poor school experiences, and moving around from school to school were highlights of these interviews. Additionally, several professional participants discussed wanting to impact childhood and school experiences as a way to support young people to avoid the STPP.

Several participants who were formerly incarcerated mentioned early instances of suspension or expulsions. Jahad (pseudonym) talked about bringing a cap gun to school in first grade and subsequently being expelled. According to Jahad:

> My aunt's boyfriend took us to the store at the school, you know, a daily routine. There was candy in there. I'd get the cap gun with the candy and all that. He tell me like, 'All right, when we in the crib, we playing with them.' But it didn't register, like, don't put it in your book bag. I didn't want my cousin to take my caps, and that's when I did it. I go to school the next day, we in the gym. You know, that was the first period. That was our first class. I go in the gym room and I go in my book bag, so I see it. So now when I see it, it wasn't like a more so of like, 'Oh, I'm going to get in trouble.' It was like, 'I'm in the gym. If I shoot it, it's going to be louder.' That was my thought process, it was stupid. But you know, I shoot it. Everybody started getting on the ground and all that, the

teachers. I put it back in my book bag. So now, they come in there…That was my first

expulsion.

Jahad went on to discuss the move to another neighborhood school, being moved in and out of an

Alternative Education for Disruptive Youth (AEDY) school in the eighth grade, and eventually

attending the neighborhood public charter school. When asked about his high-school experience

he replied, "Oh, you know high school stuff. Incarceration."

In addition, Anthony (pseudonym) also discussed getting expelled at a young age from

his middle school. He stated, "When I went to middle school, that's when I first started getting

into trouble, I got kicked out of middle school." When he got expelled from his middle school,

he then transferred to another middle and got expelled from that school as well. That was when

he attended an AEDY for the remainder of his middle-school years and then attended a

neighborhood public charter school. While at the neighborhood public charter school, he

continued to get into trouble. According to Anthony:

So from high school, I got kicked out of my school every year. I went to the AEDY 9th

grade, went to 10th grade at the neighborhood school. Went to the AEDY in 10th grade.

11th grade I went to AEDY, came back to the neighborhood school and dropped out.

From then on, I never went back to school until I got arrested November 22nd of 2016.

Based on the stories of Jahad and Anthony, and the research discussed above, it is apparent that

there is direct connection between negative childhood experiences and interaction with the

juvenile and/or criminal justice systems.

In addition to formerly-incarcerated student participants mentioning childhood

experiences, many professional participants discussed their childhood experiences as the reason

why they are in the professional positions that they currently hold. According to the High

School Principal Participant, the reason that he chose to do the work is the following:

> Primarily because of my experience as a child myself. When I look at students who grew
>
> up in my ZIP code and students who went to different schools, the tables that we're sitting
>
> at today and our life experience was drastically dictated by the schools that students went
>
> to. So, I have cousins, I have friends who live literally two, three, four blocks away from
>
> me, and some of them are in jail. Some of them don't have a job and they live off of their
>
> parents. Some of them hop from job to job. Some of them have like 50 kids. All of that,
>
> the major difference, the major correlation between me and folks who've turned out to not
>
> have a comfortable life is the high school that they went to. And because of that I wanted
>
> to be involved in this work so that all students could have an option like I had when I
>
> went to high school.

Additionally, the Assistant Principal Participant stated that they chose to work in schools

because, "I think a general desire to change the trajectory of populations that have oftentimes

been underserved in terms of education, leading to just opportunity barriers." Both of these

professional participants have an understanding that childhood experiences and positive school

experiences for young people are important in order to have a direct impact on their outcomes

and the level of interaction that they will have with the STPP.

Trauma. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration website

(2019) defines individual trauma as:

> An event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as
>
> physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects

on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-

being.

As discussed in Chapter 4 of this study, several participants who were formerly incarcerated

spoke about moments of trauma and how those moments led to negative impacts on their young

lives. Donte stated, "my aunt got killed by her boyfriend in my mom's living room…I remember

that event, that's when stuff started changing, I remember." Jahad also noted the number of

friends and "old heads" who were killed and how those deaths and traumatic experienced "piled

up."

In order for schools to be part of the dismantling of the STPP, trauma and the impact that

it has on young people need to be considered. According to the Lawyer Participant:

Trauma and childhood experience are very relevant to how students behave, and that

schools have a role to play in addressing that, and receiving it in a way that is healthy and

supportive, and not a punitive and furthering of the school to prison pipeline.

Additionally, the Non-Profit/Police Participant discussed the act of being arrested as traumatic

when he stated:

…[W]hy do I need to put them through all of the trauma and all of the, all of the

negatives of the arrest…Those girls, those young women that we've been arresting for

decades coming into school with mace. You know what, you don't really need the

fingerprint her, photograph her, hold the cell block for six hours. You know what I

mean? You have her set up for court, so the next day and she goes through an intake

center and somebody says, 'Oh, you don't need to see the judge.' We're going to divert

you, really?

Schools should deeply consider how to use the power that they hold when police are called for

instances that are unnecessary, and the increased amount of trauma that will expose young

people to.

The concept of schools increasing their trauma-informed practices was illuminated by

several participants. The Lawyer Participant stated:

> …[S]chools have an opportunity to set a culture and a set of policies, that are welcoming
>
> to students, that are supportive of students, that recognize the larger picture of the context
>
> in which students live, and the decision making that they are confronted with based on
>
> that context. And that it's not as clear cut for some students as just showing up to school
>
> and participating in the way we would all like to see everyone participate, that there's a
>
> lot more complexity and a lot more that goes on. And that trauma and childhood
>
> experience are very relevant to how students behave, and that schools have a role to play
>
> in addressing that, and receiving it in a way that is healthy and supportive, and not a
>
> punitive and furthering of the school-to-prison pipeline.

This participant agreed that sometimes the behaviors of young people are directly linked to the

trauma that they have experienced and that schools need to find ways to be supportive instead of

being punitive.

In addition to schools being trauma informed, resilience was a topic that should be

discussed. The Social Work Participant stated the following regrading resilience:

> My whole thing as a therapist, sort of my theory that I sort of rest all things on, is this
>
> idea of resilience. And so we focus so much on trauma, which is true, and it's there. But
>
> I would love to push towards, and then there's also resilience. And I think that if we
>
> could use, even in a disciplinary structure, we could find a way to focus more on their

strengths and push towards what they're capable of, instead of you did this wrong, you

did that wrong.

Schools should certainly increase their knowledge of trauma and how it impacts young people.

However, schools should also focus on this idea of resilience and that young people, with the

correct interventions and supports, can overcome their traumatic experiences.

  Power and racism. Power and racism were a theme that was illuminated during the

interviews and court observations. During the court observations, as discussed in Chapter 4,

were a clear example of the loss of power that individuals experience when they are part of the

criminal justice system. The individuals with the power in court buildings tell those who are

being prosecuted—even before being found guilty—when to talk, where to sit, what to wear, and

when to come back. This process did not take into consideration that the individual may or may

not be guilty. Additionally, the Lawyer Participant stated the following in regards to power and

how it is used, "So, wanting to create a different way of doing things and kind of experiment

with how we could treat folks differently and leverage our privilege and power as lawyers to try

to make some change in the system."

  Power also was illuminated when participants discussed the power that schools have over

young people. As the Non-Profit/Police Participant stated about schools:

  You are the one in charge of that child. And, and so often times I said, if you looked at it

  from the lens, but this is my shop. If it was my child, what I called the cop to take them

  away from them, and so if they paid more attention to the reality of the impact they have

  because at the end of the day, every time they call for that child to be arrest, they're

  feeding the system that future criminality.

Schools, along with the criminal justice system, need to be more thoughtful about the power that they hold.

Racism was also a theme that arose during interviews. This topic was most discussed when talking about the impact on young people of any individuals who work in schools who may be racist on any level. The Manager of Principals Participant noted when discussing the existence of the STPP:

> I think the silent perpetuator of this is at the classroom level with teachers who don't have a deep belief in kids, particularly poor children of color, who don't have a deep belief in them and maybe pushing them out of their classrooms, sometimes intentionally, sometimes unintentionally, and then some of those kids end up in the system. But it's underpinned by racism and bias and lots of things that kind of plague our world.

The High School Principal Participant also added, "I think every school, every organization, in any place you go there's a certain level of racist people, and we need to find them and we need to make sure they don't work here anymore." These two bold statements from leaders in education make it clear that there are individuals who work with young people of color who are racist and simply cannot be working in schools.

Avoiding or Escaping Incarceration

This section will summarize the final three themes on how schools can support young people to avoid or escape incarceration, hopefully eventually dismantling the STPP altogether.

Policy. For the purposes of this study, policy encompasses the use of restorative-disciplinary practices in place of zero-tolerance disciplinary practices and also the implementation of diversion programs.

Previous literature has focused on the powerful impact of school-based restorative justice

practices in contrast to the implementation of zero-tolerance disciplinary policies. Zero-

tolerance disciplinary policies have been found to "not only deprive students of educational

opportunities, but fail to make schools safer places" (Gonzalez, 2012, p. 282). Additionally,

zero-tolerance disciplinary policies not only increase the likelihood of future disciplinary

policies, but also increase contact with the juvenile and/or criminal justice systems (Gonzalez,

2012).

Restorative practices and restorative justice models are used both in schools and within

the criminal justice system. According to Zehr (2015), restorative justice can be defined as the

following:

> Restorative justice is a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have a stake
>
> in a specific offense and to collectively identify and address harms, needs and
>
> obligations, in order to heal and put things as right as possible." (p. 48)

Additionally, Donte noted that he specifically remembering having to have restorative

conversations after getting into arguments or physical altercations at school. It is clear

throughout research and from individuals within this study that restorative practices should

replace zero-tolerance disciplinary policies, particularly in schools where young people are at

risk of entering into the STPP.

The Assistant Principal Participant discussed communication with families are imperative

and working to change policies to be supportive. They stated:

> I think a lot of it has to do with not maybe giving up on kids who in other times have, like
>
> I said, just before been put in a warehouse situation. We try to work really closely with
>
> families in terms of communication. I think I've really never in my 15 years in education

run across a parent who didn't want the best for their kid. So I think that is one of the big

things that we do. And I think we spend a lot of time reinventing and thinking through

policy and being intentional. For example, when I started here, there was a lot more

emphasis on the stick, so to speak, rather than the carrot. And I think infusing more

interventions for positive behavior into our community has been more impactful to

continue to push against it.

This implementation of positive behavior supports into schools is an additional way to ensure

that students are staying in instructional environments and not being pushed into the STPP.

Diversion programming was also discussed at length throughout the interviews and is

something that is also prevalent in previous literature. The Office of Justice Programs defines

diversion as an intervention that "redirects youth away from formal processing…while still

holding them accountable for their actions (2020). Also according to the Office of Justice

Programs, diversion is a way to remove young people from the juvenile justice process as early

as possible to avoid later negative outcomes (2020).

One such diversion program was implemented in a city in the Mid-Atlantic section of the

United States (Fader et al., 2015). This program is a partnership between a nonprofit agency, the

school district, and the police department which specifically targets young people who have

committed a nonviolent, arrestable offense on school property. Results of this study were

impressive. Some of the most impressive results were that out of the 85 participants, 78 of the

participants completed the program and fulfilled the terms of their contract (Fader, et al., 2015).

Also importantly, only 3.5% were rearrested during the program (Fader, et al., 2015).

During the interviews, the Non-Profit/Police Participant spoke extensively regarding

diversion programming. This participant noted that he has been working in school diversion

work since 2011, when he was asked to be part of a national program around law enforcement and the role that it plays in the juvenile justice system. It was during this time, he said, that he became much more "educated on the impact law enforcement arrests were having on juveniles."

The Non-Profit/Police Participant went on to discuss the number of young people that the arrested each year, sometimes up to 1,600 young people in the city that this study takes place. He stated the following:

> There's way more opportunity for that kind of innovative, but not that all conceptually advanced, just pretty simple, straight forward stuff. To be saying, this doesn't need to go to the police, we don't need to open a case file, we don't need to put this kid on a trajectory that we know is going to end poorly, where there are opportunities and resources that we should be thinking of first.

This work of building bridges, connections, and communication between the education system, the police, and the juvenile and criminal justice system is imperative to breaking down and dismantling the STPP.

Resources. For this study, resources will include funding and teacher quality. Funding is often a hot topic when it comes to education, specifically urban education. This idea of funding encompasses financial resources, school funds and access to services for young people and their families. Often, funding discrepancies are the root cause of other systematic funding and resources issues in urban public schools.

One way that funding was discussed in this study was the possibility of being creative with the funding that is given to young people and the schools that serve them. An example of that creative funding was changing the staffing models in school buildings that serve young people of color who have experienced trauma and have other factors that make them at risk for

entering into the STPP. According to the Manager of Principals Participant, increasing access to mentors and social workers is more important than the amount of school police officers.

Additionally, the Manager of Principals stated the following regarding implementing the use of mentors as an innovative use of funding:

Mentorship. I think it's important to say that any public school, including ours, can do whatever we want to do, right? In the school district, a principal may have a little bit less flexibility over their budget, but in our charter network, there's certainly some lines that you can't move. But if a principal wanted to say, 'I am going to cut two of my deans… I'm going to devote that money to mentors, and I have identified folks in the community who I believe are committed and I believe can have a huge impact on our students and I've got them to commit to 15 to 20 hours a week of mentoring,' like a principal can do that. They can 100% do that.

This shift in the way that funding is used in schools will better serve young people who are at risk of entering into the STPP by giving them the supports and services that are necessary for them to be successful.

An additional way that funding was discussed in the interviews was around extracurricular and community activities for young people. Jahad, Namir, and Anthony discussed extracurricular activities, specifically football, as a way to keep them busy and productive. The Lawyer Participant stated, "I think school systems should be devoting more resources to support students, to providing afterschool opportunities…to not end up in compromising situations where they end up in the justice system."

Teacher quality also emerged during this study as an additional resource for young people to avoid interaction with the STPP. According to the participants of this study, teacher quality is dependent on several different factors.

One of the factors that impact teacher quality is appropriate teacher training. According to the Assistant Principal Participant:

> …[I]t would be more about teacher training, specifically because I think the vast majority of disciplinary policies that we have to put in place have to do with supporting really novice instructors…in their practices, just in mindset, in just years of experience, etc.

Suitable teacher training would increase the quality of teachers and allow their focus to be on learning and not on disciplinary issues, perhaps leading young people to be swept into the STPP.

Advocacy. For the purposes of this study, advocacy will be defined as additional knowledge and supports that are needed for students and families outside of the school building. Jahad and Anthony both mentioned the lack of knowledge that they had as they were part of the justice system in some capacity. As mentioned in Chapter 4, Anthony felt very strongly regarding this topic:

> First things first, I really feel like it should be mandatory for the teachers to weave through all the students to find out who's currently going back and forth with court, no matter what their situation is, no matter what they did. Even if you aren't known for being a good student…Because if I'm coming to court with you, that means I want to see you come out of court…

Schools having a knowledge of what students they serve are part of the justice system is important. Being able to support families and students to understand the system is also important. According to Jahad:

Because I didn't know nothing about the legal…Like, I didn't know don't take a deal,

don't plead. I didn't know none of that. All they told me was, "Yeah, it's aggravated

assault. They pressing charges, or if you plead, you take a little probation and house

arrest." I'm like house arrest or jail? Like, that's what was in my mind.

Advocacy in this case would be to support young people and their families to navigate the

system and know their rights as citizens.

Discussion

The relationships between the six primary themes and current literature and implications

for future research, practice, and policy will be addressed in the final portion of this chapter. The

six thematic findings resulting from the research are:

- Childhood experiences impact the trajectory of young people who are at risk of

  incarceration.

- Trauma, and the enduring effects of trauma, is a leading cause of young people

  entering into the juvenile and/or criminal justice systems.

- Power and racism are incorporated into every aspect of our society, specifically

  within schools and the justice system.

- The policies that schools choose to implement can impact the amount of interaction

  that young people have with the juvenile and/or criminal justice systems.

- The resources that are available, or unavailable, can have a positive or detrimental

  impact on young people at risk of entering into the STPP.

- Advocacy and supports to navigate the justice systems are essential for young people

  who are at risk of entering into the STPP and incarceration.

These potential claims are summative of the study completed and will be discussed below.

Childhood Experiences

Childhood experiences have an impact on the lives of young people. These childhood experiences play an integral part of the interaction that young people may have with the STPP and the juvenile- and/or criminal-justice systems. Additionally, a clear predictor for ongoing early criminal behavior is the age of the first arrest (Alltucker et al., 2006). To combat this, schools must be considerate with the way that they punish young people, particularly students prior to secondary schooling.

Schools should also ensure that early on, before a student's secondary educational programming, that they are being thoughtful about the supports that are put in place for young people and their families. With this being said, primary schools should be the first level of defense for implementing interventions and supports for young people who are at risk of entering into the STPP. Often, by the time that young people enter into high school, they already have negative interactions with schools and the juvenile justice system. Schools need to connect young people and their families to the appropriate community-based supports early on. Primary schools should do away with suspensions and expulsions in order to decrease the amount of changes in schools that young people have over the course of their educational careers.

Trauma

Young people who are involved in the STPP often have documented histories of trauma, being abused or neglected (West, Day, Somers, & Baroni, 2014). Trauma frequently manifests in particularly negative outcomes such as the following: self-harm behavior, dating violence, delinquency and perpetration of violence, low educational attainment, homelessness, early parenting, working poverty, unemployment, dependence on public assistance, relationship difficulties, and limited access to reliable transportation (West et al., 2014). Traumatic

childhood experiences have been linked to "increased risk of substance abuse, mental illness, physical health impairment, and sexually transmitted diseases" (West et al., 2014, pp. 58-59). Significant to this study, young people who experience trauma generally have a higher rate of interaction with the justice system and display a higher risk of adult criminal behavior than young people who have not experienced trauma (West et al., 2014).

Schools need to increase the knowledge around how trauma manifests and use of trauma-informed approaches both in and outside of the classroom. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration website (2019) discusses an approach to trauma-informed care that includes the following four essential parts:

- Acknowledgement of the prevalence of trauma;

- Recognition of trauma's impact on systems;

- Promotion of trauma-sensitive responses; and

- Avoidance of retraumatizing practices and policies.

These four essential parts of trauma-informed care need to be the very beginning and minimum pieces of knowledge that school systems implement in order to support to dismantle the STPP. Additionally, this trauma-informed care should begin the moment that young people enroll in education and not wait until their secondary years.

Power and Racism

The presence of racism across educational systems and the juvenile and criminal justice systems is a reality for young people of color in the United States. Based on this statement, antiracism training and educators who implement culturally-relevant pedagogy should be a necessity for schools that serve young people of color. According to Wilson's (2020) article on *The Mennonite* Website,

Antiracism training provides a baseline for giving the community a common vocabulary

and lens to discuss hot button topics. But what tends to happen is that people stop after

taking an antiracism training. Antiracism work must continue beyond training, and

ongoing support is necessary in order to accomplish that. Antiracism work must also be

held accountable by communities of color and done with great humility.

All individuals who work with young people of color should be required to participate in

antiracism training, along with the implementation of culturally-relevant pedagogy. In addition

to this, individuals who are racist on any level should not have the opportunity to interact with

young people of color in schools or across other systems.

Policy

The policies that schools choose to implement directly impact the trajectory of young

people. Because of this, schools, particularly schools who support young people of color, should

eliminate the use of zero-tolerance disciplinary policies. According to the Lawyer Participant,

"taking a restorative approach and employing restorative justice as much as possible, which is

beneficial both for the student involved, who would otherwise may be referred to the police, but

also for the person who's harmed."

In addition to eliminating zero-tolerance disciplinary policies in favor of restorative

practices, schools should constantly be reviewing their disciplinary structures and policies. This

review of policy should be through the lens of how to best support young people who are at risk

of entering into the STPP and eliminating any policies that impact individuals who are already

considered marginalized based on their race, disability, poverty level, and mental health status.

While reviewing policy, practitioners should also include trauma-informed approaches to their

disciplinary policies.

It is unacceptable for schools, specifically who serve young people who are already at

risk of entering into the STPP to call the police for low level offenses that can be handled

through the school's code of conduct. Schools must keep in mind, that as stated by the Non-

Profit/Police Participant, "The system should be set up for that kid who scares you, and not the

one that makes you mad."

Diversion programming is extremely imperative to supporting young people to avoid the

STPP. The diversion program in the city that this study took place should be replicated across

the nation. The partnership between the school district, the police department, the juvenile court

system, and human services is an excellent example of systems working together to support

young people. This diversion program supports young people to get the services that they need,

instead of criminalizing them.

Resources

The manner in which schools choose to use the resources that are allocated to them is

imperative for schools to increase the amount of support given to young people at risk of

entering into the STPP. As stated by several school based participants, one way to increase the

amount of supports for young people is to reallocate funding to hire more social workers and

mentors. Social workers are incredibly important to combat the ways that trauma impacts young

people.

Based on the previous discussion about trauma, young people who experience it are at a

higher risk of entering into the STPP. In one study, it was noted that trauma impacts brain

development and learning, it changes the way that young people interact with each other, and has

sustained and long term impacts on young people (McInerney & McKlindon, 2014). Based on

this study and participant interviews, social workers need to be present in school buildings and funding should be available for this to be a reality.

Additionally, funding should be reallocated in order for schools who serve young people who are at risk of entering in the STPP to have mentors to support them. According to the Manager of Principals Participant:

> So I would say one thing would be identifying mentors for students. I have been reading more and more about the power of mentorship…But to have dedicated folks who are really connected to this school who understand our mission and our values and our programs and what we're trying to accomplish. Not are just people who show up and leave but are really part of the school who are here to wrap their arms around young people who sometimes need their arms wrapped around them.

Additionally, literature also talks about the importance of positive adults surrounding and supporting young people (Smith & Stromont, 2011).

Advocacy

Advocacy, for the purposes of this study, has been defined as additional knowledge and supports that are needed for young people and their families outside of the school building. Throughout the study, participants noted the importance of schools being cognizant of what young people they serve are at risk of entering into the STPP or are already entrenched in the juvenile and/or criminal justice systems. Additionally, it was discussed that communication between the education system and the justice system is something that is general lacking in urban public schools.

One easy way that schools should be advocating for young people who are part of the STPP is to simply know who they are. There should be a way that schools are able to know the

young people who they serve who are part of the justice system, whether it be juvenile or adult.

Currently, there are some barriers to quickly being able to know whether young people are

connected to the justice system, specifically if they are being charged as adults. Creating a

system which is immediately able to notify school personnel when the young people they serve

become part of the juvenile or criminal justice system is of paramount importance.

Additionally, when schools are aware of any young person they serve are part of the

STPP, they should immediately begin communication with the support systems in place.

Communication with the young person's defense lawyer, the prosecuting attorney, and any other

involved parties should occur to best determine how the school system can support.

Additionally, as mentioned by Anthony, someone from the school should be attending court

dates for the young people who they serve. Anthony stated, "…[I]t should be mandatory for

teachers to weave through all the students to find out who's currently going back and forth with

court…if I'm coming to court with you, that means I want to see you come out…" This active

participation of the schools with the courts is an excellent way to advocate for young people. In

contrast, if no one from the school does show up to court, it sends a glaring message that schools

do not care about the entire child and do not want them to return to the school building. An

additional form of advocacy that was mentioned by the Assistant Principal Participant was the

idea of treating young people who are part of the justice system similarly to students in special

education. The Assistant Principal Participant stated:

> I actually think those students should be treated more like the way that we treat students
>
> with IEPs. So when I say that, I mean they have a case manager. What we're doing and
>
> how we're programming for them addresses what they've been through and their specific

needs I think both educationally and then just transition programming for after high

school.

This case manager support should encompass more than educational programming and would

happen as early as needed. This support should include communication between systems—the

education system, justice system, child welfare, and other another support system that need to be

participating in the ongoing support of the young people. Advocating for young people who are

part of the STPP should be and communicating between the systems who are working with them

is imperative to keeping young people out of jail.

Limitations

There are several potential limitations to consider that may impact the findings of this

study. Primarily, the researcher being a White woman is a limitation. As a White woman, the

researcher could be perceived to be in a place of power, mainly with the participants who were

former students. Previous research has emphasized the need to examine who researchers are in

relation to the contexts and people who they study (Fine, 1994). Additionally, Schultz (1997)

stated that "behind discussions of race, class, and gender as boundaries or barriers to research are

issues, often unarticulated and unaddressed, about power" (p. 503). Based on this previous

research and through the lens of a White woman, the researcher worked to ensure that

participants understood the research process, took precautions to conceal their identity, and also

felt like their perspectives were valued and heard. The researcher also used member checking to

ensure that the participants point of views and stories were not distorted.

An additional limitation to consider while reading this study is that the participants who

were formerly incarcerated are former students of the writer. Although every precaution was put

into place for the participants to feel safe expressing their true opinions, some participants may

have held back because the researcher was a former teacher and someone who previously

worked closely with them. In contrast, this may have also worked the opposite way, with them

freely expressing their opinions because of the trust they have previously built with the

researcher.

This study took place in an urban setting in schools that serve young people of color who

live in poverty. Due to this, this study did not take into consideration young people of color who

are part of the STPP who live in dissimilar contexts. Another limitation to this study is that

several former students that the writer hoped would be able to participate in the study were

unable to. One former student who was incarcerated was murdered between the time the writer

submitted their proposal and actually conducted participant interviews. Additionally, five former

students who the writer anticipated to interview, are currently incarcerated. These data

underscore the importance of the study and the need to support young people early on to stay out

of the STPP and the unintended consequences that incarceration at a young age can sometimes

lead.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

The primary goal of this study was to determine what school systems should be doing to

dismantle the STPP. In the same vein, the researchers hope for this study is to implement the

findings with her current students and current school systems. Based on this study, there are

implications for further research. Research should be completed around what young women of

color experience and their thoughts around what schools should be doing to dismantle the STPP.

Additionally, further research should be completed using the stories of young people who live in

across dissimilar settings. Furthermore, research should be focused on the stories of young

people who enter into the STPP at a young age versus individuals who did not have interaction

with the justice system until after high school. A longitudinal study should be completed

comparing the supports and services of various elementary schools in areas of high trauma and

the long-term outcomes for the students that they serve.

    Funding in schools is an area that should be investigated in future research and practice.

For the purposes of this discussion, the schools that should be investigating the use of creative

funding are schools that are considered at-risk or disenfranchised. This includes, but is not

limited to, schools that serve and support students who have elevated exposure to trauma, live in

poverty, and neighborhoods with high rates of violence. It is the job of the school systems to

determine how to reallocate funding to increase personnel who are trauma-informed and can act

as a support system for young people who are at risk of entering into the STPP. Additionally,

schools need to reallocate funding in order to ramp up services and extra-curricular activities

outside of the school hours. School systems need to implement policy that does not allow for

elementary schools to expel or suspend young people, but instead provide access to appropriate

supports and services to help young people avoid behaviors that could put them at risk of

interaction with the justice system.

    The juvenile justice system and schools should have a system to share information

regarding what students are incarcerated and where in order to ensure that families can be

supported. Furthermore, schools need to have an individual whose job description includes

being the liaison for young people in the school building who are part of the juvenile and/or

criminal justice system. This individual should be attending court dates, have direct contact with

judges, lawyer, and probation officers, and support the family to navigate the justice system.

This person should also be in charge of ensuring a smooth transition in and out of placements.

Conclusion

This study sought to examine what public school systems should be doing to dismantle the STPP. Although schools have the potential to be a mechanism for social change, there are many factors that are currently hold schools back from doing so. School systems and the juvenile and criminal justice systems, and those individuals who interact with them, need to increase communication in order to support young people who are part of the STPP. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of school systems to implement the appropriate supports, services, and interventions and to communication with families and the justice system in order to support young people to stay out of the STPP.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol for Education System Professionals

Date	
Time	
Location	
Interviewer	
Interviewee	

Interview Protocol Instructions
Introduce myself
Purpose of Study: To gain more information about how public school systems can help to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline.
Provide Structure: taking notes, recording interview
Ask interviewee if they have any questions
*Definition of the STPP: The STPP is a "collection of education and safety policies and practices that push our nation's schoolchildren out of the classroom and onto the streets, the juvenile justice system, and the criminal justice system" (Archer, 2010, p. 868). Often the STPP impacts students of color, students who have disabilities, are male, live in poverty, and experience an incredibly high of trauma (Houchins, Shippen, & Murphy, 2012). *Only give this definition if there is no working definition based on question #8*

1. Tell me a little about yourself.	
2. What is your educational background?	
3. What is your professional background?	
4. What made you decide to do this work?	
5. What are the current disciplinary policies in your school?	
6. What would you change anything about the current disciplinary policies in your school?	
7. What would you want to keep the same about the current disciplinary policies in your school?	
8. What is your definition of the STPP? *If they do not have a working definition, see above*	
9. In your capacity, how have you worked to support students (and families) who are part of the STPP?	

10. Are there any ways that your school has made conscious decisions to change their policies to begin to dismantle the STPP?	
11. What interactions do you have in your role with other systems who work with young people who enter the STPP? (Systems: Public Defenders Association, court appointed attorneys, private attorneys, ADA, probation, nonprofits, direct service organizations, etc.)	
12. What do you think would be the best next steps your school to support young people to stay out of the STPP? (*prompts: training, what happens when…, disciplinary policy changes, etc*)	
13. What data sets are reviewed and analyzed to make informed decisions on policies and procedures?	
14. How are these data sets reviewed and analyzed to make informed decisions on policies and procedures?	
15. If policy restrictions and budget issues were not factors, what is one thing would you chose to do to dismantle the STPP?	
16. Is there anything else you want to tell me that I didn't ask you already?	

17. If I want to gain more information about working to dismantle the STPP, who do you think I should talk to?	

Thank them for participating	Ask them what pseudonym they would like in the study
Ensure confidentiality	Thank again for participating

Appendix B

Interview Protocol for Justice System Professionals

Date	
Time	
Location	
Interviewer	
Interviewee	

Interview Protocol Instructions
Introduce myself
Purpose of Study: To gain more information about how school systems can help to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline.
Provide Structure: taking notes and audio recording
Ask interviewee if they have any questions
*Definition of the STPP: The STPP is a "collection of education and safety policies and practices that push our nation's schoolchildren out of the classroom and onto the streets, the juvenile justice system, and the criminal justice system" (Archer, 2010, p. 868). Often the STPP impacts students of color, students who have disabilities, are male, live in poverty, and experience an incredibly high of trauma (Houchins, Shippen, & Murphy, 2012). *Only give this definition if there is no working definition based on question #5*

1. What is your educational background?	
2. What is your professional background?	
3. What is your current role at work?	
4. What made you decide to do this work?	
5. What is your definition of the STPP? *If they do not have a working definition: see above under instructions*	
6. What are your beliefs on the STPP?	
7. In your capacity, how have you worked to support students who are part of the STPP and their families?	
8. Do you believe schools have a role in the STPP? If so, what?	
9. What should public school systems be doing to support students to stay out of the STPP?	

10. What should the juvenile and/or criminal justice system be doing to dismantle the STPP?	
11. Is there anything else you want to tell me that I didn't ask you already?	
12. If I want to gain more information about working to dismantle the STPP, who do you think I should talk to?	

Thank them for participating	Ask them what name they would like as a pseudonym in the study
Ensure confidentiality	Thank again for participating

Appendix C

Interview Protocol for Individuals Previously Incarcerated

Date	
Time	
Location	
Interviewer	
Interviewee	

Interview Protocol Instructions
Introduce myself
Purpose of Study: To gain more information about how education systems can help to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline. Give short explanation about what the STPP is.
Provide Structure: taking notes
Ask interviewee if they have any questions
Definition of the STPP: The STPP is a "collection of education and safety policies and practices that push our nation's schoolchildren out of the classroom and onto the streets, the juvenile justice system, and the criminal justice system" (Archer, 2010, p. 868). Often the STPP impacts students of color, students who have disabilities, are male, live in poverty, and experience an incredibly high of trauma (Houchins, Shippen, & Murphy, 2012).

1. Tell me a little about yourself. (Where were you born? What neighborhood did you grow up in?)	
2. Tell me about your childhood.	
3. What do you remember about your school years (start as early as you can remember)?	
4. What are some positive memories about your school experience?	
5. What are some negative memories about your school experiences?	
6. Do you remember anything about the disciplinary policy? Suspensions? Etc?	
7. When was the first time that you had any sort of interaction with police or the justice system (inside or outside of school)?	
8. What supports were in place for students who had disciplinary issues in school?	
9. What are some interventions that your school or teachers could have put into place to help avoid this interaction with the justice system	

10. Is there anything else you want to tell me that I didn't ask you already?	
11. If I want to gain more information about this, who do you think I should talk to?	

Thank you for participating	Ask them what name they would like to use as a pseudonym for the study
Ensure confidentiality	Thank again for participating

Appendix D

Observational Protocol

Date	
Time	
Location	

Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes

Appendix E

Informed Consent for Dissertation Research Project Participation:

Public School Systems & Dismantling the School-to-Prison Pipeline

Dear *{Participant}*,

  I am a doctoral candidate at Arcadia University in Glenside, PA. I would like to invite you to participate in a research project on how public school systems can work to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline.

  Your participation will include being interviewed one time for 45 minutes to an hour. A second or third interview of the same length may be added if it seems necessary after the first interview.

  There is no direct benefit to you as a participant in this study. You may still want to participate because this study hopes to improve the outcomes of individuals who have been part of the juvenile and/or criminal justice system, as well as those systems as a whole.

  You may not want to participate in this study because you may be vulnerable to someone's determining who you are and what you have said, but I will protect you from this possibility as much as possible by using a pseudonym for your name and for the organization that you work for (if applicable). I will e-mail or mail you a hard copy of the transcript of each of your interviews. You will be able to make any changes that you want. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time up until {insert date here}. At that point, I will be in the final stages of the writing process and will not be able to remove quotations.

  This study will be shared with my dissertation committee and other appropriate members of the Arcadia University community. The dissertation that results from this work will be {*published in hard copy and will be housed at Landman Library on campus}.*

  I appreciate your giving time to this study, which will help me to learn what school systems should do to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline. If you have any questions, please feel free to call at (484) 256-8599 or e-mail at cstoltzfus_01@arcadia.edu. You may also contact my committee chairperson, Dr Bruce Campbell at (215) 572- 2170 or campbellb@arcadiau.edu.

Thank you,
Carrie Stoltzfus

Please sign below if you are willing to participate in the dissertation research project outlined above.

Signature _____

Print Name _____

Date _____

Appendix F

Informed Consent for Dissertation Research Project Participation:

Public School Systems & Dismantling the School-to-Prison Pipeline

Dear *{Participant}*,

I am a doctoral candidate at Arcadia University in Glenside, PA. I would like to invite you to participate in a research project about how public school systems can assist to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline.

Your participation will include being interviewed one time for 45 minutes to an hour. A second or third interview of the same length may be added if it seems necessary after the first interview.

There is no direct benefit to you as a participant in this study. You may still want to participate because there may by satisfaction to know that you have contributed to research that my benefit individuals similar to you in the future.

You may not want to participate in this study because you may be vulnerable to someone's determining who you are and what you have said, but I will protect you from this possibility as much as possible by using a pseudonym for your name. I will e-mail or mail you a hard copy of the transcript of each of your interviews. You will be able to make any changes that you want. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time up until {insert date here}. At that point, I will be in the final stages of the writing process and will not be able to remove quotations from the document.

This study will be shared with my dissertation committee and other appropriate members of the Arcadia University community. The dissertation that results from this work will be {*published in hard copy and will be housed at Landman Library on campus*}.

I appreciate your giving time to this study, which will help me to learn what school systems should do to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline. If you have any questions, please feel free to call at (484) 256-8599 or e-mail at cstoltzfus_01@arcadia.edu. You may also contact my committee chairperson, Dr Bruce Campbell at (215) 572- 2170 or campbellb@arcadiau.edu.

Thank you,
Carrie Stoltzfus

Please sign below if you are willing to participate in the dissertation research project outlined above.

Signature _____

Print Name _____

Date _____