

A Case Study of the Prevalence of the School-To-Prison Pipeline within Long Island Correctional Facilities: an Exploration of Female Inmates –Particularly Females of Color – Aged 18–35 Years

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ABSTRACT: For over three decades, school districts across the country have sought to combat the escalation of school violence through the implementation of zero tolerance policies: a “no-nonsense” approach to school discipline resulting from the 1994 enactment of the Guns Free School Act (Pub L No. 103-882, §14601). Intended to secure school safety, these rigid strategies mandated the perpetration of predetermined punitive consequences for specific school infractions (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). American youth, disproportionately those of color, were subject to harsh disciplinary measures regardless of behavioral circumstances or mitigating factors (Kang-Brown et al., 2013). Through the criminalization of education and the stigmatization of youth, zero tolerance policies initiated the emergence of the school-to-prison pipeline (STPP), heightening a juvenile’s risk toward future justice system contact. Although a surfeit of STPP data targets male youth in substantiating the existence of the pipeline, a surge of scholarship addressing female youth has been noted.

The following exploratory case study exemplified the interrelationship between the STPP and exclusionary punishments. Through the distribution, collection, and evaluation of survey data completed by 55 incarcerated female inmates, housed within one of three New York State correctional facilities, the subsequent study validates the prevalence of the STPP. The findings suggest a correlation between the female participants’ current incarceration and a history of suspensions and expulsions during their educational years. In conjunction with existing STPP scholarship, this study identified an overrepresentation of Black participants affected by exclusionary discipline. Black female participants were disproportionately funneled through the pipeline accelerating juvenile and criminal justice contact.

KEYWORDS: education, exclusionary punishment, juveniles, school-to-prison-pipeline

I. INTRODUCTION

The passing of the 1994 Guns Free School Act (Pub L No. 103-882, §14601) granted school districts across the country the authorization to introduce zero-tolerance policies into their school disciplinary protocols

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(American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). Within two years of the law's passage, all states enacted legislation in compliance with the Federal mandates (Mallett, 2016 & Brady, 2002). Public school districts procuring federal funding were required to modify their disciplinary practices to include a mandated one-year expulsion of any student determined to have brought a weapon onto school grounds. The automatic implementation of harsh punitive measures for school-specified infractions was intended to deter student transgressions and reinforce school safety; the results were antithetical.

The school-to-prison pipeline (STPP) represents a disconcerting national trend whereby American youth are funneled out of the educational setting and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. The adoption of a "no-nonsense" approach toward school disciplinary measures escalated the use of zero-tolerance policies subjecting American youth, disproportionately those of color, to harsh punitive measures for non-violent behaviors, strengthening their risk of future justice system contact (Fabelo et al., 2011). Hemez, Brent, and Mowen (2020), through a Life-Course Perspective lens, demonstrated that school suspensions act as a negative turning point in a youth's trajectory increasing their likelihood of criminal justice contact as they transition into adulthood. Research shows that getting suspended or expelled increases students' risk for falling into unproductive behavior, affecting their social-emotional development, academic performance, and life trajectories (Osher, p. 1, 2013). As noted by Crawley and Hirschfield (2018), youth who have experienced any form of exclusionary punishment, are at a higher risk of future incarceration.

Studies indicate that students of color are disproportionately targeted by the STPP. Black and brown youth are particularly vulnerable to STPP push-out trends and the discriminatory application of harsh discipline (American Civil Liberties Union [ACLU], 2023). Students of color are at a greater risk of school suspensions at a rate of three to one. This escalated to Black and brown students being subject to punitive disciplinary actions for non-violent behaviors such as "disrespect," "defiance," or "acting out" (Cregor & Hewitt, 2011; Smith & Harper, 2015). Criminalizing these more benign, subjective behaviors proliferated the school-to-prison pipeline (Fabelo et al., 2011). According to the Children's Agenda (2022), within the 2021/22 school year, fifteen New York school districts reported having suspended 15,306 students of which almost half were the result of disruptive, non-violent behaviors. During the 2016/17 academic year, Minnesota educational data disclosed that almost half of all school exclusionary punishments resulted from disorderly, non-dangerous behaviors (Jones et al., 2018; Mallet, 2016).

Although substantial research confirms the disproportionality of exclusionary disciplinary actions toward female youths of color (Losen & Skiba, 2010; Mallet, 2016), recent scholarship has narrowed in on the carceral consequences of the STPP on young Black females (Crenshaw et al., 2014). Data obtained from the New York State Education Department (2019) indicates that school districts, outside of New York City, impose the most disproportionate discipline on Black female students. According to the New York Equity Coalition (2018), elementary and middle schools outside of New York City were nearly eight times as likely to suspend Black female students, and within the New York City district, nearly 11 times more likely when compared to their white female counterparts. As noted by Wald and Losen (2003), the 'single largest predictor' of later arrest among adolescent females is having been suspended, expelled, or held back during the middle school years (p. 1).

The following exploratory study examined the interrelationship between exclusionary punishments and future criminal justice contact. Through the distribution, collection, and evaluation of survey data collected from 55 incarcerated females, the subsequent study exemplifies a causal link between the two variables supporting the subsistence of the STPP. Although a substantial portion of the research sample had experienced some form of exclusionary punishment throughout their academic years, it must be noted that these disciplinary actions have not been determined as risk predictors of future criminal justice contact.

II. Review of Literature

The metaphorical “school-to-prison pipeline” for girls refers to school actions that propel girls toward involvement in the juvenile justice system and/or the adult criminal justice system (Simmons-Horton & Gibson, p. 1, 2019). In the twenty-plus years following the enactment of the Guns Free Schools Act of 1994, along with the implementation of zero-tolerance policies, Black girls have become the fastest-growing population to experience school suspensions and expulsions (Morris & Perry, 2016; Skiba et al., 2006). According to Innis-Thompson and the National Black Women’s Justice Institute (2022), Black girls are 6 times more likely than white girls to receive a school suspension and, although fewer common means of disciplinary action, 6.1 times more likely to face a school expulsion (National Women’s Law Center, 2017). According to Patino and Gordon (2021), although Black girls made up only 21% of the Floridian student population, they were disproportionately subject to school suspensions, arrests, and future incarceration. Within the Boston public school system, Black girls made up 40 percent of the female student population, but they represented 62 percent of all out-of-school suspensions (Innis-Thompson, 2017). For the 2017/18 school year, the United States Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (2021) reported that Black girls were the only group across all races/ethnicities for girls where a disparity was observed. Black girls received in-school suspensions (11.2%) and out-of-school suspensions (13.3%) at rates almost two times their share of total student enrollment (7.4%) (p. 1).

The implementation of exclusionary punishments, originally intended for serious school violations, expanded to include less serious, non-threatening student transgressions, particularly for Black school-aged females (Cramer, Gonzalez, & Pellegrini-Lafont, 2014; Skiba & Peterson, 2000). According to the American Institutes of Research (2020), at the high school level, an estimated two million students receive a school suspension or expulsion primarily for non-violent infractions including classroom disruptions, dress-code violations, and disrespectful attitudes. Black girls are disproportionately subjected to harsh disciplinary tactics for non-violent, subjective infractions (the idiomatic interpretation of behaviors by educators as school misconduct) including dress code violations, disruptive behavior, tardiness, and willful defiance (Hill, 2018; Morris & Perry, 2016). Substantial research exists pin-pointing educators as punishing Black girls for minor, ambiguous infractions that are linked to misconceptions of what they deem as appropriate feminine behavior (Morris & Perry, 2016; Neal-Jackson, 2018). Black girls are falsely viewed as inherently insubordinate, more suspicious, provocative, and aggressive than their white peers, even when their behavior is the same (Vargas, 2023). The disconcerting reality is that disproportionate discipline rates among Black girls are not that they behave differently than their white peers, but that they are disciplined more harshly for the same behaviors (Morris & Perry, 2016). Research has concluded that there is little to no evidence to suggest that students of color misbehave at higher rates than their white peers. Thus, differential rates of suspension across racial groups cannot be justifiable (Skiba & Williams, p. 2, 2014).

Black girls are victims of a biased educational system whereby academic facilitators are responsible for the adultification and criminalization of their behaviors. In her book, *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools*, Monique W. Morris (2016) defines adultification as, Black girls being likened more to adults than to children and are treated as if they are willfully engaging in behaviors typically expected of Black women - sexual involvement, parenting or primary caregiving, workforce participation, and other adult behaviors and responsibilities (p. 54). According to Epstein et al. (2017), the adultification bias of Black girls’ rests on the assumption that they are much less innocent, and much more adult-like, than their white female counterparts. A research study conducted by the Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality found that Black girls, as young as five, are perceived by educational systems as less nurturing, less in need of protection and support, hyper-sexual, and more independent than their white peers (Epstein et al., 2017). As a result, Black female students are disproportionately subjected to harsh disciplinary measures for discretionary, non-dangerous behaviors when they naturally fail to meet the behavioral expectations of an adult. The prejudice fuels the

aggressive discipline, as the misbehavior of these students is viewed as a deliberate violation of adult social norms, rather than a normal part of learning and growing as children (Vargas, p. 1, 2023).

Zero-tolerance practices invoke stringent academic disciplinary strategies that have led to the expansion of the school-to-prison pipeline. Discriminatory punitive practices, specifically targeting school-aged Black girls, inadvertently push students out of the classroom and into the pipeline, increasing their risk of future justice system contact (White, 2018). A study conducted by the Center for Court Innovation of New York City concluded that even one school suspension increased the likelihood of future justice system contact as well as failure to advance academically. As noted by Wolf and Kupchik (2017), experiencing a school suspension relates to the greater likelihood that a youth will engage in criminal activity and experience correctional confinement as they enter adulthood. An approximate 70% of the U.S. imprisoned population did not complete high school, and a substantial portion of that percentage can be attributed to years of zero-tolerance discipline policies (Passero, 2020).

The increased likelihood of suspension among Black girls is also linked to their greater probability of being incarcerated (Annamma et al., 2017). As noted by Wald and Losen (2003), the 'single largest predictor' of later arrest among adolescent females is having been suspended, expelled, or held back during the middle school years (p. 10). According to Fergus (2015), suspensions link directly to grade-level retention, dropping out of high school, and youth encounters with the criminal justice system (p). As noted by Hemez, Brent, and Mowen (2020), school suspensions serve as a negative turning point that places youth at much greater risk of experiencing incarceration as they transition to adulthood (p. 237). This finding substantiates the subsistence of a school-to-prison pipeline whereby youth, who are subjected to school-related exclusionary punishments, are at a substantially greater risk of future incarceration (Crawley & Hirschfield, 2018).

School use of exclusionary punishments deprives American youth of the right to a free, quality education (New York Civil Liberties Union, 2011). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, approximately three million youth face out-of-school suspensions every year. According to the New York State Department of Education (2022), New York City public schools issued just over 10,600 suspensions between July and December. The New Jersey Department of Education, for the 2015/2016 school year, reported 39,646 school suspensions. National estimates released by the U.S. Department of Education in May 2020, recorded 11,392,474 days of instruction lost due to out-of-school suspension. That is the equivalent of 62,596 years of instruction lost (Bacher-Hicks et al., 2021; Hemez, Brent, & Mowen, 2020; Welsh & Little, 2018). Referencing female youth, in 2020, black girls lost 77 days of pedagogic learning, seven times the rate of lost instruction than their white female counterparts (Losen & Martinez, 2020).

Research confirms that students who receive disciplinary removals are at a greater risk of experiencing adverse academic outcomes including grade retention and failure to complete high school (dropping out); subsequently, more likely to engage in deviant behaviors resulting in arrest, probation, and confinement (Rosenbaum, 2020; Mittleman, 2018). Mounting evidence demonstrates that exclusionary discipline practices like suspensions and expulsions have long-term negative socio-emotional, behavioral, and academic consequences for the students who experience them (Wang, et al., p. 986, 2022). An abundance of existing research has demonstrated that exclusionary discipline provides the underlying framework for student academic disenfranchisement, educational failure, dropout, and the potential for criminalization (Losen & Martinez, 2020). In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education (Brown v. Board of Education, p. 1).

Pre-pandemic statistical trends have noted that states nationwide experienced a downward trajectory in their suspension and expulsion rates. According to the Learning Policy Institute (2022), since the 1990's, school suspension rates have steadily decreased reaching a mere 5% in 2017-18. Suspensions and expulsions plummeted in the 2020-21 school year because of mandatory COVID-related closures and the temporary elimination of in-school instruction (Butrymowicz, 2023; Welsh & Little, 2018). In the past two to three years, post-pandemic, this decline has reversed. According to the Department of Education (2023), the suspension rate during the first full year following the COVID lockdowns was the highest recorded in government-published

figures. Between July and December 2022, New York City schools issued just over 10,600 suspensions — 27% more than the same period in 2021. This number is about 6% higher than in 2019 just before the pandemic hit (New York City Department of Education, 2023). According to the National Criminal Justice Association (2023), an analysis of data from schools in Washington, D.C., found that in-school suspensions increased by 16% during the 2021-2022 school year. This upward trend in exclusionary discipline, as well as the racial and gender disparity in its application, confirms the existence of the STPP and the critical need for reform.

The following exploratory study examined what percentage of the 55 New York female inmate participants had experienced some form of exclusionary punishment during their educational years. In contrast to a plethora of existing STPP research, data retrieval for this novel, exploratory case study rested solely on the words and experiences of the individual female inmates. Through an analysis of participant responses, this study aimed to provide validation to the prevalence of the STPP in both Suffolk and Nassau Counties, encompassing Long Island (New York) as a whole.

III. Methods

A qualitative case study was the elected methodological choice for this study as the researchers, sampling 55 currently incarcerated adult females, sought to exemplify the interrelationship between school-based exclusionary punishments and the school-to-prison pipeline. The value of exploratory case studies is to gain insights that are not accessible by traditional quantitative methods, case studies provide insight into the enhancement of current theory (Nutall, et al., p. 154, 2011). According to Wellner and Pierce-Friedman (2019), the exploratory study is designed to bring the researcher to a deeper understanding through either initial investigation or ongoing research, which adds depth to what is already known about a phenomenon to be examined (p. 84). The subsequent research objective focused on the identification of variables contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline. The examination of collected data, referencing the sample percentage of incarcerated female inmates who have experienced one or more exclusionary punishments during their academic years, provided greater insight into the existence and prevalence of the school-to-prison pipeline.

The labeling perspective of deviance provided the theoretical foundation for this research. Labeling theory focuses on the consequences of societal reactions to deviance and the means by which they label and stigmatize deviant youth. In his 1963 publication, *Outsiders*, Howard Becker defined the labeling theory of deviance as follows: deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an ‘offender.’ The deviant is one to whom that label has been successfully applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label (p.12). Becker contends that no act is inherently deviant; it becomes deviant when individuals label it as such (1963).

Edwin LeMert (1967) expanded on the perceptivity of Becker recognizing the significance that the reactions of others have on explaining the process of deviance. LeMert (1967) introduced his concepts of *primary* and *secondary* deviance. Primary is the initial stage of deviance whereby a youth will engage in a rule-breaking act that does not result in any long-term consequences affecting their personal self-identity or their social interactions with others; deviant behavior that goes un-labelled. Secondary deviance occurs as a response to society’s negative reaction to the behavior and the labeling of the individual as deviant. Primary deviance morphs into secondary when the stigmatized youth internalizes and adopts the label. The internalization of the label will result in a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby the youth will act according to the criminal actions imposed on them by the stigmatizing group (Becker, 1963). Empirical research has supported the labeling effect on secondary deviance finding that experiencing a suspension tends to lead to future deviance (Gerlinger et al., 2021).

In the academic arena, formal sanctions produce negative labels that can generate life-altering consequences. As educational practitioners began to subjectively broaden their definition of zero tolerance behaviors, students faced the greater likelihood of receiving a negative label (“bad kid”) for non-violent, less threatening transgressions; behaviors previously unrecognized as in need of formal disciplinary action prior to

the implementation of these policies. An abundance of scholarship confirming the negative consequences of exclusionary discipline concludes that being labeled and excluded from school has adverse effects on students including dropping out of school, engaging in delinquency, and involvement with the criminal justice system (Shollenberger, 2013; Skiba et al., 2014). Ferguson (2020), in her study of elementary school discipline practices, argues that the removal of a child from the classroom labels that student a “troublemaker”, transposing the way they are subsequently treated by educational officials. There are serious, long-term effects of being labeled a troublemaker that substantially increases one’s chances of ending up in jail (Ferguson, p. 84, 2020). Labeling theory explains the push that adolescents feel to commit a crime; it pushes adolescents into the school-to-prison pipeline (Heitzeg, p., 2016).

Fifty-five female inmates were surveyed and housed within one of two Suffolk County correctional facilities or the one Nassau County correctional facility, all located in New York. The eligibility for research participation required that participants be female; English speaking (to avoid confusion over the questions or possible response interpretations); and currently between the ages of 18 and 45, with a guarantee to be housed on the date of survey distribution.

First, the researchers examined if the participants were ever suspended or expelled from school and at what age this occurred. Second, at what age were the participants’ first interactions with the criminal justice system? And lastly, the number of arrests and incarcerations experienced by the participants. New York State was selected as the research locale due to the researchers’ location.

Participants from one of two jails (N=100) located in Suffolk County, New York were invited to partake in the survey. The participants were currently incarcerated young females. The researchers intended to gain insight into how many of these women had experienced some form of exclusionary punishment during their educational years. The researchers contacted Captain X, an overseer of incarcerated females, for a list of current inmates who met participation eligibility. At the convenience of the jail, a date was scheduled for the researchers to enter the facility(s) and begin data collection. After meeting the above criterion, prospective participants joined together in the facility recreational room under the supervision of Captain X. The researchers were already in the room awaiting inmate arrival. The researchers briefed the prospective participants on the basics of the study, including the research intent and procedures.

As a means of consent affirmation, the researchers distributed a consent form along with the survey, an unsealed envelope, and a mini pencil. This allowed each inmate to independently read the intent and the basics of the proposed study. Time was allotted for questions and clarifications by potential participants regarding the research instrument. At this point, the process of informed consent was met. To protect inmate confidentiality and anonymity, documentation of signed informed consent was waived as the only direct identifier that could be linked back to the inmates would be their individual signatures of consent. Those inmates who chose to partake in the study voluntarily remained in the recreational room.

Survey completion time was unlimited considering the individual participant reading levels. At the completion of the survey, participants placed the instrument into the envelope along with the pencil, sealed it, and placed it in a bin provided by the researchers before their exit. Those who opted out placed the uncompleted survey into the envelope, sealed it, and placed it in the bin provided. This data collection process reduced the probability of participant identifiers and decreased the potential for perceived coercion and/or liability in responses.

Fifty-five (out of 100) completed the survey, resulting in a 55% response rate. The survey instrument was comprised of multiple-choice and open-ended questions (see Appendix A). The research questions were designed to accurately determine whether participants were ever suspended or expelled from school; when their first interaction with the criminal justice system occurred; and how many times they were arrested and incarcerated.

The researchers used NVivo to code and identify themes and trends demonstrated within the collected data (Dollah, Abduh, & Rosmaladewi, 2017). Themes were identified based on participant responses. Coding data involved analyzing the themes. Codes were examined, analyzed, and re-examined for accuracy.

IV. Results

NVivo was used to enter the data from all survey responses, and while comparing results, themes developed out of each survey question. Within the themes, commonalities arose, and some outliers were examined for validity. The survey questions focused on school suspensions, expulsions, entry into the criminal justice system, arrests, and incarcerations. Demographics were also asked in the survey.

Figure 1 illustrates, 55 female participants aged between 18-45 years. The participants' ages were as follows: 25% were 30-33 years old; 18% were 34-37 years old; 16% were 26-29 years old; 14% were 38-41 years old; 12% were 22-25 years old; 9% were 42-45 years old; and 3% were 18-21 years of age.

In Figure 2 there is a breakdown of the participants' description of their race. The breakdown was as follows: 43% described themselves as Black or African American; 38% were White or Caucasian; 12% were Latina or Hispanic; 3% were Asian; and 1% responded American Indian. The results show that the majority of those surveyed were Black or African American.

Seventy-five percent of participants responded to the survey that they had received a suspension at some point during their educational years when asked if they were ever suspended from school. Twenty-one percent said they never experienced a school suspension. Three percent of the participants declined to answer.

The survey also asked participants if they were ever expelled from school and 63% percent of the participants reported having received a school expulsion. Thirty-six percent were never expelled. One percent declined to answer.

The majority of participants had received a school suspension and were disciplined for either violent or disorderly misconduct. Reasonings for expulsions paralleled the findings for suspensions. The research data disclosed that most of the Suffolk and Nassau County inmate participants did experience some form of exclusionary discipline during their academic years.

The main goal of this case study was to determine if there was a relationship between exclusionary punishments and subsequent entrance into the criminal justice system. Participants were asked to identify the age at which they first encountered the justice system. As illustrated in Fig. 3, 1% of youth aged five to ten had experienced any justice system involvement. Of those who did report contact, 32% were between the ages of 16 and 20; 21% were aged between 11 and 15; 30% were between the ages of 21 and 25; 10% declined to answer; and 1% were between ages 31-35.

Findings indicate that youth, aged between 16 and 20, are at the greatest risk of criminal justice contact. The data suggests that young females within this age frame need intensified supervision. In accordance with labeling theory, these young women need to participate in conventional activities that are not labeled as "bad" in order to reduce the risk of justice system involvement and labels.

The remaining two survey questions aimed to identify the number of incarcerations and arrests experienced by each of the 55 female participants. As noted in Figure 4, 30% had been arrested over seven-plus times; 25% of participants indicated that they had been arrested between one and three times; 21% indicated that their first incarceration was currently at the time of the survey distribution; 18% were arrested between four and six times; 3% declined to answer.

Figure 5 shows the breakdown of the number of prior incarcerations experienced by the participants. As shown, 44% were incarcerated between one and three times; 30% were currently experiencing their first incarceration; 14% were incarcerated seven or more times; 9% were incarcerated between four and six times; 2% declined to answer.

The findings indicated that the number of arrests directly correlated to the number of incarcerations. As the number of arrests increased, so did the number of incarcerations. The data conclusively indicated a correlation between school exclusionary disciplines and subsequent justice system contact.

V. Discussion

There were fifty-five female participants, aged 18 to 45 from either Nassau or Suffolk correctional facilities, who voluntarily responded to our research survey. Through the analysis of these surveys, it was found that the highest number of participants were 30-33 years of age, while the lowest percentage was 18-21. These age ranges were selected to secure participant clarity in recollection of their school experiences regarding exclusionary punishments and justice system contact.

The participants' racial breakdown was as follows: 43% described themselves as Black or African American; 38% were White or Caucasian; 12% were Latina or Hispanic; 3% were Asian; and 1% responded American Indian. The results demonstrate that Black participants were more prevalent than any other racial identifier.

Analysis of survey data revealed that 75% of participants had reported receiving a school suspension at some point during their academic years; sixty-three percent reported having received a school expulsion. Disobedience was identified as the most common cause of participant suspensions. These findings support research suggesting that the expansion of zero-tolerance policies has led to the application of harsh disciplinary measures for nonviolent subjective school misconduct such as verbal harassment, disobedience, and truancy (Ferguson, 2020; Shollenberger, 2013; Skiba et al., 2014).

Racial inequalities in reference to the implementation of exclusionary discipline have been long-established (Crenshaw, et al. 2014; Wald &Losen, 2003). Substantial research confirms the disproportionality of exclusionary disciplinary actions toward females of color (Wald &Losen, 2003). Within New York, the State Education Department (2019) indicated that school districts, outside of New York City, impose the most disproportionate discipline on Black female students, and according to the New York Equity Coalition (2018), elementary and middle schools outside of New York City were nearly eight times as likely to suspend Black female students, and within the New York City district, nearly 11 times more likely when compared to their white female counterparts. Since this case study was on Long Island, these findings suggest a racial disparity in the ways in which school exclusionary punishments are administered.

Of the 55 participants who completed the survey, 32% were between the ages of 16 and 20; 30% were between the ages of 21 and 25. Removing youth from the classroom disrupts their educational path. Loss of educational opportunities results in negative consequences (Wald &Losen, 2003). Exclusionary punishments indirectly limit access to education, achievement, and social skills (White, 2018). A study conducted by the Center for Court Innovation of New York City concluded that even one school suspension increased the likelihood of future justice system contact as well as failure to advance academically (Wolf &Kupchik, 2017).

Throughout this case study, researchers examined participant arrest and incarceration histories. Ninety-seven percent of the participants had been arrested; 3% declined to answer. Ninety-seven percent of the participants had been incarcerated; 3% declined to answer. The findings stipulate those participants with high suspension rates also encountered higher arrest and incarceration rates demonstrating a direct correlation between school suspensions and future criminal justice involvement. Research has demonstrated that the involuntary removal of a youth from the academic setting correlated with anti-social behavior, dropping out of school, and criminal activity (White, 2018). Students exposed to exclusionary sanctions face a greater likelihood of juvenile legal system contact, enhancing their risk of adult incarceration (Wolf &Kupchik, 2017).

Based on this study, the researchers have provided a supportive contribution to the bounty of school-to-prison pipeline literature. The data exemplifies a causal link between the two variables supporting the subsistence of the STPP. Through the analysis of data, there is a correlation between the participants' current incarceration and a history of suspensions and expulsions during their educational years.

VI. Conclusion

Research has demonstrated an overwhelming need for the implementation of discipline reform in school systems across the country. States nationwide have passed legislation addressing this concern through the modification of their school disciplinary practices and the incorporation of restorative measures. The New York State Education Department Safe Schools Task Force (2022) convened in 2019 to assess the State's concerns related to school safety, including the overzealous use and disproportionality of exclusionary disciplinary measures. Based on their findings, the Task Force provided recommendations which included the minimization of exclusionary discipline for all youth and instead, "promote alternative tools that can be used at the discretion of local administrators." Restorative justice allows students to take responsibility for their misconduct without the stigmatization of a negative label. Wang, et al., (2022), contend that restorative practices offer a promising alternative to zero-tolerance approaches.

As of 2021, at least 37 states and the District of Columbia have outlined alternatives to suspensions/expulsions which include greater use of conflict resolution, peer mediation, counseling, and restorative methods of justice (Education Commission of the States). Evans and Vaandering (2016), in lieu of exclusionary punishments, support restorative measures as they create a just and equitable learning environment, nurture healthy relationships, and repair harm and transform conflict (p.). Restorative justice attempts to generate a positive school climate through understanding and communication utilizing such techniques as chat circles, active listening, and the collaboration of proposed resolutions towards harm (Parker-Shandal&Bickmore, 2020). According to the National Education Association (2022), restorative practices hold students accountable for their actions while restoring the student's relationship with the school community as opposed to the isolation and alienation a student would experience if they were suspended (p.1). Validated through research, restorative practices are not only associated with improvement in student behavior, but also with a decrease in classroom removals, suspensions, and expulsions (Klevan, 2021). The implementation of restorative measures within the academic setting can produce a positive impact on student behavior, disciplinary outcomes and disparities, and school climate (Klevan, 2021).

Recognizing the need for disciplinary reform, states nationwide have modified their educational laws to reflect restorative approaches. The New York State Task Force issued a report on May 24, 2023, "Recommendations for Reducing Disparities and Discipline Reform in New York State," which advocated for the limitation on the number of school days a student can be suspended from school as well as limiting the implementation of exclusionary disciplines for minor, subjective school infractions. New York State is pushing for enacting the Judith Kaye School Solutions Not Suspensions Act. Ratification of this Act will eliminate the reliance on suspensions for inconsequential school violations. In lieu of exclusionary punishments, the state of Indiana has enacted alternatives to discipline including peer counseling, parent conferences, assigning additional coursework, and rearranging class schedules (Education Commission of the States, 2021). During the 2023 Nevada Legislation Session, the state passed two bills amending their current disciplinary practices to incorporate restorative justice practices (State of Nevada Department of Education, 2023). On September 20, 2023, the State of California passed a bill mandating that school districts imposing exclusionary punitive practices alter their approach to include restorative measures on or before June 1, 2024 (Assembly Bill No. 2598). Washington D.C., as of 2019, has mandated restorative justice practices as part of its professional development curriculum (D.C. Code § 38-236.06(a)(2)(D) (2020), Ind. Code § 20-28-3-3.5(2) (2019).

The incorporation of restorative measures in the academic environment can be financially prudent for correctional facilities nationwide. In 2022, California reported that the annual cost to incarcerate one adult inmate was approximately \$106,000 (California Legislative Analysis Office, 2022). According to the Malta Justice Initiative (2023), the average cost per inmate in New York's prisons is an estimated \$167,731 per year. As of 2023, it costs an average of \$52.61 per day (\$19,202.65 per year) to keep an adult (over the age of 18) inmate incarcerated in the State of Indiana (Indiana State Government, 2023).

The research has demonstrated a correlation between female adult inmates and future incarceration. These findings contend that, for the protection of our educational system as a pedagogic environment geared toward

learning and success, as well as the safety and promise of American school-aged girls, it is critical that reforms continue to be a focal concern for both educational leaders and legislative bodies.

Research limitations have been recognized. First, the study surveyed 55 female inmates in New York Suffolk or Nassau County jails. This is a minimal sample representation of inmates when considering the overall number of currently incarcerated females housed within New York State correctional facilities. The limited number of research participants substantially weakens the ability to generate valid generalizations. Secondly, the results may have differed if the research was more inclusive of other state or county correctional facilities. Finally, researchers have recognized the existing flaws within all survey data: lack of memory, response exaggerations, boredom, and contrived responses to please the researchers and to satisfy the intentions of the study. Acknowledging these limitations, the research findings further provide insight into the correlation between exclusionary punishment and STPP.

VII. Figures

Fig. 1
The Ages of Female Participants

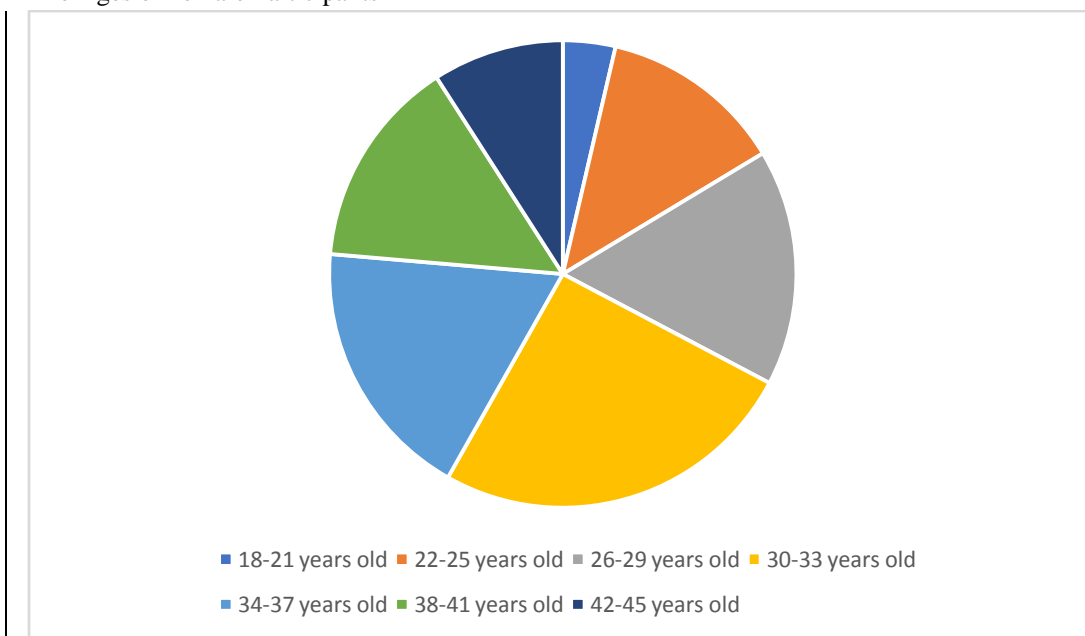


Fig. 2
Racial Breakdown of Female Participants

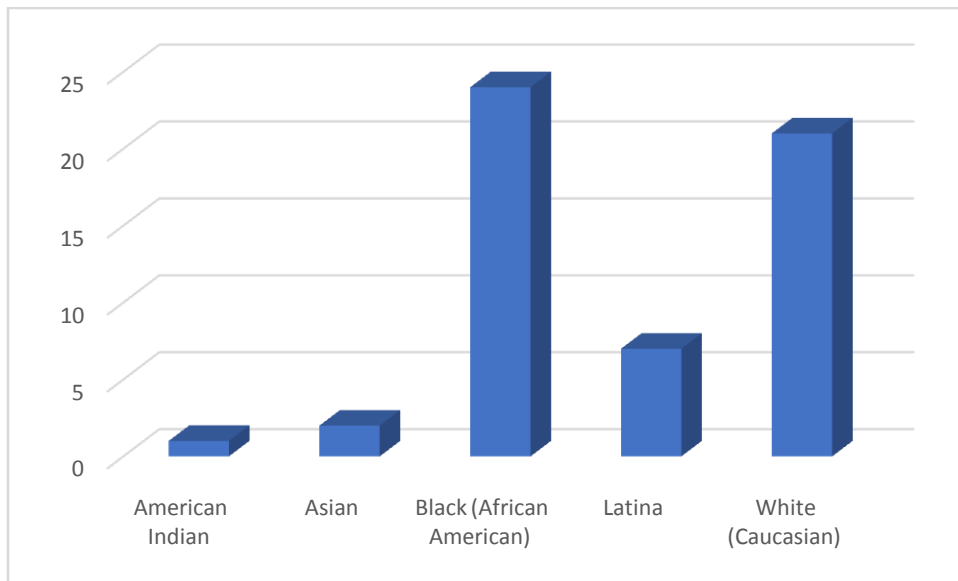


Fig.3
Age of First Contact with the Criminal Justice System

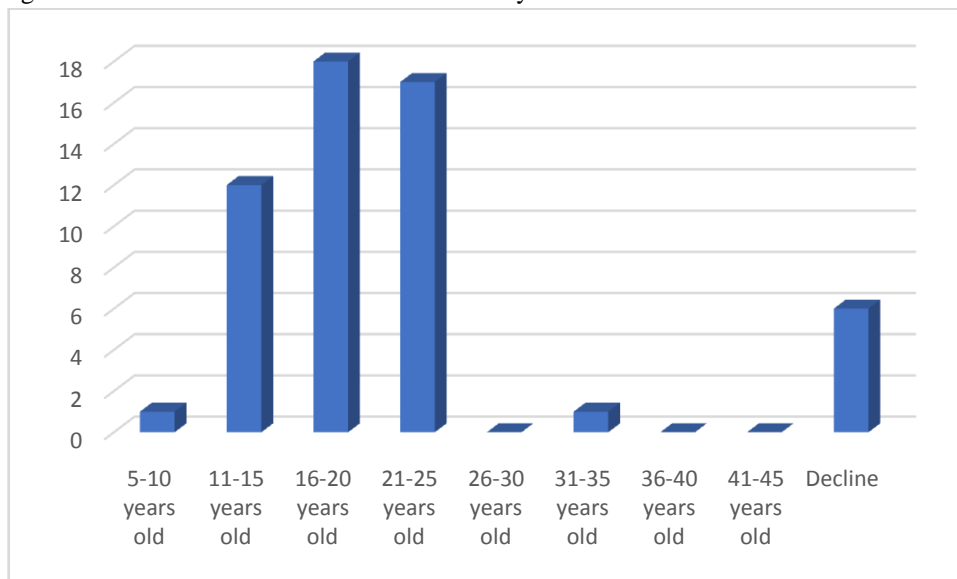


Fig.2
Number of Times Participants Have been Arrested

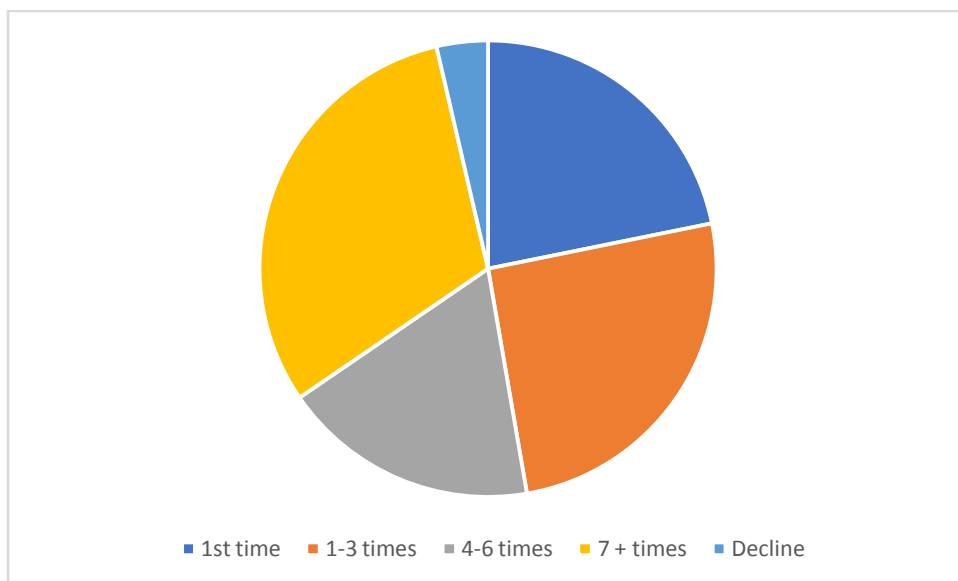
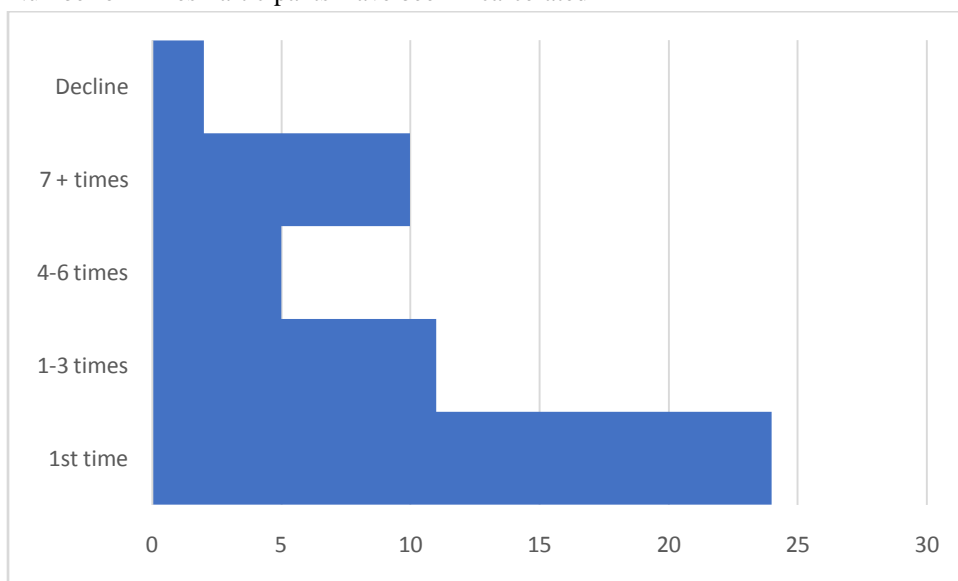


Fig. 3
Number of Times Participants Have been Incarcerated



VIII. Conclusion

Research has demonstrated an overwhelming need for the implementation of discipline reform in school systems across the country. States nationwide have passed legislation addressing this concern through the modification of their school disciplinary practices and the incorporation of restorative measures. The New York State Education Department Safe Schools Task Force (2022) convened in 2019 to assess the State's concerns related to school safety, including the overzealous use and disproportionality of exclusionary disciplinary measures. Based on their findings, the Task Force provided recommendations which included the minimization of exclusionary discipline for all youth and instead, "promote alternative tools that can be used at the discretion of local administrators." Restorative justice allows students to take responsibility for their misconduct without

the stigmatization of a negative label. Wang, et al., (2022), contend that restorative practices offer a promising alternative to zero-tolerance approaches.

As of 2021, at least 37 states and the District of Columbia have outlined alternatives to suspensions/expulsions which include greater use of conflict resolution, peer mediation, counseling, and restorative methods of justice (Education Commission of the States). Evans and Vaandering (2016), in lieu of exclusionary punishments, support restorative measures as they create a just and equitable learning environment, nurture healthy relationships, and repair harm and transform conflict (p.). Restorative justice attempts to generate a positive school climate through understanding and communication utilizing such techniques as chat circles, active listening, and the collaboration of proposed resolutions towards harm (Parker-Shandal&Bickmore, 2020). According to the National Education Association (2022), restorative practices hold students accountable for their actions while restoring the student's relationship with the school community as opposed to the isolation and alienation a student would experience if they were suspended (p.1). Validated through research, restorative practices are not only associated with improvement in student behavior, but also with a decrease in classroom removals, suspensions, and expulsions (Klevan, 2021). The implementation of restorative measures within the academic setting can produce a positive impact on student behavior, disciplinary outcomes and disparities, and school climate (Klevan, 2021).

Recognizing the need for disciplinary reform, states nationwide have modified their educational laws to reflect restorative approaches. The New York State Task Force issued a report on May 24, 2023, "Recommendations for Reducing Disparities and Discipline Reform in New York State," which advocated for the limitation on the number of school days a student can be suspended from school as well as limiting the implementation of exclusionary disciplines for minor, subjective school infractions. New York State is pushing for enacting the Judith Kaye School Solutions Not Suspensions Act. Ratification of this Act will eliminate the reliance on suspensions for inconsequential school violations. In lieu of exclusionary punishments, the state of Indiana has enacted alternatives to discipline including peer counseling, parent conferences, assigning additional coursework, and rearranging class schedules (Education Commission of the States, 2021). During the 2023 Nevada Legislation Session, the state passed two bills amending their current disciplinary practices to incorporate restorative justice practices (State of Nevada Department of Education, 2023). On September 20, 2023, the State of California passed a bill mandating that school districts imposing exclusionary punitive practices alter their approach to include restorative measures on or before June 1, 2024 (Assembly Bill No. 2598). Washington D.C., as of 2019, has mandated restorative justice practices as part of its professional development curriculum (D.C. Code § 38-236.06(a)(2)(D) (2020), Ind. Code § 20-28-3-3.5(2) (2019).

The incorporation of restorative measures in the academic environment can be financially prudent for correctional facilities nationwide. In 2022, California reported that the annual cost to incarcerate one adult inmate was approximately \$106,000 (California Legislative Analysis Office, 2022). According to the Malta Justice Initiative (2023), the average cost per inmate in New York's prisons is an estimated \$167,731 per year. As of 2023, it costs an average of \$52.61 per day (\$19,202.65 per year) to keep an adult (over the age of 18) inmate incarcerated in the State of Indiana (Indiana State Government, 2023).

The research has demonstrated a correlation between female adult inmates and future incarceration. These findings contend that, for the protection of our educational system as a pedagogic environment geared toward learning and success, as well as the safety and promise of American school-aged girls, it is critical that reforms continue to be a focal concern for both educational leaders and legislative bodies.

Research limitations have been recognized. First, the study surveyed 55 female inmates in New York Suffolk or Nassau County jails. This is a minimal sample representation of inmates when considering the overall number of currently incarcerated females housed within New York State correctional facilities. The limited number of research participants substantially weakens the ability to generate valid generalizations. Secondly, the results may have differed if the research was more inclusive of other state or county correctional facilities. Finally, researchers have recognized the existing flaws within all survey data: lack of memory, response exaggerations, boredom, and contrived responses to please the researchers and to satisfy the intentions of the

study. Acknowledging these limitations, the research findings further provide insight into the correlation between exclusionary punishment and STPP.

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