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The School-to-Prison Pipeline: A Method of Social Reproduction

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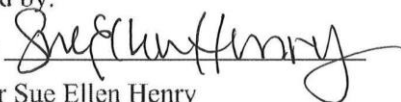
by

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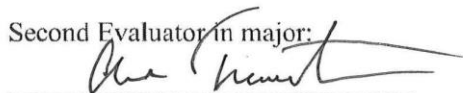
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Abstract

The American public-school system pushes many low incomes and minoritized learners out of school and into the juvenile justice system through its disciplinary practices. The school-to-prion pipeline (STPP) puts a name on this cycle, explaining how zero-tolerance policies are directly or indirectly causing students to drop out of school and leading them into prison. This thesis utilizes existing literature too deeply asses zero-tolerance policies, as well as other apparati of the STPP within schools today. It examines how the STPP discriminates against students based on social class, race, gender, and disability. This project is directed by a theoretical framework of Bourdieu's social reproduction theory and demonstrates that the STPP is a mechanism of social reproduction in American public education. Finally, the study ends with three policy recommendations that could interrupt the racist and classist processes of the STPP.

Contents

Ch. 1 Introduction

The American education system is plagued with inequalities and injustices often framed along the lines of race and class. One significant perpetrator of these problems is referred to as the "School-to-Prison Pipeline" (STPP). The STPP can be explained as the cycle of disciplinary practices in schools that lead to the early 'criminalization' of student behavior, causing juveniles to enter into the criminal justice system for minor offenses (RED 2021). The underlying problem with the STPP is the application of zero-tolerance policies, the overuse of suspension and expulsions, and the dramatic increase of policing seen in schools today (RED 2021). The STPP is a disturbing national phenomenon causing children to be funneled out of public schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. Many of these children have histories of learning disabilities, poverty, abuse, and neglect (Parker 2020). Further, tens of thousands of students targeted by the STPP are Black, Indigenous Latinx, students with disabilities, and LGBTQ students; research confirms that these and other marginalized students are more likely to attend schools with higher use of harsh discipline and policing (Parker 2020). The disproportionate use of violence and harsh discipline for minoritized students is the sad reality of our current public school system (Parker 2020).

Researchers Resendes and Hinger (2021) provide an example of the zero-tolerance policy being put into action, disciplining students in the population being targeted through STPP mechanisms. They offer the story of 17-year-old high school junior J.W., a Black student who had an emotional outburst at school in response to being sent to the "chill-out" room. Instead of de-escalating the situation, school police met the situation with violence. Resendes and Hinger explain, "Instead of trying to de-escalate the situation, the officer pressed J.W. against a door and fired a taser gun directly on J.W.'s body until he fell onto the floor face-down. J.W. was

handcuffed after 15 seconds of tasering" (Resendes Hinger 2021 pg. 1). J.W. suffered from PTSD and was scared to return to school, causing his learning experience to be hindered even more so than before the incident (Resendes Hinger 2021). This story is the sad reality for many learners being victimized by the cycle of the STPP.

The Zero tolerance policy in school discipline practices is frequently cited as a major cause of the crimination of students and student behavior (School Discipline Support Initiative, 2020). These approaches to school discipline practices mandate predetermined, frequently severe punitive and exclusionary consequences, in response to student misbehavior (School Discipline Support Initiative, 2020). This approach to school discipline was signed into law as a governmental response to end the war on drugs in the 1990s and has become a widely applied way to deal with even minor offenses in schools (School discipline support initiative, 2020). Despite the hypothetical fairness in treating all school misbehavior in similar ways, zero-tolerance policies are associated with racially disproportionate increased suspensions and expulsions, higher dropout rates, and multiple legal issues (Arredondo and Williams 2014). Research demonstrates that despite the rhetoric of such policies being applied equally to all students, the actual implementation of this approach leads to harmful effects on already marginalized individuals, resulting in higher rates of exclusionary actions not associated with improved school safety or academic achievement (Arredondo and Williams 2014). Indeed, research shows that racial and ethnic minorities are highly overrepresented among those who are harshly punished. For example, Black students are currently 2.6% more likely to be suspended than white students (Wald Losen 2003). These problematic measures call for reform and alternatives.

Objectives/Purpose + Research Question

Two research questions that frame this study are as follows: 1) How is the School to Prison Pipeline a method of social reproduction? And 2) What possible alternative disciplinary policies can replace the problematic zero-tolerance policies? This study will investigate how the STPP is affected by age group, ethnicity, and economic status. Developing a deeper understanding of how STPP works as a mode of social reproduction, is accomplished by examining Pierre Bourdieu's work with cultural capital and habitus (Cramer et al 2014). Investigating the STPP through this theoretical framework could elucidate how these policies fail large groups of students in the schooling system. This theoretical study uses Bourdieu's work as the foundation to assess different STPP policies to consider more effective and equitable means of disciplining students.

The School-to-Prison Pipeline (STPP) is a multifaceted problem seen through current school discipline policies, which are fast-tracking students into the juvenile justice system. This project focuses first on the creation of zero-tolerance policies and the role they play in schools today. This is done by an examination of support as well as distrust of these policies. Next, the project looks at the different apparati of the STPP and how they are discriminating against learners of minority backgrounds and low socioeconomic status. Finally, the project shifts to investigating alternatives to these disciplinary practices, specifically those empirically demonstrated to interrupt the STPP, while affording school administrators opportunity for behavioral reform. The project is a theoretical examination of existing empirical evidence on these two intertwined aims, seen through the lens of Bourdieu's social reproduction theory, for which a significant literature base is available. This study relies on previously published research

related to the zero-tolerance policies, mechanisms of the STPP, and alternative methods of discipline to make policy recommendations for reform in this subject.

Methodology/Methods

This study is of STPP through the theoretical lens of social reproduction. I will be examining the extensive literature on Bourdieu's social reproduction theory and the STPP, working to understand the aspects of Bourdieu's theory as it relates to and informs the STPP. I will then be utilizing prior research to examine zero-tolerance policies and how they have created the different apparati of what we refer to as the STPP. In choosing the prior research I made sure to utilize sources from the past 20 years to make sure to keep the knowledge up to date and relevant. In choosing prior research I utilized credible sources that raised a wide range of issues related to the zero-tolerance policies, and different mechanisms of the STPP. As well as utilizing some opinion pieces to understand the reasoning for support or distrust in these policies and the process they are creating in schools. Following this analysis and understanding, I advised policy changes to discipline approaches that support learners' educational experience. This allows for an understanding of reform that can be made in schools to promote equity in discipline and the education system as a whole.

Significance

American society is plagued with inequalities in many aspects of day-to-day life. One of the institutions that is a major perpetrator of this inequality is the education system. The United States is built on the ideology that education is the institution that allows for social mobility, providing many children with the false hope that if they work hard in school they will be able to be whomever they want, as well as, do whatever they want (MacLeod 2009). The mindset that an individual is a sole determiner of where they end up in society rather than considering the

cumulative impact of experience in societal institutions, such as schools on life chances, creates real structural inequality and inequity. One of the mechanisms that must be challenged to create equity is the School to Prison Pipeline. Enacting these mechanisms is a choice, one that can be reformed through reallocation of funds and differing discipline policy use. The STPP is a part of society that needs to be brought to the forefront of education reform. It is something that many individuals in America are not aware of, yet, is something that is hindering the lives of mass amounts of learners in the American public-school system. The STPP is calling for reform, and it can not wait any longer.

Ch. 2 Theoretical Framework

Bourdieu's Social Reproduction Theory

The theoretical framework that will inform the analysis of this project is Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction. According to Bourdieu (Sullivan 2002), social reproduction is a process that stifles social mobility in the education system (Stanford Center on Poverty & Inequality 2020). Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction has been researched and cited theoretically and empirically. His theory demonstrates how social institutions, such as schools, replicate class distinctions rather than allow for social mobility; this analysis arises from his examination of class inequalities in educational attainment and of broader class reproduction. Social reproduction theory explains the link between original class membership and subsequent class membership, despite school achievement, and details the mechanisms of educational institutions that foster this cycle (Sullivan 2002). Success in the education system, according to Bourdieu, is generated by obtaining the cultural capital of higher-class habitus. According to Bourdieu, schools typically judge learners from lower-class backgrounds as not possessing the traits that allow for school success; such evaluations tend to be followed by academic tracking and limiting aspirations, resulting in the recreation of social class status (MacLeod 2009). Most importantly, success and failure in education are wrongly seen as being solely dependent on the characteristics of the individual, rather than the institutional processes of schools themselves (Sullivan 2002).

Pierre Bourdieu was a French sociologist who developed the influential theory of social reproduction. Bourdieu's social reproduction theory is based on the relationship between education, family, and social class (Tzanakis 2011). His theory states that social structures of inequality are the product of unequal distribution of resources (Farid et al 2021). His theory of

reproduction is based on the link between original class membership and ultimate class membership. Bourdieu speaks to the idea that individuals' life experiences are largely predetermined by the family's socioeconomic and intellectual background (Cramer et al 2014). He believed that education plays a major role in promoting the reproduction of social inequality and social exclusion in society (Tzanakis 2011). He examines how social reproduction is linked to the creation and mediation of inequality in the educational system.

The School-to-Prison Pipeline can be examined as one of the mechanisms that perpetuate social reproduction that Bourdieu expresses in his theory. As a whole, the STPP is built on inequities in the educational system and functions to make social reproduction in schools worse. Bourdieu's work suggests that an individual's life experiences are generally predetermined by family socioeconomic status; this reproductive effect of schooling is maintained by the STPP, due to students of lower socioeconomic backgrounds being met with violence in schools and being pushed to drop out of school at a higher rate as a result (Cramer et al 2014). Indeed, Bourdieu's work permeates through the education system as well as the cycle of the STPP. The cycle of social reproduction is seen through several common elements in American schooling: " (a) theorizing about the capabilities of those outsides of the white middle class from a deficit-based perspective, (b) labeling populations outside of the established norm as "at-risk" or "disadvantaged," (c) establishing an exclusionary, hierarchical system of labeling or grouping students, and (d) glorifying white-collar work, while often reducing blue-collar work aspirations as less than desirable through curricula that is generally too wide in scope, yet too narrow in the lens" (Cramer et al 2014 pg. 6). These dynamics, coupled with other zero-tolerance disciplinary practices, create a school system based on social reproduction.

Bourdieu's theory is rooted in two major ideas: habitus and access to cultural capital. Cultural capital is defined as the familiarity with the dominant class norms or cultural expectations in society. (Sullivan 2002). Habitus refers to cultural differences between class positions (Tzanakis 2011). These two processes allow Bourdieu to explain how the education system mediates and perpetrates a rigid social structure in American society. This is further rooted in different forms of capital, reproduction of social class, and unequal distribution of resources passed down through generations. The reproduction of social classes in American society is caused by the institutions of economic capital within cultural capital. Habitus and educational attainment create and sustain this relationship (Farid et al 2021). In short, cultural capital is the possession of knowledge, whereas, habitus is holding a set of attitudes and values (Sullivan 2002).

Bourdieu argues that the American public school system legitimates and perpetuates class inequalities. The public school system has played a large role in maintaining the status quo throughout history (Sullivan 2002). Today schools have continued to be an agent of social exclusion and reproduction. Children's exposure to the dominant American culture has direct advantages for them in schools (Tzanakis 2011). Success within the public school system is not based on personal merit but rather on the obtainment of cultural capital and higher-class habitus (Sullivan 2002). Success and failure in the American public school system are seen as a result of individual gifts; this idea allows for the notion that higher-class learners earn their place in the social structure. In turn, lower-class pupils are set up to fail in the American public school system (Sullivan 2002). It is important to note that Bourdieu also makes the point that, yes, some lower-class learners will succeed in the public school system. Yet, his theory suggests these successes are allowed to justify the maintenance of the theory of meritocracy.

This reproductive cycle can be further broken down by examining the cultural capital and habitus of the poor, minoritized, and most criminally affect by social reproduction. It is a process that hinders the learning and prosperity of the lower class at a higher rate than those with class privilege (Parker 2020). This is seen through the treatment of lower-class individuals as "trouble children" and can affect the outlook and attitudes they have about themselves and peers. Bourdieu's theory as a whole provides insights into how the STPP has a direct correlation to the lack of social mobility in our society. Bourdieu explains this mechanism by saying "By doing away with giving explicitly to everyone what it implicitly demands of everyone, the education system demands of everyone alike that they have what it does not give. This consists mainly of linguistic and cultural competence and that relationship of familiarity with the culture which can only be produced by family upbringing when it transmits the dominant culture." (Bourdieu 1977, cited in Sullivan 2002 p. 145). The educational system is established on middle and upper-class norms and expectations; as such, working-class, poor, and minoritized students whose class norms and expectations differ from those of school, are disadvantaged in their schooling interactions.

  Habitus and Cultural Capital. Bourdieu utilizes the word habitus to explain "a set of dispositions which include agents to act and react in certain ways" (Bourdieu 1991, cited in Henry 2014 p. 61). In more simple terms habitus is made up of attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of an individual's journey in society (McLeod 2009). It is the cultural differences and experiences that are a result of different socioeconomic class positions, which are transmitted generationally in the home (Sullivan 2002). Habitus is the transferable disposition of an individual, through the structural association of individuals with particular institutions and groups. It is the association of certain set behaviors to distinct social classes in society. Different

social class backgrounds and learned experiences connect individuals to their "placements" in different facets of life (Farid et al 2021). The learned experience of one's habitus in the home gives an individual insight into how to react to different situations and scenarios throughout life (Henry 2014). Habitus varies significantly by class due to the relationship between socioeconomic status and capital in American society.

Those born into homes of the upper-middle or middle class are more likely to be "conditioned" by a habitus that is most desirable in American society (Henry 2014). This is seen in attitudes towards different socioeconomic classes in schooling. The high regard for the habitus or learned experience of high-class learners promotes the belief that working-class or poor students learned experience is likely to lead them to low academic achievement (McLeod 2009). An important part of Bourdieuan habitus is the idea of aspirations. Bourdieu assesses that aspirations are not a product of individual thought; rather, are learners present and future academic goals are acquired through habitus. A higher-class individual who is surrounded by family and friends that are highly motivated and ambitious is much more likely to believe in their ability to succeed than a lower-class individual who is surrounded by an environment where success in school is rare (McLeod 2009). For Bourdieu habitus is a key structure in creating a system of rigid social mobility. That being said, Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction would not be possible without the presence of cultural capital.

Bourdieu explains cultural capital is the acquiring of "knowledge, skills and other cultural acquisitions, as exemplified by educational or technical qualifications" (Bourdieu 1991, cited in Henry 2014 pg. 65). Cultural capital comprises the educational credentials, cultural goods, and behavioral patterns that an individual is subject to based on their social class status. It is a set of codes, practices, and morals that are transmitted to a child through family socialization

(Tzanakis 2011). Cultural capital is a familiarity with the dominant culture in society due to the life a child is born into, such as the ability to use an understated "educated" language. According to Bourdieu, children of upper-class origin inherit a significantly different cultural capital than working-class children do (MacLeod 2009). The desirable cultural capital is taught and developed in the higher-class home (Sullivan 2002). Cultural capital allows for the possession of prestige or honor through different institutions, such as connections of a wealthy family, or attending prestigious schooling (Henry 2014). The position of cultural capital is said to be possessed through family wealth, quality education, and connections to powerful individuals. These resources that are at the disposal of higher-class children allow for them to be more prepared in responding to different situations throughout their lives, specifically those that will allow them to "get ahead" in society (Henry, 2014). An apparent example of this is dominant class parents are likely to purchase quality education for their offspring to allow them to have the best opportunity and chance at power later in life (Farid et al 2021).

Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital consists of four major aspects (MacLeod 2009). First, the realization and understanding that each social class has distinctly different cultural capital that is transmitted generationally. Next, schooling systems deflate the cultural capital of lower-class learners by only valuing that of upper-class learners. Third, the academic achievement made possible by higher class cultural capital is retranslated into economic wealth. Prestigious jobs look almost solely at individuals who have obtained superior academic achievement, mainly those already of the upper-class (McLeod). Finally, Bourdieu explains "by making social hierarchies and the reproduction of those hierarchies appear to be based upon the hierarchy of 'gifts', merits, or skills established and ratified by its sanctions, or, in a word, by concerting social hierarchies into academic hierarchies" (Bourdieu 1983, cited by McLeod 2009

pg. 14). To understand cultural capital, it must be understood that habitus and capital are intertwined. Capital is connected to an individual's placement in life (habitus) because capital has no existence without the presence of these placements or barriers. Cultural capital is the most important capital of the education field or placement (Farid et al 2021). The attainment and understanding of pedagogies of quality education are one of the institutions that allow the dominant class to stay in power.

Mismatched cultural capital in education makes it very difficult for lower-class learners to succeed within the education system and in obtaining desirable cultural capital (Sullivan 2002). Schools are embodying the interest and ideologies that are rewarding the cultural capital of the dominant class and devaluing that of the lower-class students. For example, students who grow up in households with a habitus that pushes them to read books, attend museums, go to the movies, or even travel, can become familiar with the dominant culture that is needed to succeed in America's schools (MacLeod 2009). Bourdieu argues that the education system is run by those with cultural capital, so when lower-class individuals come into this kind of schooling, there tends to be a disconnect in pedagogy. Lower-class learners are found not to understand how they are being taught as it is not something they were predisposed to growing up, unlike learners from upper-class backgrounds. (Sullivan 2002). The disconnect in pedagogy is facilitated in schools through teachers' action of promoting cultural capital and subconsciously rewarding the dominant class. (Tzanakis 2011). Bourdieu says that although lower-class learners are disadvantaged in obtaining education attainment due to their familial habitus and cultural capital, society still views education as something gained through meritocracy (Sullivan 2002). This idea in itself is problematic and sets up the foundational idea that those who achieve and avoid

disciplinary action do so because of their merit, leaving underachievers and those individuals in

school discipline as undeserving and without merit.

Ch. 3 Literature Review

Zero-Tolerance Policies

  Introduction. The follow section focuses on the supporters and opponents of the zero-tolerance policies, which encompasses how zero-tolerance policies are viewed and acting in society. These Zero-tolerance disciplinary measures are a system of policies that require schools to give students a predetermined, consistent, harsh punishment when certain rules are broken (Cramer Gonzalez 2014). Zero-tolerance policies have become the most widely used form of discipline across the American public school system (Cramer Gonzalez 2014). These policies rely on a "one-size-fits-all" punishment approach, mandating severe consequences regardless of circumstances. These consequences for most students result in suspension or some cases expulsion. Zero-tolerance policies aim to provide action that deters future misbehavior (Wald Losen 2003). These policies do not specify rehabilitative or supportive services to help students positively manage their behavior; these policies do not believe in second chances (School Discipline Support Initiative 2021). The main objective of these policies is to steer students away from misbehaviors, done through the utilization of fear (Maxine 2018).

  The use of these policies has created a polarized debate amongst researchers, teachers, administrators, parents, and the general population. In this section, I will be breaking down zero-tolerance policies, the origins of the policies, as well as the arguments about them. Zero-tolerance policies in schools stem from different laws and theories put in place throughout history, these theories include the broken window theory and the three-strike law; these are important to acknowledge when understanding the formation of punitive punishment in schools. Zero-tolerance policies have both members of society that advocate and discredit their benefits in schooling. Advocates argue that zero-tolerance policies prevent violence, combat easily

accessible weaponry, and remove dangerous students. Critics discredit zero-tolerance policies by arguing they are inflexible, cause an unnecessary increase in suspensions and expulsions, and decreased academic achievement; these policies can also decrease self-image, and mental health, and cause a negative school climate.

Broken Window Theory. The punitive policies associated with zero-tolerance disciplinary strategies stem from adaptations of the "broken windows" theory created by James Wilson and George Kelling (Maximus 2018). Their theory claims "crime is a disorder that, if not eliminated or controlled early on, increases the likelihood of committing a more serious crime later on" (Maximus 2018 pg. 2). Wilson and Kelling saw serious crime as a final result of a chain of events, causing them to conclude that crime prospers from disorder and that if these earlier infractions were eliminated, then less serious crime would occur (McKee 2018). Further, the theory explains that the prevalence of disciplinary violations creates fear in the citizens and a perception that their community is unsafe. This fear of a lack of safety weakens social control that previously prevented criminal activity, and the process begins to unravel and feed itself (McKee 2018). Their theory allowed for the creation and adaptation of punitive disciplinary measures in American society as a whole in the 1990s.

Three-Strikes Law. To fully understand zero-tolerance policies being implemented in schools we must also look at the change in criminalization policies in the 1990s. Zero-tolerance policies in schools mirror? the three-strikes policy approach to criminalization which came to life in the 1990s. The three-strikes law states that a defendant's third criminal offense will end in a life sentence (Wiatrowski 1996). The legislation is a "get tough approach," rooted in the idea that offenders who continue to commit crimes are unable to be deterred or rehabilitated (Wiatrowski 1996). The law was born from the tragic murder in 1992 of Kimberly Reynolds, daughter of

Mike Reynolds. The murder was committed by a parolee and a repeat violent offender (Jones 2013). Mike Reynolds wanted revenge for the murder of his daughter and sought to create a law that would "incapacitate" repeat offenders (Jones 2013). The plan or "Three-Strike law" became a law in 1994 after gaining support from wealthy Republicans, the National Rifle Association, and masses of people. This support came overwhelmingly after the second brutal murder of 12-year-old Polly Kass. Polly was kidnapped from her home and murdered by Richard Allen, who was also a repeat violent offender (Jones 2013). The law was intended to keep violent individuals such as murderers, rapists, and child molesters behind bars.

Although, some nonviolent and non-serious offenses are counted as a second or third strike. The law can even raise a misdemeanor to a felony. The application of the law to nonviolent and non-serious offenses is not the intent of the original law yet is a large issue the law is causing (Jones 2013). More than half of the inmates sentenced under the law are serving sentences for nonviolent crimes (Stanford Law School, 2021). A disproportionate amount of the Three-Strikes law is applied to Black Americans as well as mentally ill and physically disabled defendants. Black Americans make up 45 percent of the third-striker population, followed by 33% of Hispanic individuals (Jones 2013). The three-strikes and zero-tolerance policies are not coincidentally similar entities. They were both created in a climate of fear, one in which many people felt the punishment was the best way to produce positive outcomes. The three-strikes law fed into the idea that zero-tolerance policies were the way to keep children safe in schools, although interestingly, both are creating problems of discrimination today. The ideas stemming from the three-strikes law play a role in why policy makers believed zero-tolerance policies could make a difference in the safety of schooling communities.

Advocates of Zero-Tolerance Policies Arguments. This particular section will focus on the arguments that supports of zero-tolerance policies believe to be true, which all encompass a philosophy of deterrence similar to the three-strikes law. Advocates of zero-tolerance policies are important to acknowledge as their options are one of the main components in society that are allowing a continuation of these harsh disciplinary actions in schools. Advocates of zero-tolerance policies emphasize their ability to ensure school safety (Lynch 2020). Indeed, part of a school's job is to maintain a safe and disciplined learning environment for students. Teachers are unable to teach in an environment that is chaotic and unsafe and students are unable to learn when they are fearful. One of the main goals of schools is to provide an escape or refuge within a student's community. Schools are places for individual students to find friends, mentors, teachers, administrators, and staff who care about them and their well-being. That being said, an influx of violence in the American public-school system has been found to shift the focus of schools and is a problem that calls for measures of reform. This reform has taken many different paths, but one of the most prominent and widespread is the utilization of zero-tolerance discipline policies in schools. Advocates of zero-tolerance policies base their arguments on three main factors: violence prevention, combat of easily accessible weaponry for children, and the removal of problematic children in schools. It is important to acknowledge that the arguments advocates of zero-tolerance policies hold come with a lack of empirical data to back their arguments; many advocates' arguments instead are hearsay or stem from a fear of the unknown.

Violence Prevention. Many believe that zero-tolerance is the answer to the problem of schools not feeling like safe learning communities for children, parents, faculty, and staff. Supporters of zero-tolerance policies provide opinions regarding how such policies can prevent injury in schools due to easily accessible weaponry. Offenses like weapon possession, drug

possession, aggravated assault, etc., must be met with harsh and efficient punishment. Advocates argue these policies are beneficial, as they aim to keep students safe (Lynch 2020). By expelling students who physically harm another and or sell drugs on school property, the rest of the student body will be safer (Lynch 2020). Zero-tolerance policies have found allies in parents, as many feel it is the best way to keep their children safe in a climate of uncertainty (Perry 2014).

Much of the support for a zero-tolerance policy stems from fear in society regarding tragic acts of violence in schools and a perception that extreme violence in schools, such as school shootings, is on the rise. In the United States, school shootings have become a distinct genre of violence. This phenomenon of target shootings involves a school being deliberately selected as the location for an attack (Warnkick Hyun Kim et al 2015). For example, the shooting at Columbine High School, left 12 students, one teacher, and the two student shooters dead. The Columbine shooting was not the first school shooting nor was it the deadliest but it was the one to attract the most media coverage and narrative. It was the rise of the emergence of panic and reform in schooling regarding school shootings (King Bracy 2019). There are other examples of school shooters wreaking havoc on schooling communities, "On February 27, 2012, seventeen-year-old Thomas 'T.J' Lane entered Chardon High school in Chardon, Ohio, with a Ruger MK III .22 caliber handgun. He fired ten shots at a group of students sitting at a cafeteria table, killing three students (Warnkick Hyun Kim et al 2015 pg. 371). Examples like these, along with others, are the reason for wanting higher levels of security, surveillance, and overall protection among supporters of zero-tolerance policies.

It is also notable that the perpetrators of violence in schools have been found to come from very different backgrounds. The lack of generalizations amongst perpetrators becomes apparent when unpacking individual events. For example, some were bullied while others were

not, some came from dysfunctional homes whereas others had engaged concerned parents, and some had an identifiable mental illness where others had no such diagnosis (Hyun Kim et al 2015). This lack of generalization can create fear through the means of uncertainty when trying to tackle reform. This fear of the unknown can cause a desire for a quick solution that will immediately create reform, which some belief is zero-tolerance policies in schools.

Combating Reality of Easily Accessible Weaponry to Children. Supporters of zero-tolerance disciplinary actions in school express concerns regarding firearms and weapons being easily accessible to children in the United States (Glatt 2005). Therefore, advocates believe professionals must take an active role in protecting our nation's children from accessible weaponry Glatt 2005). Child access to firearms is a contributing factor to school-related shootings (Glatt 2005). Firearms are found in 33-40% of American households with children and are frequently stored in an unsafe manner. Among those households, between 10% and 20% contain a loaded, unlocked gun (Glatt 2005). Peer pressure in the adolescent population can play a huge role in the handling of firearms by teenagers, which often results in injury (Glatt 2005). Peer pressure at a young age can cause children to cross the line into dangerous activities to fit in with their peers. Children with developing brains dealing with peer pressures often are not able to logically decipher the dangers associated with weapons. The ability to think logically occurs at an individual rate; therefore, one cannot assume all children are capable of understanding the risk factors associated with a firearm (Glatt 2005). This aspect of firearms is uncontrollable and creates fear among community members in schools.

Advocates understand weapons are not only easier to use in today's society, but they are also much easier to access. This idea of accessibility is not limited to individuals who legally should be handling firearms, or individuals that understand the risk factors of such firearms.

Firearms have become easily accessible to children (Glatt 2005). Advocates of zero-tolerance policies understand this reality needs to be combated to keep all children safe in schools. Advocates make the argument that schools must do what they can to avoid the prevalence of easily accessible weaponry in schools, by implementing zero-tolerance policies. The idea is that with easily accessible weapons children are more likely to bring a firearm to school and this must be stopped before it becomes a reality. The death penalty in the criminal justice system is put in place to deter crime, advocates utilize this thinking in their beliefs surrounding zero-tolerance policies in schools. They believe zero-tolerance policies are put in place to scare students away from harmful weapons and help them understand the risk factors associated with firearms.

Removal of Danger (students). Proponents of zero-tolerance policies also argue that such policies prevent school violence by immediately removing "dangerous students,' as well as serve as a deterrent for misbehavior in others (Losinski Katsiyannis et al 2014). Supporters believe that making schools safe in a society plagued with violence is the only answer. Advocates of zero-tolerance policies expressed sentiments such as this, "In a society where first-graders so easily can get their hands-on knives, guns and other potential weapons, no other policy makes sense" (Holland 2000 pg. 1). Proponents argue that school officials cannot be expected to judge the intent of a student with a weapon, and thus should be addressing every instance of weapon-based school violence consistently. Rather, when school officials see a gun, a knife, or some other potential instrument of violence it is in the best interest of a school to act immediately to remove both the student and the weapon (Holland 2000). Further, advocates claim that schools benefit from the ability to report infractions involving violence and drugs to the police, as police officers are trained to properly prosecute these students as juveniles (Lynch 2020). The belief is that school officials benefit the most in sticking to enforcement of the zero-tolerance policy. This

stems from the idea that the first step toward a safe school is the insistence that no weapon enters a building, and a zero-tolerance punishment enforced on anyone that violates this policy (Holland 2000). Supporters argue that zero-tolerance policies have the ability to force students to think about the consequences of their actions before something tragic occurs.

      Critics of Zero-Tolerance Policies Arguments. This section will cover how critics view zero-tolerance policies, this will encompass the apparati that are making up the STPP. Despite the arguments supporting the wide enactment of zero-tolerance policies, significant empirical data suggests that there are numerous adverse effects of such policies. The fact that zero-tolerance policies are now being utilized for all forms of a misdemeanor in schools is creating a problematic disciplinary atmosphere. The consequences of these policies are evident through increased suspensions and expulsions, a decrease in academic achievement, poor self-image, a negative school climate, and discrimination against minority groups. These consequences stem from the inconsistency and inflexibility of these disciplinary policies. Zero-tolerance policies are rooted in deterring future misbehavior to create a safer atmosphere, yet are being found to do the exact opposite. Critics have been utilizing empirical data to demonstrate why the use of zero-tolerance policies in schools is problematic and detrimental for learners.

      The Inflexibility of Zero-Tolerance Policies. The inflexibility of zero-tolerance policies has prevented school administrators from exercising judgment towards disciplinary action in regards to important factors of a child's life. To properly discipline students to make progress in a "safe" school environment, there are many aspects that must be considered: age, gender, grade level, special education status, the seriousness of offense, circumstances, student' prior history of offense, overall impact of offense, and students' reliance level in making up for their action (Losinski Katsiyannis et al 2014). The "one-size-fits-all" punishments of zero-tolerance policies

do not account for these factors and result in unfairly punishing significant numbers of school-age students. Moreover, consistency is a crucial criterion in any effective measure of a behavioral intervention or disciplinary action. For zero-tolerance policies to be seen as effective measures of discipline, they would have to be rooted in consistency.

Zero-tolerance policies are consistent theoretically, but in implementation, they often result in inconsistency. Even though the theory is that zero-tolerance is unilaterally applied in every instance, this isn't how human behavior works. Rates of suspension and expulsions for different types of misbehavior vary among schools as well as school districts, creating more chaos rather than amending it (Losinski Katsiyannis et al 2014). Different individuals are subject to different life outside of school that can affect their behavior, such as poverty, family structure, and community. These barriers are prevalent for many learners and need to be considered when talking about the inconsistencies of the STPP.

Unnecessary Increase in Suspensions and Expulsions. Zero-tolerance policies themselves can be directly related to increased suspensions and expulsions for students because they skip the step of assessing the problem and assigning a proper course of action (Skiba Arredondo et al 2014). An increase in suspensions and expulsions for students has a detrimental effect on their educational experience. In 2010 alone, more than 3 million students were suspended from school, more than double the level of suspensions in the 1970s (Flannery 2015). These misconduct cases were not all worthy of suspension. The majority of offenses that young people are suspended for are non-violent issues such as chronic absence or even general classroom disruption (Jones 2018). Researchers found that between 2017 and 2018, 43 percent of suspension and expulsion actions nationwide were for insubordination (Jones 2018). Between 1995 and 2014, there were 428 articles on students being suspended or expelled from schools for

the possession of a weapon. Of those 428 articles, 29 involved apparent misuse of the zero-tolerance policy by school districts (Losinski Katsiyannis et al 2014). Further, of these 428 articles, it can be predicted that many more were misusing zero-tolerance policies, misuse because the offenses did not involve possession of weapons.

   Decrease in Academic Achievement. This increase in suspensions and expulsions is not just an interruption of learning but instead causing of not learning at all. Research has found that a single suspension or expulsion doubles the risk that a student will repeat a grade. It was reported that youth with prior suspicions were 68% more likely to drop out of school (Maxine, 2018). Expulsions and suspensions are further problems due to the fact that many districts today do not require suspended or expelled students to receive homework support or tutoring, causing them to fall further behind their peers. The process of having to work their way back to get on track with classmates is one many students are not privy to, it is instead easier to involve themselves in other activities. The extra work students have to put in to catch up with their peers can encourage them to engage in more misbehavior when returning to school, or even drop out altogether. Further, expelled and suspended students tend to abandon activities that lead to college, and rather lead to activities that lead to the juvenile system (Perry 2014). Indeed, research suggests that suspensions increase the chance of a student dropping out before graduation from 16 percent to 32 percent. Further, each additional suspension after the first increased the risk by another 10 percent (Jones 2018). Suspending or expelling a student for an infraction that could be handled within the school diminishes their academic career and causes students to focus their time and attention elsewhere.

   Creation of Negative Self-Image. In addition to the academic disruption caused by 0 tolerance of disciplinary consequences, student self-image is also negatively influenced. Self-

image is created from a young age through the developments made in a person's lives such as the people they interact with (mentors, peers, parents), the learning they are subjected to, and the communities of people they come across (Cleveland Clinic 2020). Schools have an immense impact on an individual's self-image and can help children learn to have a positive view of themselves and believe in themselves further or foster an adverse self-perception (Cleveland Clinic 2020). Zero-tolerance disciplinary action is one of the main processes in schools that are participating in this adverse effect. Critics of zero-tolerance policies recognize the ability of these harsh punishments to affect students' self-image in a negative manner (Berwick 2015). Punitive punishments for minor infractions in schools create an institution that lacks trust and hope in its students. It sends the message to students that schools and school teachers do not have hope for their future or trust their judgment. It provides the idea that these children are not subject to change and do better. Putting the idea that said student is "bad" or "troubled". A self-image centered on being a "bad" or "troubled individual" in turn only promotes future behavior rather than deters it. Self-image is a crucial part of a child believing in themselves, and zero-tolerance policies are destroying this hope for many.

This problematic system of promoting negative self-image also affects students' overall development into young adulthood; zero-tolerance policies interrupt many aspects of development crucial to student development. Getting suspended for minor offenses is counterproductive in preparing children for college and a successful future (Berwick 2015). Being excessively punished for minor offenses sends a message to students that *they* are the problem rather than that they simply made a mistake. Further, attempting to instill prosocial behavior into children acts as a process that removes a child's sense of individuality (Berwick 2015). Abusive discipline in the home has been proven not to work in creating a pro-social

behavior but rather sends that child down a path of violence, schools are seeing the same thing

through the utilization of zero-tolerance policies. Diminishing a child's individuality can halt

their ability to envision themselves as successful later in life. This system of fitting every child

into the same disciplinary box creates a system of relation rather than a mindset of wanting to do

and be better. Children need to develop self-advocacy skills to be successful in negotiating their

needs and wants throughout life, and zero-tolerance policies put a hold on these aspects of

development (Berwick 2015).

     Decrease in Student's Mental Health. Zero-tolerance policies have been proven to create

a decrease in learners' mental health inside and outside of the classroom. The importance of

acknowledging mental health is becoming increasingly relevant in our society as a deeper

understanding of the topic is coming to life. Researchers alike are understanding the impact

acknowledging and accepting mental health can have on an individual's quality of life. Schools

benefit when their students are comfortable with themselves and aware of the aspects of life that

affect their mental health. This reality involves the help of school administration to encourage

students to grow to understand themselves individually. Although, zero-tolerance policies are

stunting this growth regarding a student's mental health. Researchers for the American

Psychologist state, "Before the age of 15, adolescents appear to display psychosocial immaturity

in at least four areas: poor resistance to peer influence, attitudes toward and perception of risk,

future orientation, and impulse control" (American Psychologist 2008 pg. 885). Schools should

not be punishing kids punitively for aspects of their brains that are not fully developed.

Adolescents are more likely to take greater risks and not consider the possible consequences of

their behavior. Further, used incorrectly, zero-tolerance policies have the ability to impact the

cognitive development of an adolescent brain in a negative manner (American Psychologist

2008). This can promote greater issues regarding students' mental health inside and outside of the classroom.

   Creation of Negative School Climate. Research has shown school climate and culture are crucial for a positive learning experience (Alverez 2021). A positive school climate allows for students to make connections with one another, their teachers, and staff members. A good climate promotes a community that supports students far beyond the classroom, in ways that allow for personal growth as well as learning. Critics of the zero-tolerance policy argue that these disciplinary measures are doing the exact opposite. They argue these policies are creating a culture surrounding distrust and disdain among students and administrators. Zero-tolerance does not allow for crucial aspects of learning, such as relationship building as well as a trusting environment. Positive school culture matters for the students, faculty, and staff to be successful (Alverez 2021). In attempting to remove "bad" or "dangerous" students, schools are creating a more unsafe and unsuccessful climate in their schools. Putative punishments due to zero-tolerance policies are creating a negative community for all members of schools: students, administrators, staff, and even parents.

   Schools with higher levels of suspension and expulsion have seen worse safety ratings from their faculty, staff, and student body (American Psychologist 2008). This poor school climate can also be assessed based on poor quality school governance structure, as well as disproportionate amounts of time spent on disciplinary actions (American Psychologist 2008). Both of these measures are seen more frequently in schools over utilizing zero-tolerance policies. Further, schools that utilize zero-tolerance policies have seen lower academic achievement and lower perception of the school as a whole. Schools have begun alienating students through harsh disciplinary actions, making it much more difficult to succeed academically (Berwick 2015).

How can we argue zero-tolerance policies to be a positive thing when they come with a negative school climate?

The notion of deterring future misbehavior is the root of the zero-tolerance policy, this reduction of future behavior is also the determining factor of effective punishment. It has been found that zero-tolerance policies have been seen to predict higher rates of further misbehavior (Maxine 2018). Punishment without further assessment of the problem causes kids to continue with their actions rather than understand what they are doing wrong. A school climate of higher rates of suspensions and expulsions is one rooted in mistrust and sends the students a negative message of how the administration feels about them. Zero-tolerance policies are not acting as effective measures of discipline for many students. Instead in the long run are leading to a higher likelihood of school dropout and or failure to graduate on time (American Psychologist 2008), as well as creating a negative and unsafe environment for students.

Widespread Use of Zero-Tolerance Policies in Schools Today. This section will focus on how the reality of widespread use of zero-tolerance policies is causing problem for many learners. As zero-tolerance policies became more widely used in schools, many cases of disciplinary action due to "weaponry" acted as a cover-up to unfair punishments. Between 1995 and 2014 there have only been 17 court rulings involving general education students being disciplined under zero-tolerance policies involving weapons on school property (Losinski Katsiyannis et al 2014). It is important to acknowledge that of these cases eight dealt with possession of firearms and nine involved knives. Five of the firearm cases involved either threats or actual acts of violence being committed on school grounds, and the remaining involved possession. Only two court cases: Hill v State (2021) and Sinkfield v State (1996), involved fatal shootings (Losinski Katsiyannis et al 2014). Further, the majority of cases with knives involved

possession, with only one fatal stabbing case Mosley v State (2000). This data suggests that many students are being unfairly punished due to zero-tolerance policies, yet it is being concealed by the administration as "dangerous actions regarding weapons". Many of these incidents could have been handled in schools, yet ended in students having criminal records.

Widespread use of a zero-tolerance policy has become more of an issue in today's society, as children are facing punitive punishments for minor offenses in school. Zero-tolerance policies today in schools are no longer only being utilized for incidences regarding firearms. In recent years zero-tolerance policies have been applied broadly to include minor offenses (School Discipline Support Initiative 2021). Schools have expanded zero-tolerance policies to include swearing, insubordination, vandalization, disrespect, and even dress code violations. By 1996-1997 the majority of school examples of zero-tolerance policies include drugs (88%), alcohol (87%), and fights (79%) (Losinski Katsiyannis et al 2014). This form of punishment has dramatically expanded the number of suspensions and expulsions seen in schools today. These policies are creating a system that does not allow children to grow and understand their actions.

For many students today, the use of zero-tolerance policies can have life-altering effects. These students are being treated as criminals in the comfort of their schools, and are no longer comfortable at all. Discipline policies are put in place to help keep children safe, yet this is not what we are seeing for many school-age students today. For example, A young man in high school spent 21 days in a juvenile detention center based on talking back in class (Flannery, 2015). A seven-year-old in Maryland was suspended in 2013 for chewing his pop-tart into the shape of a gun (Flannery 2015). A Michigan senior was expelled in October of 2015 for forgetting her knife in her purse (Flannery 2015). A 17-year-old Black student in Texas had an outburst in school and, instead of trying to de-escalate the situation a resource officer pressed the

young man against a door and fired a taser gun directly onto his body until he fell onto the floor face-down. He was handcuffed after 15 seconds of tasering (Resendes Ginger 2021). In 2010, 12-year-old Alexa Gonzalez wrote "I love my friends Abby and Faith" and "Lex was here 2/1/10" on her desk in Spanish class with erasable markers. The school deemed these markings vandalism, and as a result, Alexa was handcuffed, arrested, and detained at a New York City Police Department precinct in Queens (Maxime 2018). These examples provide a clear understanding that zero-tolerance policies need to be reassessed and understood.

Discrimination. Finally, the most problematic aspect of zero-tolerance policies is the fact that they are disproportionately affecting students of minorities. All the arguments I have addressed above lead to the major critique which is disproportionate identification of racial and ethnic minority students in zero-tolerance policy use. The students most affected are those of racial minorities, low socioeconomic status, as well as special education learners. The widespread overuse of suspension and expulsions is seen as most problematic for minority students in particular. This racial disparity in discipline procedure has been seen to be detrimental to minority social mobility. Critics argue that zero-tolerance policies are streamlining minority students in particular out of schools and into the juvenile justice system (Maxine, 2018). This issue is so ingrained into the School-to-Prison Pipeline I will be utilizing all of chapter four to uncover this issue.

School to Prison Pipeline

This section will show how the process of the STPP has grown and become problematic for learners due to zero-tolerance policies. First, it will provide a synopsis of the institution that is known as the STPP, more of an overview of the topic. Next, this section will delve into the generation and understanding of the process of the term "STPP ". Then it will discuss the

apparati that make up the STPP, which come as a result of the zero-tolerance policies in schools. These apparati include the use of resource officers, high rates of suspension and expulsion, and job insecurity. Finally, it will discuss how heuristic mechanisms of social reproduction cause these apparati to discriminate against minority learners in the American public-school system. This chapter will examine the idea that educational attainment is based on meritocracy or social barriers rooted in American society.

Zero-tolerance policies in schools are at the root of the "School-to-Prison Pipeline" (STPP). It can be argued that the use of punitive punishments is the root of the process in schools that make up the overarching theme of the STPP. Zero-tolerance policies foster a culture in schools that promotes a feeling of isolation and unsafety. These processes cultivate the overuse of expulsions and suspensions, a higher presence of untrained resource officers, and make life during and after school more dangerous for minority students in particular (Cramer et al 2014). While many believe status attainment in education happens due to meritocracy, the STPP is a social barrier that hinders this process. Zero-tolerance policies perpetuate the cycle that pushes students out of schools and into the juvenile justice system.

Overview. The STPP can be explained through the relationship between school disciplinary policies and the increased risk of students coming in contact with the juvenile justice system (Skiba et al., 2014). STPP is a term that advocates, researchers, and policy makers agree on and allows a conversation about this process. The STPP is one of the prime institutions that are at fault for the American public school system failing many of its students. Students are being funneled out of school through overuse of suspensions and expulsions and led right into the juvenile justice system (Cramer et al 2014). As examined in the previous section, zero-tolerance policies in schools today are creating a system of injustice and putting stressors on the

educational system as a whole. These harsh disciplinary actions are creating an education system with high levels of student dropout rates across the nation and are causing problems later in life for individuals. Further, the overuse of police in schools is creating an unsafe environment for many students across the country through their educational experience (Washington, 2021). They are promoting processes in schools that hinder education for many students in the American public school system. The STPP is a process that is promoting discrimination and deprivation amongst children currently going through school. The STPP is an institution within public education that needs policy reform.

For most students the STPP acts gradually, causing them to disengage, become less involved with school activities, act out, and finally be brought into the juvenile justice system (Cramer et al., 2014). The STPP in many senses mirrors the harsh punishment occurring in our criminal justice system today. Both systems can be blamed on the process of social exclusion, removal of individuals from important institutions in life, and promotion avenues for continued misbehavior (Jacobsen, 2019). The process of exclusion is seen across the country as many students do not feel supported, respected, or comfortable in schools. Rather than connecting with students, schools are promoting punitive zero-tolerance policies that are creating a rigid and unwelcoming atmosphere. The construction of the STPP can start for individual students as early as elementary school (Cramer et al., 2014). The STPP can cause individual students to feel ostracized and not a part of the overall school culture from an early age. This lack of fitting in causes children to act out as if they are not comfortable as individuals. When children do not feel comfortable in their school community it can lead to academic and behavioral difficulties (Cramer et al 2014). Instead of understanding this reality and working to make a more inclusive

environment, schools are suspending and expelling students. This disconnect between student culture and school culture is at the root of the STPP.

Generation and Understanding of the Term STPP. The understanding of the STPP comes from research conducted in the 1970s and 1980s in criminology with a focus on the development of juvenile delinquency, antisocial behavior, and adult crime (Hemez et al., 2019). Researchers developed an understanding of frameworks that explained the onset and persistence of criminal conduct starting at a young age and moving through adulthood. They focused on turning points in individuals' lives, finding that antisocial turning points encourage criminal behavior. Antisocial turning points include divorce, family instability, unemployment, educational failure, and criminal justice involvement (Hemez et al., 2019). Further, researchers argue that individual failure is linked to institutions of social control, for example, schools. Education is one process that can be pivotal in the life course of criminology as it is a catalyst for adolescents' life trajectories (Hemez et al., 2019). Negative school experiences such as poor academic performance, lack of attendance, and disciplinary history have all been associated with lower levels of educational attainment, occupation stability, and economic mobility. These aspects of negative schooling experience through the apparati involved in the STPP have also been linked to juvenile delinquency, adult criminality, and incarceration (Hemez et al., 2019). Researchers developed the STPP model as an explanation for how these negative schooling experiences have interacted with barriers in the education system to create a funnel out of schools and into the juvenile justice system.

Apparati of the School to Prison Pipeline. This section will dive into the apparati of the STPP through the utilization of prior research and data. Zero-tolerance policies in America's public schools are creating a process that is encompassed by the term STPP. These processes

include school resource officers (SROs), overuse of suspensions and expulsions, and job insecurity later in life. These can be considered the apparati that make up the STPP and are a result of zero-tolerance policies. These methods of the STPP can be seen through empirical data collected by researchers in the educational field. Resource officers are creating an unsafe atmosphere and creating extra stressors for students within their day-to-day lives in schools (Washington 2021). The overuse of suspensions and expulsions is creating problems for students in many regards, for example, falling academically and socially behind their classmates, or creating a negative self-image. Being criminalized at such a young age within schools is creating a system that makes job security later in life difficult for individual students (Hemez et al 2019). Overall, these processes are important to understand when looking at the cycle we call the STPP.

Use of Resource Officers. One of the major components that are perpetuating the STPP is the use of police in schools, also known as SROs. SROs first began appearing in K-12 schools around 40 years ago, due originally to the increase in gun violence in the 1990s (Washington, 2021). Since then their prevalence in schools has continued to grow as we have seen a rise in tragic events similar to the Sandy Hook and Parkland shootings. In 1995, one percent of schools were being policed, whereas in 2021 48 percent of schools are being policed (Washington, 2021). SROs have commissioned law enforcement officers with the authority to arrest, and are deployed under the need for policing in K-12 schooling districts (Washington, 2021). Nearly all SROs are armed, about 91 percent according to federal data (Sawchuk, 2021). SROs are hired to protect youth and make schooling communities as a whole feel more secure and safe, yet are not necessarily doing so. In theory, these officers are supposed to go through a 40-hour basic training course regarding the adolescent brain, cyber safety, and violence prevention in schools. Yet it is not clear how many school police have had this training (Sawchuk, 2021). In a 2018 Education

Week Survey of SROs, 1 in 5 respondents said they did not have sufficient training to work in a school environment (Sawchuk, 2021).

As I discussed in the zero-tolerance policy section, the reality of the situation is - mass shootings in schools are very rare, and more punitive punishment is not stopping them (Washington, 2021). The increase of SROs is leaving learners feeling alienated from their schools, distrustful of adults, and overall situated in a less safe setting (Washington, 2021). This lack of safety stems from a fear of SROs not being held to a direct set of rules regarding interactions with students. Research has shown a direct correlation between the presence of SROs in schools and arrests in schools, and these arrests are a major contributing factor to the STPP (Washington, 2021). Schooling arrests are a method of the STPP because once a student is put into the juvenile justice system, it is significantly more likely the youth will be pushed out of school, fail to graduate, be re-arrested, and ultimately end up in juvenile or adult prison (Washington, 2021).

The presence of SROs alone blurs the lines between youth and criminal behavior. The behavior students are now being arrested for was never previously seen as criminal before SROs. Data shows many of the arrests in schools are for non-serious crimes such as not following SRO direction, obnoxious behavior (i.e. fake burping), disorderly conduct such as cursing, tardiness, and bad grades (Washington, 2021). Further, there is also the mental health impact SROs can have on children in schools. Interactions with SROs have been found to cause youth to develop depression, anxiety, PTSD, and other mental health issues (Washington, 2021). Being constantly observed and judged by law enforcement can make it more difficult for youth to feel safe.

Suspension and Expulsion Leading to Incarceration. There is a meaningful connection between harsh school punishment and criminal justice involvement (Jacobsen, 2019). As

discussed, many more students in today's public-school system are facing suspensions and even expulsion for minor offenses of misbehavior (Jacobsen 2019). Each year 2 in 36 students are suspended from school (Jacobsen 2019). Both suspension and expulsion can cause individuals to feel disconnected from schools and form negative self-opinions. The use of suspensions and expulsions has allowed for an increase in students going from school to the juvenile justice system. Research demonstrates that school suspensions are directly correlated with later arrests and incarceration (Jacobsen, 2019). A history of arrest before age 16 decreases graduation potential by 27% (Cramer et al 2014). Children who attend schools with high suspension rates are significantly more likely to be arrested and jailed as adults (Jacobsen, 2019). The data shows that individuals who are suspended are more likely to drop out of school, causing them to get less education than many of their peers. Further, once suspended, a student is more likely to be suspended multiple times. There is a direct correlation between children attending stricter schools and being: arrested, incarcerated, dropping out, and being less likely to attend four-year colleges (Camera 2021). Students assigned to stricter middle schools are 3.2 percentage points more likely to have been arrested, 2.5 percentage points more likely to have been incarcerated as adults, 1.7 percentage points more likely to drop out of high school, and 2.4 percentage points less likely to attend a four-year college (Camera 2021). Instances of criminalization that are followed by suspension or expulsion can lead to future use of criminal response and lead to educational attainment loss.

Suspension and expulsion used for minor disciplinary make everything worse. They cause children to fall behind their peers, promote exclusion from classmates, and are detrimental to a child's learning experience. When a student is suspended they are faced with difficulties in staying up to date with school work, extracurriculars, and social relationships (Perry, 2014). The

reality of the situation is that in schools today these children are not being provided with the necessary tools to stay on track when they return from a suspension. Exclusion in all facets of schools often drives students to give up and in turn drop out of school (Perry, 2014).

   Job Insecurity. In 2008 the average rate of unemployment for high school graduates was 54% (Cramer et al 2014). Researchers have found a correlation between dropping out of school and not being able to find job security throughout life (Cramer et al 2014). Job insecurity created by disciplinary action in school can be explained by the idea that employers are less likely to hire individuals without a high school diploma. Not graduating with a high school diploma makes it much more difficult to find a job that offers high enough pay to make a living (Cramer et al 2014). Therefore, dropping out of school creates many issues in the labor force and a much higher likelihood of unemployment. Dropouts were 33% less likely to hold a job than young adults who had completed some level of schooling (Cramer et al 2014). Students who are punished in schools can be suspended or expelled with a criminal record. Employers that could provide economic stability for individuals often are not interested in hiring anyone with a criminal record. These processes can also lead individuals down paths of criminal activity, if they cannot find a job legally they might have to partake in illegal activity to create economic security. When an individual is not making enough money to support themselves it often translates into higher incarceration rates (Cramer et al 2014). Schools are promoting problematic measures that are leading to job insecurity and even the reliance on criminal activity.

   This lack of job security due to the STPP is leading individuals to participate in criminal activity. Research has shown that being economically unstable is one of the most indicative factors for both juveniles and adults to partake in criminal activity (Walden University, 2021). Being economically unstable and living in impoverished neighborhoods put stress on an

individual's life that often can become too hard to bear (Walden University, 2021). This stress surrounding economic stability leads individuals to turn to criminal activity (i.e. selling drugs and or stealing). It must be recognized that this process of being drawn to criminal activity could be squashed through reform measures implemented in schools, reducing the problem as a whole.

Discrimination. Mechanisms of social reproduction cause the apparati discussed above to discriminate against minority learners in the American public-school system. To fully understand this statement, the discussion surrounding meritocracy being problematic must be had. Institutional and structural barriers within education are at fault for hindering minority learners' educational attainment. Most simply put, the STPP is made up of educational barriers many learners are facing daily, yet is often looked at through a lens of meritocracy. The argument of meritocracy vs structural barrier effects on educational attainment must be addressed to fully delve into the consequences of the STPP. Meritocracy is rooted in the "American Dream", the idea that social mobility in America is fluid as long as you work hard in school. Allowing people to believe that in America you can be who you want socially and economically due to your educational effort. Unfortunately, the reality of the situation is not as simple as the "American Dream" makes it out to be. The STPP is a prime example of how the education system is flawed and instead rooted in structural barriers discriminating against many students in society and keeping them away from attaining the status they dream of.

Meritocracy. The idea of an individual is at the center of their educational attainment is based on traditional ideals of American society. This hopeful idea suggests that you are the controller of your own social, educational, and economic attainment in life. William Sewell developed his ideas that paved the way regarding this method of status attainment. He describes status attainment as the process by which individuals acquire positions in occupational,

educational, and other status hierarchies (Wilson Portes, 1995). Sewell's model separated the

socioeconomic status variables in an individual's life to understand how one's life decision led to

status attainment. His theory states that attainment starts at a young age when individuals

participate in self-assessment of their performance; this personal assessment then leads to

determining how to achieve life goals. (Wilson Portes, 1995). However, this practice is not

consistent with the reality of achieving life goals in society.

Meritocracy is the idea that your status attainment is based on your merit. Meritocracy is

used by the government to deny social justice action and minimize the idea of class inequalities

(Jin et al 2020). This idea of meritocracy comes from the idea that the distribution of

opportunities is based on ability, talent, or effort. This is seen in education through means of

identifying how individual students develop the rewards of merit through working hard to learn

schooling material. Members of the society can explain their ideas of individual attainment

through merit by focusing on and discussing a small number of working-class students who have

achieved academic success, therefore high-status attainment (Jin et al 2020). This small pool of

students who have been able to beat the odds allows the government to state that one's

environment is not at fault for one's status; if one works hard in school they can fluidly move

social classes (Jin et al 2020). The reality of the situation is that social barriers are stronger than

personal merit. Meritocracy is only applicable to those of privilege, those who have the access

and resources to quality education.

Social Construction. The idea that a lack of educational attainment is not a result of

individual aspirations and educational efforts but rather due to social barriers dates back to the

twentieth century. This idea originated through research done by Blau and Duncan in 1967,

which focused on status transmittal based on objective or structural barriers (Wilson Portes,

1995). Their model utilizes the effects of an individual's socioeconomic background and recorded mental ability; they hypothesized these would affect status attainment due to a chain of intervening variables. They demonstrated that educational aspirations are not an accurate measure of the effects of background and ability factors in an individual life (Wilson Portes 1995). They argued that democratic societies should help minorities overcome socio-economic disadvantages in education. This model is emulated by research today to explain the reality that educational systems hinder individual education attainment. American public education is an institution that is creating a society that promotes social mobility but in practice has a rigid social structure.

The public-school education system is the primary institution of rigid social mobility in America. The "American Dream" is not obtainable for underserved youth, and this is not at the fault of the individual, but rather education barriers in place in society. Large differences in educational quality and attainment persist amongst different individuals based on race, income, and region (Belfield Levin 2007). Equitable education is simply not attainable in the current schooling system as there is a clear opportunity gap advanced by a lack of access. This lack of access begins for individuals at a very young age. Early education is the most significant time to level the playing field for all children in society, yet is participating in the adverse effects. Research on accessibility has shown that low-income neighborhoods often have little to do with high-quality early childhood educational programs (Neitzel Mead 2020). Further, this lack of access affects the obtainment of core elements of good education such as highly challenging and engaging teaching; a safe, supportive, and well-resourced school; and an affordable high-quality college degree (U.S. Department of Education 2021). Structural barriers are also in place; for example, inequitable funding perpetuates inequitable education (U.S. Department of Education

2021). Already underserved youth are continuing to be discriminated against in schooling; they are much less likely to attend college, they are suspended and expelled at higher rates, and are less likely to have access to strong teachers and challenging curricula (U.S. Department of Education 2021)

It is also important to acknowledge the fact that underserved individuals have a host of difficulties they deal with coming into schools, one of the most pressing being poverty. Research has shown that 88 percent of teachers believe that student poverty is a barrier affecting learning (Communities in Schools 2015). These adverse effects are seen in individual students' disruptive behavior, chronic absences, and poor health (Communities in Schools 2015). A department of education study demonstrated that 45 percent of high-poverty schools receive less state and local funding than typical in their schooling district (U.S. Department of Education 2021). Quality education is serving those with parents who experience neighborhood wealth, material employment, and high levels of education and, therefore, influence. The education system is perpetuating the idea that the wealthy will stay wealthy, and the poor will stay poor -- a cycle of poverty that must be addressed, rather than participating in the mindset that social mobility originates in the individual. Student educational attainment level can no longer be focused on characteristics of the individual, but rather on how school structures interact with these students.

As I mentioned in section one, it is important to understand that at the core of these issues is the fact that these processes are predominantly affecting minority groups. The students being most affected are racial minorities, those of low socioeconomic status, and special education learners. The roots of the STPP that I have discussed above are a continuation of discriminatory measures in society. I will be examining exactly how the root causes of the STPP are disproportionately affecting minority students in chapter four.

Bourdieu. Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction comes into play significantly when looking at how aspects of the STPP create a rigid social structure. His theory expresses that an individual's life experiences are generally predetermined by the family's socioeconomic and intellectual background (Farid et al 2021). This is mirrored within aspects of the STPP, as students of poor families whose parents did not graduate high school, also tend not to graduate (Cramer et al 2014). Bourdieu's theory also makes it clear that habitus leads to cultural capital obtained by upper- and middle-class individuals. This cultural capital comes with assets that are of more value in society and the education system (Sullivan 2002). The disadvantages for lower-class pupils are seen in the STPP in many different ways, such as stereotyping of those outside of the white middle class, labeling students as "at-risk", excluding minority students, and more (Cramer et al 2014). Bourdieu would argue that these aspects become even more problematic as they are ignored in the education system, and those who do not come from a habitus with cultural capital are still taught to aspire to those standards (Tzanakis 2011).

Cultural capital and habitus play are prominent in the effects of the STPP on minority learners. Bourdieu would see the cultural capital within the STPP through cultural marginalization being the link between dropout and imprisonment. He would argue that schools favor while and middle-class values in their students regardless of their socioeconomic background or race. This creates a system that is biased in attitudes towards minority students not taking into account their identities as learners. Bourdieu would argue that cultural capital in this sense causes minority students to be punished according to the wrong standards. Further, Bourdieu would argue that a learner's habitus is a large indicator of how the STPP is going to affect them in schooling. A student's habitus allows provides insight into how they should act within schools and the preferred conditioning is white and middle-class learners. This allows

while and middle-class students to be in a position of power in schools and immediately puts minority learners at a disadvantage. The conjunction of cultural capital and habitus within schooling Bourdieu would argue are the root causes of systemic discrimination in schools. This, in turn, leads to students being thrown into the cycle of the STPP.

Ch. 4 Consequences

This section will focus on how the methods spoke about in chapter three have outcomes that are problematic to a specific group of leaners. Zero-tolerance policies, as well as the apparati that are created within schools as a result of these policies, create consequences for learners. The question must be posed, who exactly are these learners most affected? The evidence demonstrates that the STPP disproportionately affects students of low socioeconomic backgrounds, students of color, and those with learning disabilities. People of color who live in poverty are among the most vulnerable to the criminal justice system as well as are the most harshly punished in schools today (Wald Losen 2003). The opportunity gap present in the American public-school system and a lack of recognition of the STPP are further harming the vulnerable populations in schools. To answer the question of <u>how</u> the STPP is disproportionately affecting vulnerable students this chapter will look at both aspects of zero-tolerance policies and the apparati of the STPP.

Systemic racism in the American public education system is not new. In the United States, Black and Hispanic families average lower levels of education, and income, and are more likely to live in low-income neighborhoods (Han et al 2020). Socioeconomic status is tied to the education opportunity and achievement gap that is growing in our society. The achievement/ opportunity gap has a direct impact on income, poverty rates, unemployment, and educational attainment. The relationship between race and socioeconomic status is important to acknowledge when understanding racism in schools (Han et al 2020). Zero-tolerance policies are problematic for these learners due to an increase in suspension and expulsions, lower academic achievement, the creation of stereotypes, and a negative school climate.

Lingering aspects of de facto segregation of neighborhoods are impacting schooling districts by association. This discrimination and segregation cause zero-tolerance policies and the apparati that make up the STPP to disproportionately affect members of these neighborhoods and schooling communities. Schools that the most disadvantaged Black children attend are segregated due to their location in segregated high-poverty neighborhoods (Rothstein 2014). This segregation then impacts schools today as it causes a growing gap in racial education attainment through economic circumstances, demographic trends, and private discrimination (Han et al 2020). The segregated schools being in high-poverty areas causes these schools to be receiving the least school funding from parental and outside donors (Rothstein 2014). The lack of access to quality education that comes from a lack of funding is producing a rapidly growing opportunity gap between predominantly white and predominantly Black schooling districts. The opportunity gap within schools is problematic as it then translates into later life, such as the wealth gap between the upper, middle, and lower classes.

Zero-Tolerance Policies

Increase in Suspensions and Expulsions. Zero-tolerance policies and exclusionary punishment mechanisms in schools are often utilized for minor behavior, making it a common experience for learners, particularly for racial minorities (Jacobsen et al 2019). Research shows that Black and Brown's students are more likely to face disciplinary action, i.e. suspensions, expulsions, police referrals, or arrests, in place of supportive treatment (Jackson 2018). These differences in treatment are directly linked to discrimination of race and income. Implementation of a zero-tolerance policy becomes particularly relevant for school districts with higher populations of students of color living in poverty (Cramer Gonzalez 2014). Disproportionate use of harsh policies can be shown through the fact that 18% of students enrolled in school are

Black, yet, Black learners make up 45% of students suspended at least once, and 48% of students suspended more than one time (Cramer Gonzalez 2014). Black students are 3.5 times more likely than white students to face suspension or expulsion from school; Hispanic students are 1.5 times more likely than white students to be suspended, and twice as likely to be expelled (Cramer Gonzalez 2014). Students with disabilities are four times more likely than students without disabilities to be suspended; 76% of students with learning disabilities and 90.2% of students with emotional behavioral disorders will be suspended at least once. Finally, students with other disabilities, for example, autism, are significantly more likely to be suspended than their peers (Cramer Gonzalez 2014). A suspension or expulsion is an extreme disciplinary tactic that marks a student as 'at risk' by educators, which frequently leads to stereotyping (Jacobsen et al 2019). Higher levels of suspension and expulsions can also be directly associated with the idea that schools are giving up on Black learners who they deem not ready to learn (Perry 2014). Those who have been targeted by these practices often suffer serious academic achievement interruptions (Jacobsen et al 2019).

Academic Achievement. Individuals of color and those of low socioeconomic status are frequently enrolled in school districts that produce lower levels of academic achievement and higher rates of college attrition (Wald Losen 2003). Lower educational attainment for these individuals can be attributed to aspects of schools that are out of the control of the learners; these students are more likely to be by unqualified teachers, held back grades, put in restricted special education, suspended, and often pushed out of school. (Wald Losen 2003). Schools serving lower-income neighborhoods have higher levels of suspensions and expulsions. These environmental factors of the school created by administrators - not because of worse behavior by students – is what create the 'need' for harsher disciplinary practices. Making matters worse,

many school districts do not require that suspended and expelled students receive homework support or tutoring while not in school, so they fall even further behind (Perry 2014). As such, these already vulnerable populations often return from long suspensions or expulsions academically behind, as they have missed weeks or even months of schooling. This situation then frequently initiates schools to move students with disciplinary records into alternative programs that do not match their educational goals or dreams (Wald Losen 2003). Thus, high-poverty, high-minority schooling systems provide fewer resources, fewer qualified teachers, and fewer advanced-level courses. The reality of the situation then becomes that the academic achievement learners in this environment strive for, often is simply not obtainable.

As a result of these patterns and school practices, nationally half of the American Black and Hispanic student body who attend school in lower-income areas, experience dropout rates between 40 and 50 percent (Cramer Gonzalez 2014). Similarly, students of color and those with disabilities in the American public school system are significantly less likely to make it to graduation than their non-disabled white peers (Cramer Gonzalez 2014). Black students are twice as likely as white students to drop out of school. Hispanic students are two and a half times more likely to drop out of school in comparison to their white peers. Finally, students with disabilities are twice as likely to drop out of school (Cramer Gonzalez 2014). Dropping out of school is viewed in our society as an individual choice, yet the STPP and its facilitating factors can also be understood as precipitating environmental factors. This focus is problematic as it does not consider the interaction between school structures, such as zero-tolerance policies, and their learners (Cramer Gonzalez 2014). The STPP is creating extreme difficulty for some learners to not only do well in school but also stay in school.

Stereotyping (Creation of Negative Self-Image). The American public-school system is built around the prototypical white middle-class individual, and student behavior is interpreted through this lens. Students of color are frequently stereotyped as students who are emotionally disturbed or problem children (Cramer Gonzalez 2014). In many cases, white students who misbehave are prescribed ADHD medication, whereas, Black students are viewed as unwilling to learn and thus subject to disciplinary action (Jackson 2018). These practices are problematic as they do not consider the outside factors, such as daily discrimination, that students of color face inside and outside of the classroom. Researchers suggest there is an implicit racial bias that is ingrained in our education system, in educators, and in social class (Han et al 2020). Teachers are more likely to hold a pro-white/anti-Black implicit bias. While this viewpoint is less prevalent for teachers of color, more than 80% of teachers in the United States are white (Cramer Gonzalez 2014). Certain expectations for student behavior and academic performance are based on race and privilege. Research has documented that this kind of teacher-held belief system – rooted in the perception of learned behavior through social class – altered these students' educational experience. This belief system of students leads teachers to communicate, deal with misbehavior, and intervene in disputes, differently, depending on social class status (Henry Feuerstein 2021).

Stereotyping by teachers can hinder students' desire for academic achievement and can lead to misbehavior as a form of resistance to the system (Cramer Gonzalez 2014). For teachers to be effective instructors and mentors, they must be able to be adaptive to the needs of their students. For a teacher to successfully be adaptive they must be unbiased in their assessment of individual students. Research has shown that teachers do not always view their students in an unbiased manner (Denessen et al 2020). When teachers evaluate a student based on biased

expectations their teaching is not helpful to the individual student and creates a false presumption

of the student's needs. A study done by researchers Henry and Feuerstein shed light on the fact

that stereotypes teachers have based on a social class can disadvantage lower-class learners. This

can be explained by looking at how teachers often associate upper-class children with behaviors

that include: classroom engagement, good communication, and friendly interest in others.

Whereas, teachers often associate lower-class students with being restless, fearful, and angry,

and being less skilled at communicating with adults and peers (Henry Feuerstein 2021). This

perception of students can affect teachers' choice of curriculum, the difficulty of assignments and

instruction is often chosen based on group association and stereotyping. This type of teaching

informed by implicit bias leads to an increase in the opportunity gap in schooling (Denessen et al

2020). The stereotyping of learned behavior due to social classes within the classroom can also

be associated with racial profiling done by members of these communities.

Racial profiling is also seen in schools through detention policies and increased

surveillance. One such practice is "preventive detention", a policy in schools that can exclude

students from educational attainment. Preventative detention was adopted from the criminal

justice system, where it is used to control crime. Within the criminal justice system, the measure

detains and isolates potentially dangerous offenders, many refer to it as "punishing

dangerousness" (Casella 2003). In schools, it is used as a quick action plan to isolate and restrict

children who are participating in dangerous activities. Although, the youth being disciplined by

this prevention detention actin play are found to be isolated into programs that do not meet their

social and academic needs. This type of action has clear institutional links to the criminal justice

system and should not be utilized in schools (Casella 2003). More often than not this policy acts

as a form of racial profiling in schools. The youths being disciplined by preventive detention in

school are overwhelming poor Black and Latinx learners (Casella 2003). These students are disproportionally being sent to detention for offenses their white peers are not (Wald Losen 2003). Constant surveillance in schools – cameras in hallways and bathrooms, safety officer patrols -- has been shown to create an environment where students internalize that the school system sees them as potential threats, criminals, and less than their peers (Han et al 2020). These exclusionary actions taken by schools cause individuals to view themselves as problem children which in turn can cause violent actions as retaliation (Jacobsen et al 2019). Thus, research demonstrates that racial profiling in schools makes education attainment very difficult.

What Schools are Being Affected. As previously mentioned, American public-school education access is strongly tied to housing policies in America, which have historically kept racial minorities in low-income neighborhoods. (Han et al 2020). This discrimination comes from a long-rooted institutional racial history of residential segregation that includes redlining, Jim Crow laws, and discriminatory mortgage rates (Han et al 2020). Schools that the most disadvantaged Black students attend are segregated since they are living in high-poverty neighborhoods. Living in high-poverty neighborhoods is passed down generationally and has proven to put strains on academic achievement (Rothstein 2015). Neighborhoods that receive less funding are more likely to have inadequate resources such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of qualified teachers, and additional resources such as special education services or counselors (Han et al 2020). Education achievement and opportunity are constrained by housing policies in the United States. Put simply, it is not possible to desegregate schools without desegregating low-income and affluent neighborhoods (Rothstein 2015).

There is a significant disconnect between the reality of meritocracy for schooling districts with predominantly low-income and minority learners. The American public-school system is

built around the prototypical white middle-class individual, and all students are interpreted

through this lens (Cramer Gonzalez 2014). The reality of the situation is that particular American

public schools are being affected by systemic racism in the education system. Residential

isolation of low-income Black learners is a result of *de jure* segregation, the result of racially

motivated public policy that still affects housing trends in today's society (Rothstein 2015). A

historical awareness of housing isolation being a problematic source of a lack of academic

opportunity and access is crucial for education professionals and policymakers to understand.

Without an understanding of the lingering effects of these racist policies, it is unlikely to take

steps in the right direction when it comes to school desegregation and reform (Rothstein

2015). As shown, zero-tolerance policies are creating a discriminatory system that is not

allowing for meritocracy for many learners across the American public school system. These

zero-tolerance policies are also leading to apparati of the STPP that are further creating this

distance from the obtainability of meritocracy.

School to Prison Pipeline

   School Resource Officers (SROs). Nationally, three-quarters of juvenile disorderly

conduct arrests occur in schools. Tens of thousands of students with learning disabilities and

students of color including Black, Indigenous, and Latinx are over-criminalized, physically, and

mentally harmed by SRO (Resends Hinger 2021). School policing in the form of SROs and strict

surveillance has been found to cause harmful contact with criminal and juvenile systems. In the

American public-school system, Black and Brown students are more likely to attend policed

schools by SROs (Resends Hinger 2021, Sawchuk 2021); indeed, schools with predominantly

students of color made up more than half of the population found to use more strict surveillance

practices and SROS (Han et al 2020). These strict practices consist of security cameras, random

sweeps, metal detectors, and locked gates. For many students of color in American public schools, heavy security measures can have severe implications in long-lasting educational and sociological harm (Han et al 2020).

SROs have become prevalent in schools today through federal grants, although the prevalence and impact of these officers are uneven across the public school system. Low-income schooling districts are more likely to rely on SROs for discipline due to a lack of other resources such as school counselors or social workers to meet individual student needs (Han et al 2020). An increase of SROs in schools in high-minority and high-poverty schools facilitates laws mandating referrals of children to law enforcement authorities for a variety of school code violations (Wald Losen 2003). Studies have shown that schools with SROs see higher proportions of suspensions, expulsion, police referrals, and arrests; Black students are two times as likely to be the ones facing these harsh punishments (Sawchuk 2021). A study by Education Week found that in 10 states Black students were 20 percentage points more likely to be arrested than their peers (Sawchuk 2021). Additionally, when SROs were employed in schools, there was a 6 percent increase in middle school disciplinary action concentrated on Black and Hispanic students (Sawchuk 2021). Students with learning disabilities in their prospective schools are charged frequently by SROS with disorderly conduct instead of receiving emotional and mental support (Resends Hinger 2021).

SROs act in a way that undermines the goals of the education system of promoting a safe and accessible learning environment for all students. Schools that receive federal funding for hiring SROs experience a decrease in graduation rates (Resends Hinger 2021). Research regarding implicit bias shows that police officers are more likely to perceive Black individuals as guilty compared to students of other races (Sawchuk 2021). Research-based on interviewing

many SROs found race was a key factor in their perception of threatening behavior in schools (Sawchuk 2021). SROs are creating an atmosphere that is causing unease and even a toxic environment for many learners, making it significantly more difficult for them to achieve their educational and social goals. SROs can also be a significant cause for an increase in incarceration for school-age learners.

      Incarceration. There is a clear connection between groups of people who are being disproportionality unfairly punished in schools as well as in the criminal justice system. In order to understand the STPP in full, we must understand the role incarceration plays in discrimination against minority individuals. There are clear racial disparities when it comes to incarceration in the United States. The majority of inmates in local jails are individuals who identify as low socioeconomic status or individuals of color (Sawyer 2020). Further, Black individuals disproportionately serve life without parole, are overrepresented on death row, and are overrepresented in solitary confinement. Black youth are arrested for more than their share of all youth in the U.S, with Hispanic youth following them (Sawyer 2020). Approximately 68% of state prison inmates have not completed high school, 70% of the juvenile justice population suffer from learning disabilities, and 33% read below the fourth-grade level (Wald Losen 2003). This discrimination and overrepresentation in criminal justice often start at a young age in schools.

      Studies show that Black youth without disciplinary history prior are six times more likely to be incarcerated, and Latino youth are three times more likely to be incarcerated than their white peers for the same offenses (Wald Losen 2003). Black and Latino youth comprise one-third of the country's adolescent population but represent two-thirds of youth in detention and correctional facilities (Wald Losen 2003). These youth often do not have a safety net to fall back

on when pushed out of school and are then more likely to wind up arrested and incarcerated. Similar dynamics are at play for girls and women, the largest predictor of later arrest for adolescent females is having been suspended, expelled, or held back as early as their middle school years (Wald Losen 2003). The adult and juvenile prisons populations are supported by students of color who have been discriminated against through zero-tolerance policies and the apparati of the STPP. The increase of these individual's being discriminated against in the criminal justice system and schooling disciplinary measures have a direct correlation with job insecurity later in life.

Job Insecurity. Poverty is a cycle that is perpetuated by schools and the STPP. Schools in impoverished areas are more likely to struggle with higher dropout rates and therefore cause job insecurity issues. More than 20 percent of high school-age children are living in poverty in America. Members of society living in poverty are five times more likely to drop out of school than high income (Rumberger 2013) Dropping out of school makes it difficult to find a job that offers adequate wage (Cramer Gonzalez 2014). In general, high school dropouts in American culture face limited economic and social prospects later in life. As there is a direct correlation between poverty and individuals of color in our society, the cycle of poverty disproportionately affects children and families of color. Poverty rates for Black and Hispanic families are three times the rate of white families (Rumberger 2013).

In the United States, upwards of 58% of 9th-grade students in high-minority areas do not graduate; and despite this stunning statistic official dropout rates are dramatically underestimated, researchers claim there is a masking of the significant graduation gap between minority and white students (Wald Losen 2003). This process of dropping out is perpetrated by the STPP for students of color living in poverty and is undermining the ability of these children

to find secure work later in life. Black and low-income students who drop out are less likely to be employed and much more likely to be involved in criminal activity (Cramer Gonzalez 2014). Even within many working industries, employers scrutinize Black and Brown workers in general, and twice as much if those employees have disabilities (Jackson 2018). Due to the reality of dropout rates and scrutiny in the workplace for individuals of color, there is a greater likelihood to engage in criminal activity to generate an income. It is important to note that the academic barriers causing school dropout and criminalization are forcing these students to rely on criminal activity and live with significant job insecurity. This cycle is one that simply cannot be blamed on the individual. As seen, criminalization within schools is leaving students vulnerable in all facets of their lives, although this vulnerability is even more prevalent for Black girls and women in society.

Girls. Black school-age women and girls are among the most vulnerable population being pushed out of schools or inappropriately criminalized by zero-tolerance policies. Across the country, Black girls are being violently removed or even assaulted from elementary, middle, and high schools by both educators and police officers as a disciplinary measure (Hines-Datiri Andrews 2017). Two powerful examples that received national attention occurred in 2005 and 2006. "In 2005, 5-year-old J'aiesha Scott was handcuffed in the principal's office by three police officers after having a temper tantrum in school, and in 2006, 6-year-old Takovia Allen was taken away from school to juvenile jail in a police car after kicking a teacher's aide in the ankle" (Hines-Datiri Andrews 2017 para. 1). Stereotyping around Black femininity exacerbates the existing historical oppression Black individuals have and are experiencing in schooling today. Research demonstrates that there is currently a racialized-gendered approach that puts Black

children in general at the forefront of the STPP conversation and is particularly dehumanizing the lived experiences of Black girls (Hines-Datiri Andrews 2017).

Studies show that Black girls have higher percentages of punishment than female students of all other ethnic backgrounds as well as a majority of male students (Hines-Datiri Andrews 2017). The social construction and stereotyping of Black femininity within schools are positioning Black girls as susceptible subjects of unfair school punishment. Black females are often associated with being loud, aggressive, and attitudinal (Hines-Datiri Andrews 2017). Society's construction of the idea of the "loud Black girl" creates an environment where Black girls are racialized and gendered in schools. Due to this construction, Black females often internalize how they are viewed by peers and administrators, and often view themselves as failures or problematic (Hines-Datiri Andrews 2017). Educators' racialized-classed-gendered perceptions of femininity give them the outlook that Black girls' behavior is perpetually poor and deviant leading to an overuse of zero-tolerance policies. Overuse of punitive punishment is said to be aimed at making Black girls more 'ladylike,' yet it dehumanizes and ostracizes them as individuals and a community (Hines-Datiri Andrews 2017). The combination of racial and gendered stereotypes and discrimination becomes even more apparent for Black girls who are being discriminated against on both (race and gender) accounts. The STPP is contributing to not only racial discrimination but also gendered-racial discrimination and is a school practice that deserves more evaluation and alteration. Reform measures need to be considered to make all members of society have access to an equitable and safe schooling experience.

Ch. 5 Conclusion

The implementation of zero-tolerance policies in schools has created a cascade of problematic discriminatory measures in the American public school system. We refer to these measures as the "School-to-Prison Pipeline". The overarching issue of the STPP is driven by harsh punishments and creates many practices within schools that lead to disengagement – either chosen by the individual or enforced by the school – against minority learners. The STPP creates a rigid social structure within a school; this is an ironic feature of schooling today as the purpose of public education is to advance social equality. that is supposed to be the center of social fluidity. The STPP is taking the "American Dream" and squashing it for many learners within the public-school system. Rather than providing students with opportunities and access, the STPP is driving minority learners out of the classroom and right into the juvenile justice system. Through my research on the topic, it has become clear that the STPP requires substantial reform. This reform needs to come quickly and be drastic. In the following conclusion, I will be proposing three plans of action that I believe could be the beginning of breaking down the ruthless barriers that the STPP has put in place for many American students.

Possible Solutions

Fighting Discrimination. As I found and stated in my research, it is clear that the zero-tolerance policies and the apparati that make up the STPP disproportionately affect members of minoritized groups in America. This is something that needs to be combated thoughtfully and efficiently. The first solution I propose comes from the National Association of Education (NEA). The NEA expresses that school administrators need to reevaluate their policies and practices as they should not discriminate based on color, LGBTQ identification, disabilities (learning, mental, physical), or gender. If any disciplinary action is rooted in discrimination or

stereotyping against these groups within schools, immediate action must be taken (NEA 2021).

Discrimination against minoritized learners might be evidenced by the overuse of harsh

punishment, unnecessary suspension and expulsion, stereotyping of learners as "problem

children '', and experiences with SROs. Once the discrimination is detected within a school's

disciplinary process, policies and staff members must be consistently and thoughtfully monitored

(NEA 2021). To make this a possibility, teachers and administrators across the country should be

given the tools and training to interact with and understand students from different racial, ethnic,

and economic backgrounds. This training must allow them to become cognizant of their own

biases. Interest groups such as the NEA are calling on stakeholders to work together to invest in

training for teachers and school administrators that are ongoing, professional, thoughtful, and

have the tools that are adequate to increase educators' cultural awareness and competency (NEA

2021). Finally, the gap in who is being wrongly affected by zero-tolerance policies and the STPP

must be combatted at a large scale through the use of advocacy and awareness. This calls for

continuous data collection and monitoring of the effects of the training (for teachers and

administrators), as well as how discipline is being treated in schools. This plan of action also

calls on groups and individuals to raise awareness about the very real issues zero-tolerance

policies and the STPP are causing for low-income and minoritized learners. The center of change

within our society is education surrounding an issue and how it wrongly impacts members of our

community. That being said, means of change in our society often stem from funding. Investing

and divesting funds is another significant way to come about reform.

Funding. My second proposal is to divest funding from police officers in schools (SROs)

and reinvest that funding in student mental health. SROs create an atmosphere within schools

that feels unsafe for many learners, while also discriminating against those in minoritized groups.

The root of this solution is in federal funding, not only the dollar sum going into schooling but also the allocation of those funds (Resends Ginger 2021). Since 1999, more than 1 billion dollars of federal funds have been subsidized for the placement of police in schools (Melisizwe 2020). This revenue stream has employed around 46,000 resource officers who have entered the halls of elementary, middle, and high schools across the United States (Melisizwe 2020). Further, The Department of Justice COPS office awarded $50 million to 160 school districts for school police in 2020 (Resends Ginger 2021). This $50 million could have been allocated to the 14 million students in schools with police officers yet no nurses, social workers, or psychologists (Resends Ginger 2021). These numbers are concerning because evidence shows that the presence of SROs does not improve feelings of safety for students but has the opposite effect. The presence of SROs has been shown to increase the likelihood that children will be arrested on their school campus; SROs cause fear and create a higher likelihood of being arrested for students of color or with a disability (Melisizwe 2020). Federal funds could be allocated to a much more useful pursuit such as student mental health. There is a clear and current need for investment in supportive measures in school-based mental health services for students.

This diversion of federal funding could be done in an efficient and well thought out way if the bill The Counseling Not Criminalization School Act is passed. The Counseling not Criminalization School Act, introduced into Congress on July 29th, 2020 by Senators Chris Murphy, Elizabeth Warren, Ilhan Omar, and Ayanna Pressely, aims to divest funding from SROs and invest this money into counseling services for students (Melisizwe 2020). The counseling resources this bill recommends are trauma-informed services that address the need of marginalized students, in particular, those who are being discriminated against the most in American public schools (Melisizwe 2020). If passed, the Act would establish a $2.5 billion

federal grant program through the Department of Education. The grant would help to replace

SRO personnel with mental health and trauma-informed services. The act would not prohibit the

use of federal funds for maintaining police in schools but rather help schools hire counselors,

social workers, and other support personnel instead of police (Melisizwe 2020). Passing this act

is an essential first step to making our schools the safe and healthy learning environment they are

expected to be. Instead of funding policing, tazing, and handcuffing in American schools,

Congress should be funding what learners need – mental health professionals who are trained to

help and support them.

      School-based Restorative Justice. The final solution I would like to propose is rooted in

the restructuring of disciplinary actions within America's public school system. Zero-tolerance

policies have proven to be disruptive, unjust, and unfair to many learners. Replacing harsh zero-

tolerance policies in schools with a school-based restorative justice system would be beneficial

for all learners and school communities, and would begin to interrupt systemic discrimination

within school discipline (Karp Breslin 2002). Schools as institutions are the cornerstone of youth

socialization and the social control of delinquent behavior. School-based restorative justice

focuses on activities that reduce delinquency while also finding just solutions to delinquent

behavior. It promotes the idea that schools are a community made up of teachers, students, and

staff members who, no matter their racial background, socioeconomic status, or gender, should

be treated fairly (Karp Breslin 2002).

      School-based restorative justice can achieve these aims by building a community and

responding to problematic behavior without resorting to the criminal justice system.

Rehabilitation as a deliberate outcome is beneficial for all students as it allows the offender to

understand the impact they had on both the victim and the whole of their community (Karp

Breslin 2002). This type of proactive punishment can create a community and atmosphere that is safe and supportive, a community that promotes academic and social learning while effectively expressing the values of different cultures. Restorative justice at its root is focused on building a community. Perpetrators are forced to make the connection between their actions and the breaking of the social relationship between the victim and the school community, this allows for a disciplinary response rooted in rebuilding and mending bonds between the offender and their community (Karp Breslin 2002). This mending provides the mindset that the offender is still a part of his or her community rather than being ostracized and given up on. It allows for the hope and mindset that everyone can do and be better. This method of discipline assumes one mistake does not define the rest of an individual's life, unlike zero-tolerance policies.

All that said, it is true that utilizing this method in a widespread manner across the United States is an abstract idea. It goes against the way schools are built, although it is possible and being done in schools across the country. As of 2002, school-based restorative justice programs were implemented statewide in Minnesota, in 15 schools in Denver, and 6 "alternative" schools in Pennsylvania (Karp Breslin 2002). In Minnesota in 1992, a statewide 5-year plan was introduced that aimed to adopt a restorative discipline philosophy. In 2002, half the school districts in Minnesota were making some use of restorative practices, and four districts were using them extensively. These four districts each received a share of a $300,000 appropriation from the Minnesota State Legislature to evaluate "alternative approaches" (Karp Breslin 2002). Administrative personnel, teachers, and other community members were trained in restorative conferencing techniques and utilized them as both a means and an end of discipline. The results within just a couple of years were drastic. In the Minneapolis school district, one of the Elementary schools found a 27% reduction in the number of suspensions and expulsions after

one year. Two high schools in a participating district also saw a dramatic reduction in major

disciplinary action, with a major decline in both detentions and out-of-school suspensions (Karp

Breslin 2002). If these schooling districts and specific schools were able to provide this type of

discipline effectively, it can be argued that the United States public school system could do the

same. Although it would be difficult, the School-to-Prison Pipeline is a process that is calling for

difficult and drastic reform.

Closing Thoughts

The sad reality of the American public school system is that inequitable education is a common experience for many learners. As discussed in this project, there are clear systemic barriers to achieving deeply rooted in racism and discrimination that are hindering a multitude of learners from getting the education and access they are subject to and deserve. Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction helps to uncover how success or failure in schools is predetermined by social class but is being masked by the idea of meritocracy. The School-to-Prison Pipeline is one mechanism of social reproduction within the education system.

Although zero-tolerance policies were put in place to keep schooling communities safe, it is clear that these harsh punitive policies are being utilized in problematic ways, predominantly against learners of minoritized groups. Zero-tolerance policies are creating a snowball effect of discrimination, activated by mechanisms that this project refers to as the "apparati of the STPP". These apparati work to make the reality of meritocracy nearly impossible for already discriminated against individuals in our society. The STPP, therefore, is a mode of schooling discrimination that needs to be addressed and interrupted. As this project suggests, there are reform measures that schools could implement to ensure an end to the process of pushing children out of school and into the juvenile justice system. If the American public schools and society as a whole, wants to take pride in the public school system, these reforms need to be made now. Ending the STPP can not wait; progress toward a genuine meritocracy in the public school system is necessary for our nation to flourish.

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