

*Social Impacts for the Black Community
as Consequence of the School to Prison Pipeline*

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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Abstract

American schools, specifically in poorer communities, are essentially factories for prison inmates. An institution that sucks in Black victims through public K-12 education at alarming rates is the same system that spits out a disproportionately high number of poor, underprivileged, and lower-class Black victims into a so-called “fair” society. Black teens and children are deemed unfit for school and college from the start and are ultimately directed toward a path of unemployment or low-wage trade jobs if they are able to escape the correctional system. The social impacts that occur due to the school-to-prison pipeline include but are not limited to higher unemployment rates, lower income, lack of representation, housing restrictions and limitations on loans, and the overall lack of motivation toward educational achievement and connection with academic institutions. Disparities are often blamed on outside factors like families, communities, and cultural differences, rather than the disparities and deficiencies within the American school system for Black children. Each year, an estimated 600,000 people make the difficult transition from prison back to the community and suffer significantly through various roadblocks. I argue that Black youth and adults face a significantly harder transition back and the social impacts as consequence of the school-to-prison pipeline are detrimental for Black communities and America as a whole. If we ignore the discipline gap, we will be unable to close the achievement gap.

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Process Analysis Statement

I am a white female student attending a predominantly white state college in Indiana. That statement in itself is enough for one to step back and analyze my stance on this topic, my background knowledge, my methods, and results. It makes sense. My cultural background is far from the demographic I have studied and written about in this thesis. However, I am affected by the issues examined and each and every American reading this is as well. The social issues associated with race relations in America are no longer being overlooked. They are put in a place where one cannot ignore their consequences any longer. Effects of racism can be seen in education, politics, the economy, healthcare and more. I believe that this is something worthwhile to study and uncover fully for others to understand as well before it is too late. Because these issues affect the nation as a whole, it is important for non-Black Americans to understand and take action against these prejudices and injustices that continue to plague our future.

For the past four years I have studied education at Ball State University. Many of the classes I've enrolled in taught me how to be a standard classroom teacher, dealing with standard children with little behavior management needs. This is the case for many preservice teachers in their college preparation programs around America. The coursework required for a degree rarely stems beyond the typical standards and curriculum. However, some change has been made through degree programs implementing more social justice reform courses be taught to education majors. There is a strong connection between quality and level of education and successful futures versus a future of crime. Understanding this connection is very important and as more universities create policies mandating courses like this be taught, the more improvement K-12 public education will receive from teachers like myself.

Ball State University requires education majors to enroll in a social justice course around their second year of college. Without the mandate of this course, I don't think I would have enrolled, and I believe that's the case for many other preservice teachers. It didn't seem like it aligned with what I should be learning, and I began the course with a lot of skepticism. However, this course would later lead me to declaring a minor in African American Studies and going on to research and write this thesis. The little exposure I was given in one course changed my life forever, and hopefully this research and further studies along the same path can help change the lives for Black Americans forever too.

The school-to-prison pipeline is one theory that I learned during my sophomore year of college in the social justice course required. This class opened my eyes to many different social justice issues of the past and present, and showed me how I, as a teacher, could help be a change for my future students. After being exposed to some of the awful injustices that happen right here in America, I knew I could not sit back and watch. The following two years after declaring my minor, I engaged in a wide variety of research on various social issues and went on to write this thesis. Much of the societal issues I uncovered stem back and are linked to a poor quality of education, high levels of school discipline and low levels of emotional support from teachers and leaders during childhood. These issues are all things that can and should be changed for a better future for all Americans.

School discipline has been researched and written about for decades and there has never been a consensus on what is right and what is wrong. A horrific and true law that I learned along the way allowed for corporal punishment to still be practiced in schools across the United States today. This is a topic that I genuinely thought was abolished completely before I ever entered into the public school system. It's something that my parents and older family members said was a practice "back in the day." But this practice is still popular around America. During my junior year I wrote a paper analyzing the mass effects on child development and further education within the schools that promote corporal punishment and schools that use a newfound technique of school discipline. When analyzing racial differences in students that received physical punishments versus a suspension or referral the results speak for themselves. Black students are the majority recipients of corporal punishment in America. On top of that, they also represent a majority of those receiving suspensions and expulsions throughout their K-12 schooling. These factors along with a handful of other prejudices combine to create what became known as the school-to-prison pipeline.

Because my major and minor are so intertwined in these two topics, I found that studying them would provide not only a benefit for myself but for other educators in the field and leaders within school buildings and policy creation. The importance of this thesis goes beyond my personal interests and studies and can be used for real world change and action. Understanding the connection between education and future crime and imprisonment is vital for future teachers and leaders in public schools.

The overall purpose of this research paper is to examine the social impacts the school-to-prison pipeline creates for the Black community. I explore this phenomenon by analyzing differences between Black formerly convicted and white formerly convicted criminals in different aspects of society. The aspects I explore include education, recidivism, American citizen rights, jobs, housing, drugs, family stressors, and healthcare. To fully explain, I elaborate on school discipline practices and how the school-to-prison pipeline operates, funneling Black students into juvenile centers as a newfound segregation tool. Finally, I conclude with recommendations on the future of education by reducing the number of police in schools, properly funding education, and improving the number and quality of teachers, counselors, and school officials.

Completing this project opened my eyes to a lot of very important factors in American society today. Issues involving race and ethnic relations impact everyone in a domino effect. I believe this is an important issue for all Americans to fully understand and be aware of the major social consequences. The process of conducting this research was emotionally draining at times and put me in a mental space of exhaustion and frustration with the lack of improvement over decades of research. The same arguments were being made, the same fights, the same protests, the same begging for basic human rights that were ultimately denied year after year. Studying these protests and civil rights movements at times left me feeling hopeless and defeated. As a white female, it is very interesting to analyze these emotions months later. I admit I have no idea what being a Black American truly feels like, but I have a pretty good idea now.

School Violence

Claim: Zero-tolerance policies were implemented with the intent to stop school violence.

These policies have only created more crime and fear, specifically targeted at Black students.

School violence is a very real and scary issue in America. Extremely violent events, such as school shootings, unfortunately are not uncommon. According to the World Population Review, from 1970 to 2021 in the United States, over 1,369 school shootings occurred. This is in part because of America's obsession with guns. A survey conducted in 2021 by Pew Research concluded 4 out of 10 Americans have a gun. This easy access and lack of regulations on them are deadly. School shooting data has shown that the implementation of security protocols like metal detectors do not work and only create a sense of fear within the school community each time students begin their day by walking through those doors. Many predominantly Black high schools in urban areas like Detroit have metal detectors and other security protocols in place. Communities with more nonwhite students have more school police and thus punish more Black youth (Vox, 2016). In 2010 a study by researchers at Villanova University showed the “punitiveness of a school's discipline policy was positively correlated with the percentage of its students that were black, [and] was not correlated with students' rates of juvenile delinquency or drug use (Nelson & Lind, 2015).”

There have been no mass school shootings at a predominantly non-white K-12 school (Childress, 2015). Some of the most devastating K-12 mass shootings occurred at; Sandy Hook Elementary, with Adam Lanza; Stoneman Douglas High School, with Nicholas Cruz; Columbine High School, with Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold; and Santa Fe High School, with Dimitrios Pagourtzis (Wikipedia, 2021). These shootings occurred at predominantly white schools, with little to no security, committed by a white male, regardless of student status (Heitzeg, 2009). These 4 facts remain true through several handfuls of examples of school shootings and extremely violent events. The majority of school shooters are not the demographic being “targeted” in schools: Black boys (Lindberg, 2015). It is hard to justify the over policing and security regulations placed upon predominantly minority schools by analyzing the school shooting historical records. Added security measures like metal detectors, surveillance cameras and the targeting of Black males can

seem unnecessary unless “crimes” are fabricated and overcharged, giving school police a ‘valid’ reason for presence within the school building (Price, 2009).

The School Discipline Support Initiative defined zero-tolerance policies by the set of principles and practices that “mandate predetermined consequences, typically severe, punitive, and exclusionary.” Schools implemented these policies with the idea of reducing the amount of school violence, such as school shootings and weapons on school grounds. Zero tolerance policies, while not intending to, “cracked down on little things like talking back or uniform violations (Vox, 2016).” The original intent of their implementation was “to prevent mass shootings like the one at Columbine, but they end up being a way for schools to basically outsource discipline to the police (Bryan, 2017; Vox, 2016).” Although school violence was already starting to show a decline before the implementation of zero-tolerance policies, they were still widely accepted and put into practice (Ferriss, 2016; Heitzeg, 2009; Nelson & Lind, 2015). In fact, nearly 90% of American public schools practice zero tolerance policies as of 2021 (Cauchon, 1999). School communities practicing zero-tolerance discipline run by a strict set of rules. A child in possession of an item deemed undesirable for a school setting will be suspended and or expelled from the school. For example, one student was suspended for an entire week for not having his school identification badge visible (Lindberg, 2015). No questions are asked, and the result is a predetermined punishment, often suspension or expulsion from the school. Schools “with higher rates of suspension and expulsion appear to have less satisfactory ratings of school climate and less satisfactory school governance (American Psychology Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, n.d.).” Students lose personal connection to the school and form a fear bond with education systems. “When students begin to comprehend that the educational process is not working for them—that they will not be admitted to college, have access to a good-paying job, or enjoy a promising career— they have fewer incentives to obey school rules and take school seriously” which leads to minor and seemingly meaningless offenses that could have been avoided easily (Redfield & Nance, 2016). Student underachievement often leads to student misbehavior in the classroom. The current zero-tolerance policies in place exacerbate this problem, only cycling back through suspensions and expulsions as “solutions.”

Zero tolerance policies have coined the term “weapon” for a handful of various items, arguably making the policies themselves too hard to follow or understand from the child’s point of view. Some examples of extreme rules include expelling children for “making guns with their

fingers," "chewing a Pop-Tart into a gun shape," and "bringing a camping fork for Cub Scouts to class (Nelson & Lind, 2015)." Another example of this extreme punishment occurred with a 7-year-old boy in 2nd grade being suspended for 45 days for bringing nail clippers to school (Lamont Agnew, as cited in Ferriss, 2016). Another student brought a multi tool to school, and under zero-tolerance policies, the child was expelled. In the case of this child, this interaction with police led to the child switching schools, which he eventually dropped out from. This eventually led to an arrest and further crime. He even went on to steal a car (Jeremoney Hudson, as cited in Ferriss, 2016). These are only a few examples of how early encounters with the police can lead to a lifelong reputation and record. American education "system[s] emphasize controlling children who are viewed as dangerous, even in kindergarten, [rather than] education [as] the primary goal (Price, 2009)."

School police can control students and administer punishments through a variety of methods. One is direct arrests and interactions with further law enforcement. In the 2014 academic year across the United States about 70,000 children were arrested in schools. Schools staffed with police officers are 5 times more likely to arrest a student than schools without officers on campus (Nelson & Lind, 2015). A 2017 study conducted by Education Week Research Center with original analysis of Civil Rights Data Collection found approximately 44% of the United States student population was referred to law enforcement at least once in their school career. This early interaction with law enforcement can lead to altered perceptions of police and the judicial system. According to multiple studies, the "exposure to violence in childhood may be seen in adulthood and can result in greater risk for substance use, risky sexual behavior, and unsafe driving (The Healthy People, 2021)." Black children are more likely to be criminalized over non-violent and minor offenses and arrested (Nelson & Lind, 2015). An estimated 33% of school related arrests each year are Black youth, often for minor disruptions such as disorderly conduct (Education Week Research Center original analysis of Civil Rights Data Collection, 2017). In some states, an arrest for disorderly conduct can be punishable by 6 months to a year in jail. Seclusion, isolation, restraints, suspension, and expulsion are also ways that school police have taken children out of classrooms.

Another method is corporal punishment and the purposeful physical harm of children. Corporal punishment is the practice of physically harming a student in order to get them to comply with your desired rules or regulations. The American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry

defines corporal punishment as “a discipline method in which a supervising adult deliberately inflicts pain upon a child in response to a child's unacceptable behavior and/or inappropriate language. The immediate aims of such punishment are usually to halt the offense, prevent its recurrence, and set an example for others. The adult usually hits various parts of the child's body with a hand, or with canes, paddles, yardsticks, belts, or other objects expected to cause pain and fear.” In schools, corporal punishment has shown to increase vandalism; stimulate violence, aggression, and bullying; crime and delinquency; create emotional disorders, sexual abnormalities, endanger health, and cause potential to create permanent physical damage. Children that experience problems within one or more of these domains is in danger of failing academically, and the use of corporal punishment in schools is only increasing their risk of entering the school-to-prison pipeline. Corporal punishment in schools usually comes in the form of a paddling, and Black students are most often the victims (Gershoff & Font 2016). The same and similar practices are used in the corporal punishment of students as is done on prisoners. In fact, schools are becoming reflections of prison systems - patrolling hallways with uniformed guards and creating a sense of uneasiness and fear. Children not only can be subject to harsh forms of corporal punishment within the school building, but they can also be placed in restrictive constraints and protective holds from adults much larger than them. These constraints can range from gently holding a child to 4 adults firmly forcing a child against the ground as there are no regulations in place in many school systems. The lack of regulations leads to an increase in overuse of force by school resource officers with children in school buildings. Excessive force by school resource officers, as in the case of Shakara, a 16-year-old Black girl who was put in a headlock position and thrown from her desk by a uniformed school police officer, then dragged out of the classroom, for not putting her phone away fast enough (Jarvie, 2015).

The School-to-Prison Pipeline

Claim: Black youth are punished more severely and frequently than their white peers even for identical infractions. The targeting of Black students has created a disproportionate rate of Black youth arrests and imprisonment.

Discrimination in America has been a clear problem since our founding. Discrimination in schools was also built in the foundation and has remained intact since it's inception. Arguably,

schools were not designed for Black children. Schools were originally set out to prepare white boys for a successful future, slowly integrating white women into the classrooms, and then finally the Black community. However, since the desegregation of American public education, “the classroom [has] not [been] a safe space for Black male students (Bryan, 2017).” The results of this discrimination has lasting effects on those suffering, regardless of their ‘inclusion’. The Black educators teaching at all Black schools were not offered jobs during this transition, and white children were not expected to transition into the former Black only schools. This led to a huge decline in the Black educator population and created a large cultural gap between white educators and Black students. The lack of diversity in the education field has led to large amounts of the Black youth population feeling “lost” or “unseen” in the classroom. The lack of culturally appropriate teaching is evident in almost all American classrooms and is often fought against out of ignorance and reluctance toward equity between races. Classrooms are full of whitewashed curriculum and American exceptionalism. Blatant racism is not very prominent in the decades following desegregation, yet well hidden in the policies and practices upholding these institutions.

“From the first day of school, a record of student behavior is kept that, quite literally, stays with the student for the rest of their lives” and defines the type of person they are (Rockaway Youth Task Force, n.d.). Whether they are a “good” student, a “try hard,” a “trouble-maker,” or someone that should be monitored: a threat (Bryan, 2017). The type of student that you are labeled is most tightly connected with your race, secondly your gender, and so on through many different forms of unconscious and implicit biases with various identities (Heitzeg, 2009). These biases and stereotypes lead school officials to determine these characteristics about a child and then create an action plan for how to deal with that child’s behavior in the future. While almost never put in writing, the “contract” is signed and the child is deemed “unteachable” or “unfixable.” These ‘throw away students’ receive more supervision from school police, and less one-on-one time from teachers (Bryan, 2017). Black boys and children from poor communities have a history of being labeled as “unintelligent” and “behind” their peers from teachers and administrators (Webb & Thomas, 2015; Redfield & Nance, 2016). These students are often pushed out of classrooms and toward a life in the prison systems by anti-Black institutional practices labeled as the school-to-prison pipeline. Black students often do not have the same emotional attachment to their teachers or education as white students, and the lack of culturally appropriate teaching within curriculum

pushes this divide further. School police, administration officials, and teachers are shoving children deemed ‘undesirable for society’ toward a life in the prison system.

The School-to-Prison Pipeline (STTP) is a process in which the majority Black students are pushed out of K-12 schools and into the prison industrial system. In other words, it is a specifically designed system in which non-white students are over punished and seen as more dangerous than their white peers despite similar infractions. The school-to-prison pipeline targets Black and minority students harsher than white students. A report published by the Government Accountability Office found that black students in K-12 schools are far more likely to be disciplined, regardless if through suspension or referral to law enforcement. These results were true no matter the type of suspension (in school, out of school, detention), the type of school (charter, private, public) or the poverty level at the school (Lopez, 2018). Taking into consideration all K-12 education, 1 out of every 17 Black school aged children has been suspended at least once in their academic career. This ratio jumps to 1 in every 4 Black children when you categorize by disability status (Morris, 2014). The odds of a student dropping out of school nearly doubled, increasing from about 16 percent to 32 percent after one suspension and increase in odds with each additional suspension (Robert Balfanz, Vaughan Byrnes, and Joanna Hornig Fox, as cited in Redfield & Nance, 2016). By over-punishing Black children, especially when minor offenses occur like a verbal dispute that is met with a suspension, “we’re putting in their minds that they’re criminals (Judith Browne, as cited in Ferriss, 2016).” We are suggesting to the child that they are not meant to be with other students, but separated and alone, because they are bad, lesser, scary, and something to look out for. “School suspensions have large negative impacts on longer-term outcomes” and can make a lasting impression on youth as they navigate into adulthood (Bacher-Hicks, Billings, et. al., 2019).

Black students are charged with more subjective offenses such as “disrespect, excessive noise, threat, and loitering,” while white students are more commonly charged with crimes relating to “smoking, leaving without permission, vandalism, and obscene language (Redfield & Nance, 2016; Bacher-Hicks, Billings, et.al., 2019; Thompson, 2016).” Research has shown that disorderly conduct is now the most commonly charged crime in public schools. This could range from the tiniest misconduct like kicking a trash can or raising your voice too loud in the halls. Disorderly conduct is also the umbrella term covering “disrespect, excessive noise, threat and loitering,” or the top four reasons that Black children are suspended and expelled. What once would have been

an office referral is now often sent to a police precinct (Eric Holder Jr., as cited in Ferriss, 2016). These policies were designed to keep dangerous weapons and drugs off school grounds and are instead used to charge children for normal adolescent behaviors. One investigation, digging into the criminality of the Meridian Police Department found that it regularly arrests youths without probable cause, based on school referrals. These police arrests can occur over minor offenses like “profanity or disrespecting a teacher,” (Childress, 2015).

Some Black children as young as Kindergarten have even been arrested for having a “temper tantrum” in class. A 6-year-old girl in Florida was sent to the principal's office for having a temper tantrum in her kindergarten class. The principal called the local police, who canceled the call stating, ‘it was not necessary to dispatch police on an angry 6-year-old’. The principal called a police officer that he knew personally, who arrived at the school and threatened the child with handcuffs. The next day, the girl had another temper tantrum in class, reportedly “more severe” than previously. “Believe me when I tell you, a 6-year-old can inflict injury to you just as much as any other person” - police chief reported to the New York Times. This time, the principal called the local police, who sent a patrol car with two officers. The officer from the previous day had overheard the call on the radio and showed up to the school as well. Four police officers were ‘controlling’ this 6-year-old girl, who was put in handcuffs and shackled in the back of a police cruiser (Price, 2009).

Nationwide, Black students represent about 16% of total school population, 35% of in school suspensions, 35% of out of school suspensions, 46% of those with multiple suspensions and 39% of the expulsions (Morris, 2014; Bacher-Hicks, Billings, et.al., 2019). When schools discriminate in the punishment of their students, such as the overcriminalization of Black boys, LGBTQ+ communities, and disabled students, federal discrimination laws are being broken for gender, race, and disability status. These include Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964¹, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972², and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973³. Even the violations of federal and state laws do not catch the eye of the majority public when they

¹ Title VI prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in any program or activity that receives Federal funds or other Federal financial assistance

² Title IX prohibits sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, and gender identity) discrimination in any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance

³ Section 504 is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability

are completely packed with data supporting a system that does not uphold these federal rights for students. Discrimination is embedded in the American brain and into the institutions that keep it running.

The overcriminalization of normal adolescent and childhood behavior is unfair and problematic. Most American states have criminal laws that prohibit assault, disorderly conduct, larceny, and disturbing the peace, and several states have passed statutes that explicitly criminalize the disruption of school activities, or talking back to teachers (Redfield & Nance, 2016). Therefore, a student that is involved in a “scuffle with another student, talks back to a teacher, yells at another student, steals another student’s pencil, or exhibits other types of poor behavior” could legally be arrested and criminally charged in a court of law (Redfield & Nance, 2016). It also takes away from the seriousness of police arrests and the respect for law enforcement. A chief judge in Georgia told congress that arresting and charging youth over minor, non-violent offenses cause “the prosecutor’s attention [to be] taken from the more difficult evidentiary and 'scary' cases—burglary, robberies, car thefts, aggravated assaults with weapons — to prosecuting kids that are not 'scary,' but made an adult mad (Nelson & Lind, 2015).”

The discrimination among the race of victims of corporal punishment is clearly “black and white.” Black boys are punished twice as much as white boys and Black girls are three times more likely to be victims of corporal punishment than white girls (Gershoff & Font, 2016); Redfield & Nance, 2016). The pattern remains true with race and disabilities as well. Black boys with disabilities top the charts with the highest percentage receiving corporal punishments. Even within the United States, each state’s likelihood is drastically different. Still, in many southern states, a Black boy is 51% more likely than a white boy to be a victim of corporal punishment (Gershoff & Font, 2016); Redfield & Nance, 2016). Researchers speculate reasons behind the major gap in punishment between the races and have found that “Black boys can be seen as responsible for their actions at an age when white boys still benefit from the assumption that children are essentially innocent (Gershoff & Font, 2016); Redfield & Nance, 2016).” A similar study concluded results on Black girls. Their findings show a perception of Black girls “as less innocent and more mature for their age, from age 5 [on] (Lopez, 2018; Thompson, 2016).” These biases of Black youth lead to very skewed punishment rates and methods in schools and juvenile justice systems.

Education

Claim: There is a higher percentage of Black students dropping out of high school than their white peers. This leads to fewer college applications and admissions for the Black community and helps pave way for a permanent future of working-class and low-wage jobs.

High poverty schools have the least prepared students when it comes to college and career readiness. These statistics range from measurements of SAT scores, AP and STEM specific courses, high school graduation rates, and exit exams (Camara, 2013; Musoba, 2011; as cited in Bryant, 2015). Poverty is a huge factor in the outcomes of children's academic success (Thompson, 2016). About 42% of Black children are educated in all high poverty schools (Morris, 2014). This means that every year, elementary through secondary school, almost one in two Black children were having their “right to education” essentially stripped. Only 6% of white children will grow up in these conditions (Morris, 2014). Students that experience high levels of poverty in childhood are faced with adverse effects with their cognitive development and the way their brains actually function. Overall, lower class households have a lower quality of healthcare coverage, lower nutritional value in the food that’s purchased and consumed and may live in areas with dangerous health hazards such as black mold. Impoverished children are also more likely to experience mental disorders and behavioral problems that can influence their actions at school (Thompson, 2016). Students experiencing high levels of poverty are more likely to drop out and enter the workforce early to help make the family money. The jobs available for those without a high school diploma are often low-wage, temporary positions that will not lead to a permanent career.

It is no surprise that children who receive corporal punishment or are victims of police harassment more likely than their peers to skip school or dropout entirely. When considering race, the victims of corporal punishment are most often Black. These children are more likely to drop out or have high levels of truancy. Children that are absent from the classroom are missing instruction and valuable class time that cannot be made up. For children who miss several days of school a year, their academic performance is altered negatively (Redfield & Nance, 2016). Students that track high absenteeism rates tend to not be motivated when they are there. The passion for learning has been destroyed; it has been beaten out of them. Organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics argue, “corporal punishment may affect adversely a student’s self-image and school achievement and that it may contribute to disruptive and violent student

behavior (Webb & Thomas, 2015)." Black students who do not see a positive future with themselves, or their education path have little motivation to participate in school and often lead to dropping out. This can explain some of the mass dropout rates in the Black community and the unwillingness to further education. Higher rates of corporal punishment on Black youth can also point toward a higher rate of childhood aggression and rage which lead to higher rates of future crime. Children often mimic their environment and what they see adults in powerful positions doing. When children see adults using physical force as a "solution" or a way to get another to comply, they'll mimic that experience on their own.

The results are even more troubling for youth that have been incarcerated before. Studies have shown "youth released from juvenile correctional facilities seldom succeed in school" or even return at all. In fact, "the average offender reads [only] at an 8th grade level." Not only are inmates lacking a basic education, most do not have a desire to earn their GED. For most youth, "jail is the beginning of the end of any hope for a productive life (Hanson & Stipek, 2014)." Research from The American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on School Health concludes that "when students are not monitored by trained professionals and are at home without parental supervision, they are far more likely to commit crimes, such as becoming involved in a physical altercation or carrying a weapon (American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on School Health, Out-of-School Suspension and Expulsion)." The likelihood of committing a serious crime is high for dropouts and those missing school for suspensions and expulsions. The arrest rate for high school dropouts averages around 3.5 times more likely than a graduate (Hanson & Stipek, 2014).

Arguably the most detrimental fact for Black high school dropouts is that the unemployment rate is higher than any other demographic or condition. Black high school dropouts "are less likely to... keep a job longer than 1 year. Only 5%... held a job for 2 years or more (Morris, (2014))." Sadly, even the Black students that do graduate from high school still have an unemployment rate of 46% within the first two years. This is over double the rate of white graduates accounting still for only 21% (Morris, (2014)). In general, a high school dropout is estimated to earn about \$400,000 less than a graduate across the term of their working lives (Redfield & Nance, 2016). This can hurt the overall economy and limit the spending power of an entire demographic of citizens.

In America, “college degree attainment is regarded as a primary solution to reduce poverty and close wealth gaps between people of color and whites Bryant, (2015).” When analyzing higher education, the rate of college degree attainment is severely gapping between races, even today (Bryan, 2017; Bryant, (2015). Black Americans earn around 14% of associates degrees, while white Americans earn about 66%. Black Americans earn about 11% of bachelor's degrees, while 73% are earned by white Americans. The percentage is even worse when comparing doctoral degrees. Black Americans account for about 7% of doctoral degrees, in comparison to 74% white Americans (Morris, 2014). The gap in degree attainment can explain some of the gap in the workforce. High level, and high paying professions typically require a higher up degree, and the lack of formal education in the Black community is really hindering their socioeconomic ceiling. It is unfair to judge the Black community for this fault; it is a statistical fact that Black youth are “more likely to go to jail than...college (Benjamin Williams, n.d).”

Recidivism

Claim: Mass amounts of Black youth being incarcerated leads to higher rates of recidivism in adult prisons.

For adults leaving prison, the stigma associated with being a criminal follows you every day. A criminal history is a record that stays with you for the rest of your existence and is proof of your level of “good” in society. For many adults, leaving prison comes with the anxiety and depression of reentering a society that blames and faults the prison industry from its inhabitants rather than its founders and upholders. Upon release from incarceration, one would have “little to no savings... How can they possibly afford the immediate cost of food, housing, healthcare, transportation, child support, and supervision fees (Sawyer, 2017)?” Leaving the ‘sense of safety’ felt within prison can be a dangerously bittersweet feeling that leads some prior convicts toward recidivism and a life of repeat crime. When conditions are made so difficult to attain freedom, some would rather choose a life of repeat crime.

Recidivism is defined by someone who has entered the prison system, served their time, has been released into free society, and then recommits crimes, finally ending back in jail. Unfortunately, recidivism is an extremely common problem, especially in lower-class

neighborhoods and predominantly minority communities. Recidivism is one of the biggest social impacts on the Black community and can snowball a cycle of arrests and convictions that can go from generation to generation. Research has shown that “incarcerating young people is often ineffective and can actually make them more likely to commit another crime (Childress, 2015).” In Black communities, 32% of youth will experience recidivism and enter a juvenile detention center again within 3 years of release. The rate jumps to 62% when analyzing statistics including adult prisons. This is really alarming because this indicates that the majority of Black youth that enter the prison system in America will unfortunately end up behind bars again within the span of 3 years (Indiana Youth Recidivism Summary Report, 2019).

If the moral consequences of recidivism is not enough for change, the financial impact of maintaining high prison populations is huge. The cost of a prisoner far exceeds the cost of a student. In California, the average youth prisoner costs around \$336,000 over the course of their stay (Washburn, 2020). In comparison, a student in California will cost the state on average \$13,000 per year or \$169,000 for a full K-12 education (Hanson, 2021). This is a substantial difference in overall cost, even for a single year. In fact, the highest a student in the United States will cost in any state is less than \$23,000, not even a fraction of what a single year in prison would cost. In 2015, California spent about 9 billion on prison expenditures (Vera survey of state prison expenditures, 2015). The cost of imprisoning someone far outweighs the cost of an education.

American Citizen Rights

Claim: There is a disproportionate rate of current and former felons in the Black community. Felons have limited rights as American citizens and may lose them entirely.

In America, a convicted felon is essentially no longer a represented citizen. They lose their rights as an American in many ways. Some of the rights that can be taken away from someone formerly incarcerated include voting eligibility, parental control, to bear arms, to serve on a jury, traveling abroad, and many career fields. Although several of these rights are written and protected in the Bill of Human Rights, they are taken away once convicted. Many rights are lost while on probation periods or serving parole as well, indicating freedom is not really freedom.

The over-conviction rates of Black citizens of voting age lead to a misrepresentation within election results because of felony disenfranchisement or the lack of voting rights. Political elections are sometimes so close that the population of those without voting rights could have the ability to swing the results in the opposite direction (Uggen, Larson, et.al., 2020). Out of the voting age population, 2.3% are denied their rights because of prior convictions. While 2.3% may seem like a small number, out of the eligible voters in the 2020 election, that percent indicates around 5.2 million people. This statistic is actually quite lower than results obtained from the 2016 election, where 6.11 million people were denied voting rights (Vera survey of state prison expenditures, 2015). In Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee the rate of disenfranchised adults was 1 in every 13. Black voters in general average 1 in every 16 adults disenfranchised in the United States. The rate of 6.2% for the Black adult population in comparison to 1.7% non-Black population shows a drastic disparity (Vera survey of state prison expenditures, 2015). The Black community wants representation and wants to have their say in political matters. In fact, in the 2012 election, more Black voters turned out than any other population of color (Morris, 2014). When given the opportunity, they take it. It is the systemic racism and loopholes they must jump through to get there that is challenging.

While someone is in jail, they no longer have their rights as parents. This can lead to many children being in the foster care system for months, years, or possibly until they are 18. Black children represent around 25% of the foster care population in the United States (Morsy & Rothstein, 2016). The loss of parental rights can tear up an immediate and extended family and the trauma associated with foster care can damage a child mentally for years. The stigma of even being arrested can be harmful and in some cultures very disrespectful to the family name. The childhood trauma associated with having a parent in prison can also be very harmful. Children with incarcerated parents are more likely to drop out of school, develop learning disabilities, misbehave in schools, and suffer from asthma, depression, anxiety, PTSD, stress disorder, and are more likely to become homeless (Morsy & Rothstein, 2016). Black children have a likelihood of having 1 or more parents in the prison system at a rate of 20%. That means for every 10 Black children, one is estimated to have a parent incarcerated (Morsy & Rothstein, 2016). This rate is nearly 6 times higher than white children.

One of the things that America's most famous for is our obsession with firearms. While founding the original constitution, the right to bear arms came as the second thought, right after

the right to essentially be a free person; to have freedom of religion, petition, assembly, and expression. America even has more guns than it does citizens (Small Arms Survey, 2017). This right is taken away from anyone that “has been convicted in any court of a crime punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding 1 year,” or anyone convicted of a misdemeanor of domestic violence Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, 2017). On average, Black males are sentenced to a term 20 percent longer than a white males sentence (American Civil Liberties Union, 2014). Taking this into consideration, the length of sentences for Black Americans far exceeds whites, even when the crime is identical. Therefore, Black Americans are denied their right to firearms at disproportionate rates than their white peers based on lengthy prison sentencing and reconviction.

Jury duty can sometimes be seen as a ‘hassle’ or something that people do not necessarily want to do. Serving on a jury panel, no matter how minor the crime, provides someone the opportunity to demonstrate their democratic right and voice in society. There have been famous court cases over representation within jury pools as well, such as *Hernandez v. Texas*. The *Hernandez v. Texas* case ruled that the Fourteenth Amendment applied to all racial and ethnic groups facing discrimination, effectively broadening civil rights laws to include Hispanics and all other non-whites. The importance of being able to serve on a jury has always been prominent within minorities and can be very influential on the sentencing and conviction rates for Black youth and adults. All white juries tend to provide longer sentences and submit more guilty verdicts on Black defendants than white (Redfield & Nance, 2016). However, a mixed-race jury is hard to find, even today. The first Black American to appear on a jury panel was in 1860. Decades following, the courts used measures to make sure Black citizens were not represented on the jury panel and would be excused for no reason (Morris, 2014). It was not until 1986 that the practice became illegal from the *Batson v. Kentucky* case. The *Batson v. Kentucky* case ruled that prosecutors must provide a legitimate reason for excusing a potential Black juror. Black jurors would have their legal right to serve the community, but loopholes were still formed, keeping many jury pools consistently composed of white citizens. Black jurors as young as 28 and old as 43 were considered too young and too old to serve on a jury. This still happens today, and Black jurors are dismissed at disproportionate rates for reasons such as “not having the right to vote,” “low intelligence,” age discrimination, and “interracial marriages.” Racial discrimination against Black jurors has led to almost 80% being excluded from the pool (Equal Justice Initiative, 2021).

Obtaining any type of official paperwork by the federal government is always a lengthy process and can cost a decent amount. For felons, the right to a passport, or essentially to travel abroad, is stripped away as well. For some, this can mean no longer being able to see extended family members that may live in other countries. It also can limit the general travel and vacation opportunities available. According to the Nolo Legal Encyclopedia, a felony conviction will result in a probation period for “at least 1 year” and up to 5 or 10 depending on the state and situational requirements. This time limitation means a lengthy hold on passports and obtaining official documentation. Some countries even have restrictions against a previously convicted felon to enter the country. For example, Canada conducts a criminal background check on those crossing the border and can deny entry into the country based on the results.

At a federal level, employers are not allowed to obtain prior conviction records and use the information as part of the hiring process. There are a few exceptions, however, where career fields can and will use this information in this way. Teachers, law enforcement and military, childcare professionals, and other public positions in government screen employees and determine eligibility on who can or cannot be hired. In general, these rules keep many violent and dangerous criminals away from children and out of powerful positions, but the problem lies with the number of actual felons in the United States. The racial prejudice within that statistic limits these career fields to mostly white elites. Teachers, law enforcement, and military and childcare professionals are all predominantly white career fields, and this divide will continue by institutional racism against Blacks (Bryan, 2017).

Jobs

Claim: Black citizens, already facing hiring bias and discrimination, will often have difficulty finding employment opportunities with a criminal background.

Formerly incarcerated individuals are often seen as lazy or poor workers, especially when they are without a job. Unemployment rates within the Black community are exceedingly higher than the white community. However, research shows that Black employees hold longer tenure and are less likely to quit than white workers (Couloute & Kopf, 2018). Therefore, Black employees want to work more, yet are actually 27% more likely to be unemployed (Couloute & Kopf, 2018).

This statistic is higher than the United States total unemployment rate in any historical period, “including the Great Depression (Couloute & Kopf, 2018).” Higher rates of unemployment lead to higher rates of crime, and a more dangerous community. Lack of job opportunities can lead people to seeking a form of income by any means, even criminal.

Prior research suggests bias in employer hiring practices by the rejection of over 50% of job applications with a criminal background (Devah Pager, “The Mark of a Criminal Record,” 2003). Furthermore, research suggests that “Black job testers without criminal records were less likely to receive callbacks from employers than white job testers with criminal records (Couloute & Kopf, 2018).” A study conducted by the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research concluded results of unemployment rates between those formerly incarcerated, and those not, as well as controlling for gender, age (the range of 34-44 years old) and race. Black women formerly incarcerated were concluded to have the highest rate of unemployment with 43.6%, compared to white women formerly incarcerated with 23.2%. The results were similar among the men as well. Black men formerly incarcerated had results suggesting 35.2% in comparison to white men formerly incarcerated at only 18.4% (Couloute & Kopf, 2018). These rates indicate that Black men and women with criminal backgrounds suffer from hiring bias and discrimination in the workforce at higher rates than white applicants with criminal backgrounds.

Housing

Claim: Black communities, already facing housing discrimination through redlining and segregation, are often housed in impoverished neighborhoods with little resources. Convicted felons are denied housing loans and a chance of relocation out of lower-class communities.

In many instances, the housing conditions that a convicted felon must live in are horrible. Many states make a convicted felon lose their rights to housing aid or food stamps. In some cases, they are provided by the state in the form of subsidized housing. Subsidized housing is government assisted living for impoverished and low-income families. Cause for denial of subsidized housing can include felony convictions with drugs and the current or former alcohol abuse of at least one family member in the household that threatens the safety of other residents. Some states require one to stay here to follow their probation guidelines, so they do not end up back in the system. A lot of the time, these locations are not the best and lead people back into a life of poverty and

crime. The Office of Policy Development and Research, on Neighborhood and Violent Crime argues that the areas that are most densely filled with those with a criminal background are areas with high poverty rates. The combination of both makes the neighborhood schools fail the students they are intended to bring an education to. Because they are released into “freedom” without a dime in their pocket, it is often really hard for ex-convicts to find a nice area to start fresh in. Research has “shown that returning inmates without stable housing were twice more likely to recidivate than those living in stable housing (Weiss, 2016).” These under-resourced and oftentimes understaffed schools do not provide the next generation of youth with the resources to make anything better or change the future. In fact, they explain some of the prison cycle affecting Black youth and adolescents.

Drugs

Claim: There are higher rates of substance abuse among those who have exited the prison system. Substance abuse problems may lead to further jail time, overdose or even death.

Research has shown that not only does withdrawal periods from drugs medically alter your body physically and mentally. It is estimated that around 15% of the individuals entering prisons each year have a heroin addiction (Mitchell, Kelly, et al., 2009). Heroin withdrawals can create symptoms like nausea, uncontrollable sweats and shaking, muscle spasms, and a handful of mental issues like nervousness, anxiety, depression, and paranoia according to the American Addiction Center. Medical detoxes are available and would help alleviate a lot of the horrible symptoms associated with a detox, yet a very small portion of jails report using them or even following the suggested practices for detoxing an addict (Mitchell, Kelly, et al. 2009). A woman formerly incarcerated gave the statement, “This is one of the worst kicks I have ever had in jail. It gets to the point where, I mean, they do not give you anything here for withdrawal, but I was so sick that I managed to drag myself to the doctor here and tell him that I was an alcoholic. I had the shakes that bad from the drugs that they actually gave me Librium that they give alcoholics that come in here (Mitchell, Kelly, et al., 2009).” This is interesting, as a majority of alcohol related arrests are white individuals, and drug related arrests are more often minorities (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010).

Addiction relapse is a huge societal issue with formerly incarcerated Black youth and adults. The time spent in jail does not “cleanse” one from an addiction, it often makes them want it even more. Addicts who suffer from withdrawal symptoms often have a worse time navigating sobriety upon release (N.I.D.A., 2020). Evidence has shown that addicts who are released from prison after experiencing a negative withdrawal experience are negatively influenced to seek help once released (Mitchell, Kelly, et al., 2009). Drugs are a huge contributor to the factors of why a person would end up in jail to begin with and are extremely tempting to choose if you are a former addict released from prison. Addicts choose to take their drug of choice, often as a coping mechanism for something worse in their lives. Addicts “will go from the drug subculture to jail or the hospital, then back to the subculture (Harris, 2018).” Drug addiction and reliance “can take hold of a human brain to such a degree, that the drug induced decision making can cause consequences so severe, that the person will try to commit suicide, and many are successful (Harris, 2018).” In the United States, “statistics show that seventy three percent of attempted suicides and thirty seven percent of actual suicides stem from an intoxicated mind (Harris, 2018).”

Family

Claim: The family of a convicted criminal is affected severely. Police harassment, court hearings and trials, and the way Blacks are generally perceived by law enforcement are major family stressors.

The “incarceration of a loved one... can cause families and friends significant emotional distress, loss of income and property, and residential instability (Maxwell, & Soloman, 2018).” Students trying to navigate K-12 education have to jump through several hurdles. The added stressors of police harassment, court hearings and trials and the general perception by law enforcement toward Black families can have a negative effect on the health of everyone within the family. As a child, the direct loss of a family member due to imprisonment can be harmful toward students' mental wellbeing and their relationships with others (Nelson & Lind, 2015). Black infants and toddlers have a 53% chance of having a loved one incarcerated before they are school aged (Haskins, 2014). This means more than half of Black kindergarteners begin their education journey cognitively and socially behind their peers. The loss of a father figure can “affect children

emotionally, developmentally and socially (Haskins, 2014; Maxwell & Soloman, 2018)." Research shows experiencing paternal incarceration by age five is associated with lower non-cognitive school readiness. The non-cognitive developmental aspects include "attention, social, behavioral components of learning and a child's ability to concentrate, stay on task, cooperate, interact with peers, and exercise emotional self-regulation (Haskin, 2014)." A child experiencing any of the social, emotional, or material consequences of paternal incarceration during early childhood can be quite detrimental to their behavioral patterns in a classroom setting or around other children.

Other childhood trauma can be associated with the loss of a family member due to imprisonment and can include homelessness and lack of financial income. The majority, or 64%, of Black children come from a single parent household (National Kids Count, 2019). Losing a parent could mean losing their only source of guardianship and financial support. As mentioned before, Black youth represent 25% of the foster care system. The childhood trauma associated with the foster care system can affect youth in many different ways. Children that enter the foster care system sometimes never see their parents again, and many siblings are split up (Morsy & Rothstein, 2016). This could leave many Black children and teens virtually homeless, alone and completely broke. Prison visitations and phone calls can be very expensive and "many families struggle to meet basic food, housing, transportation, and clothing" from the financial burden of having a loved one incarcerated. Black women are responsible for over 80% of court fines and legal fees. These fees average around \$13,000 and thus 1 in 3 Black families will end up in debt while paying off court fees (Maxwell & Soloman, 2018). For families that cannot afford to pay off the debt, further criminal charges could be placed, and often interest builds and builds, making the bill virtually impossible to pay off.

Health

Claim: The mental and physical health of current and former prisoners can be very altered by serving a long term, or even overnight sentence. Depression, Anxiety, PTSD, high infant mortality rates, other traumas are commonly reported in the Black community.

The unfortunate truth to the matter is that convicted felons, while in jail and once they leave, have experienced a trauma that cannot be taken away. The trauma of jail and imprisonment can drive a person to mental insanity and take away their passion for life. The trauma associated

with incarceration gives “almost two thirds of youth [leaving juvenile centers] criteria for a mental health disorder (Crosby, 2016).” Prison can alter your body physically in many ways from starvation and malnutrition to being physically attacked and harmed. Research has even shown that “mass incarceration has long-term physiological effects... including mental health disorders, diabetes, asthma, hypertension, HIV, [and] Hepatitis C. (Maxwell & Soloman, 2018).” The Center for American Progress suggests that “when incarcerated, an individual can face increased risk of sexual violence and infectious illness; loss of connection with family and friends; ... [and] trauma resulting from draconian prison policies.” These “individuals [are] at a heightened risk of post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression (Maxwell & Soloman, 2018).” While youth are already the most likely to develop a mental disorder, the trauma associated with incarceration only increases their risk and severity.

The Black community also suffers the highest rate of infant mortality in the United States (Morris, 2014). The Center for American Progress labels “toxic stress” as a primary contributor toward the disparity in rates of Black and white infant mortality (Maxwell & Soloman, 2018). In comparison to white mothers, Black mothers are twice as likely to experience the death of a baby within the first 28 days after birth. The rates are most prominently gapped in Hawaii where Black mothers represent 21% of infant mortality rates in comparison to 6% for the white mothers (Morris, 2014). Research suggests that years of stress due to structural racism may be a driving factor of the infant mortality epidemic among Black women. Experts even estimate that general infant mortality rates today would be about 7.8 percent lower than the current rate, and that the gap between Black women and white women infant mortality rates would be around 15% lower (Maxwell & Soloman, 2018). Part of this difference is explained with infant mortality and the link to the poor community. Health hazards that affect pregnant women are more prominent in poor communities that are inhabited by majority Black families. However, institutional racism within medical practice shows that even Black women who receive early and regular prenatal care are still at a greater risk of infant mortality than white women who receive no prenatal care (Maxwell & Soloman, 2018).

A general sense of fear and crime within a community can decrease the likelihood for one to engage in physical activity (The Healthy People, 2021). Research has shown that poor perceptions on the safety level and crime within their environment are linked to higher body mass index scores and higher levels of obesity (The Healthy People, 2021). Black communities report

the highest percentage of obesity in America, nearing 50% for adults and 25% for children (Hales, Carroll, et.al., n.d.). Health hazards associated with obesity include stroke, heart attack, seizure, and the development of diabetes.

Conclusion

School boards and administration creating school guidelines that follow a strict zero-tolerance policy should understand that "children do not stop being children when they commit a crime (William Hibbler, n.d.)." Just because a punishment occurred, does not mean that the child understands the outcome, the severity or deeper impact of the dispute or even how to react in the future. A child will continue to be a child, and zero-tolerance policies overlook that fact and treat the offense without context. This is a really dangerous concept, especially for Black students already facing discrimination in society. Falling into the school-to-prison pipeline only worsens their own quality of life, and the Black community as a whole.

A research study on discipline policies conducted in Texas found that 97% of the school suspensions were a school administrators' choice, and that only 3% of the suspensions were required (Nelson & Lind, 2015). Choosing to take children out of the classroom is not the solution, and in most cases is not even necessary. Research overwhelmingly demonstrates that the "official processing of a juvenile law violation may be the least effective means of rehabilitating juvenile offenders (Redfield & Nance, 2016)." There is also no evidence that frequent reliance on removing misbehaving students improves school safety or student behavior in the future (Redfield & Nance, 2016). There are better ways of reforming student behavior in a healthy manner that is both beneficial for the student and teacher such as restorative justice approaches to discipline. To implement a restorative justice practice, zero-tolerance policies should be redefined and should take into consideration the situation and severity of the actions. Suspending, expelling and referring to law enforcement youth that break minor, non-violent rules, only will put in their minds "that they're not meant for education," and that they do not fit in; that they are bad, unworthy, criminals. Restorative justice is the key to reversing the school-to-prison pipeline in a way that is beneficial to students. Research has shown lower absenteeism and higher graduation rates of schools that implemented these practices (Vox, 2016).

Restorative justice approaches have already shown to work with students in even the most impoverished and underserved communities (Bucalos, 2016). In a Clayton County, Georgia school system, the implementation of restorative justice approaches toward consequences had “success when it imposed strict limits on police authority (Lieberman 2012; Nelson & Lind, 2015).” Another school, Julia Richman Education Complex, who had once “maintained a lockup cage for students who were thought to be out of control” during the 1980’s and 1990’s made a similar change as well. In 1995, new school leaders removed the cage and significantly reduced the number of security officers in the school. The few guards who remained were made active collaborators with the school’s leaders, regularly convening to discuss ways to help troubled students. Under the new rules, the officers in schools would be prohibited from simply arresting students for a misdemeanor offense. Now, a student would have to have been charged with two prior misdemeanor offenses at school. Students that have a chronic rate of disruption, absenteeism, consistently get in school fights or continuously commits misdemeanor offenses would be recommended to counseling with school administrators and social workers. This system is designed to address the underlying problems within the student’s life such as problems in their home lives. Today, the school has almost no violent crime, suspensions are rare, and it boasts a high graduation rate. Juvenile court referrals and serious weapon charges decreased around a high 70%, and the graduation rate jumped up to 24% countywide (Lieberman, 2012).

The Office for Civil Rights claims 1.6 million students attend a school with at least one sworn law enforcement officer (SLEO), but not a single school counselor. The national student-to-counselor ratio is 491-to-1, almost double the suggested amount of 250-1 offered by the American School Counselor Association. Without resources in place to help regulate behavioral and mental health concerns with students, of course things will get out of hand. Putting more money into police officers within schools versus guidance counselors is a real detriment to the future of Black students after K-12 education. In New York City there are nearly twice as many school resource officers in city schools as guidance counselors and almost 4 times as many officers as social workers (Lieberman, 2012). This has been detrimental for the academic achievement and success in public education for Black youth. According to the National Association of School Resource Officers, there are about 20,000 active school resource officers in schools nationwide. A rough estimate this cost falls around \$619 million a year. The cost to put a school resource officer in every public school, as some officials recommend, would approximately be \$3.2 billion each

year (Redfield & Nance, 2016). Federal and state funding for schools should go to the students and provide resources like guidance counselors to better advance their education, not drag them out of schools and into prisons.

School law enforcement are not the only ones to blame, “teachers are [also] trained to escalate, i.e., warn, withdraw a privilege, administer a negative consequence, remove, suspend, and finally evict (Martin Haberman, n.d.).” Education majors and future teachers are not prepared for the way a classroom really works. They are prepared for a classroom filled with 20 listening and behaving children that can be taught using the same lesson plan and using the same style. The methods of behavior management barely extend past the textbook pages and do not offer a reliable basis for future teachers to prepare upon. I believe that “if we truly invest in our education system, the prison system will decline (Wolfinger, 2020).” Giving teachers the opportunity to learn from the mistakes of the past and offering them a platform to build upon new methods of culturally appropriate teaching is the next step in the advancement of the public education system. Students succeed by building relationships and forming strong desires for learning. This cannot be done in the current state of many American schools, and for Black youth, this problem can lead to lifelong consequences. However, building meaningful relationships with students is important in children’s academic success. Teachers that believe in their students’ potential will grow learners and leaders, while teachers that deem children as “unintelligent” or “lacking” lead children toward a path of academic failure. Research has shown that “simply spending quality time with children, giving them attention, hugging them, and telling them they can be successful... increased students’ confidence in their academic abilities” and academic outcomes (Webb & Thomas, 2015; Redfield & Nance, 2016).

Overall recommendations (Redfield & Nance, 2016; Bryan, 2017)

- 1.) Remove zero-tolerance policies from schools
- 2.) Eliminate the criminalization of nonviolent student misbehavior
- 3.) Eliminate the use of corporal and physical punishment for all
- 4.) Reduce the amount of school resource officers within school buildings and provide appropriate training for remaining school resource officers
- 5.) Promote the expansion of more Black educators, counselors, and school officials

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