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Bridge To Her Education (BTHERE): Black Girls and the School to Prison Pipeline

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BRIDGE TO HER EDUCATION (BETHERE)

BLACK GIRLS AND THE SCHOOL TO PRISON PIPELINE



AUGUST 12, 2018

OTASHA CLARK

PIM 74

A capstone paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Masters of Arts in Sustainable Development at SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, VT, USA.

Advisor Udi Butler

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Student Name: Otasha Clark

Date: August 12, 2018

Dedication & Acknowledgements

To all who walked this road with me, thank you. From my mother Celena George and her Jamaican words of wisdom, to the motivation of my wonderful SistahTribe, it was all appreciated. The love, the lessons, even the tough lectures, they all brought me to this point. Who I have been is partly where I will go and where I will go is a part of who I have always been, so to my amazing Black girls I love and support you, and I hope this policy reaches you.

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Abstract

The purpose of this capstone paper is to create a citizen centered advocacy strategy plan, which will be launched through the Girls Scouts of the USA (GSUSA), in order to at the very least, slow the school to prison pipeline. It refers specifically to the zero tolerance policy, which has intensified the movement of Black girls into the pipeline. After reviewing the literature, it was evident that the zero tolerance policy in combination with historical gender and race stereotypes surrounding Black girls, had resulted in implicit bias as a motivational factor in the way Black girls are being punished. Furthermore, there are various socioeconomic issues that affects Blacks girls' gendered racialized identity that are usually overlooked when addressing Black girls' behavior.

However, the lack of research on the zero tolerance policy and the school to prison pipeline that accounts for gender, would have one think that Black girls are not subjected to the same pressures to which their Black male counterparts are subjected. The question then arises, what can be done to assist Black girls? In response to this question, I present the Bridge To Her Education (BTHERE) policy and a Girl Scouts of the USA's led advocacy campaign. The BTHERE policy counters the most harmful points of the zero tolerance policy as it relates to Black girls. The project also present a strategy plan and communications memo to guide GSUSA in their launch of the BTHERE policy.

Research Paper Direction:

Introduction: A brief historical synopsis of unequal education system in relation to Black people and white supremacy, which is also defined.

Literature Review: This section will offer an overview of the zero tolerance policy, as well as an understanding of how the school to prison pipeline emerged under the zero tolerance policy. It is also the reasoning for this research paper. In order to explore and answer the research question I argue that some of the reasons, especially surrounding Black girls being forced into the pipeline through the zero tolerance policy, implicit bias and microaggressions, a shift from rehabilitative to punitive discipline in education, the history of law enforcement in Black communities, privatization of juvenile centers, and under resourced schools.

Policy Overview: This section will offer a brief look at the policy, Bridge To Her Education (BTHERE) that I developed as a counter-policy to the zero tolerance policy. The main asking points of the BTHERE will be presented.

The Black Girl Connection: This section will explore the ways in which Black girls' safety and educational experiences are infringed upon by the zero tolerance policy, because of gendered racism and how they cope. Along with the synthesis of all the parts thus far, this section will offer insights into the part of the Bridge To Her Education (BTHERE) policy that will be used to address the issues of each section of the Black girl experience.

Policy Recommendation: I will present the alternative policy to the zero tolerance policy that takes into special account the Black girl experience - Bridge to Her Education (BTHERE) Policy. The policy will ask for clearer definitions and applications of the policy, as well as training and resources for schools, among other needs. There is also a section on The Girl Scouts of USA and why I think they are one of the best options for advocating on the behalf of Black girls and Bridge To Her Education (BTHERE).

Conclusion: Recap and closing argument in regards to the research question and transition into the proposed Policy Strategy Plan and Communications Memo.

Strategy Plan (GSUSA)

Communications Memo

Appendix

Introduction

Is the zero tolerance policy, and the resulting school to prison pipeline leaving Black girls vulnerable, and can there be a Black girl centered policy to remedy the issues that are a result of the zero tolerance policy? Education is often advertised as the road to freedom and liberation, particularly for those who are impoverished, but the achievement gap and disparate impact of the zero tolerance policies are two factors that show the disparities within the education system, particularly for marginalized groups. The United States of America's "education system is one of the most unequal systems in the industrialized world" which "inflicts disproportionate harm on minorities and those who are economically disadvantaged" (Hammond, 1998). Unfortunately, Black girls tend to be the most marginalized group in the areas of gender, race, and class, and therefore the group most negatively impacted by the unequal education system. One author explains that, "Twenty-five percent of Black women live in poverty" and that the unemployment rate for Black women age twenty and over at the end of 2014 was 8.2 percent, compared to 4.4 percent of White women and 5 percent of all women", despite a recent study having found that African American women have the highest number of college degrees (Morris, 2016 p.21) (National Center for Education Statistics). Zero tolerance policy threatens to increase the negative numbers for Black girls because it increases the dropout rate and the likelihood of prosecution and having a criminal record, all of which hinder employment. With a policy like zero tolerance policy that creates a system that pushes more Black girls out of the classroom and into juvenile detention, and possibly prison, their access to education and a more stable standard of living is threatened. Although the phrase *education is the key to success* is constantly used, from slavery to present day, Blacks have constantly been denied access to education. The lack of

access to education and its potential for upward social mobility stems from the fact that access presents a threat to white supremacy.

White supremacy was the lead used to draft the current version of the United States of America and its institutions. For the purpose of the paper white supremacy will be defined as power and resources that white people are normally privileged to, consequently the power and resources that historically underrepresented groups or people of color, specifically Black people are denied and therefore placed at an economic, social, and political disadvantage. White supremacy is an institutional issue that affects establishments such as schools and the police force in the (United States of America). VeneKlasen and Miller write,

“ the extent of power of an individual or group is correlated to how many kinds of resources they can access and control... the problem is the concentration of power in the hands of a few...Different degrees of power are sustained and perpetuated through social divisions and institutions such as education, government, law, etc.” (41, 2002).

With resources as the crux of power, and education as a path to resources and the resulting power one can obtain from gaining an education, it is no wonder why Blacks were barred from learning. In addition to that, today the majority of under-resourced schools that tend to have high population of Black students also tend to implement and enforce zero tolerance policies, which will be expanded on in the literature review section. Dr. Shawn Arango Ricks writes that, “education then and now was viewed as a necessary act of freedom and liberation by Blacks, which was threatening for Whites” and “subsequently many states outlawed education for free and enslaved Blacks; between 1800-1835, when most southern states criminalized teaching enslaved children” (Falling Through the Cracks 2016 p.3), because to prevent learning is to prevent progress. These laws were not enough to stop some slaves and freed Blacks from learning how to read and write, including Black women who taught others, and even opened

schools (Falling Through the Cracks 2016 p.3). In 1954, there was the landmark case of *Brown v. Board of Education* which reversed *Plessy v. Ferguson*, a case that permitted ‘separate but equal’ public facilities, such as schools. However, in *Brown v. Board of Education* it was found that schools divided by race did not provide the same quality education and so under the “Fourteenth Amendment schools that practiced racial segregation violated the amendment”, and therefore schools were gradually integrated throughout the United States of America to secure an equal education for all students (The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow). Despite the assumptions that with better quality education Black students would perform better, there is currently an achievement gap between Black students and their white counterparts. There are numerous theories offered as explanations to why this gap exist, and despite educational disparities having the most harmful impact on Black girls, many of the studies are based on the experiences of Black boys.

Literature Review

The literature review will explore several themes as they relate to the topic and research question, and the themes are as follows: the definition of zero tolerance policy and the resulting school to prison pipeline and the factors that came together to allow the policy to be implemented and the pipeline to continue, such as bias. After that, the review will look at police as an institution and a tool of racism and how that affects the rate at which students, particularly Black girls are funneled into the pipeline, which will be followed by a look at juvenile detention centers, particularly privatized centers. Then we will look at the conditions of under resourced schools and how that plays a role in the maintenance of the policy and the pipeline. That section will be followed by implicit bias and microaggression in schools. Together, the themes will paint

a picture for the reader of the zero tolerance policy and the school to prison pipeline, and how it leaves Black girls vulnerable.

Zero Tolerance Policy and the School to Prison Pipeline

The school to prison pipeline is a byproduct of zero tolerance policy that through suspension, expulsion, and arrests, that places a disproportionate number of students of color increasingly Black girls into the legal system, often times for minor misbehavior. According to the ACLU the school to prison pipeline refers to “the policies and practices that pushes our nation’s schoolchildren, especially our most at-risk children, mainly students of color”, and increasingly female “out of classrooms and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems” (ACLU 2015). This interaction between the schools and in particular the juvenile system is placing minority youth at risk by increasing the chances of them interacting with the adult criminal and prison system, while minimizing their access to a quality education. The school to prison pipeline is a result of the zero tolerance policy, which was adopted in 1994 with the signing of the Gun Free School Act by President Bill Clinton with the hopes of deterring events such as Columbine, as well as drug use on school grounds (The Equity Project). However, the policy is being abused.

While conducting research, I found that scholars agreed that zero tolerance policies signaled a shift from rehabilitative education to that of a more punitive education system, where punishment overrides justice and students’ development. Furthermore, in agreeance with the scholars, factors such as institutional racism and implicit bias permeate zero tolerance policies that lead to students of color, and increasingly Black girls, being disproportionately impacted by policies originally intended to protect them. The disparities and ineffectiveness of zero tolerance policy as deemed by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), The American Civil Liberties

(ACLU), American Psychological Association (APA), National Association of School Psychologists, the Department of Justice (DOJ), is evidence that the policy needs to be addressed. Years of zero tolerance policies in schools simply transferred students, particularly minority students from classrooms and principals' offices into juvenile detention centers, which are being privatized – a problem in of itself. Zero tolerance policies and the resulting school to prison pipeline threatens Black girls' education and pushes them on a path towards decreasing their quality of life and increasing the likelihood of interaction with the criminal justice system, recidivism, dropout rate, and vulnerability.

Zero tolerance: From Education to Punishment

The zero tolerance policy and the resulting school to prison pipeline should stir a reaction for change, because over 40 states employ the policy and the disparities with Black students being arrested is only increasing, and with biases, under resourced schools, untrained police officers, among other factors it will only get worse if improvements are not made. The Education Week Research Center found that in “43 states and the District of Columbia Black students are arrested at a disproportionately high level”, and in Louisiana alone where Black students are “40 percent of enrollment they are 69 percent of students arrested in school” (Blad & Harwin 2017). The Center also found that 2013-2014, “schools reported 44,000 part-time and full-time onsite law enforcement (Blad & Harwin 2017), yet only 12 states require officers to be trained (American Institute for Research) (Blad & Harwin 2017). With statistics like these, schools and in school police officers need to be held more accountable if they are going to enforce harsh zero tolerance policies, and one way to do so is to ensure that school police officers are trained or that they recruit and hire actual school resource officers who are trained to work with the students. The National Association of School Resource Officers (SROs) is one option for accountability.

Through the Association, school resource officers are trained with the “triad model”, which assigns school resource officers or SROs 3 roles - as law enforcement officials, as educators who teach students about subjects like drug prevention, and as informal counselors and mentors to the students (Blad & Harwin 2017). However, this is not the case in every school, and so students are being punished and prosecuted, rather than educated, counseled and mentored, in an environment meant for learning and youth development.

Christopher A. Mallet talks about the shift in education from justice and growth to punitive measures that placed punishment over education using increased suspension and expulsion, exclusionary practices over learning opportunities for students. First, a brief history of school discipline and the social climate and factors that influenced the shift to an environment where zero tolerance thrives, while students’ development and advancement suffer, particularly Black students and increasingly Black girls. Mallet discusses this shift and begins by explaining that once schools in the 1800s utilized corporal punishment until the 60s and 70s, when the school population began to grow and it became more unacceptable to use corporal punishment, as a result expulsion and suspension of disruptive students came into effect (Mallett 2015 16). I can imagine that in comparison to corporal punishment, suspension and expulsion seemed to be a better disciplinary strategy. However, there was an adjustment when the *Goss v. Lopez* Supreme Court decision ruled that suspensions and expulsions were a violation of due process (Mallett 2015 16). The adjustment was in school suspension which allowed students to complete their work and stay on track (Mallett 2015 16). These rehabilitative disciplinary methods were favored through the 1980s, when “mandatory disciplinary outcomes were normalized by approaches that had a tough on crime approach versus a rehabilitative strategy” (Mallett 2015 16). Two policies that arose during this time were the Broken windows policy and the zero tolerance approach in

both adult and juvenile centers. Examples of this change are the “three strikes out” and large numbers of youth offenders being transferred to adult prison.

In addition to these policies there was a fear of the youth and belief that they were growing increasingly violent and the need to prevent expected violence from “super predators” became a driving force behind zero tolerance in schools, especially after Columbine, which was highly televised (Mallett 2015 18). Schools shootings before and after Columbine have occurred in primarily suburban schools, in places termed “safe”. However, I found it interesting that despite the demographics of the schools where school shootings occurred and the shooters being predominantly white, it is mainly urban school settings with strict zero tolerance policies, predominantly Black schools.

Malett explains that the fear brought on by the perception of growing school violence, the crack cocaine epidemic within poor communities and worries about adolescent gang”, rather than hard evidence, led Congress to enact the 1994 Gun-Free Schools Act; a seal of approval for zero tolerance policies in school districts (Mallett 201518). With a federal funding incentive attached for schools K-12, “contingent on imposing a 1-year expulsion for a student found in possession of a gun on school grounds and a mandatory referral to the juvenile or adult justice system”, it was only a matter of time before the law took hold (Mallett 2015 18). Within two years all states had enacted similar legislation, with amendments over the years more surveillance technology was added to schools, such as metal detectors and federally funded police officers, sometimes referred to as student resource officers. Problematic however, is that these officers act independently of the school and are often untrained in how to deal with youth development and therefore unprepared to truly serve the students and assist with disciplinary

issues. Also important to note is that at the police and Black community relationship, is a fragmented one, and this applies to their interactions with Black youth as well.

Policing: Classroom of Broken Windows

Referring back to the definition of white supremacy and how it affects institutions, such as schools, police departments are not immune from the ideology and impact of white supremacy and the different forms of discrimination it creates, such as institutional racism and implicit bias. The police is an institution that was established by white supremacy as slave patrols by slave owners who wanted to protect their profits, and without proper training and intervention continues to operate in Black communities in an often fragmented and oppressive manner. During slavery, slave patrols were established to protect slave owners from economic loss by disciplining slaves, punishing recaptured escaped slaves, and quelling uprisings. As time passed some of those same patrols became the first police *departments* (Kappeler 2014). In a TIME magazine issue an article illustrates the slave patrol history of police departments and highlights the fact that during the Reconstruction Era, local Sheriff's policing could be compared to slave patrols, because some Sheriffs and their departments, reinforced segregation and the disenfranchisement of slaves (Waxman 2017). While persecuting Blacks much of the legal system allowed white males to terrorize Black communities, some officers were even a part of the terrorist organization the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan destroyed property in Black communities, lynched Black men and women, among other crimes. With the police as a tool of institutional racism, implicit bias and microaggressions are inevitable when police officers are interacting with the Black community, including children.

Knowing the origins of the police as an institution makes it easier to understand America's police departments' actions and inactions in relation to Black people, and how students can be pushed out of schools and into the prison pipeline, by members of agency that has long overcriminalized Black people based on race and regardless of age. It also explains how certain policies, such as the Broken windows policy takes hold and is used to profile Black people, including children. The thought process behind the Broken windows policy was the basis of the zero tolerance policy, Broken windows community policing came about in the 1980s and is imbued with implicit bias and came about in a time that Mallett argued was a shift from rehabilitative discipline to that of the zero tolerance approach. The concept was developed by criminologist George Kelling and motivated by the idea that "a broken window, left unattended, would signal that no one cared and ultimately lead to more disorder and even crime" (Childress 2016). Since its inception, police experts and community members have argued that the practice is greatly flawed, and in 2016 the New York police department Inspector General office found that there is no evidence that the practice was linked to the six year decline in NY crime, which was used as evidence to garner more support for the widespread use of the Broken windows policy (Childress 2016).

The practice lead to profiling in Black communities because it was based on the police officer's subjectivity as to what is orderly or disorderly when making arrests and writing summons for the misdemeanor crimes that under Broken windows, that officers assume will deter major crimes. This flawed concept of perceiving people as criminals helps to maintain the zero tolerance policy and the school to prison pipeline that swallows up Black girls. With a policy that suggests smaller criminal acts, or in the case of zero tolerance lighter misbehavior, correlates to greater crimes in the future leads law enforcement, including school resource

officers to view the communities and Black children that they police as potential criminals rather than students (Morris 2016 p.66). The zero tolerance policy allows for police officers to view the very students they are serving as ‘broken windows’, their first sign of misbehavior as a sign that they will commit more severe crimes. Keller sums it up well when he states, “Giving police discretion to enforce public order laws, becomes extraordinarily problematic because of racial, ethnic and class-based biases, and including implicit biases” (Childress 2016), biases that school police officers are not above when interacting with Black girls. Implicit bias is very dangerous and has led to disparate impact in the case of zero tolerance policies and consequently who is being pushed out of classrooms and pushed into the school to prison pipeline and confined in juvenile detention centers and prisons. An example of this on a larger scale is the research cited by the Kirwan institute which shows how implicit bias can lead to disparate impact, it is this connection between implicit bias and disparate impact that contributes to the maintenance of the zero tolerance policy and the school to prison pipeline (Kirwan Institute 2015). As a result of systemic racism and its many forms such as implicit bias and disparate impact, Blacks are disproportionately prosecuted and persecuted by the criminal justice system. The study cited by the Kirwan Institute found that, “those with more Afrocentric features were more likely to be sentenced longer compared to their white counterparts, and this finding was seen intraracially among their white inmates as well, despite controlling for numerous factors such as seriousness of crime and criminal history” (Kirwan Institute 2015). Disparate impact as a result of racism and bias is when policies that are supposed to be neutral affects one group more than the other (Kirwan Institute 2015). The cited research is one example of implicit bias skewing the law and creating disparities.

With schools across the nation employing the zero tolerance approach, the history of the police as an institution and tool of racism, and the resulting biases that can taint officers, helps us understand how Black students are more likely to be arrested under this policy by school police officers than assisted. Black girls are being increasingly affected by these policies and practices by those who act according to the harsh zero tolerance policy.

Some examples of police officers abusing their authority and violating students under the zero tolerance policies and pushing them into the criminal justice system are as follows (Morris 2016 p.3-4):

May 2013 Ashlynn Avery a 16 year old diabetic girl fell asleep during in school suspension and the supervisor threw a book at her, and shortly after waking up she fell asleep again after being awakened again and leaving the room a police officer slammed her face into a file cabinet and then arrested her 3. A lawsuit was filed.

April 2013 Kiera Wilmot a 16 year old was charged with a felony offense when her science experiment went wrong, giving her a mandatory suspension and arrest following an unauthorized “explosion” on school grounds 3. Charges were dropped after public objection and petitioning.

2008, Marche Talyor was arrested in Texas after she resisted being barred from prom for wearing something too revealing

2007, Pleajhia Mervin was harmed by a California school security officer after she dropped a piece of cake on the school’s cafeteria floor and refused to pick it up

In 2012 six year old Salecia Johnson was arrested in Georgia in 2012 for having a tantrum in classroom

2011 seven year old Michelle Mitchell was arrested with her eight year old brother after they got in a fight on a Ohio school bus

2007 six year old Desre’e Watson was handcuffed and arrested at a Florida school for throwing a tantrum in her kindergarten class

With the biases of the legal system, how can we fully trust any branch of law enforcement to administer the necessary care and provide the proper rehabilitation to students of color in the justice system, particularly Black girls during juvenile detention?

Juvenile Detention Centers: Rehabilitating or Debilitating

Juvenile detention centers are supposed to rehabilitate the youth and continue their education while they are confined, but with almost half of them privatized they are more concerned with their stakeholders and profits than the education and safety of the youth in their facilities. Some school districts do not provide alternative schools for students who are suspended or expelled, and even those that do provide alternative education they are often managed by “private, for-profit companies who are immune from educational accountability standards”, with “minimum classroom hours and curriculum requirements” being just two examples (ACLU 2018). Due to the lack of standards for alternative facilities, if students are allowed to return to school then they are often behind on their school work, an issue that one could argue contributes to the correlation between drop-out rates and the zero tolerance policy. According to the National Juvenile Justice Network, because of the motivation to appease stakeholders the youth who are confined in these facilities are often confined in poor conditions in institutions that are not closely monitored, or transparent. For example, there have been reports of “beating, guard instigated fights, sexual assault and rape by guards; inadequate staff, food, rehabilitative programming and education” (National Juvenile Justice Network 2015). These are just a few examples of how the for-profit sector of juvenile centers cost community more and negatively impact youth, because after confinement students are academically and socially unprepared and likely to recidivate (National Juvenile Justice Network 2015). In addition to that with youth who have an array of charges being placed together it has been shown that confinement can lead to more deviant behavior and is generally ineffective. With information like this readily available to policy makers, why are students being funneled into juvenile centers and centers that have a quota in their contracts and

a reputation of bribing officials such as Judge Mark Ciaverella (National Juvenile Justice Network 2015)..

In the book PUSHOUT some of the young Black girls that were interviewed share their experience about their time in juvenile centers and their realization that they were being targeted and that the centers similar to the classrooms often placed punishment over their education. Although it was not specified as to which type of facility they were confined in, if studies showing that juvenile centers in general are not effective, the environment and standards of juvenile centers need to be improved. To make matters worse, private prisons have ‘bed occupancy’ clauses and disparities with release dates of youth who are confined, among other issues. With the demand for prisoners through the ‘bed occupancy’ policies, it is easy for children to be pushed along the school to prison pipeline – from classroom to state prison – to meet these demands. With all the problems and social cost as a result of (for)-profit juvenile centers that disproportionately confine students of color, I struggle to make sense of why the zero tolerance policy and the resulting school to prison pipeline are allowed to persist. The policy does not improve students’ safety and standard of living. One other factor that must be considered in the pushout of Black girls out of classrooms and into the school to prison pipeline is under resourced schools and overwhelmed school officials, who might see the removal of students from their overcrowded classroom as a solution to their problems.

School House Stock

The Black education experience is often plagued by instability, especially for students who attend schools in predominantly Black and lower-income neighborhoods. There is a great deal of research to support this, and some of the recurring themes about the Black education experience are implicit bias, under resourced schools, increased suspension rates and expulsion

rates, and teacher and classroom instability. In a Washington Post article Emma Brown writes about the fact that many high poverty schools struggle with staffing, which directly affects student performance. During my time within the education system from Montclair, NJ to East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana and Washington DC, I saw firsthand how the “disruption and instability of teachers” negatively impacted students’ performance and motivation (Brown 2015). There was a difference between Montclair’s classroom and school environment, and rarely a day with a substitute, a stark contrast to the learning environment and teacher instability of East Baton Rouge Parish and Southeast Washington DC, where I served in under resourced schools. Many of the challenges that such schools face were present: high suspension rates, more police officers and ‘behavioral specialist’ than counselors, students with family challenges, overworked staff, increased suspensions, long-term substitutes and poorly trained and inexperienced teachers. The difference in standardized test results and students level of motivation was obvious between the districts.

Racial bias and implicit bias, can also attribute to the negative shadow that can haunt the educational experience of too many Black students, especially in the case of expectations and suspension rate for Black students. According to data from the US Department of Education 2013-2014 Civil Rights Data Collection Black preschool students are three times more likely to get suspended, and a 2016 Yale Child Study Center finds that that statistic could be related to implicit bias on the part of pre-school teachers (Wallace 2016 3). When teachers were presented with vignettes, white teachers were shown to expect poor behavior and performance from Black students compared to the white students in the vignettes. This is clearly problematic because there is a correlation from various studies that connects teachers’ expectations for students as early as middle school to college enrollment (Wallace 2016 4). Furthermore the lack of high

expectations for Black students' academic performance and growth is based not only in implicit bias, but a lack of empathy. If a teacher does not believe in Black girls, then it can dramatically affect the student's performance and whether or not the teacher encourages the student.

Additionally, if a teacher does not believe in or empathize with a student, it might be more appealing to the teacher to opt for having the student removed from the classroom for the slightest disruption and zero tolerance policy makes that possible.

Walter Gilliam, lead researcher of the study and director of the Edward Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy at Yale University found that "there was a more empathetic response if students were of the teacher's racial background", however due to implicit bias if the teacher does not share the same race as the student then they will equate the student's performance or lack thereof to their race. Implicit bias and even explicit bias can be looked at as a driving force behind zero tolerance and the school to prison pipeline, for although predominantly white schools are more likely to have white male school shooters, it is poor under resourced schools that enforce the policy and are the most affected by it. Through their research the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has found that a number of elements have come together to create a climate that encourages schools to embrace the zero tolerance policy and by doing so, overlook the school to prison pipeline it has created. Due to a lack of resources, such as funding to train teachers and employ counselors, combined with incentives to push out low-performing students more schools adopted the zero tolerance policy (ACLU 2018). Schools have bypassed due process in the case of suspensions and expulsions and allowed untrained police officers and resource officers to handle most disciplinary issues, despite these officers lack of training in youth development (ACLU 2018). The teachers who are trained in youth development often do not have input or the option to mediate the situation, and as a result, students are

disciplined in a harsh manner and the consequences do not correlate to the misbehavior, but more with Broken windows policy, often resulting in students being sent to juvenile detention hall and entered into the prison system from an early age.

Although the Guns Free School Act and its zero tolerance policy were originally implemented to prevent students from bringing and using drugs and weapons on school grounds, as well as threaten any member of the school community, it is now being used to address varying degrees of disciplinary issues. As a result the suspension and expulsion rates have increased from “1.7 million in 1974 to 3.1 million in 2000” and what is worse to note, is that it has increased with Black and Latino students being disproportionately affected, especially girls (ACLU 2018). Since 2000, the problem has grown and from research more schools have, under the policy, increasingly placed discipline and punishment over Black girls’ education (Crenshaw Overprotected, 2014 p.28).

As stated the zero tolerance policy in schools has led to increased suspensions, expulsions, and juvenile incarceration of students for minor and major disciplinary infractions alike, and is feeding Black girls into the school to prison pipeline as a result. According to the American Civil Liberties Union under the zero tolerance policy students who are “suspended or expelled for a discretionary violation are 3 times more likely to come in contact with the juvenile system the following year” (ACLU). This can be seen in Figure 1 (ACLU). Based on these statistics the zero tolerance policy has done more harm than good, and continues to expose minors to the prison system, as juvenile incarceration correlates to an increased chance of criminal incarceration. Research has also revealed that the zero tolerance policy has a negative effect on school climate and adolescent development, which will be analyzed. Instead of counseling and mentoring students, teachers and administrators, along with police officers or

resource officers, are sending them to the judicial system, hence the school to prison pipeline (National Association of School Psychologists 2008).

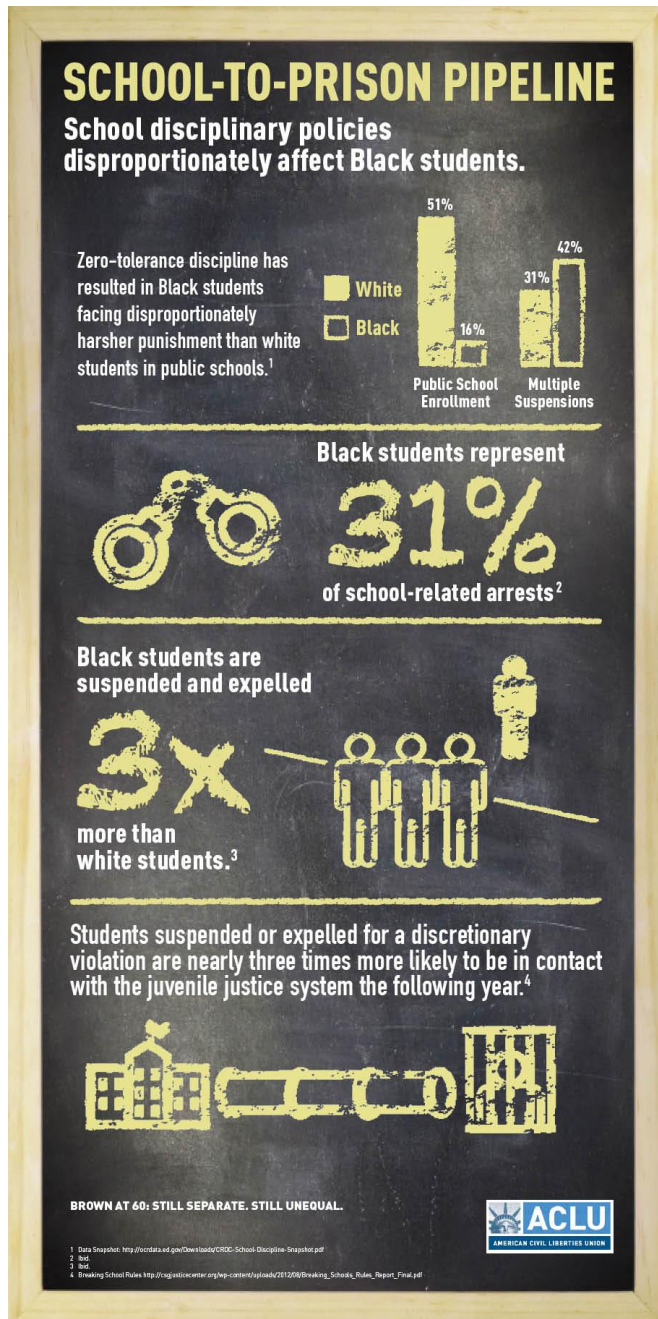


Figure 1
With little to no support, in schools that are usually lacking resources, such as funding, it is more likely for Black girls to find themselves along the school to prison pipeline path in the

manner that Rhames described earlier on. It is as if the classroom is a stockroom, where students of color, particularly Black girls await their time to fill the demand of juvenile centers and prisons. The biases that cause the pushing of Black girls into the prison pipeline and out of the classroom needs to be examined, and one such bias is that of implicit bias.

Implicit Bias & Microaggressions

It is projected that by 2050 Black girls will be “53% of the U.S. population”, which means that force fitting Black girls into pre-existing research will no longer suffice when figuring out how to address the issues that plague Black girls’ experiences, particularly those related to education (Ricks, 2016 p.1). In addition to the lack of Black gendered research, aside from those involving black males, the belief in a post-racial society also serves to deny the existence of the space where Black and female collide. The denial of racism makes it difficult to acknowledge that the intersectionality of race and gender creates challenges for Black girls as well as school personnel, such as teachers and police officers. In response to the challenges and trauma that Black girls endure they have developed coping mechanisms, which will be further discussed in the Black Girl Connection section. These mechanisms assist in dealing with “gendered racism” but are usually “misinterpreted by teachers and school personnel as personality and or cultural characteristics instead of responses to living with daily microaggressions” often fueled by implicit bias (Ricks, 2014, p.1). This coping and misinterpretation is rather costly, not just because of the friction it might create between Black girls and the school community, but also the fact that it can lead to suspension, expulsion, and arrest under the zero tolerance policy.

Implicit bias is inevitable and a result of systemic racism that permeates the minds of people and therefore the institutions that we interact with on a daily basis, because no individual can

fully refrain from acting on their implicit biases. Based on research conducted for this paper, it is evident that implicit bias correlates to discrimination and consequently disparate impact in the application of the zero tolerance policy. The Kirwan Institute offers a definition and example of implicit bias and the effect it can have in the criminal justice system: “also known as implicit social cognition, implicit bias refers to attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner - both favorable and unfavorable and can be activated involuntarily and reside deep in one’s subconscious” (Kirwan 2015). In relation to the zero tolerance policy, implicit bias is a part of the relationship between Black girls and school officials, including school police or resource officers, who might have preconceived opinions or implicit biases that surface in their interaction with Black girls. One way in which implicit bias can surface is through racial microaggressions.

Microaggression is a term coined by psychiatrist Chester Pierce M.D. in the 1970s to describe the often unconscious attacks usually based on race, that comes in three forms, each of which are problematic for young Black girls especially in schools with zero tolerance policies. Racial microaggression is defined as “commonplace verbal or behavioral indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults” (Sue, et.al 2007). It is a form of racism, that is difficult to explain as it is one of the more covert forms of racism, so when “individuals are confronted with their microaggressive acts the perpetrator usually believes that the victim has overreacted and is being overly sensitive and/or petty” (Sue, et. Al 2007) If school personnel are truly unaware of the microaggression they subject Black girls to, be it through race, gender or both, then when Black girls are reacting to the microaggressions that they experience- because they are very aware of how they are mistreated- and that teachers elect to punish as opposed to listen, that means that there are more

Black girls being suspended and expelled than counseled and assisted for defending themselves against the perceived microaggression. In addition to the inability to defend themselves, Black girls are left at the mercy of administrators, teachers, in school police officers and school resource officers, and other school officials who might not have dealt with their biases have to consciously decide to limit the microaggressions that they subject Black girls and even other students of color to. Without being challenged school officials will not come to a point of awareness and Black girls will continuously be derailed by biased judgment.

While volunteering in Baton Rouge Louisiana a few years ago, I met other volunteers from all over the United States of America. While working together we would discuss the differences we perceived between the northern and southerner regions of the country. When speaking with the Black volunteers one point would resurface. Northerners were confused as to why the southerners would choose to deal with overt racism and bigotry, and the southerners would always respond that at least they know who they are dealing with, whereas in the north you are never quite sure because racism is hidden behind smiles. Derald Wing Sue argues that post – Civil Rights era racism has undergone a change that has resulted in three levels of racism, modern racism, symbolic racism, and aversive racism (Sue, et. al 2007). Aversive racism is akin to implicit bias, and is difficult to identify and address because it is more ambiguous when it occurs, so people of color find themselves questioning whether or not the racist incident. In the first weeks of SIT I had an experience that I still question to this day, did I experience aversive racism? While at the dinner table with fellow students we were all laughing and talking, and a white student turned and shhsed me as I was laughing, saying I was “too loud”, at first I was stunned and then I thought me having a horse’s laugh, maybe I was too loud. Then a few minutes later she did the same thing to the Black male at the table and then I realized it was not me. I

observed her for the rest of the night and not once did she tell the white students at the table to be quiet. Still I question sometimes, were we too loud or was I a target of a microaggressive perpetrator?

Racial microaggressions have three categories that correlate to the three levels of racism, but regardless of the type of microaggression a Black girl experiences, prolonged exposure to microaggressions can cause anyone stress. I will offer clear examples of the microaggressions that Black girls endure as I explain the three types of racial microaggressions, developed by Derald W. Sue Ph.D, a psychology professor, who discusses and offers examples of the three types of racial microaggressions that people of color often deal with, but to be clear microaggressions can be based on gender, and other social identities.

The first type of racial microaggression is micro-assault, which is more overt and aggressive “more like racism and is conscious, often explicit racial or derogatory actions that are intended to hurt, such as serving a white person before a person of color or calling a person of color a derogatory term an explicit racial derogation characterized primarily by a verbal or nonverbal attack meant to hurt the intended victim”, with some examples being name calling, avoidant behavior, and purposeful discriminatory actions (Sue, et . al 2007). An example of this for Black girls is calling Black girls aggressive and loud when they speak up and ask questions, and punishing Black girls for this to make them more feminine, because to speak up is viewed as challenging and ‘unlady like’, when we explore gendered racism the root of this bias will be better understood. One study revealed that, “teachers sometimes exercised disciplinary interventions against Black girls to encourage the adoption of more ‘acceptable’ qualities of femininity; quieter and more passive” (Crenshaw Overprotected, 2015, p.24). This kind of discrimination and microaggression contributes to the disparate impact related to zero tolerance

policy, because Black girls are punished more severely compared to their non- Black counterparts for the very same behavior, even if they have similar academic and behavioral backgrounds. When an individual who is supposed to guide and help positively develop children into young adults prioritizes punishment and fails to empower young Black girls they consequently push them out of the classroom and on a path towards the prison pipeline under the guise of discipline. With such a high cost as a Black girl's education microaggressions and their effects need to be identified and addressed.

The second form of microaggression is micro-insult, which is “characterized by communications that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demeans a person's racial heritage or identity, they are often subtle snubs unknown to the perpetrator but convey a hidden insulting message to the recipient of color” (Sue, et. al 2007). Examples of this are a teacher not calling on a student of color, or questioning a student of color's grade, or a Black girl's intelligence: how did you get the job, how did you get into this school, are also some examples of questions that challenges the person's worth and whether or not they are deserving of what they have because of their race. As an adult it is still difficult to deal with microaggressions so imagine the challenge it presents for young students, whose young minds and hearts are being subjected to these attacks that could be viewed as a form of bullying. In addition to that, research has found a correlation between girls being overlooked and the way in which they perform in school, regardless of how well they are performing.

In *Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced and Unprotected*, it was found that “Black girls sometimes get less attention compared to their male counterparts from early in their school careers because they are perceived to be more self-reliant and mature”, but this creates a problem because it fractures Black girls' attachment to school and this “benign neglect” results

in detachment regardless of how great of a student a Black girl is (Crenshaw, Overprotected 2015, p10). Taking into consideration the many challenges that a student has to deal with, and then in combination with racist and sexist issues, and a lack of attention and essentially care, Black girls are left to their devices to survive their schools. This is even more difficult in under resourced schools, with little support in place such as counseling and nurses. Black girls are being subjected to microaggressions and then regardless of their performance as students, they are often not provided with the resources they need to combat the issues they are dealing with. There are school officials who overlook Black girls because they believe they are strong and mature enough to handle challenges on their own, or worse yet unconsciously believe they are not worth the time. Furthermore, if a Black girl were to point this out her experience might be belittled or completely ignored, which leads us to the third type of microaggression.

The third microaggression is known as, micro-invalidating, “characterized by communications that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of color” (Sue, et. al 2007). Some examples of this are when people say that they do not see color or that we are all from the human race”, dismissing differences and the privileges and disadvantages that is attached to these differences, be it race, class, or other social identity categories. When this microaggression occurs, it makes it easy to ignore the privileges and discrimination associated to different social identities; it can invalidate a Black girl’s experience with gendered racism. Under the zero tolerance policy, this is seen when they Black girls are being sexually harassed and teachers utilizing rape culture and racial stereotypes about Black girl’s sexuality to dismiss the harassment as boys being boys and Black girls being Black girls, meaning they ask for it somehow. The other problem is that that when Black girls defend themselves, be it verbally or physically, they get in trouble while their

attackers are not addressed. It has been found that school age Black girls experience a high level of interpersonal violence; girls sometime resort to acting out when their counseling needs are overlooked and failure of schools to intervene in situations involving the sexual harassment and bullying of Black girls contributes to their insecurity at school (Crenshaw, Overprotected 2015 p.10-11).Subsequently, Black girls are pushed out of class and along the school to prison-pipeline track, where they are made even more vulnerable to attacks and a possibly poorer standard of life. The zero tolerance policy has no checks in place for how it is used and instead of protecting Black girls it leaves them vulnerable to harm from school officials and classmates alike. Marilyn Rhames elaborates:

When their frustration with the past and fear of the future cause them to disengage or lash out at school, what happens? Black girls don't get the counseling they need. They get suspended. Then expelled. They go to juvie. Then, they drop out. And when they can't find a job, they commit minor crimes. They get arrested. They go to court. They get sent to prison (Invisible (Wo)man, 2016).

A policy with the intent of keeping students and school communities safe, has been misused due to the shift from rehabilitative to punitive discipline, in combination with bias and under resourced schools. The zero tolerance policy has unraveled into disparate impact and the funneling of students of color, particularly Black girls into the school to prison pipeline. The matter needs to be rectified, and with that I offer Bridge To Her Education (BTHERE) policy.

Policy Overview: Bridge to Her Education

Research has shown that since its implementation the zero tolerance policy has not yielded the positive results in schools that were predicted at its inception, especially where Black girls are concerned, because it has only contributed to pushing them into the school to prison pipeline, and therefore requires an alternative. The alternative policy that I developed is called Bridge to Her Education (BTHERE).The school to prison pipeline is not a new discovery,

however when researched Black girls are often left out of the equation, which is a problem, because even though Black girls make up “16 percent of the female population” they are “nearly one-third of all girls referred to law enforcement and more than one-third of all female school based arrests” (Morris 2015 p. 3). Statistics such as these motivated this paper and the desire to bring attention to and attempt to remedy the plight of young Black girls under the zero tolerance policy.

As stated, throughout my research process, scholars often noted this issue with some even stating that their research was limited by the fact that the available research did not disaggregate by race and gender, which created limitations, particularly when trying to create recommendations for improving the manner in which Black girls are treated under the zero tolerance policy. With this gap in mind, I aim to develop a policy strategy that the Girl Scouts of USA can implement, to help regulate the use of the zero tolerance policy in schools and limit the transferring of Black girls in to the school to prison pipeline. The strategy plan will present the alternative policy, Bridge To Her Education (BTHERE). Bridge To Her Education (BTHERE), will ask for a clearer definition of the zero tolerance policy and its application in schools in the United States of America; Gendered racism training and annual workshops for school officials including police officers and school resource officers; monitoring and evaluation of juvenile centers; expand anti-school-to-prison-pipeline advocacy; Implement and maintain alternative behavioral techniques, such as Positive Behavioral Interventions Supports(PBIS); Establish a Girl Scout Chapter and programs to educate students and staff on bullying, sexual assault and the resources available to them; Create a ranking system of behaviors and clarify who deals with which misbehavior and the process before it reaches to the point of expulsion, arrest, and or juvenile detention. Girl Scouts will be able to use the Bridge To Her Education (BTHERE) to

counter zero tolerance policy effects on Black girls, which will in turn decrease the number of Black girls entering the juvenile system.

Before going any further I will offer an analysis of the policy and the intersection of race and gender, which will provide a better understanding of why the Girl Scouts' involvement and the Bridge to Her Education policy is necessary.

Black Girl Connection

The purpose of this section is to synthesize the connection between race and gender by looking at the historical roots of gendered racism and the way in which it impacts Black girls particularly under zero tolerance policy. There will also be a section that clearly states how Bridge To Her Education (BTHERE) policy can be implemented to address the issues that each section of Black Girl connection, therefore connecting all the pieces. The report to be used in this section is Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced, and Underprotected which highlights the educational, social and economic factors that push Black girls on a path of vulnerability while cloaking their challenges in silence and making it appear as though Black girls are not experiencing certain challenges. The report looked mainly at disciplinary disparities of girls of color, primarily Black girls, through focus groups in Boston and New York City, to explore why these girls were pushed out or dropped out of schools. Among their findings from the data they collected was that Black girls are punished more than girls and Black girls are more at risk for suspension compared to white girls and more than Black boys compare to white boys. Therefore, it is of great importance that the policies, practices, and biases that work as a system to create these disparities is dismantled. The report also mentioned that there are anxieties about acknowledging differences between Black males and females may contribute to a "divide and conquer strategy" (Crenshaw Overprotected, 2015 p.23). To that I argue that if there are

differences in the root of the problems that each gender faces, then there needs to be a tailored approach to dissecting and rectifying the issue in a more efficient manner.

The report admits that the focus group and interviews were modest, however the findings are of great importance based on the recurring themes that were obstacles as perceived by the participants:

- Girls' perceptions that discipline and order are priorities that transcend educational mission of the school
- Caretaking responsibilities & financial hardship
- Doubts about the relevance of the curricula and their teachers' cultural competence
- Violence, harassment, and abusive experiences at school
- Lack of effective counseling, conflict resolution, and problem-solving interventions, etc.

While those were some of the themes from the girls' focus group the stakeholders' group highlighted the "values, attitudes, and behaviors that affect dropout rates" (Crenshaw Overprotected, 2015 p.27). One issue they found most alarming was when "girls sense the teachers do not value them or celebrate their achievements" (Crenshaw Overprotected, 2015 p.27). It is evident that both Black girls and stakeholders, such as school officials are aware of the fact that Black girls are unsafe in their schools, yet these schools enforce zero tolerance policies which have failed to create safer school environments and threaten students of color, particularly Black girls.

Black Girls Matter Too: This section will offer a broader overview of the aforementioned report and the way in which Black girls are overlooked in schools. The segment of Bridge To Her

Education, will touch on the policy points that will counter the main report's findings along with other reports to be mentioned.

The report, *Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, OverPoliced and UnderProtected* (Crenshaw 2015), highlights some of the major issues with the zero tolerance policy and how it has devolved into the school to prison pipeline. In addition to the above findings, the study found that the research surrounding education and race, including the zero tolerance policy and the resulting school to prison pipeline, is usually focused on Black boys even though the policy negatively impact Black girls more than any other group of students. Second, teachers and school personnel tend to overlook socio-economic issues and other matters that affect Black girls' behavior and determine how they are disciplined. Third, centuries long stereotypes about Black women have led to implicit biases that subjects Black girls to gendered racism that leads teachers and school personnel to target Black girls and prioritize punishment over Black girls' education and safety. Fourth, zero tolerance policy does not provide the necessary training for teachers and school personnel to deal with the sexual trauma that many Black girls deal with, and so when Black girls 'act out' due to stress, all possible root causes are often overlooked. Finally, the report talks about the importance of alternative programs that could benefit Black girls if implemented, as opposed to continuing the use of the zero tolerance policy and risking the imprisonment of more Black girls.

Bridge To Her Education: advocate for the creation of more research that includes Black girls, especially in the area of education and the zero tolerance policy; train teachers and school personnel on the issues that affect Black girls' attitudes and behaviors; request training on gendered racism and sexual trauma; demand programs that teach children conflict resolution techniques.

The Invisible Black Girl: This section discusses how the perception that Black woman possess a certain super strength to endure almost anything, can be a downfall and also lead to Black girls being neglected because school personnel believe Black girls can withstand any challenge without support, and so might overlook Black girls. Resilience, is a core element of the Black woman's narrative. It has taken different forms throughout the years, and whether it is the strong black woman, superwoman, or Black girl magic, resilience has both saved and silenced the Black female. This silence and its expectations extends to young Black girls in the education system, rendering Black girls, who are already a marginalized group, invisible. Melissa Harris Perry explains how history has formed the strong Black woman persona, and Monique Morris elaborates on the neglectful nature of researchers in relation to Black girls and how this reinforces Black girl magic, and contributes to invisible Black girl within education.

On the topic of the strong Black woman, Perry argues that:

The social construction of the black women's citizenship and identity around the theme of self-sacrificed strength is a recurrent motif in black women's lives and politics. The strong black woman is easily recognizable. She confronts all trials and tribulations. She is a source of unlimited support for her family. She is a motivated, hardworking breadwinner. She is always prepared to do what needs to be done for her family and her people. She is sacrificial and smart. She suppresses her emotional needs while anticipating those of others. She has irrepressible spirit that is unbroken by a legacy of oppression, poverty, and rejection (Perry 2011 p. 21).

This idea of unending strength places the Black women and Black girls in a position to constantly perform regardless of whatever racist and sexist challenges they are trying to manage in their lives. When we factor in the lack of research that explores the impact of being Black and female, it would appear as if Black girls are not struggling. It makes their plight invisible. An example of this in connection to the zero tolerance policy and the resulting school to prison pipeline is presented by the report which found that Black girls are "six times more likely to be suspended in comparison to white girls and boys, and three times more likely to be suspended in

comparison to Black boys” (Crenshaw, Overprotected 2015 p.17). Yet, due to the lack of research in the area of education outside of Black males, particularly the zero tolerance policy, the challenges and therefore the solutions for reaching Black females before they enter the school to prison pipeline are delayed.

Dr. Shawn Arango Ricks’ paper further supports the claim of Black girls’ invisibility. She starts out by arguing that,

the needs of Black girls are often overlooked by teachers administrators, and policy makers, an oversight that contributed to a lack of educational programming and policies that address the impact of the intersection of racism and sexism on the educational experiences of Black girls... ignoring the unique positionality in which Black girls live and learn (Falling Through the Crack, 2014, p. 1-2).

This is compounded by the discussion of a post racial America which leads many to believe that racism and therefore its effects are nonexistent. To add to that, “... because feminist epistemologies tend to be concerned with the education of White girls and women, and race-based epistemologies tend to be consumed with the educational barriers negatively affecting Black boys, the educational needs of Black girls have fallen through the cracks” (Evans-Winters; Esposito, 2010) (Falling Through the Crack, 2014, p. 1-2). This micro -invalidation disregards the experiences of Black girls and consequently the solutions to the problem they face when race and gender intersects to form their experience.

As a result of this research *oversight*, the recommendations for zero tolerance policy changes have ignored the intersectionality of Black girls’ experiences and how such experiences shape their behavior. These additional experiences hover over Black girls while they are at school, as well as follow Black girls during their journey to and from home, and shadow them within their homes and communities.

Bridge To Her Education (BTHERE): This section helps to highlight why the policy and its request for training on the issues of gendered racism and cultural stereotypes will be important. This form of training will better address the implicit bias that can lead to micro-invalidation and stereotypes that lead to benign neglect.

The Black Girl's Shadow: "Just because we are magic, it does not mean we are not real" (Jesse Williams, *BET Awards*): The quote takes from Black girl magic. The various responsibilities and hardships that many Black girls take on and endure, while still pushing through and exuding the idea of Black girl magic- being super strong and beautiful through everything - is almost unrealistic. The unrealistic level of performance makes Black girls appear to be magical to our community and even others. However, Jesse Williams reminds us that despite this high level of performance and functionality we are still human beings and need to remind ourselves of that too, as Black people.

Due to the fact that Black girls are expected to be strong and take on familial responsibilities, it is easy to forget that they are humans which further supports the invisibility concept and denies the issues that often haunts many (impoverished) Black girls. For instance, there are many facets of the zero tolerance policy that deter Black girls from attending school. One example is provided by a case study participant who compared going through her school's metal detectors and searches as an experience almost similar to sexual harassment, "You have to strip down to the T... You basically come to school naked... It feels like you're in a jail. It's like they treat you like animals, because they think that's where you are going to end up" (Crenshaw, 2014 p.31). Another participant talks about how not "feeling up to" the searches and cell phone seizures at her school, makes her and other students not want to attend school, which school personnel are aware of (Crenshaw, 2014, p30). Although this detachment from their prison like schools correlates to increased dropout rates, the policy still remains in place. If that were not enough, when Black girls make it through the metal detectors they are often ignored. One way in which this occurs is that their hard work and success is often overlooked and rarely celebrated, especially when compared to their male counterparts.

Crenshaw found that the lack of attention that Black girls observe can become “the touchstone to benign neglect that may diminish school attachment in high achieving female students”; Black girls are invisible even when they are performing well, which may lead some girls “to gravitate toward unproductive pathways or simply fall through the cracks” (Crenshaw, 2014, p.32). When Black girls head out back through the metal detectors, they have other concerns that follow them home to and from school - familial responsibilities, the threat and occurrence of sexual assault and the trauma it causes, as well as possible teen pregnancy. Factors that would affect any young girl’s stress level and thus their attitude and behavior, especially in a chaotic school environment.

Familial responsibilities, which includes early pregnancies that can lend to Black girls’ disconnection to school, and includes girls who act as guardians for their younger siblings and caretakers of the home, sometimes financially which means sacrificing study time in order to maintain a job (Crenshaw, 2014, p.25). In the case of pregnancy one recent study found that only “51 percent of teen mothers finish high school by the age of 22, compared to 89 percent of all other young women”, and the fact that the zero tolerance policy does not provide school personnel with the training and resource to prevent pregnancies and provide support for Black girls who bear the burden of familial responsibilities, it is one more obstacle in the way of a Black girl’s success (Crenshaw, 2014, p25). Subsequently, isolating Black girls whose responsibilities already undermine their academic potential, resulting in more stress and less support. One participant in the case study talked about what it was like to be the guardian for her niece, while only in the tenth grade because her sister was on drugs (Crenshaw, 2014, p.39). Another student talked about the insecurities that came with being a teenage mother, both of whom had no support (Crenshaw, 2014, p.39). To assume the responsibility of guardianship at

such a young age, while trying to complete school would be viewed as Black girl Magic, but because these young girls are doing what some might interpret as wonderful, it does not mean they do not need the support. In addition to that, for some they are judged and ostracized by both staff and students for being young parents, which to some might question their abilities as students and this type of micro-insult can lead to teachers overlooking young Black girls who are parents. If a school is to create stability for all of its students then there needs to be a policy that fosters the environment for care and safety, and the zero tolerance policy does not accomplish that.

To add to that, when it comes to familial responsibilities the financial burden does not end with youth, because according to the National Women's Law Center "due to the prevalence of single wage earning families headed by women in the African American community" Black girls dropping out of high school is of even greater concern because of the literal cost to the Black family (Crenshaw, 2014, p.25). If socioeconomics and familial responsibilities were not enough, there are other ways that race and gender intersect to create a unique space for Black girls that the zero tolerance policy does not account for in the way Black girls might behave in schools and how they need to be addressed and disciplined.

Bridge To Her Education (BTHERE): Provide resources for young parents and children who are undertaking adult-like responsibilities, without separating the family. Make their issues visible within the school's agenda.

She is Black. She is Girl. She is Hurt: This subsection of Black Girl Connection looks at how sexual trauma can shape Black girls' experience in school, especially when the trauma is ignored by school personnel. In addition to school officials leaving Black girls vulnerable, the zero tolerance policy leaves Black girls vulnerable as well because they are unable to express themselves due to lack of counsellors or defend themselves due to the zero tolerance backlash.

As previously stated Black girls face the high possibility for sexual assault, which can occur to and from schools and or within the walls of their homes and schools. Instead of providing support and protection for Black girls through programming and counseling, the zero tolerance policy makes Black girls more vulnerable because it penalizes them for defending themselves. A fifth grade case study participant's story illustrates this vulnerability all too well (Crenshaw, 2014, p.35):

This boy kept spitting those little spitballs through a straw at me while we were taking a test. I told the teacher, and he told him to stop, but he didn't. He kept on doing it. I yelled at him. He punched me in the face, like my eye. My eye was swollen. I don't remember if I fought him. That's how it ended. I was like, 'Did I get suspended?' I was, like, a victim.

With that type of response the school sends the message that bullying and harassment of Black girls is allowed. One of the other girls added that, "It was remarkable how teachers have a culture of sweeping it under the rug, they will say 'boys will be boys'; this is sexual awakening" (Crenshaw, 2014, p.35). Despite being aware of the harassment that these young Black girls are facing at the hands of their male classmates, according to the study teachers are slow to assist, as one student pointed out, "they know all the gossip about girls being shamed coming to school, like they can't concentrate because the boys are making comments- lewd comments- constantly pressuring them to have sex with them. Slapping their butts and bras, and just sort of forcing themselves on them against the wall or locker" (Crenshaw, 2014, p.35). The school's lack of response allows for the continuation of blatant sexual assault and the hindrance of any sort of self-defense, verbal or otherwise on Black girls' part.

To ignore Black girls is a micro-invalidation that clearly illustrates the gender biases that teachers can hold against Black girls. The way in which Black girls defend themselves might be viewed negatively because of the biases teacher hold based on race: " Women of color are more likely to push back on things or they are going to talk a certain way and you have to understand

what they are saying” (Crenshaw Overprotected, 2015 p.30). If Black girls are being overlooked, and have to defend themselves under a harsh policy that punishes the way they defend themselves, because they do not have education that teaches proper conflict resolution techniques, then they are made virtually helpless when being bullied, sexually harassed, and abused. Schools and those in the education sector have to do better by Black girls and students of color in general.

To make matters worse, even if Black girls survive the daily sexual harassment in a space that is supposed to be safe, like school, some still have to struggle with sexual trauma on the way to and at home. A stakeholder noted that:

It can be scary. We definitely have a lot of child predators, school starts early and it's dark outside. And they are the only one on the streets and they are worried. We've had several instances where girls were followed to school by strange men in a car, and they come to school and they are terrified. You're living in a low-income area. Our girls are a lot more vulnerable and people do target them. And so they are often approached and solicited and, you know, all sorts of things they shouldn't have to endure (Crenshaw, 2014, p.37).

One can only begin to imagine how that impacts a Black girls' daily routine, but instead of focusing on counselors and teaching girls how to manage their frustrations and communicate their problems, resources are focused on putting police officers who usually have no experience with youth development in these low income and low resourced areas. One report participant shared how her guidance counselor ignored her when she tried to get someone to listen to her after she was raped. The guidance counselor did not listen and the post-rape trauma boiled over and resulted in her kicking a teacher and being expelled (Crenshaw Overprotected, 2015 p. 37). With a counter policy such as the Bridge To Her Education (BTHERE), issues such as the one described can be avoided, because the policy would call for the training of teachers and other school personnel, including police officers, to be better prepared to deal with the sexual trauma and address sexist views that school personnel hold and that a lot of Black girls struggle with.

If Black girls survive the school hallways and classrooms, then they have home and community to contend with when it comes to sexual harassment. A recent study found that “sixty percent of Black girls have experienced sexual abuse by the age of 18”, but despite the prevalence these rapes are rarely reported or receive media coverage (Middleton 2011 p.1). One reason is that Black girls fear the backlash that they have observed other Black females receive, especially when it is a Black male. Some well-known examples of this backlash within the Black community are R. Kelly’ sex tape victim and the numerous other claims that have been made about his relations with young Black girls; Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill; Mike Tyson and Desiree Washington; along with other rape cases that are placed under a microscope and torn apart by rape culture, possibly concluding in the favor of the rapist and not the survivor (Harris-Perry, 2011, p.53-54). For Black girls the effects of rape culture does not stop with their gender, it also builds on the manner in which gender and race collided to form ‘Black girl’. It is a formation that consists of race and rape, that silences Black girls’ pain and creates a smoke screen around how sexual assault and trauma affects their academic performance and behavior, and in turn how to approach disciplining Black girls.

Bridge To Her Education (BTHERE): Ask for morning patrols by police officers and school resource officers; train all school staff to recognize harassment and bullying, as well as how to deal with it; educate student on bullying, rape culture and gendered racism; provide schools with more counselors and or train and support current counselors in areas where they struggle.

The white Hydra: The Hydra is a mythological creature that has multiple heads and is hard to defeat because each time one head is severed two more appear in its place. I titled this section the white Hydra, because the racist and sexist cultural stereotypes that Black women are still associated with are an element of white supremacy and the resulting prejudice it creates. In

relation to Black girls and Black women the white Hydra is the three major gendered racial stereotypes that haunt Black females in the United States of America and they are, ‘Mammy’, ‘Sapphire’, and ‘Jezebel’, all of which continue to be reinvented and preserved by the media; like the white Hydra when one version or head is cut down, another version or head appears (Harris-Perry, 2011, p.33). The two that plague young Black girls the most within the school walls are Jezebel-“the myth of Black women as lascivious, seductive, and insatiable” (Harris-Perry, 2011, p.55), which the case study participants’ experiences reflect; and Sapphire- the argumentative Black woman that is the bane of the Black male’s existence (Harris-Perry, 2011, p.88). Sapphire is who teachers see when they assume Black girls are challenging them by simply asking questions.

Revisiting the experiences of the report participants’ experiences, the Jezebel feeds into the type of rape culture and victim blaming that affects Black girls. The ugly head of Jezebel continues to hang over Black girls and all she embodies has been internalized by school personnel who act on these biases when they interpret and discipline Black girls using the zero tolerance policy. If school personnel believe that a Black girl is hypersexual and associate that to her body and behavior, then in a situation that involves sexual harassment the correct action to a school personnel might be suspension and expulsion to remove the perceived problem from the classroom. An example of this comes from the report Black Girls Matter.

A student was getting a lot of attention from a boy who was pressuring her for sex, and her father urged teachers to help, because it was preventing her from going to school. The father told the teachers to do something or his daughter would not attend the school anymore. The teachers responded by saying, “good, take her out she attracts too much attention from our boys”, and basically all the teachers agreed (Crenshaw Overprotected, 2015 p.32). The report states that

this is not an isolated incident and that teachers “aren’t the role models for gender equity” (Crenshaw Overprotected, 2015 p.35). Teachers have effectively recreated Jezebel in the image of the Black girls they serve.

“while the myth of Black women’s hyper sexuality and aggressive nature may have been historically created and perpetuated by white, social, political, and economic institutions, its contemporary manifestations are often seen just as clearly in the internal politics of African American communities” (Harris-Perry, 2011, p.55).

The Jezebel stereotype was a part of the early beginnings of rape culture and victim blaming for the Black female and it is often unchallenged. Jezebel was born from slavery to justify the rapes and commodifying of Black women- if she is lascivious and sex hungry then she cannot be raped and so it gave white slave masters unchallenged access to the Black female’s body (Harris-Perry, 2011, p.56). Step into the present, and the stereotype is still accepted, because as Harris-Perry points out, there is limited research that challenges these stereotypes, in contrast to the countless images that is presented by the media that reinforces these stereotypes (Harris-Perry, 2011, p.57), music videos are one example. In the case of the Black girl, these stereotypes still serve to deny her trauma as she is already viewed as a whore and therefore cannot be raped. As such, school personnel, whether consciously or implicitly might ignore Black girls’ sexual trauma, because they think it occurred because of her perceived hyper-sexual nature so she cannot be raped or traumatized. This view of Black girls as hypersexualized, presents them as the antithesis to the chaste white woman (Harris-Perry, 2014, p.55), and if this persists then policy recommendations will not take into consideration the necessary steps to addressing the sexual assault Black girls experience, and the symptoms of the sexual trauma that is reflected in Black girls’ behavior.

Bridge To Her Education (BTHERE): Teach about the historical roots of the white hydra and the effect it has today in the classes and workshops on gendered racism, and create a retreat space for male and female students.

Black Girl, Is not Girl Enough

The aforementioned stereotypes also combine with the zero tolerance policy to attack Black girls femininity through implicit bias. One study revealed that, “teachers sometimes exercised disciplinary interventions against Black girls to encourage the adoption of more ‘acceptable’ qualities of femininity; quieter and more passive”, which brings us to Sapphire the argumentative Black female (Crenshaw, 2014, p.24). It is demeaning for Black girls to have their identities as female and girl questioned, simply because they are Black, which illustrates the difficulty in separating race and gender for Black girls and women. A part of this also relates to the Jezebel stereotype and how it contrasts with traditional white beauty. While white women were allowed to be women and set the standard of womanhood, Black women were seen as no more than property and compared to animals, the contrast to white women. The “Victorian ideal of true womanhood required strict adherence to a code of piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity” however, “African American women’s lives and labors in the antebellum South contrasted sharply with this iconic womanhood” (Harris-Perry, 2014, p.55). With a contrast like that, it is difficult for others to accept Black girls in their organic forms and resist forcing Black girls to be someone they are not. Based on the main report Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced and Underprotected, Black girls are well aware that they are being targeted.

The report participants observed that there are double standards in behavioral management for boys and girls, and I have to wonder how the double standards affect the rate at which young Black girls are ushered into the juvenile system and therefore the school to prison pipeline. For

example, another young Black girl in the study group from the report pointed out that, “ If a girl does the same exact thing (as a boy) they are sent to the office right away and they miss out whatever was happening in that class”, once again placing discipline over young Black girls’ education (Crenshaw, 2014, p.31). To add to that, with the biases surrounding Black girls, one can conclude that often times under zero tolerance policy, young Black girls are simply being punished for being Black girls. Instead of creating order, the zero tolerance policy is creating more problems in Black girls’ lives, because it is being abused.

To counter this Black girls either pull out their invisibility cloak or try to find ways to increase their visibility which results in being labeled “angry, aggressive, promiscuous, and/or loud” (Arango Ricks, 2014, p.6). This means that Black girls are “punished for refusing to be discounted and demonized and run the risk of being stereotype and dehumanized, while simply fighting to be heard and validated. They rail against being allowed to participate, but not fully included" (Arango Ricks, 2014, p.6). The question then arises, how are Black girls supposed to survive a policy that punishes them when they are both quiet and outspoken? Especially when the zero tolerance policy, has already sent Black girls down the school to prison pipeline for temper tantrums and refusing the clean-up cake off of the cafeteria floor, among other behavior that prior to the zero tolerance policy, would have once placed students in detention, the counselor, or the principal’s office, instead of handcuffs? The application of the zero tolerance policy is inconsistent has effectively taken the power out of teachers’ hands and placed into that of the police officers, who are not all capable of dealing with youth, especially Black girls. The policy needs to be more standardized and the bias in application needs to be tackled. Furthermore, the policy is not worth the trouble on any level, and fails both the disparate and similarly situated tests.

Bridge To Her Education: Create a system that assigns certain misbehaviors to school resource officers and the different school personnel, that distances students from juvenile detention and the school to prison pipeline. Make sure that school personnel performance evaluation monitors their ability to check their biases and how they are treating their students. Take police out of the schools, but if they must stay make sure they and school resource officers are trained to understand the basic tenets of youth development.

Not worth a Black Girl's Life: With the biases and discrepancies of zero tolerance policies it is not worth it to keep the policy in schools, especially when there are no changes made to improve the policy and how it is used, because when we look at how Black girls alone are treated under the policy it fails students and schools.

The report, along with other research highlights the ways in which many impoverished Black girls' ignored experiences, coupled with peoples' cultural ignorance, react with implicit bias to create in the education system that creates a standardized version of Black girls, that under the zero tolerance policy are easy to push along the school to prison pipeline. This standardization continues the cycle of disparate impact and the school to prison pipeline.

If the application of the zero tolerance policy was not affected by bias and used in a discriminatory manner, there would not be so many students of color in the school to prison pipeline, particularly Black students. Disparate impact describes policies that appear neutral but disproportionately affect one student more than another, as in the case of white and Black students, and can be considered acceptable if it serves to protect the school community (Smith 2014), but with research showing that zero tolerance is not effective and leaves Black girls vulnerable, it is therefore unacceptable. As previously stated, Black girls are "six times more likely to be suspended and or expelled and therefore more exposed to the school to prison

pipeline, in comparison to their white counterparts” (Crenshaw, 2012, p.17). Even with the different elements that can affect students’ behaviors, if the policy was being fairly applied there would not be a race and gender gap of such magnitude.

The Department of Education (DOE) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) officials agree that the numbers presented Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) report on race and discipline, are “suspicious” due to the “substantial racial disparities (Smith 2014). In addition to disparate impact, the DOE and DOJ also subjected the policy to a “similarly situated” test, and found that even students with similar past discipline histories were treated differently based on race and ethnicity. For example, a Hispanic student received a longer suspension than his non-Hispanic counterpart despite having similarly situated behavioral backgrounds (Smith 2014). The DOE and DOJ also explain that schools who continue to use the policy are engaging in discrimination (Smith 2014). Taking into consideration the report participants’ experiences that illustrate the pre-existing double standard between boys and girls, as well as the study where teachers admitted to targeting Black girls for being Black girls, it is evident that the zero tolerance policy fails the disparate and similarly situated test in relation to Black girls; it is clearly not worth the cost of sacrificing Black girls to the school to prison pipeline.

The zero tolerance policy has overcriminalized students of color, as in the case of Black girls and does not create safer schools or better learning environments, which Christopher A. Malett explained were some of the main reasons for the policy. W. Lowery also questions whether or not, “the post-Columbine measures are putting minority students on the fast track to the prison system?” Lowery and other education activists and researchers nationwide see the “stringent policies as a major contributor to the prison pipeline and that the policy conditions students to be distrustful of police officers, while sending Black students to the judicial system more often than

their white counterparts (Lowery 2015). This heightened distrust could very well be a result of historical relations with law enforcement, mainly police brutality within the Black community. One can also infer, that the distrust Black girls experience is likely a result of the treatment they receive at the hands of arresting police officers, who themselves are not above implicit bias.

Zero tolerance policies are problematic to those subjected to it, because if entered into the prison pipeline there is no guarantee of a quality education, children fall behind and might drop out and there is also the economic cost, because a criminal record makes seeking employment even more difficult. Lowery also interviewed Zorka Karanxha a researcher at the University of Southern Florida who has studied the causes and impact of the prison pipeline and Zorka argues that, “Once a child is in the prison system the opportunity is lost...even when you get out, you have a record, and people won't hire you” and the economic costs to Black girls and those who rely upon them is already a concern (Lowery 2015). During the research for this paper, there were multiple references to the correlation between zero tolerance policies and the drop-out rate, this number especially for Black and Latino students will only increase. Consequently, the economic costs will only increase, because it is difficult for former prisoners to find employment, which means they will be more likely to apply for welfare programs. Zero tolerance policies are not worth the trouble.

Not Worth A Black Girl's Life: Additional Studies

Education can make a significant difference in the lives of young Black girls, and based on the above statistics without access to education, which the zero tolerance policy denies many young Black girls, the road towards success becomes even more difficult. Below is a list of the key issues related to the zero tolerance policy, some of which or a reiteration of problems pointed out by the main case study, further highlighting why this is an important policy to

address. These issues were taken from a study conducted by the National Association of School Psychologists to analyze the zero tolerance policy and its effects on students and schools.

- Racial disproportionality: Black students receive more harsh punitive measures (suspension, expulsion, corporal punishment) and less mild discipline than their non-minority peers, even controlling for socioeconomic status.
- A greater negative impact on educational outcomes for students with disabilities
- Inconsistent application of zero tolerance policies, which often are not reserved exclusively for serious behaviors but applied indiscriminately to much lower levels of rule infraction.
- An increasing rate of suspensions and expulsions throughout the country, even though school violence generally has been stable or declining.
- Increasing the length of expulsion to two-year, three-year, or even permanent expulsion.
- A high rate of repeat suspensions that may indicate that suspension is ineffective in changing behavior for challenging students.
- Elevated dropout rates related to the repeated use of suspension and expulsion - the most likely consequence of suspension is additional suspension (National Association of School Psychologist 2008).

The zero tolerance policy has been steadily contributing to the dropout rate and detachment of Black girls from their educational experience. Based on the research findings presented by the National Association of Student Psychologists (NASP), the zero tolerance policies when used in their original form for weaponry and threats to the school community can be useful. However, taking into consideration the above list of issues, when the policy is constantly being applied with a wide-casting net for all misbehaviors, then there are more Black girls being pulled out of school and placed into juvenile detention. These Black girls are more inclined to be disengage from their academic experience, which contributes to the dropout rate, while taking away from the school climate and obstructing Black girls' access to education.

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) write that the zero tolerance policy in connection to attendance problems, “may set individuals who already display antisocial behavior on an accelerated course to delinquency” (NASP 2008). This is a risk because the students are placed in a situation where “there is a lack of parental supervision and a greater

opportunity to socialize with other deviant peers”, while they are in juvenile detention or alternative schools (NASP). This supports the argument that the juvenile centers, especially private centers that do not provide appropriate resources for students is not the answer to dealing with misbehaviors. The NASP finding also supports the argument that the zero tolerance policy and its mandated suspension and expulsion “results in the denial of educational services”, especially for Black and Latino students (NASP). The policy places more and more Black girls in the juvenile system therefore feeding the school to prison pipeline, which pushes Black girls out of school and making them more vulnerable to a life of poverty.

If the NASP research was not enough evidence for supporters of the zero tolerance policy, the American Psychological Association (APA) assembled a task force to research and evaluate the zero tolerance policy. The findings only reinforce concerns about the policy and its harmful impact. They found that the policy was not helpful in regards to discipline, that it has a negative impact on school climate. Furthermore, there's a negative relationship between education and the juvenile system, as well as best practices for adolescent development (*APA):

- Have zero tolerance policies made schools safer and more effective in handling disciplinary issues: “Evidence does not support an assumption that violence in schools is out of control or increasing...There is also no evidence that zero tolerance policy has increased the consistency of school discipline” (APA 853-4).
- Removal of students who violate school rules will create a more learning conducive climate for the remaining students: However, the task force found that schools with “higher rates of school suspension and expulsion appear to have less satisfactory ratings of school climate” (APA 854).
- Zero tolerance policy deters certain student behavior: “Deterrence is central to the philosophy of zero tolerance” but “suspensions in general seem to predict higher future rates of misbehavior and suspension among those students who are suspended” (APA 854). It is also “moderately associated with a higher likelihood of school dropout and failure to graduate on time” (APA 854).
- Taking into account the developmental level of children and youth, are zero tolerance policies appropriate as psychological intervention: Adolescents particularly before the age of 15 display psychosocial immaturity, with one example being impulse control.

Therefore, “if judgment is the result of developmental or neurological immaturity and if the resulting behavior does not pose a threat to safety” the long-term impact of zero tolerance policy must be weighed against that of other disciplinary action to ensure the student is receiving developmental assistance such as socio-emotional mentorship and adult support, especially when they are being punished for their misbehavior (APA 855).

- Zero tolerance on the effects of the juvenile system and education: Although security technology and school resource officers are useful there is insufficient data on how beneficial these officers are in promoting safe schools (856). Zero tolerance practices have also increased the use of profiling, which according to the U.S. Secret Service and the Federal Bureau of Investigation “profiles constructed to promote school safety are unreliable...over identify students from minority populations as potentially dangerous” (APA 856).
- This also helps to explain why minority student are more affected by the zero tolerance policy, also illustrating that the policy falls under disparate impact and is not acceptable for in school practice. This also means that with profiling more Black students are being siphoned into the juvenile system. Additionally, “many schools appear to be using the juvenile justice system to a greater extent and, in relatively large percentage of cases that would not have been considered dangerous or threatening” (APA 856).

Once again as opposed to receiving counseling or behavioral management, students are simply being shipped off to juvenile detainment, but some departments have recognized the need for improvement. S.E. Smith inquires whether or not the Department of Education (DOE) and the Department of Justice (DOJ), could “finally be shutting off the valve on the school to prison pipeline” (Smith 2014), in regards to the 32-page “Dear Colleague” letter, outlining changes for schools to make. In addition to other issues the letter addressed the two major problem areas of the zero tolerance policy, as previously mentioned, 'similarly situated' and 'disparate impact', which are symptoms of the racist disproportionate application of the policy in regards to Black girls (Smith 2014).

The article *Zero Tolerance Policies*, mentions the 2011 Supportive School Discipline Initiative, which was a joint federal effort between the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Attorney General's office to “combat graduation rate disparities caused by disproportionate enforcement of school discipline policies”(Lowery 2015). It is one alternative that has already

been put in motion in Florida school districts, where a 2008 study found that Black students were two and half times more likely to be referred to the judicial system (Lowery 2015). There are efforts being made to counter the effects of zero tolerance policies for according to former Attorney General Eric Holder, “the educational system should be a doorway to opportunity and not a point of entry to our criminal justice system – is a critical, and achievable, goal” (Lowery 2015). The negative effects of the zero tolerance policy on the school community is increasingly evident, and so stakeholders such as the U.S. Department of Education, members of the judicial system like the former Attorney General, school districts and school boards as in the case of Florida and New York schools can no longer afford to stand by as the policy threatens Black girls' futures. One potential roadblock to all of this is the current government administration.

Bridge To Her Education: Present the findings of NASP and the APA to schools who still enforce zero tolerance policies as well as the Dear Colleague Letter to urge to advocate for a better policy, and potentially implement Bridge To Her Education (BTHERE).

The Alternative Black Girl

In this section we will look at recommendations for alternative programs and practices that can improve the educational experience and lives of Black girls and even other students.

The literature used thus far, shares some common points in both the problems that the scholars have recognized and the potential solutions needed to rectify any damages that the zero tolerance policy and its consequential school to prison pipeline created. First, the main case study Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced and Underprotected recommends the following (Crenshaw, 2015, p.12):

- The inclusion of Black girls in research, advocacy, and programmatic interventions
- Equitable funding to support women and girls

- Develop ways to help girls feel safe without an overreliance on punitive interventions
- Develop and enforce protocols to make schools a bully and sexual assault free environment
- Review and Revise policies that funnel girls into the juvenile justice system
- Develop programs that identify sexual victimization to supports traumatized girls
- Parenting programs and support groups young guardians
- Urge the Department of Education to refine statistical reporting on disciplinary matters while disaggregating along racial and gender lines

Elevate the experiences of Black girls experiences and create public awareness

Dr. Shawn Arango Ricks' offers mentorship as an alternative, in hopes that similar to their male counterparts Black girls will have a positive response to mentoring. She suggests two models: Ford's Female Achievement Model of Excellence (FFAME) and Connection, Awareness, Restraining, and Encouragement (CARE) (Arango Ricks, 2014, p.7).

- The FFAME model is aims to “increase resiliency, self-efficacy, racial and gender pride” through “intrinsic motivation and work ethic; internal locus of control; willingness to make sacrifices; academic pride” (Arango Ricks, 2014, p.7).
- The CARE model is focused on “improving the connection between teachers and Black female students; the awareness of the issues that face Black girls, similar to the main case study; retraining for teachers, parents and students on how they interact with each other; encouragement and mentorship to learn how to navigate the education system” (Arango Ricks, 2014, p.7-8).

NASP also argues that schools need to implement alternative disciplinary programs that gave all students access to an 'appropriate education in a safe environment' (National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) 2008). Some suggestions are:

- Violence prevention- this would include a prevention curriculum, services from school psychologists, counselors or social workers; family and community involvement and implementation of effective school-wide discipline practices, with examples being Second Step, Resolving Conflict Creatively Program and Promoting Positive Thinking Strategies (NASP 2008).
- Social skills training and positive behavioral supports – interventions that help students with emotional/behavioral disorders and social skills deficits. Examples of such programs are Stop and Think (Project ACHIEVE) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) (NASP 2008).

- Early Intervention Strategies- interventions that target low levels of inappropriate behavior before they escalate into violence. Some examples of successful programs are First Step to Success (kindergarten) and Positive Adolescent Choices Training (developed for African American youth) (NASP 2008).

According to NASP these alternative programs to the zero tolerance policy are just a few examples of steps that schools could take to slow and eventually stop the school to prison pipeline. They focus on the student and attempt to find the root cause of the problem, as well as provide training for dealing with youth. This approach can be especially beneficial for police officers who patrol the school or school resource officers, often with little or no knowledge of youth development. If the officers are trained to communicate with the students then it can lower the arrest rate and the number of students who are siphoned into the juvenile prison system. Despite having some variation in what is recommended, one thing is key, in order for any of the recommendations to work there has to be a large scale partnership between various stakeholders, which would require a uniformed approach towards remedying the effects of the zero tolerance policy and halting the school to prison pipeline for Black girls and potentially students of color.

Bridge To Her Education: Some of the suggested alternatives to the zero tolerance policies such as programs that mentor girls, and helps create a bully and sexual assault free school environment are reflected in the policy.

Action for the Alternative Black girl

The implementation of the zero tolerance policy required cooperation between all levels of leadership, from Congress to the police, and so to overturn the policy and undo its damage will require similar cooperation. To improve the policy or implement a new one will require organization and advocacy that empowers Black girls and those involved in the process for change. For this I suggest VeneKlasen and Miller's citizen centered advocacy, which is "an organized political process that involves the coordinated efforts of people to change policies,

practices, ideas, and values that perpetuate inequality, prejudice, and exclusion. It strengthens citizens' capacity as decision makers and build more accountable and equitable institutions of power" (A New Weave 2002 p.22). In the case of countering the zero tolerance policy, it would take numerous stakeholders to introduce, implement, and monitor an alternative policy to zero tolerance policy. Although there would be many moving parts, the approach calls for everyone to work together, while making sure that the Black girls who are involved, become more empowered over time. The citizen centered approach will be a fundamental principle in the process of protecting Black girls, and subsequently all students. For a clearer understanding, I will review the alternative policy recommendation – Bridge To Her Education (BTHERE), and introduce the Girl Scouts, accompanied by an explanation of why I think they are the best organization for launching the alternative policy.

Policy Recommendation - Bridge To Her Education (BTHERE):

The zero tolerance policy has been fueling the school-to-prison pipeline, by relying on suspensions, expulsions, and the juvenile judicial system as a means of punishment for minor and major behavior infractions. It is time to launch a new policy campaign that countermeasures the negative impact of the zero tolerance policy. A campaign that advocates for the adoption of Bridge To Her Education (BTHERE) as the better policy for students and schools. After reviewing the major case study and the NASP and APA research, the Support for Youth Development policy addresses what have been deemed the major problem areas of the zero tolerance policy, particularly those that affect Black girls.

Bridge To Her Education (BTHERE) Asks:

- Present the American Psychological Association Task force findings, along with that of National Association of School Psychologists, which show the negative effects and lack of benefit to implementing zero tolerance policy practices. Also share the findings from the report Black Girls Matter
- Advocate for the creation of more research that includes Black girls, especially in the area of education and the zero tolerance policy; train teachers and school personnel on the issues that affect Black girls' attitudes and behaviors; request training on gendered racism and sexual trauma; demand programs that teach children conflict resolution techniques.
- Redefine what drugs, weapons, and threats to the school community are according to the schools
- Train school community on how to deal with sexual trauma
- Training on racism and implicit biases, and the white Hydra
- Provide resources for young parents and children who are undertaking adult-like responsibilities, without separating the family. Make their issues visible within the school's agenda.
- Make training on alternative behavioral techniques such as PBIS mandatory for all school staff
- Provide mentoring programs and conflict management training for Black girls, such as FFAME and the CARE Model
- Have a ranking system of behavioral infraction fall under the zero tolerance policy and therefore what police officers in the schools should deal with, versus what teachers, counselors, and or principals should address.
- Have parents and other organizations work together to counter the effects of the school to prison pipeline
- Establish a Girl Scouts chapter, where the girls will work on increasing awareness for Black girls under the zero tolerance policy and for implementation of the BTHERE policy

A policy like this will require a large organization with the woman power and the influence to collaborate with the members of “the village”, including the schools that would need to be comfortable with an organization working within the school community. This is just one of the reasons why the Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) would be ideal for implementing and monitoring the Bridge To Her Education (BTHERE), using the citizen centered approach, because they are a trusted organization with a vast network.

The Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA)

The Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) was founded in 1912 by Juliette Gordon Low and has since been a leading organization in developing women of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place – which is also their mission statement. According

to the Girl Scout Research Institute (GSRI) GSUSA has over three million active members and more than 59 million alumnae (report GSRI Girl Scouting works PG4 2012). The organization has opened its doors since its inception to young girls of various backgrounds and has shifted its focus from home maker tasks to the following focus areas: Encourage Healthy Living Opportunities for Girls; Promote Economic Opportunities for Girls; Foster Global Citizenship and a Global Voice for Girls; Support a Strong Non-profit Community and Girl Scout Experience; Prevent Bullying/Relational Aggression; as well as a continued focus on the outdoors and STEM (Legislative Agenda 2015 p.1-2).

The organization also boast the prestigious Gold Award that is earned by teenage girls who complete a Take Action project. There are scholarships and other benefits associated to the Gold Award. For instance if a woman joins the army she is automatically placed one rank higher than new recruits. The Girl Scouts of the USA is more than just cookies and arts and crafts, but is it really creating women of courage, confidence, and character? And is it doing so for young girls of all backgrounds? The question that critics have begun asking is, *Does the Girl Scouts of the USA empower young girls, including girls of color?* The question cannot be ignored, and if the answer is no, is that necessarily a bad thing for launching the SYD policy through the Girl Scouts?

Definitions

There are multiple definitions for empowerment that range depending on the field it is being used for. For example, in Gloria F Carr's essay Zimmerman and Rappaport (1988) describe empowerment as "the ability of individuals to gain control socially, politically, economically, and psychologically through access to information, knowledge and skills,

decision-making, individual self-efficacy, community participation, and perceived control” (p.725).

In another example Srilatha Batliwala (2002) describes the *process* of empowerment as, a range of activities from individual self-assertion to collective resistance, protest and mobilization that challenge basic power relations...Empowerment therefore is a process aimed at changing the nature and direction of systemic forces that marginalize women and other disadvantaged sectors (VeneKlasen and Miller, p. 53).

In this sense empowerment is similar to citizen centered advocacy, where the individuals involved are no longer repressed by their situation but feel as though they have the power to make a change and are a part of the decision making process.

The questions are asked once again, based on the above definition, are Girl Scouts of all races empowered by the organization? And if not, does that mean that SYD cannot be launched through the Girl Scouts?

Girl Scout Research Institute

The Girl Scout Research Institute (GSRI) was formed in 2000 as a “vital extension of Girl Scouts of the USA’S commitment to addressing the complex and ever-changing needs of girls”, its studies are used to informing programming, public policy, and advocacy for Girl Scouting (GSRI Unfinished Business 2013 p. 19). Since its inception the Girl Scout Research Institute has released various reports on studies they have conducted in relation to Girl Scout areas of focus and the overall state of girls in the United States of America. We will review a study in relation to Girl Scouts’ impact.

Girl Scouting Works: The Alumnae Report (GSRI, 2012, p. 1-40)

This study was designed to answer the following questions:

- Does Girl Scout participation benefit certain demographic groups more than others? How lasting is the impact of Girl Scouts

- How do Girl Scouts alumnae compare to non- Girl Scout alumnae with respect to several key indicators of success
- What are the perceptions of Girl Scout alumnae of the impact and benefits of their Girl Scout experience

The study showed that Girl Scout alumnae outshone non-Girl Scout alumnae on the

following indicators of success, and they are:

- Sense of self
- Volunteerism and community work
- Civic engagement
- Education
- Income/socioeconomic status (p. 7)

The study pointed out that although incidence rate is lowest among women of color -

Caucasians 56%, African Americans 38%, Hispanics 33% and Asians 27%- the benefits of Girl Scout extend beyond racial, gender, and socioeconomic class lines (Girl Scouting Works, 2012, p.8-11). The study also reported other crucial statistics and findings (Girl Scouting Works, 2012, p. 19-22).

- Alumnae credit Girl Scouting with preparing them to face life's challenges and opportunities with resourcefulness, ingenuity, and discipline
- 57% of alumnae are more likely to consider themselves leaders compared to 49% of non-alumnae
- 72% of African American alumnae are more likely to consider themselves leaders compared to 62% of non-alumnae
- 61 % of Hispanic alumnae compared to 47% of non-alumnae consider themselves leaders
- 56% of Asians alumnae compared to 44% of non-alumnae consider themselves leaders
 - The study did offer a disclaimer in regards to leadership, in that this might not be exclusively attributed to Girl Scouts.

Important to note is that the highest ratings came from women who spent more years in Girl Scouts, are African American or Hispanic, and/or who participated in Girl Scout in rural areas. So, the Girl Scouts can have a positive influence on the Black girls who would join to advocate against the zero tolerance policy. The Girl Scout also provides useful tools that could

significantly help Black girls with communication, and perhaps not leave them as vulnerable in the face of harassment.

One such tool is the *Be a Friend First* lesson on preventing bullying/relational aggression and building healthy relations (Legislative Agenda 2015 p. 2). It focuses “directly on reducing bullying, including cyberbullying and relational aggression”, because “30 percent of girls have experienced some form of bullying or relational aggression from their peers (Legislative Agenda 2015 p. 2). As previously written, Black girls often experience harassment and are unaware of alternative strategies to deal with the harassment. With the presence of GSUSA teaching the girls alternative strategies through their *Be a Friend First* lesson, schools could see improvement in the way in which girls communicate. But is this enough? Is this level of empowerment, satisfactory?

Taking into consideration the statistical findings of the above study is Girl Scout according to our definition - where the individuals involved are no longer repressed by their situation but feel as though they have the power to make a change and are a part of the decision making process - empowering to girls, particularly Black girls?

The Question and Response

With the state of race in the United States of America, it would make sense to start introducing the topic to our youth from an earlier age, and an organization like Girl Scout is an ideal platform for such dialogue. However, such dialogue does not occur within the organization. With such an absence, can one really argue that the Black girls of Girl Scouts are fully empowered? It is obvious that Girl Scouts has positive benefits that strengthen girls' character and based on the above findings which were gathered through qualitative and

quantitative methods, girls seem to feel empowered in that they feel prepared, resourceful, and ready to lead. Qualities that one would need to invoke change. However, it seems surface level as the organization is more community service based and not advocacy based. The organization does not have a race based advocacy component, which means that the girls are not, outside of other organizational involvement, prepared to deal with systemic issues within their communities. So though they may be empowered, it is only to an extent.

To add to that, enrollment among historically underrepresented groups is low, which could be one reason why empowerment to tackle race issues is not at the forefront of the organization's focus. Nonetheless it leaves the under resourced girls with little defense, as far as what Girl Scout offers, when it comes to combatting certain issues. Does this mean that GSUSA cannot be helpful in hindering the school to prison pipeline for Black Girls?

I argue that it does not mean that working through the Girl Scouts cannot be beneficial for Black girls who are suffering under zero tolerance policy, another tool of institutionalized racism. The reason for this is that as stated before, the program has lesson plans and programs that can be of general benefit in developing young women. In addition to that, Girl Scouts has acknowledged the race gap and is searching for ways to address it, and dedicating resources to launching the SYD advocacy campaign is definitely one way the race gap can be closed. To add to that, the Girl Scout network is vast, and so mentorship and assistance for these girls and the campaign is already established. Also important to consider, is the fact that the Girl Scouts has been in schools for over eighty years and so are trusted by schools, and therefore might not experience many challenges in establishing a troop within these schools that will be of direct benefit to Black girls. The way in which the organization operates, which is to partner with other institutions to expand their reach, is very much in line with the citizen centered approach. The

only remaining question at this point would be, what should the Girl Scout SYD strategy plan look like?

Strategy Plan – Bridge To Her Education (BTHERE) policy:

- Present the American Psychological Association Task force findings, along with that of National Association of School Psychologists, which show the negative effects and lack of benefit to implementing zero tolerance policy practices. Also share the findings from the report Black Girls Matter
- advocate for the creation of more research that includes Black girls, especially in the area of education and the zero tolerance policy; train teachers and school personnel on the issues that affect Black girls’ attitudes and behaviors; request training on gendered racism and sexual trauma; demand programs that teach children conflict resolution techniques.
- Redefine what drugs, weapons, and threats to the school community are according to the schools
- Train school community on how to deal with sexual trauma
- Training on racism and implicit biases, and the white Hydra
- Provide resources for young parents and children who are undertaking adult-like responsibilities, without separating the family. Make their issues visible within the school’s agenda.
- Make training on alternative behavioral techniques such as PBIS mandatory for all school staff
- Provide mentoring programs and conflict management training for Black girls, such as FFAME and the CARE Model
- Have a ranking system of behavioral infraction fall under the zero tolerance policy and therefore what police officers in the schools should deal with, versus what teachers, counselors, and or principals should address.
- Have parents and other organizations work together to counter the effects of the school to prison pipeline

Establish a Girl Scouts chapter, where the girls will work on increasing awareness for Black girls under the zero tolerance policy and for implementation of the BTHERE

Major stakeholders and supporters

- Former President Barack Obama’s organization, Organization for Action: In January of 2014 the Obama administration issued guidelines that recommended “public school officials use law enforcement only as a last resort for disciplining students, a response to a rise in zero-tolerance policies that have disproportionately increased the number of arrests, suspensions and expulsions of minority students for even minor, nonviolent offenses” (Rich 2014).
- It is my hope that as an extension of gun violence control in schools or expanding equality, that the policy will receive support from the Organization for Action.
- Former Department of Justice, Attorney General H. Holder Jr. & Department of Education, Secretary of Education Arney Duncan: wrote a joint Dear colleague letter that addressed issues of using the juvenile justice system as the primary tool for misbehavior.

The document pointed out that in the 2011 school year alone there were over 2 million suspensions and 100,000 expulsions and so students have lost countless hours of education and constructive instruction time (U.S. Department of Education 2017). The letter outlined approaches such as, “counseling for students, coaching for teachers, etcetera” (Rich 2014).

Based on the above stakeholders’ position and document releases, they will not be the primary targets. Instead, they will be treated as allies. This campaign will take a local pathway, with our targets being members of the immediate school community such as school superintendents and principals. It is in their power to influence change and decide whether or not they would like to implement the changes that are outlined by the policy similar to the guideline released by the above allies. Other possible allies are New York and Florida school leaders, who have already begun implementing changes surrounding zero tolerance policy.

Targets

Primary Targets – School Boards, Police departments and National Association of School Resource Officers

Secondary Targets: the Superintendent to assist with influencing school boards. Additional secondary targets are the Parent Teachers Associations.

Target Rationale: Citizen Centered Approach

As defined before, VeneKlasen and Miller write that citizen centered advocacy is “an organized political process that involves the coordinated efforts of people to change policies, practices, ideas, and values that perpetuate inequality, prejudice, and exclusion. It strengthens citizens’ capacity as decision makers and build more accountable and equitable institutions of power” (A New Weave 2002 p.22). This strategy will embody just that, citizen centered advocacy, which is a part of the rationale for selecting the targets. They are individuals of the school community, along with Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) that can coordinate at the local level to make changes that directly impact their community, as opposed to having others dictate change, the Black girls who are most at risk are involved in the process.

Strategy

- First, we will present the APA and NASP task force findings to the school boards as evidence that the zero tolerance policy does not and cannot attain the goals that it was put in place to meet. In fact, the report will show that it is more damaging than helpful.
- Second, hold an open forum at schools who decide to implement the new policy for the school community, so from superintendents to students can share their concerns and suggestions about the old policy and the proposed change. It allows for people to feel heard and more a part of the process. It will also be a chance to clarify that the zero tolerance policy is being blamed and not necessarily those who implement it. The forum will help identify supporters and opponents and the arguments that we need to build the campaign around as we go along.
- Third, the Girl Scouts will work with schools to establish a chapter in their school with one of their main goals being to launch the anti-school to prison pipeline campaign and help implement the BTHERE policy. We will work with parents and students to form advocacy groups whose goal it will be to influence district school boards to redefine threat, weapon and drug, separate from medications and non-disruptive behavior. In addition to that, suspension, expulsion, and incarceration would be used in the event of major infractions. With this in place the school to prison pipeline will be slowed or possibly brought to a halt. The redefinition would also limit the broad application of the zero tolerance policy for minor and major infractions alike.
- Fourth, the Girl Scout can launch a media campaign using Facebook, bulletin boards, and public spaces like buses and trains for example to advertise the negative consequences of the zero tolerance policy, in contrast to Bridge To Her Education (BTHERE) policy. One example is how zero tolerance policy contributes to the school to prison pipeline. This will increase public awareness and more support for BTHERE policy.
- Partners can also advocate for the training for all school community members including arresting police officers and counselors. There are multiple youth development training programs that could be used such Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) a “framework for behavioral guidance and social culture focused on emotional needs and academic success”(Ward). This is also in line with the DOJ and DOE guidelines.
- Finally the policy would be open to amendments based on each school districts’ needs.

SWOT Analysis for Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA)

Strengths: One of the Girl Scout’s strength is that they have a long standing legacy within the USA and will more likely be accepted into schools, especially with the desire and means to address a cause that closely affects the community. The organization also has a large network of alumnae with various skills and connections who could help in the cause.

Weaknesses: However, due to the fact that the Girl Scouts already has a low enrollment rate for Black girls and does not deal with issues associated to race, which attributes to the environment that many of these young Black girls come from, some schools might be skeptical of the Girls Scout's ability to reach and support these young Black girls and their cause.

Opportunities: It is a chance for Girl Scouts to solidify a connection with Black girls and their communities. They can also expand their network, not just in relation to alumnae but also partnerships, because they can focus more on recruiting troop leaders from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), such as Howard. It is positive reinforcement when children can relate more to their mentors and race will probably help. Additionally, HBCU students might be more comfortable with the topic of race and how to empower young girls when addressing the issue of zero tolerance policy and the school to prison pipeline. Another way to better empower girls of color is through additional mentorship by reaching out to organizations such as Girls Inc., National Association of Black Accountants (NABA), or similar such organizations.

In addition to more partnerships within the Black community, the strategy plan and the communications memo will show that it is not a matter of completely ridding schools of the power to discipline students, it is a chance for teachers and other school personnel to regain the power to discipline students. This could also mean that teachers would be in support of the Girl Scouts' advocacy plan.

Threats: Although on one hand some teachers might be in favor of being the main disciplinarians again, on the other hand some teachers, particularly those in under resourced schools, might not be interested in taking on more responsibilities. In addition to that, despite Girl Scout's reputation, other school and community members might be skeptical of their involvement. They would also have to dedicate resources to training troop leaders and young

girls on the topic of advocacy. The Girl Scouts, from my experience as an intern with the public policy and advocacy office tend to remain neutral on certain issues so not to lose funding and partnerships. One possible threat to the Girl Scouts and therefore the campaign to halt the school to prison pipeline is that a partner might pull their funds or resources, because they do not agree with Girl Scout's involvement in a matter concerning racism.

Conclusion

Black girls exist in a social space, where gender and race intersect, which means they are simultaneously affected by sexism and racism, but in relation to education this needs to be explored more. The zero tolerance policy was implemented to secure school grounds and community, but it has disproportionately impacted Black girls, by ignoring their needs and forcing them into the school to prison pipeline. This disparate impact, as a result of implicit bias can be linked to centuries' old stereotypes that when combined with the abuse of zero tolerance policy, created another tool to target young Black girls whose stereotyped behavior and attitude are often attacked by teachers through the policy. To deal with this, Black girls try to cope, but they end up in a position where regardless of whether they are "well-behaved" or are acting in what is perceived to be a "loud and aggressive" manner, they are still attacked and rendered vulnerable by the policy. Furthermore, the policy after much research by the APA and NASP, was deemed inefficient. To counter the negative impact of the policy, scholars presented various solutions ranging from factoring female gender into the research surrounding the school to prison pipeline or developing training programs that target the weak areas of the zero tolerance policy.

After conducting the research, the Bridge To Her Education (BTHERE) policy was recommended. The policy aims to target the major problem areas of the zero tolerance policy, specifically as it relates to Black girls. To assist with this is the Girl Scouts, who will work with

Black girls within their schools and communities, to slow the school to prison pipeline and its impact on Black girls' lives. The purpose of the policy is not to eradicate disciplinary measures, but rather to return disciplinary power to the hands of teachers and other school personnel, as opposed to placing all disciplinary decisions in the hands of police officers who are often unequipped to deal with youth development and behavior. With an approach that factors in all the elements that negatively impact Black girls under the zero tolerance policy, and force them into the school to prison pipeline, a counter policy that accounts for the zero tolerance failures will yield positive benefits.

Appendix

Girl Scout's Bridge To Her Education (BTHERE) Communication Memo:

Zero Tolerance Policy: Dispel the myths, speak the truth and start anew

Bridge To Her Education (BTHERE) is a policy counter measure to the zero tolerance policy that was implemented in schools after the passing of the Guns Free School Act. Since its inception the zero tolerance policy has done more harm than good. For instance, it disproportionately affects students of color and students with disabilities, as well as fueling the school to prison pipeline, particularly Black girls (National Association of School Psychologists 2008). Taking these and other areas where the policy fails into consideration, there is still a belief among members of the school community that the policy works. However research has found that zero tolerance policy's promises of brighter better schools is simply a myth. This communication plan aims to dispel such myths of zero tolerance policy success, while speaking the truth of the harm the policy fosters in an attempt to start anew with the Bridge To Her Education (BTHERE). This communication plan will be mainly targeted at the school boards, with superintendents as secondary targets, and Black girls who are arrested and left the most vulnerable by the policy as the key messengers.

Dispelling the Myth Fact Sheet: *These are examples and can be changed as each GSUSA troop sees fit

The American Psychological Association (APA) assembled a task force to research and evaluate the zero tolerance policy. They found that the policy was not helpful in regards to discipline; it negatively impacts school climate; it has a negative impact on school climate, and that there's a negative relationship between education and the juvenile system, as well as best practices for adolescent development (American Psychological Association 2008). The report offers evidence in support of the argument that the zero tolerance policy is ineffective:

- Zero tolerance policies made schools safer and more effective in handling disciplinary issues: “Evidence does not support an assumption that violence in schools is out of control or increasing...There is also no evidence that zero tolerance policy has increased the consistency of school discipline” (APA 2008 853-4).
- Removal of students who violate school rules will create a more learning conducive climate for the remaining students: However, the task force found that schools with “higher rates of school suspension and expulsion appear to have less satisfactory ratings of school climate” (APA 2008 854).
- Zero tolerance policy deters certain student behavior: “Deterrence is central to the philosophy of zero tolerance” but “suspensions in general seem to predict higher future rates of misbehavior and suspension among those students who are suspended” (APA 2008 854). It is also “moderately associated with a higher likelihood of school dropout and failure to graduate on time” (APA 2008 854).
- Taking into account the developmental level of children and youth, are zero tolerance policies appropriate as psychological intervention: Adolescents particularly before the age of 15 display psychosocial immaturity, with one example being impulse control. Therefore, “if judgment is the result of developmental or neurological immaturity and if the resulting behavior does not pose a threat to safety” the long-term impact of zero tolerance policy must be weighed against that of other disciplinary action to ensure the student is receiving developmental assistance such as socio-emotional mentorship and adult support, especially when they are being punished for their misbehavior (APA 2008 855).

- Zero tolerance and how it affects the juvenile system and education: Although security technology and school resource officers are useful there is insufficient data on how beneficial these officers are in promoting safe schools (APA 2008 856). Zero tolerance practices have also increased the use of profiling, which according to the U.S. Secret Service and the Federal Bureau of Investigation “profiles constructed to promote school safety are unreliable...over identify students from minority populations as potentially dangerous” (APA 2008 856).

Bridge To Her Education (BTHERE)	Zero Tolerance Policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The policy would first redefine threat, weapon and drug, separate from medications and non-disruptive behavior. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is used for major and minor behavioral infractions alike
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suspension, expulsion, and incarceration would be used in the event of major infractions like a student bringing and or using weapons and drugs to school, as well as threats to the school community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students can be suspended, expelled, or incarcerated for a range of behaviors, such as not referring to a teacher as Ms., bringing cough drops and Advil to school, etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With this in place the school to prison pipeline will be slowed or possibly brought to a halt, because the redefinition would also limit the broad application of the zero tolerance policy for minor and major infractions alike. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has been shown to disproportionately affect Black and disabled students • Black girls are more likely to be suspended and expelled and are therefore more likely to be incarcerated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for all school community members including arresting police officers who are often present in the school hallways. • The policy is open to amendments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not cultivate a socio-emotional approach that supports students’ psychosocial development

Speaking the Truth: This segment will be achieved through storytelling to further help dispel the myth that zero tolerance policies work and raise awareness for BTHERE and its benefits.

PSA-The Storytellers: In addition to the episodic videos of the Black girls who are affected, there will be more thematic videos created that show the impact of the zero tolerance on the whole family. One example is family concerns when they have to leave their teenagers at home to go to work, because the students have out of school suspension, etc. Another example is one where parents, teachers, and students talk about the effects of zero tolerance policy such as the student falling behind and becoming disengaged, and how teachers are expected to get the student back on track, and what toll the disciplinary action taken under the policy means for all who are involved.

Action Camp 2.0: Trains youth, especially those who have been affected by zero tolerance policies to deconstruct the school to prison pipeline, by talking about the issues with the zero tolerance policy.

Parent Teacher Association: Find teachers who are willing to work together to illustrate to the school boards and superintendent the negative effects of the zero tolerance policy. Using information, such as that from the fact sheet they can probably convince other teachers and parents that zero tolerance policy is not working.

Start Anew: The start anew segment of the message will focus more on the benefits of BTHERE, gradually moving away from the zero tolerance policy.

Social Media: Twitter, Facebook group, and Advertisements. Examples:

After school detention, not juvenile detention

Let's return our students to the classroom, instead of a prison cell

Let's send our students to the principal office, instead of juvenile detention

Increased suspension decreased retention

S2PPtrainingequalschange

STOP targeting our Black girls

BTHERE for Black girls

Zero tolerance policy: suspending, expelling, and imprisoning students since the '90s

Let's stop criminalizing our students with Bridge To Her Education policy

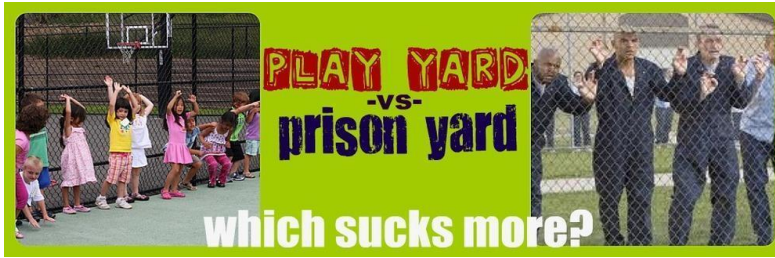
#BTHERE # Black Girls Matter # Bridge To Her Education #totheprincipalsoffice

Considering the APA task force findings, the images and slogans will touch on the positive gains of the policy and the fact that each point, was developed to target the problem areas of the zero tolerance policy. The above slogans and images are ones that supporters can easily use. The Facebook group will be a culmination of Dispel the myths, speak the truth and start anew.




[Image taken from www.bing.com](http://www.bing.com)

*Although the images below show mainly Black boys, they are presented just to give an idea of what the image campaign can look like, especially the cost benefits analysis.



[Images take from bing](#)

cost
ANNUAL EXPENDITURE FOR ONE CHILD IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM



James in juvenile detention


Juvenile Detention¹
\$49,300

Ohio Juvenile Correctional Facility²
\$123,400

Adult Prison³
\$25,900

COST TO SOCIETY
High risk youth's life of crime⁴
\$3.8 million

benefit
ANNUAL INVESTMENT FOR ONE CHILD ON THE ROAD TO SUCCESS



James attending a community program

After-School Program⁵
\$3,800

Ohio State University Education⁶
\$19,600

Job Corps Training Program⁷
\$39,700

BENEFIT TO SOCIETY
College graduate's lifetime tax contribution⁸
\$1 million

see footnote on back



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