Race, Gender and the School-to-Prison Pipeline:

Expanding Our Discussion to Include Black Girls

Monique W. Morris

The *school-to-prison pipeline* refers to the policies, practices, and conditions that facilitate both the criminalization of educational environments and the processes by which this criminalization results in the incarceration of youth and young adults. This Report discusses the literature on the "school-to- prison pipeline" and explores why the "pipeline" analogy may not accurately capture the education-system pathways to confinement for Black girls.

AFRICAN AMERICAN POLICY FORUM

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

About the Author

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About the African American Policy Forum

The African American Policy Forum is part think tank and part information clearinghouse, composed of the nation's preeminent legal minds and race and gender equity education professionals. We strive to promote the interests of all communities, with special emphasis on those suffering from intersecting forms of discrimination based on race, gender, class, as well as those suffering from unrecognized patterns of institutional exclusion.

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LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR KIMBERLÉ CRENSHAW

September 17th, 2012

The African American Policy Forum has long articulated the critical need to incorporate a gender analysis in addressing the contemporary legacies of racial exclusion. Recent initiatives that have addressed the vulnerabilities that contribute to both the exclusionary discipline and over-incarceration of Black boys and men reflect this awareness. Building on the growing literature and interventions that have developed to address what is widely framed as the "school to prison pipeline" for boys, this Report addresses dimensions of girls' vulnerability that are frequently obscured by their relative absence from this conversation. The Report acknowledges that both while boys and girls face particular vulnerabilities that contribute to the growth in their criminal supervision, the differences between them make a difference in shaping the frameworks and interventions capture the problem.

This Report, the first in a series published by the African American Policy Forum, argues that the "pipeline" metaphor fails to both capture and respond to the unique set of conditions affecting Black girls today. It builds upon the Policy Forum's long articulated stance that intersectional analysis is the key tool needed to reveal the causal and correlative factors that contribute to Black girls and women's continuing vulnerabilities inside and outside of our immediate communities. By pulling together a substantive body of literature, Morris articulates what we have all long known: the current "crisis" in Black communities is one faced by our boys *and* our girls. This revelation, of course, has important consequences for all stakeholders and all members of our communities. We can no longer, as Morris argues, afford to focus exclusively on the plight of Black boys and men and hope that in the end our work will translate entirely into intervention efforts intended to bring our girls and women out of crisis. Instead, we must develop gender and race conscious lenses and interventions that adequately capture the vulnerabilities imposed upon our Black girls and women today, rather than imposing ill-fitting ones designed and intended for our boys and men.

We encourage all stakeholders, funders, researchers and concerned members of the public to broaden the scope of our understanding about the current crisis facing Black girls as well as boys, as well as to commit to these girls an expanded conversation and set of resources dedicated to addressing their needs.

Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw
Executive Director, African American Policy Forum

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS THE *SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE?*

School-to-prison pipeline refers to the collection of policies, practices, conditions, and prevailing consciousness that facilitate both the criminalization within educational environments and the processes by which this criminalization results in the incarceration of youth and young adults. The pipeline analogy has become the dominant frame by which to discuss the lived experiences of boys and girls, disproportionately Black,[1] who are criminalized in their learning environments, ultimately leading to contacts with juvenile and criminal justice systems (Edelman, 2007; Advancement Project, Padres and Jovenes Unidos, the Southwest Youth Collaborative, and Children & Family Justice Center of Northwestern University School of Law, 2005).

Black female and male students have experienced higher levels of exclusionary discipline since 1991 than any other group of students (Wallace, J., Goodkind, Wallace, C., & Bachman, 2008; see also Losen & Skiba, 2010). Black females and males represent 17 perc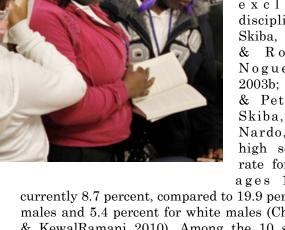ent of the youth population ages 10 to 17, but are 58 percent of all juveniles sent to adult prison (Children's Defense Fund, 2011). According to the Advancement Project (2010), "arrests in school represent the most direct route into the school-to-prison pipeline, but out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to alternative schools also push students out of school and closer to a future in the juvenile and criminal justice systems" (p. 4–5). Black students are more likely to be suspended or expelled for "disrespect, excessive noise, threat, and loitering" (Skiba, Michael, & Nardo, 2000, p. 13).

Nationwide, Black males represent the largest subpopulation in confinement (Childtrends, 2012). In 2010, Black males represented 42 percent of juvenile males in residential placement (Sickmund, Sladky, Kang, & Puzzanchera, 2011). At 28.3 percent of suspensions, Black boys have experienced the greatest risk of suspension among middle school students, with the number of suspensions increasing annually from 2002 to 2006 (Losen & Skiba, 2010). In fact, a number of studies have found Black males experience the highest rates of exclusionary discipline (Losen & Skiba, 2010; Fenning & Rose, 2007; Noguera, 2003a, 2003b; Skiba, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002; Skiba, Michael, & Nardo, 2000). The high school dropout rate for Black males ages 15 to 24 is currently 8.7 percent, compared to 19.9 percent for Latino males and 5.4 percent for white males (Chapman, Laird, & KewalRamani 2010). Among the 10 school districts with the nation's highest suspension rates,[2] Black boys with disabilities experienced the highest rates of suspension in 2009 and 2010 (Losen & Gillespie, 2012). In the Henrico County Public Schools District, nearly 92 percent of Black boys with one or more disabilities experienced at least one suspension in the 2009–2010

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[1] This summary refers to people of African descent as "Black" and "African American." While "African American" refers to people of African descent who reside in the United State, "Black" is a larger umbrella term that captures individuals throughout the African Diaspora (e.g., those of Caribbean and/or Latino descent who belong to the racial group indigenous to Africa). However, this document uses "Black" and "African American" interchangeably, as data sources uses these terms interchangeably.

[2] According to Losen & Gillespie (2012), the ten highest suspending districts included the Memphis City Schools, TN; Columbus City, OH; Henrico County Public Schools, VA; City of Chicago SD 299, IL; Alief Island, TX; Detroit City School District, MI; Fulton County, GA; Wichita, KS; Oklahoma City, OK; and Clayton County, GA (p. 35).

school year, compared to 52.8 percent of Latino boys, 44.3 percent of white boys, and 14.3 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander American boys (p. 35).

While Black males are the largest subpopulation in confinement, the plight of Black girls cannot be overlooked. Between 1985 and 1997, Black girls were the fastest growing segment of the juvenile population in secure confinement (Puzzanchera, Adams, & Sickmund, 2011). By 2010, Black girls were 36 percent of juvenile females in residential placement (Sickmund et al., 2011). During these same periods Black girls also experienced a dramatic rise in per-district suspension rates. Between 2002 and 2006, per-district suspension rates of Black girls increased 5.3 percentage points compared to the 1.7 percentage point increase for Black boys (Losen & Skiba, 2010, p. 7). Among the nation's 10 highest suspending districts, Black girls with one or more disability experienced the highest suspension rate of all girls (Losen & Gillespie, 2012). A snapshot is illustrative: in the Henrico County Public Schools District, nearly 58.4 percent of Black girls with a disability had experienced at least one suspension in the 2009–2010 school year, compared to 26 percent of Latina girls, and 18 percent of white girls (p. 35).

Notwithstanding these national trends, there is only a limited body of research that rigorously examines the intersection between race and gender when addressing young females placed in contact the justice system as a result of educational factors (e.g., academic performance and attainment, use of exclusionary discipline, etc.). Juvenile justice research that has included African American girls as research subjects has noted racial disparities at various stages of the justice continuum (Chesney-Lind & Jones, N., 2010). While there is a dearth of research exploring the unique *educational conditions* that present pathways to delinquency and incarceration for Black girls, previous studies that included Black girls alongside others has found a relationship between education-system factors and increased contact with the juvenile justice system (Acoca, 2000; Balfanz, Spiridakis, Neild, & Legters, 2003; Blake, Butler, Lewis, & Darensbourg, 2010; Nicholson-Crotty, Birchmeier, & Valentine, 2009; Nolan, 2011). Nonetheless, explicit, intersectional[3] questions about race and femininity have not figured prominently among the scholarship associated with the development of interventions or policy responses to the criminalization of Black youth.

As presented in this Report, numerous studies have examined components of the school-to-prison pipeline along with causal and correlative factors predicting susceptibility. While this body of research provides a sound basis for further explorations of the pipeline problem in the abstract, this literature is fundamentally limited by the fact that it focuses almost exclusively on males. The absence of a rigorous intersectional and comparative analysis facilitates the development of assumptive responses to the girls who are disproportionately impacted by the relationships between the educational and carceral institutions. To develop culturally competent, gender-responsive policy recommendations requires an examination and discussion of the epistemological assumptions that might inform our contextualization of research findings to date on the "pipeline" and our analysis of its applications with respect to policy and practice for both females and males.

In this Report, I argue that the research literature using the "pipeline" metaphor fails to completely capture the education-system pathways to incarceration for Black girls. My exploration centers on key themes reflected in literature on the structural factors associated with the "school-to-prison pipeline" and the implications one can draw from this framework on the pedagogy informing responses to Black females. This discussion is guided by the following question: In what ways does the "pipeline" metaphor obscure the experiences of Black girls, and how does a patriarchal framework limit a broader conceptualization of carceral forces in the lives of Black girls?

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[3] The concept of "intersectionality" refers to the intersecting identities that inform an individual's experiences, particularly those of Black women. According to Crenshaw (1991), "Black women's lives … cannot be captured wholly by looking at the race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately" (p. 1244). Instead, research must explore "the various ways in which race and gender intersect in shaping structural, political, and representational aspects" of inquiries on the lived experiences of Black females.

STRUCTURAL FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE "PIPELINE"

Examining the literature on the structural factors associated with the school-to-prison pipeline through a critical race and quantum theoretical lens makes a reductionist approach to the school-to-prison pathways futile. It is important to recognize the interdependence of systems, and the relationships that exist within these systems. As Margaret Wheatley (1999) notes, "in the quantum world, relationships are not just interesting … they are *all* there is to reality." This framework allows for the interpretation of literature through a complex, sometimes chaotic, representation of relationships that reveal systemic patterns reflecting conditioned responses to the behaviors of Black youth. When viewed through this lens, the literature can be organized into three major themes with respect to how the "pipeline" metaphor contracts the visibility of Black girls. These themes are discussed below in three sections: 1) the limits of school discipline scholarship on Black males; 2) how masculinity has defined 'racial threat,' stereotyping, and surveillance; and 3) the limits of research on violence, victimization and the social reproduction of "moral panic."

The Limits of School Discipline Scholarship on Black Males

School discipline and educational attainment are the two most heavily researched aspects of the pipeline for Black youth; in both areas, the vast majority of research has focused on the conditions and experiences of males. For three decades, scholarly investigations of school discipline have consistently found patterns of over-representation for Black males, revealing a "discipline gap" wherein the responses to behavioral problems of Black males are met with harsher disciplinary measures than for other racial and ethnic groups (Shirley & Cornell, 2011; Welch & Payne, 2011; Lewis, Hancock, James, & Larke, 2008; Skiba, Peterson & Williams, 1997; McFadden, Marsh, Price & Hwang, 1992; McCarthy & Hodge, 1987). Findings from other investigations reveal a strong correlation between youth contact with the justice system and a failure to complete high school, negative attitude about school, academic failure, and the racially disparate use of exclusionary discipline (e.g., suspensions and expulsions) (Lewis, Butler, Bonner, & Joubert, 2010; Skiba & Rausch, 2006; Skiba, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002; Bakken & Kortering, 1999; Bock, Tapscott & Savner, 1998; Skiba, Peterson & Williams, 1997; DeRidder, 1991; Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack & Rock, 1986).

According to Nicholson-Crotty, Birchmeier, and Valentine (2009):

> [O]bserved patters of racial disproportion do not correlate with higher incidence of disruptive behavior by Black students and, therefore, conclude that [Disproportionate Minority Contact] in school discipline is due in part to differential treatment of [students of color] by teachers and administrators (p. 1006).

From this finding, it follows that the unequal application of exclusionary discipline may not be in response to differential classroom disruption patterns, but instead may be a function of differential treatment (see also Losen & Skiba, 2010). While largely empirical and rooted in autoethnographic methods that are considered non-generalizable (Casella, 2003), some studies have also found that Black boys and men struggle to achieve in racially segregated environments. In these environments, negative stereotypes about Black males, informed largely by media representations of Black males as perpetrators of urban violence, are pervasive (Jones, A.R., 2011; Farmer, 2010; Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2008).

Like discipline, trends associated with a failure to complete school occupy a particularly important space in the Black boy "pipeline," whether related to family and societal issues, or by virtue of practices and policies within the school environment. Smaller studies show that Black youth are often negatively influenced by school counselors' social perceptions and as a result, are likely to be placed into special education programs for behavioral issues, rather than for cognitive ability (Moore, Henfield & Owens, 2008). Other research, again while not generalizable to all school settings, reveal education factors associated with the pipeline that include a poor quality of instruction, curriculum, and relationships with school (Jones, 2011). Other factors include a failure to emphasize reading

comprehension and provide "culturally responsive literacy instruction" in earlier grade levels (Tatum, 2006, p. 44), as well as a failure to engage Black boys in the classroom, and recognize key warning signs such as ninth graders who earn "fewer than two credits or those who attend school less than 70% of the time" (Jones, 2011, p. 21; see also Balfanz & Legters, 2006).

With respect to Black girls, discipline and zero tolerance policies are also among the most researched of the education-system pipeline to incarceration. While patterns of exclusionary discipline are found to produce similar outcomes among Black girls and Black boys (Losen, Martinez, & Gillespie, 2012; Wallace, et al., 2008), the majority of research that examines the impact of discipline on the involvement with the justice system has been geographically concentrated.[4] While not addressed in an exhaustive manner, research that found Black female disengagement from school to be a result of exclusionary discipline policies and practices also found it to be a function of intersecting structures of inequality. For example, Black females are affected by the stigma of having to participate in identity politics that marginalize them or place them into polarizing categories—"good" girls or girls that behave in a "ghetto" fashion—which exacerbate stereotypes about Black femininity, particularly in the context of socioeconomic status, crime and punishment (Jones, N., 2009). When Black girls do engage in acts that are deemed "ghetto" or a deviation from the social norms that define female behavior according to a narrow, White middle-class definition of femininity, they are deemed nonconformative and thereby subject to criminalizing responses (Blake, et al., 2010; Holsinger & Holsinger, 2005).

The relationship between educational attainment and school discipline is also a critical component of the pathways to incarceration for Black females. Studies have shown that the academic self-esteem of Black girls declines during their adolescence (AAUW, 1992; Smith, E. J., 1982; Basow & Rubin, 1999), and that Black girls who speak out in classrooms receive negative feedback from their teachers, particularly if the teacher is White (Fordham, 1991). According to Basow and Rubin (1999):

> Many African American girls view success in the academy as dependent on their invisibility and silencing and a rejection or denial of their place in the Black community. If they subdue their voices, they risk distancing themselves from the Black community and thereby

becoming susceptible to internalizing negative images of Blackness. If they refuse to subdue their voices, however, the only other way they may be able to maintain strong self-esteem is by rejecting academic achievement, thereby contributing to the high school dropout rate of African American girls. (p. 41)

Perhaps in response to Black girls' nonconformity to gender stereotypes, educators have been more inclined to respond harshly to the behaviors of Black girls. However, this assertion is largely speculative (Blake, et. al., 2010). Research on the suspension disparity found that Black girls were disproportionately suspended from middle school for behaviors that are *subjectively* determined worthy of reprimand. In 2007, a study found that teachers perceived Black girls as being "loud, defiant, and precocious" and that Black girls were more likely than their white or Latina peers to be reprimanded for being "unladylike" (Morris, E., 2007). Other research finds that the issuance of summons and/or arrests appear to be justified by students' display of "irate," "insubordinate," "disrespectful," "uncooperative," or "uncontrollable" behavior (Nolan, 2011).

While there have been challenges (Lynn, 2009) to scholarly assertions of there being no evidence to support the notion that differential rates of suspension are justified by differential patterns of offending among racial groups (Losen & Skiba, 2010; American Psychological Association Task Force, 2008), there remains only limited empirical data to explain the increased use of exclusionary discipline among Black girls, and the extent to which these practices lead to increased contact with the justice system and ultimately, confinement. To date, research has focused on the relationships between exclusionary discipline, increased risk of teen pregnancy, and delinquency (Clark, Petras, Kellam, Ialongo & Poduska, 2003), but as Blake, et al. (2010) note, "due to limited research on the discipline experiences of girls, the types of behavior infractions in which Black girls are disproportionately disciplined are not well understood" (p. 92).

The literature has shown that Black females and males are subject to disproportionate applications of exclusionary discipline for behaviors that are associated with subjective, sometimes biased, decision-making. It may be generalizable in this regard, that the responses to Black youth (female and male) reflect disparate treatment by educators and administrators, where Black youth are treated more harshly for engaging in behaviors deemed problematic to a school

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[4] Few scholarly articles or published reports have been published on school discipline studies centered on juvenile Black females or included substantive numbers of Black females as subjects. Approximately seven of these studies have used national databases, with only one or two reports focused on jurisdictions outside of the Midwest or Florida (Welch & Payne, 2012; Losen, et al., 2012; Butler, et. al., 2011; Gregory, et. al., 2011; Losen & Skiba, 2010; Wallace, et.al., 2008; Advancement Project, et. al., 2005; Skiba, et.al., 2002; Acoca, 2000; Skiba, et. al., 2000; Acoca & Dedel, 1998).

environment. The usage of punitive, law enforcement-identified "zero tolerance" nomenclature and actions in response to the behavioral problems of Black youth in school has rendered both Black females and males subject to discriminatory practices informed by stereotype-driven fear (Stewart, Baumer, Brunson, & Simons, 2009).

However, there is an important point of departure between the conditions affecting Black females and males with respect to the role of discipline and educational attainment in the "pipeline" between schools and carceral institutions. While the behaviors for which Black males are subject to punitive school-based responses tend to be associated with perceived threats to public safety (e.g. fighting, weapons, perceived hostility, etc.), the behaviors for which Black females routinely experience disciplinary response are related to their nonconformity with notions of white-middle class femininity, for example, by their dress, their profanity, or by having tantrums in the classroom (see Collins, 2004; Douner & Pribesh, 2004; Monroe, 2005; West, 1995). Still, Black females and males both experience exclusionary discipline within the context of a greater racialized environment and prevailing consciousness in which stereotyping and surveillance play an active role.

How Masculinity has Defined 'Racial Threat,' Stereotyping, and Surveillance

Research on implicit bias reveals that by virtue of our existence in a racially stratified society, there are certain ideas, racial stereotypes and norms that affect our meaning making and decision-making. These biases are rooted in our subconscious behaviors, our implicit reactions to individuals based upon latent, involuntary preconceptions (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006). Studies have found that in schools where the population of students is predominately African American and/or Latino, educators and administrators perceive a "racial threat,"[5] which has been shown to affect their reactions to problematic student behaviors (Welch & Payne, 2011; see also Brown & Beckett, 2006). Indeed, a national study in 2011 suggested that the more a school is comprised of students of color, the higher the likelihood that punitive exclusionary discipline will be used in response to disruptive and problematic student behaviors (Welch & Payne, 2011). The use of punitive responses to student behaviors is especially prevalent in schools where principals and other school leaders who believe, erroneously, that "frequent punishments helped to improve behavior" (Losen & Gillespie, 2012, p. 39). While some research has found that restorative practices may reduce discipline disparities (González, 2012; Sumner, Silverman, & Frampton, 2010), this racial threat "reduces the use of restorative discipline and increases the use of harsh discipline in schools" (Welch & Payne, 2012). Data were not analyzed by sex, only race, so there is no discussion about how racial threat may be informed by gender. It is important to note that the lack of restorative and holistic approaches (i.e., conferencing circles, mediation and counseling, and peer juries)[6] in the schools where Black populations predominate could be exacerbated by the presence of law enforcement in these environments.

Indeed, the presence of law enforcement in the schools (e.g., school resource officers, school-based probation officers, security officers, etc.) has been cited as one of the largest contributing factors to the increased rates of student arrests in schools (Nolan, 2011; Sundius & Farneth, 2008; Advancement Project, 2005, 2010). School budgets for police personnel and security infrastructure have increased dramatically since 1999, when the violent school shootings in Columbine, Colorado stirred a national frenzy about

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[5] Racial threat refers to the idea that the use of more punitive criminal punishment and harsher student discipline is associated with the racial composition of a classroom or school (Welch & Payne, 2012).

[6] School-based restorative practices such as circles, mediation and counseling, and peer juries have been found to produce restorative school cultures that seek to provide a space for the reparation of harm. These programs have been found to be effective intervention strategies for student and staff conflict, negative youth behaviors in class, and other problems that might require the involvement of a parent (Ashley & Burke, 2009).
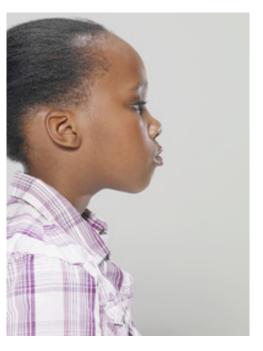
youth violence (Advancement Project, 2005). Building from a "broken windows" theory (Wilson & Keiling, 1982) that suggested that small criminal acts were indicative of more severe, abhorrent behavior that may later manifest as more severe acts against a person or property, law enforcement turned toward arresting individuals in the communities most prone to surveillance for minor infractions or incidents of misbehavior. This philosophy has generally been associated with expanding and normalizing the surveillance of Black youth, reaching from the community (i.e., on transportation, in streets, and other places) and into schools (Meiners, 2007). Specifically, while the high profile and violent school shootings took place on campuses with predominantly white student populations, the implementation of instruments of surveillance (i.e., metal detectors, cameras, and increased police presence in school) disproportionately affected schools in urban neighborhoods where the student populations were predominately African American and Latino (Springhall, 2008). As previously stated, the implementation of these policies led to punitive responses for Black females and males in schools. The increased surveillance of Black youth has led to increased contact with law enforcement, and in some cases, the juvenile court, for actions that would not otherwise be viewed as *criminal*, even if they are violative of school rules—such as refusing to present identification, using profanity with a school dean, or "misbehaving" (Nolan, 2011, p. 59–62). The presence of law enforcement in schools has instead blurred lines between institutional discourses, where daily exchanges and interactions with law enforcement expand the surveillance of youth of color and normalize prison terminology (and culture) in the school setting (Nolan, 2011).

Research on juvenile males has revealed that attributional stereotyping impacts the treatment of Black boys who are in contact with the justice system, where their negative behaviors are attributed to internal factors (i.e., bad attitude) and the negative behaviors of white males are attributed to external factors (i.e., environment), resulting in differential court reporting by probation officers (Bridges & Steen, 1998). Subsequent research found that this attributional stereotyping is a function of implicit biases that attribute adult-like behaviors to Black juvenile offenders, rendering them subject to harsher or more "adult-like" sanctions in court (Graham & Lowery, 2004; see also Ferguson, 2000). If it is true

that the information we process as participants in a racially stratified society are filtered through an implicitly biased lens, a worthy inquiry would be the extent to which the attributional stereotyping found in the juvenile justice system extends into school environments, and what, if any effect can be found of the use of punitive discipline policies. Researchers have relied on extant databases and psychological priming methods to delve into the question of how stereotyping may impact official responses to Black males; however, little is known of how implicit racial bias may inform our understanding of what impact the increased surveillance, coupled with the negative views of law enforcement held by Black adolescents (Lee, Steinberg & Piquero, 2010), may have on the discipline outcomes of Black males.

The limited knowledge that has accumulated on this subject as it affects Black males has affected the acquisition of knowledge as it affects Black females as well. While Black females and males share living environments that are subject to increased police and probation surveillance, and both experience disparate exclusionary discipline, arrest and incarceration; there remains a dearth of research on how racial threat and stereotyping affect Black girls. The failure to critically apply an intersectional framework has limited our ability to advance the scholarship on racial threat and stereotyping and its impact on the life outcomes of affected populations, both female and male. It prevents scholarship on the subject from asking questions that extend beyond causal relationships to better understand the connection between systems and policies such that we can explore *how* Black girls are perceived as threats to public safety.

Egregious examples of the application of zero tolerance policies in cases involving five- and six- year old African American girls are documented [see Sidebar: The Six-Year Old Threat to Public Safety?]. These children have been handcuffed, arrested, and in some cases, detained for normal adolescent behavior (e.g., having a tantrum in the classroom). While these and comparable behaviors demonstrate a lack of conformity with the classroom norms regarding behavior and peer engagement (see Campbell, 2012; WFTV.com, 2007), punitive discipline—particularly that which criminalizes the child for such actions—is excessive. For example, it can and should be asked whether the racial *threat* is applicable for Black females in other, less visible cases, as it is for so many Black males; and whether it manifests as a unique

response to the implicit notions about Black femininity that undermine equal treatment in the classroom and beyond. However, these and so many other questions remain unanswered.

The Limits of Research on Violence, Victimization and the Social Reproduction of "Moral Panic"

According to the theory of social reproduction, educational institutions in their pedagogy, design, structure and practice, serve to reproduce social hierarchies (Nolan, 2011; Bordieu & Passeron, 1990). Using this lens, institutions that are not intentionally "learning organizations,"[7] or evolving in the context of their intentional quest for knowledge and social change, are those that continue their reproductive role in churning out children trained to maintain racial and social stratification. Bordieu and Passeron note, "every power which manages to impose meanings and to impose them as legitimate by concealing the power relations which are the basis of its force, adds its own specifically symbolic force to those power relations" (p. xv). From this premise, it follows that education institutions may serve a greater social function than simply developing rote skills. These institutions impose a context and proposition of power that inform socio-spatial designations for children.

Within the context of urban schools prone to violence, the reproductive function of schools has served to criminalize and marginalize Black youth. As previously noted, urban schools educating populations that are predominately Black and Brown were the institutions that received the concentration of metal detectors, security guards and other instruments of zero-tolerance. The literature on "moral panic"[8] pairs the disparate application of zero-tolerance with a public meme that has suggested the immorality of urban youth, which increase their vulnerability to punitive action (Farmer, 2010; Smith, E., 2003).[9] This narrative has served to reinforce negative stereotypes about the innate character of Black and brown youth. On this issue, Farmer (2010) writes, "school provides the condition in which emotive discovery, socio-cultural formation and cognitive development take place. Thus, either school hinders or helps form a students' moral identity" (p. 369).

The "Black criminality in the nineties" (Ibid., p. 368) was largely a rhetorical criminalization, concretized in the public sphere through disparate media references to youth crime and via racially charged political references to "urban" youth as "superpredators" (DiIulio, 1995). Other specific assaults on the moral character of Black youth also fueled justifications for the increasingly punitive infrastructure that developed in urban schools. In the

1990s, in the same period when several teen-aged white males were arrested for the murder of schoolmates and teachers, newspapers and national media described the boys as "quintessentially American," using such language as "skinny," "slight," freckle-faced" and intelligent but isolated" (Morris, 2003). Black males who were featured in national media for having committed comparable or less serious crimes were described as "maggots" and "animals" (Ibid.). The use of these descriptors served to agitate pre-existing, implicit stereotypes about Black

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[7] Learning organizations are those that embrace the learning (and developed capacity for learning) among members at all levels of the organization (see Senge, 1990).

[8] Moral panic refers to the collection of punitive responses to media representations of increasing violence developed and mounting public concern regarding the morality of Black urban youth (see Farmer, 2010).

[9] Note: In the United States "urban youth" has been used interchangeably with "inner-city youth" as a euphemism for Black and brown youth, whom disproportionately reside in urban areas.

youth—female and male—as amoral, primitive, barbaric, and animalistic (Mann & Zatz, 1998; Butterfield, 1995; Frazier, 1939;). The manner in which ideas have been propagated by the American media about crime in African American communities contributed to the sharp contrast between how white and Black youth were perceived.

Like their male counterparts, Black females have also been criminalized by the social reproduction of a "moral panic" that informed the development of punitive school-based responses to negative student behaviors (Fyfe, 2012; Jones, N., 2009; see also, Barron & Lacombe, 2005). However, for Black girls, the responses have been less informed by violence as they have been by the stereotypes of a perceived moral deficit that manifests itself in the form of Black girls' perceived promiscuity or "bad attitude," typically associated with her being "loud," using profanity, wearing revealing clothing, and confronting people in positions of authority (Blake, et al., 2011; Lerner, 1972). While some of the literature asserts that Black "teenage girls are mimicking the boys and trying to have their own version of 'manhood'" (Anderson, 1994, p. 302; see also Jones, N., 2010), other research suggests that Black girls are being criminalized for qualities that have been associated with their survival as Black females. For example, to be "loud" or "defiant"—two "infractions" that lead to the use of exclusionary discipline in schools (Blake, et. al., 2011)—are qualities that have historically underscored Black female resilience to the combined effects of racism, sexism, and classism (see Davis, 1981; Lerner, 1972).

For both Black girls and boys, the impact of their victimization in shaping the school practices that governed them is less a subject of public or scholarly inquiry. Notwithstanding research that has explored avoidance theory[10] as a potential explanation for student behaviors in schools where bullying and high incidence of crime pervade (Randa & Wilcox, 2012), there is little scholarship addressing how Black students who experience victimization internalize and interpret the conditions of their learning environments since the implementation and widespread adoption of zero-tolerance policies and instruments.

Much of the literature on victimization does not specifically focus on the experiences of *Black* girls; however, research has uncovered a significant presence of abuse histories—physical, substance, emotional, and sexual—among incarcerated and detained girls (Chesney-Lind & Jones, 2010; Berlinger & Elliott, 2002; Acoca & Dedel, 1998; Dembo, Williams, & Schmeidler, 1993). While the majority of abusive incidents among adolescents occur in non-school locations (Finklehor,

1994), there may also be incidents of sexual or other victimization that occur during school hours that lead to negative associations between African American girls and their educational institutions (Nolan, 2011; Acoca & Dedel, 1998). Although the instruments of zero-tolerance that facilitated a pipeline for Black males may not have been implemented as a reaction to Black female violence and perceived threat to public safety, school system responses to Black girls who display "defiant" or "bad" attitudes often occur without consideration of their victimization histories, and instead, mimic the same exclusionary discipline responses as those which are applied to their male counterparts.

Many girls of color release their anger by inflicting violence on other girls and some boys (Letendre & Smith, 2011; Chesney-Lind & Jones, 2010). Indeed, many girls interpret violence along a continuum that ranges from self-defense to predatory actions (Letendre & Smith, 2011; Brown, M., 2010; Carroll, 1997). In a recent study on middle school violence among girls, which found racial bias and negative color consciousness to be a motivating factor in some school-based incidents, a participant stated that violence may occur because someone says:

> "Oh, I don't like you cause you're Black," or "'cause you're dark-skinned" …. I will fight them because they shouldn't be talking about people's race. Like, Martin Luther King, Jr. was there for a reason, hello, you know? And people still do that to this day (Letendre & Smith, 2011, pp. 52–53).

While the conditions of Black males are certainly worthy of substantial investment, centering *only* the Black male condition has presented a zero-sum philanthropic dilemma, where private and public funding resources have prioritized in their portfolios a number of efforts to improve the conditions of Black males without consideration for Black females, who share schools, communities, resources, homes and families with these males. For example, most philanthropic portfolios that support racial justice fail to include a gender analysis, and those portfolios that support gender issues often fail to center African American girls. Without a philanthropic investment in the status of Black girls that is comparable to that of Black boys, the historical framework associated with the invisibility of Black females persists, in which "all the women are white, all the Blacks are men, but some of us are brave" (Hull, Bell-Scott, & Smith, 1982).

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[10] Avoidance theory refers to the idea that students will avoid spaces in schools, or schools altogether, as a reaction to school-based victimization or fear of crime.

INTERSECTIONAL IMPLICATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

This review of the literature on Black females and males has uncovered a number of themes associated with the school-to-prison pipeline and demonstrated where these themes are limited with respect to their ability to capture the education-system pathways to incarceration for Black girls. While race has figured prominently in the critique of zero tolerance programs and achievement gaps, gender has operated at a more discreet level. Specifically, it has elevated the invisibility of Black girls in the discourse on school-to-prison pathways and has offered that a structural frame is paramount to future investigations of the topic.

The primary epistemological shortcoming of the pipeline analogy is the assumption that by addressing a pipeline, we will affect the conditions of Black males and females alike. However, assuming that the pathways to incarceration for Black females is identical to that of males has failed to curtail the use of exclusionary discipline on Black females—that discipline which this examination suggests may only exacerbates the likelihood of becoming a high school dropout and/or involved in the justice system.

The absence of a lens that explores gender—female and male—facilitates the absence of a structural analysis of the education-systems factors and experiences associated with the discipline of Black youth in many schools. Without this analysis, the conditions of Black girls are often compared with those of Black *boys*, rather than compared with other *girls*, which would be more appropriate. Perhaps due to historic constructs of inequality that have presented Black female experiences as more masculine or subject to a perceived gender equity than their white counterparts (see Davis, 1981; Genovese, 1974, 1974; Lerner, 1972), Black girls are left in a nebulous space between males and other women, where they are rendered not only invisible but powerless to correct course with opportunities that respond to their triple status as female, as a youth, and as a person of African descent. However, through an intersectional lens, we are better able to see these young women and their intertwined relationships with the multiple identities that inform their experiences along school-to-prison pathways.

While the research in this paper largely explored casual relationships between behaviors and student outcomes, there is little research that expounds on *why* these relationships exist, or that offer a critical

analysis of *how to understand and correct* the current ways in which zero-tolerance policies and the criminalization of urban learning spaces potentially facilitate the internalization of surveillance and anticipation of incarceration for Black youth, both female and male.

As previously noted, school-to-prison "pipeline" refers to the link between citations or arrests in school, and subsequent contact with the justice system; either as a function of exclusionary discipline and dropping out and/or future participation in underground economies. However, this paper's examination of the literature shows that a direct trajectory (i.e., "pipeline") may not be as constant for Black females as it is for Black males. Like their male counterparts, Black female students who are dissuaded from completing high school may participate in the underground economy and become involved with the justice system (see Acoca, 2000; Acoca & Dedel, 1998). However, autoethnographic research suggests that Black females who avoid both of these outcomes may also drop out of school, increase their risk of teenage pregnancy and/or become financially dependent on males who participate in the underground economy (Carroll, 1997; see also Gaines, 1994). Given the nature of facially race-neutral laws that in effect, treat Black females as co-conspirators in their partner's criminal behavior, many young Black females who have not committed crimes themselves, or done so only under duress, may also find themselves in custody or under the supervision of the criminal and juvenile justice systems even if they have not, themselves, committed any crime (Bush-Baskette, 2010; Richie, 1994; see also Smith with Morris, 2011). For Black girls who are disconnected or alienated from school, there are multiple conditions such as poor relationships with mothers, substance abuse, mental health disorders and other conditions (Holsinger & Holsinger, 2005) that converge to affect their increased vulnerability to become commodities of, or participants in, the underground economy, or as intimate partners of males and females who participate in the underground economy—which may eventually lead to their incarceration.

Carefully examined, a culturally competent female-responsive investment would need to prioritize the dismantling of policies that criminalize Black girls for noncriminal behavior, such as violating dress codes, refusing to produce identification in school, or

using profanity with a teacher. While some jurisdictions may be beginning to include girls in the conversations about the disproportionate rates at which youth of color are in contact with the justice system, many state and county agencies are still not structured to respond to females of color with appropriate, culturally-competent and gender responsive interventions (Bloom, Owen, Covington, & Reader, 2002). These jurisdictions, for example, may operate Day Reporting Centers as intensive, community-based alternatives to incarceration for males that are equipped with staff and curricula to address the specific programmatic needs of boys of color, but have no such program for the girls of color in that same jurisdiction. Additionally, the expansion of school-based restorative/transformative justice efforts to support healing, learning, and community building should also be an outgrowth of the developing consciousness around Black females and the existing Black male campaigns. To support this effort, community response planning efforts to reduce the over-representation of Black girls in confinement (e.g., the development of comprehensive planning efforts to develop gender-responsive continua of services that are also culturally competent) are also needed—those which include the development of school-based programs, community reentry services, and school reintegration.

Toward the goal of developing an informed advocacy agenda, future research must be conducted in a variety of geographic areas to account for regional and state differences and norms associated with the administration of justice. Given the paucity of research exploring the education-system pathways to delinquency and incarceration outside of the Midwest and Florida, future areas of research should specifically examine trends in California, New York, Louisiana, Mississippi and other states with high indexes signaling significant racial disparity among the youth in contact with the juvenile justice system (see Hartney & Silva, 2007). In addition to quantitative research, qualitative research that investigates how Black girls' multiple identities shape the education-system's responses to them, as well as other research on the impact of implicit bias on the application of exclusionary discipline to Black females would help to advance the knowledge, research, and advocacy on this issue. Indeed, using multi-modal approaches to knowing that include sacred experience and action research (see Wheatley, 1999; Reason, 1993;), we could better *imagine* Black reactions to indignity, their responses to poverty, sexism and objectification, and their fight to be *seen* in a world—educational or otherwise—that does not favor Black girls (and boys) who speak their minds, and who raise their voices to be heard; in other words, youth who are seeking to sift through the circumstances of their position, to come to terms with the pain of victimization in order to carve out a small space to exercise their tenuous power. Finally, participatory action research would also increase knowledge on how to improve how Black girls situate themselves in learning environments such that we can develop a new metaphor—perhaps one that gives us what we need to envision a set of informed *prison to achievement* pathways.

CONCLUSION

This Report is intended to encourage a robust conversation about how to reduce the criminalization of Black females in our nation's learning environments. The pathways to incarceration for Black youth are worthy of our most immediate inquiry and response. Engendering the school to prison pathways discussion allows for an expanded appreciation for the similarities and differences between females and males that can inform responses to interrupt the school to prison pathways for *all* Black youth. In other words, when it comes to the promise of quality education and justice—let's not only hear it for the boys. Let's also hear it, see it, feel it, and speak it for the girls.

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