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Disappeared Subjects:
Girls of Color, School Discipline and Punishment

By

Connie Wun

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
Education
in the
Graduate Division
of the
University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Na'ilah Nasir, Chair
Professor Dylan Rodriguez
Professor Janelle Scott
Professor Martin Jay

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Girls of Color, School Discipline and Punishment
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Connie Wun

Abstract

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Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Na'ilah Nasir, Chair

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of school discipline policies and practices on girls of color. This qualitative study used case study method, interviews, participant observation and document analysis to explore the multiple levels of discipline at a high school located in northern California. Twenty girls of color with discipline records were interviewed about their experiences with school discipline. Fourteen adults including teachers, counselors and administrators were also interviewed about their interpretations of students' experiences. To comprehend the girls' experiences, the study was guided by the following questions: (1a) What is the discipline environment including the federal, state and district policies that shape the case study school policies? (1b) According to school personnel, how are these policies implemented and what are their perspectives on these policies? (2) What experiences did girls of color have with discipline policies and practices at the case study site? (3) What did the girls of color identify as the factors that contributed to their discipline records at school?

Findings demonstrate that school discipline environment is a multileveled punitive structure. School discipline policies are forms of racialized and gendered disciplinary power that attempt to normalize students according to dominant standards. Students who fail to meet racial and gender norms are subject to multiple forms of punishment including referrals, suspensions and arrests. Findings also demonstrate that girls of color are subject to both formal and informal forms of punishment. Black girls, in particular, are also subject to informal punitive practices. The girls' narratives suggest that their experiences with school discipline include racial profiling and gratuitous punishment. Additionally, findings indicate that most of the girls of color who have been disciplined at school have also experienced intersecting forms of violence outside of school. Findings suggest that the girls' experiences with violence outside of school affect their behaviors in school. Results also indicate that discipline policies punish girls for how they respond to the conditions that shape their lives.

Informed by Critical Race Feminism and Black feminist theory, this study analyzes the girls' disciplinary experiences within structural and institutional contexts. The theoretical and methodological approaches employed in this study provide an intersectional approach to examining school discipline policies and punitive practices. Findings contribute to studies concerning the intersections between race, gender, school discipline and punishment.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Throughout the United States, public schools and districts that serve predominantly working-class/poor students of color have been scrutinized for their possible overreliance upon harsh discipline policies. Data (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Mendez, 2003; Skiba, 2002) on school discipline has demonstrated that students of color are more likely to be disciplined than their White counterparts. Black and Latino youths, in particular, are more often disciplined in the form of referrals, suspensions, and expulsions than their classmates and they are more often policed and arrested (Civil Rights Data Collection, 2013; Wallace J.M., Goodkind, Wallace C.M., & Bachman, 2008). According to a report issued by the Department of Education (2010), Latino students constitute 24 percent of the United States public school student population, yet they constitute 29 percent of law enforcement referrals, 37 percent of school-related arrests and 24 percent of the expulsion data. Black youth make up 18 percent of the student population, yet they constitute 42 percent of the referrals to law enforcement, 35 percent of school-related arrests, and 39 percent of all students expelled. These disparities have become a major focus for federal institutions, education researchers, and civil rights leaders (Advancement Project, 2012; Winn, 2011).

While these quantitative studies have helped to highlight the disparities surrounding discipline, they do not provide insight into how discipline policies are experienced in “real life.” That is, what is happening to the students when they are being disciplined? What are the dynamics that surround their referrals, suspensions, or arrests? This qualitative study contributes to the school discipline literature by focusing on students’ experiences with school discipline, it examines the complexities that shape students’ disciplinary lives.

This study will focus on the experiences that girls of color have with discipline. In response to the growing research around racial disparities, there have been many studies of young men of color. Projects such as the federal government’s recent initiative called “My Brother’s Keeper” and state-based projects including the Young Men’s Initiative in New York City have narrowed in on the importance of addressing the needs of boys of color, particularly around issues of health, education, the criminal justice system, and employment training. These projects are important because they highlight the factors that shape the lives of boys of color. They also offer some direction for policy makers and advocates to create interventions. However, attention only to boys also risks concealing the experiences that girls have with school discipline.¹ It also ignores some of the particular forms of violence that disproportionately affect young women including sexual assault and domestic violence.

In recent years, studies have shown that some girls of color are also overrepresented in school discipline (CDRC, 2013). According to the Department of Education (2013), 12 percent of school aged Black girls across the country have experienced out of school suspensions. Meanwhile, 7 percent of school-aged Native American girls, 4 percent of school-aged Latinas, and 2 percent of school-aged White girls have out of school suspension records. Additionally, the same study found that of Black girls with disabilities, 19 percent of the girls had experienced out

¹ In light of the interventions made by queer and gender studies scholarship, the approach to exploring “men” or “boys” without critically examining what encompasses these categories or identities has the potential to reproduce

of school suspensions, 31 percent of the girls have been referred to law enforcement; and 43 percent of the girls have experienced school-based arrests.

Most of the studies on girls of color and school discipline are quantitative. These studies show that alongside Black and Latino boys, Black girls are also disproportionately represented in school discipline data. Girls are more likely to be disciplined for behaviors such as disruption, profanity, and defiance (Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Morris, 2007). While there is very limited qualitative research that focuses on the experiences girls have with school discipline, studies of incarcerated girls demonstrate that many of them had extensive discipline records typically for subjective infractions such “talking back” or “disobedience.” (Mendez, 2005; Winn, 2010). Thus, incarcerated girls were not only excessively disciplined at school, they also had extensive experiences with different forms of violence outside of school.

This qualitative study focuses on girls of color and their experiences with school discipline. This study considers what it means for girls of color to “get into trouble”² by exploring the different ways that racially marginalized female subjects interpret their experiences with school discipline. As findings from the chapters reveal, girls of color are not all affected by school discipline policies and practices similarly.

Informed by Black feminism and Critical Race Feminism, this study uses an “intersectional” framework to examine school discipline. “Intersectionality,” in this case, examines the interlocking forms of oppression. Black feminist research has demonstrated that in order to understand social and institutional inequalities, including racial disparities with institutional practices, we must center the experiences and perspectives of those whose subjectivities are constituted through multiple marginalities (Anzaluda, 1990, Combahee Collective, 1986; Crenshaw, 1989; Richie, 2001). In this study the lived experiences and perspectives of girls of color provide rich insight into the multiple, intersecting forces that create inequalities. Critical race and Black feminists have also explained that invisibilizing the lives of women of color, including the intersecting layers of violence they experienced, is foundational to the United States’ history (Smith, 2005). Highlighting the experiences of girls of color in relationship to school discipline is an important project as we interrogate the connections among race *and* gender, schools, discipline and punishment.

Rationale for Study

The impetus behind this project is two-fold. As a former high school teacher at a continuation school (for students with extensive discipline records), I experienced the ineffectiveness of school discipline policies. While sending a student out of class may temporarily ameliorate tensions in class, the approach is antithetical to nurturing a supportive school environment.

For instance, one day, one of my students came to class late. As I was taking attendance, I noticed that Nina immediately headed to her seat, but instead of sitting in the chair, she climbed on top of it. She laid on the desk and the empty one next to it. Since this was uncharacteristic of her and most of my students, I walked over to check on her. As I asked how she was doing, I also reminded her to sit in her seat. She did not move. In response, I gently reminded her that she

² Using a Critical Race Feminist framework, this study defines “girls of color,” as Asian, Filipino/a, Latina, Black, Native American, Pacific Islander, Arab and Middle Eastern. This definition is wide and limited at once. This term encapsulates many racial and ethnic backgrounds. By using the general term, “girl of color,” this study risks losing the diverse experiences that make up each racial identity or experience (Nasir, 2011). This also risks essentializing racial experiences.

always had the option to visit the counselor's office but that I would needed her to sit in her seat. She got off of the desk and sat down, but laid her head on her arms. Minutes later as I went back to teaching the class, Nina quietly left. Assuming that she went to the counselor, I called the office to let Ms. Robinson know that Nina was on her way.

During lunch, I headed to the counselor's office to check on Nina. I learned from her counselor that she had gone home for the day. Apparently, one year prior to that day, Nina had been sexually assaulted by a group of men. The anniversary of that event had affected her ability to focus in school.

Throughout the course of my time as a schoolteacher, I learned that Nina's story was not unique. The young women of color in my classes often shared their stories about a range of experiences, which included poverty and premature deaths of family and friends. One of my students, in the middle of class activities, shared a picture of her stillborn child with me. They also shared experiences with familial neglect, sexual and other forms of violence. Another student dropped out of school after she was shot four times while waiting at the bus stop near campus. Their stories were difficult to hear.

Adding to the violence that the girls experienced outside of school, they were also being forced to deal with various disciplinary practices that schools used to manage them. Most of the students were at this continuation school because of their discipline records. While the school had exceptional academic and social services for a continuation school, it was under-resourced and stigmatized. Many of the students would have preferred to stay at a comprehensive high school where there were more extracurricular activities and academic options. However, because they had too many referrals or suspensions and were on the brink of expulsion from the district, they were sent to the continuation school.

The discipline practices, including referrals and suspensions, did not address the larger concerns that the girls were experiencing outside of school. At the same time, that the policies failed to address the girls' problems, they also seemed to operate as additional obstacles for students to navigate. These girls' experiences inform this current study.

This study is also based upon my preliminary research in 2009, which was a pilot study with two teachers and a different group of students on their perspectives around racial violence in schools. I interviewed a total of ten students – three girls and seven boys – at Foundations High School.³ Lessons from that study helped to guide the goals, purposes, research questions and methodology. I conducted in-depth interviews with adults and students to investigate perspectives around "interracial" violence among students. Students from the study explained that while most adults paid attention to the violence between Black and Latino boys, very few adults were paying attention to the violence between the girls. One teacher shared the concern that students had about girls. She explained that there was a need to address some of the experiences that girls were having with violence. According to this teacher, the girls were, "more than angry. They were filled with rage." This study draws on sights from this prior work.

Focus of this Study

Based upon twelve months of fieldwork at a suburban high school in northern California, this project uses participant observation and in-depth interviews from school personnel and

³ The pilot study was conducted at the same site as this present case study. Foundations High School and all names in this study have been changed to protect the identities of students and school personnel.

young women of color with disciplinary records to explore how subjects navigate through the school's complex web of discipline policies and practices. This study also analyzes documents to investigate the school discipline environment including federal, state and local school discipline policies. It asks why "troubled girls" get into trouble in this environment. It also identifies the differences and similarities between the ways administrators, educators and students conceptualize "disciplinary problems" and "violence." Using Critical Race Feminism and Black feminist theory as frameworks, this study examines the disciplinary environment including girls' experiences with violence. Findings indicate that their understanding of school safety and violence are at times determined by dominant ideas concerning "disciplinary problems" and "violence." This study examines how discourses around disciplinary problems are shaped by dominant ideas about race, gender, and violence.

Research Questions

- What are the federal, state and district policies that shape the case study school policies? According to school personnel, how are these policies implemented and what are their perspectives on these policies?
- How do the girls of color at the case study site interpret their experiences with school discipline policies and practices?
- What did the girls of color identify as the factors that contributed to their discipline records (i.e. their behaviors) at school?

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter 2 maps out the literature that informs this study and the theoretical frames that guide my inquiry. First, I present relevant literature on school discipline, which includes analyses of the school-to-prison pipeline, race and school discipline and the effects of racial disparities in school discipline policies on young men of color. Second, I review the literature on what I call "troubled girls," which includes research on young women and the juvenile justice system; and urban girls and violence. The third section of this chapter presents the theories that guide this study: Critical Race Feminism and Black feminism.

Chapter 3 presents the research design of my study. The beginning of the chapter includes an overview of the methodological approach that guides my inquiry. I provide a rationale for the case study method, qualitative interviews, participant observation and document analysis. Then, I examine my positionality as a researcher, former teacher, and as an "insider-outsider" non-Black woman of color. Finally, I present the design of my qualitative interview study, including data collection methods, demographics of participants, data analysis procedures and limitations of the study. I also present details of my case study site, including its demographics, and the multiple disciplinary policies that guide discipline practices at the high school.

Chapter 4 presents findings on the case study school discipline environment. Using document analysis, I examine a school handbook focusing on the ways federal, state and district policies are integrated into its policies. This chapter also includes data showing how school officials implement the policies. Findings reveal that there are discrepancies between discipline policies and the ways they are actually implemented by school officials.

Chapter 5 details how the girls of color with discipline records narrate their

experiences with discipline policies and practices. It discusses how the students understand what happened when a teacher, administrator, campus security or police officer disciplined them. In addition, findings show that girls of color, particularly Black girls, are disciplined beyond school policies and as a part of the school's multilayered punitive structure. This chapter discusses the impact of these practices on the girls' lives.

Chapter 6 looks at the reasons girls of color with discipline records identify as having lead to their discipline records. It shows that the girls are often disciplined for how they enact their anger around conditions that affect their lives. It examines the experiences that girls had outside of school, especially with poverty, sexual and domestic violence. It also discusses the girls' attempts to resist what they see as the subjugation of school authorities. This chapter discusses the girls' narratives of their being penalized for defending themselves against authoritative teachers and against other students who start fights with them. The chapter argues that the girls are penalized for their anger. The last chapter, Chapter 7, summarizes the significant findings of this study and discusses the theoretical implications for the fields of education and gender/women.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter reviews literature on contemporary school discipline policies and practices to understand how school discipline environments have been conceptualized and analyzed. Although most research on school discipline has focused on boys, this study will also examine literature on “troubled girls.” Reviewing research on “troubled girls” provides a context for understanding the experiences of girls of color with discipline records.

The first section on school discipline literature examines zero tolerance discipline policies, including theories about the origins of these policies. School discipline policies are also a part of what has become known as the “school-to-prison pipeline.” This section details the components of the school-to-prison pipeline. Next, the section provides an overview of theories that examine the relationship between school discipline policies and the criminal justice system. Finally, the section includes literature on the effects of school discipline policies, particularly as they focus on boys of color.

This chapter also explores literature on “troubled girls.” I use “troubled girls” as shorthand for research that explores the following themes: “girls and violence,” and “girls and the criminal justice system.” Since many of the girls who are in the criminal justice system or have discipline records also have histories with fighting, this section examines the reasons why girls engage in physical violence with one another. By analyzing the methodological approaches and findings on school discipline and “troubled girls” literature, this review sets the foundation for the study.

Schools, Discipline and Punishment

Research around discipline and punishment has primarily focused on the formal spaces that make up prisons, jails or detention centers (Sudbury 2005; Rhodes, 2004). Studies argue that these spaces of confinement are emblematic of the United States’ repressive and exclusionary politics of discipline (Simon, 2007; Wacquant, 2009). These spaces, in large part, function to contain and police bodies that have been rendered criminal and deviant (Foucault, 1977), most of whom are disproportionately poor and Black (Alexander, 2012; Brewer & Heitzeg, 2008; Rodriguez, 2000). One other exemplary social institution through which these politics can be seen is the current public education system and its disciplinary practices (Hirschfield, 2008).

In recent years, education researchers have begun to look closely at the punitive school discipline environment (Advancement Project, 2012; Bear, 1998; Kafka, 2012; Skiba & Peterson, 2000). Studies show that over the past four decades, schools have relied more frequently upon “zero tolerance” practices such as suspensions, expulsions and arrests (Casella, 2003; Gordon, Piana, & Keleher, 2000). In addition to these exclusionary policies, schools have also increased policing mechanisms. Today, most schools are equipped with surveillance cameras, security guards, metal detectors, or guard dogs (Lyons & Drew, 2006; Saltman & Gabbard, 2003). The National Board of Education Association found in a study of more than 700 school districts across the United States, 39 percent of all urban districts used metal detectors, 75 percent used locker searchers and 65 percent used security personnel (Welsh, 2000). These disciplinary mechanisms are a part of what make up the architecture of the contemporary school discipline environment.

School discipline includes suspensions, detentions and arrests. Based upon the Civil

Rights Data Collection (2013), in 2009-2010, more than 30,000 California students were referred to law enforcement. At least 20,000 students were arrested or given police tickets for infractions such as truancy violations. According to the report, Black Students make up 16 percent of the student population, yet they constitute 32-42 percent of those suspended or expelled. Comparatively, White students make up 51 percent of the student population, but they make up 31- 40 percent of suspensions or expulsions.

Studies suggest that U.S. public schools and their disciplinary policies are reflective of the prison system, its punitive and exclusionary mechanisms. Whereas prisons were once imagined as the only sites where criminalized subjects are contained, schools are also equipped with complex policing mechanisms, surveillance systems and practices. In addition to the multiple forms of policing, school discipline also includes a number of exclusionary practices such as arrests, suspensions and expulsions. These practices reflect the school system's multilayered punitive structure.

Zero Tolerance

There has been some debate over the origins of these harsh discipline policies. Kafka (2009) contends that contemporary discipline policies such as suspensions and expulsions in California began in the 1950s. Through her study of the history of Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), she discovered that starting in the 1950s, teachers began organizing to change various school policies, including discipline mandates. These proposed changes were a response to the complex racial and postwar climate of the 1950s. They organized for narrowed responsibilities and more centralized education policies to help govern the classroom.

This included a major shift away from the *in loco parentis* philosophy that initially guided school disciplinary practices. Under *in loco parentis* school officials shared custodial duties with parents. They had discretion over how students were disciplined because it was their responsibility to socialize them. Teachers were theoretically obligated to provide academic guidance and socialize students using effective disciplinary practices (Arum, 2003). The doctrine, which was established through the Juvenile Court Act in 1899, was replaced by the philosophy of *in loco politia* (Kim, Losen, & Hewitt, 2010). Under *in loco politia*, the logic of the criminal justice system governed school discipline. Kafka (2011) explains,

Under the longstanding legal doctrine of *in loco parentis*, which asserts that educators act “in place of the parent” when students are under their charge, teachers and principals were assumed to have a child’s best interest in mind when they imposed discipline – even if a child’s actual parents disagreed (p. 6)

This responsibility for how students were disciplined included the flexibility to tailor classroom policies in accordance with the range of behaviors in the classroom. In the late 1950s, teachers no longer wanted this type of responsibility.

In recent years, schools are managed through the philosophy of *in loco politia*. School boards and the judicial system have been granted more authority over school policies (Kafka, 2011). School discipline policies have become increasingly premised upon legal codes and policy mandates (Arum, 2003; Kim, et al, 2010). Instead of teachers individually governing students, the criminal justice system has become more actively involved. Disciplinary procedures now include drug tests, interrogation, and searches of students (Advancement Project, 2011).

Some scholars argue that these policies are an effect of the U.S. repressive culture against student protests and Black radical politics. In particular, the current disciplinary landscape is in response to the political turmoil of the 1960s (Giroux, 2003; Noguera, 2003; Sojoyner, 2013). Sojoyner (2013) contends that contemporary school discipline practices can be traced to the strategies that were used in the 1960s to police and contain Black students in public schools. In his study of school policing in Los Angeles, he writes,

[W]hile Black communities in Los Angeles conceptualized and used public education as a space to develop alternative models of cultural expression and organizing, city officials, planners, and private capital lobbied for and responded with brute force and policy tactics to undermine liberation movements of Black Angelinos (p. 235).

Sojoyner argues that schools have historically been antagonistic towards Black culture and politics.

Skiba and Peterson (1999) traced the development of these harsh policies to federal and state “zero tolerance” drug enforcement policies used in the early 1980s by the U.S. Navy and U.S. Customs Service to deter drug use in the military. According to the authors, the term “zero tolerance” was first applied to US Navy policy towards drug use by officers. According to the authors, forty officers were reassigned for purportedly using the drugs. The reason behind zero tolerance was to effectively punish officers and deter others from committing similar infractions.

By the late 1980s, the zero tolerance approach to drug enforcement was implemented at the federal level. Federal authorities were authorized to seize the property of purported drug dealers and there were strict drug sentencing laws for those found with drugs. For example, the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 included severe punishment for possession of crack cocaine (Alexander, 2010).⁴ These harsh policies used to deter drug use and dealing, disproportionately effected poor communities of color.

The American Civil Liberties Union (2006) reported that while Blacks constituted 15 percent of the nation’s drug users, they made up 37 percent of those arrested and 74 percent those sentenced to prison for drug violations. These numbers indicate that anti-drug zero tolerance policies were disproportionately meted out to Blacks. Despite the fact that Blacks constituted a minor population of drug users, they were more often arrested and convicted for drug offenses than Whites.⁵

In the late 1990s, schools began enforcing zero tolerance policies to address school violence. Following high profile school shootings, the federal government enacted the Guns Free Schools Act of 1994 (GFSA). GFSA required that schools expel students found in possession of weapon within 1000 feet from school grounds. Since the development of GFSA, schools have expelled and suspended students for a number of infractions that extend beyond possession of weapons. In 1995, the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1994 provided \$630 million dollars to states for the purposes of “drug and violence prevention” (Kim, et al., 2010). Since then students have been suspended and expelled from schools for a range of infractions

⁴ The act mandated that individuals found with 5 grams of crack cocaine would be sentenced to 5 years without parole. It also mandated similar sentencing for possession of 500 grams of powder cocaine.

⁵ <https://www.aclu.org/drug-law-reform/aclu-releases-crack-cocaine-report-anti-drug-abuse-act-1986-deepened-racial-inequity>

that have little to do with weapons. The Advancement Project (2005) reported that zero tolerance policies have also been applied to student behaviors ranging from cutting classes to bringing Tylenol, which was considered a drug, to school. The zero tolerance environment also began to extend beyond the use of suspensions and expulsions.

School-to-Prison Pipeline

Zero tolerance policies have become an integral part of what is commonly known as the “school-to-prison pipeline.” In 2003, the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University and the Institute on Race and Justice at Northeastern University sponsored a conference to address the “school-to-prison pipeline” (Wald & Losen, 2003). Conference participants examined the ways that schools were contributing to the juvenile justice system; the effects of school suspensions and expulsions; and the ways that schools could support who were at risk of “delinquency.” According to a recent report, the school-to-prison pipeline is defined as,

[T]he set of policies and practices that make the criminalization and incarceration of children and youth more likely and the attainment of a high-quality education less likely. It is the emphasis of punitive consequences, student exclusion, and justice-system intervention over students’ right to an education (Advancement Project, 2011).

The school-to-prison pipeline includes educational policies in under-resourced schools that fail to serve students’ mental health and academic needs (Kim, et al., 2010). The school-to-prison pipeline is also characterized by education budgets that prioritize policing over social services. For example, in Los Angeles Unified, the combined budget for school police and security personnel was \$91.2 million. This was 73% more than the amount of money allocated for health services and teacher assistants (The Labor Community Strategy Center, 2013). School budgets have narrowly focused upon expanding policing strategies in lieu of creating more social services for students. School-to-prison pipeline researchers explain that students who do not receive adequate educational support are more likely to have discipline records (Eaton, 2010). Students who have been suspended miss instruction, and often fall behind their classmates upon returning to school. The effects are lower academic achievement and withdrawal from school (Gregory, Cornell, & Fan, 2011). Additionally, studies show that out of school suspensions do not only fail to alter students’ behavior, they exacerbate discipline problems (Osher, Bear, & Sprague, 2010; Mendez & Knoff, 2003). Studies demonstrate that suspensions are a significant factor for students’ risks of grade retention and dropping out (Fian, 1989; Wehlage and Rutter, 1986).

The high-stakes testing environment has also contributed to the school to prison pipeline. According the Advancement Project (2010), standardized assessments and high-stakes tests inadvertently encourage educators to neglect students with more academic needs.

As a result of mandates to raise student test scores, districts, schools, administrators, and teachers are under enormous pressure to produce results. This pressure has actually given schools a perverse incentive to encourage or facilitate the departure or removal of lower-performing students.

Students who may need additional academic support are less likely to get these services when teachers are under the pressure to produce particular results. Educators are even less likely to

meet these students' needs when they are under-resourced. This cycle leaves students with more academic needs behind. In turn, these students become withdrawn and have "behavioral problems." These elements of the school-to-prison pipeline are being challenged across different levels. However, not all school discipline researchers agree that there is a school-to-prison pipeline (Meiners, 2007; Schnyder, 2012). These studies have helped to explore the relationship that schools have to the criminal justice system. However, a few scholars argue that schools are not only funneling students into prison, they are sites of confinement onto themselves.

School Discipline and the Criminal Justice System

Researchers claim that the development of these disciplinary practices is related to the U.S. culture of incarceration. Following the United States' history of chattel slavery, Jim Crow laws, and Black ghettos, Black communities are the primary targets of the prison system (Wacquant, 2001). Rodriguez (2006) identifies this as the "prison regime." Under the logic of the prison regime, the carceral logic of policing and confinement governs all of state institutions including schools. In her study of the relationship between the criminal justice system and the foster care system, Roberts (2011) identifies schools as an institution that also governs Black bodies. Giroux (2013) also recognizes the overarching implications of the "ethos of containment and punishment." He argues that schools are increasingly punitive as a part of the U.S. culture of imprisonment.

Students being miseducated, criminalized, and subjected to forms of penal pedagogy in prison-type schools provide a grim reminder of the degree to which the ethos of containment and punishment now creeps into the spheres of everyday life that were once largely immune from this type of official violence (p. 14).

Thus, the principles of containing and punishing communities extend beyond the prison walls. Schools are now infused and governed by the logic of incarceration. This, Giroux, theorizes is a recent phenomenon.

Mirroring criminal justice policies, which punish adults and juveniles for their infractions against criminal law through incarceration, schools have similar tactics for classroom management and school order (Noguera, 2007; Sojoyner, 2013; Wald & Losen, 2003). Schools also employ racialized logics of criminalization, surveillance and exclusionary policies (Giroux, 2003; Sojoyner, 2013; Wacquant, 2001). Meiners (2010) argues that there is a symbiotic relationship between schools and prisons. She contends that schools have adopted policing policies that not only lead students to prison, but make schools sites of confinements. The use of surveillance mechanisms such as metal detectors, security guards, and police officers has made schools look increasingly like jails and prisons (p. 551). Yet, metal detectors and police officers at school are not the only form of discipline and surveillance on campus.

School officials have for nearly four decades been authorized to police students on behalf of the criminal justice system. For example, in California, schools began implementing programs that formally coupled the criminal justice system with the public education system (Law in the School, 1973). In 1973, the California Department of Justice published the first edition of *Law in the School*, a guide intended for school, teachers, parents and students. According to the document:

While teachers are neither parents or policemen, they have assumed two duties which they share in common with parents and policemen. Their first duty is to take affirmative action to see to it that each child is protected from the harm caused by crimes and disciplinary offenses committed by other students, by outsiders, and even by the child himself. Failing this, their second duty is to use disciplinary and if necessary, criminal processes to deal effectively and impartially with misbehavior. (Law in Schools, 1973, p. 4).

This approach ushered in new criminal justice based responsibilities for school faculty. Ten years later, in 1984, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Attorney General created the School Law Enforcement Partnership (S/LEP) (Safe Schools: A Planning Guide For Action 2002, v). This partnership between schools and law enforcement was created based on assumptions that it was the duty of school authorities to “create safe and orderly campuses and communities” as required by the State Constitution (Article 2, Section 28).

Beyond California, courts across the country were deputizing teachers with the authority to implement criminal justice based practices to discipline and monitor students. Following the 1985 landmark decision *New Jersey v. T.L.O.*, school officials were authorized to search students beyond the parameters provided to law enforcement. In the case of *New Jersey v. T.L.O.*, school authorities were legally allowed to search lockers based upon their reasonable suspicion (Kim, et. al, 2010) These policies and legislative rulings legally permitted school authorities to practice surveillance, student searches and seizures of student property to *discipline* students suspected of criminal behavior. In short, it became legally permissible for school officials to subject students to law enforcement procedures at school.

While these were recent landmark mandates that formally joined the school and criminal justice system, Sojoyner (2013) contends that contemporary school discipline practices can be traced to the strategies that were used in the 1960s to police and contain Black students in public schools. In his study of school policing in Los Angeles, he writes,

[W]hile Black communities in Los Angeles conceptualized and used public education as a space to develop alternative models of cultural expression and organizing, city officials, planners, and private capital lobbied for and responded with brute force and policy tactics to undermine liberation movements of Black Angelinos (p. 235).

Sojoyner argues that schools, since at least the 1960s, have been structurally antagonistic towards Black culture and politics.

Schnyder (2012)⁶ also examines this dynamic in his ethnographic study of a predominantly Black school in Los Angeles. He finds that Black students at the school are not only disciplined through formal policies, but they are also being incapacitated through the school’s educational programs. Sojoyner contends that schools enclose upon Black communities. He writes, “rather than a school-to-prison pipeline, the structure of public education is just as and maybe even more so culpable in the enclosure of Black freedom, which in turn has informed the development of prisons.”

⁶ The author Damien Sojoyner is also listed as Damien Schnyder.

School Discipline Effects and Boys

Most of the students who are affected by harsh school discipline policies are students of color (Losen and Gillespie, 2012; J. Wallace, Goodkind, C. Wallace, 2008). Reasons for these disparities range from macro-level social economic trends to micro-level school and classroom biases. At the micro-level, research shows that racial climates in schools, including the relationships between adults and students, affect suspension rates (Nasir, Ross, McKinney de Royston, Givens, & Bryant, 2013). Support for students' racial identities, experiences and intellectual development enables positive student engagement (Vigil-Koon, 2013). On the flipside, studies have shown that many teachers and administrators discipline students based upon racial biases or misunderstandings (Blake, Butler, Lewis, & Darrensborg, 2011; Morris, 2007). Fenning and Rose (2007) argues that racial disparities in school discipline data are a result of cultural mismatches between teachers and students.

Most gender-based school discipline research around school discipline narrow in on the experiences that boys of color have with suspensions, expulsions and arrests (Epstein, 1998; Ferguson, 2001; Heitzeg, 2009; Noguera et al, 2008; Rios, 2011). Ferguson (2001) found that stereotypes of Black criminality were significant factors in who and how Black boys were punished at school. Rios (2011) illustrated in his ethnographic study of East Oakland, that Black and Latino boys were regularly policed and criminalized in their neighborhoods as well as at school. Institutional responses to disparities in school discipline policies also focus on boys. For example, projects such as the federal government's recent initiative called "My Brother's Keeper," and state based projects including the Young Men's Initiative in New York City have focused on supporting boys of color. While these studies and projects are important, they have the potential to neglect the experiences of other gendered individuals, namely young women of color who are also disproportionately affected by school discipline policies.

Studies have also shown that Black girls are disciplined for transgressing dominant gender norms. In 2007, a study found that Black girls were more likely to be disciplined based upon subjective interpretations of poor behaviors. The girls were seen as "too loud" and "unladylike." (Morris, 2007). In another study, Black girls were arrested for being too "disrespectful" and "uncontrollable" (Morris, 2012). These studies all show that racial biases in school determine which students are more likely to be disciplined.

Building upon this prior research, this present study examines the experiences that girls of color have with multiple layers of school discipline. In addition to exploring their experiences with zero tolerance policies, the study examines how the relationship between the school and criminal justice systems shape girls' disciplinary experiences. This study also adds to prior research by examining how school discipline includes sets of practices that extend beyond formal policies. In other words, this study explores how school discipline is comprised of formal policies and informal practices. It broadens conceptualizations of school discipline by examining how school discipline is defined and experienced from the perspectives of girls of color.

Troubled Girls Literature

While there is limited literature on the effects that school discipline policies have on girls, particularly girls of color, there are popular depictions of the "troubled girl." Within cultural discourses and popular imaginations she is understood as the young woman who fights a lot (Wiseman, 2002), will end up pregnant (Kingsbury, 2008), and has an attitude problem (Morris,

2007). She is imagined to be a trouble-maker and is from the “ghetto” (Jones, 2009). In recent years, she has also been depicted as being as bad as boys (Martin, 2007; Osler & Vincent, 2003). She is characterized as reckless and drug-addicted, disaffected and combative. These images of the “troubled girl” are that she is unmanageable, unruly and criminal (Dellaega & Nixon, 2003).

In response, feminist criminologists and sociologists have worked to dispel these depictions of the troubled girl (Chesney-Lind & Jones, 2010). Mike Males (2010) details the various ways that these myths about the girls are untrue. Since 1975, girls’ arrest rates for murder have down by nearly 50 percent. Their arrest rates for robbery have also significantly lowered by 23 percent (p. 26). Thus, despite claims that girls are becoming more violent and criminal, studies indicate that girls are not committing more serious crimes.

Instead, they are being increasingly criminalized (Chesney-Lind, 2010). Girls are being more “heavily policed” (Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2008) and arrested for minute offenses including arguing with parents (Buzawa & Hotaling, 2010). Additionally, with the development of zero tolerance policies, girls are more likely to be arrested for assaults than they were before the mandates were enacted. “In decades past, this violence would have been ignored or labeled a status offense, like being “incorrigible” or a person in need of supervision. Now, an arrest for assault is made (Chesney-Lind, 2010, p. 60)

Young women are also more often arrested for status offenses (e.g. running away) than their male peers (Chesney-Lind, 2004).⁷ Feminist criminologists argue that young women are more likely to get arrested for running away because of gendered expectations. Girls are expected to stay home. As well, feminist criminologists argue that these women may be leaving home because of the domestic or sexual violence they are experiencing at home (Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2008). Additionally, the reasons that girls are being arrested have more to do with situations at home than they do with the severity of the offense (Chesney-Lind, 1997; Sharma, 2013). Boys are more likely to be detained for the gravity of their offense while girls are more likely to be detained because of conflicts at home. These studies suggest that girls are punished for different offenses from boys. They also indicate that while girls are increasingly being arrested and detained, they are not necessarily committing more crimes.

In the past few decades, the incarceration rates for girls and women have skyrocketed. Sudbury (2005) writes that since 1973, there has been a marked expansion in the number of incarcerated women in the United States. In 1970 there were 5,600 incarcerated women in U.S. prisons and jails. This number increased in 2001 to 161,200, “representing a staggering 2,800 percent increase” (xiv).⁸ Sudbury (2005) writes that since 1973, there has been an expansion in the number of incarcerated women in the United States. In 1970 there were 5,600 incarcerated women in U.S. prisons and jails. This number increased in 2001 to 161,200, “representing a staggering 2,800 percent increase” (p. xiv).⁹ Other studies show that the female prison population increased by 832 percent from 1977 to 2007 while the male prison population increased by 416 percent within the same period.¹⁰

Chesney-Lind (2010) found that these gendered differences in criminal justice numbers

⁷ It is important to note that these numbers do not necessarily indicate that girls are running away at higher rates than boys. Instead they show that girls are arrested more often for these offenses than boys.

⁸ U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Statistics, “Federal Prison Population Increases a Record Amount, State and Local Inmate Growth Moderates” (2001) quoted in Sudbury (2005, xiv)

⁹ U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Statistics, “Federal Prison Population Increases a Record Amount, State and Local Inmate Growth Moderates” (2001) quoted in Sudbury (2005, xiv)

¹⁰ National Prisoner Statistical Data Series conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics and West, Heather C. and William J. Sabol. *Prisoners in 2007*. Bureau of Justice Statistics: December 2008.

are also racially coded. Citing statistics from the 2007 National Council on Crime and Delinquency report, Chesney-Lind (2010) writes that Black girls are “incarcerated at a rate of 214 per 100K compared to 68 per 100K for white girls. For Native Americans, it was essentially the same at 209 per 100K. Latina girls were also more likely to be incarcerated than their white counterparts (p. 63). These numbers are indicative of gendered and racialized trends within the criminal justice system.

Biographical sketches of these women’s lives indicate that most incarcerated women have had extensive experiences with violence. These histories, however, do not indicate that women who have been victimized by violence will commit crimes. They offer insight into the relationship that social forces have had to complicate these women’s lives, potentially propelling them to commit “survival crimes.” According to a study by Green, Miranda, and Daroowalla (2005), 98 percent of women in a jail study were exposed to a traumatic event. Ninety percent of the women reported at least one interpersonal trauma and 71 percent were exposed to domestic violence. National statistics demonstrate that 85 percent of young women in detention have experienced sexual or emotional abuse before incarceration (Krisberg, 2005). Many female prisoners have experienced various forms of violence, not limited to sexual assault or domestic violence (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004; Richie, 1996).

Many are from low-income families and communities (Alleyne, 2006; Moe & Ferraro, 2006). What we find through the literature on incarcerated women is that most incarcerated women have existed at the margins in society prior to their encounter with the criminal justice system. The population of incarcerated women is generally comprised of poor women of color whose histories encompass multiple layers and forms of violence. Although examining women’s intimate lives, including the trauma they have experienced and the potential motivations for committing “criminal” behaviors, is helpful, focusing only on interpersonal forms of violence limits our understanding of penalized women’s lives (Meiners, 2007).

In a qualitative study of incarcerated girls, Sharma (2013) found that most of the girls had histories of being punished for transgressing gender and heterosexual norms. As an instructor in girls’ facilities, Sharma (2013) examines her students’ autobiographies and highlights the layered complexities in their lives. Girls in her study noted that they were policed in their communities, at school and in the juvenile facilities for not subscribing to dominant concepts of femininity. For decades studies have shown that the dominant, though elusive, characterizations of femininity are often characterized by white heteronormative standards of gentle, soft, submissive, quiet, and passive modes of being in the world (Currie, 1999; Ingraham, 1999; Morris, 2007).

Not only are girls disciplined because of their transgressive behaviors against gender norms, incarcerated girls are also disproportionately victims of sexual or domestic violence. In her qualitative study of a theater program in a girls’ detention center, Winn (2011) identifies the complex worlds that the girls navigated through prior to their incarceration. She interviews students and explores the manuscripts that students write for the theater program. Finding that the plays are often autobiographical, she finds that the girls’ lives are characterized by intersectional stories of sexual and domestic violence; school and parental neglect; poverty and racism. By situating the students’ narratives and their experiences in the wider contexts in which they live, Winn demonstrates that the girls are multiply marginalized (Crenshaw, 1997) and consistently criminalized for the ways that they navigate through structural inequalities. Troubled girls, according to this literature, have been subject to different forms of violence.

In a study that examined the reasons behind Black women’s incarceration at Cook County Jail in Chicago, Richie (1996) argues that the intersections of race, gender, and class marginalities

affect how incarcerated women were “compelled to crime.” Based upon in-depth interviews and life histories, Richie’s study identifies the ways that the women in the study were victimized by structural inequalities. Her interviewees shared stories of living under poverty, of experiencing domestic and sexual violence and of being coerced into committing crimes by intimate partners who were also perpetrators of violence against them. Findings from this study suggest that structural and institutional violence affect women’s options and trajectories. Richie’s data also found that her interviewees, who were also troubled girls, were criminalized and incarcerated for how they navigated through the violence in their lives.

In another study, Richie (2012) detailed the different ways that the criminal justice system, particularly the “prison nation,” enacted violence against Black women. Using an intersectional framework, she argued that the prison nation and its criminalizing processes were forms of structural and interpersonal violence against Black women across different age groups. Her evidence was based upon high-profile cases, such as the New Jersey 4 case, in which four Black queer women were convicted of assault for defending themselves against a male aggressor, as well as upon cases that have not been as well publicized. She shared her interview with an older Black woman living in an increasingly gentrified community in New York City who was terrorized by police officers through physical and sexual assault. Richie argued that the relationship between the criminal justice system and Black women was antagonistic, one that subject Black women to multiple forms of violence. Richie argued that Black women were rarely acknowledged as victims of violence. Instead, they were more likely to be seen as perpetrators of violence than subjects of violence. Her findings suggest that Black women are vulnerable to layers of violence, including police violence, that leave them overpoliced and underprotected (Crenshaw, 2012).

In her theoretical essay, Bierria (2014) draws from various high-profile cases to illustrate that Black women are criminalized for acting to circumvent structural inequalities. She highlights the case of Marissa Alexander, who was sentenced to 20 years in prison for shooting a gun into the ceiling in order to ward off her ex-husband who had a history of domestic violence. Bierria also cites the case of Kelley Williams-Bolar, who was convicted of falsifying her home address in order to send her daughters to a “higher ranked” school district. In these cases, Black women were not only criminalized for the ways they navigated through dangers and inequalities, but also denied the status of “victimhood.” Bierria (2012) writes in another essay that Black women are more often seen as aggressors and perpetrators of violence than as victims of violence. Additionally, when violence against Black women is acknowledged, this recognition is often coupled with questions about what Black women did to incite the violence against them. Centering these women’s experiences highlights the compounding forces that actively undermine their subjectivities and agencies. They also illustrate these women’s desire to avoid being defined or paralyzed by the conditions around them.

In the case of younger women who are from marginalized communities, evidence suggests that they also resist the conditions around them (Jones, 2009; Miller, 2008; Ness, 2010). In her qualitative study of girls and boys from St. Louis, Jody Miller (2008) examines reasons behind Black girls’ experiences with violence in their communities, school and neighborhood. Based upon in-depth interviews, surveys and neighborhood observations, Miller finds that violence against Black girls in St. Louis is shaped by the intersections of normative gender expectations - for both girls and boys - and the effects of structural disadvantages on their neighborhoods and schools. Her study shows that the girls are constantly navigating through the effects of racialized gender expectations of Black masculinity. As boys make unwanted sexual advances, the girls are

forced to “stand up” for themselves. Throughout her study she provides evidence that the girls do not passively acquiesce to gender-based violence, but they resist the violence against them.

Similarly, Jones (2009) found through her ethnographic study of Black girls in north Philadelphia that girls fought to defend themselves against the different types of violence in their communities. She discusses the ways that the girls in her study experience multiple layers of violence, including racism and gendered violence, and finds that they employ survival mechanisms that are at times forms of resistance. For instance, when the girls are confronted by the threat of violence from other girls, boys and men, these young women literally fight back in order to demonstrate that they warrant respect. In other words, fighting becomes a means to demonstrate formidability.

While Jones does not discuss the ways that these girls’ behaviors may have been criminalized, her findings are congruent with the research around incarcerated women whose transgressions were often in response to their intimate lives. Other researchers have discussed different ways that girls’ cultures of fighting are related to the intersection of family structures and social and economic inequalities (Ness, 2010). In her qualitative study of girls and fighting in Philadelphia, Ness (2010) finds that girls are encouraged by their families to physically defend themselves against harm as a way to gain respect. Although these studies on violence and young women do not explicitly address the relationship that these girls have with the criminal justice system or with discipline at school, the narratives provide a framework to understand the experiences of girls with discipline records.

Most studies that examine school discipline data and the impact on females have found that girls of color, particularly Black females, are disproportionately disciplined compared to their peers (Mendez & Knoff, 2007; Morris, 2007). Findings show that Black girls are disciplined for behaviors such as disruption, profanity, defiance and fighting. Many of these infractions are subjective, and violation is determined by the opinions of schoolteachers and administrators. Literature that has evaluated the effects of the STPP on female students has also examined their histories with violence (Simkins, Hirsch, Horvat, & Moss, 2004). The findings from the Simkins, Hirsch, Horvat and Moss (2004) study, which interviewed incarcerated girls and adult women with criminal records, indicate that schools have failed to provide adequate services to young women with violent personal lives. Most schools have not only failed to address the girls’ needs but also punished them for acting out. At times, regardless of their behavior, girls of color can be susceptible to discipline policies. Research indicates that young black women are twice as likely as their white female counterparts to be sent to the office and are five times as likely to be suspended or expelled (Wallace, et al., 2008). According to the Department of Education (2013), 12 percent of school aged Black girls across the country have experienced out of school suspensions, compared to 7 percent for Native American girls; 4 percent for Latinas; and 2 percent for White girls. Additionally, 19 percent of black girls with disabilities have experiences with out of school suspensions. In terms of arrests, 31 percent of Black girls have been referred to law enforcement while 43 percent have had experiences with school related arrests. These numbers have helped to researchers and educators to better understand what is happening to girls of color at school.

This study builds on prior research by examining troubled girls and school discipline. Literature on girls and violence and incarcerated women has demonstrated that troubled girls have complex lives that are often fraught with intersecting forms of violence. Adding to the literature, this study examines troubled girl of colors who have discipline records to understand the conditions that shape their disciplinary experiences at school. It also examines how the girls

interpret the school discipline environment and its effects on their life. Whereas most research has examined how prison and urban communities have shaped the lives of troubled girls, this study adds that schools are also spaces where young women of color are expected to navigate through levels of violence.

Theoretical Framework

This study is informed by critical race feminism (CRF) and Black feminism. Both enable me to better understand the experiences that young women of color have with school discipline policies and practices. CRF examines the role that racism and sexism inform and are reproduced in school discipline policies. Critical race scholarship and Black feminist theory, draws on “counter-narratives.” It also uses an intersectional framework to examine how laws and policies reproduce racial and gender inequalities. Black feminist theory specifically examines social phenomena and the experiences of women of color through an intersectional framework. In particular, Black feminist theory informs this project by emphasizing the particular experiences that Black girls have with school discipline practices.

Critical Race Feminism (CRF), a derivative of critical race theory (CRT) and feminist of color scholarship, provides an important framework for this study. Critical race theory developed in the 1970s and 1980s, following the development of critical legal studies (CLS). The latter examined the ways that the US legal system, informed by capitalism, functioned to reproduce social and economic inequalities. CRT scholars drew and departed from CLS scholarship. They recognized that capitalism was central to US law, but that capitalism by itself could not fully account for the United States’ racial inequalities. They argued that legal scholarship should explore the role that race and racism play in US law.

CRT argued that racism undergirded institutional policies, practices and social inequalities. CRT theorists also contended that centralizing the experiences of those subjugated by race and racism would better explain the effects that policies had on communities of color. In particular, they argued for the use of “counter-narratives,” which centered marginalized perspectives, and challenged the silencing of communities of color. These narratives also provided important frameworks for understanding the material effects of the interlocking of racism and the legal system.

In *Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education* (1995) Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate argue for the use of CRT in education research. Ladson-Billings and Tate outlined the reasons behind the need for counter-narratives:

1. Much of reality is socially constructed.
2. Stories provide members of out groups a vehicle for psychic self-preservation
3. The exchange of stories from teller to listener can help overcome ethnocentrism and the dysconscious conviction of viewing the world in one way (p. 57).

These first-hand accounts had multiple uses. First, by highlighting marginalized narratives, they show that there are multiple interpretations of reality that challenge dominant narratives. Thus, they challenged the primacy of dominant narratives. Second, since a part of being racially marginalized in the United States is to internalize the effects of racism, Ladson-Billings and Tate recognized that counter-narratives would offer an outlet for “psychic preservation.” Third, the authors promoted

counter-narratives as pedagogical resources that promoted reflexivity, expansive thinking and critical relationships.

Critical race feminists contributed to CRT scholarship by emphasizing the intersectional relationships among race, gender, sexuality, and class (Crenshaw, 1995; Mastuda, 1993; Wing, 2003). They argued that examining the effects of racism in isolation from other forms of violence—including gendered violence—undermined the complex layers that shaped the lives of women of color. In other words, critical race theory, while useful, left out the particular ways that racialized patriarchy shaped laws and informed experiences. Informed by Black and non-Black women of color scholarships, CRF argued for intersectional critiques of law and policy.¹¹ That is, they asked how laws and policies are shaped by interlocking structures of racism, patriarchy and capitalism and how these structures specifically impact women of color.

Decades of women of color and Black feminist research have demonstrated that in order to thoroughly understand social and institutional inequalities researchers must center the experiences of those who exist at the interstices of multiple marginalities (Crenshaw, 1995; Hill-Collins, 1990; Richie, 1999; Moraga and Anzaldua, 1983). CRF scholars argued that the lives of women of color, particularly those from low-income and poor communities, were shaped by the intersections of multiple forms of marginalization. Crenshaw (1991) explained that women of color experienced “intersectional subordination.” The intersections of racism, sexism, and classism shaped the experiences of women of color. That is, they were subordinated by a confluence of social forces in ways that differed from their male and from white female counterparts.

Similarly, echoing the arguments of Black feminists and non-Black women of color feminists, critical race feminists who studied law and policy argued that traditional feminist frameworks homogenized the experiences of “women.” The latter centered the experiences of white women and created generalizable knowledge from their perspectives. Black and non-Black women of color feminists demonstrated that there were, indeed, explicit differences in their experiences of the world.¹² White feminism often evaluated female subjectivities, including the political, economic and social contexts that shaped them, in ways that did not apply to racially marginalized communities (Combahee River Collective, 1986; Hull, Bell-Scott, & Smith, 1982).

Feminist scholars of color presented nuanced analyses of how the experiences of women of color differed from those of white women. The latter received formal and informal protections from the government in ways that did not apply to non-white women. For instance, women of color were less inclined to report gender-based violence (i.e. domestic violence and sexual abuse) cases to the criminal justice system in large part because the criminal justice system has had a history of criminalizing and incarcerating communities of color. Thus, some women of color were not only rendered vulnerable to sexual or domestic violence, but they were unprotected by the criminal justice system. Furthermore, they were positioned to protect their communities from the criminalizing processes of the judicial system.

This case study also draws from Black feminism. While Black feminism and other feminist of color scholarship informs critical race feminism, I distinguish the former from other feminist scholarship. Black feminism focuses particularly on the experiences of Black women, primarily because of the specific relationship that the United States has had to Black people and to Black

¹¹ For example, in 1982, Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith edited a volume called, *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks are Men, But some of Us Brave: Black Women's Studies*.

¹² Within the past few decades, queer scholars of color have rightfully critiqued the biological essentialism being employed in categories and discourses around “woman of color.” My future research will explore this complexity.

women in particular. Black studies scholar Wilderson (2010) critiques the comparisons that non-Black communities make between their struggles and those of Black people. Arguing that Blackness and anti-Blackness are without analogy, he maintains that there is an antagonistic relationship between the United States, its institutions and Black people.

Black feminist Dorothy Roberts (1997) demonstrates through her analyses of the eugenics movement, forced sterilization campaigns, and the welfare system, that US institutions have historically waged attacks against Black women's bodies. Most recently, Roberts (2011) studied the ways that the foster care and prison system have a symbiotic relationship that punishes Black mothers. Beth Richie (2013) argues that the United States' prison nation, including its criminal justice system, specifically harms Black women. According to Joy James (2009), in order to best understand and address Black women's conditions in the United States, Black feminism must center its critique on the role of state violence.

Black feminism argues that the experiences and insights of women of color, especially Black women, have historically been excluded from social and academic discourses (Crenshaw, 1995). Research on school discipline has demonstrated that girls of color have largely been omitted from school discipline literature despite the fact they are also overrepresented in discipline. Informed by Black feminism, this study collects and analyzes data about the experiences that girls of color, particularly Black girls, have with discipline. The study centers the girls' perspectives around their experiences with school discipline and the conditions that shape their disciplinary lives.

Using an intersectional framework that analyzes how multiple layers of violence intersect to shape the lives of women of color, the study examines how structural and institutional conditions inform the disciplinary behaviors of girls of color. Similarly, this study employs the intersectional framework to analyze how school discipline practices are informed by structural and institutional biases against girls of color and Black youth in particular. Finally, Black feminism provides an important framework for suggesting how to change the conditions that affect Black girls (and their peers) at school with regards to discipline and punishment. Understanding that girls of color and Black girls in particular are some of the most vulnerable subjects in the U.S., this study's findings suggest more directly addressing these girls' needs when considering social and institutional changes.

Chapter Summary

As the literature on school discipline evidences, school discipline policies have become increasingly harsh and punitive— particularly for Black youth. Some researchers argue that this is a result of the rise of a law and order culture in the United States in the latter half of the twentieth century (Giroux, 2003; Simon, 2008), while others explain that this approach was a part of school culture long before mid-century prison expansion (Sojoyner, 2013). School discipline policies have funneled students into the prison system through its various mechanisms. At the same time, schools themselves have increasingly become sites of confinement.

Although there is limited research on how school discipline affects girls, there is an important body of literature that has examined the lives of incarcerated women and girls. Research demonstrates that most women who have criminal records have had complicated lives that included various forms of violence, interpersonal, state and structural violence. Thus, these studies indicate that violence shapes the trajectory of people's lives, particularly within a culture that criminalizes the most vulnerable populations for the ways they cope with and resist violence.

This study examines how girls of color with discipline records make meaning of their

experiences with school discipline. Using critical race feminism and Black feminism, this research examines discipline policies within an intersectional framework, through centering “counter-narratives,” and by studying the particularities of Black girls’ experiences with formal and informal discipline practices.

Chapter III Methods

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research questions and design that guided the study. It describes the importance of the qualitative research design. This chapter discusses the methods that were used in this study— case study, in - depth interviews, participant observation and document analysis. It presents the site background, student and adult demographics sample, data collection processes, and procedures for data analysis. It also includes a discussion of the researcher’s positionality. Finally, it explains the limitations of this study.

Research Questions

The goal of this study was to explore the experiences that girls of color had with school discipline policies and practices. This study was interested in identifying the school discipline policies at a case study site including which ones affected girls of color, how girls of color experienced these policies and why the girls thought they were disciplined or “got into trouble.” In order to answer these questions, the researcher employed different qualitative methods to answer the following research questions.

- What are the federal, state and district policies that shape the case study school policies? According to school personnel, how are these policies implemented and what are their perspectives on these policies?
- What experiences did girls of color have with the discipline policies and practices at the case study site?
- What did the girls of color identify as the factors that contributed to their discipline records (i.e. their behaviors) at school?

Qualitative Research

In order to answer the research questions, I used these qualitative research methods: case-study approach, in-depth interviews, participant observation and document analysis.

Most research into school discipline policies has been quantitative (CRDC, 2013; Morgan, et.al, 2013). Quantitative research methods focus on testing hypotheses, identifying variables, examining large-scale data sets and determining causalities. Often through studying statistics and conducting surveys, these methods are able to identify the “what” of social phenomena. While this provides useful general knowledge about large populations, they are limited in their abilities to provide insight into lived experiences. In particular, they are less able to provide insight into the complex dimensions that influence the lives of individuals. Thus, qualitative research is useful for in-depth analyses of the factors that shape people’s lives. Qualitative research is also a useful method to help researchers identify and understand people’s perspectives, feelings, needs and histories (Mishler, 1986; Richie, 1996; Watson & Watson-Frank, 1985). The method helps to locate the “how” and “why” of social phenomenon by enabling researchers to develop textured explanations of human experiences – including the social, political, and cultural systems that affect them (Creswell, 1998). They also help provide an understanding of how individuals interpret, navigate, and are affected by their worlds. Emphasis

is placed upon the contexts, interpretations and experiences with particular social phenomenon under investigation (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008). In order to answer my specific research questions it was necessary to utilize a range of qualitative methods. The next section provides a brief description of each method. Then I describe how these methods were employed in the present study.

Case Study

This study used the case study method with particular focus on in-depth interviews. As Yin (2003) explains, the case study method enables the researcher to study a “phenomenon within its real-life context” (p. 13). This method helped to investigate how girls of color with school discipline records experienced and understood school discipline.

As MacDonald and Walker (1975) argue, the case study method allows for in-depth research that can provides findings of universal applicability and value. The findings from this study are able to contribute to the larger body of scholarship on school discipline. Merriam (1998) explains,

A case study design is employed to gain an in depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation. Insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, practice, and future research (Merriam, 1998, p. 19)

Thus, findings from this case study provide insight in order to generate knowledge for policy makers. The details found through case study research add dimension to quantitative data. That is, in the case of school discipline research, while most studies have been quantitative, this project’s findings provide texture to the discipline data sets. This study examined “real-life” experiences with the school discipline environment, including the ways that school personnel interpreted the policies and their impact on the lives of girls of color.

In-Depth Interviews

The primary tool of this study was qualitative in-depth interviews. I interviewed twenty girls of color who had referrals or had been suspended and fourteen adults. I employed this method to learn about students’ experiences with school discipline policies and practices. This method was also used to learn about the perspectives that school personnel had of the discipline policies including how they interpreted the policies. In-depth interviews enable rich and textured accounts of participants’ perspectives and experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). This type of interview process provided interviewees with opportunities to share details about the impact that discipline policies had on their lives inside and outside of school (Seidman, 2006). Additionally, in-depth interviews provided school personnel and students opportunities to outline the complex layers that make up the discipline environment at Foundations High School. This would not have necessarily been possible through quantitative research or through structured interview processes.

This study also employs in-depth interviews of twenty girls of color because it is an element of the Critical Race Feminist (Wing, 2003) and Black feminist (Richie, 2004) theoretical frameworks that shape this study. These feminist approaches to data collection argue that

focusing on the perspectives of women and other marginalized communities is critical to understanding social disparities and inequalities. Given that literature on school discipline demonstrates that students of color are disproportionately affected by school discipline policies, listening to students' narratives helps us understand school discipline and its relationships to race and gender.

Studying the narratives of fourteen school personnel, including administrators, counselors, teachers and campus security technicians, provided comparative frameworks and interpretations that helped contextualize the girls' experiences at school. How did school personnel interpret school discipline policies? How did they perceive the effectiveness and applicability of these policies to the girls' lives and needs? In-depth interviews with school personnel revealed how adults who were responsible for managing students shaped and understood girls' experiences with discipline.

Participant Observation

In order to witness some of the student-teacher interactions, which may have led to students being disciplined, I engaged in participant observation. Participant observation includes collecting data through observing participants and settings (Angrosino, 2005; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1986). As a participant observer in classrooms and administrative offices, I interacted with study participants in different school settings such as in class and administrative office waiting rooms. Participant observation includes asking questions, listening and engaging with participants. This method also includes writing fieldnotes, which provides details of the setting, participants, events and discussions (Patton, 2002). Participant observation helped to increase the validity of my data (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). As I watched students and teachers interact with one another, I learned of the different ways that discipline policies are enacted in the classroom and school grounds. I observed students' behaviors in real time, including when they were "acting out" in class. I was better able to understand what "acting out" looked like and how school personnel actually addressed these behaviors. This insight helped to elaborate upon the school discipline environment and provide perspective on the experiences that girls have at school with discipline procedures.

Document Analysis

In order to understand the school discipline environment, I also analyzed a key text – the school discipline handbook - that articulated school discipline expectations. Researchers (Polit & Hungler 1991; Webb, Campbell et al, 1984) identify documents as institutional policies reports, proceedings, written and visual sources. Guba and Lincoln (1981) explain that documents are "any written material other than a record that was not prepared specifically in response to some requests from the investigator" (p. 228). In education research, specifically involving case studies, document analysis helps researchers to "increase the breadth of analysis" or to "triangulate data."¹³

Document analysis includes the analysis of texts that relate to the phenomenon under investigation (Bailey 1994). I examined the school discipline handbook and traced the federal, state and district education codes that informed the school's policies. The California Education

¹³ For more details on the use of document analysis in education research, please see: <http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=qualitative&pageid=icb.page340889>

Code book (West, 2013) and school discipline literature that closely examined school policies (Kim et al, 2010) helped to guide my recognition of key policies that informed the handbook. This study provides a descriptive overview of the formal policies that governed student behaviors and the different levels of authority that school personnel had over managing student behaviors. This method helped to map out the different discipline policies that create the context for students' discipline records.

Site Background

This case study site is where I collected data from January 2013 through January 2014. Since my focus was on race and gender, I chose the site because of its diverse racial demographics and history with race and violence. The school surfaced in the news a few years ago because of two major lawsuits. In 2007, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), on behalf of a number of Latino and Asian-American families, sued the school district and city police department for racial profiling of students. A few years later, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) filed a lawsuit against the school district and police department for failing to protect Black students from gang violence committed by Latino community members. The latter suit came on the heels of several shootings of Black students including a young African American woman who was standing at a bus stop after school and the murder of a young Black male student on one of the school campuses also after school.

Foundations High School (FHS) is located in northern California. FHS is located in a suburb called Foundations that is situated between two major cities. According to preliminary research, some of the students traveled from major urban areas to attend this school for a "better education." Although most research on the connection between schools and prisons at large and discipline policies in particular are based in urban settings, this study examined a racially diverse campus in the suburbs.

The school opened in 1959 and is a large campus that annually serves more than 4,100 students. At the time of this research, Foundations High School was the only comprehensive high school in the district, though there is a small continuation school nearby. All of the students from the surrounding junior high schools matriculated into FHS after they finished the 8th grade. The continuation school was the campus where students who were at risk of dropping out of school or who were failing Foundations High attended. During the 2013-2014 school year, FHS was 22.1% Asian, 19% Filipino, 32% Latino, 7.8% White, 9% Black, 4% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander; and less than 1% Native American. Despite the diversity of the campus, Black and Latino students are more likely to be disciplined than their counterparts. According to the 2013-2014 discipline data for all girls at FHS, Latinas constitute 44% of the population of girls who have discipline records (i.e. detention, suspension or expulsion records). Black girls make up 26% and Filipino girls constitute 12% of all girls who have discipline records. These numbers indicate that Black and Latina girls are overrepresented in the data.¹⁴

¹⁴ Although this study centers girls of color at large, most of the girls who met the criteria for the study were Black girls. As a result, this study focuses primarily on the experiences that Black girls have with discipline at FHS.

Data Collection and Analysis

In-depth Interviews

The structure of the interview protocol began with general questions about the interviewee's knowledge of school discipline policies. Interviewees were asked questions about what they thought students "got into trouble for doing." This helped to facilitate rapport between the interviewer and interviewee. Then the interviewer asked more specific questions about interviewee's experiences with school discipline. The researcher made sure to ask questions that were open-ended in order to provide interviewees opportunities to express their thoughts and interpretations (Patton, 2002). The researcher also modified questions so that they were clear to interviewees. For instance, instead of using the language of school discipline, the interviewer asked student interviewees questions such as, "Why do you think you got into trouble at school?" When the interviewer asked adult interviewees questions, questions around school discipline were more formal. For instance, adults were asked questions such as, "What do you think of the discipline policies at school?" Asking these types of questions helped to facilitate more detailed depictions of experiences and interpretations of school discipline.

Questions were also slightly modified based upon previous interviews in order to maximize clarity for participants. The interviewer continued to conduct interviews with adults and students until little new information was presented (Small, 2009).

Student Interviews

I conducted twenty interviews with students, girls of color who had been given suspensions and/or referrals. Of the girls who were interviewed, four of the girls were Latina, fifteen were Black, and one was Filipino. Using purposive sampling (Patton, 1990), this study interviewed girls who had discipline records (i.e. suspensions or referrals).

One of the school administrators generated a list of names of girls who had discipline records for the second half of the 2012-2013 school year and the first half of the 2013-2014 year. This included more than sixty students. With the help of one of the school counselors, I was able to find all of the students' schedules. I sent passes to each student to have them meet me during their elective classes or lunch. Approximately forty students responded. Other students may not have responded because my name or the counselor's name on the pass was unfamiliar to them. Some may not have responded because students do not generally like to go to the office, especially when they think that they may get into trouble.

During this recruitment meeting, I shared details about my professional life, including the fact that I had been a youth counselor for girls and teacher for more than a decade. I shared that I worked at schools throughout the Bay Area, including San Francisco and Oakland. Since I wanted to share that I had an array of experiences with youth outside of the school system, I also mentioned that I worked at non-profit organizations and youth centers. The objective was to help students understand that the study sought to respect their perspectives and needs.

I shared details about the project, including one of its primary purposes, which is to help create safe and effective learning environments for girls. Then I asked if they had any experiences with school discipline. Given that students with discipline records are often stigmatized, I did not disclose to the girls that I had prior knowledge of their records. Instead, I allowed the girls the space to disclose any information they wanted to share at this initial

meeting. Many of the girls did not ask how they were recruited for the project. When students asked about the recruitment process, I told them I could not share who referred them to me, but that they were invited to participate because they had helpful insight for the study.

If the student expressed interest with participating in the project, then she signed a permission slip and left it with me. Then the student was asked to give a parent/guardian consent form to her parent, which was to be returned the following day to Ms. Mendoza, a counselor at the school.

Half of the students fulfilled the requirements. Given the number of qualifications that were required to participate in this study, it was difficult to find students who met criteria. In order to follow up with students who signed permission slips at the initial meeting but did not return permission slips, I also visited their elective classes or walked around campus to find them. Some girls I could not find. Others changed their minds. Most of the Asian American and Filipino-American students that I recruited explained that their parents did not want them to participate.¹⁵ Two of the girls who met all criteria also ended up never returning to campus. The girls who participated in this study met all the criteria: a girl of color with a discipline record, who returned her consent form and parent permission slip, and returned for the interview.

Each interview lasted between 60-90 minutes (see Appendix A). Five of the twenty students were asked to return for follow-up interviews. These students were asked to return because they had multiple experiences with school discipline that they wanted to share. The interview protocol focused on how students understood their experiences with school discipline policies. I assessed students' understanding of the impact of these policies. In addition, I asked about the variables students identified as contributing factors to their discipline records (e.g. race, gender, friends, family).

Staff Interviews

I conducted fourteen interviews with adults (see Appendix B). Of the adults, two were counselors, three were administrators, five were teachers, and four were campus security officers. I solicited interviewees through snowball sampling (Goodman, 1961). Each interview lasted between 60-90 minutes. The questions were similar to the ones I asked of the students. I asked how adults understood school discipline policies (e.g. What are discipline and safety policies at school? What do kids get into trouble for doing?). The interviews examined how adults understood the causes behind disciplinary problems, including the effects of the community, family, poverty, race and gender.

The qualitative interviews began with open-ended questions that permitted the students to describe their experiences outside of school, including what they thought might have been factors that contributed to their school discipline records. The researcher reached the goal of saturation by conducting interviews until little new or surprising information was yielded.

¹⁵ Of the four Asian girls who were recruited for the study, zero turned in their permission slips. The girls explained that their parents did not want them to participate in the study because the study could possibly stigmatize them. The girls also explained that their parents felt the girls discipline records (i.e. suspension or referral) were anomalies and that the girls would probably never commit another infraction. The assumption was that the girls had learned their mistake. Two of the girls who denied participation were suspended for fighting. One was suspended for drinking on campus. Another was suspended for truancy records. She eventually transferred out of the school.

Data Analysis of Interviews

Each interview was audiotaped and transcribed. After transcribing the interviews, I conducted qualitative data analysis in multiple cycles (Saldana, 2009). There were five main phases to the data analysis process. The first phase occurred throughout data collection. Every week, I listened to recordings of my interviews and transcribed them. I wrote reflections that all twenty student interviews and fourteen adult interviews, I created a color-coded interpretive coding system based on salient phrases that emerged from the data (Saldana, 2009). I paid particular attention to interviewees' explanations of why young women of color got into trouble (i.e. factors that contribute to their referrals or suspensions) and what they thought about the school discipline policies. From this data, I coded for interpretations of school discipline policies and descriptions of the factors that may have contributed to student discipline records. Examples from this coding scheme included "teacher bias," "student withdrawal," and "student trauma." The third cycle of data analysis included reexamining and grouping my codes to find commonalities, overlaps or exceptions. During this phase, I grouped narratives together based upon common themes. (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This coding scheme revealed constant patterns concerning students' interpretations of conditions in school that affected girls' behaviors (racism from school personnel, disrespect from school personnel, self-defense against peers); conditions outside of school that affected girls' behaviors (poverty and sexual and domestic violence); how students are disciplined (formal policies and informal punishment); and school personnel interpretations of students' behaviors (administrators with structural critique, White male teachers with a punitive framework, teachers of color with structural critique). During the fourth cycle, two graduate student colleagues who were trained in qualitative methods examined my codes for any other emerging themes, trends, and ideas that I might have missed. I also held informal discussions with the emerging themes of my data with three students, two teachers and one counselor with whom I worked closely at the school.

Document Analysis

I analyzed the school discipline handbook to identify the school's formal discipline policies. I traced the thirty listed school policies to twenty-one California Education Codes and nine district policies. One major federal policy, the Guns Free Schools Act of 1994, framed most of the policies around school weapons. Some of California Education Codes were developed in response to different court cases. Therefore, I examined the court cases to understand the history of the school discipline policy. These closer forms of analyses were conducted with discipline policies that were often mentioned in school discipline literature. For instance, discipline codes that authorized school personnel to "search and seize" student property were highlighted in the school handbook and several discipline studies (Kim et al., 2010). As a result, I examined the California Education Code that informed this major policy and the court case that authorized school personnel to "search and seize" students. This provided an overview of the Foundations High School's discipline environment, particularly in relationship to discipline policies.

Participant Observation

I also conducted forty-four hours of participant observation on campus. This included forty-one hours of visits to classrooms to observe teachers and students interact with one another.

Because of scheduling conflict, these hours were spread out across three months. I visited three classrooms, spent at least four hours a day in the classroom to observe students and their teachers. I visited the African American Girls' Life Skills course for twenty hours, African American History course for ten hours, U.S. History course for ten hours, another U.S. History course for one hour, and the Math Fundamentals course for one hour. These classes were chosen because the school principal suggested that I visit the African American Girls' Life Skills course since it would provide some insight for my study. Since I was able to establish rapport with the teacher, she suggested that I also observe her African American History and U.S. History class. She explained that the range in classes and grades could possibly provide insight for the project. I guest lectured in the U.S. History course during two of the hours that I observed students. I also was occasionally asked to tutor students in the U.S. History class. I was also asked by another teacher during one of our interviews to observe his U.S. History class. He suggested that studying students in his course would also help to understand students' behaviors. I visited the Math Fundamentals class after I interviewed one of the students. Since she was having a difficult time in school, following several personal tragedies, I visited her classroom with her teacher's permission to tutor her during class. I also conducted two hours of observations in one of the administrative offices to observe students and administrators interact with one another.

During the classroom visits, I often sat in the back of the classroom taking notes. Particular attention was paid to disciplinary actions between teachers and students. The African American Girls' Life Skills class often had conversations about race, gender and school dynamics, which I recorded in my fieldnotes. I then coded the field notes based upon my research questions. What were the discipline policies? How did they affect students?

Research Positionality

My research was informed by particular epistemologies and presuppositions. In this section, I assess my own positionality and the potential effects it may bear on the study. As a non-Black woman of color who is also a former high school teacher, youth sexual assault counselor and volunteer prison educator, I have extensive insight into the topic I investigated.

This study incorporated Critical Race Feminism (CRF) and Black feminism in order to encourage researchers to employ reflexive research, to develop relationships with our respondents for the purposes of collective meaning making and social reform (Buroway, 1998; Richie, 1997; Marshall, 1999). Reflexive research entails that the researcher reflect upon his/her relationship to study participants and how s/he may affect responses to questions. Given this, as an "inside" researcher there are a number of assets that help facilitate this collaborative approach to empirical research and policy analysis. First, as a teacher who has had various experiences working with adolescent women of color I was particularly sensitive and invested in ensuring that students' stories were appropriately conveyed. Second, my previous experiences volunteering with incarcerated people and young survivors of sexual assault equipped me with the tools that were necessary to build rapport with vulnerable populations in ways that were sensitive to their stories and enabled them to share intimate details about their experiences and perspectives. My positionality also provided the necessary insight to develop relevant, sensitive and compelling questions for young participants. This informed by research design. Knowing that students' stories can be complex and multilayered, I created a qualitative study that would help to identify the different dimensions of students' lives. The research questions were open-ended and students were given the opportunity to provide in-depth, nuanced responses to questions.

Being an insider also came with challenges. In order to minimize potential biases, I used a reflexive approach throughout my research. I reflected upon my relationship to respondents, including the “commonalities and tensions that emerge[d]” (Milner, 2007). I constantly examined and refrained from imposing my perspectives onto students. Similarly, I often had to refrain from providing students with advice or counsel, even though I was familiar with some of their experiences. I did this to emphasize my role as a researcher and to neutralize my role as a service provider. This is important because given my extensive experiences as an educator and counselor, I found myself often wanting to provide more support for the students than a researcher is permitted. Similarly, students wanted to disclose details about their lives that extended beyond the scope of this study. Thus, I often had to remind students that I was a school discipline researcher and that if they wanted to share more details concerning the violence in their lives, they should contact a counselor or an educator they trusted. For instance, one of the students who had been subjected to kidnapping and prostitution often asked for advice and support. While I found myself wanting to provide her these resources, particularly because I was familiar with her experiences, I constantly had to remind her that the project was about school discipline. This may have affected our relationship and her answers. I also wanted to make sure that I did not get too overly involved with students’ lives because it could bias my analysis.

This study was particularly sensitive to issues of race and gender. I did not assume that my position as a woman of color would automatically grant me authority in the field or establish trust between the respondents and myself. In fact, because I am also a Vietnamese American adult woman, my racial position provided some benefits and challenges. For instance, White adult respondents seemed particularly at ease with sharing their beliefs about Black and Latina girls. They were less filtered around using words such as “jerks.” These more candid narratives helped me to better understand the overall culture that students, particularly Black and Latina girls were navigating. At times, adult faculty answered specifically about Asian girls in ways that seemed to have been exceptionally tolerant. That is, some adults were sensitive about their depictions of Asians, particularly as victims of their families’ rigorous academic demands.

Most of the girls in the study were apprehensive about my work during the initial recruitment meeting. When I mentioned that I was once a community educator and youth program coordinator in Oakland and San Francisco dealing with issues of girls and violence, they seemed more open to the project. They relaxed a bit more and were less resistant. During the recruitment meetings, I also mentioned that I was familiar with the Ethnic Studies classes on campus, including the African American studies’ and Lifeskills classes. This helped students to open up a bit more. Students were more compelled to participate in the project if they knew that I was familiar with programs or courses that addressed issues that were pertinent to them. They appeared to be more comfortable with me.

Other students also gauged how they would answer my questions through watching and listening to me. One Latina student explained that she thought I would understand her experiences because of my use of vernacular. After characterizing my language as indicative of “knowing what’s up,” she proceeded to answer my questions. Although she was not able to define clearly what this meant besides saying that it seemed “[I] would know”, she was compelled to participate.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. Given that interviewees for this study volunteered and

had to submit proper paperwork to participate, they may have been more willing to engage in the conversations about girls' experiences with school discipline. For example, student interviewees had to have parents who supported their involvement in the study. Thus, students who expressed interest in participating in the study had parents who did not want them to participate. Thus, this study was not able to examine and analyze their interpretations.

In addition, approximately five of the girls who initially agreed to participate were no longer locatable after the initial recruitment meeting. Students were either consistently absent or eventually dropped out of school. Therefore, the experiences of the students who remained cannot be considered representative of all girls of color with discipline records.

Similarly, adults who volunteered to participate were also more interested in engaging with the topic of school discipline and its relationship to girls of color than adults who did not volunteer to participate. Scheduling conflicts also affected the study. Teachers and administrators had less time to participate in the study than campus security guards. Their interpretations could have been complicated by a more diverse sample of adults. Since this study focused primarily on students, it excluded the perspectives of parents and district personnel. These samples could have also provided a more complicated analysis of school discipline policies and their effects upon girls of color.

Therefore the small sample size affected the generalizability of responses to larger populations. In addition, the purposive sampling methods may have also influenced the heterogeneity of the study. Students who were interested in addressing school discipline were more likely to participate than those who were not. Since this study focused on the girls' experiences with school discipline, there was less emphasis upon school personnel and their interpretations, did not allow a comprehensive comparison between student and adult perceptions of school discipline. This would be important to explore in the future.

Conclusion

The present study explored experiences that girls of color had with school discipline policies and practices. I employed the case study method, participant observation and in-depth interviews of twenty girls of color with discipline records and fourteen school personnel at a high school in northern California. Through these methods, I was able to explore how students and adults perceived the school discipline environment and their effects on girls of color. This study also analyzed documents to examine the discipline policies that governed students' behaviors. Although the study is limited by selection criteria and sample size, the findings help to explain how school discipline is conceptualized, including how girls of color understand their experiences with punishment at school and the multilayered conditions that contribute to their punishment.

Chapter IV

Formal Discipline Environment

Introduction

This chapter examines the formal discipline policy environment at FHS as it is described in the school discipline handbook. School discipline has largely been discussed as sets of punitive actions including suspensions and expulsions (Advancement Project, 2013). This chapter discusses how in addition to harsh exclusionary practices, school discipline includes series of rules and regulations that discipline students' movements and expressions. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1977) traced the political history of punishment and disciplinary systems. Foucault argued that "disciplinary power" replaced punishment as a form of state rule and social control. Punishment is characterized as the use of physical torture and deprivation as a means of retribution for committing crimes. Discipline is characterized as surveillance systems used to "normalize" subjects and produce "docile bodies" (p. 138) that internalize policing mechanisms. Thus, school discipline policies are not only about managing violence, but are also sets of standards for what constitutes appropriate behaviors. School discipline, according to the list of policies, is also about normalizing students. This chapter also discusses how school personnel, particularly administrators and teachers, have various interpretations based upon their insight around students' lives, their racial and gendered analyses (Kohli, 2009).

Using document analysis (Bowen, 2009), this chapter examines the school discipline handbook including the multiple layers of federal, state and district policies that govern students' behaviors. It answers the research question, "What is the disciplinary environment created by federal, state and district policies that shape the case study school discipline policies?" The school discipline handbook is a hybrid of federal, state and district policies. Despite the popular impression that discipline policies are only a means to manage school violence, the school handbook is comprised of policies that discipline students for *violent* and *non-violent* infractions.¹⁶ Therefore students are not only policed for the purposes of disciplining violent acts, but their daily movements and expressions are policed.

School personnel, their perceptions and disciplinary decisions also contribute to the disciplinary environment (Lipsky, 2010). This chapter also answers the research question, "According to school officials, how are policies implemented and what are their perspectives on these policies?" While all school personnel are authorized to discipline students, administrators and teachers were most likely to implement discipline policies. This chapter also presents data on how administrators and teachers interpret and implement the policies. School personnel have varied interpretations of the policies and how to implement them. Findings suggest that interpretations vary by the role of the personnel and their race. For instance, school administrators who had access to students' background narratives were more likely to have a structural or institutional critique of students' behaviors (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2014). For example, they consider the ways that a student's socioeconomic status may factor into their disciplinary experiences. All of the administrators that were interviewed for this study were hired after 2007, when the school district and city police department were defendants in racial

¹⁶ Although popular discourses about school discipline connect school discipline to issues of safety and violence, this study finds that most of the mandates listed in the school discipline handbook are for non-violent infractions. Future research will be conducted to examine the relationship between policies that police violent and non-violent behaviors.

profiling civil rights lawsuits.¹⁷ The current administrators had critical perspectives of exclusionary school discipline practices. These insights shaped how they implement the policies. Findings also show that at Foundations High School, personnel of color were more inclined to offer a structural or institutional analysis of students' discipline records. White male teachers were less inclined to have a structural analysis of the reasons behind students' behaviors. Across the levels, ten of fourteen adults mentioned that girls across all races had low self-esteem and lacked self-worth. Two of the adults who were Black teachers had an intersectional critique of the girls' self-esteem. In other words, they mentioned that because Black girls were subject to multiple forms of subjugation, including institutional neglect, the girls were more likely to lack confidence, which affected them getting into trouble at school. These interpretations affected how school personnel implemented school discipline policies, particularly referrals and suspensions.

Formal Policies

This section provides a descriptive overview of Foundation High School's discipline environment. First, it details the discipline policies that are outlined in the school handbook.¹⁸ The objective of these handbooks is to inform the students and their guardians of the school's mission statement and the expectations and consequences for student behaviors. Findings show that the handbook is a hybrid of federal, state and district mandates. Twenty-one of the thirty school discipline policies in the handbook are based upon California Education Codes. The remaining nine policies are district specific policies that deal with local concerns around gangs and gang affiliation. The school discipline handbook is comprised of policies that regulate *violent* and *non-violent* behaviors.¹⁹ These rules prohibit violence and govern students' daily movements and expressions.

Policies Disciplining Violence

The Codes that mandate suspensions and expulsions²⁰ for weapons possession can be traced to the federal Guns Free Schools Act of 1994 (Ayers & Ayers, 2001). As explored in previous chapters, GFSA is a federal policy that was created in the early 1990s by President Bill Clinton. Written into the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the mandate required that all federally funded schools expel students found with a weapon within 1000 feet from school grounds for at least one year. According to the mandate,

[E]ach State receiving Federal funds under this Act [Elementary and Secondary Education Act] shall have in effect a State law requiring local educational

¹⁷ Two of the administrators occupied other positions in the school or district before they became administrators at FHS.

¹⁸ All school policies must be approved by the district school board.

¹⁹ In particular, the handbook emphasizes the importance of not being distracted at school. Thus the school has a strict policy around cell-phones. This also includes a policy around student attire. Students are prohibited from showing their body parts and are prohibited from displaying "obscene behavior," including prolonged kissing. The handbook prohibits students from wearing "off the shoulder" tops or showing their "buttocks." These policies, which will be discussed later in the chapter, indicate that the school is not only interested in prohibiting drugs or violence, but they also reflect a set of expectations around student comportment. In order to maximize the learning environment, students must dress in particular ways and contain their sexuality.

²⁰ All expulsions must be approved by the district school board.

agencies to expel from school for a period of not less than one year a student who is determined to have brought a weapon to a school under the jurisdiction of local educational agencies in that State, except that such State law shall allow the chief administering officer of such local educational agency to modify such expulsion requirement for a student on a case-by-case basis.²¹

This federal mandate, school discipline scholars argue, has helped to shape several other state-based suspension and expulsion policies (Losen, 2003).

California Education Codes Sections 48915, 48900 and 48927 expound upon the federal policy. According to California Education Codes Section 48915, 48900-48927, there are twenty-one offenses that are subject to suspension or expulsion (Schulkind, 2009). This list includes violent and non-violent offenses. Violent infractions include: “physical injury, “willful force,” “weapons,” “imitation firearm,” “sexual assault or battery,” “harassment of witness,” “hazing,” “bullying,” and “aiding or abetting injury to another.” If a student commits any of these violent actions, authorities must immediately suspend or expel them. Students who commit these offenses are also subject to criminal investigation.

Likewise, the school handbook includes a clause on sexual harassment. The sexual harassment rule draws from Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which defines sexual harassment as, “Quid-Pro Harassment” or “Hostile Environment Sexual Harassment.” It is illegal for a school employee to request or demand any type of sexual act from a student in exchange for grades, participation in a school activity or education program.²² The latter form of sexual harassment is characterized by the following: “sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal and nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature.”²³ These behaviors also warrant suspension.

According to the school handbook, immediate suspensions and possible expulsions are not reserved for in-person physical conflicts. Additionally, this school handbook includes a policy mandate against “cyberbullying.”

Students who intentionally use technology (including but not limited to cell-phones, web-sites, emails) to create a hostile, threatening, or intimidating environment for one or more other students at school are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including suspension or expulsion.”

Students who engage in cyberbullying through any social media platform including Facebook, Instagram or Youtube are subject to discipline. Although this infraction is difficult to monitor, cyberbullying, which is a term that was rarely used by students, was a major problem at FHS.²⁴ The anonymity that the cyberworld afforded its user, made it difficult for administrators to manage. School officials were forced to rely on student informants and the technology department to search the web for possible perpetrators. Containing violence at FHS included prohibiting a list of possible infractions including “hazing” and “sexual harassment.” Students

²¹ <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oig/auditreports/a09a0008.pdf>

²² <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/sexhar01.html>

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ This finding is based upon interviews with principals and teachers from this present study. Future research will explore the role of the social media and discipline.

who committed any of these violent infractions were subject to exclusionary policies such as suspensions and expulsions.

Policing the Everyday: Movements and Expressions

While the index of possible violent offenses is long, the discipline handbook is also comprised of a long list of non-violent infractions such as drug related and property offenses. AAs dictated by California Education Codes, FHS school administrators are authorized to suspend or expel students for: possessing “controlled substances,” “robbery or extortion,” “property damage,” “theft,” “tobacco use,” “obscenity and profanity,” “drug paraphernalia,” “disruption,” “receiving stolen property,” and using the “prescription drug – Soma.” The handbook also included a litany of offenses that were seemingly mundane but disciplined students’ everyday movements. Less about controlling violence, these policies regulate students’ non-violent movements, expressions and forms of communication. They define what constitute appropriate and acceptable behaviors. Some of these rules are reflected in criminal law (Kim et al., 2009). Others seek to create an attentive school population. Others reproduce racialized and gendered expectations for “appropriate” behaviors (Sharma, 2009).

The school handbook also included numerous policies against electronics. Electronic devices have become a major distraction in classrooms, so the school handbook includes a number of rules against their use. These policies were informed by Education Code section 48901.5, which read that the governing board of the school district may regulate the “possession or use of “electronic signaling device that operates through the transmission of receipt of radio waves, including but not limited to, paging and signaling equipment.” School personnel were authorized to monitor the use of these devices “while the pupil is on campus, while attending school-sponsored activities, or while under the control of school district employees.” Students, however, were permitted to use electronic devices that are “essential to the health of the pupil.”

Students are required to “turn off and put away” the devices before they enter offices and “teaching spaces,” unless permitted by in a classroom management policy by the teacher. They are also mandated to have their electronic devices turned off and put away when they are outside of class. Those who violate the policy may have their devices confiscated. The handbook stipulates that administrators reserve the right to return items only to parents and to issue consequences for defying the school policy.²⁵ These policies authorized school personnel to police and monitor students’ use of electronics.

In addition to monitoring electronics, the school handbook lists nine other possible infractions, which include “prolonged kissing,” “obscene actions,” “cheating,” “inappropriate clothing and headgear,” and “cutting.” It does not stipulated what constitutes “prolonged kiss” but does include an explanation for why the behaviors are prohibited. Aside from punishing students for not attending school (i.e. cutting) or failing to meet academic standards (i.e. cheating), these policies also regulated students’ public sexual behaviors (i.e. prolonged kissing) and defined which types of expressions were acceptable (i.e. obscene actions). Students also risked suspension if they were truant (i.e. missed too many days of school).²⁶ Students who committed these infractions were subject to disciplinary action.

²⁵ Future school discipline research may be conducted around the effects of social media on the school and classroom environment.

²⁶ Truancy is defined by a student missing more than 30 minutes of classroom instruction.

The handbook also includes district-based policies that police gang behaviors. These behaviors were not necessarily violent, but seemed to represent threats of violence. According to the handbook, students who demonstrate affiliation with any of the twenty-seven gangs that are listed in the handbook are possible threats to the “health and safety of the students.” Thus, certain types of clothing are prohibited. “Students are not allowed to wear gang-related clothing on school premises or during school-sponsored activities.” Students are also not allowed to wear particular items including red, white or blue belts, laces; and particular sports apparel that may symbolize a gang. Other gang signifiers include hairnets, bandanas, doo-rags, and shower-caps are also prohibited on school grounds. The list of possible clothing violations includes prohibitions against wearing t-shirts with creased sleeves, or are creased in the center; and split pant cuffs.” Considered symbols of gang affiliation, these creases and splits are also punishable.

The school handbooks also included very detailed descriptions of other types of clothing that are prohibited on campus. Under the pretense that safe school environments require that students dress appropriately, the handbook included a list of clothes that were considered inappropriate for school.

Students should come to school in attire that is appropriate and conducive to a safe and supportive learning environment. To safeguard students' and staff's constitutional right to be safe and secure in their persons at school and during school activities, the following guidelines shall apply to all school activities: Students should not dress inappropriately for school activities as it detracts from the learning environment. Inappropriate clothing such as: Strapless or short blouses/shirts showing the stomach and midriff; see through clothing; any low-cut tops that show cleavage: back on tops must cover the back shoulder blades: pajamas; and sagging pants/trousers/shorts. Undergarments must not be worn over outer clothing and undergarments are not to be visible. The buttocks must be covered completely.

The safety and security of the school was not only determined by the school’s ability to regulate weapons, fights, and gang affiliation, according to the handbook, it also included regulating clothing. “Sagging pants/trousers and shorts” have often been affiliated with Black and Latino males (Charles, 2011). These policies reflected particular racial and gendered norms.

The litany of infractions was not limited to clothing violations. Students were also disciplined for stealing from school through “selling lunch cards.” As a part of California’s Free and Reduced Lunch program, students from low-income/poor families are provided lunch cards for free or at reduced cost. However, some students sell their cards in order to use the money for other purposes. According to the handbook, “Lunch cards are school property and are not intended for sale by students. Any students caught selling or pawning lunch cards will be subject to disciplinary process for theft.”²⁷ Selling a lunch card was punishable by detention or suspension.

In addition to these non-violent infractions, the handbook also listed policies against discrimination and racism.

No person shall be subjected to discrimination on the basis of sex, ethnic group identification, race, national origin, religion, color, sexual orientation, or mental or

²⁷ According to an interview with one of the campus security technicians, because lunch cards are funded through “tax payers money,” students who try to sell lunch cards are technically committing a crime.

physical disability. Any student making discriminatory and/or derogatory remarks of a racist nature will be subject to suspension.

Protecting the civil rights of students was also an important part of the school discipline handbook. While this infraction was not listed among behaviors that mandated immediate suspension, it was a possible consequence for this offense. The list of possible non-violent offenses not only included electronic devices, kissing, gang affiliation, clothing, but also discrimination. There were limited options for how school authorities managed or disciplined students for the list of infractions. Instead, while there were varying degrees of severity among the index of possible offenses, the consequences were the same – “subject to suspension.”

Findings show that despite the numerous school policies, only three infractions were most often the reason for discipline. They included, “disobedience,” “fighting,” and “truancy.” In the case of the former, students were generally given “detention” for being disobedient. However, students were also suspended for disobedience and defiance, depending upon the severity of the student’s behavior. Students were also suspended for fighting. The number of days the student was suspended depended upon the severity of the fight and if the student could claim self-defense. Even if it was for self-defense, any type of fighting would lead to a suspension. According to one adult and one student, students were also suspended for stealing lunch cards. Students were also suspended for robbery. Student referrals were mostly for disobedience and not dressing for physical education.

Consequences

According to the handbook, there are eight types of consequences: “warning,” “parent contact,” “detention,” “campus beautification,” “in-house suspension,” “Saturday school,” “suspension,” and “expulsion”. While the school handbook does not list arrests as a consequence, students claim that they have been arrested on campus. This section describes the possible consequences for student infractions.

“Detention” is when students are required to stay after class, during lunch or after school for committing an infraction as determined by the school official. Students who do not serve their detentions are referred to the school administrative staff for additional disciplinary procedures. “Campus Beautification” is an alternative consequence. Students are required to clean up campus through picking up trash. “In-House suspension” is when a student is assigned to an “In-House room” which is monitored by a designated teacher. When a student is serving In-House suspension, they are required to finish serving all of their time, responsible for getting and completing their work from classes that they will be missing while they are In-House. If students do not start their In-House suspension on time, they may receive additional consequences. Students are not allowed to attend school activities if they have to be “In-House.” In addition, if students are uncooperative while in “In-House,” the student may be subject to another full day of In-House suspension. Students may also be penalized for infractions through Saturday School. Students will be required to attend school on Saturday. If a student misses Saturday school, s/he risks additional consequences including suspension.

Defined as “temporary removal” of a student from class by a teacher or from an administrator, suspensions were generally issued for the following reasons:

- (1) when other means of correction have failed, or (2) when the student's continued presence on campus is considered by the administration to be dangerous or disruptive to others, or (3) for specific serious offenses.

Students are prohibited from being on campus while they are suspended and from participating in school-related activities.

Of the thirty infractions listed in the school discipline handbook, twenty-two included graduated consequences. For example, when a student fights for the first time, she will be suspended three-five days. If the student agrees to counseling (for a minimum of five days) then the number of days for suspensions may be reduced. Students may also be recommended for expulsion. On a student's second offense, she will be suspended for five days, be recommended for expulsions, counseling sessions will increase to at least ten sessions and police will be notified. School authorities are also mandated to notify law enforcement officials of the county or city if a student has been suspended or expelled for assault with a deadly weapon, Penal Code Section 245 (Schulkind, 2009).

There is also a graduated discipline system for tardy records. If a student is late to class fifteen times then s/he will be referred to an administrator, get detention (which is to miss one period of class), Saturday school or "in-house detention). A student who has twenty tardies will be referred to an administrator, and will have either Saturday School, in-house or suspension.

Additionally, the school handbook includes a clause on "search and seizure." Federal and state constitutions prohibit unreasonable searches and seizures, without "reasonable suspicion." Administrators and campus security technicians have the authority to "conduct a search of a student's property or person to size weapons or contraband. The search must be reasonable, related to the school official's duties and may not be done randomly." They also prohibit arresting or "seizing" a person without "probable cause" (Schulkind, 2009).²⁸

Based upon Education Code § 48900(p) students may be suspended or expelled for acts related to school activity and attendance when the student is in school under the jurisdiction of the district or other school districts. Students may also be suspended or expelled for committing infractions while they going to or coming from school; during lunch, and while they are at, going to or coming from a school activity. The handbook states that students and their parents/guardians are allowed to appeal any decision that was made to discipline a student. This clause affirms the student's right to a "due process" hearing.

²⁸ Search and seizure regulations were determined by the landmark *New Jersey v T.L.O.* (1985) court case. In this case, a teacher found T.L.O and a classmate smoking in the bathroom. Although the student denied smoking, the Assistant Vice Principal searched the student's purse and found a pack of cigarettes. He continued searching the purse and found rolling papers, marijuana, a pipe and other evidence the she was dealing drugs on campus. T.L.O. contended that the search was a violation of her Fourth Amendment Rights (Schulkind, 2009). The Court ruled that the search was reasonable because she was found smoking in the bathroom, evidence in her purse led to additional searches for possible drug possession. Thus, the Court ruled, " a search of a child's person or of a closed purse or other bag carried on her person, no less than a similar search carried out on an adult, is undoubtedly a severe violation of subjective expectations of privacy"(337-38). Reasonable suspicion must be a justifiable interference and "reasonably related in scope to the circumstances that justified the interference in the first place."

School Personnel Responsibilities

There are multiple levels of consequences for student infractions. At the school level, there are several adults who are responsible for implementing school rules and consequences. While most adults are authorized to ensure that students comply with school rules, there are particular duties for each level of personnel.

All adults have the authority to give a student a referral. Based upon Education Code § 48910, teachers may suspend students from the teacher's class for violating any of the codes for the day and the day after. Principals and superintendents may suspend a student from the school for no more than five days. The Board of Education may suspend a student from school for up to twenty days or thirty school days. The Board also determines expulsions.

According to California State law, the school board district is authorized to establish a security department headed by a chief of security, or a police department headed by a chief of police. California Law also permits the board to hire personnel to manage the security of all students and school district personnel. The security department or district police are supplemental to the other law enforcement agencies and do not have the same powers as city and county police officers. School boards may also hire school police reserve officers as a supplement to the school police officer.²⁹ The security department "shall be supplementary to city and county law enforcement agencies and shall under no circumstances be vested with general police powers."³⁰

The Foundations High School discipline handbook identifies the role of the school police officer as responsible for promoting open communication between Foundation High School students and city police department. This police officer is responsible for criminal violations and all other issues related to the criminal justice system. The handbook also states that the police officer is designated as "a trusted adult" for students on campus. There is only one school police officer assigned to the campus.

Additionally, Foundations High School has nine Campus Safety Technicians (CSTs), whose primary responsibilities are to support students. Their duties are to monitor student behavior, monitor after-school detention and to check that students have appropriate passes for leaving campus. They are also responsible for supervising the entrance gates to make sure that unauthorized visitors do not enter campus. While this responsibility is not specified in the handbook, students and CSTs share that the latter are also responsible for escorting students around campus, including to administrators' offices for disciplinary meetings/hearings. Also not included in the handbook is the responsibility of the lead CST to screen school video footage when necessary for evidence of disciplinary infractions.

Although there is a large discipline infrastructure in place with multiple actors involved including campus security guards, administrators and teachers, most of the time, students with discipline records interact with their teachers (who write the referral) and administrators (who provide the consequence). CSTs are generally responsible for stopping fights and for bringing students from their classroom to the office. Additionally, while there is an expansive discipline environment with countless discipline policies, most students get into trouble for defiance in the classroom and fights. The following section includes narratives from administrators and teachers about their interpretations of school policies, specifically concerning suspensions.

²⁹ http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/asm/ab_2351-2400/ab_2368_bill_20120717_chaptered.html

³⁰ Ibid.

School Personnel Reflections

The school discipline handbook maps onto the school environment in a myriad of ways. It dictates the parameters for student behaviors and prescribes consequences for disciplinary infractions. According to school personnel, implementing school discipline policies is more complicated than the handbook outlines. Their interpretations of students' behaviors, including the causes behind their actions, also affect the school discipline environment. There are policies on paper, but the disciplinary context of any particular school or school system is determined by how adults interpret and implement these policies on the ground.

This section presents findings on how school personnel interpret and implement the policies. School personnel – especially administrators -- considered the policies quick fixes to larger structural problems. Meanwhile, two white male teachers believed that administrators were too lenient with the enforcement of these policies. Findings also show that a few school personnel believed that teachers excessively relied on discipline policies because of “institutional racism.”³¹ Policy implementation and interpretations were often dependent upon the role of the school personnel and their racial background (Kohli, 2009).

Administrators and Structural Critiques

Interpretations of school discipline policies from school personnel varied. Administrators at FHS were more likely to have a structural critique of the policies. These administrators were hired within the past seven years after the district and school were subjects of two major civil rights lawsuits. They emphasized that the policies were often used as a matter of convenience and as quick fixes to student misconduct. These administrators shared a particular vision about school discipline policies, and they did not believe in using “zero tolerance” policies. One of the White female administrators, Ms. Bailey, was critical of the “school-to-prison pipeline.” She argued that administrators wanted to create an environment that was not reliant upon zero tolerance policies, but was more supportive of students.

Similarly, Mr. Samra, a South Asian American principal, expressed his conflicted opinions about school discipline policies. He believed that suspensions punished students who were in need of support services. Suspensions added to students' problems.

Suspensions are very punitive. It may take one or two days to get things back together for the student. It's essentially telling students that they do not get to participate in education for two-five days. More often students who end up in situations that lead to suspensions are already coming with significant deficits. Through suspensions we add six periods [of deficits].

He believed suspensions were generally not useful in helping students. Instead they increased the “academic achievement gap.” Mr. Samra explained that because students are coming to school

³¹ However, when it comes to gender, there is less of a structural analysis. Across the levels, ten of the fifteen adults mentioned that girls across all races had low self-esteem and lacked self-worth. Two of the adults who were Black teachers had an intersectional critique of the girls' self-esteems. In other words, they mentioned that because Black girls were subject to multiple forms of subjugation, including institutional neglect, the girls were more likely to lack confidence. This affected their behaviors at school.

with “deficits,” taking them out of class increases the deficits. He noted that students with discipline records often have a difficult time at school. Discipline policies do not help them, but are mandates that school administrators must abide by.

There’s a lot that happens at home that students bring to school. Factors as simple as: getting enough sleep the night before, getting a decent breakfast, small things to parents are separated, instances of domestic violence. [Sometimes] neither parents are in the picture, it used to be rare—it’s not common but it’s not surprising---students are being raised by grandparents. In some cases it’s very evident that a student is raised with [an economic] gap. They don’t have access to technology.

These factors contribute to students’ behaviors. However, discipline policies do not help remedy these problems. Thus, he claimed that he often did his best to resolve discipline problems without suspending students. Despite the handbook’s graduated consequences, sometimes Mr. Samra lessened the number of days of suspensions if students agreed to go to counseling.

According to Mr. Samra, relationships between teachers and students also affected disciplinary problems. He explained that “most teachers not trying to be punitive to kids” because they want “to help and teach kids.” However despite their intentions, “the relationship between students and teachers” played a role in how students behaved in the classroom. Teachers who are unable to build rapport with students or who are more inclined to send students out of class because they do not know how to relate to students will negatively impact the classroom dynamics. Because some teachers do not know how to deal with students they often relied only on discipline policies as immediate fixes. Thus, Mr. Samra contended that teachers sometimes used discipline policies as ways to avoid building relationships with students. Those who did not know how to relate to students or did not understand students relied on discipline policies to manage students. He explained that some teachers had referrals pre-written for students.

[Some teachers] already had the referral written up for [students]. This affects how willing student will be to try. [Instead, the student will] get back at the teacher, because [the teacher] was unfair or disrespectful and gave a referral for minor defiance.

Relying only on school discipline policies had a negative impact on relationships between adults and students. However, teachers sometimes excessively used policies. Their reliance upon discipline policies helped to precipitate a hostile learning environment for students (Meiners, 2009).

Mr. Samra believed in creating supportive school and classroom environments. At FHS, administrators were more aware of students’ needs. As such, they often modified discipline policies. For instance, instead of suspensions, administrators give students lunch detentions. Through these alternatives, students were less inclined to miss classes and were less harshly punished for their behaviors.

Administrators who sympathized with students lamented that despite their efforts to modify disciplinary consequences, they were mandated to follow education codes and procedures especially if infractions involved criminal law. During a visit with Mr. Samra, I witnessed him attempt to minimize a student’s days of suspensions. The Filipino male student had recently been in a fight with another Asian male. The student punched his peer several times until the young man was bleeding. He explained that while the student had inflicted injuries on

another student, he did not believe that suspending the student for the required five days would help him. According to the school handbook, if a child inflicts injury on another student unless in self-defense, the student may be subject to expulsion. Since this was the student's first offense, Mr. Samra did not want to employ the maximum consequences. Additionally, through conversations with this student, he learned that the student's father had recently been released from prison and that his mother recently passed away from cancer. The administrator believed that the young man was taking his aggression out on his peer. Subsequently, Mr. Samra attempted to reduce the number of days the child would be suspended by offering the student counseling services. If the student agreed to go to counseling then he would only suspend him for three days.

As Mr. Samra explained his thought process to me, his phone rang. The police department called to ask about the details of the fight. Based upon the Education Codes, if a student is injured in a fight, law enforcement may become involved. Although Mr. Samra was not sure who notified the police, they were beginning their investigation of the fight. The police officer on the phone explained that charges were going to possibly be brought against the student. The other student had been taken to the hospital for stitches. The administrator explained that sometimes despite his intentions and efforts, school policies – particularly in relationship to criminal law- take precedence over the school personnel's judgments. This incident is reflective of the shift away from *in loco parentis* towards *in loco politica*. Despite Mr. Samra's intent to support the student, the logic and machinations of the criminal justice system had greater authority. According to Mr. Samra discipline policies do not help to address the structural problems that affect students. At the same time they can sometimes undermine the authority of administrators.

Ms. Baily, a White principal, shared her own conflicts with school discipline policies. Reflecting upon her experiences as a teacher, she explained that as a teacher, she was most concerned with getting disruptive students out of her classroom. "Quite selfishly, how do I get the kid to stop sucking up my time?" As a teacher she had little time to learn about the reasons behind students' behaviors. Instead, her immediate concern was to make sure that students were academically proficient. As a result, students were often written up for "defiance" or "disruptive behaviors." These referrals justified sending students out of the classroom. School discipline policies, particularly suspending students from class, were the fastest way to deal with discipline problems.

Years later, as an administrator, her perceptions of students and their behaviors shifted. Given more time to delve deeply into students' lives, to learn more about the reasons behind their behaviors. Ms. Bailey explained that,

I think ninety-nine percent of children who are disciplined have experienced trauma, I think kids react to trauma, a divorce, a happy family that is sudden[ly] divorced, [being] raised by grandparents, in the foster home. Ninety percent of the time, there is serious trauma, or series of unfortunate events [that happened to the student].

These experiences, she theorized, shape how students act at school. Traditional school discipline policies do not permit school personnel to learn more about students' lives.³² Additionally, they do not provide effective measures for managing students behaviors or supporting students.

³² In recent years, schools have implemented programs such as "restorative justice" circles or Positive Behavioral Support programs in lieu of traditional zero tolerance policies. These policies while useful for mitigating exclusionary policies continue to identify students as problems.

According to Ms. Bailey, the behaviors that students exhibit on school grounds were often their responses to trauma. Because teachers have limited time and resources to learn about students, when discipline problems arise, the teacher was more inclined to suspend her from class. Thus, while many students with discipline records were subjects of some form of “trauma,” discipline policies such as referrals or out of class suspensions tend to exacerbate students’ problems.

Ms. Bailey explained that administrators who have some type of structural analysis of the conditions that surround students with discipline problems have a hard time implementing policies as mandated. Although administrators are deputized to uphold laws and policies, the more they learn about students’ backgrounds the harder it becomes to implement mandates.

[T]hat’s the hard part of the job...you want to be the hammer, [representing] law and justice. A teacher needs to feel supportive [when s/he is disciplining a child]...I maintain this structure of school, the order of the school. [But] twelve years into it, you realize that what you see in the office is the backstory of kids and teachers see the front story of kids.

Knowing about students’ histories often affect how the administrator implemented consequences. According to Ms. Bailey and her experiences, it was difficult to abide by policies that were outlined in Education Codes or in the school handbook, because other structural and institutional factors such as poverty and responses to trauma affected a child’s behavior in school.

I don’t think it’s possible for a human being to not be passionate once you see [students’] stories. A couple of things happen. You see the dysfunction right away---there’s a broken relationship at home, there’s drugs. I’ve had parents who are drunk when they pick up their kids. [Sometimes] you can’t get a hold of student’s parent. This kid is being raised by cats. There’s a lack of care...kids feel when there isn’t love in the house and I think that’s so traumatic for them

School discipline policies rarely addressed the multiple complexities that shaped students behaviors in school. According to Ms. Bailey, students’ behaviors were often a result of conditions outside of school. However, school discipline policies, especially for teachers, were quick remedies for managing students. Given that administrators had more information about students’ lives and their experiences outside of school, they sometimes had a difficult time implementing exclusionary discipline policies.

Ms. Barley, a Black administrator, noted that sometimes teachers sent students out for trivial misbehaviors. These disciplinary actions were not necessarily because the teacher was burdened with too many students. Instead, she hinted that sending students out of class was potentially convenient options for teachers. Some teachers who were unable to manage students effectively turned to administrators to enforce rules for them.

She agreed that decisions to send students out of class were sometimes based upon racial biases towards students, particularly Black students (Kohli, 2013). During these situations, teachers may be less inclined to learn how relate to their Black students and are more inclined to punish them. Black students were more likely to be sent to the office for trivial infractions such as “not having a pencil.” In this sense, school discipline policies were mechanisms that teachers used excessively to punish students of color, particularly Black students.

Administrators contended that because they have additional insight into students’ lives, they were aware that discipline policies such as suspensions and expulsions were not the best

remedies for student misbehaviors. These administrators explained, however, that teachers relied on administrators as immediate remedies to classroom problems. While teachers may need support for managing students they sometimes relied too heavily on exclusionary practices such as sending students out. The administrators from this study understood that exclusionary policies were temporary and limited in their effectiveness. These practices, they contended, failed to meet students' needs. As a result, school administrators attempted to employ different strategies to manage discipline problems and support students. While the handbook did not state the different alternatives to discipline policies, administrators explained that they were working with different non-profit organizations that could provide counseling services to students (Vigil-Koon, 2013). These strategies were still in the beginning stages of their development when this study was being conducted.

Teachers' Responses: White Males³³

While administrators - particularly those of color and White women - were more sympathetic to students, White male teachers seemed less sympathetic to students. Mr. Klein, a White teacher with more twenty years of teaching experience, believed that administrators were too easy on students because of recent lawsuits based upon racial profiling against the district and school. Believing that some students are "just jerks," Mr. Klein contended that students should be excluded from school when they misbehave. They warranted strict discipline. He theorized that administrators were "too scared" to suspend or expel students. "They're scared of lawsuits." Mr. Klein contended that administrators were too easily affected by lawsuits.³⁴

He also contended that his patience with students was affected by the recent rise in student to teacher ratio. In addition to feeling unsupported by administrators, he was hamstrung by the number of students he was required to teach. This preempted him for learning more details about students' lives and supporting them. Importantly, Mr. Klein differentiated between students who "acted out" and students who needed support. The latter, in his experience, needed "father figures." One of his examples of a student who needed support was an Asian girl who was generally engaged in classroom activities but was one day extremely withdrawn. When he approached her she began to cry and explained that there had been some violence at home. Mr. Klein explained that because of his teaching load, he misses opportunities to help more students like her. "Imagine how many kids I missed." Mr. Klein identified students who needed support as those who did not have "discipline problems."

Similarly, Mr. O'Neil explained that he did not believe in "coddling" students. He believed that school administrators were not consistently implementing the policies. As a result, students were getting away with misbehaving in school. Mr. O'Neil's explanation of the reason behind student' behaviors challenged the perspectives that Mr. Samra had of teachers and their good intentions towards students.

When Mr. O'Neil was asked about why he thought students got into trouble, he stated, "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree." This seemed to mean that students were mimicking the behaviors of their parents, who lacked proper comportment. When asked if he believed that students had any problems outside of school that may affect their behaviors, he mentioned that one of his students had apparently been forced into prostitution. Mr. Neil did not offer any

³³ All participants self-identified their race.

³⁴ Given that this study focuses on the experiences and perspectives of girls of color, I hope to conduct future research on the ideologies that inform responses from school personnel.

thoughts on how her experience might have affected her behaviors in his class. However, the researcher learned that Mr. O'Neil gave the student two referrals for disobedience, within the span of one week, after she returned to school.

According to Mr. O'Neil's analysis, students did not do a good enough job of handling their behaviors. That is, they were responsible for their own individual comportment despite the circumstances surrounding their lives. He did not believe that it was the teacher's responsibility to do more than teach students. Therefore, policies such as suspensions were reasonable solutions to student misconduct. According to Mr. Klein and Mr. O'Neil, students who acted out or were "defiant" warranted strict discipline. In the case of Mr. Klein, while there was an acknowledgement that students could be affected by conditions outside of school, but it was reserved for quieter students who did not "act out" in class. While this small sample size cannot be generalizable to all White male teachers, the insight provided by these narratives helped to provide a context for the different perspectives that affected how and which students were disciplined.

Teachers' Responses: Teachers of Color

This study also interviewed teachers of color. Since this was also a small sample size, this does not mean that the findings are generalizable to all teachers of color at FHS. Findings demonstrate that these teachers nonetheless shared similar perspectives around race and school discipline.

Mr. Craig, a Black male teacher identified "institutional racism" as a reason behind student discipline. He explained that in his more than thirty-five years of teaching, he had never given a student a referral. Mr. Craig did not believe that the discipline policies affectively addressed students' problems. Most students in the public school system are "at risk." They require attention and care. However, in his experience, most teachers do not have much patience for Black or Latino students. In the case of girls, teachers are more tolerant of Asian girls. He believed that discipline policies were used when adults did not know how to deal with children, particularly those they did not understand or could not tolerate.

This teacher who won several awards explained that girls come to school with many challenges. Girls of color, particularly Black girls, are demeaned by society. Teachers who rely on school discipline policies do not contextualize or understand the challenges that girls of color bring to school. Instead, the teachers rely on discipline policies to relate to students. According to his analysis:

Teachers don't take into consideration issues that [girls of color] come to school with -- self-esteem issues including how they feel about themselves and how they are treated at home. *Males get opportunities. There is focus placed on them. Women of color don't get that.* Latino and African American women have never been told their worth. When [they're] burdened, bludgeoned with that 'verbage'...[they] don't have opportunities to feel good about themselves. From what I've discovered, where they seek attention and focus that is sometimes negative because of this. Their reactions, outbursts and fights and fights are the immediate results of this.

Mr. Craig explained that girls of color do not receive the same amount of support as boys. At the same time, they are also constantly undermined. According to his narrative, while all students are

at risk, girls of color are vulnerable to multiple forms of subjugation. They were not only underserved, they are constantly “bludgeoned” with the idea they are not worthy. These conditions affect the girls’ behaviors. However, discipline policies and the teachers who use them do not understand the girls’ conditions. He explained, “The sensitivity is not there.”

In particular, he believed that teachers do not understand Latinas and Black girls. He believed that the girls were more inclined to get into trouble because teachers were less sensitive to them. Girls who have been subject to multiple vulnerabilities eventually explode. It is when they explode that adults punish them. He explained the steps towards “explosion,” particularly for Black girls.

It’s a suppressed kind of a thing. It’s a secret. They’re taught, “Don’t act out.” “Follow the course.” But when you don’t say anything, then you explode. You allow all this negative stuff to come out. You’ve internalized it so much. There has to be release point.

Girls who get into trouble have exploded in response to the different conditions that affect their lives. He identified the ways that students are suffering from lack of guidance at home and from social denigration. Not only were the girls suffering the pain that boys did, they had it worse.

There is pain that the kids harbor because they have been silenced...
A girl does what a boy does and she’s a whore. The girl wonders, “Why am I being degraded?” “Why can’t I be respected?”

Teachers do not understand these conditions and the reasons behind students’ behaviors. Instead they rely on school discipline policies. Mr. Craig believed that it was the responsibility of teachers to support students (Devine, 1994). However, teachers, particularly White teachers, are either not equipped to do this (Delpit, 2006) or are “institutionally racist” whether they know it or not (Leonardo, 2004).

Ms. Jones, a Black teacher who had been teaching for forty years, interpreted school discipline policies as mechanisms for mostly White teachers to police Black students. She believed that teachers are more inclined to use discipline policies to discipline Black students. Although she recognized that students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds receive referrals and suspensions, she believed that the majority of the cases were based upon “institutional racism.”

She explained that issuing discipline policies were the ways that many White teachers related to Black students and Black people in general. They were more inclined to police Black people than to relate respectfully to them. Discipline policies, particularly in the context of FHS where she believed adults were particularly racist towards Black people, were tools that many teachers used to demean Black students. She believed that White adults at FHS also tried to discipline Black teachers. She recounted a story about a time when a White teacher tried to discipline her. Like many teachers, she sometimes kept her students after class so that they could finish their assignments. When this happens, Ms. Jones wrote passes for her students to inform other teachers that the student had a valid reason to be late and that the students’ tardiness was excused by another adult. One day, Ms. Jones wrote a pass for a student who was late to her next class. In lieu of using the school’s official passes, Ms. Jones sent the child to her teacher with a pass that was written on binder paper. This, she explained, was a common practice among teachers. Apparently, the student’s teacher, Mr. Smith, did not approve of the makeshift pass. He

sent the late student back to Ms. Jones' room to request an official pass. Speculating that this was Mr. Smith's way of challenging Ms. Jones' authority, she sent the student back to her teacher to explain that the initial pass would suffice and that she was out of official passes. Within a few minutes, Mr. Smith called Ms. Jones' classroom to demand an official pass. After patiently explaining that she did not have any more passes, she hung up the phone. At the start of the next period, Mr. Smith appeared in Ms. Jones' room with a stack of passes that he put on her desk without speaking to her.

According to Ms. Jones, this was Mr. Smith's way of policing and disciplining her for not following official policies. His actions were an attempt to assert his authority over her. Her encounter with Mr. Smith was emblematic of how many teachers disciplined Black students. Instead of relating to Ms. Jones, he attempted to discipline her.

Ms. Gonzales, an Asian American teacher, agreed that discipline policies were quick fixes for larger problems. She believed that most teachers, particularly White teachers, did not know how to relate to Black students. She explained that she also did not like to give referrals or support suspensions of students. She believed that establishing rapport with students would mitigate most discipline problems. Sharing her own pedagogical philosophy, Ms. Gonzales believed that students often test teachers at the start of the school year. She said that she understood this inclination and worked to gain students' trust through conversations with them. She believed that most teachers did not precede in the same way. She admitted that the district has tried to implement racial sensitivity trainings, but that many White veteran teachers were resistant to the trainings. These she believed would help reduce discipline referrals because adults would know how to relate to their students.

The ones who most likely to need it will be most unlikely to accept it. They don't accept the training because they're assholes. There's a lot of ignorance and ego. There are a lot of fair-minded, open-minded teachers who do not know that they have a bias. [But] some people are really guilty of being resistant to examining themselves. There might be alternative ways of seeing the world. [But] their way is the right way.

Those who refuse to participate in these trainings are more likely to use the discipline policies because they are easier to use than to try to understand students. Discipline policies operate as the immediate recourse for teachers who are not willing to challenge their own biases against students. Ms. Gonzales explained that because she does want to use discipline policies, she tries to learn about her students. She explained that she has occasionally driven her students home, because she wanted to support them. Showing her students that she respected and cared about them were her ways of dealing with behavioral problems in her classroom.

Chapter Summary

The chapter presented an overview of the policies that shape the school discipline environment. Through a brief analysis of federal, state and district policies and the ways they shape the school handbook, this chapter described the policies that govern the school environment. While there are thirty different school discipline policies that are informed by federal, state and district mandates, only a handful of the policies are actually implemented. However, students are always subject to discipline based upon the policies. The chapter also provided an overview of the types of consequences students experience if they commit

infractions. It also described the responsibilities of school personnel for implementing the policies. Finally, the chapter examined the interpretations that administrators and teachers had of the policies. The interpretations of policies varied by the school personnel's position on campus. Administrators and teachers had different interpretations of policies.

As these interviews have shown, there was not a one-to-one correspondence between policy and implementation. School personnel determined which and how policies were implemented. Their authority, however, was also mitigated by legal mandates. That is, if school infractions were also considered criminal offenses, adults were less able to modify consequences. Instead, within the context of school system that interlocked with the criminal justice system, criminal law and consequences were taken precedence.

In addition, the race of teachers also affected their interpretations of school discipline policies. White male teachers who were interviewed in this study had less sympathy for students who "acted out" in class or school. Instead, they believed that administrators were too lenient on the students for fear of legal reprisals. Differently, school personnel of color – including teachers and administrators – were more inclined to sympathize with students. A White female administrator who was interviewed for this study also had a structural critique of students' behaviors and school policies. She believed that students' behaviors were shaped by social conditions, structural inequalities or limited choices. School discipline policies did not address students' broader needs. Instead, they further punished students for having needs. This study suggests that further research be conducted to determine how adults' racial positions and analyses affect their decisions to implement particular disciplinary actions.

Chapter V

Multilayered Punitive Structure

Introduction

This chapter presents data on girls' experiences with the multilayered discipline policies and practices at Foundations High School. It focuses on the girls' interpretations of what happened when they were disciplined and the impact that discipline policies and practices had on them. Using data from interviews and participant observation, this section details the girls' experiences with the *multilayered punitive structure* at FHS. This section presents data on the girls' experiences with referrals, suspensions, arrests and informal forms of punishment. This chapter argues that girls of color, particularly Black girls, are subject to a multilayered punitive structure that includes formal and informal practices. Beyond disciplining girls for violence, disciplinary practices operate to control the everyday girls' movements and expressions.

As researchers previously demonstrated in their studies of the ineffectiveness of zero tolerance policies (Casella, 2001), students from this study contend that discipline policies and practices do not deter students from committing infractions or create a safer environment for them. While the policies and practices may operate to "discipline" and normalize the girls' behaviors to meet dominant standards (Chesney-Lind, 1994; Foucault, 1977), the girls' narratives also suggest that they are subject to excessive forms of punishment. Put differently, while Foucault argues that "the art of punishing" under disciplinary power is to "normalize" (182-83) subjects, the girls in this study contend that they are gratuitously punished. That is even if they are able to meet the formal standards of "normal" behavior (i.e. good grades, honor classes), they are still subject to punishment.

Black feminist scholar Joy James (1996) argued that when it comes to race, discipline and punishment in the United States, "Greater obedience is demanded from those whose physical difference marks them as aberrational, offensive and threatening"(26). In other words, within a racialized society that considers White bodies as the dominant norm, those that are imagined as "other" are subject to heightened forms of policing and punishment. There is a greater demand for those who are deemed "other" to submit to dominant standards. In other words, even if they meet the standards, they are subject to punishment. At FHS, girls of color – particularly Black girls - are subject to multiple layers of punitive practices that excessively police and contain the girls' movements and expressions.

First, the chapter presents findings about one layer of school discipline policies, referrals, which are disciplinary write-ups for lower level infractions such as "being late to class." Literature on harsh zero tolerance policies has argued that suspensions and expulsions do not create safe learning environments (Kim et al., 2010). Data from this study suggests that lower level forms of discipline also failed to deter many of these girls from committing infractions. They do not preempt the girls from "misbehaving" in classrooms or at school but they do operate as forms of policing and surveillance. The girls explain that while referrals are not harsh and harmful onto themselves, cumulatively they can be tormenting. These forms of punishment constitute one of the important layers of the school's structure of punishment (Meiners, 2007). Nineteen of the twenty girls in this study had experiences with both referrals and suspensions. Referrals are the first level of punishment that is used to police the girls' subjectivities including the way they move and talk.

Second, the chapter discusses suspensions as the second layer of school discipline. It presents data on the girls' experiences with suspensions from their perspectives. Most research on school discipline focus on harsh exclusionary practices, particularly out of school suspensions (Costenbader & Markson, 1997; Eitle, 2004; Skiba et al., 2002). This section extends current research to focus on the perspectives of girls of color. Findings from this study show that despite the numerous rules and policies listed in the school handbook, girls get into trouble most often for fighting and theft. Given the larger contexts that shaped the girls' reasons for fighting or theft such as trying to navigate through poverty and threats of violence, suspensions did not deter students from committing infractions. In this sense suspensions also did not serve to remedy these girls' behaviors. The girls' narratives suggest that the punishment for committing infractions was not exclusion from school. Instead, what was most punitive was that educators did not provide students with the necessary support to stay on track in school. Not only were the girls excluded from school, punishment also included falling behind in their classes.

Third, some of the students who were suspended were also subject to arrest for their offenses, particularly for fighting and theft. As mentioned in previous chapters, while research on the interaction of the criminal justice system, race and gender often focus on the experiences of boys of color, this study shows that girls are also subject to arrest, criminalization and police brutality. Five girls from the study were arrested for assault. This chapter presents three of the girls' narratives about their experiences with getting arrested. The girls claimed that the arrests did not match the infractions committed. Findings suggest that girls of color are also subject to police harassment and brutality. Arrests were the most severe level of punishment as they affected the girls' experiences at school and home.

Finally, the chapter presents findings on Black girls' narratives about being punished beyond formal school policies. While Black girls are disproportionately given referrals, suspended, and arrested, they also experience informal forms of punishment that are not outlined in the school handbook. The girls related how their experiences with surveillance were not limited to exchanges with school authorities. They also describe surveillance as a peer-to-peer phenomenon. Put differently, the girls are also watched by their peers. Their bodies and actions are also monitored and policed. They felt the effects of surveillance by their peers were harmful to them. The girls explain that while school discipline policies are equipped to punish the girls, they do not support them.

Referrals

While most research on school discipline often focuses on harsh disciplinary practices including suspensions and expulsions, most of the girls' discipline records from this study are from referrals. Referrals do not typically result in excluding students from the classroom, but they are the most common form of discipline at FHS. The consequences include warnings, lunch and after school detentions. Referrals are forms that school personnel fill out to refer students for disciplinary actions. Studying the girls' interpretations of their experiences with referrals provide a framework for understanding what gets girls into trouble and how the school disciplines them.

Findings show that referrals operate as a quotidian form of policing and surveillance. According to the girls' narratives, referrals are not typically about remedying students' behaviors in order to create a productive academic environment or to serve students' needs. Their narratives suggest that referrals are excessively used to punish and control their behaviors and bodies (Crenshaw, 2012).

Of the twenty girls that were interviewed for this study, nineteen of them had been given referrals during their time at FHS. Sixteen of the girls could not exactly recall how many referrals they had received. Most of the girls recalled that the infractions were often for “defiance,” “tardies,” “cutting school” and failing to dress for physical education classes. Referrals for defiance, according to the girls, were often for behaviors such as “talking back,” “getting up to throw away trash,” and “not listening to the teacher.” All of these offenses were considered “obstruct[ions] [to] the learning environment.”

Michaela, a Black girl in the 12th grade, shared that she had received up to seven referrals during her time at FHS. Like many of the girls in the study, her referrals were for defiance. Michaela defined the infractions as “smart comments” or for “talking back.”

C: How many referrals have you gotten since you’ve been here?

Michaela: (pause) Maybe 7.

C: What are your referrals for?

Michaela: Being disrespectful maybe. Making smart comments.

C: What are smart comments?

Michaela: It’s making smart comments, like responding in a way that you know is kinda rude (sigh), I can’t explain it.

C: You get in trouble for making smart comments?

Michaela: Well, I don’t think I should have. I just thought the comment was intelligent to say (chuckles).

Studies suggest that Black girls are more inclined to get into trouble for subjective offenses (Morris, 2007). Black girls are more likely to face disciplinary consequences for “being too loud” or disrespecting authority. According to Michaela, her experiences with referrals are for statements that were considered rude or disrespectful to authority figures. She would get referrals for talking back or making sharp comments that offended adults. Such behaviors are deemed infractions against school rules. However, according to Michaela they are indicative of her wit. Schools, however, require that students are obedient subjects. Smart comments can be construed as attempts to undermine authority. As a young Black woman at FHS, she is policed and punished for challenging authority. James (1996) contends that White men are less likely to be policed than non-Whites because their bodies are more reflective of dominant ideals. She writes,

[S]ome bodies appear more docile than others because of their conformity in appearance to idealized models of class, color, and sex; their bodies are allowed greater leeway to be self-policed or policed without physical force. To illustrate: a white male executive in an Armani suit is considered more docile, civilized, and in need of less invasive coercive policing than a black male youth in a hooded sweatshirt and off-the-hip baggy jeans (p. 26).

Similar to Black boys who are often policed because they do not conform to “idealized models,” Michaela’s experience suggests that she is constantly under observation, criminalized and subsequently punished menial transgressions. Michaela claimed that she was punished for being accused of disrespecting a school police officer by calling her a “rent a cop.” Rent a cop is a pejorative term used to accuse police officers or security guards of carrying minimal authority. In common discourse, calling a police officer a rent a cop serves to undermine the officer’s power.

The police officer responded by demonstrating her authority over Michaela. She accused Michaela of defiance and then gave her a referral, which included a week of detention.

I never get referrals from teachers. The last time I got a referral was from a cop. Because I was being disrespectful. I was sitting down with a group of friends. I didn't say anything. They did. The CST [campus security technician] thought I made a smart comment. Her and the cop thought I was saying something disrespectful. [But] I wasn't saying anything. They was calling her a "rent-a-cop". One boy was making a rap about [the cop]. Cuz he got arrested by her once. Everybody had something to say. I was just laughing about the whole situation. [The cop] said I said something. I didn't. But whatever. I got lunch detention for like a week.

Although insulting or ridiculing school personnel is not included in the discipline handbook as a possible offense, Michaela was disciplined. She spent a week in detention during lunch because she was with a group of friends who made fun of a police officer. Insulting police officers, according to her experience, is an infraction and warrants punishment. Sociologists may contend that the police officer's actions were a version of the "broken windows theory."³⁵ Disciplining Michaela for this behavior would preempt her from committing future infractions.

However, according to Michaela she was undeterred by the punishment. Instead, she felt more resentment towards the school system and the police. Additionally, the idea that this would deter her from future criminal behavior assumes that what Michaela and her friends did was wrong. Although lunch detention is not a major consequence, punishing a student for insulting an adult reinforces her position as a subjugated subject. This form of punishment, a problem onto itself, also functions to reproduce the racial, gendered and age based hierarchy that renders Michaela defenseless in the relation to school authorities (Richie, 2012). She has little or no defense when confronted by an adult's accusation of disrespect. Although she has a right to contest consequences as outlined in the school handbook, it becomes unspoken knowledge that she is to submit to school authorities and their accusations. As a result, Michaela served one week of lunch detention for an infraction she contends she did not commit. The punishment did not match the accused transgression. However, according to James' analysis, the underlying logic behind excessively punishing Michaela was that she demanded "greater obedience."

Despite all of the attention to harsh discipline policies, referrals for subjective infractions also contribute to the punitive culture of the school environment. The layers of punitive practices exist despite the intentions of school administrators and some teachers of color who attempt to create supportive school environments through their structural analyses and alternative discipline practices as discussed in the previous chapter.

According to the students, there are still many teachers who excessively police and punish the students for their behaviors. Importantly, these girls are punished for behaviors that in other contexts would be expected or considered normal. However, in the context of particular teachers' classrooms their behaviors are considered punishable violations.

Victoria, a Puerto Rican and Black girl in the 9th grade shared her recent experiences with referrals. She contended that Mr. Waters, a White male teacher, constantly policed her actions. In his class, seemingly benign behaviors such as using ChapStick were rendered punishable offenses. Students could get referrals if they disobeyed his many rules but only some students were under constant scrutiny. Interestingly, according to Victoria's narrative the rules were

³⁵ <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1982/03/broken-windows/304465/5/>

unspoken and arbitrary applied. Regardless, the more that Mr. Waters watched Victoria, the more inclined she was to resist his rules. Victoria was also frequently disciplined for resisting her teachers' mandates.

Victoria: He gets mad for everything like if you're drinking Gatorade he yells, "Put that away!" [I say,] "What do you mean?" "I'm thirsty." You have out ChapStick, he yells, "Put that away!" [I think], "Whatchu mean? You want my lips to be chapped? I'm not gonna be crusty like yours [sic]."

C: What happens when he tells you to put things away?

Victoria: I wait til I'm done using it (chuckles) then I put it away.

C: What happens after that?

Victoria: I get a referral.

Drinking Gatorade and using ChapStick would be considered normal behavior outside of the classroom. However, according to Victoria, in Mr. Waters' class these behaviors risked consequences. Under the premise that teachers are required to create effective learning environments, teachers sometimes establish strict rules for their classrooms (Arum, 2005). Despite studies that suggest that students prefer strict guidelines (Arum, 2005), Victoria's narrative indicates that she resisted hypersurveillance and policing. Instead, the more she was policed, the less likely she cooperated.

Referrals from Mr. Waters did not alter Victoria's behaviors in his class. Instead, according to Victoria they made his classroom a punitive space. "No one likes him," she shared. During the course of the study, a teacher coincidentally shared an email that Mr. Waters wrote to other teachers regarding Victoria's behavior. Ms. Jones, a Black teacher, explained that Mr. Waters sent an email to teachers asking if they had trouble with her. According to her interpretation, Mr. Waters' email pathologized Victoria's behaviors. Without considering his role in affecting her comportment in class, his email suggested that her behaviors were only a result of poor family conditions. While recognizing the role that external conditions play in shaping students' behaviors is important, Mr. Waters also missed an opportunity to reflect on the implications of his behaviors. Importantly, Victoria vehemently resisted Mr. Waters' efforts to discipline her. She preferred punishment than to follow his rules. This indicates that despite efforts to demand obedience from her, Victoria insisted on maintaining her agency regardless of the consequences.

According to students' perspectives, referrals do not meet students' needs and concerns. Instead, they were repressive means to socialize students to dominant norms (Nolan, 2009). The girls from this study refused to submit to the expectations, particularly if they felt as though the norms were repressive and unreasonable. Danica, a Mexican, Filipino and Salvadorian 9th grader, explained that referrals were only one of the problems that she had with school discipline. Similar to Victoria, referrals did not modify her behaviors. Her recent referrals were for refusing to participate in the swimming unit of her physical education class. Danica explained that she had allergies that preempted her from getting into the pool. She contended that while the teacher had previously received a doctor's note to clear her participation in the swimming unit, he still gave her a referral for defiance and disobedience when the note expired.

C: How many referrals have you gotten this year?

Danica: Two referrals from Mr. Smith.

C: How have they affected you?

Danica: I don't care.

C: What happened.

Danica: It was during swimming and I didn't get in the pool. I had a note about my allergies but the note expired. When it expired, he still gave me a referral for not getting dressed. I get allergies. The strong odor, my eyes get red. They even suspended me because they thought I was high. They suspended me for 3 days. I had to get a note from the doctor's to tell them why my eyes get red.

C: You were suspended? What happened with the referrals?

Danica: I got detention. Lunch detention for not dressing.

According to Danica's interpretation, despite her medical needs, the teacher continued to issue her a referral for not participating in the class activity. While there may be other reasons behind his decision to discipline her, Danica's narrative suggests that school discipline policies and practices ignore students' needs. They attempt to control the girls' behaviors and bodies (Crenshaw, 2012; Foucault, 1977).

In addition, according to Danica, not only did she receive a referral but she was also suspended from school based upon an accusation that she was under the influence of drugs. Her narrative suggests that students are not only subject to school rules but they are subject to the dubious interpretations that school personnel have of school rules.

While these forms of punishment may seem benign, they operate as one of the layers of the school's punitive structure. The policies and practices characterize students instead of school policies or personnel as problems. Although referrals are not commonly studied because of their seemingly benign consequences (i.e. detention), these disciplinary actions are the most frequently used forms of policing and surveillance.

Suspensions

Girls from this study explained their suspensions were for fighting, possession of drugs or theft. Findings suggest that suspensions did not change students' behaviors. Instead, they often made situations worse for students. This reflects studies on zero tolerance policies, which argue that excluding students from school forces them to miss time in class (Wald & Losen, 2003). Students in this study explained that getting suspended from school made things worse for them. Not only did they fall behind their classmates, they were disempowered from defending themselves and they were ridiculed by family members. This section explores what happened to the girls when they were suspended, including the incidents that led to the suspensions and the impacts that suspensions had on them.

Pauline, a Mexican and Portuguese girl in the 9th grade explained that she was once suspended after she fought a girl in her class. The young woman accused Pauline of "trying to get at her boyfriend" and of stealing her sweats. After she taunted Pauline during the class period, Pauline began to defend herself. She explained, "I told her that I didn't take her sweats. She told me to shut up. I said I'd shut up but that I didn't steal her sweats. When I turned around, she pulled my hair and slapped me." Pauline responded by fighting back. The teacher called campus security guards who came into the classroom and broke up the fight. Subsequently, Pauline was taken to an administrator who interviewed her about the altercation.

The administrator decided that Pauline had "instigated" the fight when she responded to her assailant with, "I'd shut up but that I didn't steal [your] sweats." As a result, Pauline was

given one day of in-house suspension and three days of out-of-school suspensions. According to Pauline, the administrator explained that the appropriate response to her classmate was to either ignore the other woman or report her to their teacher. Since she had not done either of the preferred options, her actions warranted severe consequences.

The consequences she received upset her and her mother. During her suspension, Pauline missed several assignments that led her to fall behind in class. “My grades dropped because I was busy trying to make up work. They wouldn’t let me come to my classes to get my work while I was in in-house.” Her grades dropped from B’s to C’s and D’s because she spent most of her time trying to compensate for missing classwork. According to Pauline, not only did the suspension affect her grades, she also contended that the suspension was disempowering. “I was annoyed because I didn’t believe that I did anything wrong...they always talk about not bullying, but the school never talks about people defending themselves.” According to Pauline, FHS discusses the importance of not “bullying” peers, but does not have a more sophisticated policy or analysis concerning students’ needs to defend themselves against bullying. Instead of supporting her for defending herself against ridicule, she was penalized.

Echoing literature that highlights the ways that zero tolerance policies push students out of school (Advancement Project, 2012), the girls explain that missing schoolwork was one of the major setbacks of getting suspended. While it is school policy that students receive their work when they are suspended, very rarely did the students get their work. This was one of the informal consequences of committing a major infraction at school. Suspensions not only meant that students missed class or were prohibited from participating in school activities, but also that students would fall behind in school.

Similar to Pauline, Angelica, who is a Black girl in the 11th grade, shared how getting suspended affected her academic record. She had been suspended three times at FHS and all of her suspensions were for fighting. She was once suspended for five days because of the type of fight she was involved in.

Angelica: I got suspended for five days.

C: Why five?

Angelica: I think it depends on how big the fight is...I guess...I contributed to the fight...and because there was a lot of teachers, a lot of people got hurt.

C: What happened with that fight?

Angelica: The police was here. They do security here. The girl that I was fighting, she hit one of the teachers here and I guess...she was just wild...and was trying to hit everyone that was trying to stop the fight. One police officer was there.

Angelica believed that the reason she was suspended for five days was because of the gravity of the fight and the injuries that were sustained. She explained that she was taken to the office and interviewed about the details of the fight. She was eventually sent home with her mother.

Although she was upset that she was suspended for the maximum number of days, she was mostly affected by missing schoolwork. “I missed so many days and then...like I know they tell you they’ll give you your work, and they’re supposed to get your work, but they don’t.” As a result, she fell behind in her classes. She found that when she returned to school she had to complete current assignments and homework from when she was suspended. Although students are suspended from school in part to maintain a safe environment for other students, Angelica’s narrative suggests that suspensions also serve to punish students by academically setting them

behind their peers. While school discipline literature explains that students who have been suspended are more likely to fall behind their peers because they miss instructional time, Angelica's narrative suggests that she fell behind because the school did not give her assignments to her while she was away from school. In this case, Angelica's interpretation of school suspensions is that they do not meet students' needs. The punishment, it seems, is that students forgo their rights to academic success once they have been charged with committing a school infraction.

Michaela, who also had experiences with referrals, learned that one of the reasons she was suspended was because she was caught sharing lunch cards. As a low-income student, she receives free or reduced lunch cards that enable her to eat lunch for a reduced fee. Instead of using her card, she sold them to other classmates. While she did not disclose how much profit she made from this exchange, she admitted that sometimes she did not use her cards and found it best to sell them to her peers. This benefited her classmate because they received a discount on school lunches and she was able to profit from the transaction. She shared what happened when she was suspended for this infraction.

Michaela: I got suspended for selling lunchcards. I get suspended for the dumbest reasons. For stealing school property. I got in trouble for selling it instead of getting lunch with it.

C: How'd they find out?

Michaela: Um...they said they'd been watching me. They said students told them. But I think they're lying about that. Nobody's gonna just tell on me like that for selling lunch cards. But that's what they said...

C: For how many days?

Michaela: Like three.

According to the school handbook, students are prohibited from selling or "pawning" lunch cards. Lunch cards, the handbook states, are school property. Therefore, students found to be selling the cards will be disciplined for "theft." School authorities contended that selling lunch cards was a serious offense. One of the campus security technicians explained that selling lunch cards was equivalent to "stealing the public's money." She contended that students sold these cards for shoes and clothing instead of food. However, while Michaela did not explain what she did with the money, she did express discontent with the school rule. She found it "stupid."

Importantly, Michaela did not discuss the fact that in order for students to get lunch cards the student's family must demonstrate financial need. Her mother is a single parent to three children³⁶ and qualifies for the program. According to the 2012-2013 California Department of Education Income Eligibility Guidelines for Free and Reduced-Price Meals or Free Milk in Nutrition Programs, a family of four must have an income of \$29,965 or below to qualify for the program.³⁷ During the course of the interview, Michaela revealed that in addition to the four people that her mother supported, there were two other family members living in the two-bedroom apartment. Her mother and her aunt had difficulty providing for a family of six. While the description of her conditions at home are not an attempt to explain or justify why she sold her lunch cards, describing the structural limitations of her family's financial status may provide

³⁶ Her older brother recently moved out to join the military.

³⁷ <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/rs/scales1213.asp>

insight into why Michaela opted to sell her lunch cards. To provide further insight into the Michaela's life, she also shared that because the apartment was often very crowded and small, she found her solitude in the bathroom where she would occasionally spend hours in the bathtub. Selling lunch cards was one option to help to alleviate some of the pressures of the financial conditions that shaped her experiences at home.³⁸

Michaela's experience with this particular suspension highlights the conflict between school discipline policies and students' needs. Similar to Angelica and Pauline, Michaela did not feel supported by the policies. On the contrary, discipline policies worsened their experiences at school. As Angelica and Pauline's narratives highlight, they missed school assignments and fell behind in their work because of suspensions. Additionally, Michaela's narrative indicates that suspensions not only punish students through putting them students behind in school, but they are also punitive in the sense that they criminalize students for how they meet their own needs. According to Black feminist sociologist, Beth Richie, this type of offense is a crime of survival (Richie, 1996). School policies punish students for the ways that they attempt to survive the structural limitations that shape their lives.

Arrests

In five cases, students who were suspended were also arrested. As Kim, Losen and Hewitt (2010) argue, students are governed by both the school system and the criminal justice system. According to FHS' school handbook, infractions such as weapons possession, assault and theft are punishable by suspension, possible expulsion and notification of police. This section presents findings on girls' experiences with arrests, another layer of the school's multilayered punitive culture.

While most studies that explore the relationship between school and the criminal justice system often focus on the harsh experiences that boys of color have with police officers (Ferguson, 2001; Hirschfield 2008), this study shows that girls of color are also subject to interrogation and physical assault by police. The girls from this study detail their experiences with being treated as "a criminal." Their experiences highlight the relationship between the school and criminal justice system and the ways in which the latter take precedence over school policies. Findings show that arrests are the most severe form of punishment in the multilayered punitive culture at FHS.

Stacy, a Black girl in the 10th grade, detailed her experience with getting arrested by the school police officer. During the school year, her and a friend had a disagreement. After a few days of text exchanges and in-person confrontations, which included the girl calling Stacy a "bitch," the girls decided to fight.

They first met in front of campus with their friends and a few family members who would serve as their "back up." Once Stacy noticed the campus police officer watching them, she suggested that they move off campus to fight near the local McDonald's, which was where most fights took place. By the time everyone moved to the new location, the school police officer was already there. Since she was extremely angry about the threats leading up to the fight, Stacy was yelling. She was yelling at the girl who came to fight her and everyone else around her. When the police officer approached her, she was yelling. After telling her to calm down, he pushed her to the ground and handcuffed her.

³⁸ Chapter 6 delves more deeply into the structural and institutional conditions that shape students behaviors.

I was so confused. I couldn't do nothing about it. He was pushing me. I asked why I had handcuffs on me. Friends asked why. He never could say. I asked for his name, but he wouldn't give it to me. He kept saying he would throw my face to the ground.

The exchange between the police officer and Stacy escalated while everyone watched.

This layer of school discipline exceeded the consequences outlined in the student handbook. With the police officer involved, Stacy was subject to the mechanisms that police officers are authorized to use to manage citizens. The altercation shifted away from the two young women and their audiences to the police officer and Stacy who had handcuffs on her. She recalled asking the police officer, "Can you take off the handcuffs? You making me look like I'm a criminal." Her experience reflects some of the literature around the experiences that boys of color have with police officers (Rios, 2010). Rios (2010) examines the ways that the school and criminal justice system criminalize Black and Latino boys. The young men's experiences are often fraught with police harassment and brutality. Stacy's narrative demonstrates that these antagonistic experiences with the police are not limited to boys. Black girls are also physically assaulted by police officers. Stacy shared additional details around how her encounter with the school police officer escalated.

Suddenly there were trucks, ten cop cars, dogs. He threatened to throw her face to the ground. I asked, "Why do you keep threatening me?" This was because I was yelling at somebody? Ten police cars for one person talking.

The police officer, she explained, was much bigger and taller than her. She recalled feeling helpless and defenseless. The police officer refused to let her call home but did allow her to call one of the assistant principals to pick her up. Mr. Brown, a new Black male assistant principal, was hired the year before specifically to support Black and Latino students. She stated, "Mr. Brown saved me."

Throughout the interview she recalled what it felt like to have the police officer threaten her. She repeatedly asked why the police officer needed to have treated her the way that he did. "I don't understand." Although it can be argued that the police officer's actions were legitimate because they may have helped to stop a fight, according to Stacy, his use of physical force was excessive. Her question and concern has been addressed within Black feminist literature. According to James (1996), police in the United States have had a long history of violently disciplining Black women's bodies. She writes,

[M]en are not the only targets of police discipline. Four years before [police brutality against Rodney King in 1992], what became a symbol of police racism and brutality (through channels as diverse as academic texts and urban riots), the Center for Law and Social Justice issued a 1988 report, "Black women under Siege by New York City Police." Documenting white, male police violence against Black women, the center contended that the police and legal system play an instrumental role in repressive violence and that racism often motivates police assaults (p. 30).

As a result of her experiences with the school police officer, Stacy claimed that she attempted to make herself invisible. She tried to avoid trouble by staying quiet and unseen. Stacy claimed that

she tried to stay to herself at school and did not communicate much with other peers or her teachers. While these behaviors could be considered a positive outcome, they can also be interpreted as an effect of social control over Black girls bodies and actions. The excessive physical force that she experienced may have deterred her from fighting that day, but it also served to police her daily non-violent activities.

Another young Black woman, Carla, who is a sophomore, shared her experience with getting suspended by school authorities and arrested by police officers on campus. Both institutions, she contended, punished her for an infraction that she did not commit. Although Alexis was not physically assaulted by a police officer, her experience with the two police officers worsened when she displayed what they called an “attitude.”

Carla was recently suspended and arrested for theft. These were her first offenses at FHS. While she had been in fights in junior high, she had never been in trouble in high school. She believed that teachers and principals should only know her for being a good student. As a result, she did her best to stay “off their radar.” Despite going to class on time, doing her homework, “keeping to [her]self,” and avoiding “bad crowds,” she was unable to avoid “trouble.” According to her narrative, she could not avoid getting into trouble despite her efforts.

I was in the locker room and I had seen this girl at the other end. She was like going through people’s lockers. I had witnessed that she was going through people’s stuff. I didn’t tell her to stop. I said don’t touch these lockers cuz I know them.

She explained that she did not want to get involved in what the other girl was doing, but did want to protect her friends’ belongings. Her response was to make sure that the girl did not steal things from people Carla knew. “[S]he had taken an iPhone, a wallet, and I don’t know what else. And I had walked out before her and she had walked out after me.” Believing that she had avoided any “trouble,” she left. As a part of her goal to stay out of trouble by keeping to her self, she did not report the incident to school officials. “It wasn’t my business.” Underlying this decision was a particular common sense, understanding that “snitching” could possibly initiate a confrontation between her and the other girl. In other words, in order to protect herself, she did not tell authorities and left the area before she became further involved in the incident. Despite her carefulness, Carla was eventually called into the office about the theft.

[S]omebody had said that they had seen me walk out with a wallet, but I didn’t take anything. I got suspended for that.

She detailed what happened when she was suspended and arrested.

The campus security came to my class. I thought it was because there was a boy who had gotten jumped and they wanted to ask me questions about that. And right when I got in [the office], they [the police] automatically said I was arrested for taking this, this, this. They read me my rights, said I had the right to remain silent. So I stopped talking. They asked me questions that I refused to answer...they didn’t handcuff or anything....it was just verbal.

[The principal] said they wanted to ask me about what happened on Friday in the locker room. I was like okay. He said, “You heard there was an iPhone that came up missing?” [She said,] “Yeah, I heard there was an iPhone that came up missing.” [But] I stopped

talking.

Understanding that she had a “right to remain silent,” she did not answer any of the principal or police officer’s questions. She recalled that the police officers, an Asian male and White male, responded to her silence by saying, “We don’t have to deal with your attitude.” In response to her incorrigibility, Carla was transported from school grounds to a holding cell at the City jail where the police took her picture and fingerprinted her.

Carla: When I refused [to speak], they threatened to take me juvenile hall. The White male police officer] got mad.

C: How do you know he got mad?

Carla: He got red. He called my aunt told her he was going to take me to jail. “We don’t have time for this.” They took me jail, took my picture, fingerprints, asked me questions, how tall I was, how old I was, put me in the holding cell until my aunt picked me up.

Carla was kept in the cell until the evening but was not charged with any crime. Since she was a witness to a crime but refused to cooperate with the police, she was referred to a Bay Area based restorative justice program for counseling services. According to Carla, she did not believe that she needed to participate in the program because she had not committed any crime, but decided to accept the “deal” to avoid charges. She was required to check in with the restorative justice counselor for six months. Each week a counselor requested a progress report and meetings wither. While this helped her stay on track, it also served as a form of unsolicited policing. She was being closely monitored based upon a crime she did not commit and was not charged for doing. Despite all of her efforts to stay out of trouble, she was still subject to criminalization and punishment. Her narrative and Carla’s experience with police officers demonstrated that this level of punishment was severe and excessively punitive.

In contrast to Stacy and Carla’s narratives around being criminalized and punished by police officers despite their innocence, Shawna admitted that she committed a crime on campus. Her narrative suggests, however, that the school police officer helped to incite the violence that she inflicted upon another girl. Shawna, a Black girl in the 11th grade, expressed that she was willing to risk both suspension and arrest for fighting a “snitch” who purportedly told on her sister for stealing. Importantly, the reason that Shawna was upset was not necessarily that someone told on her sister but that the snitching led her sister to be charged with a criminal offense.

Shawna: It was after Halloween...I fought her on Nov. 1st after.

C: Why did you fight her?

Shawna: Why did I fight her? Cuz she snitched...I got arrested for lady for intimidating a witness and 11 [other] charges...for hitting a CST, having weed...

Snitching is characterized as “the practice by which criminals give information to the police in exchange for material reward or reduced punishment” (Rosenfeld et al., 2003). In most cases, the names of snitches are kept anonymous for fear of retribution. According to Shawna’s narrative, the police did not protect the young woman accused of “snitching” on her sister. Instead the school police officer inadvertently provided the name of the girl to the two young women. When the police officer arrested the sisters for theft, she warned the two that they would be arrested if they “intimidate[d] [the] witness.” Shawna insisted that she had no idea who revealed their

identities to the police until the officer mentioned the girl's name. Subsequently, after Shawna finished her 5-day suspension for being an accomplice she returned to school to look for the girl and fought her. Although Shawna recognized that she was culpable for inciting a fight with the other girl, her narrative suggests that the police were also accountable for the violence between the two young women.

Studies argue that in the past few decades, behaviors that were once considered minor school infractions are now criminalized and punishable by law (American Civil Liberties Union, 2012). Additionally, whereas school authorities once bore primary responsibility for managing student behaviors, the criminal justice system is now more actively involved in school discipline policies (Justice Policy Institute, 2011). This layer of punishment included experiences with getting handcuffed, interrogated by police and placed in holding cells at the city jail. Studies also show that in recent years girls are more likely to be criminalized and detained for non-serious cases than boys (Cheney-Lind, 2010). The girls in this section told their stories of being arrested and detained for both serious and non-serious offenses. The girls who were subject to this level of punishment explained that it negatively affected them. In particular, the girls explained that they felt like "criminals." The girls were not only excluded from school through suspensions, they were also arrested and sometimes processed through the criminal justice system. In other words they were simultaneously punished by two state institutions and often for the same infraction. These stories exemplify Black feminist legal scholar, Dorothy Roberts's analysis that state institutions in the United States have structurally targeted Black women and poor women of color for punishment (Roberts, 2012).

Informal Punishment

In addition to the formal forms of punishment that constituted the girls' experiences with school discipline, girls from this study contended that there were other unaccounted forms of policing and surveillance that did not register under the current conceptualizations of "zero tolerance," nor were they considered institutionalized forms of discipline. These actions do not register as egregious forms of suspensions, expulsions or arrests. Yet, according to these girls' stories, they are still punitive encounters that shape their experiences at school. This section presents data on the girls' experiences with informal forms of punishment.

During an observation of a 9th grade all Black girls course that was created and taught by a Black female teacher, students were being asked to assess their experience with the class. This class, which started two years ago, was developed to support Black girls at the school. Based upon teacher and administrator observations and school discipline data, Black girls were becoming increasingly disciplined. In response, the school created a class for Black girls to learn about Black history, contemporary Black issues, Black feminism and issues of self-esteem. When the teacher asked why the students liked the class, they clamored to answer, "Because this class is fun" and "I can be with my friends." One student expressed that "in this class, I don't get in trouble for *everything*." Ms. Jones asked her to elaborate. The young woman explained that in all of her other classes it seemed as though any time she did anything, she would get into trouble. She claimed that her Spanish teacher would get mad at her for "chewing gum," "laughing," and "talking" or for acting as if she was talking. Although she did not get a referral for these infractions, she was sent out of class.

A number of other students agreed. They shared their experiences with getting sent out of the classroom for chewing gum or for getting up out of their seat to throw something away. Students claimed that they were sometimes excluded from the class for entire periods. These

frequent experiences with punishment were not archived in school data. These are another level of quotidian punishment that mark the girls' everyday experiences. These practices are not archived in discipline data or school discipline research because they are not exceptional forms of discipline. Instead they are commonplace and embedded within the fabric of the girls' everyday lives, a condition of schooling

At the end of the class, Simone, a Black girl in the 11th grade, stayed to discuss her experiences with school discipline. Simone explained that while FHS was a "diverse" school, Black students were often subject to hypersurveillance and punishment. Simone explained that sometimes her experiences with school discipline are not recorded. As an example, she recalled that her advanced placement (AP) chemistry teacher once accused her plagiarizing her assignment. As the only Black person in the honors class, Simone contended that her teacher's accusation carried racial undertones.

[She thought] I had someone else do it. [She said] I wrote you a referral. She thought I got it off an Asian girl. I said, 'This is my handwriting.' She said, 'I thought it wasn't yours.' She could have at least asked. Did she ask every student about their handwriting?

Her teacher's assumption was that Simone had someone else do her homework. The teacher's purported evidence was that her writing looked "Asian." Not only did the teacher accuse Simone of plagiarism, but she also brought her to the principal to test her handwriting in front of another adult. Simone was asked to write sentences and compare her writing to the assignment under investigation. Although this encounter was not archived as a referral, suspension or arrest, it was a form of policing and punishment that negatively affected Simone. Simone's experiences with her teacher's accusation provides an example of the racialized suspicion that she felt her teachers had of her and other Black youth about their academic abilities and veracity as students. In response to this encounter, Simone explained that she became withdrawn in class. She did not ask for assistance when she needed it and attempted to render herself invisible to her teacher. The underlying logic behind her response was that she wanted to finish the class with minimal encounters with her teacher.

Despite completing her work and excelling as an honor role student, Simone was still policed by her teacher. Her experience was not archived in school discipline data, particularly because it did not count as any formal type of punishment or disciplinary action. Getting sent to the office to demonstrate the authenticity of one's work is not a formal consequence that is listed in the school handbook. However, it was a part of Simone's experience with punishment at school. Subsequently, Simone tried to distance herself from the teacher and classroom. Her objective was to get through school without having to engage with her teacher. When asked what she thought about her experience at FHS, Simone expressed that she "hated" FHS. She disliked the school despite the fact that she was an honor roll student who was recently accepted to several universities. In other words, while Simone was going to be graduating with honors, her experience with school discipline, particularly racialized school discipline, affected her perspective about the school and her entire high school career. Therefore despite her academic achievements, Simone's narrative demonstrated that a Black female student who succeeds in school can also be subject to gratuitous punishment.

The multilayered punitive structure also meant that the girls were underserved. Monica, a Black girl who is in the 10th grade, was often late to school because she stayed up late to take care of her siblings while her mother worked the graveyard shift. She explained that despite explaining her situation to her teacher, Ms. Wong continued to give her referrals for being late and denied her academic support. She explained that because she was late to school and missed

assignments, she tried to solicit afterschool tutoring from Ms. Wong. “[W]hen I came in after class to ask for help, she wouldn’t help me or show me how to correct my assignment.” In addition to referrals, her teacher punished her for being late by denying her support. Punishment also entails denying students access to resources. Roberts (2012) explains in her study of the foster care system that U.S. state institutions punish Black women through extensively policing them while denying the women social support. According to Monica and Simone, Black girls at FHS are not only under constant surveillance by school personnel and their peers, they are also starved of assistance.

Simone shared a story about how Black girls were subject to multiple layers of surveillance but were underserved by school personnel. According to her, an unknown peer or group of peers created a faux Instagram account that was circulated around campus. There were at least thirty young women featured in this online montage of photos, most of who were of Black girls. Each picture bore a caption about the girl’s sexuality including vulgar statements about her body parts and the number of sexual partners she had. One picture included an image of a young woman and a caption that stated she was a sexual assault victim. Simone explained that the girls searched desperately for weeks to figure out who created the site. There was no one that they could hold accountable for circulating images of their bodies online.

The online exhibition became the impetus for fights among several girls. In the meantime, while the administration attempted to contact Instagram, they were also threatening to punish the girls with suspensions and arrests for any attempts to fight. Although the administrative threats temporarily deterred students from fighting, they also disempowered the girls from asserting their agencies. Simone explained that the girls felt helpless. They had limited options for how they could defend themselves against hypersurveillance from peers.

As a guest lecturer in one of the American History classes, I taught students about race, gender and surveillance. I asked students to share their thoughts about the faux Instagram account. Most of the non-Black students explained that they did not care about the account or the discussions around it. A Filipino male student dismissed the online spectacle as an example of “girls like[ing] drama.” That is, the account was created because girls wanted attention. A Black girl in the class disagreed with him. Simone, who was in the class, explained that she did not think other students cared about the account because, “it doesn’t affect you.” Richie (2010) explains that “the further a woman’s sexuality, age, class, criminal background and race are from hegemonic norms, the more likely that they will be harmed – and the more likely that their harm will not be taken seriously by their community...and the general public.” While the girls were subject to multiple layers of surveillance – school authorities and peers – they were also underserved and underprotected. This does not mean that the girls did not resist the punitive conditions under which they were subject. Findings from this study indicate that the girls were punished for resisting. Their movements and expressions of anger and resistance were responded with hypersurveillance and dismissal.

Conclusion

The multilayered punitive structure affected the girls’ relationship to schooling where they felt alienated, expressed withdrawal, disdain and resistance. Simone explained that because of her experience with the accusations around her handwriting, she learned to dislike school. Despite being an honor roll student, she despised her experiences at school. She also learned not to ask for help from her teacher for fear of unwarranted attention or reprisal. Stacy was also afraid of getting into any more trouble. As a result, she kept to herself, did not ask for help even

if she was struggling with schoolwork. Stacy explained, “They don’t like Black kids here. They don’t like Black people.” The punishment these girls experience were a product of formal and informal practices.

Studies around school discipline have examined the ways that school discipline policies, particularly out of school suspensions and arrests have affected youth of color. This chapter presented findings that detailed the experiences that girls of color had with the multilayered punitive structure at FHS. The multiple layers of punishment, the chapter argues, is a form of demanding “greater obedience” from Black girls because they are structurally positioned to exist outside the boundaries of normal. The girls shared that they are under constant observation, hypervigilant policing and punishment. Subject to referrals, suspensions, arrests and everyday forms of regulation, the girls from this chapter demonstrate that their experiences at FHS are characterized by a multilayered punitive structure. Importantly, their narratives demonstrate that there are formal and informal mechanisms that are used to punish them for behaviors that should otherwise be deemed normal and despite whether or not the girls have actually committed transgressions (Gibran, 2011). This does not mean that the girls are “innocent” or are only “victims” of the discipline practices. Most of the girls claimed that the practices did not deter them from committing infractions, especially when they felt as though they had not committed any transgressions. Instead, their narratives suggest that their experiences with punishment at FHS is both ineffective and excessive. The objective of these punitive practices it seemed was not only to discipline girls’ behaviors but to control their movement and their expression.

Yet, many of the girls from this study insist that they will not be dissuaded from finishing school. While the effects of punishment may be withdrawal, despondence, repression and control, the girls were adamant about graduating and going to college. Monica insisted on finding tutorial services outside of her teacher’s classes and Stacy insisted that despite the school’s repressive policies, she was going to graduate. Most research on school discipline purport that students with discipline records are likely to be funneled into prison (Advancement Project, 2012). The theory is that the more students miss school from suspensions, the more likely they are to fall behind in their academic work and subsequently drop out of school. These girls’ narratives suggested that they did not intend to drop out of school despite their experiences with the multilayered punitive structure at FHS.

This chapter detailed the girls’ experiences with the different layers of punitive practices at FHS. Findings demonstrated that some of the girls were criminalized and punished for behaviors that would otherwise be considered normal. A few contended that they were punished despite any transgressions. As previously mentioned, the girls did not believe they were completely innocent from committing infractions. While they believed that many of the rules and consequences were unreasonable, they also considered the ways that their behaviors contributed to their discipline records. The next chapter presents the girls’ views of the conditions that affected their behaviors.

Chapter VI

Anger, Intersectional Violence and Punishment

Introduction

This chapter presents data on the student explanations for why girls “got into trouble” at Foundations High School. Highlighting the perspectives of students in the school, I consider the factors that students say lead girls to get into trouble by school authorities. According to the girls, their experiences, particularly with multiple forms of violence, outside of school and experiences in school created the conditions that led to girls getting in trouble.

The first section of this chapter discusses the students’ narratives of their experiences *outside of school* that affected their behaviors. Findings show that girls perceive that their behavioral problems in school are shaped by the intersections of poverty and sexual and domestic violence (Crenshaw, 2012). The girls discussed the effects that poverty had on their parents and themselves, particularly their relationship to school. They explain that their “behavioral problems” are demonstrations of anger towards conditions that shape their lives.

The second section provides findings on the students’ perceptions of experiences *inside of school* that influence their interactions with school authorities, peers and themselves. Findings illustrate that the girls’ understand their “behavioral problems” as ways to resist the school’s authoritative and punitive culture. They also understand their “behavioral problems,” as forms of resistance to the school’s expectations that they are to be docile students (Foucault, 1977). Additionally, students perceive that they get into trouble for defending themselves against other students and see their actions as resisting racism by school authorities.

Angry: Intersectional Violence Outside of School

For decades, researchers have discussed the social and economic inequalities have affected poor, low-income families and communities of color (Massey & Denton, 1993, Reardon & Bischoff, 2011). Studies argue that children from low socio-economic communities are more inclined to exhibit behaviors related to trauma symptoms such as aggression, withdrawal, depression and anxiety (Bell & Jenkins, 1991; Singer, Anglin, Song, Lunghofer, 1995). These are responses that adolescents have towards exposure to life-threatening conditions. Research also finds that adolescents who are exposed to different forms of violence learn to equip themselves with strategies to cope with the violence around them. They develop “survival mentalities” which include anger, hyper-vigilance and “fighting for respect” (Jones, 2009, 2010; Schaffner, 2004). These are the resources they use to respond and protect themselves from violence. Black feminists (hooks, 1995; Lorde, 2007) have explained that in response to multiple forms of violence, Black girls and women respond with anger. Lorde (2007) writes about Black women’s anger as an understandable and legitimate response to racism and sexism,

Anger lay like a pool of acid deep inside me, and whenever I felt deeply, I felt it, attaching itself in the strangest places. Upon those as powerless as I... What other creature in the world besides the Black woman has had to build the knowledge of so much hatred into her survival and keep going? (p. 150).

According to the girls they were being disciplined for their anger and the ways that they coped, negotiated and resisted multiple layers of violence. This section presents data on the conditions

that affected girls' "behavioral problems" in school: the intersections of poverty and sexual and domestic violence.

Poverty

Lena, a fifteen year-old Mexican-American girl in the 9th grade, explained that she could not remember how many referrals, or disciplinary forms, she had received since her first day of high school. The week before we met, Lena had been given three referrals from three separate teachers for "defiance" and "disobedience" Lena explained that she had been in many fights, and was inclined to bully her peers. She explained that these actions were how she dealt with her anger of conditions at home and in the community (Ryder, 2007).

Lena: [My] mom would ask me like...why am I like this? I'm hella angry...I don't know. Cuz at the time, it was just like my mom...and she was like hella struggling. Like by like paying bills and just...and just...I would see her paying bills, getting drunk and errything cuz she's like depressed. She's like struggling off the bills...So she would like, go to like bars, go drink...and...all this kinda stuff...so I would just go out with my friends.

C: How did you know your mom was depressed?

Lena: Because I could see it on her face and she would cry cuz she didn't know like...if she was gonna be able to pay rent, she would have to get advances and all that.

She watched her mother suffer depression and turn to drinking as a result of having financial problems. Because of her mother's struggles, Lena was forced to take care of herself. She shared that she would leave home and stay with friends because of her mother's depression and drinking. When asked how she knew her mother was depressed, she added, "Cuz I could see it on her face and she would cry cuz she didn't know like...if she was gonna be able to pay rent, she would have to get advances and all that." Experiencing poverty and the emotional effects it had on her mother affected her relationships at school.

In a recent study, Ryder (2007) uses "attachment theory" to understand girls' aggressive and violent behaviors. She encourages researchers and educators to examine how familial deprivation, neglect and abuse shape behaviors in children. Lena's narrative echoes Ryder's analysis and departs from it. While Ryder identifies the family as the primary reason behind girls' violent behaviors, Lena understands familial neglect as an outcome of poverty. In other words, Lena provides a structural critique of her family's condition and her behaviors. Poverty is the main impetus behind her disciplinary problems in school.

In response, she enacted her anger against particular authority figures and peers. Lena expressed that she had minimal patience for adults who did not understand her circumstances. Her position was that she was only able to tolerate people who "know [sic] what's up" and for those who showed *her* "respect." While school rules require that students obey school personnel, Lena's response was that school personnel, like anyone else including her peers, needed to earn her respect. However, school rules considered this type of position indicative of "disobedience" or "defiance."

She believed that questioning or resisting authority was a legitimate response to adults who had not yet warranted her "obedience." She noted that there were only a handful of teachers and administrators for whom she would listen. These adults fit her criteria for "knowing what

was up.” They spoke to her like they understood her struggles and they offered her mutual respect. She described a principal that she respected.

Yeah, I could talk to her. She gets it. Sometimes she gets on my nerves. Like you know, she be giving me attitude. The ladies, the assistants or whatever, they be giving me attitude. I don’t like that. If you want me to respect you, if you give respect, then I’ll respect you. If you don’t then ima [sic] treat you like shit.

According to Lena, her experiences with being “disrespected by adults” exacerbated her anger.

As an adolescent who experienced difficulties at home, coming to school where adults did not recognize her struggles or that she was being treated as an adult at home was upsetting. She was adamant about resisting authority figures that disrespected her. While school officials and discipline policies characterized her behaviors as defiant, Lena understood her behaviors as ways that she coped with her anger and resisted being disrespected by adults.

Chesney-Lind, Morash and Irwin (2007) argue in their study, “Policing Girlhood: Relational Aggression and Violence Prevention” for a critical examination of aggressive behaviors in girls. Instead of policing girls’ aggression, scholars and educators should examine the contexts for the girls’ behaviors. In the context of patriarchy, where girls are demeaned and ridiculed, girls may be emulating dominant society’s behaviors. As well, given that patriarchal gender norms expect girls to be passive and docile, aggression may be forms of resistance. Lena argued that her “defiance” were forms of resistance to disrespectful school officials.

Lena also shared that her life at home affected why she fought other girls. Fighting was one of the main reasons why Lena had a suspension record. “I take it [my anger] out on other girls who don’t know what’s up. Girls who aren’t ghetto.” Ghetto, in her description, is characterized by poverty and violence. Being “ghetto,” has often been defined as related to living within socially isolated, impoverished communities that are fraught with violence, loudness and crime (Sung, 2013). Lena understood ghetto as experiential and epistemological, “I bully girls who don’t have that ghetto insight.” Those who did not understand what it meant to be poor or witness violence bore the brunt of Lena’s anger. She wanted to enact her anger and specifically onto people who she imagined did not share her experiences. Thus, she enacted her anger onto “innocent girls” as a way to cope with her feelings.

This does not mean that Lena only fought when she was bullying “innocent girls.” Lena also shared that fighting was how she defended against other girls who were “ghetto” (Jones, 2009). These were the girls who wanted to prove that they warranted respect and were not afraid of her (Ness, 2004). While Lena admitted that she did not know the girls’ situations at home, she was confident that most of the girls who wanted to fight shared similar backgrounds with her. Living under conditions of poverty affected how the girls related to one another. She speculated that one of the girls who she fought multiple times did not have a permanent home. Fighting, according to Lena, was how she (and other girls) dealt with her anger. These attempts, according to Lena, did not work.

Similar to Lena, Monica, a sixteen year-old Black girl in the 10th grade, explained that being poor affected her behavior at school. Her mother is a single parent who worked the graveyard shift as a security guard at a bank. While her mother worked to support three children, Monica was charged with the responsibility of taking care of her siblings including an 1 year-old brother. Between going to school and co-parenting her siblings, Monica explained that she was often exhausted. Her daily routine was packed with responsibilities. She came home from school

around 3:30 pm, did her homework, ate dinner and then took care of her siblings from 8 pm until 1 or 2 am while her mother worked. Since her mother was a single parent, Monica helped by acting as the second parent in the house. As the oldest child, she took on several adult responsibilities.

Monica explained that she was aware that her responsibilities impacted her emotions and her experiences at school. She stated, “For the past month, I feel depressed out of nowhere. I just get mad from lack of sleep. I have a lot of responsibilities.” Her anger informed how she related to people at home and at school. She was more inclined to be short-tempered and less patient with her classmates and teachers. When she would talk back to teachers she risked referrals for “disobedience” or “defiance.” According to Monica, these infractions were mischaracterizations. Monica was not defiant or disobedient. Instead, she was tired and angry.

Additionally, Monica explained that while she was a dutiful student who tried to do well in school and to stay out of trouble, when she felt antagonized by teachers, she needed to defend herself. Monica explained, “you’re damned if you do, you’re damned if you don’t.” Even if she tried to do well in school, given her circumstances at home, she was still penalized. She shared a story about her first period teacher who issued Monica her most recent referral.

Because of Monica’s evening responsibilities, she had a hard time waking up in time for school. Thus, she was often given referrals for being late to class or for excessive absences. Even if Monica was only late a few minutes, her first period teacher gave her a referral. During one of their recent exchanges over Monica’s attentiveness and behavior in class, Monica became frustrated and blurted out to her teacher, “whatever makes you sleep at night.” Her response was considered “disrespectful.” However, according to Monica’s perception, she had grown tired of trying to negotiate responsibilities at home and gaining her teacher’s respect.

Monica explained that she was exhausted from being infantilized at school, while being accelerated towards adulthood at home. There was a disconnect between how teachers and her mother treated her. At home, she was responsible for her younger siblings. At school, she would get into trouble for wearing hats. She shared that Ms. Wong once threatened to give her a referral for wearing a “beanie” in class.

According to Monica, her discipline record is not only for “disobedience,” but also for truancy. Students who are truant are disciplined through in-house detentions, parent notifications and court-ordered interventions (CA Ed. Code 601.2). According to Monica, her discipline record is an effect of her responsibilities at home. She made sure to explain that her mother was also aware of the compromises that Monica was making for the family. Both women understood that Monica had a discipline record based upon her responsibilities at home. Monica shared that her mother felt horrible about Monica’s situation at school. In fact, when her mother would come home from work in the early morning, she made sure to encourage Monica to get to school on time. This would cause fights between them.

Charmaine, a fourteen year-old Black girl in the 9th grade, explained that her discipline record was a result of several underlying reasons, one of which was the fact that teachers did not understand students’ experiences with poverty. When asked why she thought girls got into trouble, she explained that there were circumstances outside of school that affected students. She commented, “Sometimes things happen outside of school. Like me.” She hoped that if teachers understood students’ experiences outside of school, they would have more empathy for their students. For instance, she believed that if one of her teachers, Mr. Alexander, who is a white male teacher, had known about the conditions of her life, he would not have given her any referrals.

There are five of us. Sometimes my mom doesn't eat so the rest of us can eat. Sometimes I don't eat so the little ones can eat. He doesn't know that sometimes I have to walk one or two hours to school because my mom's car broke down. He doesn't know these things. They don't see these things.

Poverty was only one of the factors that complicated Charmaine's life. Charmaine imagined that Mr. Alexander disciplined her because he was unaware of her experiences at home. Otherwise, he would have sympathized with her and not given her referrals for her behavior. This, however, was not the case. Contrary to Charmaine's hope, during my interview with Mr. Alexander, he was aware of her home life, but did not want to "coddle" her. According to Charmaine, she was disciplined in class because she had been cursing at one of her classmates. She called the girl several epithets including, "bitch," "hoe," and "slut." According to several researchers, girls who exhibit these behaviors are enacting trauma symptoms (Ryder, 2007).

During the course of our interviews, Charmaine showed me "evidence" that her family was financially strained. Once, she took out a 2-liter bottle of soda that she bought for 99 cents out of her backpack. Although I had not asked for an explanation, she wanted to share why she had the bottle. Apparently, it gave her "more for her money" than smaller bottles of water. She explained that saving money mattered greatly to her. I also learned that other teachers besides Mr. Alexander were aware of Charmaine's difficult life at home. One teacher who knew that I was working with her shared that a colleague had been collecting donated clothes from teachers especially for Charmaine. Thus, while some teachers wanted to support Charmaine, a teacher who was also familiar with her financial situation insisted on disciplining her. Instead of treating Charmaine's behaviors as symptoms of larger problems, Mr. Alexander punished her for enacting her symptoms.

Sexual and Domestic Violence

Literature on Black girls and violence has argued that Black girls particularly from low-income communities navigate through multiple forms of violence in their everyday lives (Jones, 2009; Shaffer, 2004). These young women are constantly negotiating their responses to interpersonal violence at home, school, and on the street.

Students from this present study contend that one of the factors that contribute to their discipline records is their anger over witnessing or experiencing domestic or sexual violence. This finding is congruent with feminist criminology and critical prison studies research which argue that women with criminal records have been criminalized for behaviors that are consequences of racism and patriarchy (Chesney-Lind, 1997; Dolovitch, 2001). According to some of the girls in this study, they "act out" because of the violence they experience outside of school. Some of the young women in this study discuss their vulnerabilities to violence as results of their age and gender (Chesney-Lind & Hagedorn, 1999).

For example, Lena shared that one of the reasons she liked to fight was because she "liked pain." Her affinity for pain was related to the violence she experienced as a child. She recalled that her father was extremely strict and punitive.

C: What do you mean?

Lena: Like...he would always make me clean the house. He would just like make me be

like...a little servant. Like you know, clean and if I didn't do it right, he would like, hit me. And...you know...

C: You mean like a spanking?

Lena: Like a biiiiiig spanking. I would have to...He would put me in a room, get the belt and he would like sometimes wet it and he will just like...make me like [indicates that she had to kneel]...go and like [hands are spread wide]...how do I explain it...the bed's right here and then I would just kneel down and like if I'm praying, he'll just hit me like that. And then um...I don't like...since I'm older now, like...now I know not to let nobody touch me and like...if somebody hits me, it don't really hurt me, like you know...I was used to being hit by my dad. So you know like...I like pain.

Her attention to pain is tied to her experience with her father. As a child, she is expected to listen to her parents and obey their demands. Although Lena does not identify the beating from her father as a form of "domestic violence," her narrative indicates that the punishment was excessive.

Her history with violence led her to be aggressive towards girls. "Cuz I have so much anger and so much and hate and errything...that I just take it out on girls...that...yeah. I don't know." Lena explained that she took her anger out on other girls.

Similarly, Stacy, a fifteen year-old Black girl in the 10th grade, had been suspended twice for fighting and according to her, has multiple referrals for "disobedience." While she was critical of the referrals for "disobedience" stating that sometimes teachers are racially biased against her, she explained that her fights stemmed from anger around the violence she experienced outside of school. Thus Stacy identified her teachers' racism and her anger at experiences with domestic violence as explanations for her discipline record.

Stacy explained, "I have a lot of anger." According to her, the anger is from attempting to balance complex dynamics at home where she experienced and witnessed domestic violence.

Stacy: We've been having problems at home...now we tryna see where I can stay...I don't stay at home...[but] my momma doesn't want me stay with my granny [in Louisiana], just finish out school out there...cuz I don't get along with her baby daddy...

C: Why don't you get along with him?

Stacy: Sometimes he picks arguments...sometimes I be having arguments. Night before last, we got into an argument, cuz he pushed me. I told the counselor. She had to file a complaint...I don't tell people anymore...I keep stuff in...

Prior to this, in Louisiana, Stacy witnessed her mother's ex-boyfriend physically assault her mom. Stacy reports that this relationship was the reason she and her family were forced to move into a women's shelter. While she was in the domestic shelter, she met other women and children who also experienced violence. The experience of being in a domestic shelter continues to affect her. Stacy could still vividly recall witnessing a woman have a miscarriage in front of her at the shelter. Given that most of her family was still in Louisiana, Stacy also did not have other family members who could support her.

Research shows that children who have been exposed to domestic violence are more likely than other children to demonstrate "aggressive" behavior or be depressed and anxious (Brown & Bzostek, 2003). Stacy recognized that some of her behavior at school was a result of the violence that she experienced. Without outlets to help her, she contained her emotions. She

explained that if she told school personnel about her experiences, they would contact Child Protective Services, which would only make matters worse for her. She shared that she once tried to tell a counselor about a fight that she had with her mother's boyfriend. The counselor explained that she was mandated to share Stacy's story with other school officials. Since Stacy did not want this to happen, she refused to share any more details about her life at home.

Stacy also contended that school officials have recommended her to anger management courses but these courses were not useful. She felt as though anger management counselors judged her. She shared that because her family was struggling to pay the bills, she dealt drugs to support her family. She did not want to be judged for these ways of supporting her family.³⁹

She also shared that she was not a violent person. However, because of the pressures that she was experiencing at home, she was more inclined to fight if she was provoked. That is instead of walking away from a fight, she would physically defend herself. She took pride in the fact that she never initiated fights. Stacy explained that she was embarrassed that she was not patient enough to deflect or avoid students who wanted to fight her. Her anger precluded her from making good choices to avoid fights. Additionally, avoiding fights was not an option if she felt as though she was in danger.

Charmaine, the student who hoped that Mr. Alexander would sympathize with her experiences at home, identified sexual violence as a contributor to her behaviors at school. She explained, "I was kidnapped and forced into prostitution." A few months prior to our meeting, Charmaine was absent from school for nearly three months. She described her experiences of being forced into prostitution,

I got off the bus [on Park St. in Oakland] because it doesn't go up the hill and was going to walk to my friend's house. I was trying to call her but I dropped my phone. Someone grabbed me and threw me into a van. Next thing I know, I was in a hotel with a bunch of other girls.

She showed the scars on her arm from where her kidnappers apparently burned her. There were a few other scars on her face that she pointed to which she explained came from being hit.

When asked to provide more details about what happened, she said,

Charmaine: I worked in...LA, Nevada, Reno, Vegas, a lot of places, Oakland, San Jose, Hayward, San Leandro...uh...that's it.

C: How'd you get there?

Charmaine: The pimps would drive us.

C: How many girls?

Charmaine: About 10.

C: How old were they.

Charmaine: There was me, 18, 19, 20, 21...

I had multiple pimps. I ran away a couple times. Tried to hide from 'em. Another one would come pick me up. When I was hiding out in Sacramento...I would hide out in the hotel, lock it; change the hotel [room] and everything. I would hop from pimp, to pimp, to pimp to get home.

³⁹ The girls very rarely used the words "poor" or "poverty" to define their situations. Instead they often described their situations in terms of "struggling to pay the bills."

She expressed that the experience of being “kidnapped,” and “pimped” affected her behaviors at school. Mr. Alexander, who was told about her recent experience by administrators, dismissed the effects that they had upon her behaviors. When asked if his students experienced anything out of the ordinary, he alluded to Charmaine by saying that he thought that one of his difficult students had been “kidnapped or something.” While most of her teachers were supportive, Mr. Alexander did not share similar concern.

By the American Psychiatric Association’s definition, Charmaine’s experience would have constituted “traumatic events.” According to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-IV-TR*, trauma is defined as,

An extreme traumatic stressor involving direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one’s physical integrity; witnessing an even that involves death, injury, or threat to the physical integrity of another person or learning about unexpected violent death, serious harm, or threaten of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate. (American Psychiatric Association, 2000),

Although Charmaine and her teachers did not explicitly define her experiences with kidnapping and forced prostitution as forms of trauma, the definition applied to the recent events.

In the past couple of years, Oakland has developed campaigns against underage “sex trafficking.” According to the California Health and Human Services Agency, Oakland is among three of the thirteen cities across the nation with high rates of child prostitution.⁴⁰ In 2009, the Federal Bureau of Investigation identified Oakland and the Bay Area as a High Intensity Child Prostitution Area. Oakland schools have begun to implement programs to address sex trafficking in the city. Meanwhile, girls like Charmaine who have family and friends in Oakland but go to school in the suburbs for “a better life,” do not have similar resources to support them because they live outside of Oakland. During the course of our interviews, she was unable to identify any support services that her school was able to provide for her.

Charmaine explained that her experiences with being “forced into prostitution” shaped how she interacted with her classmates and peers. According to Charmaine, she often got into yelling matches with one particular student in Mr. Alexander’s class. Because they did not get along, she called the girl names in class. “I told her, you got a dick...you got a dick bitch. Take your dick booty hole ass.” The disdain she felt for her classmate was based upon an in-class debate they had over police violence. Since the two did not agree with one another, Charmaine began taunting her. In response to these behaviors, Mr. Alexander gave her two referrals for defiance and disobedience.

Other teachers responded more positively to Charmaine. She was offered additional counseling services including a caseworker. Two of her teachers reported spending more time with her during and after school. They created different responses to her behaviors in in class. Ms. D, one of her two Black teachers, allowed her to leave the room for short walks when she needed a break from class. These responses were helpful. However, Charmaine explained that the way that school administrators and Mr. Alexander disciplined her made things worse. She recognized that her behaviors were in response to the compounded effects of poverty and sexual violence, but did not believe that she should be penalized for her behaviors. Apparently, one of the school principals, who was concerned about Charmaine made a visit to her home. After her

⁴⁰ <http://www.chhs.ca.gov/CWCDOC/CSEC%20Fact%20Sheet%20-%201.pdf>

visit, she decided that the school needed to contact Child Protective Services (CPS) to investigate Charmaine's life at home. Charmaine explained that she did not want the agency to take her away from her family since her "mama was all she had." Instead, she wanted sympathy and support.

Based upon these student narratives, girls with discipline records are penalized for how they respond to the extenuating circumstances that shape their lives. Their ways of navigating through the effects of poverty includes taking their anger out on others, including unsympathetic adults and innocent girls. At the same time that poverty factored into some of these girls' lives, for others their experiences with domestic and sexual violence also shaped their behaviors in school. Girls in this study believed that their histories with domestic and sexual violence played a role in their discipline record.

Most school discipline research have not studied from students' perspectives, why they got into trouble. Even less have explored discipline from the perspectives of girls with discipline records. This section discussed the "external" factors that shaped girls' behaviors. The next section presents data on how dynamics at school influenced the girls' discipline records.

Angry: Discipline and Disrespect in School

According to the young women disciplinary problems can be attributed to disconnection between students, the school's culture and faculty. Students argued that faculty disrespected the students; infantilized them; and failed to understand their complex lives outside of school.

In particular, students shared that their referrals for "disobedience" could be attributed to their relationship with faculty. Students explained that teachers were "disrespectful" to students, prompting the students to respond accordingly. Students, who believe that adults are disrespectful to them, feel as though they must defend themselves by asserting their own agency and authority. The theme of "respect" and defending against "disrespect" were central to these girls' disciplinary records.

Similar to Lena's narrative, Karla, a 15 year-old Black girl in the 10th grade, explained that if adults wanted respect from her then they must respect her. She shared that while she did not consider herself to be an angry person, when adults spoke to her in a manner that she deemed disrespectful (i.e. yelling, tone) then she would get upset and respond from this position. During our interview, she referred to the argument she had with Ms. Jones, a Black female administrator.

Karla: I don't think Ms. Jones likes me in the first place. It could have been avoided. I'm always respectful, but if you yell at me, I get disrespectful.

C: How long does it take you to get mad?

Karla: I'm not like an angry person. It's just when you're being rude to me, I get disrespectful back.

Minutes before our interview, I witnessed an exchange between Karla, Ms. Jones and one of the administrative assistants. I was a few minutes late to our meeting, which was in a room that was located at the very end of the office. According to Karla, because she walked into the office without an appropriate pass or an adult to accompany her, Ms. Jones and the administrative staff began telling her that she needed to immediately leave the office. Karla felt as though they did not give her a chance to explain why she was in the office, but instead began yelling for to leave. She further explains that she thinks that most girls get referrals for "speak[ing] their minds."

A "girl who speaks her mind" will be more inclined to get in trouble at school. Young

women who “don’t have a filter,” are often subject to discipline. Citing herself as an example, she further explained that she learned to speak her mind from her mother.

C: Where did you learn to speak your mind?

Karla: My mom.

C: What did she teach you?

Karla: She didn’t teach me. It’s just she does it too. It’s like...if she has something on her mind, she will say it. My mom.

Karla explained that she learned informally from her mother to express herself, which according to her is what gets her into trouble.

Studies have shown (Morris, 2012) that girls of color, particularly Black girls, are disciplined for “talking back” or being loud. Other studies (Sharma, 2013) show that girls who have juvenile records have often been disciplined for challenging gender norms. In her qualitative study of juvenile incarcerated girls, many of the young women she interviewed explained that inside of the juvenile facility, guards reprimanded the girls for not abiding by gender norms including wearing proper gendered undergarments. In this sense, the young women in this case study indicate that the school’s culture assumes that students will not argue against or challenge adults. In fact, to do so would warrant a disciplinary action. Meanwhile, Karla explained that speaking her mind is a part of her upbringing. While she was taught by her mother to express herself, school expectations were that she be deferential and manageable. The school’s expectations did not necessarily translate to allowing students to “speak [their] minds,” especially if they were to voice opposition to school rules.

Pauline, a fourteen year-old Portuguese/Mexican girl in the 9th grade, explains that in addition to getting into trouble for fighting, she is also reprimanded for talking back to teachers. In our interview, she expresses concern about the hierarchical structure between teachers and students. Particularly curious about who is allowed to define disciplinary problems and disciplinary consequences, she asks why teachers’ actions do not constitute “bullying.”

She provides an example. On a day that Pauline was not in her 3rd period class, her teacher made a comment to the students about her close relationship to another girl, implying that the two could possibly have an intimate relationship. Pauline explained that the teacher made homophobic jokes about the girls to the students. This behavior prompted her friend to end their friendship. Worried that continuing to be friends would lead to false assumptions about their sexualities, she distanced herself from Pauline.⁴¹ In our interview, she wondered why such behavior did not fall under the rubric of “bullying.” She was also curious as to why and how teachers would get reprimanded for such behavior. Although Pauline did not get into trouble for accusing her teacher of bullying, she did explain that her propensity to challenge authority has gotten her into trouble. As with Karla, she has been taught to resist when necessary.

Angry: Discipline and Self-Defense

Students also claimed that they were punished for self-defense against other classmates. According to Pauline, her most recent suspension was for defending herself against another girl.

⁴¹ In Sharma’s (2009) study, many of the girls who were sent to juvenile facilities had experiences with being harassed because of their queer sexualities.

Despite knowing that fighting on campus would warrant a disciplinary action, she cited that her mother and brother both taught her to fight back if someone was threatening to fight her. Although school faculty often told students that they should walk away when someone threatens them, Pauline explained that the school's expectations contradicted what she was taught at home. At home, she was taught to defend herself, even if this means that she will face disciplinary consequences. Pauline explained,

I was annoyed [by the suspension] because I didn't feel like I did anything wrong... they always talk about not bullying, but the school never talks about people defending themselves. My mom wasn't really mad...she said if anybody hits me, defend myself. Don't just let somebody hit me.

Her ideas about fighting are echoed by several other students. Josie, a sixteen year-old Black girl, explained that it is almost impossible to walk away from a fight. Even if one would want to do that, that would be a physical risk. The other person, "could pull out [her] hair" if she walked away. Although it was not formally mandated that all students who participate in fights get suspended, adults and students explained that anytime a student fights, even if in defense of herself, she faces disciplinary consequences. According to the girls, this practice was unfair. Pauline explains, "My mom doesn't think the rules are fair." According to Pauline, she was punished for self-defense. Forced to weigh their choices between defending themselves from physical harm or facing disciplinary actions for self-defense, the girls often chose the latter option.

Similarly, Alexia, a fifteen year-old Black girl in the 10th grade, explained that she would prefer not to fight. Fighting she believed is "unlady-like." Contrary to studies that claim that girls enjoy fighting (Ness, 2004), Alexia preferred to avoid fights. However, her peers, who did not share the same perspective, often confronted her. As reflected in Jones' research (2010), Alexia often had to navigate between being "good" and "ghetto." Her peers often challenged her desires to be "good," which included avoiding "unlady-like" behaviors and avoiding suspensions. Fights over boys, looking at each other "wrong," or "she said, he said" rumors were often the basis for fights. Despite wanting to walk away, she would often choose to defend herself. She explained, "It's hard to walk away, because if you walk away...turn your back...a lot of girls like to grab your hair when you turn your back...and just swing."

Fighting was also how the girls avoided victimization. She explained that girls do not only want to protect themselves, they also do not want to look bad in front of their peers, or to be embarrassed for not winning a fight. In that sense, they are coerced into fighting because their reputations are at risk.

In the context where the girls feel as though they are often being challenged by adults and peers, their reputations as fighters, or at least women who will not be defeated is important to them (Chesney-Lind & Jones, 2010). It becomes a means to assert their agency in a context where their subjectivities are often attacked or undermined.

For some of the girls', the perspective that they must defend themselves gets played out in the virtual world as well. Stacy explains that she will only defend herself if she is attacked in person, "Can't do anything about twitter thuggin." Some of the young women, however, contend that they will fight others who threaten them through social media. One of the main reasons the girls fight, or are willing to risk getting suspended, is to assert their dignity. The girls refuse to be disrespected, particularly when it comes to their sexuality, and are adamant about defending

themselves.

For example, during one of my visits to the school, I scheduled an appointment with Veronica, a fifteen year-old Black and Puerto Rican girl in the 9th grade. While I was interviewing another student, I overheard yelling in the hallways. I walked towards the door and saw Veronica arguing with another student. When she saw me, the young woman walked away and Veronica calmed down. After asking her if she was okay, I finished my interview with the student and begin asking her about the argument. She explained that she was just arguing with someone over a series of social media texts and showed them them to me:

Denice: “I feel so bad for you that you a fucking slut” (20 minutes before she got to me)

Veronica: TF you’re a slut fuck you too

Denice: “I feel so bad for you that you a fucking slut”

Veronica: “Hella fucking fake ass bitch!!!!” Denice ima beat your ass

Denice: Aww you a bitch

Veronica: Excuse me??

Denice: Would u ever give head?

Veronica: Want your dick chopped off?

I asked Veronica about what this text meant to her. She explained that she wanted the young woman she saw in the hallway to know that she would not tolerate the texts being sent to her. Although the exchange was on Ask.fm, a site that enables people to send texts anonymously to each other, Veronica speculated that the text was from Denice, a Mexican – American girl her age. Veronica explained that Denice had recently started spreading rumors about her. After the most recent set of exchanges, Veronica was fed up and because she incidentally ran into her, she wanted her to know that she was not afraid to fight her – to stop her from the harassment.

She applies this same logic to the classroom. During a classroom visit to her African American girls course where the girls were having a conversation about their relationship to teachers, I heard Veronica assert that if teachers disrespected students that the students should be able to fight back. She recognizes that this perspective tends to get her into trouble and that she has been accused of having an attitude problem. Defending herself, she explains that she does not like to be disrespected. School discipline policies, these girls claim, are the school’s punitive responses how girls defend their bodies and integrities against adults and peers who attempt to undermine them.

Conclusion

According to the students, discipline policies penalize students for the anger caused by experiences with multiple intersecting forms of violence. Outside of school, the girls are navigating the effects of poverty and domestic and sexual violence. The girls experiences include: witnessing their mothers struggle to pay the bills, having to be co-parents to their siblings while their mothers work, dealing drugs in order to help pay bills, witnessing and experiencing domestic and sexual violence. These experiences shape their behaviors in school. The girls contend that many times the behaviors that are characterized by school policies as “disobedience” and “defiance” are their demonstrations of how they are coping with their anger over the conditions outside of school.

The girls believe that their teachers are not aware of their experiences outside of school. Discipline policies and their alternatives do not address these underlying structural concerns.

Instead of addressing the larger structures and conditions that affect the girls behaviors, students are being disciplined or recommended to “anger management courses.” These approaches not only punish the girls, but also obscure the role that larger constructs play in affecting these girls’ lives and their coping mechanisms (Bierria, 2014). Bierria (2014) contends that because women of color, particularly Black women, are subject to multiple forms of subjugation, they enact forms of “agencies” that are considered “criminal.” Girls of color who question authority and decide to listen only to adults who have earned their trust are considered defiant. Instead of supporting girls they are characterized as problems. The study also finds that girls who get into trouble are attempting to navigate through their conflicting positions at home and school. While they are given adult responsibilities at home, they are infantilized at school. These forms of infantilization are a form of “social control” (Crenshaw, 2012) over the girls. That is, at school they are subject to discipline for wearing hats, drinking Gatorade or putting on Chap Stick. Under the pretense of classroom management, punishing the girls for these subjective offenses (Chesney-Lind, 2010) are means to police and regulate girls’ bodies and their movements.

Not only do the girls experiences forms of violence outside of school, they are also attempting to navigate through the complex dynamics at school. At school, the lessons that they learn from home are either devalued or criminalized by school policies. For instance, “speaking your mind” or “fighting back” when threatened are considered violations of school rules. Similarly, students explain that they are punished for attempting to defend themselves against teachers and students. As a result they feel, as Monica explained, “damned if you, damned if you don’t.”

This study argues that instead of penalizing the girls, schools should address the larger structural conditions that shape students’ behaviors. The girls’ behaviors, when examined within a structural context, are legitimate forms of anger. As Angelou (2006) in an interview,

*If you’re not angry, you’re either a stone or too sick to be angry. You should be angry. You must not be bitter. Bitterness is like cancer. It eats upon the host It doesn’t do anything to the object of its displeasure. So use that anger. You write it. You paint it. You dance it. You march it. You vote it. You do everything you do everything about it. You talk it. Never stop talking it.*⁴²

However, findings from this study show that girls of color are disciplined and punished for how they display their anger over the multiple intersecting forms of violence in their lives outside and inside of school.

⁴² <http://9u.com/workbook/27707/maya-angelous-embrace-your-anger-but-avoid-bitterness>

Chapter VII

Discussion

Significance of Study

This qualitative study builds on existing school discipline literature by examining the experiences that girls of color have with school discipline. School discipline has been examined using quantitative methods that measure students' experiences of suspensions and expulsions. Researchers have also disaggregated discipline data by race, providing important information around how students of color are particularly affected by school discipline policies (Kupchik, 2010; Saporu, 2012). While collecting and analyzing numbers is critical to understanding which student populations are affected by particular disciplinary actions and how often they are affected, such methods provide fewer details around how students and adults interpret their experiences with school discipline. Moreover, most studies of school discipline have focused primarily on how boys of color are impacted by school discipline policies (Davis & Jordan, 1994; Monroe, 2006). Collectively these studies have provided much needed insight into how often and in what ways school discipline policies disproportionately affect boys of color. However, less research has been available to understand how girls of color perceive and experience school discipline despite the fact that they are also overrepresented in discipline data. This study broadens our understanding of school discipline by examining the multiple levels of school discipline and punishment and its affects upon girls of color.

This study employed qualitative research methods to analyze the multilayered school discipline environment, the ways the girls of color interpreted their experiences with punitive practices and their analyses of the complex conditions that affected their behaviors. In order to develop a nuanced understanding of the experiences that girls of color have with school discipline, I employed case-study method, in-depth interviews and participant observation. Observing and interviewing girls of color and school personnel at a particular site provided insight into how school discipline records are affected by multiple factors including structural inequalities and students' responses to different forms of violence. This study also used document analysis of the school's discipline handbook to understand the formal policies that governed students' behaviors. I also sought to understand how students were informally controlled.

Although the study makes significant contributions to school discipline literature, it has several limitations. The study design included a small sample size, which limited the generalizability of the study's findings. This study excluded the experiences that White girls had with school discipline. Therefore, it was unable to provide a racialized comparative analysis of girls' experiences with school discipline. Similarly, the limited data on the experiences of Asian girls and Latinas also affected the scope of the study. This limitation occurred despite numerous efforts to recruit Asian girls and Latinas for interviews. Given that students were the main subjects for this study, there were several consent forms that had to be authorized for the girls to participate. The multileveled consent process also affected the scope of the project. Interviewees had to be students who were interested in participating in the project and had parents or guardians who would support their participation. This may have biased the findings of this study. Those who may have had starkly different interpretations of policies and practices were inadvertently excluded from the study. Additionally, the focus on girls may have risked reproducing essentialized gender binaries and categories, thereby excluding the experiences of

LGBTQ youth, specifically transgendered youth who may have challenged how this study characterized gender-specific experiences with school discipline. Similarly, focusing only on “girls of color” as a broad category also risked generalizing racial experiences.

Despite these limitations, the study makes contributions to the literature about school discipline by presenting data of the perspectives of young women of color. Listening to these girls’ stories is important because despite being overrepresented in data on school suspensions and arrests, few studies have examined their experiences. The girls’ narratives provide much needed perspective on how school discipline operates and effects students’ lives. School discipline, according to their narratives, extends beyond formal “zero tolerance” policies. Additionally, this study demonstrates that girls with discipline records have also been subject to multiple, intersecting forms of violence. Their experiences with structural inequalities such as poverty and gendered forms of violence such as domestic and sexual violence have limited their life options and trajectories. By highlighting girls of color, this study challenges historical and contemporary propensities to ignore them. In this conclusion, I will discuss the theoretical and practical implications of this study, providing directions for future research.

Theoretical Implications

This study has multiple theoretical implications for research on race, gender, school discipline and punishment. According to this study’s findings, the school discipline environment as outlined in the school handbook is comprised of several federal, state and district based policies. Students were suspended or expelled for a list of infractions that were based these policies. Many of these infractions were based upon “violent” behaviors such as “sexual assault” and “intimidating a witness.” Students were subject to criminal processes if their infractions also registered as criminal offenses.

This hybrid policy environment not only governed violent behaviors but also disciplined students’ daily activities including their movements and expressions. Confirming Foucault’s (1977) analysis of disciplinary power, which operates to normalize subjects, discipline at FHS also disciplined students according to dominant standards for acceptable behavior. For example, the school handbook included a list of rules for “appropriate” attire. Although this can be conceived as a means to minimize distractions, as the handbook suggests, these mandates also reflect dominant standards for what constitutes “acceptable.”

The discourses around safety and violence that permeate most conversations about school discipline have not examined the more nuanced and mundane forms of policing that take place through school discipline policies. The list of policies in the school handbook consists of regulations for cell phone use, profanity, clothing, kissing, and cheating. These policies reinforce dominant ideals for appropriate behavior, as they punish students for failing to meet these standards.

The school discipline environment also included school personnel who were authorized to implement the policies. Following a couple of civil rights law suits against the school for racial profiling and failing to protect Black youth from gangs, the school district reconfigured its administration. As a result, the current administrators were critical of harsh school discipline practices. Their critique of harsh disciplinary practices also included structural critiques of the ways that racism, poverty and other forms of trauma affected students’ behaviors and their discipline records. They considered the ways that harsh discipline practices worsened conditions for students. Despite the school administrators’ best intentions to modify disciplinary actions based upon these frameworks, they were sometimes hamstrung by legal mandates. That is, while

some school administrators at FHS had structural critiques of school discipline policies and wanted to alter consequences for students, they were mandated to abide by education codes. In the case where students may have committed a school infraction that was also a criminal offense, criminal law and consequences took precedence over the administrators' authority. Education discipline codes and legal mandates eclipsed administrative efforts to address students' needs.

School administrators in this study contended that the policies were not student-centered approaches to dealing with "behavioral problems" but were designed to manage students. For example, teachers who did not know how to relate to students, particularly Black students, relied on discipline policies to avoid building relationships with the students. However, not all school personnel shared their insights. White males who were interviewed for this study believed that students who "acted out" required punishment and that administrators needed to enforce punitive consequences. Meanwhile, teachers of color in this study contended that racial biases against students of color, particularly Black students, affected how teachers disciplined students. Veteran teachers of color posited that White teachers overly policed and punished Black students. These biases and antagonisms were also reflected in how they related to Black teachers. Although this study did not focus on school personnel and the contexts that informed their interpretations or experiences, interviews with administrators and teachers suggest that their racial positions and analysis affected their perspectives and how they disciplined to students.

Studies of suspensions, expulsions and arrests have demonstrated that students of color are most likely to be subject to exclusionary discipline practices. Although these studies make vital contributions to the field of educational inequality, they have not captured the more common experiences girls of color have had when confronting authority figures that are *beyond* the scope of "reasonable suspicion," or "probable cause" and are not included under the rubric of "zero tolerance. This study challenges discourses around school discipline to look beyond formal policing practices and to consider how surveillance is operationalized at various levels. This includes the behaviors of adults and peers. Additionally, this study finds that girls are denied access to support and academic services when they are suspended or arrested. This study posits that punishment is not only about policing students on campus, excluding them for failing to meet dominant needs, but it is also includes underserving them so that they fall behind their peers.

The hybrid policy environment was one major component of the multilayered structure of punishment at FHS. As girls of color with discipline records explained, their experiences with punitive policies were multilayered. While there were numerous school policies, students were most likely to "get into trouble" for fighting, defiance/disobedience, not dressing for P.E. or for being late to class. Getting into trouble, from these girls' perspectives translated to referrals, suspensions, arrests¹ and other everyday forms of policing from school personnel and peers. At FHS, girls' experiences with school discipline were based upon *formal* and *informal* punitive practices. Most of these practices did not serve to alter the girls' behaviors positively. Instead they contributed to creating a hostile and antagonistic environment (Meiners, 2007).

The list of experiences with school discipline was multilayered and extensive. Girls received referrals for behaviors such as talking back (Morris, 2007) or making "smart comments." Questioning or disagreeing with school authorities was rendered punishable through school rules that prohibit "defiant" and disobedient behaviors. Under the pretense that school personnel were responsible for creating effective and safe school environments, students were policed for a list of behaviors including "drinking Gatorade" and for wearing hats in class.

Students identified the myriad rules that they were forced to obey. A young Black woman

summarized her experience with school discipline practices, “I get in trouble for everything.” These rules, however, did not serve to “normalize” the girls. According to James (1996), “The normalization process is itself constricted and disciplined by the imaginary of the norm – the white, male, propertied heterosexual. Where the criminal or mad woman is doubly offensive marked by behavior and biology that diverge from the norm” (p. 28). Since the young woman of color offended norms through her “behaviors” and “biology,” the responses to her were often fraught with excessive punishment even if she did comply or measure up to school norms. Students claimed that they were sometimes punished based upon suspicions from school personnel and not because of evidence that they had committed infractions. Instead, the idea that the girls’ were in need of discipline preceded any infractions (James, 1996; Sexton, 2007). This was reflected in another quote from the study, “You’re damned if you do, you’re damned if you don’t.” Many of the narratives from girls of color, particularly Black girls, described the school discipline environment as confining because they were constantly overpoliced.

The girls who were interviewed for this study did not posit that they were completely “innocent.” They had attitudes and made “smart comments.” However, the punishment did not fit the behavior. Students felt excessively punished. Black girls claimed that getting into trouble had less to do with committing infractions and more with the girls’ race. Additionally, the girls’ narratives suggested that punishment also included denying access to academic and social support. Their experiences with being overpoliced also included being underserved. If a student missed school because s/he was suspended, she also missed class assignments and was forced to either make up work or fall behind her classmates. Despite these layers of punitive practices, the girls insisted on staying in school. They resisted being pushed out of school as described by “school-to-prison pipeline” researchers (Wald & Losen, 2003). Instead, they were adamant about finishing school despite these challenges. Their experiences suggest that the school was a punitive structure that the girls were forced to navigate. Importantly, these girls’ narratives challenged school authorities perceptions that they were creating a safe and productive learning environment for students.⁴³

While most studies have conceptualized school discipline as punitive policies, this study contends that school discipline is comprised of multiple racial and gendered levels of punitive actions. Findings about the multilayered punitive structure of FHS provide a useful framework for expanding how scholars and researchers define school discipline. School discipline is not limited to policing violence, but includes monitoring and punishing students for everyday behaviors. Thus, school discipline, in part, is about normalizing students to fit dominant standards. This suggests scholars and researchers should define discipline practices, their purposes and impacts in more nuanced ways. Narratives from this study demonstrated that girls of color were not only being similarly subject to excessive forms of punishment as their male peers, but that they also experienced gendered forms of violence outside of school that affected their experiences at school. Confirming other “troubled girls” literature, these girls’ narratives demonstrated that their lives were also shaped by structural inequalities. Their experiences with poverty and domestic and sexual violence affected their behavior at school. In large part, their behavior at school were an attempt to navigate the complex conditions that shaped their lives. These girls repeatedly expressed that they were angry. School discipline policies often functioned to punish the girls for how they acted out anger. Acts of anger were characterized as disruptive and defiant, instead of as understandable responses or forms of resistance to different

⁴³ Since this study interviewed girls with discipline records, it is unable to determine how other students without records responded to the discipline policies. This comparison will be included in future research.

forms of violence. Additionally, the girls posited that school discipline policies did not only punish them for their anger, but they also made things more difficult. Exclusionary practices precipitated more anger. Students also contended that they got into trouble for self-defense. The girls posited that they were punished for defending themselves against girls who wanted to fight them and against teachers who were excessively policing them.

While discourses about school discipline are linked to concepts of safety and violence, this study suggests that disciplinary practices do not create safe environments and are forms of violence themselves. In particular, when it comes to Black girls, school discipline is less about “normalizing” students according to particular standards than excessively punishing them as racialized and gendered subjects. These girls, similar to their male peers, are criminalized and overpoliced. This does not mean that the girls do not commit infractions. Instead findings suggest that the girls are criminalized regardless of whether or not transgressions have been committed. Since Black bodies are structurally imagined as criminal (James, 1996), Black girls are structurally vulnerable to punitive practices. These findings illuminate the different ways that particular bodies are policed, monitored and punished.

Like their male counterparts, girls of color are subject to racial profiling and police brutality. While the girls share experiences of criminalization with boys, they also experience specific gendered forms of violence including forced prostitution. In other words, in addition to being criminalized based upon racial biases, these girls are also subject to gendered violence that affect their behaviors. Findings from this study show that “troubled girls” in school are also multiply marginalized by conditions outside of school and in school. This study challenges school discipline researchers to broaden conceptualizations around who is affected by school discipline and how it intersects with other forms of racial and gendered violence.

Implications for Policy and Practice

This research has several implications for school discipline research. Traditional education policy analysis has rarely examined the effectiveness of policies from the perspectives of students. This study examines the experiences and interpretations of students who have already been affected by school discipline policies, providing an opportunity to learn from students firsthand about how policies affect their daily lives. This approach provides a framework to guide policy analysis and reform. Instead of modifying or creating policies based upon future projections of school discipline effects (i.e. the school to prison pipeline), this study suggests that education researchers measure and analyze conditions at school based upon all students’ needs – including the needs of non-disciplined students to have a safer and positive learning environment.

This study also encourages other scholars, researchers, policymakers, analysts and “street-level bureaucrats” (Lipsky, 2010) to evaluate how students experiences outside of school affect their experiences inside of school. Thus, schools may benefit from policies and services that address the social conditions that shape students behaviors. This means to move beyond policies such as “behavioral support” or “anger management” programs that focus on remedying students’ behaviors. Instead, findings from this study posit that school discipline policies should acknowledge the structural inequalities that affect students’ lives.

Informed by critical race feminism and Black feminism, this study specifically examined how school discipline policies and practices affected girls of color. Focusing on girls of color, their interpretations and experiences provided insight into how school discipline intersects with the girls’ racial and gendered experiences outside of school. For example, the girls’ narratives suggest that their behaviors are an effect of being subject to gendered-based forms of violence

particularly domestic and sexual violence.

Student narratives suggest that discipline policies support students and their needs. Instead they often punish students for failing to meet dominant standards for normal behavior. The disconnect between school discipline policies and students' lives worsens conditions for students. In addition to being punished for how they respond to the violent conditions in their lives, they are underserved. The findings from this study encourages policy researchers and analysts to examine the ways that school discipline policies support or exacerbate difficult conditions that shape students' lives inside and outside of school.

Findings from this study have shown that girls of color are often disciplined for their anger structured by complex layers of violence. This study suggests that policies and support services be created to tend to students' complex needs. Providing services that help students to navigate and challenge the conditions that shape their experiences may be the most effective strategies towards addressing students' behaviors. In addition to providing counseling services and other social services, there is a need to help students understand the contexts that shape their lives. Trends in school discipline practices have been to punish students for series of infractions. This study suggests that school policies create programs and services that support students' needs and helps them to challenge the conditions surrounding them. The propensity to punish has made conditions worse for students. Policies and practices that hear the girls' stories may serve to support the students instead of punishing them. Focusing on the girls' needs may help to improve their conditions. Students explained that they did not want to fight and would prefer environments where they could be at ease and not be "defensive." Experiencing schools as hostile environments (Meiners, 2007) preempts students from understanding and maximizing their potential. This study's findings provide insight into how school policies have confined girls of color, particularly Black girls. The study encourages policies and practices that will fully support girls of color in order for them to excel. The girls insisted that they were going to succeed despite the violence outside of school and the punishment inside of school. This study's findings encourage practitioners to create learning environments that do more than help students to graduate from school. It challenges policy analysts to use more than graduation rates as metrics for success but to also measure their overall racial and gendered experiences with school and school personnel.

Directions for Future Research

Based upon this study's limitations, there are several opportunities for future research. Research could provide more detailed analysis of the relationship among federal, state and district jurisdictions over school discipline. While the school practices draw on an array of federal, state and district policies, this also suggests that there are multiple agencies that are mandated to oversee the implementation of these discipline policies. A closer study of the relationship between these education agencies would provide more nuanced analysis of how the agencies' different policy expectations complicate how school personnel implement discipline policies and their effects on students.

This study focused only on girls of color and their experiences with school discipline policies and practices. Future research should investigate how the experiences of girls of color compare to those of their peers including White girls and boys of color. A comparative analysis would illuminate potential differences and commonalities in experiences with school discipline. This comparative research could further delineate the racial and gendered components of school discipline policies and the particular factors that affect students' disciplinary experiences. Future

work could also compare suburban school settings to urban schools settings. This comparative approach allows for more nuanced analysis of how different settings (i.e. Funding resources, community involvement) may contribute to particular disciplinary practices and students' experiences.

A larger sample of girls of color would possibly allow for more generalizable findings and produce data for quantitatively based statistical analysis. This would help to analyze the generalizability of the initial themes that emerged from this study. In addition, with a larger sample size, future work could discover more variables to describe the experiences that girls of color have with school discipline. Future research could also draw on a larger and more diverse sample of school personnel, which would enable one to explore additional variables and themes for how adults interpret and implement school discipline policies. This work would allow for a broader analysis of the factors that contribute to the school discipline environment.

Research on the experiences that LGBTQ youth have with school discipline is necessary (Irvine, 2011). While this study focused upon the experiences of "girls" it risked reinscribing narrow definitions of gender. Studies around how queer youth interpret and experience school discipline would provide rich frameworks for exploring the relationship between sexuality, gender, race and punishment in schools.

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Appendix A: Student Interview Protocol

1. Which race or ethnicity best describes you?
2. Which gender best describes you?
3. How old are you? What grade are you in?
4. Have you ever been given a referral or been suspended?
5. If applicable, describe one time you were given a referral.
 - a. Why did you get a referral?
 - b. Who was there?
 - c. What happened?
 - d. Who do you think was at fault?
6. If applicable, describe one time that you were suspended.
 - a. Why were you suspended?
 - b. Who was there?
 - c. What happened?
 - d. Who do you think was at fault?
7. How did the consequences affect your experience at school afterwards (i.e. grades)?
 - a. How did it affect your relationship with your teachers, administrators, and classmates?
 - b. Is there a difference between how teachers and administrators reprimand you?
8. How often do you see girls getting into trouble?
 - a. What do you they get into trouble for doing?
 - b. Is there a typical girl who gets into trouble? Describe her.
9. What factors do you think contribute to a girl getting into trouble?
 - a. For example, what role do families and friends play in shaping student behaviors?
10. What kind of support do you think girls need so that they do not get into trouble?

Appendix B: School Personnel Interview Protocol

1. Can you identify the different discipline policies at school?
 - a. What do students get referrals for doing?
 - b. What do they get suspended or expelled for doing?
2. What do most students get into trouble for doing?
3. What do you think most girls getting into trouble for doing (i.e. fights, truancy, etc.)?
 - a. Why do you think this happens?
4. Can you describe the typical girl who gets into trouble?
 - a. What does she look like?
 - b. What grade is she in?
 - c. What do you think is her family situation?
 - d. What factors contribute to her behavior?
5. Can you recall an incident where you disciplined a girl?
 - a. What happened?
 - b. What was she doing?
 - c. What did you do?
 - d. Why do you think she did what she did?
6. Do you think the way the situation was handled was fairly? Explain.
7. Can you recall a time when you witnessed a girl getting into trouble by another adult?
 - a. Can you describe her and what happened?
 - b. What adults were present and what was their role in the event?
8. How do you think the school helps girls who get into trouble?
9. Do discipline policies help the girls?
 - a. Why or why not?
10. Do you have suggestions for improvement?