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Reducing Racial Disparity of Youths Referred to The Juvenile Center

Kimberly Paige
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Health Sciences and Public Policy

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Kimberly Paige

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Reducing Racial Disparity of Youths Referred to The Juvenile Center

by

Kimberly Paige

MA, Lindenwood, 2013

BS, Lindenwood, 2007

Professional Administrative Study Submitted All

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Public Administration

Walden University

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Abstract

In 2018, The Juvenile Center in St. Louis, Missouri acknowledged that they needed to decrease the racial disparity in the numbers and percentages of Black youths who were overrepresented compared to White youths at the front-end intake step of the facility. The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain insight as to whether there were alternative actions for police officers after they arrested the youths but before they referred them to the front-end intake step of The Juvenile Center. The main method of collecting data was an ethnographic interview in the form of a questionnaire to gather the community relations concepts and roles of the police department and The Juvenile Center. The study included nine police officers and five deputy juvenile officers who were interviewed through the Zoom platform. This study was framed as a community-based approach with six different strategies: (a) community empowerment, (b) private and public support, (c) social bonding support, (d) police accountability, (e) juvenile system accountability, and (f) cultural training. Systematic narrative trends were analyzed, coded, and identified within the qualitative data. The findings from the thematic analysis demonstrated that the youths needed accessibility to youth clubs and positive relationships between youths and police officers. Also, the police officers needed education on the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative efforts and the Juvenile Detention Assessment Tool used during The Juvenile Center's referral process. The findings from this professional administrative study may be used to promote positive social change through developing policies and procedures on police referrals, parent(s) involvement, and community partnerships and engagement based on the efforts of The Juvenile Center.

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of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to God Almighty my creator, who gave me the wisdom, knowledge, understanding, and strength. I also dedicate it to my parents, Walter and Florence Paige, who told me that I could do anything if I put my mind to it. I would like to also acknowledge my beloved daughters, Shene't and Crystal, who gave of themselves to allow me to finish this path. To all my girlfriends that sent and gave their constant encouragement and support. And, to all the people in my life who touched my heart, I dedicate this research and send thanks to you all.

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Section 1: Introduction to the Problem

In 2013, the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) opened an investigation of The St. Louis County Family Court (Family Court) for potential civil rights violations of youths in the Family Court's system (Wing, 2019). As a result, the DOJ determined that race had a significant and substantial impact on the determinations of the youths during referrals to the juvenile office, pretrial detentions, at plea times, during detention hearings, and at subsequent court appearances (United States, 2015). These due process violations were found 48 years after the United States Supreme Court's *In re Gault* decision, which extended the principles of due process to juvenile proceedings (Calhoun, 2014).

Attached to the Family Court is The Juvenile Center, which provides a safe, secure, and controlled residential setting for youths who allegedly commit offenses and are waiting to appear in front of a judge in the Family Court. The Family Court's and Juvenile Center's administrators addressed the associated due process and equal rights issues through a strategic plan that focused primarily on the treatment of Black youths after juvenile officers referred their cases to Family Court.

On December 14, 2016, The Family Court and DOJ signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA; United States Department of Justice, 2016). The MOA addressed The Juvenile Center administration's constitutional protections of the youths facing delinquency charges before and during their appearances in The Family Court (United States Department of Justice, 2016). Between January 1, 2017 and June 3, 2017, The Juvenile Center had delinquency referral rates of 86.4% Black youths and 11.8% White

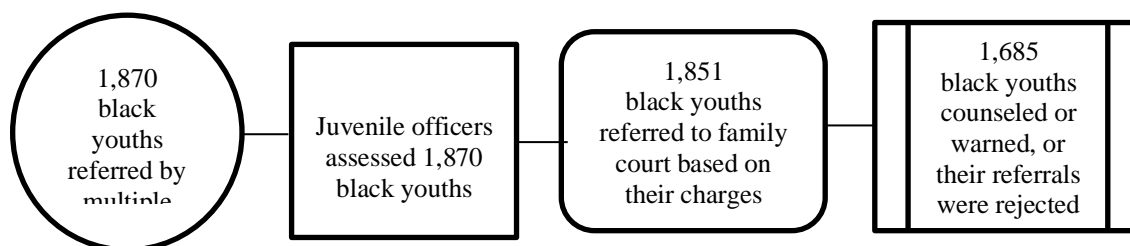
youths to the front-end intake step of the juvenile justice process (Wing, 2019). In November 2018, 17 months after the MOU was signed, The Juvenile Center had delinquency referral rates of 74.8% Black youths and 22.9% White youths at the front-end intake step process (Wing, 2019). As of November 30, 2019, the data continued to show that the number and percentage of Black youths referred to The Juvenile Center was still higher than the number and percentage of White youths (Wing, 2020). N. Rodriguez (2018) found that race had a considerable impact on pretrial detentions in juvenile facilities. The Juvenile Center's degree of racial disparity rose among youths when police officers referred many Black youths to the front-end intake office during the intake assessment stage and during the referral to the Family Court.

The Family Court handles law violations by youths, matters involving families, and operates with the principle of assigning one judge to each family. According to the Family Court of St. Louis County (2010), these are the following phases that a juvenile can touch at The Juvenile Center after being arrested by a police officer:

- Referral to the juvenile office (referral by police, schools, probation officers, or parents)
- Intake assessment (by the Deputy Juvenile Officers [DJOs])
- File a petition with the court (referral to the family court)
- Petition classification (formal and informal)
- Detention hearing (arraignment, initial, pretrial, probable cause, or plea hearings)
- Referral disposition (waived, placement, probation, dismissed/rejected, and fines).

The Juvenile Center's plan for reducing the racial disparity at the front-end intake step of the juvenile office was to actively engage with select community members and organizations (Wing, 2018). The Juvenile Center's plan also included working with law enforcement and school resource officers to identify the origination of the referrals (Wing, 2018). The Juvenile Center's and Family Court's plan to reduce the overrepresentation of Black youths referred from the pretrial detention phase to the Family Court consisted of using DJOs for counseling and case management and training the staff on racial equity and diversity (Wing, 2018). The Juvenile Center's open-door referral policy allowed police officers and school resource officers to continuously refer youths to the juvenile intake office. The Juvenile Center's DJOs, who performed intake assessments must have the minimum qualifications of a bachelor's degree in social or behavioral sciences (St. Louis County, n.d.). With the existence of disproportionate racial representation in The Juvenile Center, the goal of the recommendations from this study was to reduce the percentage of racial disparity of the youths that are referred to The Juvenile Center.

The figure below demonstrated the number of youths referred to The Juvenile Center, the process at the front-end intake step, and appearing before a judge.

Figure 1*Youths Referred to the Juvenile Center*

Note. Adapted from Wing (2018)

Problem Statement

The DOJ found that Black youths were overrepresented in number and percentage compared to white youths at every stage of the St. Louis County Juvenile Justice System, based on population (United States Department of Justice, 2016). A second finding was The Juvenile Center and Family Court administration and staff's conduct violated the youths' constitutional guarantee of equal protection of the laws as required under the U.S. Constitution's 14th amendment (United States Department of Justice of Civil Rights, 2015). After youths entered The Juvenile Center or other juvenile facilities, the parent(s) lost their control and authority over their child (Walker et al., 2015). Another issue found at The Juvenile Center in the Family Court process was that 62.2% of Black youths' referrals were rejected and informally adjusted, compared to 30.1% of White youths (Wing, 2018). The Juvenile Center's overrepresentation of Black youths at the front-end intake step impacted the treatment of youths at critical stages throughout the St. Louis County Justice System. The overrepresentation of Black youths also reflected that majority of the youths were not charged and were released back to their parents or

guardians (Wing, 2018). The youths that were released due to lack of evidence or jurisdiction was affected negatively (substance use disorders and posttraumatic stress) for an undetermined amount of time after they spent time in a juvenile justice system (McCord et al., 2001).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to examine ways to help The Juvenile Center's administration reduce the racial disparity of referred youths by improving the center's front-end intake step. The Juvenile Center received delinquency referrals from various sources, with 91.1% of the referrals originated from law enforcement officers and 4.5% from school resource officers (Wing, 2018). In 2018, The Juvenile Center received 1,870 Black youths' and 572 White youths' delinquency referrals in their front-end intake step (Wing, 2018). Although disproportionate minority contact (DMC) efforts had been federally funded to address overrepresentation of racial and ethnic minority youths, it was still a problem in several juvenile justice systems (Claus et al., 2018). In November 2018, The Juvenile Center had delinquency referral rates of 74.8% Black youths and 22.9% White youths at the front-end intake step process (Wing, 2019). A decrease of 51.9% of Black youths that were referred on the front-end can reduce the racial disparity in other areas of The Juvenile Center and the Family Court.

The Juvenile Center acknowledged that they needed to decrease the racial disparity in the number of youths referred to the front-end intake step. Claus et al. (2018) noted that postarrest handling by law enforcement officers determined whether the youths were charged, released, detained, or sentenced. Black youths were referred to The

Juvenile Center six times more frequently than White youths (St. Louis County Circuit Court, 2019). The continued racial disparities demonstrated that the administrators had not made enough changes to the police department or school resource officers' current protocol on youths brought to The Juvenile Center. Due to the authority that police officers had over the youths at the arresting stage, it was critical for The Juvenile Center to examine how race and ethnicity influenced decisions made at this critical decision-making stage (St. Louis County Circuit Court, 2019).

Research Question

RQ1: How can The Juvenile Center decrease the racial disparity to 35% in the number of youths referred during its front-end intake step?

Nature of the Administrative Study

In this study, I examined the front-end intake step of The Juvenile Center. I used a qualitative approach to examine the intake step during the 2015-2018 period in St. Louis County, Missouri. I gathered qualitative data from narrative interview questions created to elicit the participants' responses of their detailed experiences. The participants' statements were based on their experiences and addressed the determining factors of whether the youths should be referred to The Juvenile Center or returned home with their parents or guardians. The main method of collecting data was ethnographic interviews which allowed me to gather information on the community relation actions from the police officers and school resource officers in the neighborhoods in which those officers served. Also, I gathered qualitative data on what referral factors were considered by the police officers and school resource officers with regards to youths who were arrested.

The additional method of collecting data was interviewing The Juvenile Center's staff to gather data on the front-end intake referral processes. The Juvenile Center's administration and staff have access to the DMC case study that analyzed data on the number of delinquency referrals, referral sources, charge levels, and referral dispositions from The Juvenile Center.

Significance of Study

After the U.S. Department of Justice's investigation in 2013, The Juvenile Center's Black youth population increased through front-end referrals. The population threshold number increased, which caused an overrepresentation of Black youths throughout The Juvenile Center (Wing, 2018). Some researchers performed studies on programs designed to reduce the over-representation of black youths referred to juvenile facilities. In August of 2018, the Family Court provided an annual racial and ethnic disparity (RED) multifaceted five-step training to 150 staff members (Hutchinson, 2019). On September 20, 2019, the Family Court's staff received a second training that enhanced the initial training on race and achieving racial equity (St. Louis County Circuit Court, 2020). On November 17, 2019, the Family Court filed an audit report with the DOJ documenting 23 provision improvements (e.g., data collections and reporting, training for the Family Court staff, attention to equal protection duties and responsibilities) to remain compliant with their MOA (Greenwald, 2019). However, in mid-2021, The Juvenile Center racial disproportionality continued to remain high at the front-end intake step and decreased at the Family Court's sentencing phase (Missouri Division of Youth Services, n.d.b) . The public and policymakers celebrated a drop in the

overall juvenile incarcerations and falling arrest rates. Quinn (2016) agreed that changes such as these were not impacting Black communities to the same extent and at the same pace that they were impacting White communities.

My study results may help create an effective process for police officers, school resource officers, and juvenile officers to communicate and collaborate with one another. Also, the contributions may bring a positive change in the number of Black youths that are referred to The Juvenile Center. The Juvenile Center's administrators could use this study's findings to improve the intake step of the Juvenile Center and at the police stations and schools. As researchers continue to conduct studies of other juvenile justice centers, their contributions can lead to adjustments of existing policies and procedures in school disciplining and police youth arrests. In addition, studies contributed to policing reform to address youth behavioral issues, forming juvenile justice commissions centered around racial equality, and partnering of social community organizations. These actions were considered a holistic approach and a shared responsibility to address the differential racial disparity rate in The Juvenile Center.

Summary

In Section 1, I introduced and noted that The Juvenile Center has a high racial disparity in the number of Black youths compared to White youths referred to their front-end intake step. I also, noted how the data will be collected and the significance and potential contribution of the study. In Section 2, I presented scholarly literature that clarified terms and added substance to the issue of reducing The Juvenile Center's racial disparity.

Section 2: Conceptual Approach and Background

The U.S. DOJ (2016) found that Black youths were overrepresented at different stages of the Juvenile Justice System. The Black youths were overrepresented at the front-end referral step to the juvenile office, pretrial detentions, plea agreements sessions, and at their detention hearings. Also, the DOJ found that Black youths had a higher possibility of receiving harsher consequences, rather than informal diversion, than White youths in the Family Court (United States Department of Justice, 2016). The Juvenile Center's degree of racial disparity rose as police officers and school resource officers referred black youths to the front office. The degree of racial disparity also rose when juvenile officers completed Black youths' intake assessments and at the contact point when the youths were referred to the Family Court. The Black youths represented 75% of the law enforcement referrals and 80% of the juvenile administrative referrals at the front-end intake step of The Juvenile Center (Wing, 2019).

The Family Court's and Juvenile Center's administrators addressed the associated due process and equal rights issues by creating a strategic plan that focused primarily on the treatment of Black youths after juvenile officers referred their cases to the Family Court (Wing, 2019). Many juvenile justice systems' strategic plans that addressed inequalities substantiated the studies that showed a lack of attention in the role police officers played during the initial contact and arrest of black youths (Dillard, 2013). To explore how The Juvenile Justice Center decreased their percentage of racial disparity at the front-end intake step, five staff members and nine police officers were interviewed to find recommendations related to this question:

RQ1: How can The Juvenile Center decrease the racial disparity to 35% in the number of youths referred during its front-end intake step?

The purpose of this study was to examine ways to help The Juvenile Center's administration reduce the racial disparity of referred youths by improving its front-end intake step. In this section I discussed a community-based approach to stimulate the community to mitigate the Black youths' racial disparity in the juvenile justice system. I also discussed how this study's conceptual framework addressed reducing the racial disparity of Black youths compared to White youths for the organization and any terms used that need to be defined.

Concept's Models and Theories

The academic literature related to racial disparity in the juvenile justice system concentrated on Black youths' experiences dealing with differential treatment during arrests, processing of the youths after detention, and transferring youths to outside facilities at the diversion stage. There were also studies that clarified the reasons racial disparity existed, such as selective enforcement, race difference in offending, bias risk assessment instruments, and different administrative practices (Dawson-Edwards et al., 2020). However, researchers did not give detailed answers as to why racial disparity exists, which prompted me to study and gather data that redefined responses and recommendations.

The conceptual framework that I used in this study was a community-based approach in which parents, residents, community leaders, and community organizations worked together to help reduce the racial disparity of Black youths referred to The

Juvenile Center. Reduction in racial disparity of Black youths referred to The Juvenile Center required committees created with school superintendents, police chiefs, juvenile court counselors, directors of social services, prosecuting attorneys, and public defenders (Frabutt et al., 2008). The Juvenile Center created several subcommittees of nonprofit executive directors, business owners, clergy members, coaches, social workers, and the parents of the affected Black youths to address the present racial disparity issue (Wing, 2019).

Smith (2013) noted a six-step framework that demonstrated a holistic, community-based approach with training that addressed the racial diversity for Black youths referred to the juvenile justice system. These approaches were developmental and enhanced how the youths' human rights were currently being protected. Dillard (2013) acknowledged that it was vital for juvenile justice administrators to use a human rights perspective when planning to improve their front-end racial disparity margin (p. 215). When the juvenile justice administrators address the human rights approach, they should prioritize how law enforcement's policies and procedures helped to minimize the variance in the use of social control mechanisms (e.g., detention and incarceration). The human rights approach focused on interventions aimed at strengthening individuals, families, and communities (Dillard, 2013). Dillard's human rights approach was embedded in Smith's community-based approach which created the opportunity for key partners and stakeholders to contribute to the developmental strategies and decision-making processes.

Approach 1 focused on empowering the communities and youths dealing with mass amounts of incarceration, poverty, violence, underperforming schools, a lack of mental and medical healthcare services, and insufficient growth and development opportunities (Smith, 2013). Approach 2 addressed the need for cultural training for those who provide legal services and capacity building. It also addressed the need for cultural training for those who advised the cultural traditions, methodologies, and language elements of the populations receiving services. While the advisors provided cultural training, they acknowledged the root causes of racial disparities and injustices. Approach 3 was concerned with supporting social bonding forms that addressed perceived and false margins about behaviors that caused Black youths to become delinquent. Approach 4 addressed the need for public and private support. Approach 5 concentrated on police departments being accountable to the Black youths taken into custody by reforming their legal structures and requirements about referring youths, community engagement, and various cultural practices. Approach 6 addressed the juvenile system's need for an accountability system firmly grounded in human rights law (Smith, 2013).

Empowered Black youths from urban areas with low community and family socioeconomic status reduced their chances of experiencing chronic academic failure, learning challenges, and behavior problems (Smith, 2013). These obstacles led to Black youths dropping out of school and encountering the police. With the decision-making points across the juvenile justice system starting at investigations, arrests, formal supervision, and ending at detention and incarceration, the answers to why racial disparity existed at these points were different for each community (Smith, 2013). In

urban areas, Black youths were more likely to attend schools with zero-tolerance policies and law enforcement presence on campus, which increased a student's chance of being arrested, expelled, or suspended at a young age (Dupéré et al., 2019). In the neighborhoods of the urban areas, Black youths were more likely to come from households with lower incomes than Whites; therefore, Black youths were more likely to live in low-income households (Robles-Ramamurthy & Watson, 2018). In these same neighborhoods, families dealt with what is known as the carceral experience. The youths that lived in high crime areas were often confronted by police or have seen adults harassed, arrested, or shot by the police (Brown, 2014).

Addressing the racial disparity of Black youths referred to the juvenile justice system was a multilayered problem (Leiber & Rodriguez, 2011). This issue required federal, state, and local-driven efforts to identify the problems and then finding collaborative ways to address the causes (Mallet, 2018). Morsy and Rothstein (2016) mentioned that many of the harmed youths had incarcerated parent(s) which contributed to the youths having a higher propensity to participate in criminal activities. They indicated that the harmed youths were more likely to drop out of school if their parent(s) were involved in the criminal justice system . In addition, youths suffered from disaffection, even alienation, from a community with whom they do not identify. (Baskin & Sommers, 2014). Smith (2013) suggested that the members of the community who were directly impacted by the juvenile justice system must feel empowered to transform their situation to decrease the system inequities (p. 24).

Smith (2013) stated, "the modern juvenile system also lacked cultural competence and held minority communities at a cultural disadvantage" (p. 14). The public sector identified that the increased attention paid to creating quality juvenile justice systems and pushing for juvenile accountability caused critical gaps between the typical and best practices for the juvenile justice system (Lyon et al., 2015). Youths that had attorneys to represent them before and during their process with the juvenile justice system had attorneys that lacked familiarity with the child's culture and social systems. Schutte (2014) mentioned that many attorneys represented children in the justice system were unfamiliar with the child's world. The confined space of the professional relationship created a constrained opportunity for the attorney to learn about the youths' life and experiences.

C.C. Rodriguez (2014) and Smith (2013) agreed that a culturally competent individual understood that one must approach situations differently and respect diverse backgrounds to provide adequate services. Smith noted that many employees of the juvenile justice system did not reflect or did not relate to the demographics of the youths they served; stereotyping, bias, and discrimination were likely to occur during their interactions. Cultural competence was a developmental process, and individuals with a lower level of cultural competence improved their knowledge of competency over time with the proper resources, education, and training (C.C. Rodriguez, 2014).

It is essential for police and school resource officers to observe youths to determine whether they were demonstrating externalizing behaviors (e.g., aggression, delinquency, hyperactivity) before arresting them and referring them to juvenile facilities

(Kulkarni et al., 2020). Documentation showed that youths who displayed externalizing behaviors were at significant risk for later involvement in the justice system, adult crime, substance use, and violence. These externalizing behaviors were considered one of the strongest predictors of recidivism among youths involved in the juvenile justice system (Kalu et al., 2020).

Youths in middle school often formed the four constructs of social bonding (e.g., attachment, involvement, commitment, and morals; Kalu et al., 2020). Smith (2013) mentioned that the juvenile justice system had a system-driven approach that relied on law enforcement officers, courts, locked facilities, and programs to manage youth crimes. This approach shattered social bonding and did not hold governmental agencies accountable for wrongdoings or ineffectiveness. These system-driven strategies only delivered temporary assistance for the juvenile justice system curbing the youths' crimes. After some of the youths were released to the public, they were left without parents or guardians and were considered homeless (Smith, 2013).

Kalu, et al. (2020) explained that social bonding theory suggested that positive reactions occurred when youths had an attachment to their parents. This positive attachment with parents had a large role in the development of youths' self-esteem, positive social functioning, and increased security. Social bonding theory focused on adherence to law-abiding behavior through socialization practices to foster attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. Social bonding helped enhance parental and school attachments and improved youths' compliance with established values, which reduced delinquent behaviors.

A community-based support system that used social bonding theory helped The Juvenile Center meet its objective of reducing racial disparity at the front-end intake step. In California, one of their prevention early intervention diversion programs (PEIDP) is a program for low-level offenders designed to keep youths out of the juvenile court system (Superior Court of California, n.d.). The community-based organizations under the PEIDP used assessments, prevention techniques, early intervention, and diversion programs to help youths in police custody learn from their mistakes (Superior Court of California, n.d.).

From the federal government view, the creation of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) was essential in supporting state and local efforts to reduce racial disparity and assist communities to effectively avert and react to juvenile delinquency and juvenile victimization (OJJDP, 2019). The OJJDP aimed to improve the juvenile justice systems and policies so that the public is better protected, youths and their families are better served, and justice involved youths are held accountable for their actions. In 2002, OJJDP added a component to their program to assist states in maintaining compliance with the DMC core requirements. The OJJDP developed a general set of eight focused contact points for juvenile justice systems to incorporate in their policies and procedures to help reduce or eliminate DMC (OJJDP, 2019).

In 2018, Missouri participated in the OJJDP's program to implement policies, practices, and system improvement strategies that identified and reduced racial and ethnic disparities among youths who encountered the juvenile justice system (OJJDP, 2019). The newest approach from OJJDP was the Title II Formula Grants Program (Title II

Program). The Title II Program granted states the opportunity to become eligible to receive federal funding for implementing plans to reduce DMC, as outlined in the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (OJJDP, 2019).

The OJJDP oversaw the Title II Program and provided states and localities guidance in developing and implementing their plans to address juvenile justice needs, including reducing DMC (OJJDP, 2019). Furthermore, local advocacy groups focused on issues of minority youths' confinement and the results from those studies suggested selection bias was a problem. Community-based organizations (CBOs) in the juvenile justice field prioritized personal, grassroots experience with the system, and individual self-determination over professional expertise (Smith, 2013). Also, at the local levels, citizens and parents encouraged a suspension reduction program within the school district as a method to reduce DMC at the front-end intake step of the juvenile justice system (Fix, 2018).

Smith (2013) mentioned that the juvenile justice system needed youths, community members, and advocates to meet and collaborate to create culturally sensitive, civic-appealing, and effective programming. Having a holistic collaboration allows police departments to use these assets in the community as resources to mentor the Black youths. According to Wing, (2019) the local agencies in St. Louis County were lacking funding from private and public sources to provide the needed programs. Local agencies cannot provide youth-supported programs if the funding is not available. In addition, researchers were not able to identify a significant number of studies that focused on how

police helped with reducing racial diversity during the front-end intake step of the juvenile justice system (Claus, 2019).

The Institute of Judicial Administration and American Bar Association revived the juvenile justice standards that involved the need for incentives and accountability, with directions for needed improvements and further research of police officers (Sobie & Elliott, 2014). Police who handled juvenile issues prioritized showing accountability to their administrators. In addition, the police showed accountability when handling juveniles in public (; see Flicker, 1982; Sobie & Elliot, 2014). Smith (2013) noted that police misbehavior isolated and dehumanized youths. Besides, police were unaccountable for the uselessness of and indecency of existing arrest and patrol strategies, but mostly for their mishandling and incompetence (Claus et al. 2018). Police officers that exhibited indecent actions demonstrated their disregard to follow the law enforcement standards provided by their police department. In police programs, community involvement warranted administrative sanctions, procedures, and remedies (Claus et al. 2018).

The Family Court's staff gave attention to Black youths and ensured their human rights were protected (Wing, 2019). This part of the juvenile justice court provided secrecy, closed proceedings, and nonadversarial informal proceedings to advance the best interest of the youths (Fix, 2018). These actions consisted of (a) protecting privacy and (b) creating an unthreatened, relaxed atmosphere in which the court officers developed a relationship of trust and confidence with the youths. The court officers used his or her background to choose a disposition suited to the youths' needs (Flicker, 1982; Sobie & Elliott, 2014). Dawson-Edwards et al. (2020) noted the juvenile justice court's closed

hearings and unregulated procedures have resulted in arbitrary decision-making and unjustifiable disparity in outcomes . If the juvenile court administrators' standards addressed closed hearings and unregulated procedures the issues of racial disparity could be reduced. Instead, the juvenile officers' standards addressed how the juvenile officer found a way to teach youths to be accountable for their actions that initiated the arrest by a police officer (Dillard, 2013).

As The Juvenile Center went through their policy changes, they continued requesting community engagement, and their employees continued with the RED training (Wing, 2019). From a juvenile justice organizational theory perspective, when juvenile justice administrators addressed any issues in the juvenile justice system, including racial disparities, they looked at them through the lens of public safety and offender accountability. Claus et al. (2018) declared that social and contextual factors alone cannot account for racial disparities in the juvenile justice system. Racial disparity in juvenile justice facilities is guided by conflict and social control theory, and no research has examined the intersection of race and ethnicity at postarrest decision making by the police (Claus et al., 2018)

Hager (2018) noted that the new OJJPD officials under the Trump administration did not address the provisions on racial justice and cut the budget that funded the racial disparity issues within the juvenile justice systems. In 2016, the state of Missouri received \$610,864 (the lowest funding amount between 2015-2020) in funding from the Juvenile Justice Formula Grant (JJFG) (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2019). In 2020, the state of Missouri was awarded \$965,947 in funding from

JJFG for their Juvenile Justice Systems to address DMC. (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2019).

Hager (2018) also mentioned that the analyzed federal data from the Sentencing Project showed that Black youths fought, stole property, carried weapons, and used and sold drugs at about the same rate as White youths. These illegal actions mentioned above were not disproportionately policed when committed by Black youths. The theory supporting the community-based approach developed by Smith (2013) held that a juvenile justice center approaching racial disparity with his six steps showed a reduction in the juvenile justice's racial disparity percentage rate.

Clarification of Terms

Community based: Physically located in the community served, geographically and philosophically (Smith, 2013).

Community-based approach: Invites communities to actively design, develop, and deliver their own prevention and intervention strategies (Smith, 2013).

Community capacity building: The efforts that strengthen the ability of local community organizations to support, serve and supervise young people with juvenile justice system involvement as a strategy for reducing reliance on youth incarceration (Brown, 2014).

Decision points: The individual stages in the juvenile justice process that required a decision to be made about a youth's case (United States Department of Justice, 2016).

Disproportionate minority contact: The overrepresentation of minority youths at critical decision points and other stages in the juvenile justice system (Dawson-Edwards et al., 2020).

Diversion: The alternative to the traditional juvenile justice responses to youths' misbehavior and delinquencies (Stalker, 2019).

Race differences: The race of youths committing crimes that are categorized as severe and violent crimes are found to be Black rather than White youths (Dawson-Edwards et al., 2020).

Selective enforcement: The arbitrary punishment of specific individuals or groups for legal violations or crimes rather than the equal punishment of all known offenders (Dawson-Edwards et al., 2020). “

Socioeconomic: The economic and social position in society in relation to other individual groups and can be estimated using features, such as income, education, or occupation type that espouses justice as its principle, based on equality, freedom, and range of choice (Baskin & Sommers, 2015).

Urban neighborhoods: Areas identified by their demographics and dimensions, emphasizing the distinct population mix that people associate with a neighborhood, mainly manifested in visible attributes, such as race and income level (Rekker et al., 2015).

Relevance to Public Organizations

Extensive literature and policy resources were available on how local juvenile justice systems have reduced their racial disparity or DMC. The majority of the related

literature focused on racial disparity in local juvenile justice systems centers referred youths' contact points during the juvenile court's process. Even though the governmental agency OJJDP encouraged the reduction of racial disparity for decades, the Black youths were currently showing an overrepresentation at The Juvenile Center (Wing, 2019).

Robles-Ramamurthy and Watson (2019) contended that leaders had displayed concerns about the youths housed in juvenile centers receiving differential treatment based on their race. Ericson and Eckberg (2016) asserted that consideration was at the focal point of black youths not having the opportunity to be diverted while in police custody.

Furthermore, Ericson and Eckberg (2016) found a study that mentioned police officers' interactions with black youths that were disrespectful, suspicious demeanor, and being on the street late at night were considered chargeable reasons to take the youths into custody.

Existing Scholarship and Broad Context

Over the past 30 years, research has documented racial disparity in the treatment of Black youths that are housed in the juvenile justice systems (Robles-Ramamurthy & Watson, 2019). Racial and ethnic disparities associated with school discipline practices and juvenile justice contacts added to the number of juveniles referred to the juvenile justice system (Marchbanks et al., 2018). The multiple stages in the juvenile justice process involved various decision makers who have the power to determine a child's future. The level of discretion every decision maker had at each step of the process played a role in deciding how youths were processed. Therefore, the decisions made on

behalf of the youths affected their future regarding whether they revisited the juvenile justice system repeatedly or stayed out indeterminately (Gann, 2019).

In 2001, states were required by the JJDP Act to gather race and ethnicity information at nine different juvenile justice contact points, and report how they addressed DCM of identifying racial disparities (Robles-Ramamurthy & Watson, 2019). Despite those mandatory requirements there was a significant lack of attention to the system's front end (Robles-Ramamurthy & Watson, 2019). A meta-analysis by Dillard (2013) found only six out of 36 studies of DMC in the juvenile justice system reviewed police decision-making. The most common data source used was court records, not arrest data. This information suggested that initial police contact data was missing from many studies and was beneficial to efforts aimed at reducing racial disparities (Anderson, 2015).

The racial disparity research and closely related literature was relatively abundant and helpful for acknowledging racial disparities and the need for systems and policy changes. However, other authors called for expanding reduction in racial disparity explicit literature to include more qualitative approaches (Dawson-Edwards, et al., 2020). Most available qualitative research methods were: focus groups; interviews that included school personnel; the juvenile assessment center; state attorney's office; police; school resources officers; faith-based organizations; mental health service providers; the Department of Corrections; parents; church ministers; and business representatives (Robles-Ramamurthy & Watson, 2019). To alter the overrepresentation of Black youths in the juvenile justice system required understanding the causes and an action plan to

address the underlying disparities that brought minority youths in contact with the system.

Current State of Practice

Youths' race continued to matter in the juvenile justice system. Fifty years after the Supreme Court's *In Re Gault* decision, Black youths continued to be disproportionately suspended and expelled, arrested, processed in courts rather than diverted, detained in juvenile justice facilities, and transferred to adult facilities (Dawson-Edwards et al., 2020). According to the 2020 Family Court, many juvenile delinquents were referred for stealing, property damage, and peace disturbance, which did not result in formal charges. These low-level offenses were one of the factors why Black youths were chronically overrepresented in the juvenile justice system (Bertelson, 2021).

Law Enforcement Officers

Police officers serve as the principal investigators of any criminal conduct or delinquent behavior by a juvenile (Missouri Law Enforcement Manuel, 2019). The police officers serve as the initial contact and primary investigators of any reported incidents involving juvenile status offenders. Police officers are also responsible for gathering and maintaining supportive evidence during the investigation of delinquent conduct (Claus et al., 2018). During this time, the police officers will make a discretionary judgment call about whether they should take a juvenile into custody under an order of the Juvenile Court or according to the laws of arrest applicable to adults regarding delinquent offenses (Claud et al., 2018). A statutory presumption exists that the juvenile could be released to the juvenile's parent, guardian or custodian, or another suitable person, unless the

Juvenile Officer or Court authorized detention (Missouri Law Enforcement Manual, 2019).

School Resource Officers

Many urban and suburban school systems have police officers who spend at least part of the day at a school (Delaney, 2020). Supporters see them as an added protection against violence and school shootings, and a pathway to build community relations with the parents, guardians, students, and police officers. When school resource officers handled minor disciplinary problems, the result would be that those students are forcibly detained (Delaney, 2020).

When school resource officers handle minor incidents, those actions add to the research data that suggested stricter school discipline practices and DMC for minority youths which was relatively more prevalent in urban areas (Marchbanks et al., 2018). What remain unknown is the relationships between and among race and ethnicity, school discipline practices, and juvenile justice referrals across urban, rural, and suburban schools (Marchbanks et al., 2018).

Referral to The Juvenile Center

The police officers, school resource officers, juvenile officers, and probation officers refer black youths disproportionately in high numbers to The Juvenile Center (Wing, 2019). The Juvenile Center handle many of the juvenile offenses after the youths are referred to the facility. According to Wing, (2019) the main concern is the racial disparity found at the front-end of the process before the youths enter The Juvenile Center. Due to the administrators focusing heavily on the other stages of The Juvenile Justice Center and

The Family Court, the racial disparity decreased as the black youths move through the process (Wing, 2019). According to Bertelson (2021), Judge Micheal D. Burton stated, "the decrease was due to The Family Court doing everything it can to collaborate with community leaders and advocates to help keep kids out of the system, out of harm's way, and on a healthy track to responsible adulthood" (p. 1).

Referral to The Family Court

The police officers, school resource officers, and family members are far more likely to refer Black youths than to refer white youths to juvenile authorities for delinquency (Wing, 2019). However, racial disparities will diminish at subsequent decision points in the court system, which include issuing of formal charges, commitment to the Division of Youth Services (DYS), and certification to stand trial as adults (Bertelson, 2021). The Family Court heightened its focus on diverting young people from the juvenile justice system into programs that allow them to remain with their families, in the communities, stay in school, while providing supervision to ensure that youths comply with the law.

The November 2019 Disproportion Minority Contact Report noted a division in research studies on whether the racial disparity at the front-end intake step resulted from Black youths committing more offenses, differential treatment due to racial stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination, the social organization of The Juvenile Center, or characteristics of the community served by The Family Courts. (Bertelson, 2021).

The Family Court administrators presented the current implementation plan to the DOJ that included changes at the different point of contacts that could reduce the degree of racial disparity (Wing, 2019). For example, the administrators would analyze trends with DMC data in the biannual report. The administrators would conduct analyses of determinants of high relative rates indices at the secure detention decision point. Other aspects that the administrators felt needed to be addressed was the age of youths at the time of the front-end referral. As well as continuing youths, family, and community engagement, and identifying the origination of law enforcement referrals (Wing, 2019).

Sentencing of Black Youths

According to the November 2019 DMC report, most juvenile delinquency referrals to The Family Court for low-level offenses did not result in formal charges (St. Louis County Family Court, 2020). Juvenile court judges have more legal options than the juvenile officers to meet the treatment needs of the youths (St. Louis County Family Court, 2020). The Family Court provides educational and therapeutic programming in the youths' communities or near the youths out-of-the-home residential placement programs (Episcopal, n.d.). If the Family Court sentences the youths to The Juvenile Center, the normal period that youths are confined is three to five weeks. However, some youths may remain in detention from a few days to months (Episcopal n.d.). Generally, youths that are held in The Juvenile Center after their arrest are waiting for a pending detention hearing, formal court hearing on their charges, or their disposition. After the disposition, some youths are sent to diversion programs to help them with their reentry to society and with making better choices outside the juvenile justice system. Youths that are sentenced

to longer-term rehabilitation may be assigned to other treatment facilities or to the DYS (Episcopal n.d.).

The Juvenile Center and The Family Court receive funding for their operating diversionary programs (Missouri, n.d.). Many of these programs and services would not otherwise be available to youths near their homes without Juvenile Court diversion funding. The Juvenile Court Diversion program encourages the development of services to youths and families at the local level while diverting youths from commitment to the DYS. The diversion programs provide early interventions to prevent further involvement in the juvenile justice system. Judicial circuits across the state apply for grants from DYS to create specific services or solutions for problems unique to their communities (Missouri, n.d.).

January 1, 2021, the "Raise the Age" bill went into effect in Missouri (Briggs, 2020). The bill allowed 17-year-old juveniles to remain in The Juvenile Center instead of being transferred to the adult criminal justice system. The issue that municipalities are having with the "Raise the Age" bill is that there is not enough funding to accept 17-year-olds into their juvenile justice systems (Briggs, 2020). Two Missouri prosecuting attorneys with the state's largest dockets, St. Louis County and Jackson County, refuse to charge 17-year-olds as adults, regardless of the cost. St. Louis County Prosecuting Attorney, Wesley Bell, stated that "his office worked with the juvenile court system to ensure it could take on additional 17-year-olds" (Byers, 2021).

Recommendations for Improvement

Reform efforts to address issues in the juvenile justice system were intended to reduce racial disparities at all levels, from interactions with the police, to the court systems and transfer mechanisms, and in the facilities themselves. Extensive data, disaggregated by race and gender, was critical to understanding the scope and causes of racial disparities and creating change trajectories. The Justice Center had the capability to partner with smaller organizations that were working with at-risk youths to find alternative solutions for their front-end process (Bertelson, 2021)

Strategies and Standard Practices

In Santa Clara, California, the mission of the Juvenile Justice Center was to protect and rehabilitate their youths, build strong and healthy families, redress victims, and increase the safety of their community (The Superior Court of California, n.d.). One of the strategies for reducing racial disparity at the front-end intake step of The Juvenile Center was a program called the Prevention and Early Intervention Diversion Program (PEIDP), a program of rehabilitation for the youths and community to reduce the number of youths going through their juvenile justice system (The Superior Court of California, n.d.). PEIDP administrators may have informally resolved all non-traffic infractions and misdemeanor cases that do not involve alcohol, domestic violence, or restitution over \$1,000. The PEIDP was a diversion program for low level offenders designed to keep youths out of the Juvenile Court systems. This program enabled youths to have the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and receive services from community-based organizations (The Superior Court of California, n.d.).

In Jennings, Missouri, located in St. Louis County, a predominantly African American municipality required its school resource officers to be black, go through cultural competency training, and participate in mentoring programming. The City of St. Louis, Missouri juvenile justice system method for reducing its racial disparity was engaging stakeholders in discussions on what it would take to raise their equity score from 21 to 100. During the discussions the stakeholders gave their thoughts on opportunities in the communities and alternatives for the youths arrested for minor crimes (City of St. Louis Family Court, 2020). The 22nd Circuit's Family Court also provided their staff training on understanding the causes, impacts, and ways that they can help with reducing the racial disparity throughout the facility (Jones, n.d.).

In St. Louis County, the Maplewood Richmond Heights School District (MRHSD), School Resource Officers instructed school children, taught nonviolence and conflict resolution, and protected lives and property, and maintained the peace (Maplewood Missouri, n.d.). The school resource officers developed and supported educational programs for high school and junior high students in anger management, conflict resolution, and proactivity in eliminating violence. These programs targeted youths and their families who displayed risk factors that may have led to violent, disruptive, or abusive behavior in the high school and junior high school. The designed programs included prevention, early identification, and intervention. The school resource officer also functioned as the juvenile officer investigating all crimes and offenses involving juveniles and acted as the liaison between the Police Department and the Juvenile Court (Maplewood Missouri, n.d.).

With the collaboration efforts of the St. Louis Public School District and MERS/Goodwill, former Juvenile Court Judge Jimmie Edwards opened a school that addressed the needs of at-risk students (National Juvenile Defender Center, 2018). This alternative school is a first-of-its-kind joint venture between The Family Court, St. Louis Public Schools, and MERS/Goodwill. Other partners included the Division of Youth Services and several community agencies that provided a myriad of services for St. Louis at-risk youths between the ages of 10 and 19. Whereas the state of Missouri's juvenile courts had jurisdiction over any age youths prior to their eighteenth birthday (National Juvenile Defender Center, 2018). The professional staff of the partnering organizations offered many benefits, including case management, outreach, and monitoring of day and afterschool programming (City of St. Louis Family Court Report to the Community, 2020).

Organization Background and Context

As The Juvenile Justice Center progressed with their REDI and DMC, it was essential to reduce their racial disparity margin on their front-end referrals between the Black youths and White youths (Bertelson, 2021). It was also crucial that the administrators ensured that they have concrete policies that directed the police and school resource officers on The Juvenile Center's process. It was important to put the necessary policies and procedures in place since Black youths were still far more likely than White youths to be referred by police, schools, and family members to juvenile authorities for delinquency (Bertelson, 2021).

Institutional Context

In partnership with MERS Goodwill, Inc., The Juvenile Center and The Family Court received a \$500,000 three-year federal grant to provide career training, professional development, and employment opportunities for court-involved youths (Bertelson, 2021). Even though the youths had first-hand knowledge of the juvenile justice system, their voices were often missing from the roundtable discussion. The youths' voices were an essential accompaniment to the existing data that The Juvenile Center needed to make a meaningful system change (Bertelson, 2021). The youths' voices also provided The Juvenile Center's administrators the understanding of the reasons for disproportionate Black youths' involvement. According to Bertelson (2021), the youths reported to Tymesha Buckner-Dobynes, Director of Court Programs for the Family Court, that obtaining jobs was a necessity to help support the youth's families and to prevent engagement in delinquent acts.

Definitions of Organizational Terms

The Family Court exclusively hears cases involving children and families and operates under the principle of one family-one Judge (Wing, 2019). One family-one Judge means that all matters involving a particular family are assigned to the same Judge or Commissioner whenever possible, bringing increased continuity and consistency to the judicial process. This one-family-one Judge policy came after the DOJ found civil rights violations against the youths that were in The Juvenile Center (Wing, 2019).

Schranz and McElroy (2000) defined racial disparity as existing in the juvenile justice system when the quantity of a racial/ethnic group within the system's control is

greater than the proportion of such groups in the general population. The unjustified racial disparity resulted from distinctive treatment by the staff at the juvenile justice system of alike placed youths. The unjustified racial disparity involved open racial bias or reflect the encouragement of factors that were not directly associated with race. In the juvenile justice system, some causes of racial disparity were higher crime rates, inequitable access to resources, legislation that disproportionately affects minorities, and bias.

A conversation of indicators of racial disparity at critical decision points in the juvenile justice system targeted the following stages of processing: police action; arraignment, release, and pre-adjudicatory decisions; adjudication and sentencing; probation and community supervision; jail and prison custody; and parole decisions (Schrantz & McElroy, 2000).

A referral is a written report or statement that alleges that a juvenile has come under the Juvenile Court's jurisdiction (Family Court of St. Louis County, 2010). The Family Court defines a juvenile as a child under 17 years of age that commits status offenses or delinquency acts. The Family Court defines a juvenile as a child under the age of 18 years when the child has experienced abuse and/or neglect. Referrals are made in writing and contain the juvenile's name, date of birth, address, and parent's name, along with sufficient information explaining the allegations. The reporter must also be identified in the report when it is submitted. When the juvenile staff receives spoken referrals, and the DJO uses the spoken referral to start the juvenile justice proceedings, the juvenile officer must convert the spoken referral into writing as soon as possible.

Referral sources include law enforcement agencies, schools, parents, other juvenile courts, and the Children's Division. The referrals on youths are received and reviewed by the intake officer at The Juvenile Center for possible disposition. If the intake officer has any uncertainty of the jurisdiction or legal standards of the charge against the juvenile, the intake officer shall present the intake referral to the legal team for assessment. If the legal team rejects the referral, the intake officer will take no further action. The staff at The Juvenile Center will send a letter to the juvenile and to the parent or guardian advising them of the youth's status. If the legal team does not reject the referral, the intake officer will proceed with the disposition (Family Court of St. Louis County, 2010).

Context to the Problem

Nearly 30 years after federally supported efforts to address DMC, the overrepresentation of Black youths in various stages of juvenile justice processing remains a long-standing issue. The relationships between race, ethnicity, and contact within the juvenile justice systems are complex. Studies show that the effects of race in the juvenile justice systems contacts may vary by extralegal, incident-related, and contextual factors, including age and gender of youths, and social and neighborhood contexts (Claus et al., 2018).

Johnson (2019) confirmed that the number of Black youths referred to detention centers had increased considerably from 1994 to 2019. Black youths are referred twice as often than white youths, due to being exposed to disadvantages and stressors disproportionately related to their experiences within the home, community, and school

environments. In the school setting the youths were treated differently which drove them to receiving more discipline referrals. Those factors tightly interconnected with Black youths' future socioeconomic gains, educational achievements, and the probability of becoming involved in the criminal justice systems. These realities constricted and shaped Black youth's life options in the United States and limited the number of opportunities that they may have encountered (Johnson, 2019).

Role of the DPA Student/Researcher

This study focused on reducing the percentage of racial disparity in referrals at the front-end of The Juvenile Justice Center. As a community member and the student/researcher conducting this study, I have no relationship with The Juvenile Center addressed in this study. However, I have met with administrative staff from The Juvenile Center looking to find answers on how they can reduce the racial disparity percentage from a community standpoint. Also, I mentored youths that reside in three of the zip codes with the highest number of youths referred to The Juvenile Center. I am knowledgeable about The Juvenile Center's priority issues and the specific population that is affected.

Furthermore, I am motivated to see The Juvenile Center succeed in its mission, based on their "ask" for help from the community. While attending the meetings with other community members, I realized that their solutions pointed fingers at the youths and their parents. This behavior encouraged me to examine current and past literature on front-end racial disparity or DMC among Black youths or juveniles at juvenile centers. My search of nine states that received funding from OJJPD turned up little research that

directly addressed how police officers, school resource officers, and juvenile officers diverted Black youths before they are arrested or referred to The Juvenile Center. Schools were one of the leading sources of referrals to The Juvenile Center. School administrators formed a partnership with police officers to develop and implement a school-based program is another aspect of a holistic approach to reducing racial disparity at the front-end intake step of The Juvenile Center.

Some of the study's participants may have been familiar with my face or my name and responded to the research goals. I performed the interviews individually and informed the participants to respond to the questions based on their personal and professional experiences.

Summary

In Section 2, I documented the literature on the conceptual framework of reducing the racial disparity with Black youths' referrals from police, school resource officers, and parents to The Juvenile Center. I furthered explained recommendations for reducing the racial disparity and how non-profit organizations have partnered to help with supplying the youths with the resources and tools to help them evade being referred to The Juvenile Center. Although I have not identified much literature on the racial disparity on front-end referrals, it is becoming a more salient topic in the juvenile justice system. In Section 3, I presented the case study methods and techniques to collect and analyze the data in the study.

Section 3: Data Collection Process and Analysis

The Department of Justice Civil Rights Division of the DOJ opened an investigation of the Family Court for potential violation of the rights of youths in The Juvenile Center and the Family Court systems (Wings, 2019). The DOJ found that police officers, school resource officers, and family members referred more Black youths to The Juvenile Center for delinquent acts than White youths. The DOJ also found that Black youths remained in custody at The Juvenile Center while waiting to be referred to the Family Court. In contrast, White youths were released to their parents or diverted to outside partnering organizations (Wings, 2019). The purpose of this study was to examine and identify the racial disparity of referred Black youths at the front-end intake step of The Juvenile Center and make recommendations on reducing these disparities. .

As The Juvenile Center progresses, the administrators need to reduce the racial disparity margin at the front-end intake step (Bertelson, 2021). It is crucial for The Juvenile Center's administrators to ensure that concrete policies are in place to guide police officers and school resource officers on referring Black youths to the facility. It is also vital that The Juvenile Center's administrators form partnerships with agencies to reduce their racial disparity margin (Bertelson, 2021).

In this section I discussed The Juvenile Center's need for recommendations to reduce the racial disparity at their front-end intake step. I also discussed the of using NVivo 12 Software to analyze the data from the questionnaire interviews with police officers and The Juvenile Center's administration and staff.

Practice-Focused Questions

The Juvenile Center's administration did not address the overrepresented Black youths. The Black youths' racial disparity margin was higher than the White youths at the front-end intake step (Wing, 2019). The DOJ found that The Juvenile Center violated the Black youths' equal rights in the 14th amendment (Wing, 2019). There were gaps in scholarly literature committed to addressing police officers, school resource officers, and juvenile justice officers referring more Black youths than White youths to juvenile justice facilities. I did not find any literature on juvenile justice administration changing their policies and procedures to address the racial disparity that Black youths experience compared to White youths at the front-end intake step of the juvenile justice facilities. Therefore, I gathered data for this study through interview questions to find recommendations to the following research question: How can The Juvenile Center decrease the racial disparity to 35% in the number of youths referred during its front-end intake step?

Interview Questions

Police Officers Questions

1. Describe how a police officer builds trust and relationships with Black youths in the communities that the police department serves.
2. Describe improvements that you would like to see added to the police department's "community policing" training regarding how police officers interact with Black youths.

3. If additional “community policing” training was offered in a youth-oriented facility, what would you want to see included in the training content?
4. Describe the police department’s policy when a police officer encounter Black youths suspected of committing a delinquent act.
5. Describe a diversion program for Black youths that commit low-level delinquent acts instead of referring them to The Juvenile Center.
6. Describe a program that school administrators can implement that involves police officers and troubled Black youths which end goal would pivot them into doing the right thing.
7. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about ways to decrease racial disparity for Black youths at the front-end intake step of The Juvenile Center?

Juvenile Justice Staff Questions

1. Describe your current role with the 21st Judicial Family Court and your familiarity with the terms racial disparity and disproportionate minority contact?
2. Describe your familiarity with the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative model?
3. What efforts have the 21st Judicial Family Court made to address racial disparity since 2019?
4. Describe suggestions on what can be done by the 21st Judicial Family Court to address racial disparity at the front-end intake step of The Juvenile Center.
5. Describe how family members can play a crucial role in helping the 21st Judicial Family Court implement a front-end diversion program.

6. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about ways to reduce the racial disparity at the front-end intake step of The Juvenile Center?

Alignment to the Research Question

The purpose of this qualitative study was to help find recommendations to reduce the percentage of racial disparity between Black youths and White youths at the front-end intake step of The Juvenile Center. I created interview questions that allow the police officers and juvenile justice staff to give their perspectives on addressing racial disparity at the front-end intake step of The Juvenile Center. The themes that the interview questions addressed were as follows:

1. Community empowerment
2. Private and public support
3. Social bonding support
4. Police accountability
5. Juvenile system accountability
6. Cultural awareness training for the police officers and The Juvenile Center staff

The interview questions differentiated which policies and procedures addressed front-end referrals of Black youths to The Juvenile Center.

Operational Definitions

At-risk behaviors: Behaviors that are categorized into school and mental perspectives to help identify which settings these behaviors are displayed. From a school perspective, the following behaviors are red flags for at-risk (tardiness, absenteeism, poor grades, truancy, dropping out of school, and rebellious attitudes towards school

authorities). The community often presents at-risk behaviors as drug and alcohol use, gang membership, sexual acting out, and family problems (Capuzzi & Gross, 2019).

At-risk youths: Youths that perform behavior that places them in danger of a negative future (Capuzzi & Gross, 2019).

Cultural awareness: The awareness of personal biases, the ability to accept cultural differences, and openness to various worldviews or perspectives (Baltes et al. 2015).

Cultural competency training: The practice of educating individuals about ways to be more receptive to different cultures, beliefs, practices, and languages. A version of cultural competency training involves cultural awareness and cultural knowledge (Whitfield, 2019).

Cultural knowledge: Knowing the norms of diverse cultures and groups regarding their history, differing worldviews, or opposing viewpoints (Mayfield et al. 2021).

Delinquent acts: Crimes against persons, crimes against property, drug offenses, and crimes against public order. Punishable delinquency acts are murder, robbery, and larceny. Alcohol and tobacco use, truancy, and running away from home are the only delinquent acts that mandate legal intervention and are known as status offenses (Levesque, 2011).

Juvenile justice system: The set of laws, policies, and procedures designed to regulate the processing and treatment of youth offenders that violate the law. In addition to providing legal solutions that protect their interests in situations of conflict or neglect (Dowd, 2015).

Juvenile justice system accountability: The administrators within the juvenile justice systems monitor and measure their facilities' stated goals. The juvenile justice administrators monitor whether the youths' quality of life is improving, whether there is a reduction in the offending of the youths and whether they are creating safer neighborhoods (Mears and Butts, 2008).

Secure detention spaces: The temporary holding unit for the youths while awaiting adjudication, disposition, or placement in on-site or off-site youth facilities.

Sources of Evidence

Sources of Data

The first source of data I used was published research and outcomes from *The Family Court 2019 Disproportionate Minority Contract Report* (St. Louis Circuit Court, 2020) that provided data trends on the front-end decision point of referred youths to The Juvenile Center. The second source of data this study collected is qualitative data from the police officers and The Juvenile Center's administration and staff regarding Black youths referred to The Juvenile Center.

The second source of data that I used was the police officers and juvenile staff's responses to the interview questions that I created to gather evidence generated for the PAS. The issues investigated included the police department's policies and practices for arresting and referring youths. Other issues under investigation included the needed for cohesiveness between The Juvenile Center, family members, nonprofit organizations, and police officers. In addition, the juvenile staff interview questions also gathered data on

their level of commitment to The Juvenile Center's internal mission to reduce the racial disparity at the front-end intake step.

Relationship of This Evidence to the Purpose

The relationship of the evidence retrieved from *The Family Court 2019 Disproportionate Minority Contract Report* (St. Louis Circuit Court, 2020) provided the data that established whether these areas (sex, race, their charge level, age, and seriousness of the crimes) contributed to the Black youths' experience with racial disparity at the front-end intake step of The Juvenile Center. The interview responses from the police officers and The Juvenile Center staff provided the data on whether their actions, policies, procedures, and decision-making skills contributed to a reduction of racial disparity Black youths experience at the front-end intake step of The Juvenile Center.

Police officers and juvenile officers were the top referral sources for Black youths that were referred to The Juvenile Center. The police officers' response to the interviews identified whether training, policies, procedures, or outside sources helped reduce the racial disparity that the Black youths were experiencing at the front-end intake step of The Juvenile Center. The juvenile administration and staff's responses determined whether more training, policies, procedures, or outside resources are needed to identify front-end reductions for Black youths referred to The Juvenile Center

Published Outcomes and Research

The search portal used to find literature and results related to racial diversity, police arrests, and referrals to the Juvenile Justice facilities included Criminal Justice Database,

ProQuest Central, ProQuest Ebook, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global, Public Administration Abstracts, Sage Journals, Thoreau Multi-Database, Google, Bing, and the internet. The key search terms included in the scope of the literature review were

- *Racial disparity*
- *Juvenile justice systems*
- *Disproportionate minority contact*
- *Police officers*
- *School resource officers*
- *St. Louis County Juvenile Center*
- *21st St. Louis County Family Court*
- *Community-based approaches*
- *Juvenile delinquency*

The literature review search spanned from the years 2005 to 2021, including internet sites, blogs, reports, online books, minutes, websites, brochures, peer-reviewed articles, and journals. I did not subject the terms to filters or controlled terminology and I used multiple databases to search for key terms.

Evidence Generated for the Administrative Study

Participants

The top referrals sources to The Juvenile Center originate from law enforcement agency, the school resource officers, other juvenile courts, and juvenile personnel. The Family Court 2019 Disproportionate Minority Contract Report recorded Ferguson, Missouri as one of the top ten zip codes in which black youths were administratively

referred to The Juvenile Center. I interviewed nine police officers from the police department and five juvenile officers from The Juvenile Center for this study. I selected participants using the following criteria:

1. The police officers' participation was voluntary.
2. The police officers had first-hand experience with the research topic (referring Black youths to the juvenile center) and were to talk about it.
3. The police officers worked as a police officer in the St. Louis County, Missouri area for three years.
4. At least two police officers worked with school resource officers for one year.
5. The Juvenile Center's staff participation was voluntary.
6. The Juvenile Center's staff worked directly with the youths in the juvenile facility or family courts.
7. The Juvenile Center's staff worked as a juvenile officer for one year.
8. The Juvenile Center's staff were able to talk about the referral process at the front-end intake step.

Procedures

Before starting this study, I emailed the Family Court Administrator a written letter invited The Juvenile Center to partner with my research. The Family Court Administrator requested that I send a Memorandum of Understanding. I sent the required Memorandum of Understanding to the 22nd Circuit Court Family Court Administrator to solidify the partnership agreement for my DPA Study. I also invited police officers to be a second partner with my DPA Study.

I created an interview guide with a list of topics that I wanted to cover during the interview. I developed interview questions that were focused and aligned with the data collection and data analysis of reducing racial disparity of Black youths referred to The Juvenile Center. The primary method I used was interview questions to collect data from nine police officers and five juvenile staff members. All questions were written in a manner so that the participants did not have the option to give one-word responses. I adjusted the wording on the questions that had ambiguity so that the respondents were motivated to answer as honestly and completely as possible. I performed a pilot interview with various family members and friends to determine if the responses were aligned with the research question. The reader should consider that the responses were subjective, and the research design was the standard measurement of the data's credibility. I collected my primary data by June 15, 2022.

Protections

I did not disclose the identities of the participants in this study. The hard copy data was locked in a desk drawer, with the recorded data stored on a password protected external hard drive, locked in a file cabinet, accessible only to myself. The names of the participants were not identified during the data collection process and were not used during the data analysis or writing process. Any information that may identify participants, such as the employers, organizations, or study locations, were not divulged. I did not use participants' personal information for any reason outside of this research study. Instead, all information was generalized to guarantee anonymity for the protection of all parties involved.

The data will be kept for at least 5 years, as the DPA study protocol requires. The Juvenile Center had the right to agree to participate in the study project, and I reported to the partners that Walden Institutional Review Board approved their participation. Also, I discussed strategies for recruiting and develop working relationship with participants, and participants had the right to stop the interview process for any reason.

Analysis and Synthesis

I answered the research question by collecting qualitative data from The Juvenile Center's staff, and police officers. I interviewed each police officer and juvenile officers and staff through Zoom video conferencing, got their permission to record the interview through the Zoom recording technology, and then began the interview. After each police officer's interview, I named the recording by the initials of the participants and downloaded all recording transcripts to an USB flash drive. I repeated the same steps for The Juvenile Center's staff and administration but used a second USB flash drive to download all recording transcripts.

The first step in the analysis was reviewing the transcripts of all participants and taking notes of the foremost trends. I re-read and manually coded individual transcripts to determine relevant information and patterns based on the study research question. The following step was uploading transcribed interviews, and my notes into NVivo 12 Software to determine if the interview questions results were consistent and providing sufficient information. If information was missing, I went back and viewed the recorded interviews, if the information was found in the recording, I added the data, and

re-analyzed the data. If the missing data was not in the recorded interviews, I got permission from the organization to speak with a participant, asked the participant questions to get the data, added the data, and re-analyzed the data. If there was an outlier that is totally different, I revisited the participant and got clarification on their response. However, if the outlier was close to one of the themes, I added the information to that categorical theme.

I used a thematic data analysis to determine how the relevant data is connected. Using a thematic analysis helped with analyzing and interpreting patterns along with coding the data from the transcript. From the secured data, a summary of the results, without subjective bias, explained the patterns and their relations to one another. The expectations in qualitative research was that the information was topic specific, and I used inductive reasoning to analyze the study results. Analysis of the results concluded with intervention recommendations and summary remarks.

Summary

The study results were presented in a three-page summary report to The Juvenile Center's administrators, documenting the study outcomes and recommendations for action. The study recommendations may lead to the creation and implementation of new policies and procedures on arresting and referring Black youths or a front-end diversion program. In Section 3, I presented the case study research methods used to conduct this study on reducing the racial disparity margin of The Juvenile Center's front-end intake step. In Section 4, I reported a summary of the current policies and procedures in place, lack of community relationships, knowledge on referral criteria, and exclusions of outside

resources that allows the options for Black youths that commit delinquent acts to be arrested and referred to The Juvenile Center.

Section 4: Evaluation and Recommendations

The Juvenile Center provides safe and secure custody for youths alleged to have committed an offense in which police bring them within the jurisdiction of the Family Court (Wing,2019). The police will detain the youths if they believe that the youths present a danger to themselves or the community. The youths are released to their parents, referred to the Family Court for a hearing, or given alternative sentencing in a community setting.

Between January 1, 2017 and June 30, 2017, The Juvenile Center had delinquency referral rates of 86.4% Black youths and 11.8% White youths at the front-end intake step of the juvenile detention office (Wing, 2019). In this study, I examined ways to help The Juvenile Center's administration reduce the racial disparity of referred youths by improving the juvenile office's front-end intake step. With this qualitative study I aimed to learn front-end diversion programs for The Juvenile Center. The data collected was used to answer the practice-focused study question: How can The Juvenile Center decrease the racial disparity to 35% in the number of youths referred during its front-end intake step?

Demographics

The participants from the police department were eight males and one female police officer who work as patrolmen and sergeants. The police officers have worked on a police force for at least 3 years and with youths for at least 1 year. The second group of participants from The Juvenile Center were one male and four females staff members who work as deputy juvenile officers and a group therapist. The Juvenile Center staff

worked with youths in the facility for at least 1 year. The Juvenile Center's staff were able to discuss the referral process at the front-end intake step. Only the DJOs were familiar with the terms racial disparity and DMC.

Sources of Evidence

The study included nine police officers and five deputy juvenile officers who I interviewed through the Zoom platform. The data was recorded using the Zoom recording capability and downloaded into the iCloud. After the interview, I transcribed the interviews onto a Word document and Excel spreadsheet and used NVivo 12 to display the themes of the data. One specific thing that happened during the interview was that a DJO mentioned that the police department has a high rate of referrals to The Juvenile Center. It was unknown to the DJO that police officers were also participants in the study.

Findings and Implications

The research instrument that I used in this study was an online interview. Before I interviewed the police officers, I went to the police station, introduced myself to the police officers and sergeant, and gave them some background information on the interview process. Afterwards, the officers that volunteered gave me a date and time that they could meet for the interview.

Before I interviewed The Juvenile Center staff, I conducted a Zoom meeting with the deputy director juvenile officer, and the court administrator to give them an overview of the interview process. Afterward, the deputy juvenile officers and therapist sent me an

email with the word “consent” and the date and time they would be available for their interview by Zoom.

Analysis of Data

I completed the recorded interviews; I transcribed each word on a Microsoft Word document. I reviewed each interview again to ensure there were no errors in the conversion of the transcripts. I created an Excel spreadsheet with the interview questions, and recorded keywords or phrases each police officer and juvenile center staff used per question. I also put the transcribed document into the NVivo-12 database to find the themes for each question. I asked each police officer and each juvenile center’s staff questions in the same order. See Table 1 for the themes from the police officers’ responses to the interview questions about reducing racial disparity at the front-end intake step of The Juvenile Center. The Juvenile Center’s staff responded from their professional experience and background working with youths in multiple juvenile settings. See Table 2 for the themes from the juvenile staff responses to the interview questions on reducing racial disparity the front-end intake step of The Juvenile Center.

Table 1*Reducing Racial Disparity from Law Enforcement*

Themes	# of participants that mentioned the themes
<u>Building Trust</u>	
Communication	9
Respect	7
Show Emotions	3
Get out of the car	4
<u>Community Policing Improvement</u>	
Add More Officers	4
Create Programs	4
Police Training	3
No Changes Needed	2
<u>Youth Facility Training</u>	
Youths Come to the Training	7
Train Police About Youths	2
Extra Activities with Youths in Training	2
Staff Speak Positive About of Police	1
<u>Department Policy</u>	
Youths Taken to the Station	6
Parents are called	7
F11 Form Completed	6
Discretion of Officers	2
<u>Diversion Programs</u>	
Youth Programs	4
Community Service	3
Follow Up with Youths	3
Parents and Police in Training	1
<u>School Programs</u>	
More School Resource Officers	6
Police and Youth Programs	3
DARE and Explorer Program	3
Law Enforcement Elective Classes	1

Table 2*Reducing Racial Disparity from the Juvenile Center*

Themes		# Participants that mentioned the theme
Role and Knowledge of Issue	DJO	4
	Not a DJO	1
	Familiar with RD/DMC	4
	Not Familiar with RD/DMC	1
	Familiar with JDAI	
	Very familiar	3
	Somewhat familiar	1
	Less familiar	1
	Not familiar	0
Efforts to Address Racial Disparity	Screening instruments	3
	Family Engagement	2
	Form Committees	3
	Partner with Organizations	1
	Family Role with Front-End Referrals	
	Engage Family for Help	4
	Partner with Organization	1
	Educate Parents on Helping Mechanisms	3
	Training Staff to Work with Parents	1

Police Officer Responses

Question 1 asked the police officers to describe how they build trust and relationships with Black youths in the communities that they serve. The main themes that came about from most police officers is to get out of their patrol cars and communicate with the youths. In addition, when the police officers approach the youths, they should show that they are sincere in their efforts by treating the youths with respect, being honest, showing empathy, and having a positive attitude. Participant 1 stated, “that knowing how to talk to people, don't mislead the person when you are talking to them, try to have empathy for the person, and to be understanding and respecting youth will help them to begin to trust us”. Participant 2 said,

The police officers need to interact with the youth to build trust. It is good to communicate with the youth and bridge the gap between the police officers and the youths. When an officer approaches a youth and there is some tension building, they ask questions such as: do you know me, and do I know you? Have you ever met me before? This a way to start a conversation from the start. Come to the youth in a positive attitude”

Participants 3,4, and 7 said, “get out the police car and talk to the youths.” Participant 5 stated he needs to know who he is talking to in his sector and get the youths familiar with and build a rapport. Participant 7 mentioned that it is important to make contact with the youths, engage in conversations with the youths on good days and rather than when there is something bad going on. Participant 8 stated that the police officers really do not get the opportunity to start a conversation with the community. They do not have the

opportunity to establish a rapport with the youth because they are short staff, and RSO would help if they were in the schools. Participant 9 mentioned,

That police officers need to be able to relate to the community. If you can't relate to the experience or the calls that they are going to that needs to happen first. The police officers should remove their badge and show their heart and empathy.

Question 2 asked the police officers to describe improvements they would like to see added to the police department's "community policing" training regarding how police officers interact with Black youths. The main theme is the police officers should plan, implement, and participate in youth programs and events. Participant 1 said, "that the police department needs to add more manpower, because being short staffed they don't have the time to interact with the citizens." Participant 2 mentioned implementing more youth programs and getting police involved with the youth clubs, the boys and girls club, and the YMCA. The police officers can have more events to interact with youths and to build the bridge between youth and police. Participant 3 said, "the police officers being able to deal with youths by building relationship for the next generation. Getting involved with parents and youths and collaborate with the community as a whole. Police should not help form the youth." Participant 4 said, "training should include working in other sectors within their municipality. Participant 8 said, "police officers should go into other jurisdictions, dressed in plain clothes, and learn the thought process of the youths in those communities." Participants 6,7, and 8 said, "the community policing training does not need any changes, but the police department needs additional funding to add more police

officers.” Participant 6 mentioned that police officers can start events and meet with community members to find out what they need not what they want.

Question 3 asked the police officers if additional “community policing” training was offered in a youth-oriented facility to describe what they would like to see included in the training content. The main theme developed was that youths should be included in the training with specific requirements. Participant 1 stated that the youths must be open-minded about police officers, be able to have an open dialogue conversation with endless questions. Participant 2 mentioned that training police officers how to communicate and interact with youth. The administrators and police chief should collaborate and implement police training with youth at the youth clubs. Participant 3 stated that the training should teach youths about relationship building and include extracurricular activities involving youths and police officers. Participant 4 said,

Staff at the youth facility need to speak highly of the police. The youth clubs should have brochures with all the duties that the police officers perform and keep the communication about police officers positive so that the community know what their job really entails.

Participant 5 stated that after community policing training the officers must write a memo or essay as to why the trainer should release them off training. Participant 5 and 8 specified the DARE program, four-man scramble basketball team, youth participating in ride-a-longs with police which can give the youth the impression that police officers are humans too. Participant 7 and 8 talked about having an all-inclusive training with youths,

parents, and police officers over an 8-week period at the youths' club. The police should be out of uniform during the training and have topics about root causes for crime,

Question 4 asked the police to describe the police department's policy when police officers encounter Black youths suspected of committing low-level delinquent acts. Participants 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, and 9 mentioned that their procedure is to talk to the youths through questions and conversation, transfer the youths to the station, contact the parent, complete a referral known as F11 form, then release the child to the parent. Participant 7 and 9 stated they use their discretion to determine the root cause of why the youths are committing delinquent acts and then begin the referral process. Participant 6 said,

Talk to the youths and let them know what they did was a crime but get in touch with the parents and try to get them to be held accountable for their act. Work with the community to make sure the child must pay some type of restitution whether it's some type of work or the mother has to pay restitution.

Question 5 asked the police officers to describe a diversion program for Black youths that commit low-level delinquent acts instead of referring them to The County Juvenile Center. The theme response is to refer the youths to the Boys and Girls Club to participate in a structured program created to address delinquent acts. Participants 1, 2, and 4, stated that the youths should perform community service for the victim, business, or the police department or have a follow-up system to contradict former behavior. Participant 1 said, "bring back the scared straight program where the youth that have gotten in trouble multiple times can go into a jail or facility such as workhouse or and get scared into not wanting to come into a correctional facility." Participant 3

mentioned that they could use the Boys and Girls club and have a structured program where they could add to society instead of rebelling against it. Participant 6 said, “get the parents involved to find out what is the root cause of why the youths are acting in the manner that are causes delinquent acts”. Participant 8 replied that there needs to be a similar program like Adopt A Block just for youth. A group of ministers rented an apartment in the community where they held events every 3 or 4 weeks. They have an open-door policy where community members can visit whenever they feel like it, they can participate in events and get food to eat or just talk to the chaplains. Participant 9 mentioned Boy and Girls Club should allow the police department to partner with them as a first stage stop like three times a week to so youths can clear their minds.

Question 6 asked the police officers to describe a program that school administrators can implement that involves police officers and troubled Black youths whose end goal would pivot them into doing the right thing. The main theme was to have more school resource officers in the schools and allow on-duty police officers to work within the schools to demonstrate that they are there for interaction and support. Participants 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8 felt that school resource officers need to be in the schools. Participant 2 also stated that the schools need to implement a mentoring service with police officers coming into the schools and talk to the youths that are having issues at the school. This type of program will help for police officers to build a rapport with the youths. Participant 3 stated that the police can come into the schools and have programs such as balling with the cops, chess with the cops, or mentoring youths to teach them how to work as a team. Participant 4 said, “incorporate a class into the school’s

curriculum that teaches the job and details about first responders and allow the students to receive credit for the class”. Participant 5 mentioned that the DARE Program needed to be revamped and reactivated and have more than one school resource officer in the school, because “it takes a village to raise a child”. Participant 6 replied that the police department can start another Explorer Program and school resource officers need to be more active and approachable with the youths in the school instead of just being in the building. Participant 8 revealed that when they were in school the school resource officers kept the names of youths that were acting out in a notebook. Then the school resource officer would change hats to become a social worker to help with the root cause of why the youths were acting out in school. Participant 8 stated that police officers could go to the school, read books, and have real genuine conversations with the youths.

Question 7 asked if there is anything else the police officers would like to tell me about ways to decrease racial disparity for Black youths at the front-end intake step of The Juvenile Center. The response themes are split between how police officers and parents could play a part in reducing the racial disparity issue. Participant 1 said,

There should be in the home teaching on how the youths should respect themselves, respect others, and deescalate situation with words. Parent must take responsibility for their children’s actions, a community class for residents to learn how to interact with police. Police need to learn how to communicate and treat youths.

Participant 2 said, “that we as a community need to decrease our bias ways of thinking and increase communication and involvement in the community and schools.” Participant

3 said, “quit talking about racial disparity, teach that there is no racial disparity and that every child should be inclusive. Parents would not have to discuss racial disparity with their children if it does not exist.” Participant 4 said, “reprogram the parents’ thought process about police. People need to tell others that they need to own up to their interactions with the police if the conflict was on the person’s part and stop badmouthing and blaming the police.” Participant 5 mentioned that parents should stop the delinquent act when the child first commits the act instead of waiting until it gets out of hand.

Participant 6 said,

Parents need to understand that police officers are in the community to help as well. Police needs to get it across to the community that they are here to help. The community need to bring back that it takes a village to raise a child theory.

Participant 7 stated,

Once the youths are at a juvenile center or a lock up facility an officer should come to the youth and talk to them about what caused them to be held in the facility. This type of behavior could help with recidivism. Having a church ministry is a good ideal just with police officer being the boots on the ground.”

Participant 7 included how the media portrays the worst of the police and that they should show the positive: “Music and news really make it challenging to make thing better for police officers just based on the image that is being put out in society. The police should treat the youth as though they are family.”

Juvenile Center Staff Responses

Question 1 asked The Juvenile Center's staff to describe their current role with the 21st Judicial Family Court and their familiarity with the terms racial disparity and disproportionate minority contact. Three juvenile staff were deputy juvenile officers, one deputy juvenile officer manager, and one was a group therapist. The deputy juvenile officers were able to define racial disparity and disproportionate minority contact and their involvement in implementing the JDAI process. The group therapist could not define racial disparity or disproportionate minority contact but participated in a group meeting discussing implementing the JDAI processes. Each juvenile center's staff member worked with the youths as they came through the front-end intake step.

Participant 1 is a deputy juvenile officer that connects the family to resources following court expectation and probation, and with racial disparity and DMC. Participant 2 is a deputy juvenile officer that supervise children that needs ongoing informal and formal court supervision making recommendation at court and family resources, and familiar with racial disparity and DMC. Participant 3 is the manager of the deputy juvenile officers and assistant manager and is familiar with racial disparity and disproportionate minority contact. Participant 4 is a deputy juvenile officer and initial review officer who receives the lower-class felonies and misdemeanors and is familiar with racial disparity and DMC. Participant 5 is a group therapist and is not familiar with racial disparity and DMC.

Question 2 asked The Juvenile Center's staff member to describe their familiarity with the JDAI model. The main theme is that the juvenile staff worked on committees

established to implement and measure whether The Juvenile Center was in compliance with the JDAI standards. Participant 1 was on the committee that looked at all the ways diversion can be implemented instead of a restricted environment. The DJO was also on Results Count Committee which looks at all of the data for the juvenile facility.

Participant 2 has been creating policy on JDAI and helped with implementing the risk level instrument. Participant 3 is very familiar with JDAI and their team has to make sure that the recommendations that the right youth are held in the center and the returning youth could be held in the community. Also, working to make sure the juvenile facility core strategies keep advancing the work of JDAI while chairing the alternative committee that works to link families to seek diversion programs on their own. Participant 4 said, “the facility has JDAI material posted throughout the building, it is discussed at every meeting and talked about regularly on certain committees.” Participant 5 helped the juveniles with equitable setting for the youths and their diversion programs. Also, participates on the Results Count Committee, and working with youths staying in school or graduating from high school.

Question 3 asked The Juvenile Center’s staff what efforts the 21st Judicial Family Court has made to address racial disparity since 2019. The two main themes are that The Juvenile Center collaborates with community partners to prevent the police officers from arresting the youths. The Juvenile Center’s staff uses a Juvenile Detention Assessment Tool (JDAT) to determine the risk level score of the youths referred to The Juvenile Center. The JDAT helps the deputy juvenile officers to determine whether the child should be held in the court system or returned to their parents. Participant 1 said,

the juvenile facility uses the JDAT screening instrument when the youths are referred to the detention center to determine their score will be. The facility also added family engagement events and began working with community partners and agencies for their diversion program.

Participant 2 also said,

the facility implemented a risk level score instrument to determine whether the child should be held in the court system. The juvenile officers are participating on core strategies committees, monthly meeting on how to meet the JDAI goals, and looking to work with community partners to work with the general presentation on data on different stages of the youth in the juvenile facility.”

Participant 3 mentioned,

the juvenile officers are on the different JDA Collaborative committees. The juvenile facility created a response grid regarding technical violations and incentive grids for the youths to try and prevent technical violations. The juvenile officers are addressing violations in an equitable manner, and they revamped how the truancy calls are handled. The Juvenile Center are diverting the truancy calls to external programs instead of bringing them in and meeting with their parents and giving them an informal.

Participant 4 stated, “The Family Court instilled it into the workers. At one time they were forced to adopt JDAI because of the lawsuit. The standard is implanted but the participant doesn't believe that it is gospel.” Participant 5 mentioned the collaboration work where the juvenile facility is collaborating with 2 school principals to be on the

Results Count Committee. From this partnership The Juvenile Center is working to increase student graduation to deter youths from committing delinquent acts. The Family Court has implemented a diversion program where the DJO are in the schools to help prevent youths from committing delinquent acts.

Question 4 asked The Juvenile Center's staff to describe suggestions on what can be done by The Family Court to address racial disparity at the front-end intake step of The Juvenile Center. The major theme is educating the police officers on The Juvenile Center's and The Family Court's on their JDAI efforts and their measures for reducing racial disparity. Participant 1 said, "educating the police and community agencies..... to teach them what The Juvenile Center's efforts on addressing the racial disparity."

Participant 2 stated,

The Alternatives to Detention committee created other options for the youths instead of police officers sending in referrals. Implement programs with reporting center where youths can go after school for detention instead of being housed in The Juvenile Center. The Family Court can educate law enforcement and the schools on what The Juvenile Center is doing with JDAI. This will allow law enforcement and schools to be able to address how to reduce with the racial disparity on their ends."

Participant 3 said,

educate law enforcement on what The Juvenile Center is doing as far as their JDAI efforts. Inform law enforcement of the data that is collected and that there needs to be an alternative to referring the youths to The Juvenile Center. Also,

inform law enforcement that the youth needs should be addressed in the community and not inside of The Juvenile Center. Sharing data with law enforcement to have control of their front door because they do not have any way to control who comes into their facility. Connect the community partner with the police officers and they can transfer the child there instead of The Juvenile Center.

Participant 4 said,

diversity training for the police officers every year, follow up training every year, and have situational training. When it comes dealing with the youth in a county neighborhood the police officers are not familiar with the area that they work in and don't know anything about the youths that live in that area. Also, the juvenile staff come from other areas should have diversity training.

Participant 6 said, “the police officers should make sure that if the charge is sufficient, it is the trainer in The Family Court to educate the police on what is sufficient for The Juvenile Center to detain the youths.

Question 5 asked the juvenile staff to describe how family members can play a crucial role in helping The Family Court implement a front-end diversion program. The key theme is family members should be allowed at the discussion table to give their input on the determining factors of what would be the best succession plan for their youths.

Participants 1, 2, 4, and 5 said, “parents should have a voice at the table to discuss how The Juvenile Center should handle the youths that are brought into the front-end office by police officers. Participant 1 also stated, “The parents know their child better than

anyone, so engaging the family to feel like they are part of the process instead of The Juvenile Center dictating what should be done with the youths.” Participant 3 said, “increase parent engagement with the staff meetings.” Participant 5 said, The Juvenile Center is training staff to be able to use the right language and feeling comfortable discussing delicate conversations. The training consists of listening sessions which informs the staff on how to bring families to the table. Participant 4 stated, “parents need to reach out to the police officers, schools, and The Juvenile Center when they first see the sign of trouble. Parents need to stop stating that their child is bad and be more active and honest with what is going on with the youth.” Participants 3, 4 and 5 mentioned, “parents are not educated about the resources that The Juvenile Center and schools have for the families.” Question 6 asked the juvenile staff if there is anything else they would like to tell me about ways to reduce the racial disparity at the front-end intake step of The Juvenile Center’s. The main theme is partnering with community organizations that will create summer camps, crafts classes, community centers, sports, and other extra curriculum activities. Also, introduce them to successful professionals who can educate them on being a product of a low-income community. Participant 1 stated, “The Juvenile Center needs more community programs for the youths.” Participant 2 said, “Community Partners would be great, but they keep running into roadblocks.” Participant 3 said, “racial disparity is their biggest challenge for The Juvenile Center. The juvenile officers are on board with what The Juvenile Center is trying to do to reduce racial disparity. There is always work to do in the RED work with what they do as an organization. If the police officers can prescreen the youths, then they can make the determination if the

youths will stay.” Participate 4 stated, “social programs such as summer camps, crafts classes, community center, sports, and extra curriculum activities. Introduce professionals that have come from their neighborhoods and communities. Those successful professionals should come back to the community and talk to the children.

Interpretation of Findings

This study is beneficial in bringing out data that answered the research question. The research shows that police officers have the most crucial duty in helping to reduce the racial disparity of Black youths referred to The Juvenile Center. Also, family members play a key role in helping The Juvenile Center's staff determine what is best for the youths referred to the front-end office. Based on all the responses from the police officers and juvenile officers, using a holistic approach while also educating all parties involved will help meet the goal of reducing the racial disparity percentage at the front-end intake step by 35 percent.

Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, deemed that communication is the essential aspect of building relationships and partnerships. Whereas a healthy communication style makes it easy to build trust between police officers, juvenile staff, parents, and the youths.

Participant 9 felt that it is imperative for police from rural areas and different demographics to know how to communicate with the youths and their parents.

Participants 4 and 9 recommended that parents, school staff, and community members speak positively about police officers to the youths in the community.

All the police officers and juvenile officers expressed the need for police officers to receive training on when it is appropriate to refer youths to the juvenile facility, how to

deal with youths in the community, and diversity training regarding Black youths. Participants 2, 5, and 8 believe that police officers lack the training to listen to the youths and decipher the necessary details in the conversation, which leads to a misunderstanding of facts. Participant 6 felt it is essential to train police officers to be in tune with what the youths are communicating because their minds work differently than adults. The police officers discussed the importance of community organizations being a part of improving the community policing process. Participant 1 felt that there needed to be a martial arts program that teaches the youths' self-discipline, self-respect, and self-worth. School administrations has more of the power to work with school resource officers to build relationships with children and parents.

The police officers discussed front-end diversions for youths arrested for delinquent acts or misdemeanors. Community service with the victims, or the youths can teach youths more about work ethics than being held in The Juvenile Center. If the police officers have more education on what delinquent acts will cause youths to be held, it is possible to have youths' complete community service hours at the police station instead of being referred to The Juvenile Center. When discussing if there was any additional information the police officers wanted to contribute to the interview, their responses mentioned recommendations for the youths' parents.

The Juvenile Center's staff, when asked about their familiarity with the JDAI, all the staff responded that they were familiar with JDAI. The Juvenile Center has worked extremely hard on creating committees and training their staff to reduce the racial disparity in the facility. Participant 3 makes sure that the recommendations are suitable

for the youths in the facility and when the youths return to the community. Also, Participant 3 monitors The Juvenile Center's core strategies to make sure they are advancing the work of JDAI and chairs the alternative committee that links families to their diversion program. Participant 5 has an equitable setting in The Juvenile Center and in their diversion programs.

The Juvenile Center's staff responded to their efforts to address racial disparity by having family engagement and collaborating with community partners and agencies. The juvenile officers also have core strategy meetings and monthly meetings on how to meet JDAI goals. The Juvenile Center's staff also works with the Responsive Grid that measures technical and incentive violations. The objective of the Responsive Grid is to prevent technical violations. The Juvenile Center's diversion programs allows the DJOs to get in front of the issues when the youths get into trouble. The Juvenile Center brought on a group therapist that works with the youths, families and schools. Although the group therapist is in the community planning family engagement events called Family Game Night there was no mention of collaboration with police officers. The Juvenile Center's staff recommended that there should be more structured reporting centers for the youths in the community.

Unanticipated Limitations or Outcomes

The Police Department is short-staffed due to not having a sufficient number of officers to effectively dedicate time to participate in community policing. Also, due to funding cuts, programs such as DARE Program and Explorer program are not functional even though they have the decorated cars and materials to accommodate the programs.

Funding cuts have stopped the department from hiring more police officers, which stops school resource officers from being in every school. Primarily the programs and the manpower it would take to help reduce racial disparity are limited.

Implications Resulting From Findings

For the Client Organization

The Juvenile Center should have working meetings with the parents and families of the youths detained or arrested by police officers. The Juvenile Center's staff should gather all the facts of the incident and invite the youths and their families to participate in the meeting to help build relationships. Also, The Juvenile Center's staff must be ready to meet those parents where they are at the time of the meeting. These meetings must be flexible for the parents and families to benefit from these collaborations. The sessions should have a representative from the appropriate organizations for the resources the parents and families need. The police and juvenile officers will be the point person to follow up to ensure the resources were used by the parents and families while gathering other resources from outside organizations. Lastly, the police departments need to bring on a social worker or contract with individual social workers to work with them on their juvenile cases.

Positive Social Change

This study has implications for change because 88 municipalities and 10 unincorporated municipalities fall under St. Louis County demographics. The result of this study shows that the prominent people involved in decreasing the racial disparity at the front-end intake step of The Juvenile Center are not in sync with one another. The

Juvenile Center may not handle all the juvenile cases for the 98 municipalities, however, the police officers for those municipalities that are within The Juvenile Center's footprint should be required to collaborate. These changes will provide the communities with the staffing needed to provide the necessary community resources and community engagement required to make progress on reducing the racial disparity. The police and juvenile officers will have the opportunity to learn the culture of the communities, build trust with the residents, train officers on the JDAT. The results of this study will allow a streamlined process for getting the families and youths the services and resources that they need to reduce the racial disparity degree of the Black youths referred to The Juvenile Center.

Recommendations

Based on the data I collected, this study was able to generate some exciting outcomes. I would recommend that The Juvenile Center create a list of protocols which includes the JDAT screening instrument, so that when the police officers arrest the youths, they can determine whether the youths will be held or released from the juvenile facility. I did notice a gap in the responses of The Juvenile Center's staff; there were no recommendations for collaboration with organizations for diversion at the front-end intake step. I would also recommend that this study be used with a police department with a larger jurisdiction within Missouri. One of the patterns that emerged from both organizations that I interviewed is training for the police officers to teach them to build better relationships with the youths and know when to refer youths to The Juvenile Center or an outside agency. I would recommend the police department bring on reserve

police officers or partner with neighboring police departments that patrol in St. Louis County. One of the primary things found in this study is that parents are not involved in either process until after the youths are arrested or referred to The Juvenile Center. I recommend that a police substation be housed in the local youth organizations and clubs with a social worker on staff to provide the parents with the resource needed immediately

Training and education are essential to reducing racial disparity at the front-end intake step. The youths are committing misdemeanor and felony crimes, but each person or entity involved is not educated on the innerworkings of the juvenile justice system. I would recommend that the state of Missouri hold annual mandatory training workshops for police officers, juvenile officers, and security officers centered around JDAI, community policing, being school resource officers, and diversion programs. Lastly, I would recommend the State of Missouri evaluate quarterly the racial disparity data to determine whether the collaboration of the police officers and juvenile officers is benefiting the youths. If the numbers are not reduced based on The Family Court Disproportionate Minority Contact Report, the State of Missouri should be the change agent to request the funding that local organizations need to join the collaboration.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

This study had a few strengths that was put in place. The objective was to interview five to eight police officers and deputy juvenile officers from each organization. However, the police department had seven officers and two sergeants who agreed to participate in the interview. The Juvenile Center had three deputy juvenile officers, the manager of deputy juvenile officers and a group therapist that agreed to

participate in the interview. The strengths of having middle management employees and the group therapist interview allowed the study to get responses from a supervisor point of view and evidence-based point of view. I recommend doing qualitative research with parents and social workers to see if there is a correlation.

Summary

After conducting interviews with nine police officers and five juvenile facility employees, I gathered enough data to provide sufficient evidence to answer the research question. From the data collected, I concluded that the four important components needed to reduce the racial disparity at the front-end intake step of The Juvenile Center are the youths, parents, police officers, and juvenile officers. The specific theme is that the parents and police officers need training and education about understanding and communicating with the youths. The Juvenile Center has a process to reduce racial disparity at the front-end intake step, but it is not shared with the main outside referral source. In Section 5, I described my plans to disseminate the work to The Juvenile Center. I clarified the audiences and venues I will use to disseminate the PAS to a broader audience. Also, my summary will have a concluding statement about the PAS.

Section 5: Dissemination Plan

Before the study The Juvenile Center agreed to receive the results as they apply to helping the organization reduce the racial disparity regarding Black youths referred to the juvenile facility. My deliverable to The Juvenile Center as my client is a plan with recommendations.

PAS Deliverable Described

I will be providing to The Juvenile Center the plan that I have prepared with the problem, findings, results, and recommendations attached (Appendix B). I will visit The Juvenile Center to meet the juvenile officers and answer any questions they may have. I will also deliver the same plan to the police department and remain there for any questions the police officers may have.

Clarify the Audience(s) Appropriate for Dissemination

The audiences appropriate for dissemination are the family court administrator, chief juvenile officer, police officers, sergeants, deputy juvenile officers, juvenile officer's manager, and group therapist. The participants are employees with the police department or The Juvenile Center.

Summary and Conclusions

Based on the results of this study, I recommend that The Juvenile Center offer education and training on JDAI and JDAT to the police officers that refer youths to their facility. I also recommend a diversion plan that allows the police officers to access the youth, have an alternative meeting location where parents and the arrested youths and determine whether their act accumulate enough points on the JDAT. The results showed

that community-driven programs and events police officers spearhead that involve the youths constitute a significant need within the community. The only way to implement intercity policing collaboration is for more federal and state funding for community policing programs.

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Appendix A: Delinquency Referrals in 2018 -2019

Table A1*Delinquency Referrals by Source of Referrals*

Sources	Frequency	Percent
Municipal Police	2,200	91.1%
School Resource Officer	109	4.5%
Other Juvenile Court	49	2.0%
Juvenile Court Personnel	32	1.3%
Other Law Enforcement	14	0.6%
County Sheriff	7	0.3%
Highway Patrol	3	0.1%
Children Division	1	0.0%
Total	2415	

Delinquency data referrals from the St Louis County Family Court 2018 Interim Disproportionate Minority Contact Report. 11-2019

Table A2*Delinquency Referrals by Source of Referrals*

Sources	Frequency	Percent
Municipal Police	2,409	91.7%
School Resource Officer	97	3.7%
Other Juvenile Court	90	3.4%
Juvenile Court Personnel	19	0.7%
Other Law Enforcement	9	0.3%
Highway Patrol	2	0.1%
School Personnel	2	0.1%
Total	2415	

Delinquency data referrals from the St Louis County Family Court 2019 Interim Disproportionate Minority Contact Report. 11-18-2020

Table A3
Status Referral Outcomes by Circuit and County

County	Missing	Ture Out of The Home	True in Home	True No Service	Not True	Dismiss	Inf. w/o Sup	Inf. with Sup	No Action	Trans. Other Court	Trans. Other Agency	Reject	Total
21 st . St. Louis Co.	2	4	1	3	9	0	46	82	566	133	8	473	1327

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Appendix B: Dissemination Plan

Research Dissemination Plan for Reducing Racial Disparity:

Reducing Racial Disparity of Youths Referred to the St. Louis County Juvenile Center

Kimberly Paige

Department of Public Administration, Walden University

Background:

The Juvenile Center acknowledged that they need to decrease the racial disparity in the number of Black youths that are overrepresented in number and percentage compared to white youths at the front-end intake step of the St. Louis County Juvenile Justice System based on the population. This administrative study is a qualitative study using ethnographic interview in the form of a questionnaire that allowed me to gather the community relation actions from police officers and juvenile administrators and staff.

Mission and Purpose:

To introduce the St. Louis County Juvenile Center's staff and police officers to the results of the professional administrative study titled: Reducing Racial Disparity of Youths Referred to the St. Louis County Juvenile Center. This study was conducted to gain insight as to whether there are alternative actions before or after the arrest of youths that will reduce the percentage of racial disparity between Black youths and white youths, at the front-end intake step of St. Louis County Family Court.

Audience:

The interviewed population of interest and any persons interested in learning about the results of the survey at the police department and The Juvenile Center. Any person interested on the local, state, and federal level that can help to implement the necessary

tools, facilities, and monies to help the police officers get the training, manpower, and collaboration needed to make a positive social change in their community.

Approach: I will speak with the Chief Deputy Director at The Juvenile Center and the Chief of Police at the police department to set up a time to deliver a copy of the professional administrative study. Then I will see if there is an appropriate time to meet with the participants involved and give them a three-page summary report of the professional administration study and a suggested plan to implement some of their concerns and ask for their suggestions and connections.

Schedule: Dependent on the schedule of the police officers and juvenile staff. Within a week of meeting with the participants I will seek to have meetings with local, state, and federal officials. Within three weeks of meeting with the participants of the study I will seek to have meetings with youth club administrators. I will continue to have these conversations monthly until I see some portions of my plan implemented to help decrease the number of Black youths referred to the St. Louis County Juvenile Center.