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Unvoiced LGBT Individuals' Perceptions and Experiences of the School-to-Prison Pipeline

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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Walden University
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Abstract

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by

DeShaunt'e A. Burns

MP, Walden University, 2020

MS, Liberty University, 2015

BA, Marygrove College, 2013

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Studies have shown that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals face

discrimination, harassment, and bullying by different education and criminal justice

system entities because of their sexuality. Research has also indicated that when it comes

to the school-to-prison pipeline (STPP), children of color are often mistreated and face

harsher penalties, and research must be done to see how LGBT individuals are treated

because they are considered abnormal because of their sexuality. Little is known about

the perceptions and experiences of LGBT individuals when they are punished for

violating minor infractions in school. This study addressed the critical race theory

framework concerning oppression's educational and systemic structure. Using a

qualitative phenomenological methodology allowed access to 11 LGBT individuals'

lived experiences and perceptions of the STPP in connection to the criminal justice

system. Data were analyzed using Moustakas's (1994) modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen

method and three themes were identified: (a) sensitivity and diversity training; (b)

sexuality; and (c) education rights. The implications for positive social change at the

individual level could include a better understanding of LGBT with zero-tolerance

policies and perceptions and experiences of students and support staff. On the community

level, anticipated implications for positive social change would include educating parents

about the STPP, providing community resources to those who need them, and teaching

teachers how to handle and become open-minded about unique LGBT needs.

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Dedication

I want to dedicate this body of work to the memory of my graceful mother, Jennifer E. Cooks; thank you for your inspiration, motivation, love, and patience. My mother was the driving force behind me finishing this long journey. In 2022 she kept asking when I would be done, I wasn't sure, but after her passing on December 22, 2022, the fire that once burned inside me was reignited. I will continue to make you proud, and I wish you could see me officially become Dr. DeShaunt'e A. Burns. Thank you for molding me and making me a strong black man; you stated during my childhood that you did not know anything about being a man, but you will guide and teach me the best you can. I remember that you always told me that the current generation is supposed to be better than the previous. Thank you for your support and encouragement to do things you did have the opportunity to do.

To my father, Therrin L. Burns, even though you were taken away when I was seven. Thank you for telling me never to give up and to finish everything I started. Those few words encouraged me to keep going when my world was dimmed by depression and bad influences. Thank you for installing in me to keep pushing forward and for all the love you showered me with during your time on this earth. I will continue to break barriers and conquer obstacles that may lie ahead. I am blessed to have parents like you both, and it is an honor to be your son. To my future children, I hope you will one day read this body of work, utilize it as inspiration, and know that there are unlimited possibilities for success.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Current school policies and practices across America's educational system are not meeting the academic needs of diverse students, including the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) student population. An educational phenomenon known as the "school-to-prison pipeline" (STPP) currently exists in inner-city schools across America that is reshaping the education system by directing children out of inner-city schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice system as a form of punishment. Children often disproportionately targeted by the STPP are children of color, children with disabilities, and LGBT individuals. These individuals often suffer from living in poverty, abuse, and neglect. Instead of being allowed to take advantage of additional educational and counseling services in the school setting, they are secluded, penalized, and removed from the school setting.

Although many researchers have examined the STPP, studies have suggested that there is an extreme need for a national and intentional focus on issues related to LGBT individuals in school support journals (Graybill & Proctor, 2015). There remains a gap in examining the school discipline experiences of LGBT individuals as compared with other individuals that are targets of the pipeline population (Snapp et al., 2015). This study focused on the experiences and perceptions of LGBT individuals and their experiences with the STPP in a school setting. This knowledge will aid the public-school system and the LGBT community in providing necessary services unique to students who do not fit into social norms. This research identified potential barriers faced by the LGBT

community relative to schools' disciplinary policies and practices and advocated for this population within the criminal justice system.

This study focused on describing LGBT individuals' lived experiences and perceptions by examining their interactions with the various sectors of the education and criminal justice system when interacting with teachers, school resource officers, and the criminal justice system. The results of this study may aid in the creation and implementation of new policies that address the needs of the LGBT community in inner-city schools and could improve the knowledge of LGBT individuals by informing educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders in power who can make a change, by offering lived experiences to gain a better in-depth understanding of the unique needs of the LGBT community. Moreover, this research provided a better understanding of how to respond to the individual needs and situations of the LGBT population adequately and appropriately.

<div align="center">**Background of Problem**</div>

Zero-tolerance policies are the core piece of the giant puzzle of oppression in the education system in America. The state and federal government has created educational policies throughout American history to help the STPP come into effect and become a legal way of ushering underprivileged individuals out of the school system and into prison, especially individuals of the LGBT community. School districts across the country have adopted policies that support the governments' efforts to punish the LGBT community for minor infractions that do not fit current social norms and cheat them from obtaining a quality education. LGBT youth are up to three times more likely to

experience criminal justice and school sanctions than students who do not identify as such, according to research cited by (Kransberger, 2016). Also, one-third of LGBT youth drop out of school to escape violence and harassment that administrators fail to address (School-to-Prison Pipeline Expands with Innovative Inversion Efforts, 2016). Research has suggested that LGBT individuals are subjected to discipline that results in high rates of punitive or exclusionary discipline, disciplinary penalties for violating gender norm policies, and a school climate so hostile that it may motivate fighting to protect oneself against bullying (Skiba et al., 2014). They are twice as likely as their heterosexual peers to be detained for nonviolent offenses such as running away, prostitution, and truancy (Snapp et al., 2015). For example, if LGBT individuals decide to protect themselves from being bullied, they could be removed from the classroom and placed in detention centers as punishment. Essentially, they are disciplined when they stand up for themselves and when they reach out for support from school staff. This, in turn, revictimizes the victim. Research has also suggested that LGBT individuals are overrepresented in the pipeline when placed in juvenile detention facilities (Snapp et al., 2015).

Problem Statement

The LGBT community often deals with harassment and discrimination in educational environments, leading to damaging social-economical outcomes and encountering interpersonal violence, victimization, and isolation (Clauss-Ehlers et al., 2012; Graybill & Proctor, 2015). Furthermore, LGBT individuals are vulnerable to push-out trends and the discriminatory practices of discipline based on color, sexual orientation, and gender identity (Thoreson, 2016). More than likely, LGBT students are

often withdrawn from the learning environment and neglected because they do not fit school social norms. Because the school atmosphere can be antagonistic, which can provoke some students to fight against bullying for self-protection, the guidelines that school districts are using to help teach, enforce curriculum, and administer behavior are seemingly used as a tactic to usher children into the STPP (Skiba et al., 2014; Wilson, 2014).

Research has indicated that LGBT individuals do not have the same access to the presumption of innocence and are not understood the same way that young white people are, especially when there is racial disproportionality at every level of the juvenile justice system (e.g., surveillance, arrest, removal from the home, conviction, and sentencing; Meiners, 2015). Research has also shown that LGBT individuals are three times more likely to experience harsher punishments from school administrators than their non-LGBT counterparts (Mitchum & Moodie-Mills, 2014). Further research has suggested that the experience of being marginalized or targeted by school personnel has left LGBT individuals distrustful of educational leaders, which has ultimately resulted in LGBT students feeling as though their educators do not promote an accepting and safe learning environment for them (Mitchum & Moodie-Mills, 2014).

The STPP consists of zero-tolerance policies that forbid minor infractions of school rules, with the primary purpose of placing law enforcement officers in schools to monitor students' behavior, which has resulted in mass incarceration over the past decade. This policy created a hostile untrustworthy environment for children and situations for administrators (Mitchum & Moodie-Mills, 2014). Snapp et al. (2015)

suggested that LGBT individuals experienced discriminatory conduct in schools that may yield criminal sanctions. There was a lack of studies focusing on the experiences and perceptions of LGBT individuals and their interactions with the STPP. This study provided firsthand knowledge.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative study identified how LGBT individuals experienced, perceived, and interacted with the STPP. Graybill and Proctor (2015) have suggested that there is an extreme need for a national and intentional focus on issues related to LGBT individuals in school support journals. Overall, this study provided an in-depth understanding of the experiences and perceptions of LGBT individuals' interaction with the punishments from the policies and regulations enforced by the STPP. The participants of this study were LGBT individuals in the metropolitan area of Detroit, Michigan.

Research Questions

1. How can the experiences of LGBT individuals be used to construct training programs to help them feel safe and educate faculty?

2. How do LGBT individuals perceive school policies that act as deterrence regulations in the school setting that prevent them from wanting to be educated?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in this study was critical race theory (CRT), which explained the perceptions of LGBT individuals regarding the STPP. CRT's roots came from the works of writers like Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Du

Bois, and Martin Luther King, Jr. These advocates for justice studied law, feminism, and post-structuralism. Later in the 1980s, Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado responded to the slow progress of equality following the civil rights movement in the 1960s, and their determination led to the creation of CRT (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012). Critical Race theory is a tool the school system uses to ensure education and hope for non-White children. Sommers-Mthethwa (2014) stated that "social justice education theories maintain that schools should serve as sites of democracy with all its inherent ideological, cultural, religious, and social diversity, and should be used to work toward social justice, a significant signpost of democracy" (p. 10). Black civil rights activists stood up for equality; they believed that all groups in society were allowed the same rights and that no dominant or privileged group existed. Using this theory in this study was important for comparing the perceptions of LGBT individuals with other members of the school setting and juvenile courts. Carlisle, Jackson, and George (2006) argued that a just school would promote inclusion and equity, hold high expectations for all students, develop reciprocal community relationships, involve a system-wide approach, and entail direct social justice education and intervention (p. 57-61).

CRT is a theoretical framework that explains how various institutions place White people on a higher pedigree than people of color; this is a form of discrimination. The theory has been used to describe how CRT helped to implement the STPP agenda and why it must be removed from the education curriculum. Brizee et al. (2015) stated that the key terms that are important and associated with CRT are "white privilege, microaggressions, instructional racism, social construction, and intersectionality and anti-

essentialism" (p. 1). This structure was selected as the main theoretical framework because it has become part of the education system in America and is part of what is known as the STPP.

CRT became prominent as a response "to the historical inability of our system of jurisprudence to understand and adjudicate cases of racial inequality adequately" (Fujimoto et al., 2013, p. 86). Research has shown how CRT has played a significant role in the education system in America and how CRT is a form of oppression, and that the only people that benefit from it are White people. Delgado et al. (2006) explained how CRT became a movement in law and rapidly spread beyond that discipline. Delgado et al. further stated that "many in the field of education consider themselves critical race theorists who use CRT's ideas to understand issues of school discipline and hierarchy, tracking, controversies over curriculum and history, and IQ and achievement testing" (p. 2). Using this theory in this research showed how LGBT individuals are oppressed and justified in being placed in the STPP.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study consisted of qualitative phenomenological research that provided firsthand knowledge of the experiences and perceptions of LGBT individuals with STPP. Phenomenology has been described as a method to "go back to the things themselves" by focusing on what is experienced in an individual's consciousness (Husserl, 1967,1999)). I employed a semi-structured interview guide to explore the lived experiences of LGBT individuals who encountered disciplinary entities within the public school and criminal justice system – education policies, juvenile facilities, police

presence in schools, and the courts. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, follow-up questions and reviews were not conducted, which could have encouraged a much richer narrative from the participants about their experiences and the meaning that they ascribe to their individual experiences with the STPP.

Definition of Terms

Gender identity: An individual's internal sense of being male, female, or something else (National Center for Transgender Equality, 2014).

Gender nonconforming: Refers to individuals "who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does fit neatly in a category" (Human Rights Campaign, 2019).

LGBTQ: An acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning (Human Rights Campaign, 2019).

Sexual orientation: An individual's attention attraction to another person of the same sex and different sex, usually defined as lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual, or asexual (National Center for Transgender Equality, 2014).

Transgender: Describes an individual not identifying with their assigned sex at birth. They tend to express their gender identity differently from cultural expectations. They may also identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and so forth (Human Rights Campaign, 2019).

Assumptions

I assumed that all participants were honest with their responses to the interview questions. I assumed that all participants had had experience with the STPP. I assumed

that participants in this study had contact with juvenile courts, jails, prisons, and detention centers in the metropolitan area of Detroit, Michigan, due to their sexual identity. I assumed they would answer all questions asked during the interviewing process and offer extra valuable information that could help bring awareness to the mistreatment of LGBT individuals. I assumed their participation would be voluntary, and they would be willing to share experiences that might help improve the school system for LGBT individuals.

Scope and Delimitations

This study did not include LGBT individuals who did not have contact with the STPP, juvenile courts, jail, or detention centers. White and other ethnicities were excluded from this study; only Black and Hispanic participants were. The reason is that Blacks and Hispanics are the two leading races in the American prison system. Individuals who identified as heterosexuals were not included in this study because the STPP does not target them based on their sexuality. Heterosexuals do not have the same challenges and barriers as LGBT individuals who reside and attend school in the inner-city. LGBT students with more privileges and opportunities living in suburban communities were omitted.

Limitations

A significant limitation of this study is that it involved only LGBT individuals who are Black and Hispanic from the metropolitan area of Detroit, Michigan. Another limitation of this study was the number of participants, who did not reflect the numerous perceptions and experiences of other LGBT individuals in the metropolitan area of

Detroit, Michigan. The age range of the participants was limited to LGBT individuals who are 18 to 45 years of age and did not recently attend high school because it was essential to capture their experiences in connection to the STPP. The upper age limit was set at 45 to provide a more in-depth understanding of different age ranges and decades involving the education system in connection to the criminal justice system, as it involved life-changing experiences that affected LGBT individuals as adults. The LGBT individuals currently in jail, prison, or detention centers were not included in this study; this is another major limitation. The data from this research did not fully generalize other concentrated areas in Michigan or other states where LGBT students reside and attended school. LGBT individuals' experiences in suburban areas that attended better schools in better communities were not involved in this study.

Significance of the Study

This study contributed to a positive social change with an application for education and criminal justice. This research was significant because it addressed the American school system and added to the limited research on the LGBT community by going beyond the underlying problem. The primary focus of this research was the cognitive process that individuals of the LGBT community go through in the school system. It offered ways to improve the system for LGBT individuals targeted by the pipeline.

Additionally, it suggested training teachers and other staff on proper ways to handle situations regarding LGBT individuals in the school setting. Administrators continue to remove thousands of children from schools around the country. They are

either put into juvenile detention centers or forced into creating a homeless lifestyle, thus creating more social problems. This research aimed to understand the barriers in place on both sides by highlighting the misunderstandings and providing solutions on how to inform all involved. If adequately implemented, the targeted information can aid and reduce the STPP conflict, leading to higher graduation rates, lower dropout rates, and a better learning environment.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the research problem, went into detail about the background of the study, and listed the research questions. I also addressed and discussed the theoretical framework and explained the nature of the study. Important terms that are part of the LGBT community were defined, and the scope, delimitations, and limitations were also outlined.

In Chapter 2, I provide a more in-depth examination of the literature in which I explain the theoretical framework of CRT, LGBT individuals' contact with the education system in connection with the criminal justice system (i.e., LGBT individuals' perceptions and experiences, and the perceptions and experiences of support staff).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The school and the criminal justice systems have combined their resources by adopting zero-tolerance policies used in inner-city schools to discipline students. Students who identify as LGBT are more prone to be discriminated against and victimized in schools, which in turn is associated with poor academic performances, risk behaviors, low self-esteem, depression, and suicidal ideation and behaviors (Day, Perez-Brumer & Russel, 2019; Palmer & Greytak, 2017). This chapter provided an overview of the relevant literature regarding the experiences and perceptions of the STPP. The literature review focused on the theoretical framework of CRT, the zero-tolerance policies and discriminatory discipline, and the perceptions and experiences of students and support staff.

Literature Review Strategy

The literature review for this study included qualitative and quantitative peer-reviewed literature regarding the experiences and perceptions of students and support staff regarding the STPP as well as literature regarding the use of zero-tolerance policies and discriminatory discipline on students. I used numerous databases in the Walden University Library, including ProQuest (Criminal Justice Database, Nexis Uni [formerly LexisNexis Academic]), Sage Journals, SociINDEX with Full Text, and EBSCOhost. I also searched Google Scholar for additional articles and websites. Some of the key terms I used were *school-to-prison pipeline, education, inner-cities, harsh punishments, school policies, alternative programs, safety, zero tolerance, drop-out rates, prison, pipeline,*

LGBTQ students, educational policies, critical race theory, social justice education

theory, history of the school-to-prison pipeline, students experiences with the STPP,

perceptions of the STPP, and *STPP training and training programs.*

Theoretical Framework of Critical Race Theory

CRT is "the perception that race is biologically grounded and ordinary. CRT is a socially constructed concept that purpose is to maintain the interests of the White population that constructed it (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012). Conferring to CRT, racial inequality emerges from the social, economic, and legal differences that White people create between "races" to maintain elite White interest in labor markets and politics and, as such, create the circumstances that increase poverty and lawbreaking in many minority communities. Though the intellectual origins of the movement go back much further, the CRT movement officially organized itself in July 1989 (Curry, 2010).

Delgado and Stefanic (2001) claimed that CRT is based on the following premises:

> (1) racism is ordinary, not aberrational; (2) racism serves important purposes; (3) race and races are products of social thought and relations [and] categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient; and (4) intersectionality meaning that 'no person has a single, easily stated, unitary identity … everyone has potentially conflicting, overlapping identities, loyalties and allegiances.' (p. 7 & 9)

Later, Bonilla-Silva (2015) redeveloped the tenets of CRT to the following: "(1) racism is 'embedded in the structure of society'; (2) racism has a 'material foundation'; (3) racism

changes and develops at different times; (4) racism is often ascribed a degree of rationality; and (5) racism has a contemporary basis" (p. 74).

Indeed, many inner-city schools have shifted from environments of education and hope to juvenile detention holding cells decorated with metal detectors and a heavy police presence (Allen & White-Smith, 2014). Inner-city school guidelines and practices often play a substantial role in the educational failure of Black males, and their consequential placement in the STPP. Essentials of a stratifying institution, policy choices, and teacher practices replicate economic and racial inequalities for many people of color and people in poverty, specifically Black males (Allen & White-Smith, 2014). The mistreatment of Black males is closely related to CRT and is predominantly beneficial as a systematic tool to observe Black males' organizational barriers in school. As a critical theory with roots in legal studies, CRT centers on race and its intersection with other identities (i.e., gender) in investigating marginalized groups' social and institutional subordination (Allen & White-Smith, 2014). CRT was used to explain further the part it plays in the non-acceptance of LGBT individuals who attended school in the inner cities of America. CRT is used in this chapter to discuss and show how CRT was used to oppress LGBT individuals further. LGBT individuals are seen as deviant and a group of people who do not belong or fit into society's core values.

LGBT individuals are not only targets of the STPP but also targets of systemic racism. In this way, the current state of racial and class school segregation indirectly contributes to the STPP for Black men; poor educational opportunities contribute to high unemployment rates and poverty, making Black males more susceptible to encounters

with the criminal justice system (Allen & White-Smith, 2014). LGBT individuals face these same factors that Black males face; however, prior to this research, there was a limited amount of literature that backs up this assumption because of the lack of attention that LGBT individuals get from researchers when researching the STPP. Several teachers and counselor training programs require coursework and field experiences that address diversity, critical self-reflection, and culturally relevant practices, and it is not clear if and how these opportunities effectively prepare teachers for work in diverse schools (Allen & White-Smith, 2014). This issue in education further supports the STPP with the help of CRT because many educators are from suburban areas. They teach in the inner cities; they do not know much about the diverse population; educators are not trained on LGBT issues, nor do they understand their needs. One of the highest assets of whiteness as a property is the ability to exclude others from the benefits of whiteness, maintaining the inequitable distribution of resources (Annamma, 2014). Whiteness is the explanation of why LGBT individuals that attended school in the inner cities are targets of the STPP and faced harsher punishments when they committed the same infractions as their White counterparts in the suburban schools.

Additionally, it is unclear if these opportunities help White educators understand their role in disrupting the STPP processes. For example, in teacher preparation programs, teacher candidates may resist or show indifference to the discussion and analysis of racial issues, choosing instead to adopt colorblind approaches to viewing their students, a position that, according to CRT, camouflages the self-interests of dominant groups and maintains that status quo of inequalities Muller, 2017). In adopting these

colorblind approaches, White teacher candidates not only pardon themselves for maintaining racial supremacy but also miss out on understanding how social and institutional racism pervades the lived experiences of students of color (Allen & White-Smith, 2014). Since they feel this way about children of color, research was conducted to see how LGBT individuals are treated because of the non-existence of training courses/programs to educate teachers on the LGBT community. This research aimed to increase/change the current attitudes on school policies and to gain a better understanding of researchers and policymakers regarding the differences in attitudes regarding the STPP on sexuality, gender identity, and non-conforming acceptance.

Zero-Tolerance Policies

Historically, the primary focus of schools in the United States had been "on academic and learning needs in training students for postsecondary vocational occupations" (Mallett, 2016b, p. 296). In the early 1990s, schools started using zero-tolerance policies initially created to eliminate drug activities in the 1980s to create "safe and conducive school environments for teacher and student productivity" (Kyere et al. 2018, p. 1; Mallett, 2016a). However, while these policies intended to prevent weapons and drug possession on school campuses, these policies have become the norm in schools and have been used more to punish a student for violating the simplest of school rules (Glenn, 2019; Kyere et al., 2018; Mallett, 2016a). A standard definition of zero-tolerance policies is as follows:

Zero-tolerance is a philosophy or policy that mandates the application of predetermined consequences, most often severe and punitive in mature, that are

intended to be applied regardless of the apparent severity of the behavior,

mitigating circumstances, or situational context. Such an approach is meant to

deter future transgressions by sending a message that no form of a given

unacceptable behavior will be tolerated under any circumstances. (Skiba et al.,

2008, p. 26)

Zero-tolerance policies and exclusionary disciplinary practices have potentially

increased the number of students suspended, expelled, arrested, and referred to the

juvenile and adult criminal justice systems (Kyere et al., 2018; Mallett, 2016b). They

have even been described as policies the school uses to deprive students of their right to

an education (Kyere et al., 2018; Mallett, 2016a). Students are being disciplined at higher

rates than ever, utilizing office discipline referrals, in-school suspensions, out-of-school

suspensions, and expulsion to being arrested (Whitford et al., 2016). These policies have

also increased the likelihood of students interacting with the criminal justice system for

violating minor school rules (Mallon, 2019). Mandated harsh punitive consequences are

enforced upon students when and if they are suspected of breaking school rules (Mallon,

2019).

Zero-tolerance policies have perpetuated the STPP by targeting and monitoring

students once they return to school (Mallon, 2019). Once individuals have been placed in

the criminal justice system, often, they are unable to get back on track in school (Mallon,

2019). Mallon (2019) suggested that "many become demoralized and drop out and have

the potential to fall deeper into the juvenile and criminal justice system (p. 6). Even more,

research has indicated that students "are more likely to experience academic failure

mental health problems, substance abuse, gang activity, and justice system involvement" (Langberg & Ciolfi, 2017, 42).

Zero-tolerance policies are inflexible because they do not allow school administrators or staff to use discretion when punishing students for violating the school rules (Mallett, 2016b). Research has indicated that zero-tolerance policies and exclusionary discipline are applied to students who have committed nonviolent incidents for the first time (Mallett, 2016b). Mallett (2016b) suggested that "most disciplined students are not posing serious risks to the student body nor are they posing safety concerns for the schools they attend" (p. 297). The impact on students placed in the STPP included "missing instructional time and opportunities to learn, falling behind academically, forming negative attitudes or perceptions concerning schools and the school personnel" (p. 297). Mallett (2016b) also indicated that a student who is suspended once doubles the risk of failing additional courses in high school and is more prone to dropping out of school by 20% (p. 297). The rate at which a student drops out of school is doubled if they are "arrested on or off school grounds" and is four times greater when the student is "formally involved with the juvenile courts (p. 297).

Research has indicated that zero-tolerance policies and exclusionary discipline are disproportionally applied to LGBTQ students, students of color, students with disabilities, and those living below the poverty line (Mallon, 2019; McNeil et al., 2016). Moreover, research has also indicated that LGBTQ students "may be selectively punished" and blamed for their victimization (Whitford et al., 2016, p. 120). Preliminary data on LGBTQ students indicated they "have faced greater exposure to peer

victimization and therefore have been more likely to engage in behaviors such as drinking, fighting, truancy, or carrying a weapon for protection" (Whitford et al., 2016, p. 121). Additionally, Whitford et al. (2016) indicated that LGBTQ students "may be selectively punished because school officials might blame them for their victimization, which reinforces the ideology of differential treatment as a contributor to discriminatory discipline" (p. 121).

Perceptions and Experiences of Students and Support Staff

Student's Perceptions and Experiences

To highlight the experiences of students and support staff and their interactions with the STPP, Snapp et al. (2015) conducted a research study that included 19 adult advocates (i.e., educators, including school administrators, teachers and counselors, policymakers, staff youth-serving organizations, and activists) and 31 youths who identified as LGBTQ in Grades 9 to 12. The adult participants were from across the United States, which included Arizona, California, Colorado, D. C., Georgia, Illinois, and Louisiana. A total of 322 youths completed the survey. The findings indicated that the sexual orientation and gender identity of a student are more closely scrutinized than other students when it comes to their presence and actions. School administrators often punish them while their victimizations are ignored or even encouraged by school administrators and educators.

Moreover, Snapp et al. (2015) found that school policies were often enforced unequally on LGBTQ youths regarding dress code violations, public displays of affection, and self-expression. These problematic behaviors included LGBTQ youths

being suspended or expelled from school. Furthermore, LGBTQ youths reported that they have learned to mistrust school administrators because they lack support when victimized. The lack of support they have received from school administrators has required them to fight back to protect themselves, including being truant to escape their victimization. Overall, Snapp et al. opined that LGBTQ youths are viewed as problems and are not worth saving. This can result in them dropping out of school, transferring to an alternative school, getting a GED, or even entering the criminal justice system (p. 76).

Snapp et al. (2015) suggested that further research be conducted on LGBTQ youths from the general public. Further research should include the narrative of LGBTQ youths and "specific discipline policies and practices in specific schools/regions" to understand the various pathways these youths enter into and through the STPP (p. 78). Arredondo et al. (2016) indicated that when it comes to LGBT students' experiences, there is a critical gap in information regarding the negative educational experiences and outcomes that LGBT students face.

In current research on understanding the experiences of youths and how their experiences "may hinder academic achievement and perpetuate justice system involvement," Fine et al. (2018) conducted a quantitative study that included 1,216 male juvenile offenders aged 13 to 17 who participated in a Crossroads Study that followed "male adolescent offenders after their first official contact with the juvenile justice system" (p. 1329). The findings indicated that youths who transferred to and attended an alternative school "fared better academically" than those who attended a traditional school.

Given that the voices of individuals who have experienced the STPP are missing from the literature, Jones et al. (2018) conducted an autoethnographic study of three incarcerated college students and a professor who teaches prison education (p. 51). Jones et al. contributed to the STPP dialogue by examining how unmet needs and complex systemic interactions influenced their identity development. Their narratives demonstrated "the antecedents and negative effects of the STPP," which included: (a) zero-tolerance policies that led to their suspension and expulsion; (b) hostile school climates that were marked by bullying, neglect, and exclusion; (c) the educational trauma that contributed to their low self-esteem and a lack of their academic success; and (d) their involvement in the criminal justice system at school and in early adolescence. The authors indicated their unmet needs as they moved through the criminal justice system. They sought "safety, belongingness, and achievement through violence and gang activity" (p. 53).

Support Staff Experiences and Perceptions

Yang et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative study that employed an interpretative phenomenological approach (IPA) to "examine how the root causes and possible solutions to the STPP are understood by school-based and central office student support services within Denver Public Schools" (p. 319). Using a semi-structured interview protocol, the authors conducted seven focus groups of 36 student support professionals. The findings indicated an awareness of the disproportionality in disciplining students, including a range of beliefs about why it exists. The authors suggested that their research study be replicated using various school districts "that do not have explicit policy goals of

reducing disproportionality, or where discipline disparities have not been identified as a problem to be addressed by community stakeholders" (p. 326). Furthermore, it is suggested that future research be conducted to understand the root cause and solutions to the STPP.

Glenn (2019) utilized a cross-sectional time dimension and quantitative study to examine the perceptions of 112 mental health professionals regarding the three theoretical predictors of problem behaviors, including parental efficacy, child impulsivity, and child resilience. The study found that child resilience was a strong predictor of problem behaviors than child impulsivity and parental efficacy. It is suggested that "promoting resiliency may produce better behavioral outcomes than punishing problem behaviors that likely stem from noncompliance and impulsivity" (p. 14). A weakness of this study was that by using a quantitative approach, there was a lack of the contextual perspective of the participants "because there was no forum for them to expound upon their individual experiences," which ultimately lacked the depth of their knowledge (p. 18). The author recommended using a mixed-method approach that would assist in understanding rule-breaking from their perspectives, adding context to the quantitative analysis.

Summary

In this chapter, I synthesized the pertinent literature regarding LGBT perceptions of and experiences with the education system in connection with the criminal justice system. The literature focused on the theoretical framework of CRT, zero-tolerance policies in connection with the criminal justice system, and the perceptions and

experiences of students and support staff. In Chapter 3, I discuss the research

methodology, including the research design, sampling process, instruments, and

procedures used.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

This study aimed to get an in-depth understanding of how LGBT non-conforming adults have graduated from high school within the last two decades and their experiences in connection to the STPP. The previous chapters gave detailed experiences of LGBT individuals within the STPP. They analyzed the literature concerning CRT and LGBT individuals' relations with the criminal justice system while attending public high schools in the inner-city. This chapter introduces the researched methodology that was used.

Methodology

For this research, I used a qualitative methodology to examine the perceptions and experiences of LGBT individuals with the STPP (e.g., LGBT individuals' perceptions and experiences and perceptions and experiences of support staff). Berkwits and Inui (1998) contended that qualitative research observations and interviews could offer vital real-world information: On a deeper level, qualitative encounters are also essential to comprehend the "structure" of a system: how interdependent individuals, groups, and institutional component's function (or fail to function) together. Qualitative research is applied when it is necessary to study a group of individuals or a population whose voices have been silenced (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research methods are appropriate for real-world situations in which a fuller understanding of behavior, the meanings and contexts of events, and the influence of values on choices might be helpful (Berkwits & Inui, 1998). This study could aid policymakers in creating a more welcoming setting for LGBT individuals that attend schools in the inner-city.

Research Design

This research study aimed to gather firsthand knowledge of the perceptions and experiences of LGBT individuals when seeking support, seeking assistance, or reporting a crime as a victim or an offender when interacting with the criminal justice system. Hence, a phenomenological qualitative approach was chosen. Phenomenology is all about the critical and graphic experience of phenomena by gaining the perception of individuals through their eyesight, and the phenomenological term means "lifeworld" (Creswell, 2013). Phenomenologists are interested in all types of human experience; for example, they would want to know what it is like to be a victim of domestic violence. Taking the human experience of everyday life is a valid way to interpret the world (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). This research design aligned with the research questions successfully captured the meaning perceptions, experiences, and perceived challenges of LGBT individuals who have experienced an interaction with the STPP in connection with the criminal justice system. Since no research studies have focused on these individuals, applying a phenomenological research design to study their lived experiences and interactions with the criminal justice system provided a rich and more profound examination of their experiences and any perceived encounters or obstacles during their exchange.

Participants of the Study

The participants in this research study were 11 adults who self-identify as lesbian, bisexual, or gay individuals who have had an interaction or an experience with the STPP in connection with the criminal justice system (e.g., juvenile court, school resource officers, community police, probation). The age range for participants in this study was

18–45. The reason for selecting this particular age group was that there is an up to an two-decade time range since the participants had been students at inner-city schools in the Detroit Metropolitan area. The participants in the study expressed that they are part of the overlooked population that are targets of the STPP, and their experiences drew attention and expanded the understanding of individuals that identify as non-heterosexual. Homogeneity is used in qualitative research to describe a particular subgroup in-depth (Palinkas et al., 2015). Recruiting participants for this study was highly complex due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Creswell (2007) suggested that a gatekeeper may be required if research is being conducted on individuals marginalized by society. I attempted to utilize an LGBT case manager who had access to this population in the Detroit Metropolitan area. The case manager was provided with information on the nature of this study along with a request for assistance in recruiting participants for this study. The LGBT case manager agreed to distribute fliers to LGBT individuals in the housing program he helps manage. A letter describing the study was sent to the case manager. Interested participants could contact me to begin the interview process. The LGBT population in the Detroit area was recruited through various social media platforms (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Survey Monkey). I also utilized Uber and Lyft and posted the research flier in my car to recruit participants for the study.

Measures

Snapp et al. (2015) created and utilized a semi-structured interview guide for this study with Assistant Professor Shannon D. Snapp's permission (see Appendix A). The interview guide (see Appendix B) focused on information about LGBT individuals'

experiences with and their perceptions of the educational system in connection with the criminal justice system (e.g., juvenile detention centers, school resource officers, and probation). The interview guide was utilized to facilitate discussion in the focus groups and encourage the participants to answer the questions in an open-ended format. Follow-up questions (e.g., "Care to tell me more?" and "How do you suggest your experience with the STPP can have an impact on policy change?") would've been utilized to clarify or further investigate the participants' responses when necessary.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study and influenced the data collection process and analysis were as follows.

1. How can the experiences of LGBT individuals be used to construct training and training programs to help LGBT feel safe and educate faculty?

2. How do LGBT individuals perceive school policies that act as deterrence regulations in the school setting that prevent them from wanting to be educated?

Ethical Protection of Participants

The significance of any research study relies on the safety of human participants. The participants in this research read and signed a consent form, and their confidentiality is protected. There was no known harm concerning the participants in this phenomenological research study. If a participant experienced any harm or had difficulty participating, referrals to local professional support and services offered in the city/county were emailed to them. Throughout the study, the participants were informed

that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the interview at any given time without notice and consequences.

To protect the participants' confidentiality, I replaced all direct and indirect information that could personally identify the interviewee. Each interviewee was assigned a numeric code throughout the transcripts and before data validation to minimize any links between the participants and their data so they could not be re-identified (Drake, 2013). The data collected through email, files, and transcripts were stored on an encrypted password-protected drive in a locked cabinet that was only accessible to me. Due to the current pandemic, during the data collection phase, the participants in this study did not feel comfortable meeting face to face to conduct the interview. I, therefore, offered to interview participants via Facetime, Skype, Microsoft Teams, and other forms of visual communication. However, the participants felt more comfortable answering the interview questions via email.

Data Collection

The data were collected through semi-structured interviews held via email that were safe, conducive to the interviewee's comfort and convenience, and ensured privacy. Emails were exchanged before sending the participants the interview questions, and I established rapport with each participant by asking them to sign the consent form to participate in the research study and their consent via email. There was a section during the interview where demographic traits (e.g., age, race, and education) were requested to elicit descriptive data about each participant. The participants were provided with an

assigned number code that was utilized throughout the interviews. The nature and purpose of this study were discussed, recorded, and transcribed.

Each interview utilized the same semi-structured interview guide created, tested, and used by Snapp et al. (2015). Questions 1 and 2 relate to LGBT past experiences in high school with discipline and perceptions based on their sexuality. Question 3 dug deeper into their experiences by asking if they felt singled out because of their sexual orientation and gender. Question 4 related to the STPP regarding the discipline tactics connected to sexual orientation and potential outcomes of youth once fed into the STPP. Question 5 related to their perception of schools being aware that LGBT individuals are a targeted group of the STPP. Question 6 connected to the participants' perceptions of what can be done to remove disparities from the school setting. Question 7 related to LGBT resources available in the community and how they help others where they have been. Question 8 related to identifying barriers that prevent the LGBT student body from being assisted and recognized as a unique population. Question 9 related to resources such as different forms of support that assist them in serving LGBT youth. Question 10 related to getting extra information not asked during the previous question. This question also allowed the participant a free comfortable space to offer more details that might have been helpful that were not mentioned before. Each question is listed in Appendix B.

Each interview was transcribed and organized accordingly. Emails and files remained in a locked cabinet in my home office. After transcribing the emails from each interview, analyzing that information began.

Data Analysis

I used a phenomenological qualitative approach, narrative analysis, to properly analyze the data. This method analyzed content from various sources, such as interviews of respondents, observations from the field, or surveys. It focused on using the stories and experiences shared by people to answer research questions (Bhatia, 2018). Six methods were utilized to analyze the data:

1. Acknowledging preconceived notions and actively working to neutralize them to avoid confirmation bias.

2. Reducing and coding data into themes involves creating categories and subcategories that are likely to expand during the analysis process.

3. Searching for commonalities and divergences, as overlapping themes are likely to occur across the data sources.

4. Mapping and building themes.

5. Building and verifying theories.

6. Concluding. (O'Leary, 2019)

Before emailing the participants the interview questions, I completed the bracketing process by writing down my experiences with the phenomenon before hearing the lived experiences of each participant. *Bracketing* is setting aside prior knowledge or preconceptions to focus on the essence of the participant's experience, with the researcher being as non-biased as possible (Finlay, 2013). After bracketing my personal experiences and biases, I transcribed each interview. Each transcript was read in its entirety, which provided information and allowed me to identify significant statements.

The next step was to develop a list of significant statements from each transcript, a procedure Moustakas (1994) referred to as horizontalization. These significant statements were related to the participants' descriptions of their experiences. The third step involved clustering the significant statements into "meaning units" or themes. All relevant statements were recorded with their supporting quotes and page number. Each nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping statement was listed. These meaning units were clustered into color-coded themes on the transcripts and placed in a table format for easier viewing. Once the themes were identified, the fourth step of writing a textural description began. The textual descriptions, which came from the common themes across the transcripts, described what the participants experienced. These descriptions included verbatim quotes from the participants relating to their experiences and perceptions about the criminal justice system. The fifth step included creating structural descriptions, which provided a detailed explanation of how the participants experienced the phenomenon (i.e., the setting and context). The final step in completing the analysis involved writing a composite description of the group's experience. This composite description provided a better understanding of participants' experiences and perceptions of the criminal justice system (see Hamilton, 2019).

Role of the Researcher

Qualitative research is about seeing individuals' perceptions and experiences through their eyes. I was honest with the participants during the recruiting and interview phases. I had to actively interpret and report for others to read and learn (see Sutton & Austin, 2015). The focal point of any study should be to be open-minded to the topic

being studied while linking any knowledge or prejudices to concentrate on the core of the

participant's involvement, not the scholar's (Finlay, 2013). The research participants

needed to know about the human instrument (researcher) to accomplish this. It is the

researcher's job to connect with the participants by incorporating aspects of self,

including any biases and assumptions, experiences, and expectations that qualify their

ability to conduct the research (Greenbank, 2003). Establishing this form of knowledge

before the interview, I was able to shine a light on an unvoiced population. I provided a

comprehensive analysis of the subjective view of LGBT individuals' interaction with the

education system in connection with the criminal justice system when seeking assistance

or reporting crimes through the recorded narrative owned by each participant.

Verification of Findings

To ensure that trustworthiness was created and developed throughout the study, I

utilized four criteria: (a) credibility (in preference to internal validity); (b) transferability

(in preference to external validity/generalizability); (c) dependability (in preference to

reliability); (d) confirmability (in preference to objectivity) (see Guba, 1981).

Concentrating on tactics to create trustworthiness at the end of conducting a study,

instead of focusing on the methods of verification during the study, would have put the

research at risk of missing severe threats to reliability and validity until it is too late to

correct them (see Morse et al., 2002). I confirmed credibility through member checking

by reaffirming, translating, or summarizing all unclear information that lacks precision

during the interview process (Harper & Cole. 2012). This allowed me to determine the

accuracy of the information provided by the participant during the data collection

process, which produced a deeper understanding of their experiences and perceptions of the education and criminal justice systems in their own words as they have experienced it.

The results of a conducted study in which the results can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings are known as transferability (William, 2006). Transferability was enhanced when I described the contents of the research and the assumptions that were the core of the study. Transferability took place when the results all share the same characteristics (Creswell, 2007, 209). The organizational and documented descriptions of the participants' experiences and perceptions of the educational system in connection with the criminal justice system provided a dense explanation of this population's behavior.

According to Bitsch (2005), dependability refers to "the stability of findings over time" (p. 86). Dependability is consistent; the results are more dependable when the researcher is constant. To check the dependability of any qualitative study, check whether the researcher has been careless or made mistakes in conceptualizing the study, collecting the data, interpreting the findings, and reporting results (Williams, 2011). The researcher adhered to Walden University's quality standards and guidelines throughout this study. The standard of confirmability was fulfilled by the phenomenological research's fundamental component of relating, which is fundamentally reflexive and a vital constituent.

Implications for Positive Social Change

This study collected personal experiences and added to current knowledge of what is known about the LGBT community and their interactions with the STPP, also, on their perceptions, interactions, and experiences with the criminal justice system (zero-tolerance policies, the perceptions, and experiences of students and support staff, and STPP training programs). It was predicted that the results of this study would imply positive social change at the educational level, which included a better understanding of LGBT perceptions and experiences of the STPP. On the community level, the anticipated implication for positive social change included continuing education for parents and school staff (teachers, principals, and school resource officers) regarding the unique challenges LGBT individuals faced when attending schools in the inner cities when seeking acceptance and understanding.

Summary

The purpose of the qualitative phenomenological research study was to comprehend how LGBT adult-aged individuals who have experienced, perceived, and interacted with the STTP (zero-tolerance policies, and perceptions and experiences of students and support staff) and the responses when seeking assistance and reporting incidents of discrimination based on their sexuality. This research design aligned with the research questions to effectively capture the meaning-making perceptions, experiences, and perceived challenges of LGBT individuals who had experienced an interaction with the STTP. The participant population was individuals who identified themselves as LGBT individuals.

This chapter discussed the phenomenological design utilized for the research study and the justification for its use. The research questions, participants, interview guide, and procedures were also addressed. The data collection and analysis and the verification of findings were also explained in their chapter.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This qualitative study aimed to describe and understand the insights and encounters of LGBT individuals who have attended high school in the inner city of Detroit, Michigan, with a connection (e.g., sexuality, bullying, and the criminal justice system). The problem that this study explored was how sexual orientation and sexual identity might influence LGBT individuals' experiences and perceptions of the criminal justice system. A qualitative phenomenology research methodology was employed to capture the essence of this phenomenon. The research questions that guided this study were the following:

1. How can the experiences of LGBT individuals be used to construct training programs to help them feel safe and educate faculty?

2. How do LGBT individuals perceive school policies that act as deterrence regulations in the school setting that prevent them from wanting to be educated?

In Chapter 2, I provided a synopsis of the literature concerning LGBT individuals' insights and encounters with the criminal justice system. I also reviewed the theoretical framework of systematic/structural racism and microaggression. In Chapter 3, I explained the research methodology, the ethical protection of the participants, the research questions, the number of participants, the recruitment methods, and the sampling strategy used in this study. In Chapter 4, I described the research setting, participants' demographics, the data collection, and the data analysis process used in this study. I also

addressed credibility and explained the significant themes acquired from the participants'
lived encounters with the education system in inner cities relating to the criminal justice
system.

Setting

To collect data from LGBT individuals who had attended high schools in inner-
city connected to the criminal justice system, I posted fliers on Facebook, Twitter, and
Tik Tok. I contacted LGBT/allies organizations to post fliers. I utilized SurveyMonkey to
get the word out about my study and to recruit participants. It was incredibly challenging
during the pandemic to recruit and arrange a time for people to complete an interview. I
also used snowball sampling to recruit LGBT individuals via Microsoft Teams, Skype,
Facetime, and Google Duo. I conducted email interviews from July 2021 to April 2022.
The information on the fliers included a Google Voice number and an email address that
potential participants could use to reach me. During the email interviews, I was unaware
of the participants' physical location, which allowed them to feel comfortable and
assured their privacy of participating in the study freely. I did not physically meet with
any of the participants in my research and only communicated with them through email
and during their email interviews.

Demographics

The study sample consisted of 11 LGBT individuals- eight participants were gay,
two were bisexual, and one was lesbian. One participant identified as Puerto Rican and
Dominican; the other ten identified as African American/Black. The age, ethnicity,
gender, and sexual identity of the 11 participants are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Participants' Demographic Data

Participant	Age	Ethnicity	Gender	Sexual identity
001	33	African American/Black	Male	Gay
002	30	African American/Black	Male	Gay
003	33	African American/Black	Female	Lesbian
004	28	African American/Black	Male	Gay
005	41	African American/Black	Male	Gay
006	30	African American/Black	Male	Gay
007	24	African American/Black	Male	Bisexual
008	32	African American/Black	Male	Gay
009	33	African American/Black	Male	Bisexual
010	27	African American/Black	Male	Gay
011	34	Puerto Rican/Dominican	Male	Gay

The participants of the study sample shared common traits, such as (a) self-identifying as an LGBT individual, (b) having an interaction an experience with an entity of the education system in the inner city (e.g., school officials, bullying, and the criminal justice system), (c) being of adult age (i.e., 18 years of age or older), and (d) being people of color. All study participants attended high school in the inner city and were open about their sexuality. The mean age of participants was 31.75 years, with the youngest being 24 years of age and the oldest being 41 years of age. All participants spoke English

and had an interaction or knew of an experience in the criminal justice system. To ensure confidentiality and to minimize any concerns about the participants' identity, an identifier number was assigned to each participant at the beginning of the interview.

Data Collection

I began collecting data after receiving approval from Walden University's institutional review board (# 08-21-20-0623765). After posting fliers on social media, 11 potential participants contacted me to schedule an interview. I conducted 11 interviews using a semi-structured interview guide created by Snapp et al. (2015) with 15 open-ended questions (see Appendix B). The interviews were conducted over ten months (July 2021 to May 2022). This study reached saturation, and therefore no further participants were recruited. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews lasted 20–45 minutes and were completed via email with the consent of the participants. A number was assigned to each participant before the interview began.

Before each interview began, I briefly introduced the study and encouraged each participant to ask questions throughout the interview. After the participant indicated acceptance and understanding of the requirements, demographic information was obtained, and the interview began. At the end of each interview, I assigned each interview an identification number corresponding to the number assigned to the participant at the beginning. To respect the participants' time and experience, I did not pressure them to respond to every interview question even though they were asked. The interview was then backed up on a password-protected hard drive. After completing this process, I manually transcribed each interview into a Word document. Specific names,

locations, and any other information that could be used to identify the participant were omitted from the transcripts to further ensure the participants' confidentiality and privacy.

All participants were eager to share their feelings, thoughts, past conversations, experiences, and interactions with the education system in connection with the criminal justice system. Some participants were more detailed than others, but all remained on topic and provided factual information throughout the interview. Each participant was cooperative and freely answered all questions that pertained to them. At the end of the interview, the participant was debriefed and thanked for participating in the study.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data analysis approach used for this study was Moustakas's (1994) modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method. I chose this approach because it focuses on the participant's experience in a study of shared experiences based on the STPP. The analysis is closely correlated to the data recorded during the interviewing process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Throughout this research, I used NVivo (12) to store and organize the data by creating similar responses and manually organizing them into themes. I manually completed several steps to organize the data using Moustakas's modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method. In the first step, I described my personal experience concerning the phenomenon being studied. Before conducting interviews, I ensured that the study did not include my experiences, thoughts, and feelings on the phenomenon. I kept a journal, which allowed me to provide detailed feelings and thoughts about the STPP.

The second step consisted of developing a list of significant statements, which was done by assigning equal value and weight to all the statements in the transcripts. This

allowed me to create a list of statements that were nonoverlapping and nonrepetitive and kept the focus on the phenomenon that was being studied.

The third step was grouping the factual statements into meaning units or themes. The factual statements were stored and organized in NVivo, and connections were created to group those statements into meaning components or identifiers, which were assigned descriptive titles. Initially, nine codes were generated. I further analyzed the codes, searching for and distinguishing related patterns or terms. I then categorized these codes into three themes that allowed more focus on the phenomenon and better supported the research questions that led this study.

The fourth and fifth steps involved writing textural and organized descriptions of the participant's experiences, including quotations from the participants' transcripts. These quotations were organized and stored in NVivo. The explanations of the participants' experiences represented their individual feelings, perceptions, thoughts, and lived experiences in connection with their interactions with the criminal justice system. The sixth step involved explaining the center of the phenomenon by integrating both the textural and structural descriptions, representing a solid and precise composite description from all participants.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of this research study's process and data collection was established through four criteria: (a) credibility; (b) transferability; (c) dependability; and (d) confirmability.

Credibility

I ensured credibility in this study by structuring a study to seek and attend to complexities that can be explained through a recursive design process that includes member checking, presenting thick descriptions, and discussing negative experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Transferability

I guaranteed transferability in this study by presenting a rich, thick explanation of the data by combining both the textural and structural depictions of all participants' experiences and insights into the education system concerning the criminal justice system.

Dependability

I ensured dependability in this study by providing a robust, comprehensive, and sequential description of how I collected the data so that others could duplicate the research process. The interview guide I adopted in this study was used with permission from Snapp et al. (2015; see Appendices A & B).

Confirmability

To achieve confirmability, I kept a journal. I reviewed it before and after each interview to ensure that the study did not include my encounters, opinions, and attitudes on the phenomenon.

<div align="center">

Results

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Participants who met the study criteria of being LGBT individuals attending high school in the Detroit Metropolitan area during Grades 9–12 were emailed the interview

questions. The semi-structured interviews were conducted via email due to the current

pandemic. Participants responded to the research flier and contacted me via email.

Participants were then emailed the interview questions and emailed back when they were

completed. The interview guide was used to ensure all participants were briefed on

confidentiality and the voluntary nature of the study. Each participant was interviewed

separately, and the interview responses answered the main research questions.

The LGBT individuals answered the interview questions thoroughly about their

lived experiences and how it pertains to the education of LGBT individuals that attended

high school in the Detroit Metropolitan area. The participants vividly described how their

high school years correlated to the STPP. The LGBT individuals spoke openly about how

they were treated in school based on their school policies. All participants clearly

explained how their experiences could influence the change in education policies and the

criminal justice system. Two research questions organized the study results, and the

themes resulted from the coding of the transcripts.

1. How can the experiences of LGBT individuals be used to construct training
   and training programs to help LGBT feel safe and educate faculty?

2. How do LGBT individuals perceive school policies that act as deterrence
   regulations in the school setting that prevent them from wanting to be
   educated?

I used anchor codes based on the research questions. Anchor codes come from the

central concept depicted in the research question and are derived from the breakdown of

each question (Phillips, 2016). The anchor codes for Research Question 1 are

experiences, construct, training, feel safe, and educate. For Research Question 2, the anchor codes are LGBT experiences, schools, policies, and deterrence regulations. Nine codes were created based on the participants' responses using the qualitative research program NVivo. The codes generated were alternative schools, specific circumstances, disciplinary policies, disorderly conduct, disruptive behavior, education, public schools, school officials, and schools. The research and interview questions created three themes: sensitivity and diversity training, quality education, and education rights. Subthemes also emerged: sexuality, lack of supervision, and lack of resources. Table 2 displays the two research questions, the interview questions that addressed the research question, anchor codes, and emergent themes. These themes appeared through the participants' significant statements and supported the two research questions that guided this study.

Table 2

Study Themes

Research question	Interview questions	Anchor codes	Emergent themes
1. How can the experiences of LGBT individuals be used to construct training and programs to help LGBT feel safe and educate faculty?	1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14	Experiences, construct training, feel safe, school-based arrest, and emotional response	Sensitivity and diversity training and quality education
2. How do LGBT individuals perceive school policies that act as deterrence regulations in the school setting that prevent them from wanting to be educated?	2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13	LGBT experiences, school policies, and deterrence regulations	Education rights and sexuality

Theme 1: Sensitivity and Diversity Training

The first theme from the data was the participants' experiences regarding their interactions with the criminal justice system. Three anchor codes were generated: (a) construct training, (b) feel safe, and (c) school-based arrest. The seventh interview question is, "What training should police officers, teachers, and other staff receive before they are deployed to work with children of the LGBT community in schools?" The question facilitated a detailed description of how each participant viewed school policies at high schools in the Detroit Metropolitan area. The participants responded with extensive knowledge about training that can help alleviate different forms of bias around sexuality.

Construct Training

The first code that was generated from the data was construct training. All 11 participants indicated they experienced a dire need for a training program when interacting with school officials (school staff and school resource officers). All respondents expressed the utilization of police presence in schools when detailing their high school experiences. The respondents said there is a dire need to train school staff working with LGBT individuals in inner-city high schools that utilize the aid of police presence. Participant 7 stated,

I think they could have a community discussion presenting issues that LGBT have within their school. An open discussion is more effective for understanding LGBT individuals' challenges. Teach a class to respect people who do not think, act, and do things you do not.

Participant 1 stated that

Police officers, teachers, and other staff should learn how to speak to LGBT individuals with respect. The police do not respect LGBT individuals and are quick to call them demeaning names such as fagats [*sic*] and get away with it, and also suggested that there should be more openly gay officers on the force.

Participant 9 suggested the general basics are to watch your words and be mindful of people's feelings. This participant stated, "I feel people in power can be assholes. For example, a trans woman, I think some people shouldn't call them sir; call them by their pronouns." Participant 10 expressed that "School resources officers, Cops, Teachers, and other staff members should be receiving a large amount of training before they work with

anyone who's part of the LGBT community for the simple fact that they treat us as if we don't matter or that our voices don't deserve to be heard with is unfair."

Participant 3 stated that their potential supervisor should provide them with a questionnaire the officer must fill out to work with the LGBTQ community. The purpose of the questionnaire is to identify if the officer genuinely wants to make a positive impact on that person's life during their interaction. Participants 5, 10, and 11 did not go into details but stated that diversity training was needed in schools that enforce the STPP. Participant 11 further suggested that school staff should be required to take LGBT training even if they identify as being LGBT. Participant 4 stated: They should make them take classes that will explain the different parts of the LGBT community.

Participant 6 expressed that LGBT-sensitive training can help them to look beyond their sexuality and more at the person. Diversity training would be the first in understanding LGBT needs. Watching a video is not training; hands-on training is the best bet. Events are a good conversation starter. Participant 2 also suggested childcare training and how to deal with issues that might come up that a child cannot express to their family.

Feeling Safe

Participants were asked, "How can we ensure safe public schools while respecting all students' right to education?" There were a few differences in the responses from the participants. The overall concept of the LGBT individuals' perceptions of feeling safe in schools that practice STTP procedures is as follows:

Participant 10 stated that we could ensure safe public schools by making sure that everyone's safety is taken seriously and appropriately the moment that the child steps one foot on school grounds; no matter what their gender or sexuality preference is, everyone should feel safe while earning their education. Participant 1 further added kids should be taught to be respectful at all times; also address bullying.

Participant 11 felt that by ensuring that all policies are followed through, respected, and providing check-ups to ensure they are still followed. Participant 2 stated that sensitivity training and separating personal beliefs from the job would ensure safe public schools. Participant 10 said that making sure that everyone who decides to go into the education field takes a sensitivity class also by making school administration (including the board) as diverse as possible. Participant 4 elaborated more by suggesting that a mixture of security in the schools identify as non-conforming heterosexuals. Participants 10 and 4 felt that if the schools had more open LGBT employees, it would make the students feel safe.

When Participant 3 was asked about how to ensure school safety, they stated the following:

We cannot ensure any safe schools because kids are jerks. Kids try to find other kids to relate to. All people need to do is to have an open mind that everyone is not the same and people have a right to express themselves. Maybe given the proper guidance on dealing with the many issues students face every day instead of judging and assuming.

Participant 9 partially agreed with Participant 11 by stating, "Straight people should take a moment to ask themselves how they would react to being treated nasty because I am not straight also, by accepting everyone." Participant 7 had a fascinating point and stated the following:

It would seem that everybody needs a space for them to go. People need to focus on their similarities instead of differences. Create an environment where everybody is accepting and part of the same playing field. Public schools need more income and parents' involvement in their children's education. Make the school more enjoyable and recognize common ground; parents can no longer sit on the slide line.

Participant 6 agreed with Participant 7 by adding, "Adults should be more involved in a positive way." Participant 5 did not elaborate on their response when asked about feeling safe; they stated, "Keep enforcing the rules and laws.

School-Based Arrest

The majority of the participants agreed with school-based arrest. Their opinions varied; however, Participant 11 had an opposing opinion about the school-based arrest and a very detailed suggestion:

Nobody should be arrested in school. It sends a wrong message to other students, lowers morale, and tells the student that the school doesn't care about them. They should allow them to either get in the back of a police vehicle with no cuffs or maybe have a place within the school facility that houses individuals needing police attention.

Participant 10 agreed with 11 "Yes, I feel if there's going to be an arrest, it shouldn't be arrested in front of other students." Participant 10, who works in the education department, had this to add:

It is your job to manage disruptive behavior; if not, the parents should be contacted. If a student is violent and can't be contained, the parents should reach them; then call the police or get them involved if the school could de-escalate the situation. Participant 6 said it depends on the situation.

Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, and 10 agreed that children should be arrested in school; however, their opinions differed. Participant 9 stated that a child should be arrested in school if:

If the kid brings a gun to school, they should be arrested if they get a weapon to school to cause harm to kids. No disorderly conduct or disruptive behavior should warrant arrest, and mental health advisors should be placed in schools. Participant 1 agreed with nine by expressing, "They should be arrested if found with a gun in their hand, bag, or locker. You don't know what the person had planned to bring the weapon to school". Participant 5 added that physical harm should warrant arrest.

All 11 participants agreed that if a child brings a weapon to school intending to do bodily harm, they should be arrested. Participants also agreed they should be arrested if a child is doing drugs/selling them on school grounds. Participants 2, 3, and 7 decided children should not be detained in school due to disruptive behavior or disorderly conduct. Participant 4 stated, "If the child needs to be contained and is disrupting school

operations. Disorderly conduct and disruptive behavior are enough to arrest a child if the parents cannot be reached".

Emotional Response

When asked about their reactions to being arrested in school, Participants 2, 10, and 11 all stated that they would feel embarrassed. Participants 1 and 7 indicated that it depends on the situation and would need to understand why. Participant 9 expressed great emotions when responding to school-based arrest:

I would be pissed off. My little brother was arrested; he went to an alternative school, was shooting dice during lunch, and got caught by the teachers. My brother stated that when the teachers grabbed his and his friend's coats, a bag of weed fell out of them, and they were arrested. Participants 2 and 11 said they would be upset and angry, and 11 stated they would feel bad.

This leads to Participant's three emotional response to school-based arrest; they added, "I would be scared because the police arrest people who have committed a crime, not just for behavior issues." This implies that police officers do not show empathy when making arrests. Participant 6 stated, "I'll be devastated, but my friend was arrested in middle school for bringing a gun to school because he was being bullied." Participant 5 did not express concern by stating, "If we were wrong, I wouldn't feel anyway." Participants 4 and 7 wouldn't suspect their child, friend, or themselves to be arrested.

Theme 2: Quality Education

The second theme from the data was the participants' thoughts about education and the criminal justice system. Four anchor codes were generated: (a) LGBT perceives, (b) school policies, (c) deterrence regulations, and (d) sexuality.

LGBT Perceives

The first code that was generated from the data was LGBT perceives. All 11 participants described their perceptions/lived experiences in the education system in correlation with the criminal justice system.

School Policies

The second code that was generated from the data was school policies. The participants were asked, "What are the disciplinary policies in your school? How do they compare to the policies in place when you or your parents were in school?". Participant 7 is an educator, and their response was a step in the right direction by sharing the following.

> We try our best not to send them home because if they go home, they will lose a month of school because of a lack of structure. For example, we do school suspensions, community service, and phone calls home. It was different because we did not get a chance to get an in-school suspension. We had to sit silently in class and do homework for 8 hours. It was a consequence if I did not go to school, and it was considered a setback for me not going to school compared to kids in the modern-day who do not see a connection or lose out on missing school.

Participant 9 had a different experience to add:

When I was in high school, you were allowed to get suspended for a week for
fighting, but by the time I got to sophomore year, if you got into a fight, such as
an argument, you would be suspended for the entire school year. When my
parents were in school, the teachers could discipline the children by hitting them
with a ruler. They were not kicked out of school. My father stated that his
teachers were able to punish students physically.

Participant 2 also said that the teachers could hit the students when their parents
were in high school. Participant 5 was the first and only participant discriminated against
because of their sexuality. They had this to share.

Back in school, there was no cussing and fighting the basics. I was suspended a
lot because I was gay. The school administrators overlooked the fact that I was
gay. I always felt that I had to prove myself compared to today; when children act
up, they are being prosecuted.

Participant 11 felt as though the school policies have gotten worse, and they had
this to express;

When my parents were in school, I thought it was a day's suspension; When I was
in school, it was ten days. I think it's currently ten days out and five days in".

Participants 3 and 6 don't feel that school policies have changed by stating, "I
graduated in 2007, and my mother graduated in 1987. I think my mother's
disciplinary policies were not as bad as they are now in most schools.

Participant 4 also attended a high school in the inner-city of Detroit and had this to say:

I went to Cody, which is located on Detroit's west side. You had to have your

high school ID or couldn't attend school that day. You had to wear the same

uniform; if you did not, you were forced to go home and change. The policies are

different because my parents did not have metal detectors or police presence in

the school.

Participant 1 was the only participant that stated, "Not a lot of arrests," but

suspension and being kicked out was a school policy. Participant 10 said, "When I was in

school, we were suspended for fighting, and in school suspension for skipping class. The

policies were similar but not the same as when my parents attended school". Participant

11 stated the following about their high school experience "No violence of any kind but

no policy on gender equality. When my parents went to school, they didn't have as much

support for the issues they were dealing with today; there are better solutions for the

kids".

Interview question 10 seeks to answer if disciplinary schools are necessary and, if

they are, what their requirements would be. Participant 7 stated is a teacher that teaches

in Inkster, Michigan, which is considered a rural area, had the following to say.

No, because that doesn't help to learn to function in the real world. In reality, you

need a check to pay your bills at a job. While at work, you can't just up, leave, get

stuff, and go back to work. We had to send children home that we could connect

to, and they were disruptive. Attendance, c average, and choosing an

extracurricular activity unique to them, but some bad kids are wrong; they cannot

sit idly.

Participants 1, 2, 6, and 9 agreed that alternative disciplinary schools are not a good substitute for troubled children. Participant 2 had an opposing viewpoint and shared, "They are a good idea for children who can't seem to behave in a normal school setting." Participant 6 had this to add.

> Yes, because it suits the more challenging kids, but then I heard those schools are worse than the schools where the children were sent. The exact requirements are as regular schools. They should be given more attention and more focus on their education.

Participant 9 believed alternative disciplinary are a good idea and added, "If a child gets kicked out, they should be sent to an alternative school." Participant 1 had the following to add, "Yes, I do, and I don't know the requirements. I know that it is good for kids that are kicked out of school and are gangbanging". Participants 3, 4, and 5 all agreed they were not a good idea. Participant 3 shared a personal experience from when they were in high school.

> I've had plenty of friends forced to go to an alternative school. Some were abused, some were experiencing extreme poverty, and some were misguided; however, people don't see that or even ask, and all they see is what is being shown physically.

Participant 4 argued against alternative schools, stating, "Because it is a way of pushing the kid's behavior off to others when they need to be understood." Participant 9 furthermore added.

They get rid of regular kids in regular high school. Kids are introduced to a lot of things that they shouldn't be. Alternative schools have crappy teachers because they do not want to be there; I feel that alternative schools are the step before going to juvenile detention. The exact requirements that they have in regular school.

Participant 10 did not respond to Question 10; however, it was interesting how LGBT participants felt LGBT individuals should be sent to alternative schools. The other participants were against it and believed that it goes against educating the youth.

Sexuality.

Sexuality is a topic that is considered taboo, and most people feel that it has no place in the world, let alone in the education system. Children in modern-day society are more open with their sexuality now than ever before. That has caused some issues to arise in public schools in connection with the criminal justice system. All participants were asked, "How would you react if you (or your friend/child) were unfairly punished by school officials based primarily on their sexuality?" The majority of the participants express some form of a negative emotion/reaction. Participants 2 and 11 stated they would file a lawsuit, be angry, and protest. Participant 11 said, "They would get the news involved and cause problems for the school administration." Participant 10 stated that they would:

If my child were ever unfairly punished for their sexuality, I would take that situation to the higher-up, the county school board. My child should be able to attend school to earn their education regardless of their sexual preference.

Participant 9 added, "I would be furious because your sexuality should not have anything to do with your behavior and how you act in school. The only reason you go to school is to be educated". Participant 7 stated, "I would feel betrayed because a school is supposed to allow all types of children, and when you act differently and marginalize children, it creates problems." Participant 4 stated that they would be "Pissed off because school officials should be more accepting of children instead of judging them." Participant 3 said, "You shouldn't discriminate against people based on their sexuality, race, or gender."

Participant 1 witnessed LGBT individuals being mistreated and punished by school officials based primarily on their sexuality, and they shared their experiences.

I hated seeing it firsthand; how others would gaybash the feminine boy at school or the female stud, and most of the staff didn't do anything. It has gotten better today, but some schools aren't that accepting yet.

When I attended high school between the years of 2002-2006, most of the student population was African American/Black, and it were instances where the more feminine boys were teased but not bullied. I was in the 11th grade, and it was a guy in the 9th or 10th grade that was super flamboyant. He was teased, but I don't recall him being bullied; he even wore dresses to school, and when heterosexual boys tried to pick on him, it was a few instances when people of both LGBT and heterosexuals stood up for him. Participant 5 had this is said:

I would advocate for my children back when I was in school and punished for

being bullied. I don't think it had to do with my sexuality. The school officials

mistreated me because they knew I was being bullied and was defending myself.

Participant 6 stated that they would take the following actions if they were a

parent "I'll be upset because why is my child being punished based on their sexuality. I

would talk to school officials to see what can be done to make my child's school

experience better". Participants 3 and 11 hoped the school would have specific

procedures and guidelines to prevent their children from being punished solely for their

sexuality. Participant 11 added:

I would be upset if my child and friend were mistreated because of their sexuality.

I would hope that they had specific procedures in place to make sure that nothing

crazy happens and that everything works out smoothly.

Lack of Supervision.

Participants were asked, "What do you think are the reasons for the increase in

suspensions, expulsions, and school-based arrests in schools?" The question facilitated a

detailed description of how each participant viewed the increase and change in school

policies at high schools in the Detroit Metropolitan area. Most participants blamed the

increase on the adults, such as parents, guardians, and educators, in LGBT individuals'

lives. Participants 3, 5, 6, and 7 agreed that the parents were to blame. Participant 3 said,

"A lot has to do with the kid's upbringing and to find themselves and where they fit in."

Participant 5 added, "I think the lack of guidance counselors, children going through

sexual identity crises, not being understood at home, and school has contributed to this

increase." Four out of 11 participants in this study believe that no tolerance starts in the home and is not tolerated in the public school system in Detroit. Participant 7 went into detail by expressing the following.

> I think that parents don't care about their children. Parents do not educate; they have no interest in their well-being or studies, and their minds are focused on other things than their children. Their home lives put so much stress on them that they do not care about school. When parent-teacher conferences come around, it tends to be a waste of time because the parents that should attend do not, and they do not check on their children throughout the school year. The only parents attending parent-teacher conferences are the parents of the children doing well in school.

Participant 2 was unsure about increased suspensions, expulsions, and school-based arrests. Participant 1 stated, "The staff is not paying attention to half of the students. They should be able to tell when a child is suffering or ready to do something to others". Participant 11 added, "I feel for LGBT individuals because of racial and gender bias. Schools aren't equipped to handle the many issues individuals face daily". The changes made in the public school system are due to zero-tolerance policies. They have been added in response to increased fights and negative behavior.

Participants 4, 6, 10, and 11 agreed that the common denominator is fighting among students. Participant 6 had this to express;

> Fights, kids come from an environment where their parents do not care. The parents do not teach their kids the way they used to teach them when I was

younger. Their parents tell them to speak their minds, and they do not care about others.

Participant 4 added, "Being in the wrong place at the wrong time." This could suggest that some LGBT individuals are guilty by association. Participant 11 believed, "The increasing violence seen in the media and the streets is only in urban areas." This has resulted in zero-tolerance policies in inner-city high schools.

Participant 9 had this to say to add;

I genuinely feel that it is because of the zero tolerance for drugs and behavior in schools. The increase in suspensions and expulsions is because if you target kids at a young age, they develop a criminal record and end up in jail.

Theme 3: Education Rights

The third theme to emerge from the data was education rights. Four codes were generated: (a) pipeline operating, (b) waiving education, (c) harsh punishments, (d) lack of resources, and (e) educational funding.

Pipeline Operating

School policies are one of the main factors that hold the STPP together. So, it would make sense to ask the participants a two-part question "Have you ever seen any instances of the school-to-prison pipeline operating? How did you know that the instance was based on the pipeline?". Participants 1, 2,4,7, and 11 stated that they had not seen the STPP operating within their schools. Participant 7 added, "The school does not want to send children home as a form of punishment." Participants 3,5,6,8,9, and 10 did not respond to the question. Participants 1, 10, and 11 stated no; when asked the second part

of the question, the shared instances were not based on the pipeline. Participants 6 and 9 did not respond. Participant 4 shared, "I did not notice the stpp operating. I did not notice the pipeline my sexuality was accepted". Whereas participant 8 had this very detailed experience to share

> Yes, for example, when I was in the 10th grade, I got into a minor altercation with a group of boys; the gym teachers caught us fighting, and the teacher broke it up and sent everyone home. One of the hall monitors told the principals and wanted all of us kicked out of school. I got suspended indefinitely, and my mom had to go to the school board for a week to get me back in school. If you get kicked out, getting back into school is problematic because an investigation will be launched. My stepfather educated me on the pipeline, so my mother could argue with the school board to get me back in school.

Having parents like Participant 8 was a positive outcome for LGBT students because their parents were educated on school policies. Participant 5 shared the personal experience of a current family member.

> Recently, my 14-year-old niece started high school, leading to multiple girls' homes. My sister got a child protective services case and was later charged with assault and battery, as well as my niece. My niece developed a criminal record based on a school fight, and she was defending her brother.

Participant 3 gave insight into how the STPP operates within the inner-city public schools in Detroit, Michigan, by sharing the following.

When you have schools specifically for students with behavior issues, instead of finding what interests the child or what could be causing the child to act out, you place them in a school for delinquents. Which, to me, gears them up for the worst to come, which is jail.

Furthermore, this keeps the pipeline going; preparing for this study involves education and whether children can decide if they want to be educated.

Waiving Education

Participants responded to question 11 in various ways, but most did not believe children can waive their education rights under certain circumstances. Participant 10 did not respond to this question. Seven out of eleven participants thought a child could not waive their education rights. Participant 7 gave the following explanation as to why a child does not have the right to waive their education "They don't have the right to waive their education. They cannot support themselves during that phase of their lives, so they cannot decide if they want an education". Participant 11 agreed almost entirely with Participant 7 but said, "I think some kids don't even think about the repercussions of their actions, how it affects them in school, and how it relates to their lives in the future."

Participant 1 stated, "Kids today only want to learn from social media. Not people". Participant 11 expressed that children should be required to finish school, whether public or alternative. Participant 9 felt that if a child comes to school to kill people or to cause harm, they waive their right to education. Participant 6 added, "When a child is being disruptive, "Participant 3 went deeper by saying, "Unless a child is facing an issue keeping them from focusing on school. Many factors can cause a child not to be

interested in school; the next section will discuss another topic that continues to contribute to ushering LGBT individuals into the STPP in Detroit, Michigan.

Harsh Punishments

There are many forms of punishments that LGBT individuals have gone through and that continue to go through; this section will discuss eleven different experiences from LGBT individuals that have attended inner-city schools across the Detroit Metropolitan area. Interview question number 8 asked the participants, "Why do you think students of the LGBT are more likely to receive harsh punishments for misbehavior? What about children with special needs?" Participant 4 shared their thoughts on why LGBT receives harsher punishments.

Children are more out than when I was back in school. Most people still feel it should not be flaunted, and school staff uses it to punish LGBT children. I am not sure about children with special needs. I have not seen mistreatment in my own life.

Participant 3 expressed a personal thought from their experience in high school and shared the following.

Some people perceived me as delinquent because they already felt I was headed down the wrong path. I was told that I was doing the devil's work. Regarding special needs, my little brother has autism the moment he starts talking; I see people judging him because of how he talks.

Participant 9 shared,

I think homophobia has a lot to do with it; for example, in school, coaches will call the boys that are more feminine fairies and princesses, which are demeaning

names. I think special education kids are targets because people do not have
patience and understanding.

Participant 1 added, "I've seen it happen to others but not myself. Gays receive
harsher punishments because society fears them for no reason". Participant 5 believed,
"They are being bullied because of being gay, especially gay males. Children with special
needs should not be included". Whereas participant 6 stated that "Children with special
needs receive harsher punishments because they are considered special needs."
Participant 11 shared,

> I think anytime someone doesn't know precisely how to deal with a situation, they
> meet it with aggression. It's just the way humans were programmed, most
> humans. I have seen kids with special needs get treated differently. For example,
> When I was in high school, there was a fight between two students, one had
> special needs, and the other did not. The fight was minor; the special needs
> student could return to school the next day. The other student received a 3-day
> suspension.

Participant 6 agreed with Participant 11 by stating that "people do not have
tolerance nor are comfortable." Participants suggested that LGBT would receive harsher
punishments because people do not accept them. Participant 7 believes sexuality has
nothing to do with the students receiving harsher punishment based on their education
challenges and sexuality. Participant 2 shared, "I have had issues with my gender because
some felt that boys deserved more punishment than girls." Participants identified as gay
males, but their experience did not include their sexuality but their gender. Participant 5

further expressed that the harsh punishments were based on fights they were in, not their sexuality. Participant 9 replied no, and ten did not respond to question 8.

Lack of Resources.

Question 14 asked the participants, "If you had the proper amount of funding to spend on education in your community, what would you do with it?". All 11 participants provided positive community improvements that would start within the school system that could prevent future LGBT individuals from experiencing/risking becoming part of the pipeline. Participant 7 stated they would offer the following modifications to their school.

I would remodel our school. I would take field trips to places outside of Michigan. Invest in some science kits and things that will help the classroom to be more interesting. Pay for some things outside of school for the children to do, including recreational equipment.

Participants 6 and 11 stated they "Would create programs to enhance the learning experience for LGBT youth in schools." Participant 2 also said they would improve the school environment by "Making sure there is a school that will be able to help all kids and give them the time and love they need to be productive members of society." Participant 1 felt that ensuring the schools have better teachers is because most teachers do not care if the students learn.

Participants 3 and 5 wanted to focus on mental health and substance abuse resources for LGBT individuals. Participant 4 stated they attended a friendly high school and did not provide further insight. Participants 3 and 9 touched on life skills and

financial freedom. Participant 10 focused more on children with special needs by stating, "If I had the proper amount of funding to spend on education, I would use it for special education students, teach them life skills to be successful and to graduate with a high school diploma."

Question 13 probed to find out what steps the participants could take as LGBT individuals to help to ensure that LGBT youth have access to education. Participant 7 stated.

The first step is to realize their education is an issue, supporting and creating a space where they can thrive. We can help show kids that they are part of the LGBT community. Please enable them to understand and find strength in who they are. Help to build up their character in a positive way.

Participant 4 had this to add, "Create more welcoming environments and let the students know that gay pride is not a once-a-year celebration. Allow the students to be free to be who they are". Participant 10 stated that they would take the following steps, "The steps that I would take would be to make that all LGBT community has equal education rights. I would enforce equality and resources to reach these goals". Participant 11 added, "Treating LGBT fairly and providing the same education rights to them as their heterosexual counterparts." Participant 5 mentioned that they had taken courses through Detroit Wayne Health Authority to help LGBT youth struggling in recovery. Participants 1, 2, and 6 felt that being in the community and acting as a mentor/tutor would help LGBT individuals in high school.

Educational Funding

One of the main factors that is an issue within the education system is the need for funding. Interview question 12 is a three-part question that asks, "How much do you think it costs to incarcerate a child? Participants 1 and 11 did not respond to this question. Participant 2 stated that they did not know. Participant 4 believes it takes about 13,000 a year. Participant 7 gave a rough estimate of 200,000, based on how long they have been incarcerated. Participant 10 stated, "Think it costs about 20 000 per year to have a child incarcerated". The second part of the question asked participants the following.

How many LGBT children do you think are incarcerated compared to heterosexual children? Participants 1, 2, 9, 10, and 11 did not respond to this question. Participant 3 stated that "there are defiantly more heterosexual children incarcerated." Whereas participant 4 believes that the incarcerated rate is 50/50. Participant 5 felt that it is fewer LGBT individuals than heterosexual children. Participants 6 and 10 expressed that about 71 percent of detained children identify as LGBT compared to heterosexual. Participant 7 believes that 25 out of 100 children identify as LGBT. Participant 10 thought the ratio was 2 (LGBT) to 1 (heterosexual). The last question of the three-part series probed participants by inquiring about the following.

How much do you think it costs to provide a child with a decent education?". Participants 1 and 2 stated, "A decent education is free. If the parents care and are involved, the children will have a good education, including LGBT". Participant 3 stated the cost was high but did not provide an amount. Participant 4 felt it is about 8,000 for public and 20,000 or more for private schools. Whereas Participant 6 believed 20,000 is

needed yearly to provide a decent education, Participant 11 stated it's 25,000. Participant 5 thought that it would cost about 35,000 for a proper education. Participant 7 believes it costs 100,000 dollars to provide a decent education; however, the participant did not disclose whether it was a public or private school. Participant 9 added that how the education system sets up a decent education can be a lot, but it is not. Participant 11 stated that they believed that it would cost 300,000 to provide a child with a decent education. All participants provided insights on the cost of incarceration, the ratio of incarcerations based on sexuality, and the cost of proper education.

Summary

This qualitative research study aimed to describe and understand the perceptions and experiences of LGBT individuals as they attended inner-city high schools and their interactions with the criminal justice system, school staff, school policies, and other factors that have contributed to the STPP. Two research questions aided this research: "How can the experiences of LGBT individuals be used to construct training programs to help them feel safe and educate faculty?" and "How do LGBT individuals perceive school policies that act as deterrence regulations in the school setting that prevent them from wanting to be educated?" The participants' responses to the interview questions were analyzed, and three themes were identified: (a) sensitivity and diversity training; (b) sexuality; and (c) education rights. Three subthemes were also identified.

Regarding the first research question, I found that the participants felt that criminal justice, in correlation to the education system, is generally broken. Much work is needed to alleviate the negative experiences and obstacles that LGBT individuals face

when attending inner-city schools that practice STPP guidelines concerning criminal justice. For school staff, the participants felt that they did not care and were not there to support them while in school. Furthermore, most participants felt unsafe while attending school in the inner city because of how they were treated or the perception of how they were treated based on their sexuality. The participants felt that the education system is biased against LGBT individuals because of the actions and conservative views regarding LGBT individuals.

In Chapter 5, I will discuss the interpretation of the findings, the limitations of the study, recommendations, and the implications for social change of this research study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This qualitative phenomenological study aimed to describe and understand the perceptions and experiences of LGBT individuals as they attended high school in the inner-city of Detroit, Michigan (e.g., school staff, school policies, and police presence in school) and interacted with the criminal justice system. The problem that this study explored was how sexual orientation and gender identity might influence LGBT individuals' experiences with and perceptions of the education system in connection to the criminal justice system. Before this study, there was a lack of empirical research in the field of criminology, education, and criminal justice regarding the LGBT population; an analysis of the lived experiences of LGBT was warranted. This research study addresses the gap and provides modern-day knowledge in education, criminal justice, public safety, and queer criminology by understanding the lived experiences of LGBT individuals and their perceptions of their interactions while attending school in the inner city.

I used Delgado and Stefanic's (2012) CRT as the theoretical framework for this study and Moustakas's modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method for data analysis. Snapp et al. (2015) created the semi-structured interview guide for this study with Snapp's permission (see Appendix B). Two research questions guided this study:

1. How can the experiences of LGBT individuals be used to construct training and training programs to help LGBT feel safe and educate faculty?

2. How do LGBT individuals perceive school policies that act as deterrence regulations in the school setting that prevent them from wanting to be educated?

The participants' responses to the interview questions were analyzed, and three themes were identified: (a) sensitivity and diversity training, (b) quality education, and (c) education rights. Three subthemes were also identified.

Interpretation of the Findings

Participants in this study described their experiences and perceptions of attending inner-city high schools in Detroit, Michigan, in connection with the criminal justice system. The findings provide an understanding of participants' unique experiences and perspectives, which were positive, negative, and neutral towards high school policies concerning the criminal justice system. Many inner-city high schools have changed from institutions for education and hope to juvenile detention holding cells incorporated with metal detectors and a heavy police presence (Allen & White-Smith, 2014). Inner-city school policies and procedures often play an extensive role in the educational failure of Black males and their significant position in the STPP. Fundamentals of a stratifying institution, policy choices, and teacher practices reproduce economic and racial inequalities for many people of color and people in poverty, specifically Black males (Allen & White-Smith, 2014). This was true because 9 of 11 study participants self-identified as African American males: with one African American female.

Theme 1: Thoughts About Sensitivity and Diversity Training

The findings for this theme have been organized by the education and criminal justice system sectors: construct training, feeling safe, school-based arrest, and emotional response. CRT was used to explain further how the theory factored into discriminating against LGBT individuals that have attended high school in the inner-city of Detroit, Michigan. LGBT individuals are seen as deviant and as a group of people that do not belong or fit into society's core values. LGBT individuals are more likely to face local culture and government oppression, have fewer community and economic resources, and fear harassment and violence. LGBT individuals who attend school in the inner cities can benefit from training programs that focus on LGBT concerns and obstacles (Barefoot et al., 2015; Oswald & Culton, 2003; Palmer et al., 2012; Wienke & Hill, 2013).

Construct Training

All 11 participants believed that LGBT training is needed in inner-city schools. The participants' suggestions focused on LGBT individuals. The main thing that stood out from the participants was their desire to feel respected. Participant 9 conveyed that people in power can be dirtbags. For example, if someone identifies as a trans woman, they shouldn't call them sir; they should be called her/she. Participant 9 did not identify as trans; however, they witnessed the maltreatment of trans individuals while attending high school in the inner-city. Participant 9 supports the findings of Allen and White-Smith (2014), who argued that it is unclear if and how teachers and counselor training programs do not require/provide special training to work in a diverse school environment that includes LGBT individuals. Training for educators needs to have LGBT issues and

how to understand those issues and perspectives. This study can guide how to address

and create an open space to improve the school environment for the LGBT community in

inner-city high schools across America. The research was conducted to find out if

heterosexual teachers used CRT to target African American/Black LGBT individuals to

continue to use institutional racism as a form of punishment towards non-conforming

heterosexual students in the inner city of Detroit. This thinking and practice go against

creating a safe and conducive school environment for teachers and student productivity

(Kyere et al., 2018, p. 1; Mallett, 2016a).

Quaye and Johnson's (2016) research on intergroup dialogue facilitators is

instructive because of the skills delineated for the role. Instructors must negotiate various

tensions, conflicts, and emotions; have self-awareness of their own identities, privileges,

and marginalization; recognize their authority as a facilitator in the space; determine

quantity and quality of verbal contribution in the dialogue; and recognize students enter

the space at differing locations of their own development (Quaye & Johnson, 2016). It is

only suitable to demand a theoretically related skillset for LGBT facilitators. This further

support what Participant 3 suggested by sharing that "when an adult is employed to work

with LGBT individuals, they should be required to complete a questionnaire to see how

they would make a positive impact." School staff should be required to participate in

simulation training and role play so they can have the chance to walk in LGBT

individuals' shoes. Participant 10 added that even if the adult identifies as LGBT, they

should still be trained to handle LGBT issues that may arise on school grounds. Creating

school policies that include students, parents, and school staff is a way to better the

education system and reduce the number of students that indirectly enter the criminal justice system.

Feeling Safe

All of the participants in this study expressed numerous negative emotions when dealing with school staff and the criminal justice system (e.g., pissed off, angry, defensive, and upset). In a national online survey of the experiences of the general population of college students, LGBT individuals were found to be more likely to utilize mental health services than their heterosexual peers. They and individuals identifying as queer were likelier to have experienced mental health concerns, including suicidality, than heterosexual participants (Baams et al., 2018). The way that LGBT individuals have been and continue to be mistreated continues to increase mental health concerns among LGBT individuals. The more resilient a queer person is, the greater their chance of making it through internal or external stressors and protecting themselves from suicidality (Fenway Institute, 2018; Moody & Smith, 2013; Singh et al., 2011). Resilience is often thought of as the ability of a person to resist and rebound from stresses and traumatic events (Bonanno, 2004; Chang et al., 2018). Participant 5 said he would create a non-profit organization to help LGBT youth struggling with mental issues and substance abuse. It is essential to help and make LGBT individuals feel safe while attending schools in the inner-city. Helping LGBT individuals with their self-esteem and creating a more welcoming school environment is imperative to a child's upbringing and investing in a positive future.

Participants 3 and 5 said they would focus on LGBT mental health to make them feel safe. Other participants focused more on making the school environment safer regardless of sexual identity, age, and race. Conversely, when drawing from available research about both rural and LGBT populations, it is apparent that rural LGBT students may also display hardy resilience, greater happiness, and satisfaction in their work, a strong sense of self-efficacy and independence, close-knit relationships with other queer folks, creativity, and different unique strengths (Singh et al., 2011; Smalley & Warren, 2012; Vaughan & Rodriguez, 2014). Participant 6 said he would create a learning program for LGBT individuals to enhance their high school experience. This, in turn, can help guide the students' young minds down the right path, allowing them to become more interested in the school curriculum by eliminating the need to be defensive due to their sexuality.

School-Based Arrest

Most participants believed that school-based arrest is acceptable depending on the situation; they all agreed that LGBT individuals should not be arrested based on disorderly conduct and disruptive behavior. Participant 10 conveyed that if a child is arrested at school, it should not be in front of students. They believed that it set the wrong tone for the school environment. Participant 11 explained that since they work in the education system, if the student cannot be contained and the parents cannot be reached, the school should have an area within the school the police should be called if the school officials cannot de-escalate the situation. This is a time to provoke institutional change from within the institution through research on LGBT individuals to improve attendance,

grades, and self-worth through facilitation that allows LGBT individuals to enact their values. There is debate about what types of school experiences are best for promoting positive development, especially among justice-system-involved youth (Fine et al. (2018).

The average school-based arrest results in the student being relocated to an alternative school. Most participants felt that alternative schools are not a good choice because, based on prior research, the staff at alternative schools do not have the same resources and structure as traditional schools. Furthermore, the participants' responses bridged the gap in the literature by sharing how going to an alternative school shines a light on the negative educational experiences and outcomes, as stated by Arredondo et al. (2016). This finding is particularly troublesome considering that youth who feel less supported tend to be less engaged in the classroom and more in school misconduct (Fine et al., 2018). This finding supports the idea of Snapp et al. (2015) that LGBT youth are not worth saving; this is why they are sent to an alternative school when portraying disorderly conduct and disruptive behavior.

Emotional Response

Zero tolerance policies, exclusionary discipline, and school SROs have created a portal through which students may experience contact with the criminal justice system. The process by which a student enters this portal may be best understood by working backward. Before a student experience contact with the justice system, the student must violate a school policy. The policy violation is often a product of a student's misbehavior (Glenn, 2019). Two participants commented that they would be upset if they were being

punished for being Black and LGBT and would be scared to get arrested by a White officer versus a Black officer. Three participants indicated they would feel embarrassed because they were not raised like that and do not surround themselves with people who portray that behavior. For example, Participant 11 stated they would need to know the factors that caused the arrest (e.g., various forms of misconduct). These findings confirm the findings of pervious research by Jones et al. (2018) that a hostile school environment that includes a lack of support, bullying, and exclusion results in suspension and expulsion. It further creates low self-esteem and failure in school, leading to involvement in the criminal justice system. Jones et al. also indicated LGBT needs were unmet as they moved through the criminal justice system. They sought "safety, belongingness, and achievement through violence and gang activity" (p. 53). This research has shown that the majority of LGBT individuals that participated in this study would have a negative emotional response to being arrested in school. This shows that when adolescents do not get the proper support and guidance, they look to other avenues with harsher consequences to fill that void.

Theme 2: Thoughts About Quality Education

The thought of what a quality education is and interwinding that thought with the criminal justice system is not as effective as many of the participants of this study have indicated. The lack of resources and support from school staff, according to LGBT individuals, has formed many opinions about what and how much a quality education cost. For example, Most participants felt that quality education should be free. Participants 4, 5, 6,7,10, and 11 all stated how much they thought it cost to provide an

LGBT individual with a decent education. Participant 4 said that they felt it costs $8,000 yearly to educate a child if they attend public school and $20,000 annually to educate a child if they attend a private school. Whereas Participant 10 stated that they felt it costs $25,000 to provide a child with a decent education, they did not further explain if that amount was regarding public versus private education. Another factor that must be considered when adding up the amount it costs to educate children is the amount of funding stolen from the public-school sector, which reduces the number of resources schools located in the inner city of Detroit, Michigan, can provide children.

The idea that the accommodations in the education system for LGBT individuals are lacking and need to be improved, especially in the criminal justice system, was agreed upon by all participants in this study. The majority of participants agreed that they would create a more welcoming environment for LGBT individuals to be able to be themselves. Participant 8 stated that they would produce a safe space for LGBT students and host a podcast to discuss topics that may arise in open conversation. This can help to shift the directive in high schools and to allow students to feel safe, especially when the staff is involved and supportive. This study brought awareness to the different obstacles that LGBT individuals face while attending school in the inner-city. Yang et al.'s (2018) study supports the findings that school staff is aware of disproportionality in disciplining students, and it has not been identified as a problem to address. This is one of the reasons that LGBT individuals do not feel safe.

Providing inner-city schools with resources such as tutoring, moral support, and other positive affirmations will boost school morale. Kroneman (2022) found that in the

Netherlands, primary and secondary schools are legally obligated to teach students how to deal with sexual diversity in society respectfully. Peer education can be an effective means for that purpose because studies on peer education for sexuality and relationship education show a positive impact on sexual knowledge. In peer education for sexuality and relationship education, more learners accept the message communicated, and learners report more emotional connectedness to peer educators compared to interventions by teachers and advisers. This means a more open attitude and productive interactions among students and between peer educators and students are created. Changing school policies to be more accommodating can close the gap in the literature regarding the STPP and LGBT individuals; this study helped to bring awareness to LGBT individuals and their unique connection to the STPP. This supports the findings of Knauer (2012), who argued that LGBT individuals are denied protection by biased, restrictive, and discriminatory policies. Knauer suggested policies be crafted and designed "to reduce disparities and address inequality" for LGBT individuals (p. 755).

While conducting this research, over half of the participants agreed that schools are not the only ones to blame; parents should be held accountable for students' education. Many participants stated that the attitude towards education starts at home and involves the child's upbringing. Participant 7 said that parents should be held accountable. For example, a teacher did not like attending parent-teacher conferences because the parents who need to show up never do. They never call, email, or reach out to check on their child's progress. The children are left to fend for themselves; they are at a very vulnerable time in their lives and need all the support they can get. Participants 5, 6,

7, and 8 agreed that the lack of parental guidance is why children are kicked out at higher rates. This study found strong predictors of behavior, such as child impulsivity and parental efficacy, were the same as Glenn's (2019) cross-sectional time dimension and quantitative study findings.

Theme 3: Thoughts About Education Rights

The participants in this study described mixed experiences while attending high school in the inner-city of Detroit and the encounters that included the criminal justice system. Participant 8 indicated that children waive their right to education if they put others in danger or cause a threat within the school system. Participant 6 stated that a child waives their right to education when disruptive in school. Participants 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, and 11 agreed that a child has no right to waive their right to an education. Participant 1 believed that a child should not be forced to attend school if they are uninterested. Participant 10 further expressed that a child should be required to finish high school or obtain a GED. Participants 2, 9, and 11 all agreed that a child cannot waive their right to education. However, participant 3 further expressed that the only factor that should be considered are obstacles that prevent a child from being able to attend school and focus on education.

The participants had mixed opinions regarding alternative schools. Participants 3, 7, 8, and 10 shared their views on alternative schools. For example, Participant 3 indicated that when students are sent to an alternative school, they are often abused, misguided, and experiencing extreme poverty. Participant 7 is a current schoolteacher and stated that an alternative school is not proficient for a child's development and future.

Sending children to alternative schools further limits their ability to navigate challenging situations because their obstacles are not addressed. Fine et al. (2018) found that the schools recognize that the child has an issue that does not conform to current school traditions. The school administrators use that as an opportunity to remove the child based on current STPP guidelines. Adolescents with juvenile justice system experience may be enrolled in alternative schools to increase academic success or to reduce delinquency. This proves that most participants expressed that alternative schools are not a good idea or solution to student misconduct and behavior. Participants 7 and 8 stated that the requirements for alternative schools should be the same as public schools regarding attendance, maintaining a C average for course curriculum, and behavior.

Overall, most participants indicated that they had negative experiences in the education system and sometimes with a sector of the criminal justice system. Snapp et al. (2015) One may conclude that justice-system-involved youth should be transferred to alternative schools because they may fare better. However, several studies of community youth enrolled in alternative schools suggest that they often feel ostracized and resentful for being removed from their traditional schools, receive poor grades, do not regularly attend school, and are more likely to experience juvenile detention. Moving youth to new schools may foster academic and behavioral difficulties. Various studies prove that school instability, or movement between schools, is associated with decreased academic performance, increased probability of high school dropout, higher truancy and suspension rates, more problem behaviors, delinquency, and increased likelihood of adult arrest. This further supports the participants' suggestions that alternative school is not a good fit for

the education system and opens the gateway for the criminal justice system to intervene. Educators and other school staff need more resources and training to close the gap of the STPP. Providing them with more support will decrease the number of LGBT individuals being removed from the traditional education setting and increase graduation rates in high schools in Detroit, Michigan.

Limitations of the Study

This study provided significant findings about the lived experiences of LGBT individuals and their perceptions of the education and criminal justice system, and there were several limitations to this study. The first limitation of this study is that eight out of eleven participants identified as gay Black males. It was only one participant that identified as lesbian and two that identified as bisexual, and there were no participants that identified as transgender. Another limitation of this study was that only one participant identified as a teacher, which gave important insight into the lived experiences of LGBT perceptions from a teacher's perspective. All 11 participants identified as African American/Black; initially, I tried to get a mixture of different LGBT races to understand the experiences better. The major limitation of this study was the Covid-19 pandemic that shook the world. It was complicated and challenging to recruit participants; a lot of LGBT sites and affiliates did not allow the posting of the research flier, which in turn took longer than expected to complete the interviewing phase.

Another limitation of this study is that the participants were not fresh out of high school, and the participants' ages ranged from early 20s to early 40s. None of the participants had been to jail, detention centers, or other isolated areas of the criminal

justice system. This study did not touch on Southwest Detroit, an area heavily populated by LGBT individuals of Hispanic descent. The participants expressed in numerous ways how training was needed. Going further, they stated that sensitivity and diversity were required but did not offer specific training techniques that could be explored. Snapp et al. (2015) said, "Given the multiple pathways of the school-to-prison pipeline, we acknowledge that our scope of the harshness students may experience is limited by the narratives we drew regarding youth's in-school experiences. Had we recruited youth who were already in juvenile detention or homeless, the complexities to these pathways would likely have emerged". This was also a significant limitation to this study due to LGBT individuals not having been to jail, being arrested, being juvenile delinquents, having a history of drug abuse, experiences with prostitution, and other factors/experiences resulting from being a victim of the STPP. However, given we did not have a nationally representative sample, we are limited in our capability to generalize these findings to youth across the United States (Snapp et al. 2015). More research is needed to compare and contrast the differences in school policies nationwide.

Recommendations

There is a lack of research on the lived experiences of LGBT individuals regarding their experiences in high school that practice STTP guidelines and procedures. When seeking support, one must understand how their experiences change and influence their perceptions and opinions about the education and the criminal justice system. They deserve to be given a fair chance and treated with respect regardless of their identity.

There is more research that is needed to continue to examine the various experiences of LGBT individuals that attend high schools in the inner-city across America. The study can be taken further by exploring the different aspects of the criminal justice system and how the various races of LGBT individuals perceive the two systems discussed in this study. It is essential to understand how gender identity and sexual orientation affect the viewpoints of LGBT perceptions when being introduced/going through the criminal justice system. Exploring the unique issues, obstacles, and barriers that LGBT individuals experience is critical in examining how to improve and reshape a biased system towards sexuality and non-conforming heterosexuals. These steps can allow more leadership from LGBT individuals and create equality within these broken systems.

The study participants reported that the education and criminal justice system needed to be revamped by improving training and policies; future researchers in this area should attempt to explore best practices of the education and criminal justice system for interrelating with LGBT individuals. For instance, the American Society for Public Administration's codes of ethics enshrines that public servants should serve the public interest, uphold the Constitution, promote social equity, and develop personal integrity and organizational ethics (Svara, 2014). Faculty and staff should be trained to provide culturally competent care and education. Student affairs professionals can better support rural LGBT students by emphasizing interventions focused on building resilience, interpersonal skills, social support, emotional well-being, psychoeducation regarding sex and sexuality, suicide prevention training, and by connecting to networks of other local

and national support systems for rural and LGBT populations (Goodrich & McClellan, 2022). Further, Layzer et al. (2017) mentioned speaking in a more intimate setting. This should be an option for LGBT individuals, school staff, and school resource officers to start a conversation on how to hear and learn from each other; thus, creating a more welcoming environment and allowing everyone to be respected and opinions to be heard.

Implications for Social Change

Conducting the research for this study and analyzing the data created one of the best implications for social change for LGBT individuals in Detroit, Michigan. The participants of this study brought awareness to the unique challenges and potential barriers that LGBT individuals face while attending high school in the inner-city in connection with the criminal justice system. There is a shortage of literature that has explored the lived experiences of LGBT individuals but not in connection with the STPP. This study contributed to a gap in the literature because it provides insight into how those experiences affect LGBT perceptions of the education and criminal justice system (Nadal et al., 2015; Stotzer, 2014). The participants in this study were excited and willing to share their experiences and assessments of the education system in Detroit, Michigan, which revealed the need for additional qualitative research to be conducted in this area.

The results of this study will hopefully, on an academic level, provide a better understanding of LGBT individuals' experiences with the education and criminal justice system and how those experiences have affected LGBT perceptions of the education system in Detroit, Michigan. On an organizational and community level, the results of this study will hopefully provide insight into the obligation and significance of training

programs in education. This study's findings described the obstacles LGBT individuals face when attending high school and interacting with the criminal justice system. In school, LGBT youths face bullying and victimization from classmates and even from teachers or administrators. The 2009 National School Climate Survey conducted by the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network found that 84.6 percent of LGBT students were verbally harassed (e.g., called names or threatened), 40.1 percent were physically harassed (e.g., pushed or shoved), and 18.8 percent were physically assaulted (e.g., punched, kicked, injured with a weapon) at school because of their sexual orientation (Kosciw et al. 2012). The fact of the matter is that everyone deserves to be treated fairly; sexuality should not be a factor in how you treat someone.

People, in general, are more inclined to act negatively when poorly treated. School climate can also serve as a protective factor for LGBT youth. Schools that promote awareness and acceptance of youth offer support and resources for students and teachers and ensure the safety of students can promote positive outcomes for LGBT youth (Development Services Group, 2014). Creating new training programs for adults before being employed to work with LGBT individuals can increase morale and trust between the students and school staff. Hopefully, this can eliminate the need for school resource and police officers.

Conclusion

Research has shown that adolescence is a time of heightened risk-taking behavior, and, as indicated above, there are several unique risk factors that LGBT youths are more likely to experience, thus increasing the odds they will come into contact with the

juvenile justice system (Development Services Group, 2014). There are many obligations

that the education and criminal justice system must fulfill to serve a community. Those

economic systems should not be biased toward a person's gender identity and sexual

orientation. LGBT individuals' interactions with school staff while attending high school

in the inner-city, sometimes involving the criminal justice system, have built a foundation

of prejudice and persecution to incorporate distrust, violence, and fear. These experiences

have barred LGBT individuals and the education system from working together in a

welcoming and safe school environment. Reviewing the literature has shown a demand

for scholarly research on LGBT individuals attending high schools in inner cities across

America.

Specifically, as it relates to their lived experiences and perceptions of the

education and criminal justice system in Detroit, Michigan, this qualitative

phenomenological study aimed to describe and understand the perceptions and

experiences of LGBT individuals. At the same time, they attended high school and

connected with the criminal justice system in Detroit, Michigan. The problem that this

study explored was how sexual orientation and training programs might influence LGBT

experiences and perceptions of the education system in connection with the criminal

justice system.

School instability appears to be the most detrimental to youth's attitudes about

school and reoffending outcomes that have the most significant impact on keeping

youthful offenders in the juvenile justice system (Fine et al. 2018). Furthermore, the

findings of this study painted an exact model of LGBT individuals' experiences and

perceptions of their interactions in high school with the criminal justice system and the obstacles they confront during those interactions. Creating policies, training programs, and procedures based on lived experiences of interacting with LGBT individuals may improve the treatment of LGBT's view on the education and criminal justice systems.

The findings in this study confirmed that there is a need to further train adults with an interest/current career in education and the criminal justice system. They adequately trained on how to connect and interact with LGBT individuals during interactions professionally, allowing LGBT individuals to feel accepted in written school policies and procedures by creating LGBT-favorable training programs. Increasing the knowledge of school staff and deployed police officers through programs is needed to improve interactions with LGBT individuals in the school system. LGBT individuals deserve to be treated without bias when intermingling in high school concerning the criminal justice system, regardless of their sexual orientation.

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Appendix A: Permission From Shannon D. Snapp (email)

Messy, Butch, and Queer: LGBTQ Youth and the School-to-Prison Pipeline (Great

Article)

From: Shannon Snapp <ssnapp@csumb.edu>
Sent: Thursday, September 26, 2019, 5:30 PM
To: DeShaunt'e Burns <deshaunte.burns@waldenu.edu>
Subject: Re: Messy, Butch, and Queer: LGBTQ Youth and the School-to-Prison Pipeline (Great Article)

Hi, DeShaunt'e,

Thanks for your interest in my research. I am excited to hear about your work and plan to expand this research to adults who experienced the pipeline.

I've included the interview questions we used with adults who may have some info about this and the youth themselves. You may need to adapt based on your sample.

Please keep me posted, and good luck!
Shannon

On Thu, Sep 26, 2019, at 10:31 AM, Shannon Snapp <sdsnapp@gmail.com> wrote:

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Thank you for coming to join us today. My name is DeShaunt'e Burns, and I'll be your interviewer today.

So today, we will discuss Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, and Transgender (LGBT) individuals' experiences in the school system with connection to the criminal justice system. We'll be talking about the spectrum of the school and criminal justice system—from zero-tolerance policies to students' perceptions and experiences and support staff perceptions and experiences. I encourage you to be as honest and open as possible. Please remember that the informed consent form you just signed guarantees that everything you state today will remain confidential.

At this time, I would like you to introduce yourself and tell me about your initial thoughts about your experiences with STPP in connection with the criminal justice system.

1. What do you think are the reasons for the increase in suspensions, expulsions, and school-based arrests in schools?

2. What are the disciplinary policies in your school? How do they compare to the policies in place when you or your parents were in school?

3. Have you ever seen any instances of the school-to-prison pipeline operating? How did you know that the instance was based on the pipeline?

4. Should children ever be arrested at school? If so, when? Should disorderly conduct or disruptive behavior be enough to warrant arrest?

5. How would you feel if you, your friend, or your child were arrested at school?

6. How would you react if you (or your friend/child) were being unfairly punished by school officials based primarily on their sexuality?

7. What training should police officers, teachers, and other staff receive before they are deployed to work with children of the LGBT community in schools?

8. Why do you think students of the LGBT are more likely to receive harsh

punishments for misbehavior? What about children with special needs? Have you

seen evidence of this disparate treatment in your own life?

9. How can we ensure safe public schools while respecting all students' right to

education?

10. Do you think disciplinary alternative schools are a good idea? What kinds of

minimum requirements should they be subject to?

11. Do you believe children waive their right to an education under certain

circumstances? What circumstances?

12. How much do you think it costs to incarcerate a child? How many LGBT children

do you think are incarcerated compared to heterosexual children? How much do

you think it costs to provide a child with a decent education?

13. What steps can you as an individual and society take to make sure that all LGBT

youth have access to quality education?

14. If you had the proper amount of funding to spend on education in your

community, what would you do with it?

15. Is there anything else that you would like to add before we end this interview?