A CRITICAL CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER TRAINING TEXT IN TEXAS

by

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ABSTRACT

Inspired by fears of school shootings and supported by substantial federal funding, the number of school resource officers (SROs) on our nation's K-12 campuses has increased exponentially. The consequences of this sea change have yet to be fully evaluated. What we do know suggests cause for concern. Specifically, SROs' presence may be contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline (STPP), most especially for students with minoritized identities. This concern demands increased attention to SRO training and professional development. Because Texas educates a substantial portion of the nation's students and has recently legislated mandatory SROs training (referred to as TCOLE 4064), the state is poised to lead the country in SRO preparation. My study examines the Texas training material for potential intersection with key components of the STPP, such as, race, school discipline, gender, sexuality, and disability, among other concerns. Using a hermeneutic approach and grounded in Critical Whiteness Studies, this study deploys critical content analysis and critical policy analysis to answer the following:

RQ 1: What assumptions about the nature of schools and students frame SRO training in TCOLE 4064?

RQ 2: Which concerns about working in schools are highlighted in TCOLE 4064 training, and which concerns are ignored?

RQ 3: How does SRO training in TCOLE 4064 address officers' potential impact on minoritized students and the STPP?

Thematic findings reveal dysconscious definitions, unreliable information, and deficit thinking that enshrine Whiteness as correct; marginalizes girls, LGBTQIA+ students, and students with disabilities; and reinforces racist, sexist, and homophobic beliefs. These findings lead to some questions and considerations through which the school safety framework can begin to be rebuilt for more responsive and equitable schools.

I. INTRODUCTION

The number of school-based law enforcement officers on our nation's K-12 campuses has grown substantially in recent years (Counts et al., 2018). Fears of school shootings and the subsequent dedication of public funds to address these fears have led to the installation of school resource officers (SROs) across the country (Weisburst, 2018). Survey research conducted in Texas finds that school leaders themselves identify highly publicized school crimes as a significant motivating factor for implementing new security policies (Snell et al., 2002). While the numbers are difficult to track, in part because of the wide variation in how school-based law enforcement programs are structured, schools have embraced the use of SROs and seen significant increases in public funds funneled this direction (Fowler et al., 2010; Weisburst, 2018).

Placing police officers on school campuses visually and symbolically signals a school's concerted effort to increase school safety (Jennings et al., 2011). SROs are "career law enforcement officer[s] with sworn authority," sometimes employed directly by a school district, but more often employed by a local policing agency that through legal agreement provides SRO services to partnering schools (NASRO, 2020, para. 1). However, the consequences, both intended and unintended, of having sworn police officers as full-time school staff have yet to be fully evaluated (Fisher & Hennessey, 2016; Javdani, 2019; O'Murphy, 2013). What we do know suggests cause for concern. A 2016 meta-analysis of 10 quantitative studies found that the presence of SROs relates to higher rates of exclusionary discipline (Fisher & Hennessy, 2016). In Texas, the presence of SROs may have a negative effect on Black and Hispanic students by increasing their discipline rates, depressing high school graduation rates, and curbing college enrollment

(Weisburst, 2018). Married with the knowledge that police are more often found on campuses with large minoritized populations, the growth in school police presence raises important questions about equitable treatment of racially minoritized students (Scott et al., 2017).

Perceptions of Threat

"People long for security when designing safety systems" and "fortifications feel safe," though we see repeatedly in history the folly of this thinking (Perrodin, 2019, pp. 3 - 6). Identifying threats from which society needs to protect itself can be described as risk assessment. Both individually and collectively, people travel through life recognizing and responding to hazards, and the complicated and nuanced thinking this requires can defy what is often described as "rational" by policy makers and observers outside the "hazard zone" (Slovic, Kunreuther, & White, 2000, pp. 1-2). Some of the factors known to influence perceptions of a risk include how voluntarily a person enters into the risk, whether the risk posed is chronic or catastrophic, whether the risk is commonly observed, the degree of harm posed or degree of fatality, whether the risk is well understood, how close evidence of harm and hazard appear in time, the novelty of the risk, the degree to which the risk is controllable, and the perceived benefits of the hazard inducing behavior (Fischhoff et al., 2000). For example, while there were over 38,000 car fatalities in the U.S. during 2019, there were only 5 fatal shark attacks worldwide during 2019. Informed only by statistical risk, the rational response would find us far more fearful of driving than shark bites, but the complicating characteristics of familiarity, perceived controllability, and benefits of driving places these fears in reverse order.

In addition to the complicated factors that figure into our risk assessments,

hazards are also subject to interpretation based on imperfect knowledge of evidence. A high desire for certainty encourages people, lay people and experts alike, to employ heuristics that make difficult decisions faster and simpler (Kahneman, 2011). Heuristics are processes that aim to conserve time and other resources by making quick and efficient decisions by basing them on limited information previously determined to be the most salient (Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier, 2011). "Although valid in some circumstances" the use of heuristics often has "serious implications for risk assessment" (Slovic, Fischhof & Lichtenstein, 2000, p. 105). The rarity and recency of catastrophes, for example, tend to effect how people assess the likelihood of an event (Slovic, Kunreuther, & White, et al., 2000). A vivid memory of a shocking event often inflates perceptions of the frequency it might occur and so make the risk feel more salient. Slovic, Fischhof, and Lichtenstein (2000) discovered that assessments that relied on heuristics were often accompanied by an "overconfidence" in their accuracy (p. 109). This is likely at work as policy makers and the public at large assess the risks posed by school shootings. In 2019, school shootings were responsible for 51 injuries and deaths, including the deaths of five K-12 students (Education Week, 2020), while school bus accidents were responsible for 2,551 injuries and five student deaths (Hannon, 2019). A comprehensive review of literature related to school firearm trauma from 2000-2018 reveals that for children ages 5-18 in the U.S., less than 2% of firearm homicides and less than 1% of firearms suicides "occur at schools (including on the way to or from school)" (Price & Khubchandani, 2019, p. 155).

Mowen (2020), citing NCES statistics on school-based crimes, points out that in fact "schools are safer now than they have ever been and crime and victimization in…K-12 schools has absolutely plummeted since the early 1990's" (para. 4). Further, he draws

attention to the fact that only "about 1% of all homicides of school-aged children and young adults occur at school" and that "school shootings are not increasing" and while extraordinarily tragic when they do occur, are in fact extremely rare events (Mowen, 2020, para. 6). Pointing to research that links increased school security with decreased academic and extracurricular participation as well as diminished mental health outcomes, Mowen most forcefully warns policy makers that "police officers do not make schools safer" (para. 15). This sentiment echoes the conclusion of Gottfredson et al. (2020), "that increasing SROs does not improve school safety" because of the negative impacts of their presence (p. 905). Mowen (2020) suggests that forthcoming research will present findings that schools with SROs are statistically more likely to experience a school shooting than those without and urges the public and educators to have "frank conversations" and "a look at the evidence" when setting school policy (para. 8).

Collateral Consequences

Risk assessments often fail to take into account a full picture of collateral consequences and ramifications of risk mitigation (Slovic, Kunreuther, & White, 2000). This phenomenon likely plays a role in the increased security measures schools have implemented in recent decades. Schools have seen significant increases in security cameras, ID badges, access control measures, and SROs in response to school safety concerns (NCES, 2020). In the 1980's and 1990's a similar uptick, one that has now levelled off, could be measured in the use of metal detectors on campuses. Metal detectors offer an excellent case study in how risk assessments and the potency of mitigation responses can fail to factor in the risk associated with the mitigation itself.

Assumptions about the efficacy of weapons screening through metal detectors is

challenged by the evidence (Schildkraut & Gorgan, 2015). Research in airports yielded very high fail rates, and research in schools suggests that even those with metal detectors find hand searching to be more effective (Schildkraut & Gorgan, 2015; Winn, 2017). Walk through metal detectors are subject to great variation in performance based on many factors including orientation of the object, height of the object, ambient temperature, and speed of the scan resulting in both missed scans and false alarms; when "used in real settings" performance can be far less that optimal (Nelson et al., 2016, p. 6). Details about tests of effectiveness are usually treated as classified information protected by Homeland Security (Kantor 2018; Nelson et al., 2016), but government reports about metal detection systems identify persistent deficiencies. For example, a 2017 briefing to Congress reported that "in about eight of 10 tests" covert inspectors from the Office of Inspector General were able to successfully defeat the systems in airports (Halsey, 2017).

The questionable effectiveness of metal detectors begins to point to other complications in the assessment calculation. Relying on this tool might unwittingly make an institution more vulnerable; people rely on the technology and believe the hazard is managed. In addition, the infrequency of weapons discoveries in schools begs questions about metal detectors' value compared to the impact on the thousands of unarmed students that are subjected to this search. For example, during the school year 2013-2014 New York City public high schools that employed metal detectors served a total of 91,114 students and yielded 712 weapons finds with this tool (Aaron & Ye, 2015; Edelman & Jamieson, 2014). Even if is assumed that students each walk through the detectors only once a month, that means .08% of scans identified a potential danger. The impacts of those 99.02% of safe scan experiences pose hazards that until recently were

not factored into the metal detector equation. Students in national studies of adolescent health reported feeling less safe in their metal detector-using schools and saw those learning environments as more disordered (Gastic, 2011; Hankin et al., 2011; Mayer & Leone, 1999). The concerning "potential unintended negative consequences associated with the use of metal detectors" and the "little evidence to support their effectiveness" has only recently begun to slow their growth on U.S. campuses (Schildkraut & Grogan, 2015, p. 3). In 2001, 8.8% of U.S. students ages12-18, through a U.S. Department of Department of Education School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS), reported metal detectors at their schools (NCES, 2020). In 2015, that number had grown to 12.3%, but in 2017 it was only 10.4%, the first indication of a fall (NCES, 2020).

Disparities in Perception of Risk

More recently, decision scientists have pointed to differences in risk assessment based on gender and race/ethnicity. When asked to assess the risk posed by a slate of hazards, White men consistently judged risks to be lower than did White women, Black men and women, and Latino/a men and women (Finucane, et al., 2014). White male participants compared to White females and all Black and Latino/a participants, described themselves as more sympathetic with and trusting of individualistic views and technological guidance than with "community-based decision and regulation processes" (Finucane, et al., 2010, p. 137). Further, while White males surveyed were "less sensitive to potential stigmatization of communities from hazards," they didn't fear the sting of being shunned through group association with a hazard (p. 137). This kind of community stigmatization can be witnessed through declines in property values near industrial facilities (Messer et al., 2006), or anti-Asian xenophobia in America during the Covid-19

pandemic (Le et al., 2020). Because, as the researchers posit, "the world seems safer and hazardous activities seem more beneficial to White males than to other groups" policy decisions regarding safety and hazards made from the White male perspective risk alienating or excluding the real concerns of others (Ficunane et al., 2010, p. 137).

Perceptions of School Safety

In fact, research into school safety finds that changes in students' perceptions of safety do not uniformly respond to SRO presence. Girls and students who identify as having been victims of criminal activity do not experience the same gains in sense of safety that White male non-victim students report (Theriot & Orme, 2016). Black students' perceptions of safety are also not as positive to SRO presence relative to White students' perceptions (Pentek & Eisenberg, 2018). In some cases, Black students' perceptions of safety actually decrease when SROs are a campus presence, while White students' feelings of safety increase, even when controlling for personal interaction with the SRO (Theriot & Orme, 2016). This matches research findings in studies of youth and police outside of schools that counter the assumption that individual officers' behaviors during police-youth interactions always have the strongest impacts on youth perceptions of police (Flexon et al., 2016; Slocum & Wiley, 2018). That assumption seems to reflect White experience, as White youths' perceptions of police are far more responsive to their individual and direct experiences of police.

Interestingly, most research on school safety uses stakeholders', e.g., students, teachers, administrators, perceptions of safety as a proxy for safety (see, for example, Counts et al., 2018; Johnson et al., 2018; Pentek & Eisenberg, 2018). If SRO presence compromises students' sense of safety or increases negative outcomes for students,

researchers and policy makers must ask if school safety and security have truly been improved. SROs' presence on campuses may be contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline (STPP) by depressing students' positive engagement with the school community, particularly students from marginalized groups.

SRO Preparation

Given warranted concerns about the potential impacts of their presence, the preparation of SROs to serve in school settings is an area worthy of attention. The growth in the school-based sector of the law enforcement workforce has not been accompanied by a commensurate development of SRO training (Javdani, 2019; Pentek & Eisenberg, 2018). Few jurisdictions require any specialized training for police serving in school settings (Keierleber, 2015). Even the basic role description of an SRO can vary wildly, and SROs themselves do not have a consensus about their responsibilities (McKenna et al., 2016).

Further complicating the SRO landscape are questions about the quality and effectiveness of the SRO specific training that does exist. Utt (2018) studied the SRO training curriculum from Arizona and found embedded in the materials a clear effort to ignore race and in so doing default to a hegemonic White perspective. Utt (2018) noted that the STPP was mentioned once in the training "isolated to one vague slide rather than woven throughout the materials" illustrating "an active dysconciousness through avoidance" (p. 78). This problematic framing of SRO training could speak to why Bolger, et al. (2019) found that officers who receive training from NASRO (National Association of School Resource Officers) are not less likely, but in fact more likely to opt for "formal resolutions," i.e. charges to incidents, rather than "diversionary techniques," i.e. crisis

intervention, warnings, and school diversion programs or conflict resolution.

U.S. police, including SROs, attend pre-service academy training an average of only 21 weeks (Reaves, 2016). The effectiveness and appropriateness of the curriculum is far from assured (O'Neil, et al., 2018; President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015). Continued professional development for officers in the field relies on "short, one-off programmes of topdown advice" (Bayley, 2018, p. 126) rarely grounded in rigorous research on effectiveness (Skogan et al., 2015). Understanding that police come from this varied landscape of minimal and inconsistent training, preparing officers well to serve in the specialized setting of K-12 schools is especially urgent. NASRO, and by extension member organization Texas Association of School Resource officers (TASRO), recommends specialized training for all SROs, and asserts that "specially trained school resource officers who follow NASRO's best practices do not arrest students for disciplinary issues that would be handled by teachers and/or administrators if the SROs were not there" and do not contribute to the STPP (NASRO, 2020, para. 7). The NASRO standards and best practices suggest that SROs receive training within one year of beginning work on a campus on topics that "may include, but are not limited to: crisis planning, active threat response, [and] adolescent mental health" (Canady, 2018, p. 11). An additional policy statement drafted in response to recent "incidents with the involvement of SROs in school disciplinary situations" advocates for specialized training in the area of special-needs children (NASRO, 2015, para. 1).

Other organizations representing different stakeholder groups offer more reserved perspectives on SRO programs. Some studies demonstrate that a majority of school leaders perceive SROs as an effective strategy for curbing school violence (Chrusciel et

al., 2015; Price et al., 2016). In a 2019 legal bulletin the Texas Association of School Boards offered safety "considerations" that Texas schools might contemplate as they consider "is there more we can do to protect schools" "[i]n light of mass shootings" (TASB, 2019, p. 1). Included is a list of six options "for obtaining security services" that includes SROs as one possibility. TASB also includes in their website a 2019 report that cautions school leaders about the dearth of school counselors and nurses in Texas and posits that "one of the potential factors in the failure to provide the preferred number…is the emphasis on budgeting for police officers" (DiSchiano, 2019, p. 2). The Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA) cautions members to carefully weigh the costs in both financial terms, "every time we hire a security officer we have to give up a teacher, instructional coach, assistant principal or custodian" and in terms of school climate, "We don't want them [schools] to feel like prisons" (Brown, 2018, para. 2-3). Brown (2018) acknowledges to his TASA audience that appropriately addressing safety concerns poses "a difficult balance to strike" (para. 5).

Some advocacy groups express deeper concerns about the involvement of SROs on Texas campuses. Texas Appleseed (2020), a nonprofit that works to promote "social and economic justice for all Texans" through research and advocacy, has published a series of reports warning about the harmful effects of a "punitive and criminal approach to students" including the use of SROs (see also Craven et al., 2019; Fowler et al., 2010; Fowler & Craven, 2018; Texas Appleseed and Texans Care For Children, 2016). Texas Appleseed (2020) also cautions about long term "future consequences, including an increased likelihood of being held back, school dropout, and contact with the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems" (para. 3). The disproportionate intersection of increased

school security with the school experiences of Black students have also inspired many Black Lives Matter affiliated groups to call for the removal of SROs (Kamenetz, 2020). In their policy platform's first demand, The Movement for Black Lives (2016) calls for: "an immediate end to the criminalization and dehumanization of Black youth…This includes the removal of police from schools, and the reallocation of funds from police and punitive school discipline practices to restorative services" (p. 6). Also, in support of Black Lives, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT, 2020) executive council calls for schools to divorce the "function of school safety from policing" and train security personnel "as peace officers…with a focus on nonviolent resolution of conflicts" in order "to help achieve a safe and welcoming environment…and not a militaristic police state that has criminalized Black and brown students" (para. 20). The AFT's (2020) strong language notwithstanding, the essence of their call is to rethink and transform school security rather than dismiss SROs.

Context of the Study

As one of the few states where police are required to undergo specialized training before serving in schools, and as home to almost 11% of U.S. public school students, Texas is one of the national leaders in SRO professional development (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017; National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments, 2019). Texas has tried to offer some clarity about the role of SROs on the state's campuses. By law, SROs are "to perform whatever law enforcement duties are set out by the school district's board of trustees" and should revolve around protecting the "safety and welfare" of people within the jurisdiction and protecting the district's property (Office of the Attorney General of Texas, 2020, p. 7). Further, they "must"

• take actions to prevent and suppress crime;

• execute all lawful processes issued by any magistrate or court;

• notify a magistrate of all offenses committed within the officer's jurisdiction,

when the officer has good reason to believe a penal law has been violated;

• arrest offenders, even without a warrant, but only when authorized by law; and

• take possession of missing children pursuant to Art. 63.009(g), Code of Criminal Procedure (p. 8)

Until Senate Bill 11 (SB 11) was signed into law by Texas Governor Greg Abbott in June 2019, the only school-based law enforcement officers required to undergo special training were those serving in the state's largest school districts (those with >30,000 students, about 4% of districts) (Texas Senate Research Center, 2019). Beginning in 2020, Texas law requires all school-based law enforcement officers to complete specialized training (Texas Senate Research Center, 2019). The required Texas SRO training course, TCOLE 4064, is based on written curriculum from the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement published in 2015 (TCOLE, 2019). Texas's SRO training materials will likely serve as a model for other states and districts as they recognize the need for SRO professional development (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017; National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments, 2019). A clear and profound examination of TCOLE 4064 will be a critical support to SRO professional development programs being designed across the country.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

The presence of SROs marks a sea change in our K-12 environments and may be contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline (STPP), most especially for students with minoritized identities. This concern demands increased attention to SRO training and professional development. Research about general training for police in the U.S. suggests a varied landscape frequently not rooted in research-based best practices. The majority of serving SROs do not receive specialized training for working in a school setting, in part because most states do not require it (Finn et al., 2005; MacDonald & Perez, 2019). Recent research in California, where, as in Texas, SROs are legally obligated to receive specialized training, revealed that only 67% of SROs had received specialized training (Gottfredson et al., 2020). Very little research has examined SRO training that is conducted (Bolger, et al. 2019; Keierleber, 2015). Because Texas educates a substantial portion of the nation's students and has recently legislated mandatory SRO training (TCOLE 4064), the state is poised to set precedent for the country in SRO preparation. The purpose of this study is to examine the Texas training material for potential intersection with key components of the STPP and to identify the foundational assumptions that undergird the TCOLE 4064 course. The research questions guiding this study are:

RQ 1: What assumptions about the nature of schools and students frame SRO training in TCOLE 4064?

RQ 2: Which concerns about working in schools are highlighted in TCOLE 4064 training, and which concerns are ignored?

RQ 3: How does SRO training in TCOLE 4064 address officers' potential impact on

minoritized students and the STPP?

The following chapter will explore relevant literature that speaks to the intersection of schools and policing in the US, the SRO phenomenon. The ideas of Critical Race Theory (CRT), including critical Whiteness studies (CWS) and intersectionality, build a lens through which the research questions will be answered. Special attention is paid to literature that helps identify components of the STPP for a full exploration of how they may relate to the presence of SROs.

II. REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

This review of literature will synthesize the important strands of existing research that inform the current investigation of the TCOLE 4064 SRO training text. First, an exploration of Critical Race Theory, specifically critical Whiteness studies, will be described; as that is the theoretical framework that underpins this research. Next, a brief history of the phenomenon of police serving in U.S. schools combined with a review of current police training practices will illustrate how SROs prepare for and approach their work, and how the position fits within a school community. Lastly, an exploration of the school-to-prison pipeline will reveal points of nexus between the criminal justice system and education system that might be particularly sensitive to impact by the work and presence of SROs.

Theoretical Framework

This Critical Race Theory (CRT) grounded study is most specifically informed by critical Whiteness studies and the concept of intersectionality (see Figure 1). CRT explores issues in education with the understanding that racism is foundational to all of society's systems – including education systems – and is continually enacted through the policies and processes that grow from and continue to support those systems (Crenshaw, 2011; George, 2021). CRT challenges the "habit of not thinking realistically and deeply" about "undergirding racial structure[s]" (Feagin, 2013, p. 5) in part by examining the ways Whiteness lives invisibly through our systems, policies, and practices. This stream of CRT, critical Whiteness studies, seeks to make visible the "ideology, racialization, expression and experiences, epistemology, emotions and behavior" that are elevated along with the means and effects of that elevation in a culture (Matias et al., 2014).

Simultaneously, an intersectional understanding of race, another powerful stream of CRT, counters the potential pitfall of a binary White/non-White “single-issue framework for discrimination” that erases the concerns and experiences of people when they identify with more than one marginalized group (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 152). A racialized hierarchy structured to privilege Whiteness works most successfully in concert with patriarchy and other systems of dominance (Annamma, 2018; Butler et al., 2019; Montoya, et al., 2016;).

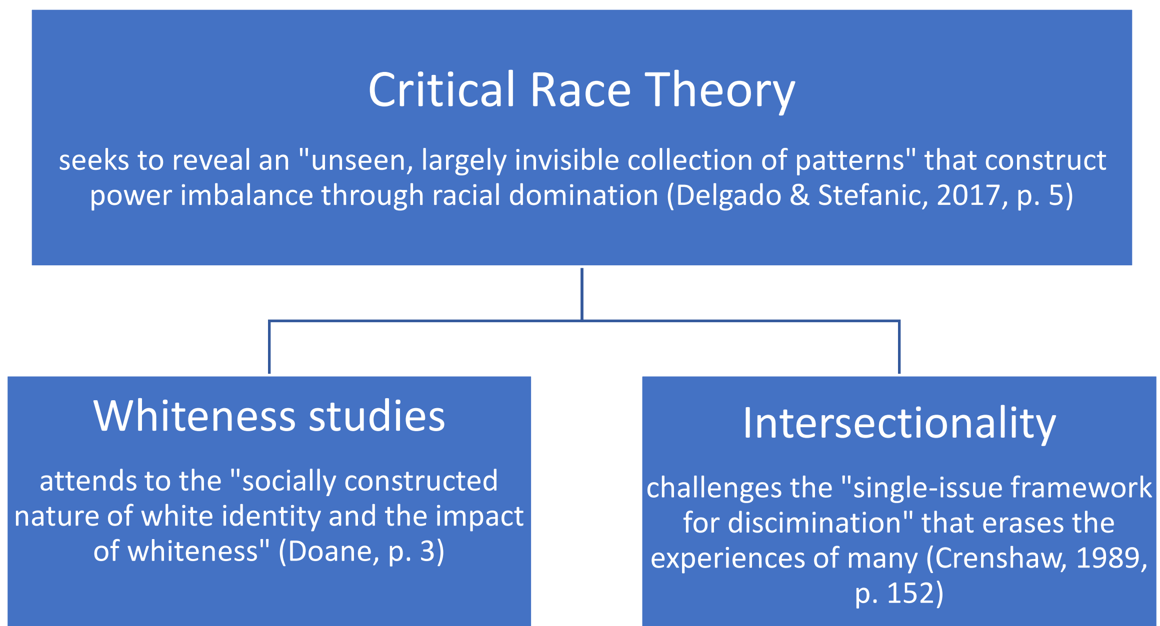

Figure 1. Theoretical framework

Born from the world of critical legal scholarship in the late 1970’s, CRT responded to the frustration of scholars who found that legal arguments for equality were falling short (Bell, 2008). Rather than address systemic problems, emerging CRT scholars feared the main streams of critical legal studies were reifing a “non-critical liberalism” that “worked to reduce racism to matters of individual prejudice or a by-product of class” (Crenshaw, 2011, p. 1260- 1260). Earlier in the decade Feminist

Critical (Fem Crit) legal scholars had organized around similar concerns as their work was "ghettoized" into an incidental sub-topic not central to the larger stream of critical legal scholarship (Menkel-Meadow, 1988, p. 65). Inspired by Black civil rights work of the 1960's and leaning on critical legal approaches, Fem Crit legal scholars called for a re-examination of how society is ordered and dominant power structures are maintained (Rifkin, 1980). CRT scholars similarly seek to reveal an "unseen, largely invisible collection of patterns" that construct power imbalance through racial domination (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017, p. 5).

CRT employs the lens from its critical legal scholar roots that argues a binary framing of adjudicated decisions (formally adjudicated in the courts or more casually adjudicated by other social systems) requires subjugating and even ignoring certain "line[s] of authority;" through these submissions and oppressions the recognized story is created and described as "knowledge" (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017, p. 5). For example, in Kohlberg's (1981) classic dilemma of Heinz, who failing to find the extraordinary funds required to purchase life-saving medicine for his wife steals it from the chemist/inventor, can be judged from very different perspectives. The chemist can rightly claim with legal authority his property rights were violated. Heinz can claim a moral authority that demands a respect for life over property. The conviction or acquittal of Heinz becomes knowledge for that society. In fact, this is the very definition of the idea of case law: previously concluded cases become the knowledge by which subsequent cases are judged. Kohlberg uses this exemplar to illustrate a progression of moral development, however competing lines of authority are not often so well ordered and ranked. CRT leans into the idea of "legal indeterminacy" (Dix, 2004) which acknowledges there are

multiple legitimate ways to interpret rules and facts and points out ways our systems almost invariably default to interpretations that privilege White understandings thereby supporting racism and producing racist outcomes. In the world of education, CRT, as explained by Solórzano, similarly works to develop “an explanatory framework that accounts for the role of …race in education” (as cited in Harmon, 2019).

This project specifically approaches the textual material under study through a critical White lens. A recent development in CRT, critical Whiteness studies looks to examine, in part, the ways Whiteness is legally established and maintained and “the array of privileges” that come with Whiteness (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017, p. 85). In education, as in other spheres of U.S. society, Whiteness, its “culture, ideology, racialization, expressions, and experiences, epistemology, emotions, and behavior,” have been elevated and are continually re-enacted through both policy and practice (Matias et al., 2014, p. 290).

Leonardo (2013) identifies distinguishing characteristics of Whiteness that explain how Whiteness serves to erase non-dominant understandings from public policy and will provide an important framework for analyzing the TCOLE 4064 training text. Whiteness refuses to explain even acknowledged inequities as the result of racism and prefers to treat racism as an elephant in the room of civil discourse (Leonardo, 2013). In this post-civil rights era, color-blind discourse continues this historical project through covert rhetoric and invisible rhetoric that presents Whiteness as neutral (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). In addition to this style of “new racism” (Bonilla-Silva, 2003, p. 272) recreating a slate of status quo harms, color-blindness slyly insinuates that these harms are a result of happenstance or a byproduct of natural choice (Lewis, 2013). More recently critical

scholars have reframed this phenomenon as color-evasiveness, as evading implies an active choice and complicity (Annamma, 2016).

Whiteness tends to equate the idea of ethnicity with otherness; White is normal and natural while all else stands in contrast (Gillborn, 2005; Leonardo, 2013). White identity tends to be constructed as cultureless (Perry, 2001). Examining how this process of constructing a cultureless White culture simultaneously racializes others is a central concern of Whiteness studies (Anderson, 2003). Whiteness appears “as a default” because Whiteness is defined through the “action of demarcating blackness” (Ehlers, 2006, p. 151). In fact, through the lens of CRT, schools are some of the principal performers of Whiteness helping create and recreate societies in which Whiteness is normative (Gillborn, 2005).

Whiteness acknowledges racism as an historical fact but refuses to acknowledge any damaging legacy (Leonardo, 2013). Feagin (2013) describes this problem as a “habit of not thinking realistically and deeply about…undergirding racial structure” and points to foundational social scientists who all but ignored conspicuous “systems of racial oppression” (p. 5). These “intellectual giants,” having been “handicapped by…dominant racial framing” generated theoretical underpinnings for understanding the social world that reify a European/European-American world view (p. 5). The corollaries to these White Western informed theories suggest that in this post-civil rights era racism is a dying anachronism, that the U.S. is post-racial (Feagin, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2015).

Lastly, though because of its ubiquity and status as ‘normal’ Whiteness may not seem to require action, it is in fact performative (Leonardo, 2013). Butler (1993) pointed out, with regard to gender, that identities are constructed through performativity, the

continued bodily and structural repetition of discursive arrangements via enactment within social spaces. In this way, discourse produces the phenomena that it regulates and normalizes. Like gender, race identities, rather than only designated and assigned, require continual performance (Dyer, 2017). Enacting Whiteness, however, fits with the hegemonic norms and therefore often goes unnoticed (Warren, 2001). Because Whiteness is performed and enacted, Kendi (2019) argues race and racism allows no neutrality or passivity. Anti-racism demands actively identifying and opposing implicit performances of Whiteness, "the opposite of 'racist' isn't 'not racist.' It is 'anti-racist'" (Kendi, 2019, p. 9).

Putting the issue of race at the center of this analysis invites Gramsci (1971) and the concept of hegemony to the conversation. Hegemony as a lens helps recognize the hidden curriculum that serves to support Whiteness and other forms of power dominance that are maintained as normative in U.S. schools, e.g. masculinity and heteronormativity (Jay, 2003). Broadly speaking, the term hidden curriculum refers to expected learning outcomes that are implicit and largely go unacknowledged (Jackson, 1968). Critical scholars identify the hidden curriculum as a means of "reproduc[ing] and… maintain[ing] dominant beliefs, values, and norms" (Giroux & Penna, 1979, p. 26).

White cultural dominance in the U.S. intersects very neatly with heteropatriarchy. Just as Whiteness acts as a hegemonic tool to sterilize U.S. school curricula of successfully engaging race and racism (Pang, Rivera, & Gillette, 1998), so too do patriarchy and heteronormativity, collectively heteropatriarchy, prevent critical engagement of issues of gender inequity, sexual minoritization, and the myth of the gender binary. Patriarchy describes "a system of social structures, and practices" (Walby,

1989, p. 214) and a "mode of production" (p. 221) that frame the world through the lens of male, thus marginalizing and disadvantaging those who identify as female or non-binary. Patriarchal arrangements of power, the normalcy of the masculine gaze, and the construction of the "rules of the game" by which social and economic bargaining occurs (Kandiyoti, 2000, p. 138) hallmark some of the complex ways that patriarchy "ignores the interests" of women and others (Jackson & Pearson, 2000, p. 4) in favor of normalizing the performance of a domineering heteromasculinity. In schools the patriarchy is made manifest in myriad ways including the "authority structure of the school," "staffing patterns," explicit curriculum that replicates gender stereotypes, and informal program tracking (Kelly & Nihlen, 2017, p. 45).

Queer studies scholars point to patterns of heteronorming that in many ways parallel and accompany patriarchal patterns. Warner (1991) credits feminism's focus on gender as helping open the way for queer social theory. Building on Foucault's (1978) explication of how the idea of personal sexualities has been constructed as a means of exerting power and control, Warner (1991) challenges readers to recognize that "themes of homophobia and heterosexism may be read in almost any document of our culture" (p. 6). Schools, through both explicit and hidden curriculum, act as key social institutions for reproducing a binary understanding of gender and the normalcy of heterosexuality (Eder & Parker, 1987; Pascoe, 2007; Thorne, 1993). "Perpetuated through pervasive heteronormative discourse and symbols" heteronormativity permeates the U.S. school experience (Wilkinson & Pearson, 2009, p. 542). Football culture helps illustrate how beliefs are performed to perpetuate heteronormativity within U.S. schools. "Highly masculinized football players, [and] feminized cheerleaders are overtly celebrated" not

only at games, but during pep rallies, homecoming, and other events that often ritualize courting behaviors thereby strengthening the legitimacy of heterosexuality and marginalizing anything else (Wilkerson & Pearson, 2009, p. 547). Heterosexuality is "centered, presumed, and normative; while queer experience is a focal point for the panoptic gaze" (O'Malley & Long, 2017, p. 67).

However influential the norms of Whiteness, patriarchy, and heteronormativity are individually, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Intersectionality, the tangled interaction of these systems of dominance, complicates the marginalization of individuals and groups. Analyses by feminist scholars of color in the 1980's drew attention to the ways that Whiteness underpinned feminist theory, so much so that the ostensibly anti-oppressive nature of feminist scholarship in fact served to further marginalize women of color and exclude them from newly forming paths to power (Davis, 1981; hooks, 1984; Lourde, 1984). From their work grew the theory of intersectionality, which challenges the "single-issue framework for discrimination" that perversely erases the concerns and experiences of people "within the very movements that claim them" when they identify with more than one marginalized group (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 152). Crenshaw (1991), who coined the term, explains that intersectionality is not "some new, totalizing theory of identity," but instead offers a way to "account for multiple grounds of identity" so that a fuller story can be told (p. 1244-1245). Though the idea of intersectionality was first and more commonly applied to the combination of race and gender, as a theoretical lens it has helped education scholars explore the experiences of not only female students of color, but also LGBTQIA+ (García, 2009; Kumashiro, 2001) and disabled (Gillborn, 2015; Tomlinson, 2014) students' experiences as well.

History of Police in Schools

The brief accounts of the history of school police place their U.S. origins in the 1950's at the time of school de-segregation efforts (Burke, 2001; Weiler & Cray, 2011). Though few historical overviews draw the connection between *Brown v. Board* and SRO programs, it was understood by school leaders at the time. For example, in response to a special grand jury report suggesting police be installed in all New York City public schools, superintendent Dr. William Jansen said, "We do not want a Little Rock in New York City" (Fellows, 1957). Supported by private grants, Flint, Michigan junior high schools were some of the first campuses to experience a police-school liaison program (Radelet, 1973), but it is likely that the roots of these programs reach back at least a decade (Brown, 2006). The Flint program worked toward a goal of "prevention of delinquent and antisocial behavior among youths" and grew from the junior high schools to involve all secondary schools (Patterson, 2007, p. 84). It took years, but eventually schools around the country began to create programs modeled on Flint's. By the mid-1970's 40 out of 50 states were home to at least one school-police partnership with an estimated 200 programs in schools nationwide (ACLU, 2017; Scheffer, 1987).

For several decades, growth of the SRO phenomenon was slow, but in the 1980's widespread concern about a perceived rise in youth violence began to inspire several changes in policing and criminal justice practices, including the increase of SROs (Butts, 2000). Gang violence became a national topic directly addressed through government programming and funding (Decker, 2007). Juvenile criminal punishments became harsher and more likely to treat children like adults in carceral and justice systems (Fahey, 2016). The notion of youthful "super predators," promoted by the work of

political science researcher DiIulio (1995), became popular with politicians and became part of the national zeitgeist by 1996 when politicians began ringing alarm bells in law-and-order speeches (Associated Press, 1996; Miller, Potter, & Kappeler, 2006; C-Span, 2016). American news programs became steeped with depictions of the American juvenile superpredator: young, male, urban, and usually of color (Feld, 1999). The superpredator idea fed some Americans' "fear of other people's children, especially minority youths charged with crimes" and swept significant policy changes into the juvenile justice system (Feld, 1999, p. 5).

DiIulio and his co-authors predicted a coming culture of crime that would give rise to "super-predator" youth, a prediction that helped reinforce a culture of fear which was ultimately unsupported by observable reality (Krisberg, 2018). In fact, the superpredator myth leaned on increases in juvenile arrest rates during the late eighties and early nineties without acknowledging that arrest rates may be more indicative of changes in police behavior than criminal behavior (Bilchik, 2000). Researchers who probed for the causes of the rise in juvenile crime, beyond the demographic cohort effect, did not find a new species of youth offender but increased access to guns and drugs (Cook & Laub, 1998). However, the myth of the juvenile superpredator layed the groundwork for viewing highly publicized school shootings as evidence of a terrifying trend, rather than anomalous events (Burns & Crawford, 1999).

Simultaneous to the shift in society's perception of youth crime as a growing threat was a shift in policing philosophy toward community-oriented policing. Policing in the U.S. can trace its European lineage back through several centuries in voluntary citizen watch programs, shire reeves (today 'sheriff') who served as administrators more often

than law enforcers, and constables who were colonial gig workers paid per writ or warrant (Brandl, 2020; Potter, 2013). In addition to the importation of these largely informal structures, publicly funded slave patrols were established in the early 1700's as a means of controlling the slave population (Williams, 2015). These predecessors gave rise to the professional police departments that resemble what we know today. Beginning in the 1830's, cities began offering services 24 hours a day through centralized agencies with paid uniformed police (Brandl, 2020; Potter 2013,). These departments inherited their roles and missions from the urban night watchmen of old in the Northern cities, and from the slave patrols in Southern cities (Brandl 2020; Williams, 2015). In some locations White men were required to serve a term in the slave patrols, thereby reiterating the right of White Americans to police Black Americans but also impressing upon them a *duty* to do so (Muhammad, 2019). In the Northern cities, having evolved from the voluntary night watch, early professional police departments often stipulated that "policemen had to live in the ward in which they served" (Richardson, 1974). The social control exerted by these Northern police forces centered on ranking and subjugating each subsequent wave of European immigration and creating a racial hierarchy (Muhammad, 2019).

These early police forces were hired and fired directly by elected officials and were therefore beholden to the political needs of their official benefactors. Extortion and violence became *pro forma* in some departments, and officers learned that creating order could be achieved through corrupt means (Brandl, 2020; Muhammad, 2019). Friendship and favor in this system of political wards trumped civil rights; officers patrolling their own neighborhoods often preferred arresting people for 'suspicious character,' likely

meaning incorrect ethnicity, race, or religion, than for crimes (Muhammad, 2019; Richardson 1974). Reformers of the early 20th century sought to improve the legitimacy of the police by centralizing authority and creating a military-esque command structure that emphasized rules and hierarchy (Brandl, 2020; Williams, 2015). The value of having a policeman living in the neighborhood he patrols had been seriously corrupted by the ward system and reformers did not think it a priority. Instead a professional, rules-based process would make the desire for police to work in their own neighborhoods irrelevant, if not counterproductive.

In the 1980's a new wave of reformers argued that officers' isolation from the communities they patrolled engendered distrust in police. In response they offered a new policing framework, community-oriented policing (Travis & Langworthy, 2008). Community-oriented policing does not define a concept (Skogan & Harnett, 1997), but describes a constellation of aims that inspired some changes in police practices and can be considered a framework in policing philosophy (Ponsaers, 2001). Community-oriented policing, and the sub-genre of problem-oriented policing, aim to prevent problems and improve safety and perceptions of safety in communities by engaging the cooperation of (non-police) community members and addressing low level offenses (Glensor & Peak, 2012).

Epitomized by the broken-windows theory of policing, one central idea to community-oriented policing posits that disorder, e.g., graffiti and vagrancy, begets more disorder in a downward spiral (Glensor & Peak, 2012). A broken-windows inspired community-oriented approach to policing seeks to stop and prevent low level offenses to create a more orderly community, which in turn discourages subsequent and escalating

criminal activity (Kelling & Wilson, 1982). However, the broken windows theory is drawn from a somewhat flawed chain of events perspective that asserts causality where only correlation can be detected (Sampson & Raudenbush, 2004), owing in part to the very subjective ideas of order and disorder. Further, in practice broken-windows inspired policing largely failed to make "public spaces safe by addressing unsafe conditions." Instead a broken-windows approach meant zero-tolerance and stop-and-frisk, which made "public spaces very, very dangerous for black people, Latino people, poor people, LGBTQ people, people with substance abuse problems, people with mental health problems, and homeless people" (Howell, 2016, p. 1059-1060). These criticisms stand as important reminders that as community-oriented police aim to build relationships in the communities they patrol, they may be bringing assumptions and habits to the work that will undermine those efforts.

Problem-oriented policing, a strategy proposed by Herman Goldstein in 1979, like the larger community-oriented policing construct aims for prevention by focusing on "means over ends" (Goldstein, 1979, p. 235). The Community Oriented Policing Services office (COPS), a division of the U.S. Department of Justice, embraces problem-oriented methods and has helped the problem-orientation become part of the "language of modern police management" (Scott, 2000, p. 1-2). Applying a problem-oriented approach means identifying "substantive social problems" within a police jurisdiction, evaluating the context of these problems, and analyzing ways to curb the problem (p. 99). Stokes et al. (1996) describe a problem-oriented approach used in a Philadelphia middle school. Incidents of student victimization were analyzed for patterns, and police determined that creating a "safe corridor" for students walking to and from school would prevent crimes,

so directed policing resources to very targeted patrols based on the school day. The problem-oriented approach, however, "encourages [a] broad…role for police" in part because solution activities could be well outside the scope of traditional police work (Scott, 2000, p. 99). For example, other problem-oriented solutions for the same Philadelphia school might rest on police working with schools to stagger release times, create afterschool/before school care opportunities, or organizing community groups to escort students.

In many ways, community-oriented and problem-oriented policing seem to marry well with schools. Some of the issues around the community-oriented policing framework are not problems in a school setting. For example, the question of how to define community, while extremely challenging in policing at large, becomes clearer in a school context. Similarly, the appreciation for an orderly environment fits well with most schools' missions, and the idea of early intervention and problem solving certainly resonates with educators. However, remaining are significant problems with community-oriented policing that may only be exacerbated in a school setting. As Ponsaers (2001) points out, selecting and implementing any police program requires answering deep questions about our values and norms, whether we consciously acknowledge them or not: "What is the meaning of prevention; How should we evaluate police discretion; What is the meaning of community;...What kind of policing do we want?" (p. 472). Outside of school, orderly and disorderly may have legal definitions but defining these concepts inside schools is often discretionary and even arbitrary (Nance, 2015). Moreover, as in society at large, the descriptions of orderly and disorderly are some of the myriad ways we codify dominant cultural standards, an especially problematic practice in a school

setting (Aghasaleh, 2018). Further, early intervention in a disciplinary context might in fact cause rather than repair problems, as will be explored in the coming section, School to Prison Pipeline.

Today school police officers are referred to as School Resource Officers (SRO); they are sworn career (and usually armed) law enforcement officers responsible for the safety of a school or schools (Community Oriented Policing Services Office, n.d.). Most SROs are employed by a local police agency and serve in schools through legal agreement between the school district and the local government (Coon & Travis, 2012). The duties and activities of SROs vary (McKenna et al., 2016), and few jurisdictions require SRO specific training before officers are assigned to a school position (Javdani, 2019; Utt, 2018). According to both the Justice Department which funds many officers' salaries and the National Association of School Resource Officers, best practice for an SRO program requires outlining an officer's responsibilities in a memorandum of understanding (MOU), an interlocal agreement between public entities (COPS, 2019; NASRO, 2020). However, there are few standards for what is contained in an MOU and they too vary wildly both in thoroughness and approach to school policing (Cotman & Duarte, 2021). This lack of direction could help explain the wide latitude SROs take in the exercise of discretion over their school policing duties (Wolf, 2014).

Perhaps because police were already serving in many schools because of the new interest in community-oriented policing, when public concern turned to school shootings, placing more police in schools seemed a logical step. Installing SROs visually signaled a commitment to keep schools safe, and politicians keen to be perceived as responding to school shootings opened the public purse to pay for SRO salaries (French-Marcelin &

Hinger, 2017). Today most researchers estimate that about half of U.S. campuses employ a police officer with no signs of the growth slowing (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). In fact, some states are legislatively mandating that schools employ police (USDOJ, 2018; State of Florida Department of Education, 2017). The National Association of School Resource Officers (2020) acknowledges that "because SROs are not required to register with any national database, nor are police departments required to report how many of their officers work as SROs" there are no means of accurately counting serving SROs (para. 5). NASRO (2020) offers an estimate of between 14,000 and 20,000 SROs currently in service nationwide, based on DOJ data and the number of SROs that NASRO has trained (NASRO, 2020, para. 5). In a 2017 survey of 12-19 year-olds across the U.S., 70.9% reported observing a security guard or assigned police officer on their school campuses (Musu et al., 2018), and researchers estimate nearly half of U.S. schools include sworn police officers as part of their normal staff (Diliberti et al., 2017).

Police Training and Professional Development

Any SRO-specific training is supplemental to the training that police undergo to become sworn officers of the law. SROs are sworn and commissioned police officers drawn from the ranks of local law enforcement bodies, organizations whose certification requirements differ from state to state. Their law enforcement training and service does not begin in school settings, but instead in police academies and state, county or local police departments. As adult learners, officers will almost certainly filter any new training through their previous training and professional development experiences (Knowles, 1984). In fact, researchers who have studied U.S. police training suggest that effective programs purposefully incorporate the life experiences of the trainees into the

coursework (Birzar, 2003).

The Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE) has responsibility for certifying police training academies and programs through which people interested in becoming officers can be commissioned in Texas. By legal code these requirements leave great discretion to both the academy and the TCOLE inspectors who inform the commission responsible for granting official status to training institutions. As in other states, the lack of specificity has led to a wide range of training experience for Texas law enforcement officers undergoing training (Reaves, 2016). For example, instructors are to be "qualified," without further definition of the qualifications (Texas Administrative Code title 37 part 7 chapter 215 rule §215.2). Larger police departments often have their own academies, and other officers attend training provided by unaffiliated academies or community colleges (Reaves, 2016). By and large this diverse training landscape does, nevertheless, have some common features. "Police academies almost universally focus on firearms training, investigations, report writing, first aid/ CPR, criminal law, traffic law and ethics" (Rossler & Suttmoeller, 2018, p. 109). The trainings are frequently "militaristic" in style (Birzer, 2002, p. 29), and they are a means by which police agencies instill their "values and views among the recruits" (Kumar, 2019, p. 256).

The National Research Council sounded the alarm bell about police training "being offered without scientific evidence of their likely effects" in 2004 and urged the development of research informed programs (Skogan et al., 2015, p. 320). The President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015) identified high quality training, based on consistent standards derived from evidence-based best practices, as one of its six pillars critical for effective policing in a democracy. However, only limited progress toward this

effort has been achieved (Skogan et al., 2015, p. 320). Small scale studies on the effectiveness of specific trainings suggest that specialized trainings compacted into one or a few days (often called ‘single-session’ or ‘block training’) have little impact on police practice (O’Neill, et al., 2018; Scantlebury, et al., 2017).

Researchers on police training note a dearth of evidence about the effectiveness of training in de-escalation (Engel et al., 2020), procedural justice (Antrobus et al., 2019), and around understanding gender and sexuality related issues in policing (see Russell & Sturgeon, 2019 re: intimate partner violence; Renzetti et al., 2015 re: human trafficking; Israel et al., 2017 re: understanding LGBTQ citizens). Even with this discouraging evidence, many advocates still believe in the value of SRO training and offer some ideas about how it can be most effective. Pushing against the block training approach, Johnson (1999) calls for regular training opportunities throughout their service on campuses. Lambert and McGinty (2002) suggest that school principals should not only know what SRO training entails but help tailor training to their own campus needs.

A recent analysis of the SRO training materials used in Arizona found that the materials “universalize” student experiences, and in so doing reinforce an “operative whiteness” by framing the training as race neutral (Utt, 2018, p. 78-79). Not only is colorblind framing an implicit form of racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2003), in the context of school police it is particularly dangerous. Disparate police experiences of Black and Latino/a communities in America (Goff et al., 2016), and disparate experiences of Black and Latino/a students in U.S. schools necessitate a complex look at the contexts within which SROs serve (Kohli, et al., 2017). For example, when through the guidance manual officers are encouraged to integrate into their new work settings, the text fails to address

“what it would mean for an officer to be “integrated” into a school where Students of Color might experience police as violent and harassing in the wider community” (Utt, 2018, p. 78).

School-to-Prison Pipeline

The School to Prison Pipeline (STPP) metaphor describes in shorthand the problematic relationship between some students’ school experiences and their subsequent incarceration. Rather than a single system or policy, the STPP can be identified by a “pervasive pattern” of systems and policies that push students away from school success and instead pull them toward involvement with the criminal justice system (Okilwa et al., 2017, p. 3). The STPP channels children away from positive opportunities to engage as educated citizens and instead sends them on a “journey” toward prison (Wald & Losen, 2003, p. 3).

Researchers have sought to identify elements that construct the STPP structure. Some key components suggested by research include: zero tolerance and exclusionary discipline policies (Justice, 2018; Skiba et al., 2014), school discipline decisions that disproportionately affect minoritized students (Darensbourg et al., 2010; Raible & Irizarry, 2010), surveillance and school based law enforcement officers (Johnson, et al., 2018), and culturally non-responsive pedagogy (Darensbourg et al., 2010; Okilwa, Khalifa, & Briscoe, 2017). Furthermore, other researchers have warned about ostensibly positive practices that without carefully considered implementation may mask structural supports for a STPP rather than dismantle it, i.e. restorative justice (Lustick, 2016), Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (Bornstein, 2017), and high stakes testing to encourage school accountability (McCarter, 2016).

Zero-tolerance and Exclusionary Discipline. Zero-tolerance discipline policies trace back to 1980's concerns about youth crime and the war on drugs (Potter & Boggs, 2017; Teske, 2011). Proponents often subscribed to the broken windows theory of policing that suggested that criminal behavior arises when people perceive a lack of social control as signaled by smaller offenses (Livermore, 2008). According to this theory, quickly addressing minor challenges to the social order with predetermined consequences for offenders prevents larger problems. In educational settings, this translates into zero-tolerance discipline practices defined by punitive pre-determined consequences applied without consideration of context or mitigating circumstances (McCarter, 2016). The zero-tolerance approach began as a response first to drugs, and then guns, in schools (Monahan et al., 2014) but "morphed into an overarching, systematic attempt to deal with all violations to a school's code of conduct" (Potter & Boggs, 2017, p. 41; see also Skiba & Rausch, 2006; TEA, 2007).

Because this philosophy appealed both to policy makers with a hard law-and-order stance (Mallett, 2016) and also some with an interest in the socially just application of like consequences for like offenses (Skiba & Peterson, 1999), schools adopted zero-tolerance exclusionary discipline rules with speed. From 1974 to 2000 the likelihood of receiving out of school suspension punishment nearly doubled from 1.7 out of 51 million (3.3%) 5-17 year-olds to 3.1 out of 53 million (5.8%) 5-17 year-olds (Poe-Yamagata & Jones, 2000; Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau). The rate of out of school suspensions for American K-12 students remains high at 2.8 out of 50 million (5.6%) students in school year 2013-2014 (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2016; see also Wald & Losen, 2003 and Losen & Gillespie, 2012 for more

statistical evidence of this rise over time).

Unfortunately, neither zero-tolerance policies, exclusionary discipline, or their combination supports better student outcomes or a positive school climate. In an analysis of national data, Schollenberger (2015) demonstrated a strong correlation between school suspension rates and subsequent criminal justice involvement. This finding tracks with more localized analyses conducted in Missouri (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2009) and Texas (Fabelo et al., 2011) that found direct links between the rate of exclusionary school discipline and juvenile court referrals. Skeptics might argue there is a chicken-and-egg question in these findings; intuitively it follows that individuals who misbehave in school are the same individuals who misbehave out of school. However, research demonstrates school discipline punishments cannot be perfectly predicted by negative student behavior (Rocque 2010; Rocque & Paternoster, 2011). In fact, Schollenberger (2015) found that a substantial portion of boys who had received school suspensions did not participate in delinquent behavior, and only a very few exhibited violent behavior, "it is possible that schools' actions [exclusionary discipline] might increase their [disciplined male students'] risk of involvement in more serious delinquency and illegal activity later on" (p. 40).

Many schools offer disciplinary alternative programs (DAP, also called disciplinary alternative education programs or DAEP) to mitigate the consequences of 'putting students on the street' through school suspension and expulsion. DAP, designed to allow "for both the removal and continued education of students whose behaviors violated local or state-mandated rules of conduct," (TEA, 2007, p. 2) have grown increasingly common across the nation (Tajalli & Garba, 2014). Building on studies of

educators' observations and perceptions, best practices for DAPs have been developed that hold promise: smaller student/teacher ratios, individualized student goals, and conflict resolution training for staff (McCreigh, 1999; NAEA, 2014). Student outcomes, however, are less than promising (Brown, 2007). Novak (2019) conducted a meta-analysis of the few quantitative studies that directly measure DAP student outcomes and concluded the programs were "ineffective at improving disciplinary sanctions, academic performance, and truancy in the long-term" having found no significant positive effect on any measure of student success (p. 433). Rios (2017) found that participation in a California alternative program contributed to negative self-concept formation for participating Latinos. The students developed identities as deviant and even criminal (Rios, 2017), which match with findings in criminal justice research about programs that aggregate young offenders (Dishion et al., 1999).

According to research, students' sense of safety and perceptions of school climate are negatively associated with the prevalence of exclusionary discipline practices on their campuses (Hanson & Voight, 2014; Skiba et al., 2014). However amorphous the concept of school climate might be, a substantial research base points to it as a significant factor in students' experiences (Hanson & Voight, 2014; McCoy et al., 2013; Moos, 1987; Osher et al., 2008). Taking direction from the Obama administration's Now is the Time Plan and My Brother's Keeper Taskforce, the U.S. Department of Education has dedicated substantial resources to researching school climate and providing resources to education leaders for improving school climate (National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2016), Given this environment, understanding the relationship between discipline policies and students'

perceptions of climate is especially critical (Thapa et al., 2013; Rudasill et al., 2018). Students recognize that high rates of exclusionary discipline track with low expectations and supports (Mattison & Arber, 2007) which may help explain Lee et al.'s (2011) finding that exclusionary discipline policies correspond to higher dropout rates and other poor student outcomes.

Disparities in Discipline. However imprecise the STPP metaphor might be, the idea demands attention because of the adverse long-term impact on children, most especially children of color. Research demonstrates that early experiences including disengagement with school, exclusionary school discipline experiences, and early involvement with the criminal justice system as a juvenile significantly predict later criminal justice involvement (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2005). Whatever their intention, zero-tolerance and exclusionary discipline policies have not, in practice, created a more equitable distribution of school discipline (Anyon et al., 2018; Barnes & Motz, 2018; Mallett, 2016). An analysis of discipline data from Texas demonstrates African American and Latino/a students are significantly more likely to be disciplined for discretionary violations and more likely to receive exclusionary punishment in response (Fabelo, et al., 2011). In Texas, Black students are more frequently and disproportionately assigned to DAEP programs (Tajalli & Garba, 2014). Other research demonstrates that children of color receive more and harsher punishments in school than White students, by a factor of 2 for Latino/a and Native American children and factor of 7 for African American children (Bal et al., 2019).

Historic disparities continue for marginalized sub-populations to devastating effect. In 2017, Hispanic-origin identifying and African American residents were four

times as likely as White non-Hispanic origin residents to be imprisoned by federal or state authorities (436,500 out of 202,229, 636:White; 794,400 out of 92,341,534: African American and Hispanic-origin identifying) (USDOJ, 2018). [Note, though I use the term Latino/a to refer to people with Latin American heritage, the USDOJ uses the term Hispanic. Since their data relies on self-identification, it is important to use the term they invited participants to claim.]

LGBTQIA students are also disproportionately disciplined with harsher punishments for the same behaviors as their cis-gendered and heterosexual peers (Snapp et al., 2015). Examining a national sample of LGBTQ student data, Palmer and Greytak (2017) found that not only were queer students disproportionately disciplined but were more likely to be referred to the criminal justice system as a result of those experiences. Combined with the additional stressors more common in queer children's experience of family rejection and homelessness, negative school experiences may have an especially devastating effect (Snapp et al., 2015). These discipline consequences track perfectly with queer youth's experiences of disproportionate negative involvement with the criminal justice system (Himmelstein & Brückner, 2011; Mallory et al, 2015).

Students identified as disabled also experience higher rates of school discipline than their non-disabled peers (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008; Christle et al, 2005; Krezmien et al., 2006) and specifically experience more exclusionary disciplinary consequences (Miller & Meyers, 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Slaughter, et al. (2019) highlight how frequently students with Autism Spectrum Disorder are removed from their educational settings for discretionary violations and Alnaim (2018) explains how zero-tolerance disciplinary policies are particularly problematic for students

with emotional disabilities and behavior disorders.

Other researchers have calculated far higher risk of exclusionary disciplinary action against students with special education status, and the complex ways this identifier intersects with other marginalized identities (Anderson & Ritter, 2017; Mandell et al., 2008). African American, Native American, and Latino/a students are more often excluded from the learning environment for disciplinary causes, but they are also more likely to be labeled as emotionally disturbed, a label that alone significantly increases school discipline rates (Bal et al., 2019; Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni, 2008). Dembo and LaFleur (2019) discovered a correlation between the over disciplining of special needs students with the medical resources in their surrounding communities, pointing to another intersectional factor of disability status and socio-economic level. Cheely et al. (2012), after noting that students with disabilities are more likely to be charged with criminal offenses for school-based behavior than their non-disabled peers, posit that "the social demands of an educational setting may be particularly difficult" for some special education students increasing the likelihood of "problem behaviors" (p. 1860).

School Based Law Enforcement. Interest in community-oriented policing spawned lucrative federal grants to support the placement of police officers in schools (Counts et al., 2018). Combined with increased concern over school shootings, school districts across the nation moved toward placing school-based law enforcement officers, often known as school resource officers (SROs), on every campus (Coon & Travis, 2012; O'Murphy, 2013). The dearth of reliable data about SROs limits opportunities for targeted and longitudinal examinations of the phenomenon. Though the data about SRO placements is not systematically collected (James & McCallion, 2013, Weisburst, 2018),

we do know that the number of Texas K-12 schools with SROs has grown from 1% in 1978 to well over 50% (Carreon, 2015). The effects of this marked change in school personnel are yet to be fully measured, much less understood (Owens, 2017; Theriot & Orme, 2016; Weisburst, 2018).

Critics warn that an increased police presence will necessarily increase student involvement with the criminal justice system (Flannery, 2015; Thurau & Wald, 2009). While some research argues that this not a problem (May et al., 2015), most research suggests this concern is warranted (Fisher & Hennesey, 2016; Owens, 2017; Theriot, 2009; Weisburst, 2018). Curtis (2013) cites alarming statistics from Georgia and Alabama demonstrating that when SROs are placed on campuses, student referrals to law-enforcement increased over 10-fold. This increase may be aberrantly outsized, but Na and Gottfredson's (2013) rigorous study of national data also matched an increase in SRO presence with an increase in weapon and drug offenses. Similarly, through studying Community Oriented Police Services (COPS) grant funding of "Cops In Schools" (CIS) programs and FBI crime data, Owens (2017) was able to determine that an increased SRO presence resulted in an increase in juvenile arrests at the county level, particularly for middle school-aged children. Theriot (2009) compared school arrest rates between a sample of schools with full-time SROs to schools whose police presence consisted only of regular visits by sheriff's deputies and found a significant increase in the number of disorderly conduct arrests in the schools with SROs. Kupchik (2016) explains this phenomenon through his observational research, "I observed many instances where caring SROs worked hard to define misbehavior as a criminal act so they could make an arrest" (p. 32).

Even when offenses do not rise to the level of criminal justice involvement, an officer's presence in schools can correspond with higher rates of school discipline. Weisburst (2018) discovered that on middle school campuses in Texas, SRO presence increased disciplinary actions for low-level offenses like conduct code violations. Largely because "appropriate data is hard to obtain," research evaluating the relationship between SRO presence and student outcomes is sparse (Weisburst, 2018). There is evidence however that SROs are more likely to be placed on campuses with previously existing high levels of student disciplinary actions (Kupchik & Ward, 2014).

Other research points to more complicated outcomes of SRO presence that rest in students' perceptions of their school environments. SRO presence, for many student groups, does not correspond with a sense of safety (Bracy, 2011; Perumean-Chaney & Sutton, 2013; Theriot & Orme, 2016). Children of color, and students who self-identify as having been previously victims of crime report feeling a diminished sense of safety relative to other students on campuses with school-based law enforcement, regardless of their personal interaction(s) with the officer(s) (Theriot & Orme, 2016). This finding matches part of the findings in Bachman et al. (2011) that discovered for most students many school security measures corresponded to an increased probability of perceiving fear. Johnson et al. (2018) found that aside from a sense of safety, students of color on campuses with high levels of surveillance, including SROS, are more likely to identify their campuses as inequitable and unfair. SROs' presence on campuses, regardless of their activities, may be contributing to the STPP by depressing students' engagement with the school community.

There are stakeholder groups that respond positively to the presence of SROs.

Johnson (1999) interviewed 10 school principals, the majority of whom considered SRO presence an asset to their campuses. Subsequent research of larger groups of principals also found the majority of principals "feel that SROs are very important components of their school safety plan" (May et al, 2004, p. 88) or "should be placed in public schools" (Chrusciel et al., 2015). Though it is interesting to note that the only specific safety issue (of 16) that one study's principals identified as decreasing since the inception of their SRO program is "fighting" (May et al., 2004, p. 87). Chrusciel et al. (2015) similarly found that the principals' enthusiasm waned in the face of decreased funding; only 30% supported the placement of SROs if funding for the position was entirely from the school budget and not outside funders.

Culturally Non-responsive Campuses. Some explanations for disparate student discipline experiences include educators focused "gaze" on minoritized populations (Raible & Irizarry, 2010), school cultures defined by dominant cultural paradigms (Darensbourg, Perez, & Blake, 2010), and a social interest in controlling certain populations (Hirschfield, 2010). School campuses that are not engaged in culturally responsive pedagogy and leadership are contributing to the STPP (Okilwa, Khalifa, & Briscoe, 2017). Khalifa (2018) argues that failing to lead schools in culturally responsive ways results in students whose cultural background or identity falls outside of the dominant paradigm struggle to find success. As a result, non-culturally responsive schools connect more potently to the STPP.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, as conceived by Ladson-Billings (1998), turns away from deficit-orientated investigations about the ways Black American learners fail to achieve and toward identifying the practices that support the success of students of

color. “I dared to ask what was right with these students” says Ladson-Billings (2014) and found teachers and teaching practices that were “thoughtful, inspiring, demanding, critical; they were connected to the students, their families, their communities, and their daily lives” (p. 74). Ladson’s “domains” of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy are “academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness” (p. 75). Subsequent scholarship has built on Ladson-Billing’s work. Gay (2000) focuses very specifically on teachers’ practices that respond to diverse learners in their classrooms. CRP calls for teachers to base their work in an assets-based view of students, a view that will impact instruction, materials, classroom climate, relationships, and the teacher’s own critical self-reflection (Gay, 2000). Paris (2012), recognizing the dynamism, multiplicity, and cultural import of the identities that people inhabit, injected the idea of sustenance into the conversation with Critically Sustaining Pedagogy. Critically Sustaining Pedagogy urges educators to use the culturally relevant and responsive practices to underpin and even center a plurality of ways of being and knowing, inspired by the many cultures and identities that students add to the learning environment (Paris, 2012). Khalifa et al. (2016) take up the call to move cultural responsiveness/sustenance outside of classrooms into the school, school system, and community at large. Speaking specifically of campus leaders, Khalifa et al. (2016) describe cultural responsiveness as a “must…through resisting exclusionary practice; promoting inclusivity, Indigenous youth identities; and integrating student culture in all aspects of schooling” (p. 1296-1297).

School environments that do not engage in culturally sustaining practices design school policies, including student rules, that reflect the values of the dominant culture and thereby are more likely to trigger disciplinary action for students from other cultures

(Blaisdell, 2016). Dress codes, for example, often codify a White, male, middle-class orientation to acceptable/professional self-presentation (Aghasaleh, 2018). As a result, students of color, particularly girls, and students who present outside the gender binary norm are more likely to be dress-coded and receive punishment for the violation (Morris & Perry, 2017; Glickman, 2016). Howard (2015) argues that police presence similarly conditions students, but most particularly students of color who are more likely to attend schools with SROS, to accept compliance and invasion of privacy as normal. "What seems to be clear is that while safety is the state explanation for the presence of officers…across the U.S. Black students appear to [be] disproportionately targeted for police intervention" (Howard, 2015, p. 104).

More insidiously, campuses without a culturally responsive approach will be less effective in engaging students of color and others from non-dominant paradigms (Ladson-Billings, 2007). Hammond (2015) explicitly describes how culturally responsive pedagogy is necessary for equitable engagement of the diverse U.S. student body as it leverages "the natural learning systems of culturally diverse students in our ongoing efforts to close the achievement gap" (p. 5).

The STPP Moving Forward. Critics of the STPP heuristic rightly argue that talking about a school to prison connection seems to ignore what are potentially larger pipes funneling certain citizens into the criminal justice system, e.g. childhood trauma, poverty, and drug/alcohol abuse (Ward, 2017). However, the presence of other prison push-ins does not absolve schools from an urgent examination of their complicity in a STPP. Other critics argue that the STPP is a myth, that the data on specific policies that have been linked to the STPP, e.g. school based law enforcement officers, do not

necessarily describe a marked causal relationship (McGrew, 2016). To the extent that this is a fair criticism, it neglects to acknowledge the challenge at the heart of what school leaders face on every front: understanding the intersectional, subtle, and/or layered impacts of a program and policies.

Perhaps the less common term ‘school-prison nexus’ better fits the relationship between students’ education experiences and subsequent criminal justice involvement. The school-prison nexus conceptually acknowledges that while the pipeline suggests a linearity to students’ experiences, very often paths can better be described as webbed (Annamma, 2016). Importantly, the idea of nexus places the STPP within the larger context of a national acceptance of and reliance on carceral logics in all systems. Carceral logic is social control exerted through surveillance, coercion, which “encourages the removal of non-normative bodies from public spaces through a host of discourses and practices” (Annamma, 2016, p. 1211). Schools shape students’ behavior and thinking through practices that can extend the carceral experience beyond the boundaries of the prison into an imprisoned society (Foucault, 1977). From this Foucauldian perspective, “the technologies of schools…are the true product of prisons, and prisoners are the waste byproduct” (Miller, 2018, para. 8). “Even when they come from a helping profession” [teachers, social workers, et al.] those who aim to help others inform their work from start to finish with “ideologies, discourse, and practices” that implicitly understand social order and control as paramount and normal (Annamma, 2018, p. 6). There is a clear onus on educators and leaders to interrogate the school experience offered to our students and be certain that no one goes without a consistently clear invitation to full participation in the citizenry.

How the STPP Works - A Story

Having pulled many of the pieces of the STPP apart, i.e., zero tolerance and exclusionary discipline, racial and other disproportionalities in discipline, cultural non-responsiveness, and the presence of SROs, I offer a story to illustrate how upon integration they form a powerful school to prison nexus. In the summer of 2018 several families with students attending a local high school I'll call Barrow High campaigned the school board about a safety problem. This school board oversees their small suburban school district of about 7000 students including Barrow. The concerned parents spoke passionately about how unsafe their students felt going into particular bathrooms on campus because of other students loitering to smoke during school hours. The board sympathized and decreed a **zero-tolerance policy** for smoking and vaping, moving forward any student caught with smoking or vaping material was to be cited by law enforcement for the class C misdemeanor, minor in possession of tobacco products.

School students' fourth amendment search and seizure rights have received particular attention in court cases and as a result are governed by special and unique parameters. Schools retain possession of and the unimpeded right to search lockers, desks, and school-owned digital devices. Student-owned property, e.g., pockets and backpacks, may be searched by school personnel with "reasonable suspicion," a lower bar than "probable cause" required for police officers. The courts have not reached a clear consensus about how to view SROs, whether as school personnel or police officers, in part because principals and SROs can, in practice, act as one another's agents making the distinctions very murky. At Barrow there were occasions that the SRO brought a principal's attention to a student they suspected of vaping providing the "reasonable

suspicion" needed for the principal to search pockets and backpacks. There were other occasions that a principal's search yielded material that provided "probably cause" that the student's car had illegal material and required a police search.

Most of the searches during that school year at Barrow were actually conducted with the consent of the student being searched, but neither school officials or police are required to advise a student they have the right to refuse consent. The voluntary nature of a student's consent is subject to legal scrutiny, and it seems likely that some of the students searched that year could have felt coerced, but the onus to challenge a search lies with those students and their families. None of the students with misdemeanor citations decided to challenge the legality of their search.

At that time in Texas a minor in possession of tobacco could be fined up to $250 plus court costs. In the school's jurisdiction these citations required a court appearance for a scolding from the judge and $300. Without their sheriff's deputy **SROs present** the school would not have been able to issue these citations. In the 2018-2019 school year 90 students were introduced to the criminal justice system through these citations and subsequent court appearances.

A few citations into the school year the principals recognized that a student caught vaping was high and discovered that THC oil was being vaped in lieu of legal (for adults) vaping materials. At that time state law classified the possession of any amount of THC oil a felony offense, and felonious conduct requires school expulsion. The first felony vaping arrests of Barrow students were prompted by the students having confessed to the principal during what the student took to be a normal disciplinary meeting. Barrow did have the students back, but to their segregated small Disciplinary Alternative

Education Program (DAEP) wing; they were **excluded** from their regular classes and disconnected from their old teachers and peers for the remainder of the school year. These shocking first felony arrests led to two important changes in how many police, principals, students, and parents approached these events. First, the county sheriff quickly realized that he didn't want his lab budget to be blown by having to test dozens of vape pens from the high school. The SROs were advised to limit testing to the vape pens of those most suspicious. When I asked the SROs how they determined which were most suspicious they explained it was largely based on previous experience with the student, student reputation, and student attitude, "you can just tell." Among a 75% White student body the Latino/a and Black students already drew an outsized portion of disciplinary action. The previous school year 43% of the out-of-school suspended students were Black, Latino/a, or of mixed ethnicity and 50% of expulsions were Latino/a. Undoubtedly **this racially disproportionate approach to discipline** put Black and Latino/a students under a cloud of suspicion.

The second shift was in parents' reactions to the vaping incidents. Students whose parents had the social and financial capital taught their students not to consent to searches and hired lawyers, thus keeping their children out of DAEP. Some parents began claiming the vaping pens found at school were their own hoping to protect their children from felony arrests. The school culture made it possible for the families that operate comfortably within White structures and systems to navigate more successfully. Students and families who admitted to wrongdoing rather than hiring an expensive lawyer found themselves out of their depth; for all the talk about restorative justice disciplinary practices at Barrow, the **culture of the school was not responsive** to other ways of

conceiving of and addressing these events.

The result was nine felony arrests that school year including 2 arrests of 18-year-olds (not juveniles). If convicted these incidents result in records, fines, potentially jail time, along with severely restricted access to scholarships, college financial aid, and even college admission. One tragic year, made possible by SROs on campus every day, introduced almost 100 students to the criminal justice system, some with results that will haunt them the rest of their lives.

Positionality

I believe that the presence of SROs compromised the safety of the student body at Barrow High that year. All of my varied years of school experiences have convinced me that school safety is far too important and far too complex to reduce to school shootings or school police. Qualitative research, and certainly critical content analysis and critical policy analysis specifically, call for researchers to think deeply and reflexively about their own positions and relation to any project. Experienced researchers warn that the quality of research is undermined, and dominant ideologies tend to be replicated, by investigators and investigations that do not take seriously this call (Smith, 2012; Utt & Short, 2018). To that end I begin here making my vantage point explicit.
I have worked in a variety of school spaces with SROs as a teacher, parent, and researcher, and those experiences no doubt inform my reading of the TCOLE 4064 text. Most directly, as a research assistant at the Texas School Safety Center I helped test a framework for the successful implementation of SRO programs at a campus level. In this work I met regularly with many administrators and SROs serving secondary schools in central Texas and occasionally with SROs and school leaders from across the state. I also

helped design and deliver professional development about school policing to educators. Never have I personally had anything but friendly and professional relationships with SROs.

Before the 1999 Columbine shooting that sparked the recent increase in school police I taught in a middle school with a full-time SRO. His role, in my observation, was largely to stay near the main office to help deal with difficult parents and witness the administration of corporal punishment to attest that it was not abusive. This SRO, the administrators, and most of the faculty were White and middle class in a majority Black Title 1 school. Though it was never made explicit in words, I understood that the SRO's priority was to protect the White faculty and staff. I expect many parents and students did not feel an increased sense of safety from the SROs presence, but certainly safety was these families' high priority. Without a single exception a brave soul from each class I ever taught at that school would ask on the first day, "Miss, do you swat?" The whole class listened intently for my answer. Parents too would find ways to ask this of me, though more delicately; the first order of business was whether I would hit students (I did not) and what were the rule infractions that might result in swats. They feared, on a palpable basic level, their bodily safety in school.

When I began homeschooling my own oldest child a few years later it was largely to keep her out of schools that believed hitting students was appropriate. Later in a new state I connected with other homeschooling moms, some of whom also began their homeschooling journeys out of safety fears. We sat in public parks in a progressive affluent Washington, D.C. suburb and formed a community. Black mothers shared their own student experiences and fears that their boys were destined for mistreatment at

school. Hijab wearing mothers didn't want their Muslim children subject to post 9/11 hysteria and stereotyping. Mothers with autistic children feared for their students' safety too, as did those whose children had anaphylactic allergies and other medical conditions that needed vigilant monitoring. None of these real safety concerns are addressed by investing in school policing.

I am a White woman and have lived almost all my life in suburbs, sometimes within the confines of urban school districts, and as often within suburban ISDs that did not include an urban hub. My elementary school years were spent in the freshly desegregated schools of 1970s New Orleans, where I attended schools with majority Black student and faculty populations. That experience stands in stark contrast to my (nearly) exclusively White secondary school years in suburban Houston. I don't remember SROs at any school I attended, but I do remember feeling safer in the Houston schools because the bathrooms were clean and functioning and there was playground equipment and grass. My mother remembers being shocked at my shock when I reported these observations after my first day in my new Houston school. Even as a child I could feel the impact of investment in facilities on my sense of safety.

As a teacher these investments (and failures to invest) are even more palpable to me. In school year 2019-2020 I taught part-time at a local high school with just under 1000 students that counted 2 SROs from the county sheriff's office among its personnel, an annual investment of about $300,000 (for salary, equipment, and related expenses). Among the safety-compromising facility problems I spotted were broken glass in classroom cabinet doors, non-functional bathroom taps, inoperative emergency fire suppressors in science labs, and no traffic design for school drop-off and pick-up. I could

also list safety-compromising policy and practices including sending feverish children back to class, dismissing students to unidentified adults when a language barrier makes clear communication challenging, and limiting paper napkins in the lunchroom to one per child. I have no doubt many of these and other issues can be observed on campuses across the state.

I am able-bodied, cis-gendered, and heterosexual, and have been all my life. These are not claims that all members of my family of procreation can make, which has given me something of an intimate outsider's perspective and further challenged how I conceive of safety and safe environments. Attending to and investing in real safety liberates students and families, but the idea of safety is not simple or separate from values and identities. Putting all our safety eggs in the school shooter/SRO basket has damaging effects to real safety.

Restating the Problem

At a prayer vigil following the Newtown school shooting President Obama asserted that if we don't truly take care of our children, "if we don't get that right, we don't get anything right" (NPR, 2012). He then challenged the nation to ask, "can we say that we're truly doing enough to give all the children of this country the chance they deserve to live out their lives in happiness and with purpose?" When we can draw through lines from school policy and practice to the prison door the answer to Obama's challenge is a tragic, no. School police might offer a visible commitment to safety and tangible comfort to some worried students and families, but to others they heighten safety concerns. We must ask what philosophy, assumptions, and aims undergird the project of school policing. The TCOLE 4064 training curriculum offers one of the lengthiest public

policy documents on this topic in the state of Texas, and its examination will offer valuable information about how the SRO role is conceived and intended to support the work of schools.

III. METHODS

A special urgency and gravity colors academic research in education because dissemination and practical application of discoveries can be rapid and far reaching. In fact, an often unspoken anxiety reminds us that hesitating to put new best practices into effect can mean an entire generation of students loses opportunities that might have improved their learning and lives. Historically, problem solving in the academy has drawn from an objectivist epistemology that views knowledge as "unambiguous and accurate," separate from human interpretive interference (Crotty, 1998, p, 18). As social and decision science fields grew, they inherited the theoretical perspectives and methods from this Enlightenment approach and attempted to apply them to problem solving in their own realms. However, research conclusions imbued with and built on this objectivist understanding of knowledge were found wanting in profound ways, ways that are critical to determining practicable and effective best practices. In light of these shortcomings, philosophical and inquiry paradigms emerged that exceed the parameters of "normal science" and instead questioned the received definitions of reason and knowledge (Crotty, 1998, p. 37).

Education research, like other social and decision sciences, has had to grapple with different ways of knowing that better speak to the phenomena under investigation and offer nuanced and multi-faceted understanding while retaining methodological rigor necessary for credibility and trustworthiness. Qualitative inquiry systematically "focuses on meaning in context" (Merriam, 2009, p. 2) and "interprets the meaning-making process" (Patton, 2015, p. 3). Qualitative research takes into account "the personal and interpersonal nature" and context of knowledge (Patton, 2015, p. 4).

Qualitative Research

Every practice in education is imbued with social meaning in danger of being ignored by traditional scientific methods, meanings that through qualitative inquiry often speak more directly to the purpose and effects of the practice than an obviously quantifiable result (Denzin, 2010). In embracing the centrality of human context in research, qualitative methods seek to illuminate meanings through interpreting “how human beings construct and attach meanings to their experiences” (Patton, 2015, p. 13). Qualitative research, rather than searching for an objective truth relieved of the imprints of humanity, instead studies those marks, and how and why they are made.

For example, the effects of punishing girls in school for wearing skirts shorter than a prescribed length could well be quantitatively measured in lost instruction time; disciplinary consequences; or frequency by location, race, or over time. As informative as this data would be, salient data can also be found in girls’ complex internalization of and response to these social controls as measured by qualitative research (Pompper & Crandall, 2014; Raby, 2010;). Quantitative research can ask when and where these skirt length codes were imposed and how the length requirements have changed over time and place. Qualitative research can additionally ask why and how skirt length became attached to “appropriateness” of dress and why, how, and by whom “appropriate” are defined. Perhaps most importantly, making meaning of girls’ responses to skirt length dress code rules requires a deep investigation about how those responses are informed by the girls’ various cultures and the context of their lives.

Qualitative inquiry aims to capture “people’s perspectives and experiences” (Patton, 2015, p. 7) and honors the centrality of the intersection between the public and

private in meaning making (Denzin, 2010). It is through this qualitative data that we might better understand how dress codes disinvite girls from full academic participation, in contrast to the quantified disciplinary consequences, which often look less than dramatic compared to other school discipline issues. Through this valuation of context, qualitative research can have a special ecological validity that quantifiable methods fail to yield; results resonate with the complex ecology of real-life.

Insisting that education research be constrained to a traditional scientific approach or "brought within a framework of utility" risks "oversimplification" (Fairfield, 2011, p. 2). In practice that oversimplification grows from and results in minimizing or dismissing the experiences – the contextual data – of people not lifted up by the existing structures in society: people of Color, people that do not fit a cis-gendered gender/sexuality binary, people without financial means, people with disabilities, and women. For example, in researching school safety, often the safety of a campus is quantified by stakeholders' Likert-scaled assessments of their own feelings of safety. However, the idea of "safety" likely has very different meanings to different people, largely dependent on their various cultural identities and personal experiences, so researchers are effectively quantitatively comparing and aggregating apples and oranges which compromises research reliability. If the researchers interpret and present findings through their own, often dominant-culture informed perspective, they have effectively ignored the richer and more honest description of stakeholders' sense of safety. Qualitative research methods must be carefully selected to avoid these pitfalls by diving into personal understandings, both of participants and researchers.

Hermeneutics

One influence on the development of qualitative research is the philosophy of hermeneutics, a tradition of scholarship that has for centuries searched for truth and meaning in texts. “Hermeneutics reveals the mediated processes of all human understanding; qualitative research is concerned with the same project” (Kinsella, 2006, p. 2). Rejecting the positivist assumption that only observable data rightly inform inquiry hermeneutics instead honors that “layers of meaning, prejudice, and intention surround all artifacts” (Slattery, et al., 2007. p. 540). Hermeneutics embraces these layers as meaningful and seeks understanding through conversation, often described as cyclical, among textual parts and the whole, including the world of the author (Heidegger, 1927), and including the world of the reader (Gadamer, 1975).

Traditional theological hermeneutics, originally aimed at deeply understanding and explaining the spiritual meaning of religious texts, places a text in conversation with the historic and cultural context within which it was born (Kakkori, 2009; Slattery et al., 2007), relates the different pieces of a text to each other (Halivni, 1996; Slattery et al., 2007), and/or engages allegorically with the text (Slattery et al., 2007; Sommer, 2006). Later religious scholars added more hermeneutic techniques including searching for allusions to and in other texts (Slattery et al., 2007; Sommer, 2006) and embracing the cultural and historical context of the reader as informative (Sommer, 2006).

With its embrace of complicating and subjective means of inquiry, hermeneutics can be seen as rejecting objectivity as a conceit, but perhaps hermeneutics can more accurately be assessed as insisting on a re-examination of our understanding of object, an understanding that must include this dialogic characteristic (Zimmerman, 2015).

Gadamer (1984,) in recognizing the fullness of the dialogs and methods of hermeneutics suggests that hermeneutics reconceptualizes the relationship of objective sensory data and subjective interpretation. For Gadamer (1984), understanding is not a conversation between the objective and subjective, but in fact all knowledge items are born of human interpretation. Differing Hermeneutical approaches in contemporary hermeneutics recognize that interpretation and knowledge are synonymous and engage with the text in ways that "concerns itself with the ambiguous," an effort that better mirrors the world (Slattery, et al., 2007, p. 541).

Critical Hermeneutics

This study most fully embraces the critical strand of hermeneutics that searches for insights about "power, the potential misuse of language, the 'the fix we are in'" (Kinsella, 2006, p. 8). A critical approach to hermeneutics insists that "coming to terms with...competing, cultures, traditions and epistemic regimes" (Simpson, 2016, p. 21), including the interpreter's, must inform meaning-making and will be key to "deconstruct[ing] hegemonic power arrangements" (Slattery et al., 2007, p.548). Few hermeneutic methods would seek to omit these considerations within the hermeneutic conversational circle, but critical hermeneutics draws from a Marxist worldview that places these conflicts in the center of the human social experience (Slattery et al., 2007). Because this study seeks to reveal assumptions and perspectives implicit in TCOLE 4064 that might serve to reinforce dominant distributions of power, critical hermeneutics is well-matched.

Critical hermeneutics pays special attention to the discourses and cultures of groups who have been marginalized and "requires a consciousness about who is absent

from conversations" (Kinsella, 2006, p. 9). Critical hermeneutics achieves these ends in part by scrupulously avoiding a negative interpretation of cultural values while simultaneously being open to providing critique within "the horizons" of a culture (Simpson, 2016, p. 22). Critical hermeneutics must walk the tightrope of non-invidious views of cultural values while still allowing critical responses to cultural practices and artifacts (Simpson, 2016, p. 23). Simpson (2016) asserts that critical hermeneutics must first avoid errantly describing any culture as monolithic and instead recognizes the breadth and scope of individuals' world-views within each cultural paradigm (Simpson, 2016). While cultures can be described when viewed through a long lens, the "wide variety" of individuals within a group insist that cultural values, traditions, and perspectives are not invariant or static (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 8). Critical hermeneutics leans on this recognition both for a more robust investigation that avoids over-simplification and embraces ambiguity.

Source of Data

Beginning in 2020, Texas law requires all school-based law enforcement officers to complete specialized training (Texas Senate Research Center, 2019). The required Texas School-Based Law Enforcement Training Course, TCOLE 4064, is based on written curriculum from the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement published in 2015 (TCOLE, 2019). It is a written guide "designed to assist the instructor in developing an appropriate lesson plan or plans to teach the course" designed around course objections that "are the minimum required content of the School-Based Law Enforcement Course" (TCOLE 2019, p. 2). By law the curriculum incorporates objectives regarding

1) child and adolescent development and psychology;

2) positive behavioral interventions and supports, conflict resolution techniques, and restorative justice techniques;

3) de-escalation techniques and techniques for limiting the use of force, including the use of physical, mechanical, and chemical restraints;

4) the mental and behavioral health needs of children with disabilities or special needs; and

5) mental health crisis intervention. (Texas Occupations Code Sec. 1701.262, Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1258 (H.B. 2684), Sec. 2, eff. June 20, 2015).

The course curriculum is publicly available from the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement, the agency charged with reviewing the curriculum and updating the subject matter "as needed at least once every four years" (TX Occupations Code 1701.262 as above). The last update was conducted in 2019. Institutions that can provide the course are certified through TCOLE and must have "qualified instructors and staff to conduct successful training" (Texas Administrative Code Title 37, part 7, chapter 215 rule 215.2).

Method of Analysis

Education leaders largely recognize that curriculum cannot be defined by the composed and printed outline for a course. Like curriculum in a K-12 classroom, the TCOLE 4064 curriculum is only partially described by the document under study. What actually occurs, the process and praxis of curriculum, as well as its context, are each component of what is the genuine SRO curriculum in the state of Texas. However, though curriculum texts do not encompass all of what constitutes curriculum, they do carry a special authority in framing a course and therefore are worthy of particular

analysis (Apple, 2008; Gay, 2000).

The methods used to study the TCOLE 4064 curriculum document must enable meaning making of the text itself, while recognizing it as only part of the SRO training process that actually is the curriculum. A critical content analysis employing a broad contextual approach examines the text for discrete messages that relate to the STPP and make meaning of those messages. A critical policy analysis further reflects on the text and its messages holistically to understand its relationship to the broader context of K-12 schooling and policing in the U.S. Integrated, the critical content analysis and critical policy analysis provide a clear picture of the messages inside the TCOLE 4064 curriculum and ways they could contribute to inequitable school experiences and outcomes.

Critical Content Analysis

Through content analysis, I examine the TCOLE 4064 curriculum for ways that it is informed by dominant culture discourses that might serve to harm students who are served by SROs trained to view these understandings as educational best practice. Neuendorf (2002) argues that analyzing discourse in this way is a necessary step to composing content analysis coding guidelines (Herrera & Braumoeller, 2004; Neuendorf, 2002). A critical approach to content analysis requires "thinking with theory" and employing a critical frame in every step of the research process (Utt & Short, 2018, p. 3). This method will key into ways that the curriculum text exceeds the sum of its parts and not only consider what the text explicitly contains but look for implicit and absent messaging as well (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Patton, 2015). See figure 2.

Step 1: Initial rounds of deductive coding searched for how the curriculum directly and obliquely addresses discourses, revealed through the review of existing literature, important to the structure of the STPP: zero-tolerance and exclusionary student discipline; disparities in discipline by race, gender, sexuality, and disabilities; cultural non/responsiveness; and SRO presence. A passage, the unit of analysis, is a discrete contiguous length of text within the curriculum document that allows the conclusion that the subject of the passage intersections with an identified discourse of the STPP.

Step 2: Each coding unit was then evaluated for its semantic relationship to the discourse including depth of discussion, accuracy of information, and context within which the unit is embedded (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). If relevant to understanding the coding unit, nearby contextual pieces, context units, were also be recorded along with a description of their contribution to understanding the passage being analyzed. Context units' relation to the coding unit may include, but are not limited to: "defining, explanatory, embellishing, descriptive, exemplifying, itemizing, correctional, modifying, antithetical or contradictory" (Mayring, 2014, p. 90). Each coding unit was assigned a value that reflects its treatment of each intersecting STPP domain: ignored, tangential, clear guidance that aligns with best practice, unclear guidance, misguidance.

Step 3: Lastly, an analytic memo (Saldaña, 2009) for each coding unit was recorded that employs the 'thinking with theory' (Utt & Short, 2018, p. 3) required by critical content analysis. This note includes analysis about potential impact on SRO practices; the STPP; and if and how Whiteness and other hegemonic perspectives (patriarchy, heteronormativity, ableism) undergird the text message.

Coding Unit	Location	Discourse(s)	Value	Context Units	Context adds	Analytic memo
What Do You Think This Statement Means? "THERE IS NO HEALTH WITHOUT MENTAL HEALTH"	pg. 28, para 8	inequ - disabil	first piece of material after objective	begins by boldly (literally) inviting audience to see mental health as no less important than physical health	clear	I appreciate the balance of challenge/invitation in this way this statement is presented. Offers an excellent entre to the topic
Research has shown that prolonged stress can create changes in the brain and its function.	pg. 28, para 9	cult response	after the above there is no health w/out mental health challenge	this serves as a piece of evidence literally connecting mental health with physical health	Unclear; ignores	This is true and important, but does this presentation inadvertently reify the idea that it IS the physical that matters - that if we couldn't identify physical markers/changes of MH issues then they wouldn't be as important? More importantly, will this be followed up with a discussion about how school structures/policies act as stressors that unequally fall on particular group of students?
Furthermore, there are genetic or other neurological connections for many mental health disorders. They are now being diagnosed more accurately (and frequently) in children as scientific understanding of the brain progresses. In addition to traditional diagnostic tools, researchers using modern imaging technologies have associated specific brain differences with certain mental health disorders.	pg. 28, para 9	inequ - disabil	after the above there is no health w/out mental health challenge	this serves as a piece of evidence literally connecting mental health with physical health	misguidance	turns the promising bold framing inside out and returns to placing emphasis on the physical over emotional/"mental" and supposes an *objective* way to define at mental/emotional health

Figure 2. Sample of coding spreadsheet

As a content analysis, this study is grounded in the mass communications model which recognizes communication as an exchange of meaning, the same exchange of meaning that in hermeneutics is necessary to create knowledge (Berlo, 1960; Shannon & Weaver, 1998). This broad contextual analysis approach to the TCOLE contents allows for a "hermeneutical interpretation" that uses "material beyond the textual context for explication" (Mayring, 2014). Through a critical hermeneutic approach, each coding unit is put into conversation with the whole of the text, education practices, policing practices, and our current Texas, U.S. context. If, as Lau (2001) asserts, curriculum is the manifestation of the power distribution in society, a broad and critical content analysis offers a means of assessing indicators of this distribution by identifying norms supported in the text.

Critical Policy Analysis

Upon completion of thee qualitative content analysis, a second round of analysis approached the text holistically using Critical Policy Analysis (CPA). A critical policy analysis framework invites readers to a hermeneutical understanding of policy texts, a recognition that they are comprised not only of their content, but also ways the content "is framed, and how it is contextualized and linked to courses of action" (Wood, Sebar, & Vecchio, 2020, p. 458). The fundamental concerns of critical policy analysis search for: differences between policy rhetoric and the reality of practice; the roots and development of policy and its role in reinforcing dominant culture; how power is distributed, who are policy winners and policy losers; policy's relationship with social stratification and inequity; and how policy engages with members of non-dominant groups (Diem & Young, 2015). These concerns mesh well with critical Whiteness scholarship that seeks

to reveal mechanisms of group dominance through "systemic social practices" (van Dijk, 1993, p. 24). This stage of analysis leaned heavily on ways the Whiteness and accompanying structures of dominance are upheld through language and ideas, that point to the mechanisms that reinforce White hegemony.

This more inductive analysis invited fresh insights through emergent themes that begin in, but reach outside the boundaries of the STPP frame (Patton, 2015). Using these different approaches to analysis (deductive and inductive, a priori and emergent) supported more robust and accurate findings (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

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IV: FINDINGS

TCOLE 4064 is broken into 5 large units each with an identified goal for that segment of training. Each unit contains 18-26 pages with an average of about 22 pages. See figure 3 for a details about the units in TCOLE 4064. Within each unit several topics are covered, topics identified by law:

> (1) child and adolescent development and psychology;
>
> (2) positive behavioral interventions and supports, conflict resolution techniques, and restorative justice techniques;
>
> (3) de-escalation techniques and techniques for limiting the use of force, including the use of physical, mechanical, and chemical restraints;
>
> (4) the mental and behavioral health needs of children with disabilities or special needs; and
>
> (5) mental health crisis intervention.
>
> (Texas Occupations Code Sec. 17-1.262)

Unit	Title	Stated Goal	Topics covered
1	Child and Adolescent Psychology	Discussion of Child and Adolescent Psychology and its significance to the School-Based Law Enforcement Officer.	Emotional Intelligence Self-esteem Temperament Aggression Pro-social behavior
2	Mental health and crisis intervention	Discussion of the mental illness crisis and intervention in children and adolescents, the significance in society and how it relates to the School-Based Law Enforcement and School Resource Officers.	Define mental health Warning signs of mental health issues Suicide Bullying
3	De-escalation techniques and techniques for limiting the use of force, including the use of physical, mechanical, and chemical restraints	Progress toward "expanding" your capacity and knowledge on de-escalation techniques for Limiting the Use of Force and sustain effectiveness in meeting the needs of students while maintaining the safety and security of all.	Law around use of restraints Importance of understanding student behavior Phases of escalation/de-escalation

4	The mental and behavioral health needs of children with disabilities or special needs	Medical professionals are now able to diagnose more accurately in children as scientific understanding of the brain progresses. School staff can play an important role in helping to identify and support children with mental health and behavioral disabilities.	Define mental health disorder What mental health issues are common in schools What is SPED What are developmental disorders Responding to students with mental health disabilities
5	Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, conflict resolution techniques, and restorative justice techniques	Discussion of restorative practices and positive behavioral interventions and supports in the school-based environment.	PBIS Restorative Justice

Figure 3. TCOLE 4064 training units, goals, and topics covered.

This list of topics provided some foreshadowing of the types of themes that would bubble up in analysis, for example, a focus on student disabilities and a focus on interacting with students. Tackling one section of the TCOLE 4064 material at a time, I began by coding each unit of text that suggested an intersection with the identified components of the STPP, i.e., zero-tolerance and exclusionary discipline; discipline disparities by race, gender, and ability; SRO presence; and cultural non-responsiveness. Each TCOLE 4064 unit's analysis yielded thematic findings that were then compared across multiple units. These findings are organized into ten themes, one of which has 6 sub-themes, reported with examples and explanations.

As should be expected from this layered and hermeneutical approach, the themes overlap. This overlap offers an additional means of revealing some of the complex ways that Whiteness and other dominant discourses embed into the TCOLE 4064 training curriculum. The thematic analysis includes examining these points of convergence. The themes begin with the most broadly applicable concerns, i.e., dysconscious definitions, and unreliable information, to those that require the closest reading and target specific

groups of students, i.e. ableism and intersectionality. The final theme considers textual moments that counter the prevailing messaging.

Dysconscious Definitions

TCOLE 4064 fails to offer definitions for key terms in the curriculum instead defaulting to dysconscious definitions. Meanings of important ideas are left uncritiqued and unquestioned and thereby reinforce existing understandings that very often reinforce systems of dominance. In Texas, the legal definition of School Resource Officer comes from the Texas Occupations Code, "'school resource officer' means a peace officer who is assigned by the officer's employing political subdivision to provide: (1) a police presence at a public school; (2) safety or drug education to students of a public school; or (3) other similar services" (TOC Sec. 1701.601). This definition leaves most of their responsibilities and tasks a mystery. TCOLE 4064 similarly avoids specifying any purpose or duty of SROs, a surprising choice for the basic training course. This omission invites an uncritical acceptance of the status quo, "the existing order of things as given" (King & Akua, 2012, p. 724). Whatever conceptions SRO trainers and trainees have about the appropriate role of police in schools, they are dysconciously welcome to keep, as the curriculum offers little to no guidance on this point and fails to welcome critical inquiry.

Without direct messaging about the role, the text, through implication, offers a confusing impression about the shape of SRO responsibilities. A lengthy discussion about mental health issues in schools, their symptoms, signs, and safety concerns, includes the warning that "SRO's are not therapists" and the importance that health professionals diagnose and treat students (p. 44). How will trainees make meaning of the wealth and

detail of information about working with students experiencing mental illness, if not to diagnose and counsel them? In another section, a cartoon depicting a student being pushed, kicked, and called “freak” “dork” and “nerd” concludes with a panel showing the bullies dead and the word “killer” (p. 49). See Figure 4. So, though SRO duties “do not include routine discipline enforcement” (p.49), they are invited to view routine discipline infractions like shoving and name-calling as a significant threat to school safety.

Figure 4. Cartoon from the bullying section, Unit 2, pg. 49

Definitions are offered for ideas like “aggression” (p. 16), “mental health” (p. 28), and “bullying” (p. 47), but safety, a concept central to the work of SROs, receives largely dysconscious treatment in the text. The first use of the word ‘safety’ or ‘safe’ does not occur until page 24 when the text asserts that “as adults we must help them [adolescents] by providing positive role models, safe environments and accountability” (p. 24). Unfortunately, without interrogation of the concept each trainee and trainer likely dysconciously carries an image of “safe environment” that speaks primarily to their own experiences and values. The next ‘safety’ mention is a bulleted list titled “implications of

student mental health on school safety" (p. 30), so trainees dive into exploring how safety might be compromised without ever identifying what safe means, or how those meanings might differ for different people and communities. This dysconciousness yields an implicit definition that will almost certainly center a dominant White cis male perspective. For example, mid-pandemic research points out substantially different safety concerns for parents in different racial and ethnic groups (Gilbert et al., 2020; Mott Poll Report, 2020). As school boards, school principals, and faculty across the nation are predominantly White, hazards more central to the experiences of students and families of Color are in danger of being consigned to the margins or ignored (NCES, 2017; NSBA, 2018).

To be fair, deep in the text the mental health unit concludes with this interesting thesis about school safety:

> School safety is not achieved with a single program or piece of security equipment. Rather, effective school safety starts with prevention; provides for students' mental health; integrates physical and psychological safety; and engages schools, families, and communities as partners. (p.106)

While this does not offer a definition of school safety, these sentences do offer avenues for exploring the concept and draw attention to the complexity of the idea. And, while the text shies away from defining or describing safety or security, it does advocate for "safety policy" that is "clearly written" and "reviewed periodically" (p. 76).

Unreliable Information

Some TCOLE 4064 units include a lengthy list of references, but almost no references are cited within the text making it difficult to identify the source of particular

statements. This difficulty challenges more than academic integrity, the integrity of the information provided by the curriculum is also at stake. For example, I was curious about this passage from the section about bullying:

> Some research indicates that the very fact of having power may make some people wish to wield it in a noticeable way, but it is also true that people may be given power without being trained in the leadership skills that will help them wield it wisely. Either situation can contribute to why people bully others. (p.52)

This statement drew my attention because I found it strange to suggest that an inequitable distribution of power is not the problem but rather that those with power are not trained to use it properly. Because this philosophy contains echoes of *noblesse oblige* and ‘white man’s burden’ colonial thinking, I hoped the fuller context from the source for this statement could reveal more.

This passage, like the vast majority of the TCOLE 4064 text is uncited, so I resorted to a simple Google search. By searching for the text, I found that it seems to be drawn in whole from a WordPress blog for an organization called *Bullying Statistics*. This reference does not appear in TCOLE 4064, and I could find no Twitter or other social media presence for this organization or identify any supporting institution, funder, mission statement, or physical location. The most recent statistics I discovered on the *Bullying Statistics* blog were from 2010 and their reference sources for articles include *The Daily Mail* a British tabloid, *Zimbio.com* a self-described entertainment and celebrity news source, and *The Huffington Post* an online news aggregator. I found no academic references or current sources in my perusal of their archives. They do list some

government sites as sources on certain articles, e.g., stopbullying.gov, but strangely the *Bullying Statistics* blog features articles that contradict the information at stopbullying.gov. For example, *Bullying Statistics* (n.d.) says, "it is becoming more apparent than ever that female bullying is just as common as bullying with males...girls can be just as ruthless especially when it comes to the type of bullying that is not as physical" (para. 2) while stopbullying.gov says, "but contrary to popular perceptions, higher levels of relational aggression were more common among boys than girls...we should stop the erroneous stereotype of relational aggression as a predominantly female behavior" (Orpinas et al., 2015, para 7).

While I did not look for the origins of every statement in TCOLE 4064, incidental to my more purposeful analytical efforts I found several more direct quotes, without attribution, from less than reliable sources. For example, there is another passage about bullying drawn from a sample essay on a pay-for-tutoring site (Bartleby.com). Another lengthy passage errantly summarizing an important piece of school law concerning discipline, TEC chapter 47, is taken from a PhD dissertation from an online for-profit diploma mill (Jordan, 2018). Even passages drawn from more reliable sources tend to exclude important context. Take for example this passage in TCOLE 4064 lifted wholly from *WebMD*:

> Some people are born with weak executive function. People with ADHD, depression, or learning disabilities often have problems with these skills. An injury to the front of the brain can harm your ability to stay on task. (Goodman, 2021, para. 10).

The bleak view this might paint is immediately balanced in *WebMD*'s treatment of these

sentences. *WebMD* follows this statement with "Experts rely on different tests to measure specific skills related to executive function. Problems seen on these tests cannot predict how well adults or children will do in real life" (Goodman, 2021, para. 11). This added nuance complicates the simple picture TCOLE 4064 paints. This tendency mars the discussion of many challenging topics the training tackles.

Further interfering with clarity of information, TCOLE 4064 frequently cites dated statistics and/or inaccurately reports them, both actions at cross purposes with preparing SROs to successfully serve in Texas schools today. In describing adolescent aggression TCOLE 4064 asserts that "Very few adolescent girls (1% - 2%) commit very serious or multiple offenses," offering citations from 2002 and 2003 (p. 18). Fortunately, this is a misrepresentation, otherwise 1 or 2 girls in every 100 would be committing offenses on the violent crimes index (homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault). What they no doubt meant was that 1-2% *of female juveniles arrested* have committed a violent crime or multiple crimes. As a percent of *all* girls, this would amount to .08%. TCOLE 4064 overstates the frequency of girls' commission of violent crimes by a factor of between 12 and 25. Additionally, these statistics do not reflect what the U.S. Department of Justice reported in 2015, when they identified 4% of female delinquency cases involved violent crimes, two to four times the rate TCOLE 4064 uses (Erhmann et al., 2019). Similarly dated and/or ill-reported statistics are included about the prevalence of adolescent suicide, rates of mental health issues and disabilities, students' self-reported victimization, as well as graduation and arrest rates.

Centering Student Engagement

All the topics covered in TCOLE 4064 address student behaviors and how to

engage with students appropriately. Great care is taken to share information about the developmental differences among students and between students and adults and how those differences might impact both student behaviors and adult perceptions of those behaviors. For example, the curriculum discusses adolescent brain development cautioning that "differences in processing, organization, and responding to information/events leads to misperceptions and misunderstandings verbal and non-verbal cues" (p. 8). In keeping with this perspective, the text advises "to avoid further miscommunications, adults can help teens by explaining a breakdown of what they really mean rather than assuming a teen understands based on short communication and body language" (p.8). Guidance is given about how human development influences the ability to communicate and ways trainees' practices can adjust to respond to this knowledge.

Beginning the curriculum with this information sets the stage for subsequent topics to be imbued with this developmental perspective. The exploration of aggression builds on the understanding that "there are developmental stages of aggression in children and these trends are very much a part of age-appropriate behavior" (p. 17). The treatment of mental health problems reminds trainees that mental health develops and overlaps with social development, and that "children and teens can suffer from the same mental illnesses as adults, but they may present very differently" (p. 29). Similar reminders frame discussions about student behavior models including PBIS and restorative justice practices that are said to "promote the development of [students'] internal controls" (p. 116). TCOLE 4064 makes a clear priority of parsing out ways that policing juveniles differs from policing adults.

Steeped in material about student behavioral expectations, the course omits any

training about perimeter patrol, access control, traffic safety, emergency planning, weapons, or any other security concerns or policing duties. Since SROs are all sworn law enforcement officers, the training could have been designed assuming that they will come to campus with all the policing training they need, save that which is specific to working with a student population. However, if the training is designed to fill a perceived gap in police training, it is predicated on a dangerous assumption given that ample research that demonstrates immense variation in the quality and topics covered by police training (Javadani, 2019; Bayley, 2018). Additionally, if the training is designed to fill a gap in police knowledge, it is not framed that way by the course materials: “This guide is designed...to teach the course learning objectives. The learning objectives are the minimum required content of the School-Based Law Enforcement Course” (p. 2). The TCOLE 4064 topics are presented as basics, not gap fillers, and no other special skills or knowledge is alluded to directly or indirectly.

It could be that the training was designed in response to perceived issues with SRO training that found police underprepared to work with students. However, there is no indication in the training itself that SROs’ behaviors are the potential problem in police-student encounters. In fact the opposite is true, TCOLE 4064 describes many ways and reasons students will “act out” (p. 66). From unit 1 alone (Child and Adolescent Development and Psychology) students may be failing “to regulate and control emotions (p. 6),” have poorly developed empathy or social skills (p. 7), be mis-interpreting social cues (p. 7), have a poor self-concept (p. 12), have a difficult temperament (p. 15), be exhibiting normal aggression (p. 16), be exhibiting antisocial aggression (p. 20), or responding to a coercive home environment (p. 22). This abbreviated list from unit 1 does

not include every possibility mentioned in those short 20 pages.

In addition to being replete with ways and reasons that students will present problems on campus, TCOLE 4064 rarely, and only obliquely, references ways that SROs might cause or contribute to a problem. This extends a clear initiation for SROs to view student deficiencies as the source of any problems, a theme that will later be discussed. In unit 2 discussing mental health crisis intervention the text warns, “mental health is all too often one of the last things we pay attention to, even though we know how immensely important it is” (p. 54). In unit 3 referring to de-escalation techniques the text offers this gentle admonishment, “However, what happens to our values when we are stressed, and life becomes complicated? How do we behave when the children in our school are falling instead of rising? Where does our level of standard respect start? If we are not levelheaded how do, [*sic*] we expect everyone to stay levelheaded?” (p. 63). The most direct suggestion that police have the potential of playing a problematic role in school incidents is from the conclusion of unit 4, “Excessive building security (e.g., metal detectors, armed guards) can actually decrease students’ sense of safety and does not necessarily guarantee protection” (p. 104). In sum, SROs might overlook mental health issues in students, fail to stay levelheaded in times of stress, or be part of a landscape of excessive security. However helpful these warnings, they are overwhelmed by warnings and advice about student behaviors in the training.

Taken together, the intense focus on student behavior and almost absent reference to police behavior will likely encourage trainees to expect their work will center on interactions with students, interactions prompted by student behavior problems. However, TCOLE 4064 makes plain that Texas law insists “A school district may not assign or

require as duties of a school district peace officer, a school resource officer, or security personnel routine student discipline or school administrative tasks" (TCOLE 4064, p. 63). Given that the text fails to define "routine student discipline" a nebulous term at best, how are trainees to make sense of this legal prohibition given all the training around understanding and interacting with students and student behavior issues? Perhaps they will dismiss this rule as a legality subservient to the lived experience and practicalities of daily work in the state's schools. From their experience as county and municipal officers, SRO trainees come to schools understanding that local police "serve as the public agencies of first and last resort for a range of social problems, few of which are criminal law violations" and do not need to adhere to the same "constraints that are suppose to define the state" as meaningful oversight and review of practices is rare (Sekhon, 2019, p. 1717-1718). In other words, local police understand their duty is to address a wild range of problems on the job and in response to this challenge do not constrain themselves to equally strict application of the law as they navigate their work, particularly when it comes to their own behaviors. SRO trainees could understandably interpret this student-behavior centered training to negate the legal bar against "routine student discipline or school administrative tasks." Alternatively, they could lean on the introductory phrase, "a school district may not assign or require," taking it as permission to assign themselves the tasks of student discipline.

However trainees resolve this contradiction, the idea that SROs should not be involved in "routine student discipline or school administrative tasks" contains other problems. This stricture, from a practical point of view, has no meaning. Simply the presence of an armed and uniformed officer in a school hallway, classroom, office, or

cafeteria *is* involvement in “routine student discipline or school administrative tasks.” Constraining “discipline” and “administrative” to apply only to some subset of adult tasks and behaviors in schools denies the reality that all tasks are disciplinary and administrative to some degree. Student discipline can be approached from many perspectives. The TCOLE 4064 training claims for itself an interventionist approach (Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports which will be discussed in more detail in later findings) that rests in targeting “students’ behaviours and self-regulation” and then making these the goals of overt training (Millei, 2010, p. 25). Not all interventionist approaches look alike, but they generally involve establishing rules and enforcing them with various carrots and sticks. However, even the TCOLE 4064 discussion of PBIS acknowledges that “in order to achieve behavioral outcomes there must be strong instruction on a campus. Where instruction is weak, we see the opportunity for behavior problems to exist” (p. 111). Clearly even this interventionist framing of school discipline recognizes that students’ behavior is disciplined by far more than activities overtly labeled as disciplinary.

Other approaches to discipline can also be found in the work of schools and in TCOLE 4064. An interactionalist approach builds on the theory that students want to belong to the group and have fulfilling relationships with others and therefore works toward the “creation of an environment and social relations in which the student has the possibility” to act in accord with socially accepted norms and build strong relationships (Millei, 2010, p. 26). Though less prominent than the interventionist perspective, this interactional approach to student discipline also informs TCOLE 4064. For example, the discussion of restorative justice stresses the importance of relationship building,

including repeated references to “officer-student relationships” (p. 118). There are also several references to arranging an environment that contributes to student behavioral success throughout the training. A third school of discipline, a non-interventionist approach, trusts that students can control their own behavior given the chance (Millei, 2010, p. 27). Discipline efforts center on helping students learn to recognize and manage their own thoughts and feelings. Again, TCOLE 4064 employs this discipline perspective as well when it advocates for helping students develop “EQ,” shorthand for emotional intelligence, which is described as the “ability to manage emotions through self-awareness, such as identifying one's emotions and interpersonal skills, such as applying empathy to others, resolving conflict, and developing a cooperative spirit” (p. 6). TCOLE 4064 also includes an extensive section training SROs to conduct restorative justice circles, a non-interventionist practice the text itself describes as “discipline” (p. 115). Clearly, embedded within the TCOLE 4064 are a multitude of ideas about student discipline measures all of which are conceived to intersect with the work of SROs.

Practically speaking, SROs on the job do understand their work to include many of these discipline tasks. In interviews with 47 serving SROs Kupchik et al. (2020) found that SROs consistently identify two chief responsibilities, “to maintain safety, and **to develop relationships with students** [emphasis added]” (p. 404). The SROs described day-to-day tasks of greeting students, being present in the hallways, monitoring changes in student demeanor, preventing conflicts, getting to know students by name, and eating with students in the cafeteria. Researcher Victor Rios (2017) explains in vivid detail how well-intentioned officers might “‘mean mug’ (stare down) every student...as if to remind them who they would have to face if they were defiant that day” (p. 79). This high

visibility echoes the findings of McKenna et al. (2016) who also discovered through SRO interviews that officers "believe that the constant presence of officers and the awareness of their presence by students serve as a deterrent" (p. 430).

In summary, the TCOLE 4064 curriculum centers almost exclusively on student behavior and how it may go wrong. Many theories about student discipline permeate the course materials, most saliently an interventionist approach that advocates deliberately shaping student behavior through rewards and punishments. However, even an SRO's literal presence is a discipline tool; there is no clear way to distinguish between disciplinary and non-disciplinary activities. In practice SROs are very involved in school discipline, and that practice will only be reinforced by the TCOLE 4064 training. Officers come to the TCOLE 4064 training understanding the course to be presenting the fundamentals of serving as an SRO, and already heavily informed by their previous law enforcement training and experience. They understand the work of police is to respond to all sorts of problems and are primed to believe they can judge for themselves whether they need to follow legal strictures on a case-by-case basis. The TCOLE 4064 training serves to reinforce both these beliefs: students will present a myriad of problems and given the fictitious line between normal school discipline and what is appropriately the purview of police they are also invited to view the one legal statement warning against this involvement in "normal discipline" to carry little weight.

Racism Through Deficit Thinking

This universal emphasis on anticipating problematic student behavior reveals a curriculum steeped in deficit-oriented thinking about schools. The core of deficit thinking maintains that "the student who fails in school does so because of internal deficits or

deficiencies" (Valencia, 1997, p. 2). This framing shifts responsibility for problems away from schools and other systems; "it is a blame the victim way of thinking that attribute[s] students' failures to their individual, family, or community traits" (Davis & Museus, 2019). A deficit orientation perpetuates stereotypes and supports inequitable systems and practices. Educators may lower expectations for certain students creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. Many scholars have challenged this framing in education research. Ladson-Billings (2007) called out the terms "as-risk" and "achievement gap" for Black students and suggested that it was our schools and systems there were at-risk of failing students and therefore owed an opportunity debt. Yosso (2005) proposed an assets-based community cultural wealth frame for viewing students' engagement with schools "to shift the research lens away from a deficit view of Communities of Color" (p. 69). Additional work has identified ways deficit thinking harms other minoritized groups as well, i.e., special education students, students in poverty, and recent research suggests that LGBTQIA students may also find deficit thinking aimed toward them in schools (Banks, 2014; Fenaughty et al., 2019; Gorski et al., 2013). Valencia (1997) identified six characteristics of a deficit thinking frame, all of which are present in TCOLE 4064: blaming the victim, oppression, pseudoscience, temporal changes, educability, and heterodoxy (p. 3). In the following sections I demonstrate through examples how each of these characteristics helps create that deficit orientation toward students in the curriculum.

Victim Blaming. Victim blaming evolves from implying that individuals' traits, whether they be genetically inherited or inherited from family or cultural beliefs and practices, are "the source of their own failures" (Davis & Museus, 2019, p. 122). Because

the responsibility for problems is laid at the feet of students and their families and communities, the influence of systems and structural inequalities can be ignored. TCOLE 4064 is replete with ways that students bring homegrown problems into the school and barely nods to the possibility that problems may be born of the school system, "Achievement in school is obviously related to a child's ability, to his motivation, to his experiences, and to the quality of instruction he receives. Achievement is also related to temperament" (pg. 16). Not only does this statement contain a ratio of 4 student-endemic factors (ability, motivation, experiences, temperament) for success to 1 school-endemic factor (quality of instruction), it also well represents TCOLE 4064's blind eye toward ways the system might undervalue some students' abilities, de-motivate some students, be the locus of damaging experiences, or misinterpretation of temperament. The training claims that "students who have behavior disorders often come from homes where many critical needs are not met" (p. 68). To the degree this is a factual statement, the prominence (first on a list of triggers of behavioral disorders) and lack of nuance in this claim present trainees with a clear invitation to deficit thinking. Further blame is placed on parents in poverty, who are suspected of faltering in their obligations to monitor "children's whereabouts, leading to delinquent and aggressive behavior" and who through poor parenting practices "encourage the children to use aggression to solve conflicts with their peers" (p. 22). A school-wide interventionist discipline system, PBIS, is said to be needed because, "it has become evident that...more students are coming [to school] with social skill deficits that must be addressed in order for them to be successful in an educational setting" (p. 112).

Genetic, family, and cultural influences are highlighted throughout TCOLE

4064's exploration of specific diagnoses including depression, anxiety, ASD. Substance abuse including in utero, child abuse, medical conditions, environmental toxins, and a stressful home life are highlighted as possible causes of mental ill health. Particular mention is made of "genetic or other neurological connections" and "specific brain differences" before reminding trainees that

> Children come to school each day with more than their lunch and backpack. They bring a myriad of life factors that shape their learning and development. These influences range from family issues, health, and culture to behavior, learning style, and abilities. (p. 28)

When causes for problems might trace back to the school experience itself, the text falls silent. The text describes "psychological trauma" that could cause mental health issues as originating from "trauma in early life, such as emotional or physical abuse, sexual abuse and/or the loss of a parent or caregiver" (p. 29). "Environment" as a cause of mental ill health is described as "a traumatic or stressful home life" (p. 29). In contrast, "Ongoing stress and anxiety," a cause which could offer the opportunity to discuss school settings as a cause for problems gets no further explanation (p. 30). More subtly, children experiencing mental ill health are expected to pose "a widespread challenge to school staff and administrator's efforts to improve academic outcomes." (p. 32). This framing cleverly subverts the role of educator from one of working on behalf of all students to working on behalf of some students while other students interfere with their good efforts.

Oppression. The second of Valencia's characteristics of deficit thinking stealthily conceals itself in colorblind language (discussed more thoroughly in later findings) making it difficult to ferret out, though peeks can be found. Deficit perspectives and

stereotypes are reinforced through oppressive systems and practices which exert social and cultural power over the dominated. The way that TCOLE 4064 discusses emotional disturbance (ED) offers a case study in how the curriculum oppresses those experiencing racism or gender-related discrimination. TCOLE 4064 defines ED the way it is defined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in six bullet points:

- A condition exhibiting one or more of the following over a long period and to a marked degree that adversely affect a child's educational performance:
- An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors
- An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers or teachers
- Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances
- A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression
- A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems (p. 91)

Several of these markers are of observed characteristics that could well be attributed to a student's circumstances and not their mental condition. An inability to learn unexplained by health or other personal factors could in fact be explained by a mismatch between the student and the schooling being offered. The teaching could be poor (Burroughs et al., 2019), the curriculum misaligned with the student's abilities and interests (Gay, 1988), or the classroom could be built on and speak to cultural epistemologies foreign to the student (Milner, 2011). An inability to maintain satisfying relationships with peers or teachers at school or the development of symptoms or fears of school could well be the

result of being ostracized because of a difference (Wölfer & Scheithauer, 2013). More importantly, the hazy picture painted here might apply to most students at some point in their school career. The markers of developing fears associated with school problems, an unexplained inability to learn, or a pervasive mood of unhappiness are so general in their description they are almost meaningless as diagnostic tools. A proponent of this ED definition might point to the requirement that the identifying characteristic be "over a long period" or "to a marked degree," but these descriptors are no more concrete than other bits of language critical to the definition. How long is a "long period?" What is a "marked degree?" We know that terms like "appropriate" behavior, and "normal" circumstances are deeply informed by cultural values, so through what cultural lens are these terms being interpreted (Hofstede et al., 2010)? And what is a "satisfactory interpersonal relationship?"

That ED labels are ripe with potential for oppression of the marginalized is not just a theory. Qualitative research and personal narratives overflow with the weaponized application of these terms to the behaviors and experiences of marginalized students (Janz & Banbury, 2009). In a report to Congress in 2014, the U.S. Department of Education described that Black and Native American students are at least twice as likely as White students to be identified with an ED label, a distinction that correlates to decreased school engagement and significantly lower graduation rates (Mitchell et al, 2018), two outcomes that significantly correspond with later criminal justice involvement (Henry et al., 2012). TCOLE 4064 makes a quiet reference to this problem while simultaneously offering an excuse:

> Students with behavioral health conditions—disabilities that may manifest

> in behaviors that school staff deem anti-social, bizarre, aggressive, or disruptive—can be subjected to repeated isolation, segregation, disciplinary removals, and complete loss of access to an education. Exclusionary disciplinary practices are even more prevalent for students of color with behavioral health conditions. (p. 92)

Bal et al. (2019) calculated that Black and Native American students were closer to three times as likely as their White peers to be labelled ED, as were students on free/reduced lunch programs, a common stand-in variable for low socio-economic status. Researchers attempting to identify the ways and degree to which queer students are involved in special education suggest that a heteronormative school culture might well lead to misdiagnosis and/or increased stress that presents as emotionally disturbed (Morgan et al., 2013). The potential intersectional effects of race, gender, and class could be harrowing.

The "characteristics" of ED listed in TCOLE 4064: "hyperactivity, aggression or self-injurious behavior, withdrawal, immaturity, [and] learning difficulties" might well be reactions to an oppressive school experience. (p. 92). Trainees are taught instead to understand these behaviors as the ways ED is made manifest in school because of ED students' "difficulties with the social, structural, and academic expectations." (p. 92) The curriculum suggests looking out for students who are "Repetitively defiant towards those in authority, [exhibit an] Inability to make rational and appropriate responses, [are] Manipulative, [exhibit] Verbal abuse, [are] Irrational, Often over-react, [are] Withdrawn, [and are] Attention seeking" even though these could well be appropriate psychological and physiological stress responses to challenging environments and events (p. 92).

Moreover, ample research demonstrates that Black students are more likely to be perceived by adults, including police officers, as defiant, irrational, and verbally abusive (Goff et al., 2014). Preston (2016) similarly discovered teachers perceive queer students to "flaunt it," i.e., attention-seek, or show "how distraught" they are, i.e., be over-reactive, in their response to a hostile school environment (p.29). If SROs rush to view these behaviors as signals that the student is emotionally disturbed, a more holistic understanding of their selves – their environment, experiences, and culture – is oppressed. Also, when ED labelled students exhibit these behaviors and their acts are attributed to their emotional ill health, the students could also be falling victim to efforts to reify dominant ideologies and oppress other ways of seeing the world.

Pseudoscience. The third tell-tale marker of deficit thinking resides in fallacious conclusions from uncritically examined scientific evidence. Often the fallacies arise from unsound assumptions, weak instruments and other flaws in data collections, and failure to consider rival hypotheses for observed findings (Valencia, 1997). The course material in TCOLE 4064 references several scientific ideas and theories that have either been debunked or are strongly challenged. Grammatically, assertions and opinions are often presented as unassailable fact, for example, "Schools are the optimal place to develop psychological competence and to teach children about making informed and appropriate choices concerning many aspects of their lives" (pg. 31). "Families that are not warm and loving and in which feelings are not shared are more likely to have children who bully" (pg. 51). TCOLE 4064 presents this material as incontrovertible in part by using terms like "evidence." This can be seen on page 17 in reference to gender and aggression, page 31 references "evidence-based or empirically supported practices" in relation to mental

health services in schools, page 36 in reference to assessing suicidality, page 53 in reference to recommendations to prevent suicide through building resilience against bullying, and on page 109 in describing PBIS as “an evidence-based, data-driven framework proven to reduce disciplinary incidents.” Further, the text includes many lists that define and describe complex and contested ideas without nuance, often in bulleted factoids (e.g., “5 Characteristics of Emotional Intelligence” pg. 7, the 3 bulleted lists that explain the nature of human behavior pg. 63-64, and “ASD [Autism Spectrum Disorder] Facts” pg. 103).

One illustrative example of pseudoscience underpinning a deficit orientation can be found in the first unit which asserts that “Facial expressions are a universal language of emotion” (p. 7). This claim immediately follows an online link for trainers to use with trainees to “Test Your Emotional Intelligence” by identifying emotions from photos of facial expressions through a multiple-choice quiz. The faces pictured in the quiz prompts are of people from diverse races which reinforces the idea of universality. However, the chief evidence that facial expression of emotions cuts across cultures comes from small-scale studies of Pacific Islanders in which researchers sought confirmation that their Western taxonomy of facial expressions could be recognized in this very different context (Ekman & Friesen, 1971; Sorenson, 1975). Newer data based on less biased collection methods does not fit with this conception (Crivelli et al., 2017; Gendron et al., 2018). Researchers are finding that some emotional concepts, like fear, may not cross cultures with similar conceptions intact (Barrett et al., 2007). More fundamentally, researchers suggest that other cultures conceptualize the phenomena of emotions and facial expressions differently, meaning that the research was grounded in Western assumptions

about the experience of emotions and their human presentation (Gendron et al., 2018).

Preparing SROs not to anticipate, much less recognize, cultural differences in the ways emotions are expressed means they are being prepared to accept White standards of emotional expression. Officers are invited to a deficit view of students whose emotional expressions and understanding of others' expressions reflect non-White cultural influences. Students who are immigrants or children of immigrants, particularly those from non-Western countries are likely to be less agile with Western facial expression of emotions. Students with specific disabilities or living with others with certain disabilities, i.e., deaf/hard of hearing or blind, might also exhibit a different understanding of facial expression of emotion. TCOLE 4064 explains to trainees that students' inability to express and interpret facial expressions of emotion indicate an EQ (emotional intelligence) deficit, lack of empathy, and an increased likelihood for exhibiting behavior problems (pg. 7-8).

While this example serves well to explain how pseudoscience informs TCOLE 4064, it may be a particularly salient one. In the world of policing, deficit thinking relates to racial profiling, a practice of using "race as a factor in criminal profiling based on presumed statistical probabilities" (Barlow & Barlow, 2002, p. 338). This is precisely the thinking process that the facial expression discussion invites. Students who do not read or express emotions 'correctly' are more likely to be a problem, and since students from marginalized communities are more likely to have a different approach to facial expression of emotion than the expected White Western-informed approach they are viewed as statistically more likely to present problems. As research on racial profiling reveals, this kind of discrimination becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy (Glaser, 2014).

“Regardless of any actual differences in offending rates” profiling causes an overrepresentation in collected statistics, criminal or school discipline (Glaser, 2014, p. 5). When students from a minoritized group are policed more because they are from the minoritized group, more minoritized students will be disciplined. Failure to recognize this explanation when looking at school discipline data will serve to reinforce stereotypes, creating a self-perpetuating cycle of deficit thinking.

One proposed solution to racial profiling in the wider world of policing has been to move toward artificial intelligence that reads faces to determine race/ethnicity and emotion (Lum & Isaac, 2016). Critical researchers in this field are sounding alarm bells about how these ostensibly objective machine-observers are actually very biased (Birhane, 2021). As in the research about universal facial expressions, the data set that informs the construction of the computer algorithms represents a limited collection process that heavily favors White Western faces (Gonen & Goldberg, 2019). And, like the facial expression research, the AI solution assumes a White Western approach to the world, one that believes that the “intrinsically political tasks of categorizing and predicting things such as ‘acceptable’ behavior” is possible and that challenges can be successfully “formulated as problem/solution” binary (Birhane, 2021 pg. 1-2).

TCOLE 4064 pays a great deal of attention to special education students, which will be addressed in a later finding. However, it is valuable to consider the science that undergirds many of the special education labels by diagnosis through the *Diagnostics and Statistical Manual - 5* (DSM-5) and how it could be contributing to a deficit view of students. Health and education professionals in “much of the world” rely on the DSM-5 as an “authoritative guide to the diagnosis of mental disorders.” (APA, 2021, para. 1). It

is difficult to overstate the power of the DSM-5 in shaping how we conceive of mental health and mental illness. The APA claims the volume “provides a common language” of descriptions, symptoms, and diagnostic criteria and makes possible “consistent and reliable diagnoses” of mental disorders (APA, 2021, para. 1). The idea that the DSM-5 codifies a common language that can be used in much of the world hints at the cracks in the foundation on which it is built resulting in a document that is “flawed in process, goals and outcome” (Wakefield, 2015, p. 188). A deeper analysis of the DSM – 5, definitions of mental disorders in children, and how these diagnoses shape U.S. school culture could be it’s own project, but a glimpse offers valuable insight about a powerful mechanism of deficit thinking.

Diagnosis of disorders in the DSM - 5 relies heavily on descriptions of behaviors and feelings, however the ways that people make meaning of behaviors and communicate feelings are culturally determined values. As diagnostic tools, each of these criteria is limited by any cross-cultural dissonance in the criteria statements, reports from individuals, and interpretation of the clinician. For the purposes of illustrating how the heavy reliance on the DSM - 5 in TCOLE 4064 supports deficit thinking, I will show the layered ways that the description of substance use disorder reveals an inherent cultural bias. For example, one criterion is “continuing to use, even when it causes problems in relationships.” Whether an individual views relationships as problematic/not problematic, how they conceive of a problem in a relationship, and how they share any concerns will be highly informed by cultural values around privacy, power distance, gender roles, and others (Hofstede, 2010). Recognizing the seriousness of this issue, the APA strongly urges practitioners to “tailor their use of assessment instruments depending on the

characteristics of the caregiver (e.g., age, cultural background), the care recipient" (APA, 2020, para 1). Unfortunately, the TCOLE 4064 does not acknowledge this limitation and instead says about DSM-5 diagnostic criteria (for obsessive/compulsive disorder) "pattern of symptoms is similar across cultures" (p. 89) an assertion directly challenged by research on the disorder (Nicolini et al., 2017).

Beyond being constrained by the differences in how people make meaning of and describe their experiences, the DSM-5 poses challenges in the language itself. Linguistic diversity does not only mean we use different words to say the same things, "speakers of different languages think differently," because language creates our "cognitive universe" (Boroditsky, 2018, para. 25-26). When the words for specific ideas are translated from one language to another, either when speaking or when thinking, they might well have differently nuanced connotations that significantly shift the way the phenomena being referenced is conceived. Caetano (2012) points out, for example, that the words "addiction" and "dependence" seem to translate easily to the Spanish "*addicción*" and "*dependencia,*" but the way the DSM-5 uses the terms assumes an "English-centric" understanding and is "not necessarily applicable" in the same way with heritage Spanish language speakers. This challenge reoccurs throughout the DSM and includes terms central to the descriptions included in TCOLE 4064, e.g., stress, depression, and self-esteem, that can carry vastly different meanings in translation.

Culture also constrains the occurrence and importance of some DSM-5 diagnostic criteria in people's lives. The list of substance use disorder criteria includes "spending a lot of time getting, using, or recovering from" the substance in question. The availability of drugs and alcohol and its acceptability in a community will heavily factor into

assessing whether this criterion is met. In the United States more severe limits are placed on alcohol use than many other cultures. Individuals with limited financial resources will also find this criterion easier to meet, even though neither living in the US nor having little money should itself increase the likelihood of diagnosis.

At a deeper level, the way that symptoms are collected into disorders reflects choices informed by culture. As renowned clinical and research psychologist Paula J. Caplan describes it, "mental disorders are nothing more than constellations," just as different cultures will group different stars into differing pictures in the night sky, so too will different cultures make different connections, see different patterns in human experience (in Davies, 2013, p. 26). Further, which feelings or behaviors make it to a list of symptoms, instead of remaining part of the range of normal human experience, certainly speaks to cultural ideals and ideas. Even the assumption that a taxonomy of mental illness can be designed and will have relevance that transcends culture assumes Western enlightenment principles.

That the DSM is a "culturally constructed document" is well supported by historical research into its creation and revisions (Davies, 2016, p. 45). The data that informed the creation of the DSM were most often the clinical experiences of the psychologists who were gathered to create the document, a task force composed largely of White male professionals from the U.S. with similar interests, including capital interests in the pharmaceutical industry (Cosgrove & Krimsky, 2012). This begins to explain why race and gender can be such pronounced predictors of many diagnoses, e.g., ADHD (Morgan et al., 2013), bipolar disorder and schizophrenia (Perron et al., 2010; Waite, 2017), and substance abuse disorder (Alegria et al., 2013). The pattern of race-

predicted diagnoses and labels in schools may be even more stark. Black, American Indian or Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander students are more likely than Asian, Hispanic/Latino, or White students to be identified with a special education need. Black students are at particularly high risk for being diagnosed with an emotional disturbance or intellectual disability, more than double the risk for White students. In addition, Black students receiving special education services are more likely to be placed in restrictive classrooms compared to most other students with a similar label (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Given that schools have a wealth of observed student behavior to analyze, the possibility of identifying symptoms and grouping them to fit a menu of disorders can be tempting. For this very reason there are strict admonishments in both federal and state law against regular school personnel diagnosing a student; diagnoses can only be made by qualified and licensed healthcare practitioners. TCOLE 4064 though, repeatedly refers to ways that "school staff can play an important role in helping to identify and support children with mental health and behavioral disabilities" (p. 84) and offers diagnostic-style descriptors to look for. What do SROs in training make of this information, especially as it constitutes such a large portion of their required 20 hours? At the very least they are invited to interpret student behaviors as markers of each student's endogenous capabilities to meet school expectations and not cause problems, even when those behaviors themselves do not break school rules, much less laws. Fallacious logic flows from this DSM-5 informed portion of TCOLE 4064: students with mental illness are ill-behaved and compromise school safety, you will be able to recognize them through their behavior, it is your job to watch out for them. The more accurate takeaway would be that

all students comply (or not) with school behavioral expectations at any given point for a host of reasons, only one of which may be a mental illness they might be experiencing. SROs will not be able to deduce from a behavior its complex motivations and attempting to do so means making assumptions that are likely to stereotype and minimize. The task of an SRO is to remember that there are a host of possibilities at play when you encounter a student having or presenting difficulties.

Temporal Changes. The history of deficit thinking reveals its insidious adaptability (Valencia, 1997). Each age has favored theories, the *en vogue* way of understanding reality. The dynamism of deficit thinking allows it to be made manifest inside many scholarly ideas; phrenology of the 18th century morphs into eugenics in the 19th century which dissolves into popular late 20th century scholarship including the culture of poverty (Lewis, 1959; Payne, 1996), *Cultural Literacy* (Hirsch, 1987), *The Bell Curve* (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994), and juvenile superpredators (DiIulio, 1995). These frameworks do not need to include deficit thinking "in the basic framework of the model," rather they must act as mechanisms for transmitting alleged deficits (Valencia, 1997, p. 7).

Some significant pieces of TCOLE 4064 have inherited this task of transmitting deficit thinking through current theory. One popular idea in education today that permeates the TCOLE 4064 material is the urgent need for social and emotional learning (SEL). The original research "focused on two poor, low-achieving, predominately African American elementary schools" and hypothesized that "the contrast between a child's experiences at home and those in school...shapes academic achievement" and was brought to popular national attention through *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter*

More Than IQ (Edutopia, 2011). SEL, according to one of its strongest advocates, “is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions” (CASEL, 2021, para. 1). Though the TCOLE 4064 curriculum does not use the term “social and emotional learning,” evidence of SEL tenets saturates the course. The course speaks about the need for schools to help students to develop

- a cooperative spirit (p. 6)
- empathy (p. 7)
- social awareness and skills (p. 8)
- an emotional vocabulary (p. 8)
- self-management (p. 7, 70)
- positive interpersonal relationships (p. 9)
- self-esteem (p. 11)
- compassion (p. 8)
- resilience (p. 54)

The basic framework, like Valencia suggests, need not, and in this case does not, telegraph a deficit orientation; it would be foolish to argue against developing compassion or a cooperative spirit. However, SEL does transmit a deficit view by arguing that lack of these social and emotional skills explains poor “student outcomes and school performance” (Buffet & Shriver, 2013, p. 3). Advocates proclaim SEL the “missing” “critical” “puzzle piece” (Buffet & Shriver, 2013, p. 3) that has prevented

schools from addressing "various forms of inequity and co-create thriving schools and contribute to safe, healthy, and just communities" (CASEL, 2021, para. 2). Similarly, TCOLE 4064 identifies problems with social and emotional learning as the root of "increasingly common" problems among children (p. 6-7). The training asserts that children's deficit of "self-awareness," "self-regulation," and "interpersonal skills," puts them at risk of "failing, dropping out, and developing conduct and mental health problems" (p. 6-7). TCOLE 4064 reinforces the deficit orientation by frequently citing the central role that students' innate "temperament" (p. 15), "group differences" (p. 6), and "family issues" play in their emotional development.

Educability. Having saddled students with deficits based on endogenous qualities that portend bad behavior, social inadequacy, and poor school performance, deficit thinking then proposes solutions for remediation that have a student "adjust to the curriculum - not the other way around" (Valencia, 1997, p. 8). Deficit oriented solutions remediate student behavior paying little or no attention to reshaping the negative influence of systems (and their adult representatives). TCOLE 4064 is grounded in just such interventions, including a significant section about Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), a "framework proven to reduce disciplinary incidents" and "increase a school's sense of safety" (p. 110). According to TCOLE 4064, "the major premise of PBIS" rests in treating behavior like an academic discipline by "directly teaching expected behaviors" (p. 110). PBIS aims to "teach & reinforce pro-social skills and behaviors" and "screen universally & monitor student performance & progress continuously" (p. 111). TCOLE 4064 compares this approach to behavior to a traditional approach to academics, "when students come to school with math or reading deficits we

work to diagnose and serve their needs," therefore students arriving with deficient behavior must be similarly diagnosed and treated (p. 112).

To be fair, PBIS is the only schoolwide behavior model recognized in IDEA (Bal, 2018) and enjoys support from the U.S. Department of Education, so much so that the department advocates that families implement PBIS at home as an especially useful way to support the work of schools during remote learning (Office of Elementary & Secondary Education, 2020). The TCOLE 4064 presentation of PBIS is not a bastardized version of the concept. The definitions and descriptions mirror those from the Center on PBIS and Horner and Sugai, the researchers who founded the system. They describe PBIS as "a commitment to addressing student behavior" beginning with "teaching and acknowledging appropriate student behavior" (Center on PBIS, 2021, para 8). The system rests on tiers of "support" that also help the school screen for behavior problems. When a student is "not successful with Tier 1 supports alone" they are targeted for deeper intervention (Center on PBIS, 2021, para 11).

According to the Center on PBIS it has been adopted in over 25,000 schools (McIntosh et al., 2018) and it is "fast becoming the primary means of providing behavioral support" in schools (Bal, 2018). Advocates advise that PBIS works most effectively when all in the school have "a shared vision and approach" (Center for PBIS, 2021). This wide-spread use and "shared" vision requirement explain why the topic might be included in Texas's SRO training while simultaneously pointing to some serious concerns. The history of reforms in U.S. education is peppered with widely adopted reforms that in truth are attempts to improve "not just education but society" (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 1). Because "Americans have thought it easier to instruct the young than

to coerce the adult" reforms like PBIS often veil attempts to reform society, not just schools (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 2). But adoption and implementation of PBIS may reify deficit views of those whose behaviors are informed by identities whose standards and values do not fit within the White hegemony. Recent scholarship, for example, points to the positive correlation between the adoption of PBIS by a district and its portion of students experiencing poverty (as measured by participation in free/reduced lunch programs) (Kittelman et al., 2019). As this aligns with TCOLE 4064's many mentions about the risk of high-needs or lower income homes, it begs the question, whose behaviors are we trying to control?

Heterodoxy. Given TCOLE 4064's deficit orientation and belief that "two main types of conflicts" arise in school, those based on cultural differences "in national origin or ethnicity" and those based on social differences "based on gender, sexual orientation, class, and physical and mental abilities" the PBIS tenet of shared vision begs a second question, whose behaviors are we recognizing as correct in order to resolve the conflicts that give rise to disordered behavior (p. 112)? Scholars have critiqued the PBIS framework's assumption of universality and cultural neutrality (Bornstein, 2017; Bal et al. 2012). Bornstein's yearlong study of a collection of schools using PBIS revealed that behavioral expectations demanded many students think of the school culture as separate from their indigenous home cultures (Bornstein, 2017). This may help explain why urban and Title 1 schools abandon PBIS programs more swiftly than wealthier suburban schools (Nese et al., 2016). Without specific intervention, cultural norms of a school will be set to dysconciously match White heteronorms (Leonardo, 2004; Gillborn, 2005). The orthodoxy of the dominant classes is assumed and treated as superior to unorthodox and

counter narratives of the dominated (Valencia, 1997; Annamma et al., 2016). TCOLE 4064 presents PBIS as a tool whereby the school, including the SRO, can train students to comply with these norms.

Beyond PBIS and the general approach of defining behavioral standards in terms of White cultural norms, TCOLE 4064 reifies Whiteness in its approach to many other topics. For example, restorative circles are defined with a minimal nod to cultures that embody this approach to justice; "peacemaking circles draw directly from the tradition of Talking Circles, common among indigenous people of North America" (p. 119). The instructions then proceed to undermine a fundamental principles of an authentic restorative justice approach, including centering community and addressing "the obligations that result" from needs of and harms from the community (Zehr, 2004, p. 307). Instead, as presented in TCOLE 4064, restorative practice still offers a an individualistic victim-perpetrator duality and ignores and even masks "relational distrust and racial prejudice" that are required for authentic restoration (Lustick, 2017, p. 127). Not only does this style of heterodoxy bubble up in many sections of TCOLE 4064, the concerns addressed and ignored in the curriculum themselves represent a White heterodoxy where bullying is devastating, but not racism; where mental health issues are cause for alarm, but not sexual assault.

Minimization of Racism Through Color-Evasiveness

One way to lift dominant views up as normal and natural is to minimize the impact of racism, address race matters in the abstract, and assume inequity is born of natural or cultural differences rather than structural design. Bonilla-Silva (2003) describes this post-civil rights era ideology as "color-blind racism," and dis/crit scholars

Annamma et al. (2016) extends the concept to "color-evasiveness." Color-evasiveness avoids using the disability label of blind as pejorative, but Annamma et al. (2016) suggest that its greatest strength lies in more accurately describing the ideology as an active choice.

TCOLE 4064 contrives to avoid race in two chief ways. Most obvious is the complete omission of any reference to specific races or ethnicities. The terms Black, White, African American, Latino, Latina, Latino/a, Native American, Indian, and Asian do not appear in the curriculum. The term Hispanic receives a single mention when explaining that the concept of self includes that: individuals identify with "social groups. Examples include British, Republican, Hispanic, or gay" (p. 12). Though overt references to race and culture are excluded, there are hidden references familiar to critical scholars including the use of "urban" (p. 22) to mean Black or Black and Latino/a and "group differences" (p. 6) to refer to race and ethnicity (Watson, 2011). "We are an aggressive society in the United States. Studies indicate that socioeconomic status is the greatest predictor of aggressive behavior, especially in urban males" (p. 22). Combining "socioeconomic status," "aggressive," and "urban males" very thinly veils the anti-black racism in this statement (Collins, 2000; Myers, 2005). Other coded language can be found throughout the TCOLE text that signals racial and gender othering. With concerns about how the school system and criminal justice system are racist in structure, SRO training that is unwilling to explicitly discuss race and ethnicity will at best fail to address these problems instead recreating oppressive structure and practices.

Secondly, a commitment to color-evasiveness in TCOLE 4064 means that key information about topics presented is excluded because disaggregation of data by race

and ethnicity is treated as irrelevant. Typical statements from the curriculum include "boys and girls of all ages, ethnic/racial backgrounds, and regions of the United States experience mental disorders" (p. 31) and "intellectual disability is found among all races and cultures" (p. 104). These statements are never followed with particulars about different races or cultures. Instead, general information follows about prevalence that conceals important specifics about the intersection of dis/ability and race with regards to mental illness in student populations.

Researchers have revealed many areas of mental health in which factors beyond symptoms predict diagnosis including the areas intensively explored in TCOLE 4064. For example, race is "among the strongest predictors of an anxiety disorder" (Vanderminden & Esala, 2018, p. 119); data suggest "potential underdiagnosis among Black respondents and/or overdiagnosis among Native American, white, and Hispanic respondents" (p. 114). There is likely a causal link between experiences of racism and generalized anxiety disorder (Gee et al., 2007; Soto et al., 2012; Priest et al., 2013), and there are race and ethnic-specific mental health protective factors as well (Jones & Neblett, 2016). The concept of youth anxiety penetrates TCOLE 4064 with 49 uses of the word in connection with a litany of topics, e.g., adolescent brain development, self-esteem, aggression, suicide, bullying, de-escalation, and of course mental illness. However, no information is offered about the intersection of race, ethnicity, or racism with anxiety. Similar erasure of racial differences can be found throughout TCOLE 4064. Some of the most significant omissions include the influence of race on special education diagnoses and labels, high rates of suicide in some communities (particularly American Indian/Alaskan Native teens) , and the disproportionate use of restraints in schools by race.

Heteronormativity

Heteronorming broadly describes efforts to re/enforce heterosexuality and essentialist conceptions of gender as binary and biological (Marchia & Sommer, 2019). Queer theorists expose how through categorization of sexuality and gender judgements of normal and deviant are (re)invented as tools for protecting Whiteness and patriarchy at the expense of the othered (Pryzbylo, 2019; Butler, 1999). TCOLE 4064 embraces a binary conception of gender. Boy/girl duality is overtly referenced throughout the text, e.g., in regard to aggression, bullying, and mental illness prevalence, without any reference to the possibility of a non-binary presentation of gender. The only two mentions of sexual orientation are as a source of social conflict and as a risk factor for suicidality. One mention, embedded in information about conflict resolution techniques, does not specify homosexuality or queerness and instead lets "sexual orientation" do this work (p.112). Because of the deeply heteronormative culture of the U.S., a discussion of sexual orientation always refers to queerness. Heterosexuality exists, but homosexuality and asexuality must be spoken into existence; in other words, no one 'comes out' as straight (McGregor & Kosman, 2021). Employing the term "sexual orientation" in a list of conflict triggers places the problem on the shoulders of LGBTQIA youth, as though their very existence causes conflict and not heterosexism and homophobia.

A second mention offers research-based evidence about prevalence of suicide attempts among "self-identified gay, lesbian, and 'not sure' youth" (p. 37). Unfortunately, this information was not accompanied by an interrogation of the causal mechanisms that might be at work. Neither did the treatment of the subject refer to research-based assets

that queer youth employ to successfully navigate harmful structures. Both these causes and mediators are also in the research-base (Mustanski & Liu, 2013; Ryan et al., 2009; McDermott & Roen, 2016). Without this context, this passage, which ostensibly aims to support LGBTQIA students by calling attention to a serious issue, also serves to enhance their othering. This 'at-risk' discourse flattens the multidimensionality of queer experiences to this single dangerous marker - deviance from the 'normal' rate of youth suicidality. The text furthers this queer othering with an oblique reference to the need to further explore how physical disease and injury might relate to risk of suicide. As an explanatory example the text points to the influence of HIV/AIDS as a suicide risk factor in adults though it "has not received adequate empirical study among adolescents" (p. 39). Doubtless trainees will associate HIV/AIDS with queer students, though the current rate of HIV/AIDS infections in U.S. youth is extremely low (fewer than 2000 a year) (CDC, 2018).

The most powerful signifiers of heteronorming in TCOLE 4064 are not passages that mention gender or sexuality, but passages that omit discussion of queerness and the queer experience. For example, even with the earlier reportage about high suicide rates for queer students, the lengthy section on bullying (pg. 45-54) which includes an examination of the relationship between "bullying behavior and suicide-related behavior" fails to examine anti-queer bullying. The CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey makes clear that LGBTQIA youth are far more likely to be threatened, bullied, and cyberbullied (Kann et al., 2018). Similarly, discussion about youth arrest rates ignores the disproportionate exposure of LGBTQIA youth to the criminal justice system (Green, 2017) and mentions of sexual and physical abuse ignores how the gender and/or sexuality

influences rates of victimization and reporting (Kosciw et al., 2020).

Sexism

TCOLE 4064 contains a hidden curriculum of sexism. Like the color-evasive and deficit treatment of students from different cultural groups, the curriculum simultaneously calls out girls with debunked science and ignores important scholarship about girls' experiences. Like the heteronormative othering of queer students, the curriculum also embraces essentialist ideas about gender.

By far the lengthiest discussion about girls in TCOLE 4064 runs through the treatment of "aggression" as a topic (p. 16-25). At the core of the taxonomy and descriptions of aggressive behaviors in students lies the idea that "when gender specific forms of aggression are considered, there is evidence to suggest that girls are as aggressive as boys" and that their aggression "peaks much later" than boys' (p. 17). The curriculum discusses "female aggression," aggression that is "more surreptitious," "mean-spirited and can be extremely subtle" (p. 18). The proper term for this type of aggression, the document explains is "relational aggression" (p. 20) which the curriculum describes for trainers and trainees by referencing the movie *Mean Girls* and describing it as "difficult to observe" and frequently "overlooked because adults simply do not think the compliant, popular, honor student engages in such an activity" (p. 20).

The idea of relational aggression as the girl equivalent to boy's overt hostile aggression gained traction in U.S. popular media in recent decades. However, research based on both behavioral observations and child self-report do not bear out the theory that girls are more relationally aggressive than boys (Lansford et al., 2012; Card et al., 2008).

Orpinas et al. (2016) discovered through a comprehensive longitudinal study that followed 620 students for seven years and examined rates of both perpetration and victimization of relational aggression that boys exhibit more relational aggression than girls. The researchers described "the myth of 'mean girls'" as "creating and reinforcing" stereotypes about girls being crueler than boys (Orpinas et al., 2015, para. 2). TCOLE 4064 leans into this stereotype describing teen girls as taking part in a particularly "harmful" form of aggression that is both "effective' and "devastating" even though it lacks the physicality of boys' more "hostile" aggression (p. 20).

Activities described as relationally aggressive include "ignoring, belittling, shaming, or isolating someone, or spreading rumors about someone" (p. 20). What will SRO trainees take from the mean girl discussion as none of these behaviors would seem to fall under the purview of police management? At minimum they are invited to understand boys and girls as essentially different. In fact, the lengthy section on "aggression" relies on an essentialist view of gender, the idea that there are "fundamental, intrinsic, necessary, determinative differences" between male and female (Gowaty, 2018, p. 145). Examining the century of canonical research and theory that both leans on and props up this idea Gowaty (2018) concludes, "from observations of sex differences, investigators predict the existence of other sex differences, which affirms the consequent" (p. 159). In other words, this idea is born of a circular argument which confirms the founding bias: it is observed that men are more aggressive than women, seeking why reveals that the cause is differences between men and women. Gowaty does not stand alone. In *The Handbook of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity in Counseling and Psychotherapy* the American Psychological Association targets essentialism as a

"singular view [that] limit[s] our understanding" and notes that "today, many researchers acknowledge that many biological and sociocultural factors interact and influence sexual orientation and gender identity" (Sánchez & Pankey, 2017, p. 53). TCOLE 4064 is not strictly essentialist as it does pepper the aggression discussion with the possibility that "parental behavior and expectations" and the toys children play with may influence their development, but it pointedly omits schooling or any other social structures as possible social influences on gender presentation (p. 17).

Collecting the behaviors of "ignoring, belittling, shaming, or isolating someone, or spreading rumors about someone" into a group, labelling it as a type of aggression, and aligning that aggression with girlhood signals a deeper issue with how behaviors are monitored in schools (p. 20). Equating "ignoring, belittling, shaming, or isolating someone, or spreading rumors" with the anticipated "more physically and verbally aggressive" (p. 18) "fighting" (p. 20) presentation of aggression by boys means that girls are held to a much higher standard of correct behavior. Boys are called to account for throwing a punch or cursing someone out; girls are called to account for those *and* not including someone in a discussion or activity. In one fell swoop TCOLE 4064 reinforces an intrinsic, essentialist gender binary; labels girls' behavior as mean, sneaky and dangerous as physical assault; and offers a list of girl behaviors to police that include activities as benign and even healthy as "ignoring" (p. 20).

In other ways TCOLE 4064 ignores important information about girls' differential experiences thereby erasing their perspective on some critical issues the SRO trainees are called to understand and address. For example, the lengthy section on bullying states "for the most part girls bully girls and their bullying is more verbal bullying, whereas boys

tend to bully other boys and their bullying takes the form of physical bullying" (p. 47). This ignores the significant issue of dating and other gender violence in school populations, a problem the CDC describes as "common" and disproportionately affecting female students, "about 1 in 8 female and 1 in 26 male high school students report having experienced sexual dating violence" (CDC, 2021b). TCOLE 4064 makes no mention of dating violence or sexual harassment. Under the heading "cultural causes of bullying" the document identifies U.S. cultural elements that both signal and breed a fascination with violence, "the World Wrestling Federation (WWF) as glorification of bullies in the name of entertainment" and "the high rate of domestic violence," but the discussion ends there (p. 51). This silence staunchly avoids any exploration of toxic masculinity, the very phenomenon alluded to by mentions of WWF and domestic violence and a critically important consideration for schools, social institutions that play a powerful role "in shaping conceptualizations of masculinity and gendered patterns of power" (Elliott, 2018, p. 18-19).

TCOLE 4064 leaves behind the wrong impression that in school, girls need to most fear other girls' verbal abuse. The curriculum includes an exploration of the story of Amanda Todd, a Canadian teen who according to the text "used self-harm, drugs, and alcohol in an attempt to silence the pain she suffered as a result of Cyberbullying [sic]...she wanted a friend" and who eventually committed suicide (p. 39). It is telling that the curriculum would identify cyberbullying and the need of a friend as the source of her pain. The precipitating event was Todd's victimization by an online child predator (Dean, 2012). She was then extorted by the predator with threats of revenge porn that he carried out, and her classmates responded by slut-shaming her. Every step of her tragic story is

informed by toxic masculinity and a culture of objectifying girls, but the curriculum ignores these factors and turns her story into an object lesson on suicide. This choice oddly directs SRO trainees to focus on signs of suicidality when as law enforcement officers they, more than many adults in school, have the capability of working to protect students from online predation.

Similar omissions of differential experiences by gender occur in TCOLE 4064's treatment of teen pregnancy, where this claim is made, "unwanted pregnancy, for both boys and girls can feel overwhelming enough to contemplate suicide" (p. 37). This, the single mention of teen pregnancy in the course, presents it as equally challenging for boys and girls, a patently false claim, as is born out in post-natal graduation and college-going rates (CDC, 2021a), mental health issues (Hodgkinson et al., 2014), and economic well-being (Brace et al., 2008). Similar omissions erase the significantly gendered female experience of other important phenomena, e.g., child sexual abuse, self-harm, and behavioral expectations.

Ableism

TCOLE 4064 spends much of its pages exploring topics related to special education, a term ostensibly for the unique services provided by schools to students with any of a number of disabilities. However, 'special education' at least as often is used not to label education services but the students receiving those services. The label itself has become a tool whereby the nondisabled ways of development and being are reified as normal and other ways are, well *othered*, as 'special.' In the world of education, as in society at large, "it is preferable for disabled students to do things in the same manner as nondisabled kids" (Hehir, 2002, p. 3).

TCOLE 4064 suffers from an ableist perspective about many groups of students who would be considered eligible for special education services. The curriculum assumes deficits of students with learning disabilities, developmental disabilities, and mental health diagnoses. For example, in a short, bulleted list of four facts titled "recognizing and managing emotions" the curriculum states "challenging for adolescents with learning disabilities" (p. 7). In the wide world of learning disabilities this is no doubt true for some students, but it cannot be true of all, and it still leaves open the question, challenging by whose standards? As this statement is presented without nuance or context it clearly invites deficit thinking about students with learning disabilities.

More deeply, the text speaks about school culture in dysconscious ways that reify a non-disabled understanding of the learning process:

> Consider how a child must adapt to a reading or math assignment, especially if the assignment is long and demanding. The child must "settle down," focus energy and attention, adapt to new directions, resist distraction, and persist, even when the task may be boring or difficult. (p. 16)

This passage begins by highlighting "reading or math" to the exclusion of other potential learning tasks that could be "long and demanding." This ignores that kids of differing abilities will find, and successfully complete, a great variety of tasks that can be described as long and demanding, sometimes tasks that non-disabled people experience as short and easy. Exclusively focusing on tasks that non-disabled students might find challenging erases the efforts of disabled students. This same focus also ignores that many tasks are only challenging because they exist in an environment built for the abled.

In a different world an able or seeing student might find that daily navigating a school building designed primarily for wheelchair users or blind students to be a “long and demanding” task, an experience that does not speak to their ability as directly as it speaks to the structure of the environment in which they find themselves. It is very possible that in a different environment the child described in the passage would not need special efforts to “settle down,” “focus,” or “persist” (p. 16)

Keeping an eye open to the ableism undergirding the text reveals a dangerous deficit orientation toward the disabled. The text characterizes the homes of students with behavior disorders as places often “where many critical needs are not met” (p. 68). Trainees are advised to expect “individuals with learning disabilities...may be impaired towards peer relationships and social success” (p. 7). They are warned that “mental health issues have been associated with substance use [and] criminal behavior” (p. 30) and to expect “untreated disorders can lead to...behavior issues...social isolation...and in the most extreme cases, suicide and violence” (p. 32).

Intersectionality

Having drawn attention to ways TCOLE 4064 reinforces racism, heteronorming, sexism, and ableism, I will now point to how these concepts tend to dangerously intersect in the course material. Intersectionality offers a deeper analysis of how systems of power and dominance work; most people have intersecting identities that change the shape of their lived experience compared to others that share some, but not all, identifiers (Crenshaw, 1991). A short case study in the text illustrates the combined effects of color-evasiveness and gender norming, sexism and ableism on one fictional student. “Sara’s Story/ Case Study" (p. 34) appears at the conclusion of a discussion about how to

recognize “warning signs and symptoms of Mental Health in students” (p. 32).

> Sara is a 7th grade student at a local middle school and has been recently placed in the foster care system. She was placed in foster care because she was physically abused by her step-father and neglected by her mother. Sara can be even-tempered at times, but most of the time she is quick to anger and often has outbursts where she will yell at others and then burst into tears.
>
> Sara often gets into trouble at school for talking back to teachers and getting into arguments with other students in her class. Her teachers have noticed a decline in her school work. Sara reports being unable to sit still and concentrate on her work. Sara has been placed into ISS several times and is now labeled a “trouble-maker.” She responds angrily to any kind of correction or criticism from adults or peers and begins to cry when she gets angry. She had made the comment that life isn’t worth it. During elementary school, Sara was reportedly a good student who rarely got in trouble. (p.34)

Sara carries a gendered name, pronouns and assigned age, but is given no race, ethnicity, or other cultural markers. This color-evasiveness combined with clear gendering raises questions about some important elements of Sara’s story. She is “physically abused by her step-father.” Is this a coded reference to sexual abuse, a problem adolescent girls face more than three times as often as boys, and if so why is this not a critical element of her story (CDC, 2020)? Is glossing over the nature of her abuse at home a means of adultifying Sara, a phenomenon experienced by girls who are

expected to mature faster than boys, but most especially by Black girls (Carter Andrews et al., 2019)? The adultification of girls partially arises from "benevolent sexism" that stereotypes girls and women as more moral, pure, and mature (Glick & Friske, 1996, p. 491). In schools adultification translates into a higher bar for girls' correct behavior, as established in TCOLE 4064's discussion of adolescent aggression that described girl's behaviors of ignoring and shaming equally as aggressive and hostile as boys' hitting and fighting behaviors. However, Black girls often feel the burden of both this gender stereotype and race stereotypes that simultaneously exclude them from fitting the feminine ideal and instead render them as sexually aggressive (Carter Andrews et al., 2019). When we imagine Sara to be a Black girl, her victimization might well be minimized; she is held to stringent behavior standards while her abuser is granted some measure of pardon because Black girls are sexually objectified (Morris, 2016; Townsend et al., 2010; Gordon, 2008).

Sara is described as "quick to anger," prone to "outbursts where she will yell at others," and a back-talker to teachers (p. 34). For these infractions she was "placed into ISS several times and is now labeled a 'trouble maker,'" This further evidences discipline practices that discriminate against girls (p. 34). Calling out students for being quick to anger, yelling and backtalking all requires discretionary judgement. In other words, backtalk is in the eye of the beholder. Students' color and cultural norms highly influence these labels on their behavior. Exclusionary discipline for discretionary rule violations has been particularly central to the "push out" experienced by Black girls in U.S. education systems (Morris, 2016). Combined, Sara finds herself in the hands of systems that have excluded her from both her home and her classroom, for what well could be

simply existing. Depending on Sara's cultural identities and how those identities match, or mismatch, those now controlling her life, these exclusions can prompt different feelings in Sara, responses from her peers, and life outcomes. Ignoring Sara's race and culture, and minimizing the influence of her gender, means the case omits more important elements than it offers.

The story goes on to refer to Sara's inability "to sit still and concentrate on her work," the times she will "burst into tears," and her comments that "life isn't worth it" (p. 34). These are doubtless meant to suggest a high likelihood of mental illness which, according to the preceding paragraph, "should concern school staff" and have them guard for "threats to self or others" (p. 34). In fairness, this warning is one in a list of concerning behaviors but given the popular discourse linking mental illness with mass shootings, it is not a stretch to suggest the curriculum leans into this discourse in warning about violent tendencies of mentally ill students. Consider the only questions posed by the text about this case:

> Does the child demonstrate symptoms of a mental health issues? [sic]
>
> If so what are the symptoms?
>
> How does her behavior affect school safety?
>
> What are some prevention and treatment options for Sara? (p. 35)

Clearly the case is offered as a means of exploring the link between mentally ill students and school safety threats. More careful analysis describes the link between mental illness and violent behavior as "myth" and warns that "when assessing individuals for dangerousness, mental health assessments alone are problematic" especially since the risk posed by people diagnosed with mental illnesses "remains much lower than the general

population” (Van Brunt & Pescara-Kovach, 2019, p. 60). As Sara is in foster care, *her* exposure to violence and potential for further victimization might well pose higher risk concerns (Lutman & Barter, 2017). Capping the questions by looking for “treatment options” for Sara perversely saddles 13-year-old Sara with the responsibility to course correct when clearly the adults in her life are responsible for her circumstances, no wonder “she responds angrily to any kind of correction or criticism” (p. 34). Sara’s behavior has been pathologized as a means of supporting structures of dominance. She becomes the safety threat; she needs treatment; the systems and practices that make her vulnerable can be ignored to endure.

Moments of Clarity

Though their paucity cannot counterweight the bulk of the deficit framing, there are brief passages that seem to run counter to the prevailing narrative. For example, after lengthy discussions about the deficiencies and dangers posed by students, the text offers this advice on page 106:

> Realize it may be a relief for the young person to talk about how they feel
>
> Remember it’s about them, not you:
>
> •Their experiences are not the same as ours
>
> •Their perspective is not the same as ours or necessarily of other youth in the family or peer group
>
> •Their culture may not be the same as ours
>
> •They need our empathy
>
> •They may use language that makes us uncomfortable (p. 106)

Offered at the end of the discussion about mental illness in students, the presentation of

the passages leaves me with more questions than answers. Will trainees digest that different people have different ways of knowing, values, experiences, and cultural norms, all of which will affect their thinking, behaviors, and interpretation of others' behaviors? Dr. Patricia L. Guerra, an education researcher who advocates for a deep understanding of cultural differences in education leadership preparation and practice, argues that glossing over these ideas works against changing the thinking or behavior of learners (personal communication, July 7, 2021). To truly understand this passage requires deep and reflective work about our own and others' world view, e.g., values, beliefs, attitudes, and expectations. Further, to apply any new knowledge demands new professional tools and practice using them (Guerra, personal communication, July 7, 2021). Because it stands alone in contrast to the previous material, will this be received like a throw away touchy-feely cap on otherwise meaty and factual content? Since this perspective is not embedded in the rest of the document, it would require discussing and considering how this list of considerations complicates the previous information and advice. It seems at least possible that this ending passage be ignored as trainers race to wrap up a session, rather than investing the time needed for the deep inquiry it requires.

Many of the passages that begin to challenge the otherwise deficit framing of the training materials are in the section on de-escalation practices. This could stem from TCOLE's experience and comfort with police de-escalation training; information about current research and best practices are likely readily available and understood. Trainees are reminded that "respect for the student's dignity and rights must be a critical consideration when adults respond to problem behavior" which resists the condescension and dehumanization that deficit thinking can support (p. 74). Even more directly, the

training suggests that adults can be the cause of escalating behavior in students claiming that "the root problem is that staff may take the behaviors exhibited by the students personally" (p. 72) and that "the adult's behavior should be controlled and nonjudgmental" (p. 71). While this advice is limited to incidents where students are already perceived to be misbehaving, and still neglects the impact of culture and marginalization, identifying adults in the school as potential triggers for student problems does begin to challenge the otherwise deficit view.

Conclusion

This chapter reported the thematic findings that resulted from my analysis of TCOLE 4064, the SRO training curriculum required for all law enforcement officers serving full time in Texas schools. Looking through the lens of critical Whiteness studies reveals many ways the curriculum (re)builds systems of dominance and therefore prepares officers to do so on Texas campuses. Given the power, both symbolic and legal, of armed law enforcement officers, their presence will have a formidable influence. The TCOLE 4064 curriculum prepares officers to expect students to be problems, need handling, and compromise safety. The curriculum attributes this student behavior to endogenous factors while overlooking ways the school and other outside influences are involved in either the behaviors or perceptions of the behaviors. The curriculum fails to stake a claim on central questions, like the meaning of school safety or the role of SROs, leaving those questions to be implicitly answered by dominant interests. The curriculum is steeped in racist, sexist, heterosexist, and ableist ideas and language while ignoring safety concerns more central to groups traditionally marginalized in U.S. schools and society. The next chapter will return to my original research questions to see how these

findings help answer questions about how the curriculum conceives of the work of schools and the impact of SROs work on students from minoritized groups.

V: CONCLUSIONS

The thematic findings in the previous chapter call back to the questions that began this research. The first two questions aimed to describe the shape of the training Texas's SROs receive.

> RQ 1: What assumptions about the nature of schools and students frame SRO training in TCOLE 4064?
>
> RQ 2: Which concerns about working in schools are highlighted in TCOLE 4064 training, and which concerns are ignored?

The final question asks how this preparation might shape the experiences of students in Texas schools.

> RQ 3: How does SRO training in TCOLE 4064 address officers' potential impact on minoritized students and the STPP?

This chapter uses the thematic findings outlined in the previous chapter, i.e., dysconscious definitions; unreliable information; centers student engagement; racism through deficit thinking: victim blaming, oppression, pseudoscience, temporal changes, educability, and heterodoxy, color-evasiveness; heteronormativity; sexism; ableism; intersectionality; moments of clarity, to answer the original research questions.

Assumptions and Concerns of TCOLE 4064

TCOLE 4064 assumes that trainers and trainees already understand the role and tasks of SROs in Texas schools. Few tasks are explicitly asserted in the training text, rather the training offers information about school-specific jargon, legal codes, and practices assuming this information will be useful to SROs in their school work. The training omits any information that could assist officers in other school safety related

duties, e.g., perimeter patrol and access, traffic control, or emergency planning. From this we can deduce that SROs expect to be very involved with student behavior.

TCOLE 4064 recognizes that many students come from homes that do not embody the same values and behavior standards that are expected in schools and assumes that it is the rightful function of schools to teach students these *correct* values and behaviors. Divergent beliefs and behaviors are described as the result of deficits in the student or student's family, culture, or experiences, deficits which can be compensated for through training at school. The assumed function of schools, the task of all school personnel, is to socialize all students into the school culture, a culture conscribed by middle-class/affluent Whiteness, heteronormativity, patriarchy and ableism. TCOLE 4064 makes clear that SROs should expect their work to center on helping the other adults in the school address this central issue. While direct discussion of race, culture, and sexuality are studiously avoided in the curriculum, this colonial project of replacing students' endogenous ways of being silently takes center stage in the TCOLE 4064 training.

There is a carceral logic to the way schools are envisioned in TCOLE 4064. Students need to be constantly monitored because the adults watching them can expect they will cause problems and step out of line. This policing is justified because stepping out of line translates to potential compromises to school safety. This carceral approach to creating K-12 school environments is not new and did not begin with or rely on school police. Legal guidance across the country since the 1980's has identified "a newly recognized inalienable right" (Sawyer, 1984), students' right to attend "safe" schools, which requires teachers to fight against "the commonly known tendency of students to

engage in aggressive and impulsive behavior which exposes them and their peers to serious physical harm" (California Department of Justice, 1990. See also the federal Safe Schools Act of 1994 and Texas's response, The Safe Schools Act of 1995, TEC Ch. 37). This same philosophy reverberates throughout TCOLE 4064, now sharing this charge directly with armed, uniformed school police.

This carcerality renders students, some students more than others, "fungible objects for surveillance and control" (Wun, 2017, p. 207). Students are not invited to co-create the school environment, but instead are intended to be objects in the regimen created for them. More accurately, students, while not invited to, are expected to co-create the school environment by posing problems that demand policing systems and practices in response. We can know the invitation goes wanting when students and their families are viewed as fundamentally deficient, as is clear from the findings. This disinvitation does not extend equally to all students. The curriculum explicitly suspects students from low-socio economic backgrounds and those from home cultures that do not rest on White, Western, middle-class values have had deficient developmental opportunities. In practical effect this largely means the training encourages an especially lingering and suspicious gaze be cast on students of Color, a practice not new in or unique to schools (Raible & Irizarry, 2010; Yancy, 2016). These students' experiences, beliefs, and values are pushed to the margins of acceptable-at-school and are therefore more likely to be perceived as crossing outside of the margins of correct and safe school behavior.

Mirroring this marginalization of some students, TCOLE 4064 works hard to avoid even the ideas of race and culture, ostensibly projecting a Color neutrality that

ignores the clear preponderance of evidence that policing, imprisonment, and school discipline fall heavily on poor, Black, Latino/a, and Native American populations. The existence of, or even potential of, a school to prison pipeline does not enter the TCOLE 4064 discussion, though much of the research on the impact of SROs in schools is born, at least in part, from this concern. At best this avoidance reflects a dysconscious acceptance that any school-prison nexus is normal and acceptable. At worst, TCOLE 4064's silent erasure of even the possibility of an STPP seeks to absolve SROs of any responsibility for these harmful practices thus actively sustaining them.

Like students from races and cultures that are marginalized in the school system, girls are similarly marginalized as they too find safety issues central to their experiences are ignored. Unfortunately, the topics of sexual harassment and sexual violence remain untouched in TCOLE 4064, though the report rates for these phenomena point to a serious and rising concern for girls in K-12 education. In school year 2017-2018 there were 14,938 incidents of rape, attempted rape and sexual assault (US Department of Education, OCR, 2020). For comparison, the 2017-2018 school year also saw the Parkland, Florida and Santa Fe, Texas school shootings, among others, resulting in what has been called the "worst year for US school shootings" for the total of 113 people killed or injured (Coughlan, 2018). Rates of occurrence alone do not offer a way to compare the relative safety risk of these terrible events, of course, but the ratio of 132 rapes/attempted rape/sexual assault to 1 shooting death/injury does suggest that safety risks that disproportionately impact girls get much less attention.

Simultaneously girls are held to higher behavior standards in the curriculum; trainees are taught to more closely monitor and constrain girls' behaviors. Combined, the

extra demands on girls' behavior and dismissal of the real threats they are under reinforces foundational elements of push-out that girls experience in schools. Pairing this sexism with the color-evasive and deficit approaches to students of Color exponentially increases the push-out experience for girls of Color. Black girls, in particular, tend to be othered in school spaces: highly policed like their male counterparts, subject to casual (and not so casual) sexism like their female classmates of other races, and subject to a maddening set of stereotypes about Black femininity long in the making (Morris, 2016). That TCOLE 4064 minimizes or dismisses these differential discipline experiences, sexual assault and harassment, and sexism in school reveals its investment in problematic assumptions and complicity in replicating inequitable practices.

The very conscribed assumptions about the expected 'correct' ways that girls present themselves in schools rise largely from an essentialist approach to gender. In addition to the danger girls are in because they are viewed as essentially different beings, beings defined by their divergence from maleness, this binary perspective on gender all but erases sexual and gender diversity. The concerns of LGBTQIA students, particularly those not cis-gendered, are pushed so far to the margins of TCOLE 4064 that they fall off the page. Queerness in TCOLE 4064 registers exclusively as aberrant and dangerous; it is a source of suicidality, a trigger for conflict between students, and related to HIV/AIDS. Additionally, the near silence on differential experiences of students of Color and girls in TCOLE 4064 is replicated when it comes to discussing students' sexuality and gender diversity. This omission betrays yet again that the safety concerns on which the Texas SRO project builds, focus on issues central to heteronormative White males. Rather than being dismissed, LGBTQIA students should be of special concern as they are often those

most likely to be victimized at school and most likely to be introduced to the criminal justice system (Palmer & Greytak, 2017).

In direct contrast to TCOLE 4064's overt erasure of the experiences of students of Color, girls, and queer students, students with disabilities, particularly those with disabilities that affect cognitive development and/or mental health take center stage. Students with disabilities are especially suspect of posing threats to school safety in the TCOLE 4064 curriculum. Without stating it explicitly, the training leans into the false conception that mentally ill people act out violently. It points out the student diagnoses and symptoms to be wary of, though the U.S. Department of Health (2017) makes it clear that there is no evidence that people with mental health problems are more violent "than anyone else" pointing out that only 3-5% of violent acts can be attributed to people suffering from serious mental illness (para. 7). Compared to the general population, people with mental illnesses are much more likely to be victimized than victimizers (Thornicroft, 2020).

Through highlighting and detailing a wealth of information about working with student disabilities and mental illnesses while also avoiding the impact of race, culture, and gender on these and other facets of students' lives, TCOLE 4064 powerfully resists any intersectional interpretation about students' experiences and behaviors. Avoiding an intersectional perspective means refusing to recognize the experiences of what could easily be most Texas students. According to the Texas Education Agency demographic data, in school year 2019-2020 public school students in the state were described as:

12.6% African American

00.4% American Indian

04.6% Asian

52.8% Hispanic

00.2% Pacific Islander

27.0% White

02.5% Two or more races

20.4% Limited English proficiency

10.7% Special Education

06.9% have 504 plans

48.0% female

51.2% male

None recognized as non-binary - data not collected

Back of the envelope calculations suggest that 35.04% of students are girls of Color, and at least 13% (6.66% male, 6.34% female) of Texas students are children of Color with special education IEP or 504 plans. Though the TEA does not collect data related to student's sexual and gender queer status, the Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law used data from the large Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey and the U.S. Census Bureau to estimate the population of LBGT youth in each state. By their estimate, 195,000 Texans age 13-17 were LGBT in 2017, a figure that represents 8% of grade 7-12 enrollment (Conron, 2020). If queer identity is distributed evenly across student groups, that means 5.84% are LGBT students of Color and at least 1.4% of students with a special education or 504 plan are LGBT. Denying intersectionality means ignoring "how individuals ongoingly and flexibly negotiate their multiple and converging identities in the context of everyday life" (Lutz, 2015, p. 41) which disrupts "coalition-building"

(Collins, 2017, p. 37). A dysconscious approach to structures of dominance actively undercuts any collective action effort by those who find themselves disempowered, and the TCOLE 4064 training embraces this dysconscious approach.

The School to Prison Pipeline

My final question asks how this preparation might shape the experiences of students in Texas schools.

RQ 3: How does SRO training in TCOLE 4064 address officers' potential impact on minoritized students and the STPP?

The TCOLE 4064 training material addresses many components of the STPP: zero-tolerance and exclusionary discipline practices, inequitable treatment of students from minoritized groups, culturally non-responsive practices, and the presence of school police. Though the STPP goes unacknowledged in the training, these identified elements underscore many of the training topics and inform their treatment.

Zero-tolerance and Exclusionary Discipline. The training supports viewing school discipline outside of the damaging zero-tolerance mindset. There are repeated calls to appreciate developmental stages and consider students' specific circumstances. The training also invites SROs to consider the value of not responding to low level rule violations in order to de-escalate some situations. Avoiding zero-tolerance rhetoric may not be as powerful as it may seem at first glance since Texas Education Code requires a zero-tolerance approach to many discipline issues. For example, students must be removed from the regular classroom and placed in a disciplinary alternative education program if they make a "terroristic threat" even if it is a "false alarm or report" or if they are found under the influence of marijuana or alcohol (Ch. 37, Sec..006). The training

need not speak about zero-tolerance when legal strictures already construct a zero-tolerance environment, but the omission of rhetoric that reinforces a zero-tolerance approach at least leaves open the possibility for some nuance in the way trainees approach their work.

As part of TCOLE 4064's hearty embrace of the PBIS approach to discipline, trainees are encouraged to look for "barriers to student [behavioral] success" (p. 112). It is important to note that research suggests that PBIS is often plagued with issues around school staff buy-in and implementation fidelity that compromise its effectiveness and success (Hall & Hord, 2011; Tyre & Feuerborn, 2021). The limited treatment of PBIS in TCOLE 4064 does not address these issues or offer the professional development suggested by PBIS advocates to overcome these challenges. Further, critics of PBIS point to ways that PBIS protocols can suppress challenges to racist behavioral expectations through its veneer of race/culture neutrality, a practice that supports the STPP (Bornstein, 2017). Failure to address this possibility, combined with the text's White, male, cis, and ableist norms of behavior, greatly increases the likelihood of a problematic approach to discipline.

Inequities in Discipline Practices. Trainees are repeatedly exhorted to help identify and manage students with mental health issues. The limited degree to which the training acknowledges the potential intersection of mental health diagnoses with race, ethnicity, culture, gender, and sexuality encourages SRO trainees to blame diversity for presentation of symptoms, rather than understanding divergent ways of being and behaving. The training rarely suggests that the actions of the adults in the school or the design of school practices might be causal factors in students' perceived behavior issues.

Further, the training invites trainees to ignore the possibility that the school environment and practices could be framing normal and even healthy behaviors as problematic when they fall outside of White, able, cis-male middle-class norms. TCOLE 4064 strangely assumes that clear communication between SROs and students arises through standardization. The training offers PBIS as a system by which all students can receive identical expectations and identical consequences for failing to meet them. Standardization is presented as equitable when in practice, standardization reifies the norms that best fit able, cis, heterosexual students from White middle-class backgrounds. Research on Texas school discipline practices and outcomes confirm this problem and the problematic results it helps produce (Fabelo et al., 2011; Fowler et al., 2010).

Culturally Non-responsive. One causal factor for inequitable discipline practices are behavioral standards that (re)enforce Whiteness thereby othering non-White ways of being as transgressive. Facial expression is seen as universal, as are the progression of emotional development, goals of maturation, and presentation of mental health, however none of these phenomena can be described, or even conceptualized, in universal terms. Instead, the standards and expectations presented as universal and neutral stem from a White Western worldview thereby centering Whiteness. De-centering Whiteness, however, is *sine qua non* for creating a culturally responsive school environment. TCOLE 4064 does not begin to support a culturally responsive school climate because it refuses to recognize the way Whiteness is normalized and privileged.

SRO Presence. After examining the relationship of SRO funding with Texas school outcomes, i.e., graduation rates, college enrollment, school discipline, and arrest rates, Weisburst (2018) warned that "police presence may create an adversarial school

culture and...reduce student attachment to school and student educational aspirations" producing damaging and life-long effects. TCOLE 4064 nods to this possibility cautioning, "excessive building security (e.g., metal detectors, armed guards) can actually decrease students' sense of safety" (p. 106). This tame warning refuses to name police, instead referring to "armed guards," which almost certainly is not interpreted by trainees to include themselves. School Resource Officers pointedly distinguish themselves from security guards, school marshals and others who are not "carefully selected, specially trained...active, sworn law enforcement officers" (NASRO, 2020, para. 10). The TCOLE 4064 warning goes on to claim that "effective school safety starts with prevention [and] provides for students' mental health." In a very short dozen words, this assertion gives license to trainees to prioritize policing students, all students, in the name of safe schools, a license on which the training revolves. Teaching how to police students is the *raison d'ê·tre* for TCOLE 4064.

Conclusions

The racism, sexism, and heterosexism of TCOLE 4064 that serves to disempower students unfortunately only mirrors many other safety related school policies and practices. For example, student codes of conduct very often require that students dress in ways that reinforce a gender binary through different requirements targeted at girls and boys (see Curtis, 2016; Glickman, 2016), reinforce girls as objects by much more stringent policing of girls' appearance (see Morris & Perry, 2017; Lovell, 2016; Raby, 2010) and reinforce White standards by banning clothing and grooming habits popular, and sometimes standard outside of White culture, e.g. hair wraps, sagging pants, and exposed midriffs (Aghasaleh, 2018; Pavlakis & Roegman, 2018). Dress codes and other

discretionary student behavior policies lie at the foundation of the STPP. Students from marginalized groups are far more likely to be disciplined under these policies beginning a cycle that for an unfortunate portion leads to criminal justice involvement (Glickman, 2016; Potter et al., 2017; Ramirez et al., 2011).

The color-evasiveness and fallacious false balancing with regards to girls in TCOLE 4064 also does not stand alone among school safety policies and rhetoric. For example, in 2004 the U.S. Secret Service released a report for "the prevention of school attacks in the United States" that serves as foundational research for threat assessment practices and programs in educational settings. Given that fears of school shootings have justified the growth of the SRO phenomenon, it is worth considering how these features of school shooting rhetoric inform SRO related policies.

The Secret Service (Vossekuil et al., 2002) report studied every incident of "targeted school violence" between 1974 and 2000 concluding that "all of the incidents of targeted school violence examined...were committed by boys or young men (100 percent, n=41)" (pg. 15). Even so, the report warns, "while all the attackers in this study were boys, it would be misleading to read the findings of this study as suggesting that a girl could not or would not carry out a school-based attack" (Ibid, pg. 15). Langman (2015), a leading researcher and author on the topic of school shooters, conducted historical research similar to the Secret Service's but expanded the timeframe to 50 years concluding "due to the rarity of female perpetrators" the 50-year sample of incidents did not allow the variable of gender to be quantitatively analyzed. And yet, when writing about the "demographic profile," Langman (2015) speaks about the need to shift our conception of shooters away from "white males" (p. 9). As a result, leaders in the field of

school shooting research and threat assessment refer to research evidence that "there is no accurate or useful 'profile' of students who engage in targeted school violence" (Vossekull, et al., 2002). See also Langman et al., 2018, and Sigma Threat Management Associates, 2021. This well matches TCOLE 4064's approach to finding ways to implicate girls equally in dangerous and aggressive behaviors, even when not overtly violent or even in violation of school rules.

These foundational studies also pointedly exclude events that consisted "of intimate partner violence" (Langman, 2015, p. 2) and "violent interaction between individuals that just happened to occur at the school" (Secret Service, 2004, p. 7). These exclusions result from the assumption that intimate violent assaults result from "a different type of violence" (Langman, 2015, p. 2) and are part of the "more common" "kinds of problems in American schools" rather than the "high-profile" events that "have resulted in increased fear" (Vossekull, et al., 2002, p. 7). That TCOLE 4064 minimizes and ignores safety issues that might largely engender fear in female and LGBTQIA+ student populations, positions the training within the general stream of rhetoric around school violence.

Questioning and even dismissing the usefulness of profiling in the case of school shooters also speaks to color-evasiveness that serves to privilege Whiteness, the same color-evasiveness that permeates TCOLE 4064. For example, much school shooting research has tended to define the phenomenon in part by distinguishing it from events deemed gang related. When the nation's concern about adolescent violence was "gangs," in the 1990s, the concept was understood and often directly described as an issue of "ethnic youth" (White, 2018) and "minority youth" were often assumed "probably

delinquent" (Johnston and Center for the Family In Transition, 1992); 'gang-related' signals Black and Latino/a as surely as the term 'urban'. Challenges by critical scholars and twenty-first century rhetoric notwithstanding, this compartmentalized conceptualization still echoes in our public policy approach to school shootings. The Secret Service (Vossekull, et al., 2002), in their influential study, took care to explain that one of their criteria for defining "targeted school violence" was that "attackers purposefully chose his or her school as the location of the attack" rather than having chosen it "simply as a site of opportunity, such as incidents that were solely related to gang or drug trade activity" (p. 7). Langman (2015) explained the exclusion of school shootings that were "a result of rival gang violence" so that results would not be "confounded by multiple types of violence" (p. 2).

The "ways in which we conceptualize the problem have tremendous bearing" on policy, particularly in the arena of criminal justice research (White, 2018, p. 302). Gang-violence is overtly racialized, but school shooting policy and research often actively suppresses efforts to describe perpetrators as majority White even though the Secret Service study found that 75% of perpetrators were White and Langman's sample of perpetrators were 54.7% White with two White parents (they excluded from White any students who had a non-Caucasian parent). In the case of school shooters, profiling is viewed as problematic. Instead of looking for White racialized experiences and explanations, a call goes out to move "beyond the sound bites, stereotypes, and misconceptions" and look for "motivations and...pre-attack behaviors" (Langman et al., 2018, p. 3). Policy makers seem to be on the hunt for a separate peace with 'school shooters' while 'gang activity' is assessed as chronic and criminal. TCOLE 4064 does

much the same when it vaguely presumes that students from poor backgrounds or non-dominant cultures will bring deficits from their othered home lives and suggests problems are to be expected and addressed with behavior (discipline) policies like PBIS. In contrast, the training around bullying, a problem not predominantly tied to students of Color, details the mindsets and pain of school bullies alongside bystanders and victims, and even to some degree makes all those actors co-complicit in the bullying.

Not only does school shooter rhetoric shun male and White as identifiers, but it also treats school shootings as though they are wholly different from 'gang violence' and more concerning than sexual violence. When gang violence is the concern, there are targeted programs in low-income schools with majority Black and Brown student populations. When sexual assault is the concern, girls are targeted by prevention and recovery programs. When school shootings are the concern, intervention efforts, including SROS, target the nation's entire student population. This same approach permeates TCOLE 4064.

School shooting rhetoric tends to explore the shooters' mindset, to identify, address, and course correct students on the "pathway to violence" (Sigma, 2021), but very pointedly without "profiling" students by race or gender. This effort leads directly to dangerously implicating people with mental health problems. TCOLE 4064 does much the same when it ignores the potential impact of known inequities on students, but deeply investigates the school safety implications of a range of mental illness diagnoses, symptoms, and behaviors. Again, however inadvertently, this endangers a group already at risk for the STPP, students receiving special education and 504 services for conditions related to mental illness and capabilities.

TCOLE 4064 enshrines Whiteness as correct; marginalizes girls, LGBTQIA+ students, and students with disabilities; and reinforces racist, sexist, and homophobic beliefs. SROs may be a small portion of a school's workforce, but their uniformed presence makes a very powerful statement; "it is the symbol of the presence and the coercive force of an entire legal order" (Siniscalchi, 2019, p. 155). The training invites police to engage with students in ways that will utilize that great power to re(enforce) harmful practices.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

Calls for safe schools have in part become a mechanism for propelling deficit thinking about minoritized students and families into the twenty-first century. Just as Valencia (1997) describes, deficit thinking has conformed itself to exploit school safety policy as a means of transmitting the intrinsic value of Whiteness. Just as SROs visibly signal a school's concern about safety worries, they also visibly signal whose worries are worth the investment of resources. SROs trained with the TCOLE 4064 curriculum receive a mandate to center the interests of Whiteness, ableism and a heteronormative patriarchy in their work.

The long-term remedy lies in turning away from the dysconciously defined idea of school safety and explicitly re-envisioning what makes a school experience safe or unsafe. That effort must be ongoing as well as deeply and fully informed by the diversity of voices that are part of the school community. We need a new framework by which school leaders can evaluate school safety, a framework that decenters Whiteness and its attendant structures of dominance. Some questions and considerations through which a school safety framework can begin to be built are suggested by the findings of this

research. Below they are grouped into four themes.

1. How is safety defined? Is safety a feeling of security? Is it preservation of life and limb? Is it improving health outcomes? Are both mental health and physical health important? Does safety only concern immediate outcomes, or does it include long-term effects? Are incremental and nonlethal negative impacts of hazards part of the safety picture? Can it be measured?
2. Whose safety is paramount? One consequence of failing to define safety is that the implicit definition will almost certainly support dominant social structures. An ostensibly universal notion of safety dysconciously "acts to privilege the emotional safety of White students at the expense of Students of Color" (Utt, 2018, p. 78). The recalcitrance of Whiteness in school safety policy must be countered by centering the voices, experiences, and concerns of people of Color.
3. Initiatives must be evaluated for cultural responsiveness. Policies and practices must actively resist excluding some students and instead promote inclusivity. Safety initiatives, like all school programs, must be evaluated and assessed for potential ramifications across the school community, including unintended consequences. We must, for example ask how police presence might impact students of color, LGBTQIA students, and students with disabilities. Failing to explore how these new high-profile members of the campus community will impact all aspects of the school experience, through negligence or fear of the answer, means failing to prioritize equity.
4. Initiatives must be implemented with an eye toward how effectiveness will be

evaluated, including how unanticipated consequences will be recognized. Before implementing a safety initiative, school leaders must be clear about the project's goals and how progress toward the goals will be assessed. Sharing these goals and processes with the school community will help gather information about effectiveness and unanticipated consequences.

This more expansive framework for understanding school safety necessitates evaluating other school policies for their intersection with equitable safety practices. A critical whiteness studies lens and a critical policy analysis approach can be effective tools for creating safer attendance policies, bus/transportation patterns, dress codes, maintenance and custodial routines, and a myriad of other school policies.

Implications and Recommendations for Leadership Practice

School leaders must not let policing practice conscribe the concept of school safety and relegate responsibility for school safety to SROs. Creating safe school environments and experiences intersects with every aspect of education practice, and school safety does not sit outside of the confines of systemic problems school leaders must wrestle with every day. Safety concerns, safety outcomes, even the very idea of what is appropriately safe for different ages are all deeply informed by cultural values. Leaders must center non-dominant cultural values in safety practices to begin to unseat hegemonic whiteness, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and ableism.

A more holistic and culturally responsive understanding of school safety will undoubtedly point to new roles and tasks for SROs and/or point to new ways to invest safety directed funds and other resources. It could well be that a deep and equitable evaluation of a school's safety needs will reveal that investing in SROs does not produce

the safest campus. If SROs are to remain on campuses, their work duties should be identified and detailed by this new framework so that their presence does correlate with improved campus safety. Further, SRO training must be re-designed to match the work they are expected to perform, be ongoing, and take advantages of best practices in adult education.

Future Research

Evidence of discrimination in schools can be seen in student outcomes. Much attention is rightly paid to revealing and correcting discriminatory practices. We must give fuller attention to discrimination in school policy documents. School practices do not all flow from policy documents, however many do. Other practices are supported by the silence in policy documents and a mask of neutrality that hides a worldview steeped in hierarchies of dominance. Critical analysis that demonstrates how policy rhetoric enshrines Whiteness and marginalizes others will help deconstruct deficit notions and loosen their grip on school structures and practices.

Links between SRO practices and student outcomes must continue, which requires more careful data collection about SROs presence on campuses. Further qualitative research could investigate how SROs navigate the dissonant messaging within the TCOLE 4064 training and in Texas SRO policy at large. Results of these research efforts could help create better training materials and experiences for SROs.

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