Intervening in the School to Prison Pipeline for Students of Color with Dis/ability: Literature Review

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Abstract

The construction of the school to prison pipeline (STPP) metaphor to describe the social and disciplinary practices of American public school sites and their impact on students of color overwhelming participation in the juvenile detention system has been a widely studied topic, particularly its causes and impact. This literature review synthesizes available research present on the school to prison pipeline (STPP) with particular focus on three emerging theoretical intervention camps; restorative justice, DisCrit theory, and legal advocacy, all of which are concerned with dismantling the school to prison pipeline in public schools. The findings from the research are utilized to facilitate and encourage further discourse regarding potential future research and the imperative need not just for restorative interventions in curtailing the impact of the school to prison pipeline on students of color with disabilities, but also for further development of critical pedagogy that influences school site policies and culture as it relates to the daily educational lives of students of color participating in special education services.

*Keywords:* school to prison pipeline (STPP), restorative justice interventions, critical pedagogy, integrated learning model, critical race theory, disability studies

Intervening in the School to Prison Pipeline for Students of Color with Dis/ability: Literature

On June 18th, 2015 the United States Federal government released a report compiled by the National Council on Disability (NCD) titled Breaking The School-to-Prison Pipeline for Students with Disability. The detailed, nearly one hundred page report outlined the state of the nations alarmingly growing and biggest challenge to equitable education, the school to prison pipeline (STPP). The report’s focus targeted the disturbing trend of increased incarceration within the juvenile system of students with disabilities. The NCD defines the school-to-prison phenomena as the systems, policies, and practices that exile certain school children in the United States out of their classroom environment and directly into our nation’s criminal justice system. The NCD found that at the time of report publication 85% percent of minors in the juvenile criminal justice system and its respective incarceration facilities have a disability. (NCD Report, 2015 p. 7) Furthermore, the NCD revealed that of the 85% of youth incarcerated with a disability an overwhelming majority were students of color whom were labeled with what the NCD names “invisible disabilities” such as specific learning disabilities (SLD), emotional disturbance (ED), posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and attention deficit/hyperactive disorder (ADHD). (NCD Report, 2015 p. 7) The NCD unveiled in its report a clear link between public school discipline policies and the continued marginalization of youth of color with disabilities. Despite making up a minority representation of the public school student body, students with disabilities nationally are likely to gain out-of-school suspension at a rate (13%) double that of their non-disabled classmates (6%). (NCD Report, 2015 p. 18) Even more alarming is the NCD’s finding that students of color, particularly African American children are receiving disciplinary suspension and expulsion at a rate of one to every four (25%). (NCD report, 2015 p. 18) The report concludes by deeming the state of educational discipline impacting students of color with disabilities a national crisis imploring the recommendation that all efforts to break the STPP for students with disabilities must not only address disability discrimination but must also address the continued racial bias both unconscious and conscious that continues to plague our nation’s educational system. The NCD’s findings clearly state that the intersectionality of race and disability and its combined discrimination contribute to the STPP crisis. (NCD report, 2015 p. 9)

This literature review aims to address the STPP crisis and its impact on students of color with disabilities by reviewing relevant research on both the STPP and intervention methods of addressing the crisis, from which three major theoretical intervention camps have emerged. The three major camps are 1) restorative justice intervention 2) DisCrit theory and reform and 3) legal advocacy and intervention. This lit review then utilizes available and relevant research on both the STPP and methods of intervention to facilitate a critical discourse directed at moving research forward particularly in the area of school culture and critical pedagogy that can and should drive the culture and climate of our nation’s school sites that serve our most vulnerable students.

**Criteria for Inclusion**

The school to prison pipeline (STPP) research began to be widely addressed in the early 2000’s, with the influx of zero tolerance discipline policies in schools. Researchers began studying the impact of zero tolerance discipline policies and the students these policies directly impacted in an effort to understand school culture and climate and the disproportionate drop out rate amongst high school students leading to the achievement gap. Through this research, a crucial trend was established between the zero tolerance discipline policies and disproportionate drop out rates and participation in the juvenile detention system by certain student subgroups.

For this literature review, inclusion criteria specifically focused on research related to the STPP and its impact on the specific subgroup of students categorized by students of color with disabilities. Research was filtered to include peer review articles that specifically addressed students with disabilities and students of color within the STPP. The meta database entitled Discover hosted by EBSCO was utilized to obtain relevant research articles supported by the educational institution, Chapman University.

Once literature was appropriately filtered to meet the criteria of peer review, and specificity for STPP research involving students of color and students with disabilities articles were further categorized into three major finding areas, appropriately linking the research to three emerging camps of intervention in the STPP for students of color with disabilities. A total of sixteen articles were selected and met the inclusion criteria for this literature review. The following table illustrates each article and its categories for inclusion as well as the intervention framework it represents.

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| **Table 1.** Literature Review Articles.­ | | | |
| **Article** | **Type of Article** | **Type of Research** | **Theoretical Camp /**  **Evidence Suggestion** |
| Cramer, E. D., Gonzalez, L., & Pellegrini-Lafont, C. (2014). From classmates to inmates: An integrated approach to break the school-to-prison pipeline. Equity & Excellence in Education, 47(4), 461-475. | Theoretical/argumentative | Review of data linking the school to prison pipeline to high school drop out rate | Restorative Justice / Intervention |
| Fader, J. J., Lockwood, B., Schall, V. L., & Stokes, B. (2015). A Promising Approach to Narrowing the School-to-Prison Pipeline: The WISE Arrest Diversion Program. Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice, 13(2), 123-142. | Program evaluation WISE diversion program | Mixed method evaluation | Restorative Justice / Intervention |
| Mallett, C. A. (2014). The “learning disabilities to juvenile detention” pipeline: A case study. Children & Schools, 36(3), 147-154. | Empirical | Case study | Restorative Justice / Intervention |
| Mallett, C. A. (2016). The school-to-prison pipeline: From school punishment to rehabilitative inclusion. Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth, 60(4), 296-304. | Review of research on the school to prison pipeline | Research review | Restorative Justice / Intervention |
| Osher, D., Coggshall, J., Colombi, G., Woodruff, D., Francois, S., & Osher, T. (2012). Building school and teacher capacity to eliminate the school-to-prison pipeline. Teacher Education and Special Education, 35(4), 284-295. | Theory/Argumentative | Research Review  Examines evidence correlating to the four factors that perpetuate the STPP  (a) racial disparities, (b) poor CFL, (c) family–school disconnection, and (d) the failure to build the social and emotional capacity of youth. | Restorative Justice / Intervention |
| Skiba, R. J., Arredondo, M. I., & Williams, N. T. (2014). More than a metaphor: The contribution of exclusionary discipline to a school-to-prison pipeline. Equity & Excellence in Education, 47(4), 546-564. | Review of policy | Review of research on exclusionary discipline policies | Restorative Justice / Intervention |
| **Table 1** (continued)*.* | | | |
| **Article** | **Type of Article** | **Type of Research** | **Theoretical Camp /**  **Evidence Suggestion** |
| Annamma, S., Morrison, D., & Jackson, D. (2014). Disproportionality fills in the gaps: Connections between achievement, discipline and special education in the school-to-prison pipeline. Berkeley Review of Education, 5(1). | Empirical –  State level case study on the intersectionality of race, special education, school discipline, and state law. | Review of research or theory | DisCrit Advocacy / Policy Influence |
| Annamma, S. A. (2014). Disabling juvenile justice: Engaging the stories of incarcerated young women of color with disabilities. Remedial and Special Education, 35(5), 313-324. | Empirical | Qualitative methods | DisCrit Philosophy / Implementation |
| Archer, D. N. (2009). Introduction: Challenging the school-to-prison pipeline. NYL Sch. L. Rev., 54, 867. | Theoretical/argumentative | Review of research/theory | Legal Advocacy |
| Haight, W., Kayama, M., & Gibson, P. A. (2016). Out-of-school suspensions of Black youths: Culture, ability, disability, gender, and perspective. Social work, 61(3), 235-243. | Empirical | Qualitative | Legal Advocacy |
| Hill, L. A. (2017). Disrupting the Trajectory: Representing Disabled African American Boys in a System Designed to Send Them to Prison. Fordham Urb. LJ, 45, 201. | Empirical – Case Study | Review of research | Legal Advocacy |
| National Council on Disability, Breaking the School to Prison Pipeline. June 18, 2015.  United States Federal Government. | Empirical | Quantitative Research | Legal Advocacy |

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| **Table 1** (continued)*.* | | | |
| **Article** | **Type of Article** | **Type of Research** | **Theoretical Camp /**  **Evidence Suggestion** |
| Poucher, S. M. (2015). The road to prison is paved with bad evaluations: the case for functional behavioral assessments and behavior intervention plans. Am. UL Rev., 65, 471. | Theoretical/argumentative | Analysis of the effects of Functional Behavior Assessments, and Behavior Intervention Plans in promoting the STPP.  Quantitative Methods.  Review of literature regarding FBAs and BIPs across the spectrum | Legal Advocacy |
| Rivkin, D. H. (2009). Decriminalizing students with disabilities. NYL Sch. L. Rev., 54, 909. | Empirical – legal case review | Review of legal case | Legal Advocacy |
| Tulman, J. B., & Weck, D. M. (2009). Shutting off the school-to-prison pipeline for status offenders with education-related disabilities. NYL Sch. L. Rev., 54, 875. | Theoretical/argumentative | Review of special education law | Legal Advocacy |
| Togut, T. D. (2011). The Gestalt of the School-to-Prison Pipeline: The Duality of Overrepresentation of Minorities in Special Education and Racial Disparity in School Discipline eon Minorities. Am. UJ Gender Soc. Pol'y & L., 20, 163. | Theoretical/argumentative | Review of research | Restorative Justice /  Legal Advocacy |
| Bell, C. (2016). Special Needs Under Siege: From Classrooms to Incarceration. Sociology Compass, 10(8), 698-705. | Theoretical/argumentative | Review of research or theory | Legal Advocacy mixed with Restorative Justice / Interventions |

Throughout the research directly analyzing the STPP and its impact on students of color and students with disabilities, three major intervention frameworks emerged. These three intervention frameworks comprise the majority of research regarding students of color with disabilities and the STPP. Amongst these three intervention frameworks, there are theoretical/argumentative articles and empirical articles each contributing to the conversation in the room and each appropriately aligned to support their specific intervention framework. Through out the research the three theoretical intervention framework camps that were identified are restorative justice, legal advocacy, and DisCrit philosophy/implementation within school curriculum. Some articles included, drew upon a combination of theoretical interventions such as advocating for the inclusion of legal advocacy with restorative justice to assist in stifling the STPP for students of color with disabilities.

**Restorative Justice**

Since early research on the STPP pipeline identified zero tolerance discipline policies as a crucial contributor to disproportionate rates of participation in the juvenile detention system by students of color with disabilities, much of the continuing research has been focused on addressing what exact causes pre-empt students of color with disabilities from entering the STPP due to discipline referrals and what school sites can do to shift discipline culture in order to prevent the continuation of the STPP for youth of color with disabilities. One major avenue of intervention advocacy that has emerged through the research is restorative justice intervention. Scholars within this intervention framework advocate that exclusionary discipline directly correlates to the STPP by creating direct connections between school behavior and the juvenile detention system. (Fader, Lockwood, Schall, & Stokes, 2015). This trend is visible in the presence of school expulsions and use of campus safety officers to search and detain students, often leading to school based arrests of students (Fader et al., 2015). Furthermore, scholars within this intervention branch of research have identified predisposing factors that lead to the vulnerability of students of color with disabilities to zero tolerance discipline policies. Three major factors identified through research are racial disparities amongst students of color with disabilities and white students with disabilities, poor conditions for learning present in schools and programs where there is a majority representation of students of color with disabilities, and failure to build the emotional capacity of students of color with disabilities in schools (Osher, Coggshall, Woodruff, Francois, Osher, 2012) In the face of identifying these causes and implications scholars in support of restorative justice advocate for the use of intervention programs such as the arrest diversion program known as WISE on school campuses to restoratively assist school sites in moving away from zero tolerance discipline practices (Fader et al., 2015). At the school site level, programs like the WISE diversion program, allow for administrators to use more discretion in addressing non-serious behavior issues, than the zero tolerance framework allows. Instead of moving to suspension or removal from school for behavioral issues, diversion programs implement a restorative framework that allows administrators to consider the need of the student as well as the needs of school community in rectifying behavior and promote the use of counseling and mentoring referrals instead of punitive consequences for behavioral issues. The empirical case study of the WISE diversion program implemented in high school in Utica, New York, found that the application of this program at urban school sites serving students of color had the result of reducing school based arrests for this subgroup of students by 35% (Fader et al., 2015). Another positive finding of this case study illustrated the restorative potential for such programs to incorporate various school stakeholders in the process of intervention. One notable finding of the study was the shift in behavioral attitudes of adults on campus particularly security response officers, who shifted their discipline response framework from a punitive zero tolerance approach of school removal to a restorative framework of counseling and restorative campus based actions to redirect misbehavior for high need students of color (Fader et al., 2015). This case study posses positive results for the restorative justice intervention framework when utilized within the context of arrest diversion programs not only for students of color but also for students of color with disabilities who disproportionately make up discipline referrals in high schools (NCD report, 2015).

STPP literature that addresses restorative justice does not only focus on diversion to arrest programs but also puts forward a strong argument for shifting the entirety of school culture away from zero tolerance discipline policy and towards a restorative justice school culture that promotes learning and community building in the absence of punitive discipline. One prominent argument for this is made in research analyzing the lack of capacity in schools working closely with students of color with disabilities and their families in building community and effective conditions for learning (Osher et al., 2012). This literature particularly advocates for the shift in school culture through implementation of restorative justice professional development for teachers that encourages teachers to shift conditions of learning towards community building, culturally relevant pedagogy, and restorative practices such as community circles within the classroom space (Osher et al., 2012). To accompany the argument of shifting classroom cultures away from punitive rule based discipline and towards restorative justice practices, is the STPP literature advocating not only for in classroom restorative justice practices but also school wide restorative justice reform with implementation of school wide positive behavior intervention and support (SWPBIS). SWPBIS aims to shift entire institutional culture away from zero tolerance discipline approaches and towards a preventative and intervention based model for supporting discipline school wide (Mallett, 2016). SWPBIS requires that administrators, teachers, and counselors work hand in hand to identify students in need of positive behavior support, and matriculate them along a tiered system from tier I students (those in need of least support) to tier III students (those in need of most support) (Mallett, 2016). The school site is then equip with varying levels of positive behavior systems to support each student along the tiered intervention continuum (Mallett, 2016). Examples of institutional reform would include implementing school wide positive behavior incentives such as tickets given to students for exhibiting positive behavior expectations that the school site has set and then engaging in a raffle each week for students to win prizes. This type of intervention would be considered a Tier I intervention and applied to all students. Another example of a tiered intervention within the SWPBIS system would be the check-in/check-out system where students would be matched with a mentor, often an administrator or counselor, with whom they would meet with to set daily goals in an effort to support their positive behavior throughout classes. This type of intervention would be applied to Tier II and Tier III students in need of extra support. The essential element of SWPBIS is that these practices are not just enlisted in isolation in various classrooms or counseling offices but rather are utilized to reshape the entirety of a school’s code of conduct and discipline system to a restorative mindset build in support and engagement with the positive outcomes of desired student behavior (Mallett, 2016). While SWPBIS has been utilized in over 16,000 school sites nation wide, and has shown to lower out-of-school-suspensions by 60% for students of color and students with disabilities (Mallett, 2016) the long term effects of such Tiered intervention systems have not been studied, particularly in their effectiveness in maintaining positive outcomes for students of color with disabilities who are identified within the Tiered intervention system (Mallett, 2016).

A last literature area regarding the STPP and restorative justice focuses particularly on developing restorative justice practices that are not solely behavior based but rather curriculum based. This area of literature is particularly interesting as it rejects the ‘wait-to-fail’ model often applied to students of color with disabilities in special education programs, and advocates for curriculum development that is restorative in not only supporting positive behavior but also facilitating academic success for students of color with disabilities (Cramer, Gonzalez, Pellegrini-Lafont, 2014). This literature advocates deeply for the use of the integrated learning model for students of color with disabilities, basing its rational on the researched success of culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural curriculum with general education students of color (Cramer et al., 2014). The Integrated Learning Model (ILM) draws on sociocultural theorists as well as educational research to reject traditional models of schooling based in white middle class norms, and purposefully shifts learning towards an empowering, action-based means of acquiring knowledge that takes into account a student’s cultural, dis/ability, and socio-economic identity (Cramer et al., 2014). The ILM model is especially applicable to students of color with disabilities as it works to foster an inclusive classroom curriculum that not only accounts for a student’s culture and dis/ability status but also fosters a learning environment that directly empowers these unique identities within students to engage them critically in the learning process (Cramer et al., 2014). The ILM, while a component of restorative culture at a school site, is unique in that it offers an instructional-based approach to engagement that restoratively accounts for a student’s learning identity beyond their behavioral needs.

**DisCrit Theory/Implementation**

DisCrit is the combined study of Disability Studies and Critical Race Theory. DisCrit as a theoretical branch of study seeks to address the structural power of ableism and racism by addressing the historical, social, political, and economic interests that purposefully limit the access to educational equity for students of color with disabilities (Connor, Ferri, Annamma, 2016). Parallel to the Integrated Learning Model (ILM) presented in Restorative Justice approaches, DisCrit as a camp argues for the implementation of instructionally equitable approaches at school sites as well as systemic reframing of educational institutions as a whole to dismantle the STPP for students of color with disabilities.

DisCrit understands and addresses the impact of various social identities in contributing to student participation in the STPP. Along with race, DisCrit argues that the very presence of a disability label normalizes a student on the track to being a participant of the juvenile justice system. An empirical case study exploring the impact of the juvenile detention system on students of color with disabilities, particularly female identified students of color with disabilities found that 33% to 40% of students within the juvenile detention system were labeled to have a disability, and almost 50% of detained youth were students with an emotional disability label (Annamma, 2014). Within this empirical case study ten female students of color with a disability label, who were incarcerated in a juvenile detention facility participated. Their ages ranged between fourteen and twenty and their disability labels ranged from specific learning disabled (SLD) to emotional disturbance (ED) (Annamma, 2014). The study sought to analyze and describe the juvenile incarceration and educational process of girls of color with a disability by examining (1) what procedures and systemic processes lead to incarceration for students with historically marginalized identities (2) how is the educational process for female students of color with a disability label particularly impacted by these procedures and systemic processes (Annamma, 2014).

The empirical study utilized qualitative measures of obtaining data such as observations of juvenile detention facility classrooms and in depth interviews with participants. Two major themes emerged from this study in relation to the STPP for female students of color with a disability label, (1) experiences with disability within the STPP were defining and (2) socializing practices in juvenile facilities impacted the way in which girls of color saw themselves, with particular emphasis on special education status and the impact such labeling had on the participants (Annamma, 2014). Findings from the study showed that participants overwhelmingly identified as feeling dumb, with the mention of a lack of intelligence as perceived by their special education label being prevalent 76 times (Annamma, 2014). Such sentiments as feeling dumb or incapable played a significant role in the participants’ disengagement in their traditional schooling (Annamma, 2014). One particular point of interest uncovered by this case study was the socialization processes of the pipeline and its impact on students of color with disabilities. The study uncovered that within the STPP emotional and intellectual needs were ignored in favor of ensuring compliance (Annamma, 2014). Emphasis on control and regulation was transmitted throughout the educational environment of the participants in the pipeline research, and impacted their ability to not only form multidimensional representations of themselves but to also to understand their disability label in ways that were not entirely from a deficit perspective (Annamma, 2014). Continued deficit mindsets foster marginalization away from general education learning environments for students of color with disabilities, and push students towards alternative institutions and educational environments such as those present in the STPP.

DisCrit advocates for the countering of overwhelming participation in the STPP by students of color with disabilities through systemic changes to the inherit oppressive systems present in our society (Annamma, Morrison, & Jackson, 2014). DisCrit argues that if school environments are to be effective at stopping the STPP trajectory for students of color with disabilities they must not solely focus on race or zero tolerance discipline policies but also must focus on the intersection of identities such as gender and disability and the traditional historical practices that have marginalized these students away from inclusive education beyond zero tolerance discipline policies (Annamma, Morrison, & Jackson, 2014).

In one particular case study of the educational laws present in the state of Colorado, DisCrit scholars identify inclusive education as a “property right” attributed to the dominant societal group and purposefully exclusive to them, at the expense of marginalized groups such as students of color with disabilities (Annamma, Morrison, & Jackson, 2014). This theory is particularly powerful in explaining the STPP trajectory for students of color with disabilities as it points directly to legal “race-neutral” policies implemented at the state level that purposefully ignore the racial and dis/ability inequities faced by certain populations in their practice of implementing educational norms that continue to serve segratory measures within schools that benefit dominant groups; white non disabled students (Annamma, Morrison, & Jackson, 2014). An example of this can be seen in the continued presence of re-segregation tactics in schools utilized through special education services that legally leave least restrictive environment (LRE) placement for students of color with disabilities to the decision faculties of individual education plan (IEP) teams often comprised of educators, administrators, and school psychologists who do not share the same ethnic identity, dis/ability identity, or cultural background as the student receiving the IEP. Legal consideration for race, culture, or implicit bias to dis/ability is non existent in state based educational legal code as evident in the case study of the state of Colorado’s educational code, and thus promotes “race-neutrality” which inherently results in race bias and ultimately dis/ability bias not only within IEP LRE placement but also overwhelmingly in discipline practices of schools and school administrators (Annamma, Morrison, & Jackson, 2014). The legal educational code study of the state of Colorado sheds light into the implications of race and dis/ability in continued marginalization of students of color with disabilities in discipline and educational placement, and ultimate links such identity labels directly to the STPP participation by these very students (Annamma, Morrison, & Jackson, 2014).

**Legal Advocacy**

DisCrit is not alone in its critique of the legal system and its contribution to the disproportionate participation of student of color in the STPP. The third camp of theoretical discourse regarding the STPP and its possible intervention is the legal advocacy camp. Akin to DisCrit, legal advocates take issue with the utilization of the legal system, unlike DisCrit scholars, however, the majority of legal advocacy scholars do not see the system as inherently broken, but rather as not being utilized appropriately to stifle the STPP.

One particular case study tracks three African American brothers with disabilities as they encounter punitive consequences for their behavior at school and ultimately face expulsion from their respective educational institutions. This legal case review identifies poverty, race, gender, and disability as three major contributing factors to STPP participation for students of color with a disability label (Hill, 2017). Analysis of the plight of three participants through expulsion proceedings at their school sites and entanglement in the juvenile detention system by this case study exposes the concept of the “justice gap” for families and students of color with disabilities (Hill, 2017). The article argues that if the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA) was implemented effectively it could of assisted the participants of this case study both in their special education placement as well as with their behavioral and academic challenges at school that ultimately led to their entanglement in the STPP (Hill, 2017). It is therefor defined that the “justice gap” is the difference between the needs of low-income students of color with disabilities and the actual resources available to families and students in meeting these needs through the legal system to obtain effective educational services (Hill, 2017). This case study puts forward a strong argument for the integration of legal and social services to adequately utilize the law to meet the needs of students of color with disabilities, which ultimately thwarts their participation in the STPP (Hill, 2017). This argument is then proven in the case study’s outcome for all three participants who were able to effectively navigate around the STPP by using legal representation and special education advocates that also functioned as social workers (Hill, 2017).

Like DisCrit scholars, legal advocacy scholars in this camp argue that the use of criminalizing language in discipline procedures conducted by schools work to oppress students of color with disabilities (Haight, Kayama, Gibson, 2016). Unlike DisCrit however, the scholars within this camp focus heavily on the criminalization of students of color with disabilities without criticizing such practices as purposefully generated by a racist and ableist system designed to benefit some at the expense of others. While some scholars in this camp do recognize the problematic intersection of race and culture in criminalization (Haigh, Kayama, Gibson, 2016) they do not focus on the inherit oppressive nature of ableistic driven society defined by medical models of biological normalcy in the same manner that DisCrit scholars do, as yet another critical nexus point for pushing students into the STPP.

Legal advocacy scholars within this camp do not only argue that educational law is not being utilized appropriately to intervene in the STPP for students of color with disabilities, but also tend to adopt a behaviorist argument, absent of criticism for the very existence of behaviorists models in education as contributing to the STPP. Rather, legal advocacy scholars argue that behaviorist models and interventions only contribute to the STPP when utilized incorrectly (Poucher, 2015). These scholars do not take issue with the very process of labeling and identifying students, but with poorly conducted evaluations. They argue that appropriately aligning a student’s IEP to meet the standards of Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) under IDEA can assist in preventing the STPP (Poucher, 2015). Furthermore, it is argued by these scholars that the use of behavior intervention plans (BIP) should be utilized frequently and reevaluated regularly particularly in the face of disciplinary issues faced by students with disabilities in order to ensure adequate support and a circumvention of the STPP (Poucher, 2015). The combination of effective BIP implementation as well as legal advocacy in the presence of disciplinary status offenses at school sites by students of color with disabilities is seen as a powerful combination in preventing participation in the STPP by scholars in this camp (Tulman, Weck, 2009).

One particular point of interest in this theoretical camp is the intersection of restorative justice with legal advocacy as a means to address the STPP. Legal advocacy scholars with this perspective narrate a complex picture of overrepresentation of students of color with disabilities in the STPP, based on the nexus not just of race and poverty, but also on the exclusion of participation in general education environments by students of color with disabilities (Togut, 2011). These scholars synthesize practices of legal advocacy, along with behaviorist tactics such as implementation of effective BIP to support students, while also advocating for the use of restorative justice to streamline inclusion environments and delineate inequities present in highly segregated special education programs that hold a large over representation of students of color with disabilities (Togut, 2011).

**Discussion**

The literature surrounding the STPP offers promising intervention approaches in the three major theoretical intervention camps of restorative justice, DisCrit, and legal advocacy. All three camps offer solutions for either utilizing or changing the current schooling system to better serve students of color with disabilities and dismantle the STPP.

Amongst the research that is particularly progressive is the research that advocates for measures beyond behavior management to combat the STPP. DisCrit in its approach to analyzing the intersections between race and dis/ability as well as its understanding of the historical context of oppression in our nation, rooted in racism and segregation, offers a promising approach forward for research that develops STPP interventions beyond behaviorist models of intervention. While scholars have advocated for the use of instructional modalities such as the integrated learning model (ILM) to expand social justice pedagogy and combat oppressive norms of schooling for students of color with disabilities, few long term research studies have been done on the implementation of ILM and social justice pedagogy particularly in the context of special education instruction and programs. While critical pedagogy and social justice has been a budding field of inquiry and prominent area of study in general education, the absence of students of color with disabilities in this field is very much evident.

The theoretical intervention camps of Restorative justice as well as DisCrit offer great promise for expanding the research of social justice pedagogy in the field of special education, especially when the two camps are able to intersect. Intersecting DisCrit and Restorative justice offers opportunity for restorative justice scholars and practitioners to move beyond behavioral focused interventions in the STPP for students of color with disabilities and towards long term solutions that have the promise of changing the way in which school sites and ultimately our society operates in its relationship with race and dis/ability. Facilitating inclusion programs that do not rely first on segregation as a means to inclusion as well as the implementation of critical diversity curriculum such as pedagogy that fosters an exploration of disability as difference to be valued rather than the traditional medical model of inadequacy, offers opportunity to shift cultural reference of disability and thus oppressive norms. Furthermore, implementing social justice driven curriculum in specific application to special education engages students in self-advocacy as agents of social change, thus making it possible for them to understand and explore avenues of legal advocacy and change within the legal system and society as a whole.

Moving forward, the road for continued study and research as it pertains to STPP and its impact on students of color with disabilities should include empirical research on the implementation of social justice pedagogy within special education settings that claims disability as a valued identity and moves away from the medical constructs of inadequacy as it relates to identity construction. The impact of such pedagogy should be studied for the effect it has on promoting an equitable school culture and mitigating the effects of the STPP on our students of color with disabilities.

**Conclusion**

The STPP is a devastating reality for many students of color with disabilities matriculating through our nation’s juvenile justice system. Intervention scholars in the areas of restorative justice, DisCrit, and legal advocacy not only address the causes of the STPP matriculation by our most vulnerable students but also provide opportunities for school implemented change to combat this alarming reality. Whether through discipline conduct shifts from zero tolerance to restorative community building consequences, or reframing of socialization norms related to dis/ability, or utilizing special education legal advocates trained in social work, each intervention camp puts forward strong arguments for new approaches and changes to the way our students of color with disabilities interact within the schooling system, the legal system, and the special education system. It is imperative that research be expanded in regards to the STPP to analyze a synthesis of suggested interventions particularly from DisCrit and Restorative justice, to magnify the way in which we approach combating the STPP for students of color with disabilities beyond behaviorist approaches or the utilization of a legal system that has already shown to fail them, to systemic changes in the way schools and society as a whole relate to race and dis/ability. It is only through this expanded research that the STPP can be shut off and eradicated in our educational system.

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