Arresting Youth:

A Case Study of Abolition and Policing in K-12 Schools in the United States

by

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ABSTRACT

This project aims to situate ending policing on campuses in K-12 education alongside broader social movements. How does the school reform movement connect to broader policing reform efforts in the US? Specifically, who are the key organizations or voices leading the movement in schools, what opportunities or barriers have shaped their efforts over time, and how does this connect to the work of other social movements in the US? Through interviews with frontline activists and school officials this thesis builds an analysis from critical race theory and the intellectual tradition of police abolition to examine the movement to end police presence at schools. The very presence of police on campuses impacts how and for whom schools are situated as a space for building communities of trust.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

UPHOLDING THE RACIAL REGIME

Introduction

In Orlando, Florida, the Orange County School District is home to Lucious and Emma Nixon Academy (LENA). LENA is a public charter school that serves students kindergarten to fifth grade. This school receives Title I funding and over 90% of the students enrolled identify as Black (National Center for Education Statistics). Florida is unique. In 2019, the state passed a mandate ordering police presence on all public-school campuses (Flores & Weisfeldt, 2019). This police presence is fulfilled through the role of school resource officers[1] (SRO/SROs). The Orange County School District has their own police force in addition the to Orlando Police Department (Sawchuk, 2019). Although LENA is a school in this district, the SRO on their campus was contracted through the Orlando Police Department and not the school district's police department (Sawchuck, 2019).

Kaia was a first-grade student at Lucious and Emma Nixon Academy. She had sleep apnea which at times caused her to have unregulated behaviors during the school day. Her family was working with health professionals to find a solution to Kaia's sleep apnea and administrators at Emma Nixon Academy were aware of this. However, on a fall day in 2019, Kaia was throwing a tantrum because she was unable to wear her sunglasses, which resulted in her being escorted to the front office by the Assistant Principal. During the escort, Kaia was hitting the Assistant Principal who then "restrained

[1] School Resource Officers (SRO) are police officers assigned to a specific school campus. They are employees of the local police or sheriff departments or they can belong to the police department for a specific school district (not all districts have their own department).

her by holding her forearms" (Flores and Weisfeldt, 2020). Kaia's outburst resulted in her arrest by the school resource officer (Moshtaghian, Vera, Willingham, 2019). Kaia, a six-year-old Black student was taken from her learning space, unwantedly touched, and then arrested for battery.

Body camera footage was released by Kaia's legal team in 2020, highlighting the incident in more detail. The footage shows Kaia sitting calmly in an office with a school staff member. The school resource officer (SRO) and another police officer enter the office and one of them shows Kaia zip tie restraints (Flores and Weisfeldt, 2020). Kaia asks what they were for (Flores and Weisfeldt, 2020). The officer replied, "that's for you" (Flores and Weisfeldt, 2020). Kaia begins to cry as the officer restrained her. Throughout the video Kaia is sobbing and begging the officer, "don't put handcuffs on… please… help me" (Flores and Weisfeldt, 2020). Once the officers and Kaia exit the campus, Kaia continues to plead, "I don't want to go in the police car…give me a second chance…" (Flores and Weisfeldt, 2020). The video of the arrest is hard to watch and trying to grasp why a 6-year-old is being arrested is even harder.

As the story unfolds, Kaia's case becomes even more alarming. At the end of the body camera video, the officer is seen talking with school staff and explaining that arresting Kaia sets a new record for him. Prior to Kaia, the youngest person the SRO had arrested was 7 years old (Flores and Weisfeldt, 2020). There is no public information available about the details of the 7-year-old's arrest; however, it was reported that the arrest happened just a week before Kaia's arrest (Chiu, 2019). Before the arresting officer worked as an SRO, a case was brought against him for abusing his own 7-year-old child. The case was processed through an internal police investigation that resulted in the

officer keeping his job, and years later, being allowed to work at the elementary school as an SRO responsible for "policing" primarily Black, K-5 students.

In addition to Florida's state law requiring police presence, memorandums of understanding (MOUs) formalize the partnerships between specific local police departments and school districts. These MOUs put students at risk across the country by placing them into contact with the carceral system at a very young age (Wun, 2016). It also arranges power relations where youth are highly vulnerable to officer discretion. For example, under Florida law, if an officer is going to arrest a child under the age of 12, they must receive prior approval by a Watch Commander. In Kaia's case, the officers did not receive approval for the arrest (Flores and Weisfeldt, 2020). In addition to this one incident of an SRO violating state law, the school issued a statement explaining, "never did anyone within our organization [school] request or direct the school resource officer to arrest this student" (Flores and Weisfeldt, 2020).

The grandmother recently reported that Kaia is still having nightmares about being arrested – especially since an SRO remains in power at her school (Flores and Weisfeldt, 2020). On Kaia's first attempt at returning to school she "had a meltdown inside the car as they drove up to campus because she saw a uniformed officer on the grounds" (Flores and Weisfeldt, 2020). Kaia was sure that the officer she saw as she pulled up to school was going to arrest her again (Flores and Weisfeldt, 2020). At the recommendation of a therapist, Kaia moved to a school that did not have a school resource officer or other law enforcement on campus (Flores and Weisfeldt, 2020). This took several months because "a 2019 Florida law mandate[s] that uniformed police be present at every public school in the state" resulting in Kaia having to attend a private

school (Flores and Weisfeldt, 2020). Unable to afford private school, Kaia's family had to wait until she had received a scholarship (Flores and Weisfeldt, 2020).

After this tragic event and charges against Kaia were dropped, her family choose to release the body camera footage to prompt conversation and a reassessment of school policy. This was successful. The Florida State House passed the "Kaia Rolle Act," which was embedded in a larger school safety bill (Gainey, 2020). The Kaia Rolle Act specifically "requires law enforcement in schools to have a procedure in place for police and sheriff's departments when they are interacting with kids 10 years of age or younger regarding criminal matters" (Gainey, 2020, para. 7). This was recognized as a "great first step" but lawmakers and citizens acknowledge that "…a long line of steps… must [be] take[n] to get to the final destination" (Gainey, 2020, para. 7).

Kaia's story raises several critical issues that are core to this thesis. Frist, if a police officer is involved in a school related discipline matter, the school and the police do not have to agree on a course of action (School Resource Officer, Zoom Interview, 2021). The school and the police are independent of each other and have the discretion to decide what course of action to take with a student. The MOU is a critical factor in the police department (a carceral institution) being able to maintain power. This agreement is what allows blind discretion to continue, school districts and police departments legally operate as separate entities. Without an MOU that explicitly states every role and decision-making authority of each party, no legal obligation exists for the department and the district to agree on courses of action when arresting youth.

Another issue is the fitness of a police officer for the job of an SRO. There is no federal mandate for police departments to screen SROs in the hiring process, nor are

there clear standards required for what constitutes necessary discipline. This allows police departments to choose the officers they place in schools and do not have to meet a specific set of standards. The implementation of state and federal standards could mitigate some of the open discretion. However, implementing standard screening policies and trainings does not remove carceral power it just simply uniforms it.

Next, policies in police departments and schools are often vague, allowing for a great deal of discretion when SROs reprimand a student. Having an MOU linking a school to a police department creates an intentional space where policing practices take over alternative support structures that would center the welfare of the students. Policing in the school setting is often equated to particular understandings of safety and creating safe spaces, in the wake of school shootings. At stake, however, is whether our schools remain safe and equitable spaces for students to grow, learn, and connect to the community. Zero tolerance discipline[2] and carceral practices at schools' ought to raise alarms about these very real concerns – as Kaia's experience helps demonstrate.

Of course, Kaia is not alone. The problem is systemic in America and spans all 50 states. In 2010, a 12-year-old student was arrested by a SRO at her middle school in Forest Hills, New York. Alexa wrote two phrases on her desk with washable marker, "I love my friends Abby and Faith" and "Lex was here 2/1/10" (Chen, 2010; Monhan, 2010). Alexa was handcuffed, perp-walked out of school in front of all her peers, and charged with vandalism (Fowler, 2013). Alexa was not only arrested but subjected to excessive force. A Daily News Article states, the student was "physically dragged by a

[2]Zero Tolerance Policies are a set of rules and policies that schools use to implement student discipline. These include, but are not limited to, suspensions, expulsion, and police intervention.

teacher and an assistant principal to the dean's office" where a school resource officer "searched her by placing their hands inside the rear and front pockets of her jeans" (Monhan, 2010, para. 7). The student's mother "pleaded with the officers to accompany her daughter to the police precinct… [but] was told to go home and wait for a call" (Monhan, 2010, para. 10). Alexa was brought to the precinct and handcuffed to a pole for over two hours (Monhan, 2010).

Alexa and her Mother brought a claim against the city's department of education and the New York Police Department seeking $1 million in damages based on the excessive use of force and a violation of Alexa's rights (Mohan, 2010). In regard to school-based arrests and excessive force, Alexa and her Mother were not the first to file a claim (Monhan, 2010). Two other families also filed claims in prior years. One family filed because their 13-year-old was arrested for writing "okay" on his desk and the second family filed because their five-year-old was "handcuffed for throwing a fit in kindergarten" (Mohan, 2010).

Steeped in a history of racism and white supremacy, it is important to consider how the American education system exists in relation to a carceral system that disproportionally targets communities of color. Centering race, this thesis challenges prominent ideas about safety and "safe spaces" in the education setting. In short, I critique the normalized view of police on campuses as making students safer and as policies intended to serve students by providing a counter-narrative rooted in abolition. Throughout the United States and globally, schools have successfully implemented practices rooted in abolition ideology that work to deconstruct the idea of harsh discipline

(Nance, 2016). A new way of thinking about safety in schools is emerging through grassroots efforts and collective organizing.

Overview of the Thesis

This thesis project situates ending police on campuses in K-12 education alongside the broader social movements on policing in the United States and is guided by multiple research questions. How does removing SROs from school campuses speak to the importance and role of social movements more broadly? Specifically, who are the key organizations or voices leading the movement in schools, what opportunities or barriers have shaped their efforts over time, and how does this connect to the work of other social movements in the US? To address these questions, this thesis draws from interviews with frontline activists and school officials to build an analysis from critical race theory and the intellectual tradition of police abolition to examine the movement to end police presence at schools. A core argument I make is that the very presence of police on campuses impacts how and for whom schools offer a safe space for building communities of trust – which is essential to achieving equity in education.

As Kaia and Alexa's stories help showcase, these concerns have been present throughout the 21st Century, especially in states like Florida that have enacted laws requiring school police presence (Flores & Weisfeldt, 2019). Movements to counter these laws and forms of policing have developed in response to the crisis faced by youths of color. Despite this, however, there is very little scholarship on movements to remove SROs from schools. As this thesis will reveal, these campaigns are intersectional, complex, and constantly changing. The events of 2020 that ignited new energy in the

Black Lives Matters movement also brought many of these tensions and complexities regarding SROs to the forefront like never before.

In 2020, the world watched as George Floyd was murdered in the streets of Minneapolis, MN, and as Breonna Taylor was shot by police in her apartment while she slept Louisville, KY. These violent acts by law enforcement stirred rightful outrage and sparked a shift in schools across the country to consider ending, and temporarily suspending their MOUs with local police departments. What has occurred over the past year are major steps towards defunding or abolishing school police, under a broader vision for reforming our ideas, policies and practices around policing in America (Editorial Board, 2021). Yet, there remains unclear future trajectories regarding policing at schools, especially in places like Phoenix, AZ where the termination of the MOU with the local police department will be reconsidered once students return to campus from virtual learning, due to COVD-19.

Key leaders of the movement against policing in the United Sates – like BLM– are generating change by pushing for a range of policies and organizing in communities across the country (Clingham-David, 202). Outside of schools, Black Lives Matter has been successful in removing confederate monuments, influencing states to cut police budgets, and driving international solidarity for anti-police brutality (Clingham-David, 202). However, what remains a barrier in the school setting is the MOUs that form partnership between schools and the police. Protests during the summer of 2020 were important because they resulted in a take back of power – some districts ended their MOUs with police departments. This thesis is exploratory in nature, rather than testing a particular theory. It seeks to understand various actors and stakeholders in policing on

campus that have shaped this movement towards abolition. It applies critical race theory and intersectionality as the primary modes of analysis to unpack these complexities. Given these recent developments, this thesis is not only timely, but it also offers a critical, in-depth analysis of the movement(s) to end policing at schools.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into three sections: Literature Review, Research Design & Methodology, and Thesis Overview. In the first section, I discuss three expansive bodies of literature and lay the analytical framework for the remainder of the thesis. The second section takes an elaborative look at my research questions, the case selection, and the multi-method approach used to address the core research questions. Finally, the third section introduces the following chapters and provides a roadmap for the remainder of the thesis.

Literature Review

The United States operates as a carceral state through a complex, yet strategic arrangement of smaller institutions (policing and non-policing), policies and actors that have become entrenched over time – resulting in institutions that unequally target and penalize racial minorities. Through its connections to K-12 education in particular, the injustices of our carceral state are even more troubling and pronounced because of how presumptions of criminality become operative against innocent youth which impacts their futures. The school-to-prison pipeline[3] has grown out of what scholars have called the New Jim Crow (Sokolower, 2011). Rather than paving inroads for educational equality in the spirit of the US Supreme Court's decisions in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954)

[3] The School-to-Prison Pipeline is a term used to describe the funneling of students from the education system into the criminal justice system through the use of zero tolerance discipline policies.

and *Plyer v. Doe* (1982) based in the 14th Amendment's equal protection doctrine, our schools have anchored themselves to the strategic backlash against the modern Civil Rights victories, particularly to mass incarceration (Colbern & Ramakrishnan, 2020).

This thesis bridges three broad categories of scholarship: 1) Racial Regimes and Carceral Power, 2) Social Movements and Intersectionality, and 3) Carceral Practices in K-12 Education. Each of these bodies of scholarship are vast and important to understand individually, but when situated within this conversation adjacent to each other, they help bring clarity to tensions in power between racialized carceral systems and reimagining policing at school. The first section of this literature review discusses the structure of the racial regime, how power is traditionally implemented, what reimagining power structures look like, and how race is a defining factor in who ends up with power. The second section, arguably the most important section of the literature review, speaks to social movements and racial justice, highlighting how movements are engaging political systems to generate change. This scholarship draws attention to reform efforts and intersectionality within movements – where they work, where they fall short, and how reimagining institutional structures from an intersectional lens can lead to gains in power. Finally, the third body of scholarship on carceral practices within K-12 education discusses how tools, like SROs, are used to uphold power structures that systematically disadvantage all students, but more specifically students of color. This section works to bring these concepts into conversation with each other and center the importance of social movements when talking about policing in schools. This conversation is new and vital to the trajectory of defunding police in schools. This thesis is situated amongst these

diverse bodies of literature and works to make an argument for an end to carceral practices within K-12 education.

Part I: Racial Regimes and the Carceral Power

This section includes several distinctive bodies of literature that address key factors which uphold a larger racial regime. The institutions operating to uphold the racial regime are tightly intertwined and should be conceptualized as one. A racial regime itself is a "constructed social systems in which race is proposed as a justification for the relations of power" (Camp, 2009, p. 702; Robinson, 2007). The tools, such as branding through rhetoric and policy, the use of surveillance, and classification through policy, are all important to understand as together they are what uphold the racial regime. If separated, it would do an injustice to the foundational understanding and grounding of this thesis. The analysis of this project is derived from the following conceptualization of the racial regime and the foundational principals of Critical Race Theory (CRT) in order to capture policy, practice, and specific rhetoric used to uphold carceral power within education. Figure 1 illustrates the racial regime hierarchy that grounds the project analysis in Chapters 2 and 3.

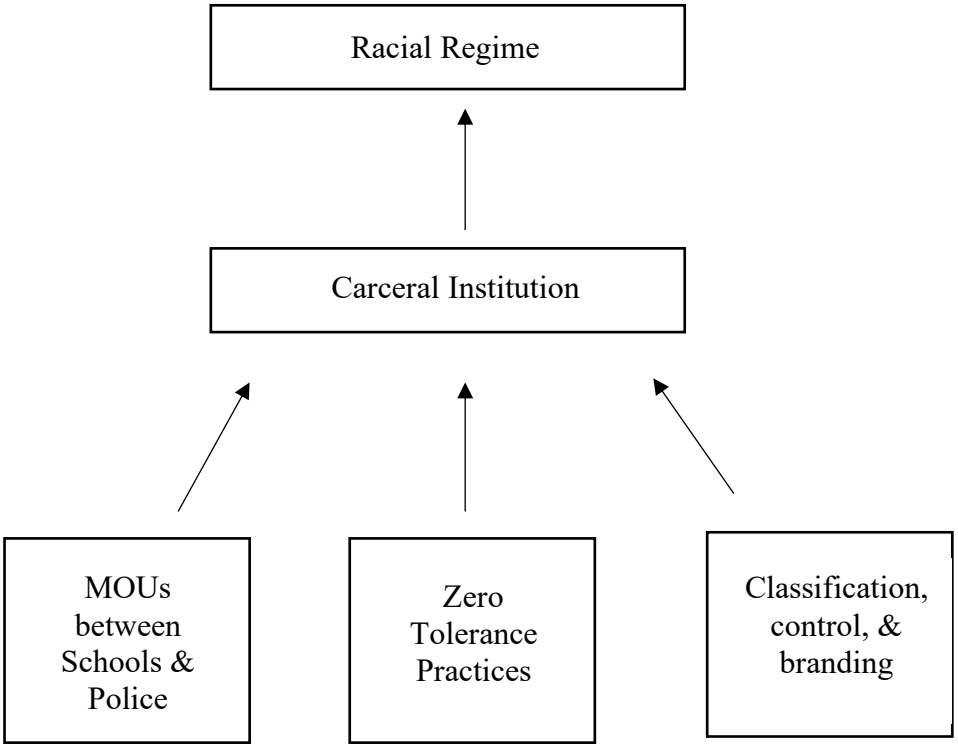


Figure 1: Conceptualization of Carceral Institution within the Racial Regime

The bottom tier that makes up the racial regime structure are the three key factors in maintaining carceral power within education spaces. MOUs between schools and the police department make it possible for the carceral institution to involve itself in education, while zero tolerance practices are used by police and the schools themselves to implement institutional rule. The zero tolerance policies are upheld through the use of rhetoric that works to classify, control and brand our young people. As this section will show, the tools of control, classification, and branding are a founding principal of the carceral system and this language within school policies allow power to be upheld. The subsections of the first tier work in conjunction to uphold the carceral institution. When the carceral institution is able to maintain power, it provides the foundation to uphold the racial regime. In order for the power to be dismantled, we must work to generate ideas about power that are rooted in an abolition framework. This is essential in reimagining

policing and discipline on K-12 campuses. This work provides us with the analytical tools and historical background to better conceptualize the racial regime and carceral system in order to move forward successfully by identifying where power exists, why it exists, and how it is racialized.

The United States construction of race has always been intentional and intended to elevate the lives of White folks over those of color. The control and oversight of Black lives in the United States is tightly connected to carceral practices. Carceral practices are complex methods used to control individuals who are not deemed to fit into the "American" standard. Michel Foucault's elaboration on the theory of panoptisim, derived from Jeremy Bentham's construction of the panopticon, is sought to "induce in [an] inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (Foucault, 1977, p. 201). This implementation of control is enforced through a system that is intended to give off the perception that someone in power is always watching. Constant surveillance and its ability to elicit societal conformity eliminates the need for individual empowerment. This "intervention of power, which can be implemented in hospitals, workshops, schools, [and] prisons" creates a "generalized model of functioning; a way of defining power relations in terms of the everyday life of men" that creates a uniformed society (Foucault, 1977, p. 205).

The establishment of carceral tactics peeked in the United States during the 1970's with the call for the War on Drugs and has yet to be rescinded from practice. This focus has led the United States to have "the highest rate of incarceration in the world, dwarfing the rates of nearly every developed country" (Alexander, 2010, p. 6). The use of carceral techniques is present in every part of our society influencing who has power and

their ability to gain control. Carceral techniques that are implemented specifically to incarcerate, generally target low-income communities of color and reinforce a cycle of criminalization that is nearly impossible to break (Alexander, 2010). Michel Foucault emphasizes the idea that "those punished and imprisoned as delinquent are left permanently 'marked' or 'branded'" (Martin, 2013, p. 496) leading to a lifetime of stigma. It is not a coincidence that the country's structure and values are rooted in the ideology that power is everything. This is clearly exemplified by the fact that "the first full fledge effort to create a panopticon prison was in the United States" (Davis, 2003, p. 46).

The concept of being "marked" or "branded" is a critical point to understand because it is a method used to push control and power beyond an individual level. When control and power can be implemented at a structural or societal level it is much easier to justify why a full population is "undeserving." Systems in the United States have worked to suppress and perpetuate a clear divide between White and Black people. W.E.B Du Bois discusses this struggle to gain power in a society that does everything to ensure Black folks never do:

> "We are diseased and dying, cried the dark host; we cannot write, our voting is vain; what need of education, since we must always cook and serve? And the Nation echoed and enforced this self-criticism, saying: Be content to be servants, and nothing more; what need of higher culture for half-men?" (Du Bois, 1903, p. 10).

The system perpetuates this type of oppression, through the policies and practices within every aspect of our society. David Tyack provides an example of this in education quoting a Texas Superintendent in 1928:

> "Most of our Mexicans are the lower class. They transplant onions, harvest them, etc. The less they know about everything else, the better contented they are… If a man has very much sense or education either, he is not going to stick to this kind of work. So, you see it is up to the white population to keep the Mexican on his knees in the onion patch" (Tyack, 2003, pp. 84).

Bettina L. Love continues to highlight this same oppression within the modern-day education system in the United States. She acknowledges the paradox between students of color being invisible when policies are created but yet visible when discipline or other policies that do not take into consideration varying cultures need to be implemented (Love, 2019). The use of oppression over those of color within education is longstanding and must finally be addressed!

Rhetoric is commonly used to mold perspectives and construct the way society should justify the injustice that happens because of policy. The media is used to portray a generalized understanding that people of color – specifically Black folks – be viewed as criminal (Heitzeg, 2009). This type of rhetoric is still used today but was amplified during the War of Drugs to target communities of color. Within these advertisements of "good" versus "bad", the media "generate[ed] hysteria inextricably linked to 'teen super predators'…unmistakably characterized as [an issue] of race" (Heitzeg, 2009, p. 3). These racially motivated punishment tactics are used as a key tool to target "…the (racialized) juvenile [and construct them] as predatory" (Wang, 2018, p.196) leading

"them directly and/or indirectly into the juvenile and adult criminal justice system" (Heitzeg, 2009). The younger our children are when the system labels them as delinquent effects their ability to gain power (Rankin Mahoney, 1974).

The use of rhetoric as a tool to brand youth has infiltrated the United States public school system through zero tolerance school discipline policies. The concept of branding is highlighted in Kansas City, Missouri's school discipline policy where teachers and school administrators are able "…to classify students as young as nine years old as 'pre-delinquent,' putting them at risk of police contact for even the smallest transgression" (Smith, 2019). Youth who face carceral practices at school are at a higher likelihood to have faced them within their neighborhoods as well (Khan-Cullors & Bandele, 2017). This makes it increasingly harder for youth to thrive. As one youth in a juvenile detention facility explained to researcher, Monique W. Morris, "once she was labeled as 'juvenile delinquent' the quality and rigor of her education greatly declined" (Morris, 2016, p. 40).

Studies have consistently shown that "juvenile justice processing [does] not effectively deter delinquency" it simply increases "delinquency and future involvement in the justice system" (Nance, 2016, p. 320). The branding of youth as delinquent through zero tolerance policies creates a higher risk of poverty which allows for the perpetuation of a vicious cycle imposed through a societal lens that enforces a barrier between those who are worthy verses those who are unworthy (Heitzeg, 2009). This cycle is almost unbreakable because society refuses to acknowledge the problem. Angela Davis, an abolitionist scholar and activist, discusses this further by drawing on branding and the ability to disregard structural racism in America:

> "… 'criminals' and 'evildoers' are, in the collective imagination, fantasized as people of color. The prison therefore functions ideologically as an abstract site into which undesirables are deposited, relieving us of the responsibility of thinking about the real issues afflicting those communities from which prisoners are drawn in such disproportionate numbers. This is the ideological work that the prison preforms – it relieves us of the responsibility of seriously engaging with the problems of our society, especially those produced by racism and, increasingly, global capitalism" (Davis, 2003, p.16).

Thus, making it easy to deposit our students into prisons or arrest them for misbehavior instead of acknowledging the larger societal problems at play. There are no "bad" kids, there is a bad society – a broken society – that continues to ignore the atrocities taking place in our schools. We must not continue to ignore or turn a blind eye to the racisms and the history that created these flawed systems.

Part II: Social Movements, Intersectionality, and an Abolitionist Framework

Racialized carceral practices do not exist without opposition. Social movements emerge when institutions enact power in an unjust way. It is critical to think about carceral institutions and practices with social movements in mind. Figure 2 highlights the framework for the racial regime from the above section. However, in this figure social movements and resistance have been added to indicated their influence on the bottom tier. Social movements and resistance challenge the means of power used by the carceral system within schools to uphold the racial regime.

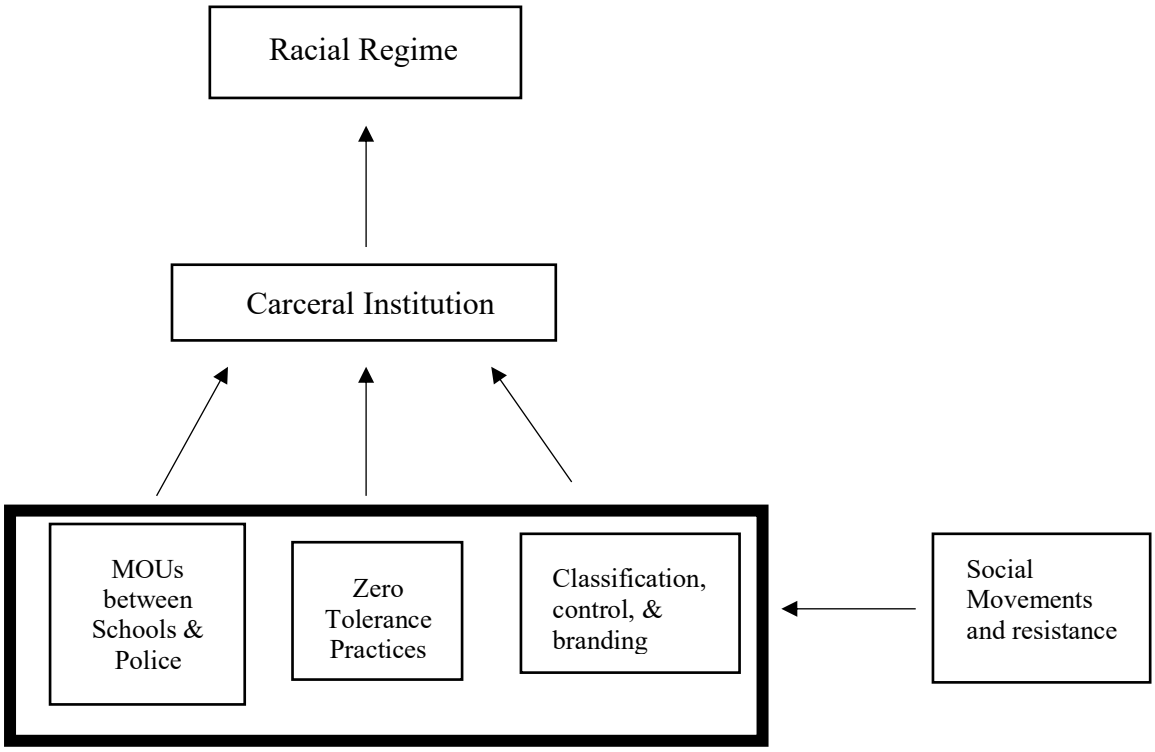


Figure 2: Conceptualization of Social Movements and Resistance

Movements are complex and intersectional. This section works to discuss how movements are engaging political systems to generate change through an abolitionist framework. In addition to building a strong foundation for social movements to engage with political institutions, it is vital to engage in literature about intersectionality because of its deep connection to the complexities of removing SROs from education spaces.

Social Movements are defined as "a group of persons organized in a sustained, self-conscious challenge to an existing system and its values or power relationships" and for decades those power relationships have disproportionately been stripped from people of color (Clayton, 2019 pp. 451; Walton, Smith, & Wallace, 2017). Historical social movements have worked to challenge power structures that uphold the racial regime. The civil rights movement specifically had success challenging the political narrative with, "…exceptional leadership, coordinated protests, and structed organization" (Clayton,

2019, p. 425). The civil rights movement, the black power movement, and the immigrant rights movement have paved the way for future movements to succeed in challenging power dynamics within particular institutions.

Specifically, education has always had a place in these movements. We saw education prevail in the fight for school desegregation (*Brown v. Board of Education (1954),* the free breakfast program for Black children, with an underlying goal of fueling a revolution supporting Black survival in the community (the Black power movement), and the decision that the state cannot deny students free, public education because of their citizenship status *(Plyer v Doe 1982)* (Blakemore, 2018). Historically, schools have been spaces for protest, both for education equity and societal injustice. We see this in the civil rights movement and during the anti-war protests in the early 70s. However, this thesis works to address unique challenges that arise for different populations of students when we allow the carceral system to infiltrate education spaces.

Intersectionality is an analytical framework developed by Kimberle Crenshaw that explains how factors like race, class, and gender affect one's exposure to discriminatory practices (Crenshaw, 2017). The framework is rooted in Critical Race Theory and Black Feminism providing a strong tool to conceptualize and develop a critical analysis of the carceral system and its upholding of the racial regime (Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays, Tomlinson, 2013, p. 303). When analyzing social movements through an intersectional lens it becomes clear that

> "social movements entail collective action that challenges societal powers; are centered on common goals, beliefs, values, and/or identity; and operate on interpersonal, structural, cultural, and institutional levels. Movements

> have some degree of organization, are often defined by the population involved in the movement (e.g., the Women's Movement) or a specific end goal (e.g., the Peace Movement), and can lead to formal and informal social change" (Watkins Lui, 2018, p. 306) (Amenta et al. 2010; Armstrong and Bernstein 2008; Andrews 2001; Bell 2014; Diani and McAdam 2003; Giugni 1998; Liu, Geron, and Lai 2008; Mann 2011; Morris 1984; Nelson 201, Robnett 1997; Snow 2004; Tarrow 2011; Tilly 1978; Wanzer-Serrano 2015).

What intersectionality allows us to recognize is that there is collective action around identity and personal values. This speaks to the connection individuals have because of oppressive power systems and widens the need for sustainable and transformative change.

Intersectionality is positive and should always be taken into account. However, it does not come without challenges. When social movements take on an intersectional lens "there is potentially always another set of concerns to which the theory can be directed, other places to which the theory might be moved, and other structures of power it can be deployed to examine" (Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays, Tomlinson, 2012, p. 304). Intersectionality provides the framework for a deeper understanding of problems; however, it also makes it challenging to identify a specific problem to unite a movement.

There are various frameworks that have been developed and applied to typologize movement structures. The counter movement opposing removing SROs from schools has a huge impact on making the voices of a movement invisible. Counter movements "seek to maintain the currently dominant field frame and thus maintain the status quo by

opposing or countering the efforts of movements seeking change" (Brulle, 2014, p. 683; Lo 1982). In Chapter 3, I present an original framework that classifies the core, peripheral, and counter organizations to better understand the movement dynamics. This structure provides insight on how the counter movement works to expand and maintain the carceral system. The counter movement is fearful of the succuss the movement is making and as is tradition represent "…economic interests directly challenged by the emergent social movement" (Brulle, 2014, p. 683; Gale, 1986). As the fight to defund the police grows, the counter movement is fighting to maintain the carceral system by countering efforts by the movement seeking change (Brulle, 2014). The opposition takes form in several ways and actively upholds the racial regime by defending carceral practices and fighting for their expansion.

There have always been necessary grounds to organize. The concept of power has always been racialized and "oftentimes a particular set of conditions will arise, a particular conjecture, and it reveals the opportunity to accomplish something" (Davis, p. 19, 2016). Angela Davis argues that "the prison is a key component of the state's coercive apparatus, the overriding function of which is to ensure social control" (Davis, pp. 66, 1971). Through her expansive body of work, she expands on the ideas of W.E.B. Du Bois, pushing forward the idea that Black people are criminalized for "crimes" they have not committed leading to the "railroading of countless innocent Blacks and other national minorities into the country's coercive institutions" (Davis, 1971, p. 70). These coercive institutions are built on a carceral ideology, utilizing methods such as policing as a "…form of social organization," much of the time aligning with white supremacist ideals (McDowel and Fernandez, 2018, p. 380; Martinot and Sexton, 2003).

Dating back to before the abolition of slavery, Black people formed "armed teams to protect themselves from white terrorists who were, in turn, protected by law enforcement agencies, if not actually identical with them" (Davis, 1971, p. 42). Fighting against societal structures brings "the political prisoner's words or deeds [into] political protest against the established order [leading] into acute conflict with the state" (Davis, 1997, p. 55-56). The political prisoner, as Davis refers, is "charged with the nominal crimes of trespassing, disturbance of the peace, etc., but in actuality they are under state scrutiny, not for their specific 'crime,' but for being an enemy of the state" (Davis, 1971 pp. 58).

Vague laws and policies, like "disturbing the peace" have been used to criminalize youth in K-12 education (Rivera-Calderon, 2019). These policies go beyond punishing "students for committing infractions but [work] to undermine, if not neutralize, the possibility for Black political education" (Wun, 2016, p. 176). America's history is rooted in "the use of state violence against Black people, people of color [and] has its origins in an era long before the civil rights movement – in colonization and slavery" (Perhamus & Joldersma, p. 1319, 2019; Davis, 2016). The education system is not exempt and in fact embodies these racialized practices. American education is

> "…overrun with dark suffering… Native American boarding schools, school segregation, English-only instruction, *Brown v. Board of Education,* No Child Left Behind, school choice, charter schools, character education, Race to the Top… all have been components of an educational system build on the suffering of students of color" (Love, p.27, 2019).

This causes trauma for students of color and drastically affects their ability to access equitable education. The reoccurring racial injustice within education sets the framework for Love's concept of the Educational Survival Complex, where "…students are left learning to merely survive, learning how schools mimic the world they live in, thus making schools a training site for a life of exhaustion" instead of a space that is fostering growth and community (Love, pp. 27, 2019). The carceral system can no longer be what guides our education system. Education must not be a support that upholds the racial regime. It is unacceptable that students must engage with carceral practices in a space that is supposed to foster a sense of safety and community.

As movements for civil rights has evolved, they have become more intersectional – especially in campaigns associated with several movements – and the ideas around success have shifted. In the modern-day movement for Black lives, there is a distinct difference between reformist efforts and efforts of abolition:

> "…reformist efforts aim to redress extreme abuse or dysfunction in the criminal process without further destabilizing existing legal and social systems — often by trading reduced severity for certain "non- violent offenders" in exchange for increased punitiveness toward others — abolitionist measures recognize justice as attainable only through a more thorough transformation of our political, social, and economic lives. To realize justice in abolitionist terms thus entails a holistic engagement with the structural conditions that give rise to suffering, as well as the interpersonal dynamics involved in violence" (McLeod, pp. 1616, 2019).

The movement for Black lives is fighting for an end to police brutality against people of color and as Angela Davis would say, "the most effective abolitionist strategies will contest these relationships and propose alternatives…" (Davis, 2003). The work of "abolition is not a negative process of tearing down, but rather one collectively re-imagining of institutions, ideas, and strategies, and creating new institutions…" that address intersectional need (McDowell & Fernandez, 2018, pp. 377; Davis 2005; Du Bois 1992). In terms of K-12 education, it is not the school itself that needs to be reimagined. Education is important and the abolition of it would be detrimental. However, reimagining functional practices within education from an abolitionist perspective provides a great deal of opportunity to build strong communities and support networks for our students.

In 2020, "defund the police" has been an amplified phrase and school districts across the country have done just that. The though behind this is perhaps that it is time to consider something new that promotes learning and self-growth in a space that is supposed to uphold those values for all students. As Cullors discusses,

> "… abolitionist framework and strategy [are] necessary to challenge the conditions faced by Black communities in this country, and that only through an abolitionist struggle will we repair our communities and undermine the systems of oppression we know have facilitated devastation, from the transatlantic slave trade through the prison industrial complex" (Cullors, 2019, p.1684).

The systems of oppression in the United States are so deeply rooted that reform cannot be the answer. Black students matter and they deserve a space that will foster their strengths,

support them through life's challenges, and ultimately "demand and fight for an education system where all students are thriving, not simply surviving" (Love, 2019, p.11). In order to truly foster an education system that is rooted in abolitionist ideology, we must refuse to participate in carceral practices and school discipline that leads our students directly into the school-to-prison pipeline (Love, 2019). As a society we must acknowledge, "one size [does] not fit all in education, and equality [does] not mean sameness. Democracy in education should provide equality and diversity of opportunity, the chance to rise as far as one's abilities permit[s]" without a student's ability being defined by government policy, the media, or institutional racism (Tyack, 2003, pp. 114). The carceral institution is intended to hold up the racial regime, therefore movements that operate from an intersectional lens and work to deconstruct the tools upholding the power, are necessary.

Part III: Carceral Practices in K-12 Education

The ideas discussed above come together in this section to allow for new points of discussion around policing in K-12 education. It is important to note that this body of work is lacking discussion around social movements and this thesis works be bridge that gap. The discussion of abolition and carceral practices are typically in relation to mass incarceration and the larger carceral state, however, I argue that the school themselves are independent entities that embody complex political dynamics (Alexander, 2010, Davis, 2003). These dynamics – like MOUs – allow SROs to operate on campuses, which ultimately is the key tool used to uphold the power of the racial regime.

The concept of the school-to-prison pipeline provides an important contextual foundation for understanding the funneling of students into the larger carceral system

(Love, 2019; Nance, 2016; Khan-Cullors & Bandele, 2017). The origin of school resource officers can be traced back to the early 1900's (Anderson, 2015). However, the role of school resources officers today, and the justification for them to serve on school campuses, gained traction in the early 90's after the Columbine school shooting in Colorado (Anderson, 2015). School shootings or instances of major violence on school campuses are widely circulated by the media around the world "negatively impacting perceptions of school safety, forging a strong association between the two terms 'school' and 'violence'" (James et al., year, p. 211). These negative images depicting a space that is supposed to be safe for our children furthers the "tough on crime" mentality that has fueled mass incarceration in the United States. It is not a coincidence that a formalized institution, like the education system, has adopted harsh discipline polices that are enforced by those in a place of power in the community.

Studies that support school resource officers working on campuses indicate officers are "specifically trained to deal with a wide variety of both instrumental and expressive criminal acts" as well as trauma informed practices and de-escalation approaches (James et al., year, p. 211). However, if the training will be mandated or not is left up to the discretion of local police departments. Very few states actually mandated school resource officer training or have explicit polices depicting what their role on campus looks like (Education Commission, 50-State Comparison). As of 2019, Arizona specifically does not have any statutes that clearly define the role or training required for a police officer to serve on a school campus at the state level. With the lack of training and regulation of law enforcement's role on school campuses it creates a further divided system, valuing power and control over learning and growth. If partnerships between

school districts and police departments are going to exist, the MOUs must reflect policies and practices that value students because when left vague, these documents work as a tool to uphold the carceral institution.

In addition to the training requirements and MOU agreements, school discipline policies also take root in many forms and vary by state. When evaluating school discipline laws across the United States they are classified under many different names such as: school disturbance laws, disorderly conduct laws, and disturbing the peace or disturbing assembly (Rivera-Calderon, 2019). These laws provide the space for blind discretion and allow for school officials and SROs to identify specific students as "problem" students. This speaks directly to a key facet of the racial regime model – Classification, Control, and Branding. The policies themselves and the MOUs tend to be vague, allowing for open discretion by SROs.

The role SROs play in student discipline contributes to the heighted concern that our students will be subjected to carceral practices. I argue that SROs do not in fact make schools safter because the idea of safety, when tied to the concept of policing, is a social construct. Police training is carceral and their practices are a reflection of a carceral institution. In a recent study, it was found that "students at a school with a SRO were five times more likely to be arrested for disorderly conduct" (Bleakley & Bleakley, 2018, p. 251). School discipline policies and the influence SROs have over how and when they are implemented drastically impacts students of color, therefore, limiting students' abilities to access power (Nance, 2016). These practices work to enforce the ideology of the carceral institution that work to uphold the larger racial regime. Similar to policing in the community, "school policing [enforces] social control over Black and Latino youth

who [can] no longer be kept out of neighborhoods and schools through explicitly discriminatory laws" (ACLU, 2017, p. 2). The carceral system is a tool to uphold the racial regime therefore the practices are innately racist and operate to criminalize students who do not pass as white.

Saidiya Hartman's concept of "afterlife of slavery" addresses the way Black people are still positioned within society as "captive" (Wun, 2016, p.173; Hartman, 1997). Wun uses this concept as a theoretical framework to discuss how "school discipline operates as an instrument in the 'afterlife of slavery' that positions the Black girl as perpetually and involuntarily open to surveillance and control" (Wun, 2016, p. 179). The use of these policies is rooted in zero-tolerance ideology that makes it easier to criminalize students for behaviors that should not be treated as criminal. We must work to reimagine what our education spaces look like without the use of carceral practices. Students are being classified by behaviors that are typically rooted in external factors and without taking into consideration the root of the problem, the student will continue to struggle (Nance, 2016).

The idea that SROs are supposed to "develop a rapport with the students so that students trust them enough to either inform them about other classmates planning violent incidences or turn to SROs for help when they themselves are in trouble" feeds the idea of "good" student versus "bad" student (Bleakley & Bleakley, 2018, p. 250; Mulqueen, 199). Through building relationships with students, SROs are expected to bridge the tension between police and community, "by acting as informal counselors and educators" (Higgins, Overstreet, Coffey, Fisher, 2019; Canady, James & Nease, 2012). I do not argue that individual officers are not in fact good people, I argue that the carceral

institution they are a part of is so detrimental that it is impossible for their presence to foster a sense of community for every student.

Research Design and Methodology

This project is a multi-method crucial case study. I use open-ended interviews and a news content analysis to situate ending police on campuses in K-12 education alongside broader social movements around policing in the United States. The key questions being addressed are:

1. How does removing SROs from school campuses speak to the importance and role of social movements?
2. Who are the key organizations or voices leading the movement in schools?
3. How does this connect to the work of other social movements in the US?

The analysis builds from critical race theory and the intellectual tradition of police abolition to examine the movement to end police presence at schools. A core argument I make is that the very presence of police on campuses impacts how and for whom schools are situated as a space for building communities of trust.

This thesis is a qualitative case study utilizing open-ended interviews paired with a news content analysis of articles from the Arizona Republic dating from 1999-2020. A single case study is best described as "an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a large class of (similar) units" (Gerring, 2004, p. 342). In other words, the decision to focus this thesis on the state of Arizona allows for a parallel to be made with the national issues surrounding carceral practices in K-12 education. Although

Arizona was initially chosen due to geographical convince, it is a valid choice because of the shifts in policing that have happened over the course of 2020 and the unknown trajectory of the movement. The current situation in Arizona provides a strong case for the importance of a social movement that is sustainable. The interviews provide a present-day perspective, whereas the news articles provide the perspective overtime and how the framing of the issue has been presented over the last 20+ years.

This project emerged in the context of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor murders and seeks to use the timing of these events to think through the connection between K-12 policing and broader social movement efforts occurring before and after the Summer of 2020. The foundation of this project is a case study in the State of Arizona. Arizona is an important state that works to inform the conversation around policing in education because of their history of policing within the state, but more importantly their recent temporary removal of SROs at the campus level in Phoenix. The removal of these officers is directly related to the protests following the murders and the global pandemic.

I think it is vital for me to make the distinction between the individual and the system, before further explaining my methodology. This project is *not* intended to call out individual school resource officers, in fact several officers I spoke to do phenomenal work on their campuses and make an effort to go above and beyond to connect with the students they work with on a daily basis. However, the system they were trained in still promotes the ideas of criminality and incarceration over restorative practices that promote healing and growth. The intention of this project is rather to identify a flawed system that values carceral punishment and how a movement aimed at deconstructing carceral values – not people – has melded itself into our education system.

The analysis of this project is rooted in Critical Race Theory (CRT) which aims to situate racial oppression at the forefront of the conversation (Delgado and Stefancic, 2013). Qualitative methodology is predominantly associated with CRT and remains true in this project (DeCuir-Gunby, Chapman, Schutz, 2018). Race needs to be talked about. The acts of blatant – and discrete – racism need to be addressed by everyone. This is not just a fight for People of Color. White people must take action to deconstruct systems that value whiteness over everything. The framework of CRT examines and fights against these longstanding power structures that have created a dichotomy of "good" (white) vs "bad" (dark) (DeCuir-Gunby, Chapman, Schutz, 2018). CRT is a common form of analysis when discussing racialized practices in education and works to "root out the systemic inequalities and inequities levied upon marginalized groups and harbored and reproduced by schooling structures" (DeCuir-Gunby, Chapman, Schutz, Parker, 2019, p.25).

As a researcher my role is to weave "together reliable sources to establish a collective narrative that acts as an evidentiary pilar for the argument being made or the questions being answered" (DeCuir-Gunby, Chapman, Schutz, Parker, 2019 p. 29-30). However, I think it is vital to disclose my positionality as a White researcher discussing race and prompting these conversations. In the context of this project, I have never experienced fear of the police, especially not during my K-12 education. I do not have the ability to tell a personal narrative and frankly, I am not a part of the demographic who experiences the highest rates of carceral discipline in schools. I am White, straight, and do not have any learning disabilities. However, it is not acceptable to remain silent just because I am not affected. Due to project constraints, I was not able to collaborate with

students or families that have been affected by policing on school campuses, however, I hope that this research sets a framework that works to further explore racialized carceral discipline on school campuses and its connection to social movements.

To better understand the connection between the movement, the system as a whole, and education, I interviewed school resource officers, teachers, a school board member, former student, and organizers from across the State of Arizona. The interviewees were identified through snowball sampling, which "is a distinct method of convenience sampling which…is commonly used to locate, access, and involve people from specific populations…" (Cohen & Arieli, 2011). The members of my thesis committee provided initial contacts that generated the snowball sampling. In addition to this, I located contact information of individuals who were qualified to interview and cold emailed them as a second form of recruitment. The first group of professionals I emailed were teachers and guidance counselors from several Arizona schools. Table 1 is a breakdown of who I contacted, how many individuals, and who responded. This is important because 2020 and early 2021 was a challenging time to conduct research – especially in the education field.

Table 1. Number of Interviewees Contacted and Interviewed

Interviewees	Number of People Interviewed	Number of People Contacted
School Resource Officers	3	7
Teachers	3	147
School Board Member	1	1
Former Student	1	1
Activists	1	9
Civil Rights Attorney	1	1

I utilized three structured interview instruments (SRO, Teacher, Activist) as a guide, however, the conversations took shape naturally and each participant shared beyond the scope of the questions. The instruments themselves can be found in the Appendix section. These instruments were constructed with the intention of leaving the conversations open-ended and semi-structed. The questions were rooted in CRT and aimed to address participants experiences with SROs and potential connections between Black Lives Matter and other social movements. The questions that addressed CRT concepts were the same on all the instruments, but the responses differed drastically based on the positionality of the interviewee – and frankly, I believe my positionality impacted the outcome of the conversations too.

A barrier I faced during this process was not personally knowing professionals in the State of Arizona that would qualify for an interview. In combination with my lack on connection, we are also experiencing a global pandemic that has caused a great deal of stress and change within education spaces. Organizers have also faced a global pandemic,

in addition to 2020 being an election year. To help combat the low interview numbers, I am using a news article content analysis to provide a deeper understanding of the police movement within education. The news has always played a large role in the racialization of different populations and for this project the news helps speak to the widely used rhetoric that is attached to policing in education. I am not interested in the methodology the news uses to push rhetoric forward or why they choose the language they do, however, I am interested in what is being said, by who it is being said, and how the conversation about policing in education has shifted over the last 20+ years to get us to this point.

The news articles were collected from ProQuest using the search term ("school resource officers" OR "school resource officer"). The term was left broad intentionally to account for all mentions of SROs. The total number of articles using this search term is 66,595. I have selected and analyzed the Arizona Republic (879 articles) to more broadly understand the shift in the movement around K-12 policing in Arizona over time. The publications were sorted on ProQuest by the "year" and "full-text" filters. The Arizona Republic starts at 1999 and goes through 2020. These articles were coded in NVivo using three coding methods: qualitative coding, text-based coding, and word frequency.

Qualitative Coding

The qualitative coding process was an involved process that required line-by-line reading of the articles. This was necessary in order to build up a strong codebook from an interpretivist lens, versus utilizing preconceived understandings of the data to build a codebook. Through this process it allowed for a stronger understanding of key patterns

within the news articles and worked as a starting point for the additional two methods of coding.

Text-Based Coding

Once I developed a starting codebook through the qualitative coding method, I was able to use a key word or phrase search to sift through the data. This method located key words and phrases providing the opportunity to read the context surrounding each search, instead of having to read every article line-by-line. This method helped inform the content that was coded to the codebook. By conducting qualitative coding first, I was able to anticipate some of the frequent terms and concepts addressed throughout the news articles.

Word-Frequency Coding

Word frequency coding looks at how many times a specific word is used throughout the entire data set. This method determined which publications were using specific words or phrases and during what time frame they were being used. This is an interesting approach and does not hold a lot of weight on its own. However, by identifying the frequency of language used it can draw attention to critical areas that need further examination through the other methods of coding that provide a broader context to how the term or phrase is being used and why.

Thesis Overview

The following two chapters work from the conceptual framework of the racial regime. Building off the scholarship, I implement the framework of the racial regime in the context of policing in schools while situating the issue within the context of social movements. From the perspective of key stakeholders, Chapter 2 brings several

interviews in conversation with one another. The interviews unpack the racialized power dynamics that create such a troubling issue for our students, while highlighting key features of the movement. These features contribute to the political dynamics in Arizona that make the movement so complex.

In Chapter 3, the news content analysis works in conjunction with the interviews to bring forward critical aspects of the movement. These aspects are categorized by "leader of the movement," "natural ally," "performative ally," and "counter movement." Through these categorizations, I unpack the complexities of three major movements: BLM, immigration, and the counter movement. Police in schools is situated not as a movement itself, but as a crucial campaign taken on by several movements making it intersectional. I argue that this issue deserves a movement of its own in order to generate consistent attention and resources to our students.

CHAPTER 2

THE CARCERAL SYSTEM AT PLAY IN ARIZONA SCHOOLS

Introduction

In October of 2019, in Phoenix, Arizona, several organizations co-led a petition to remove Isaac Middle School's SRO from campus after two incidences (Frank, 2019). In the first incident, the SRO deployed pepper spray onto several students. The students were gathered to watch a fight and the SRO deemed the use of pepper spray necessary to clear the crowd (Frank, 2019). In the second incident, the SRO was escorting a student to the office and she tried to run away from the officer, so he handcuffed her (Frank, 2019). The handcuffs were removed, and the student was released to her parents once they arrived at the office (Frank, 2019). Both of these incidences we deemed appropriate by the school district and the police department. However, the middle school did not notify staff, faculty, or parents that pepper spray was used on schoolgrounds and Puente says that the officer did not warn students prior to deploying the pepper spray (Frank, 2019).

Activists stepped in because they believe students' civil rights were violated. The coalition of activists generated a petition with a list of four demands. These demands were,

> "1. We must hold both Principal Robert Miller and Superintendent Ventura accountable and demand transparency. They must release a statement about the incident with the SRO and not ignore the impact it has caused students, teachers, and concerned parents.
>
> 2. School must remove School Resource Officer… from school grounds. Isaac Middle School must change the culture of how we deal with conflict

in Isaac Middle School by adding more counselors to help students on campus.

3. … more ethnic studies programs, more teachers and counselors that have critical consciousness and the cultural competency training to empower and support students in order to create a well-rounded learning environment.

4. We want an independent investigation of civil rights abuses at Isaac Middle School by School Resource Officers" (Puente, 2019).

Following the demands, the SRO stationed at Isaac Middle School voluntarily returned to patrol (Critchfield, 2019). However, the police department deemed that the officer did not violate policy in either incident (Critchfield, 2019). The school does not have a set standard of operating procedures for SROs on campus (Critchfield, 2019). The officer is supposed to operate based on general police department policy which means that "… the use of pepper spray on fighting sixth graders, or handcuffs on a student attempting to run away while being escorted to the principal's office, are both within protocol" (Critchfield, 2019). These tactics are tools used by the carceral institution to uphold the racial regime. In Chapter Three, we will see how these practices allow counter movements to justify these tactics because carceral policies have been normalized.

The use of general carceral practices within schools violates communities trust in the schools. There must be clear policies that distinguish practices within schools versus the community. Students should not have to fear being pepper sprayed at school. If we cannot recognize that even when an officer is "following policy" they are still causing harm, we are furthering the harm caused by the carceral institution. Punitive practices

have long been used to criminalize people of color and are directly connected to the sustainability of racial regimes. By allowing these practices on our school campuses we are knowingly causing harm to our students.

The movement to combat policing at schools is hard to conceptualize because of its intersections with other prominent social movements. Additionally, although there have been individual policy changes on a microlevel, the problem as a whole is hard to define. In different areas of the country, there has been individual success removing police and transforming school discipline policies, however, recently we saw larger scale change. This is important because the enacted change happened in more than one location despite the individual school district politics. This thesis works to situate all these factors happening on the ground, to link these factors to the concept of racial regime, and to map the trajectory of the social movement, more generally. The structure of the regime itself, I argue, allows us to conceptualize and contextualize the movement.

First, this chapter lays out several critical features that uphold the power of the racial regime and the complexities of the movement. Officers operate under and for the integrity of the carceral system. Their work is intended to enforce punitive practices that embody that of the carceral system. Police are a product and tool of the carceral system; therefore, they replicate the practices implemented in the community on schoolgrounds. This is problematic and makes us question who is so invested in generating this positive imagine of police for young people and why? The chapter then highlights the movement itself. Strong movements are intersectional. It is critical to recognize and elevate key voices in the movement. The struggle to remove SROs from campuses faces several complexities that have made the problem hard to define. In order for the movement to

become stronger we must work to elevate the voices of our students and create a conversation that allows for buy in from several different stakeholders. This has been challenging in Arizona due to the complex political dynamics of the school board. However, there is still hope for the movement to progress and it is important to recognize the change that has been made.

The interviews are critical because these individuals are key players on the ground. Their perspectives help to unpack the movement in conjunction with the racial regime. Table 2 showcases the interviewees featured in Chapter 2. Pseudonyms are used to protect the anonymity of the interviewees.

Table 2. Breakdown of Interviews

Name	Title	Background
Bob	SRO	SRO for over 10 years. Currently serving on a high school campus.
Sarah	SRO	Police officer 15+ years. SRO for less than 5 years. Currently serving on a middle school campus.
Sally	SRO	Police officer 15+ years. SRO for about 5 years. Currently serving on a middle school campus.
Emily	Teacher	High school teacher. Taught multiple districts in Arizona and out-of-state.
Danielle	Teacher	A new high school teacher in Arizona. Conducted student teaching on a campus with SROs but has only had her own classroom virtually during COVID-19.
Steven	Teacher	High school teacher and athletics coach. Identifies as Hispanic.

Bryce	School Board Member	Recently elected school board member for a high school district in Arizona.
Trish	Former Student	Recent graduate of an Arizona high school. An active member in the protests to remove SROs from campuses in Phoenix Union High School District.
Linda	Activist	Arizona activist working to end the school-to-prison pipeline.
Evan	Civil Rights Attorney	Attorney fighting for racial justice in public education – specifically focusing on ending the school-to-prison pipeline.

Part I: Carceral Practices within Education

The racial regime is the overarching power that allows the carceral system to maintain power within society. Specifically, in schools SROs and zero tolerance policies are used to maintain the power structures of the carceral system that support the continuation of the racial regime. This section works to highlight the carceral system at play within education. The interviews work to inform the analysis which is rooted in the framework of CRT. The racial regime will become visible allowing for the movement to become identifiable. From the perspective of key players within the movement in Arizona, I address 1) how the police are more than just individual players, 2) the connection between police and in the community and police in schools, 3) who is invested in fostering a positive image of the police, and 4) what is allowing police to continue to hold the power. These sections developed naturally through common themes found amongst the interviews.

Police are Not Individual Players

In Phoenix, political actors have a huge influence on the direction of the movement. These actors are a part of a system that operates under a carceral regime whose foundation is rooted in a racialized structure. One teacher was in the community with a group of colleagues when they ran into the off-duty SRO, as the teacher recalled the incident "…it was around the time of Trayvon Martin…something like that came up… and [the off-duty SRO] told a joke, 'how many cops does it take to change a light bulb? And the answer is 'none, they shoot it because it's dark'" (Emily, Zoom interview, 2021). The racial aggression that is blatantly displaced is directly related to the deep history of white supremacy in the United States. It also highlights that those who are a part of the institution are connected through an ideology guided by racial bias – whether implicit or explicit. The United States police originated out of the Slave Patrol which was "created in this nation specifically *and solely* to hunt Black people seeking freedom" (Khan-Cullors & Bandele, 2017, p.187). There is no way to separate those who choose to participate as a formalized member of the institution, from the institution itself. It is the polices job to uphold the institution whether in the community or within schools.

Later in this Chapter, I discuss the complex politics of the movement and the school board's decision to end the partnership with the police department. However, in this section I would like to bring light to how the racialized practices and influence of the carceral system have a drastic impact on the independence of the education system itself. One teacher discussed that, leading up to the school boards special meeting, the school administration, "only encouraged teachers to attend to "defend the SRO against the community who wants to get him out…there was no invitation for any teacher to come

share any sort of dissenting viewpoint" (Emily, Zoom interview, 2021). It is impossible to support an individual officer because they are a direct reflection of the system and those in power within the educational institution do not recognize that. Although the school and the police are separate entities, the decisions made by the school are dictated by the influence of the carceral institution. When those in power do not recognize the influence of the carceral system, this is what allows the power to remain thus upholding racialized institutions. As one teacher discusses, although some school campuses might love their individual SROs, "there's no guarantee that [the officer] is going to stay. Any moment [they] can retire. [The officer] can leave and who knows which officers the next…" (Emily, Zoom interview, 2021). This fear is not of the individual, but of an institution that allows for unjust practice.

Connection between Police in the Community and Schools

SROs on school campuses trigger generational trauma for students and families. As one teacher noted, "Phoenix Police is one of the deadliest in the country… there's families that have been personally impacted by police officers killing their family members, and who…have to walk by that reminder every day when [they]'re in school …" (Emily, Zoom Interview, 2021). Bettina L. Love's concept of the Educational Survival Complex draws our attention to the importance of schools being a place for students to thrive, not just survive. Schools need to be intentional in developing practices and procedures that allow all students equitable opportunities within the education space. This includes removing factors found in the community that make students – especially Black and Brown students – feel unsafe. The schools themselves are ultimately not the problem. One teacher discussed, "the problem is… as a society, we've allowed too much

inequality and too much disenfranchisement for too long…" and the solution is "… building up the community and the people and healing some of that stuff so that you don't even need the police" (Emily, Zoom interview, 2021).

The racialized practices within schools are a direct reflection of the racialized practices in communities. The civil rights attorney elaborated in our discussion,

> "having a police officer in school, affects everybody, and it affects the way in which discipline operates affects the school culture for everybody. Statistically, Black and Brown students are much more likely to be punished by school police officers. And moreover, folks living in communities where the police are not seen as benevolent folks helping grandma cross the street, but as occupiers…those kids that have to come to school and go through a metal detector and be policed all day long. That has a psychological effect" (Evan, Zoom interview, 2021).

SROs are trained as police first. Continuing our conversation, the civil rights attorney said, "when there's a kid who you know acts out… the police officer reacts like a police officer and arrests. That's what police officers do that's their major tool… so if you want to… make schools into less punitive places… you want to reduce the criminalization of abuse, then you need to get the tools of…the criminal justice system out of the schools…" (Evan, Zoom interview, 2021).

SROs, however, argue that "we don't just arrest…its actually the opposite" (Sally Zoom interview, 2021). For example, one SRO I spoke with discussed the type of discretion they have with students when it comes to arrests:

> "The good part about being an SRO is that we have so much discretion as far as dealing with the same calls' day in and day out… we know the history of most of the kids that we have negative interactions with, and we are able to make the decision to arrest them or not. Whereas, if a patrol deputy came in… there is not going to be a 'let's see how you are going to act over the next few weeks to see if I am going to arrest you for today.' We [SROs] have a lot of discretion with these kids because we are there all the time. For example, if there was a fight and someone punches someone else and there was an actual injury the deputy off the street is just going to come in and arrest. Whereas for me [SRO] I am going to take a minute… I don't need to just hurry up a do the arrest so I can go to the next call… I can really take a step back… we are able to decide if we are going to arrest someone… I try to turn what could be an arrest around… [For example, I would tell a student] 'next time I am going to arrest you. Not only am I going to arrest you the next time, but I am also going to arrest you for this time next time, as well. So, you are going to have two arrests because I have a year to arrest you for an offense. If I decide not to right now, I can always change my mind within that year.' So, I try to turn it around as a learning [experience], if I can…" (Sally, Zoom interview, 2021).

Although the SRO has the time to talk with the student and not rush an arrest, the intervention is rooted in the threat of an arrest. The SRO holds the power to decide what the repercussions for that student are. This is dangerous and creates a space that is lacking

trust. When schools allow outside forces to dictate the fate of their students it not only fosters distrust amongst the police and students, but amongst the students and the school itself.

Who is Invested in The Positive Image of the Police?

Some SROs recognize that most interactions with police are not positive, so being in schools is a way for young people to see them outside of bad situations (Bob, Zoom interview, 2021). There has been a loss of trust between the police and the community and as an SRO it is my role to earn that trust back (Bob, Zoom interview, 2021). However, others have a stronger disconnect between their work as an SRO and the perceptions that the community have of the police. One SRO said, "…[students] need to see us daily and to have that interaction with us, because that's where trust is built. I hate using the word trust, can we scratch that, I would say trust with the staff. Kids you have to earn their respect…actions speak louder than words to them" (Sally, Zoom interview, 2021). Many SROs are operating with the notion that the younger the youth the more impressionable they will be and the less likely they will be to have a distrust in the police. For example, one officer said,

> "[middle schoolers] are so easy … they are not too far gone. If they have made bad choices, they can still be saved more so than in high school. In high school yes, they can still turn around, but they have more attitude…they know everything in high school…" (Sarah, Zoom interview, 2021).

For some SROs, budling these relationships with students can be harder than expected because many of them or their families might have per-conceived notions of the police. One SRO discussed the importance of

> "being present in the school and just mentoring, just the day-to-day interaction is huge… students get to know me…not as a deputy, they know when I talk to them you know I am Sarah... still respectful I don't want them to completely disregard that I am a cop, but I also do not want them to… see me as a cop, but as a friend someone they can trust…" (Sarah, Zoom interview, 2021).

However, who is it really that wants to foster these relationships? Is it the youth? Is it the school? Is it the police department who is working to uphold power? A teacher touches on this by asking,

> "who is invested in the kids having such a positive view of the police… [SROs]…need to almost like manipulate [students] by exposing them to an artificial version of the police. The police are not people that sit around at recess that's not their job. That's not what they do, they go arrest people and put them in jail…it just doesn't make sense. It's like having… I can't even think of an analogy like …let's have dentists, hang out in elementary school recesses so kids aren't afraid to go to the dentist… if they want kids to not be afraid of the dentist…explain why it's still good for you even if it does hurt better… I don't think it's an authentic way to… build relationships, I think it's a manipulative way to build relationships" (Emily, Zoom interview, 2021).

The relationships that law enforcement is trying to build with youth is a tool of perception. If the community views the police as having a positive impact at schools, the police must have a positive impact in the community. This tool of perception is used by the carceral institution to maintain power and excuse racial injustice because those responsible are also having "positive" impacts on youth. This trust that SROs are desperately trying to build can easily be broken, not just between the officer and the student, but between the student and the schools itself. This break in trust is not always recognized or can be excused as a cop just being a "bad apple". When in reality we all should be questioning why police have so much power within education and should be reimagining what school safety looks like.

The MOU allows for SROs to have discretion and remain in a place of power within the educational space. One SRO discussed the relationship between officers and the schools,

> "We [schools and SROs] are completely separate entities. We have to work very closely together… they [the school] bring me [SRO] in because they have to, they are mandatory reporters, so they have to bring me in on certain things, but how they [school] handle it has nothing to do with how I [SRO] handle it and vice versa. If I arrest a kid, they could say that they are not going to do anything… per [the schools] disciplinary matrix it's not a suspension or, so it's very possible that they suspend a kid and I am like, I am not going to arrest them for that… it kind of goes both ways. We work together but our decisions are not a direct reflection of the other person" (Sally, Zoom interview, 2021).

This stark distinction between the schools and the SROs provides a challenging situation for students to navigate. Although the student may feel comfortable at school, they may not feel comfortable with an SRO and there are no protections in place for students. When an MOU is in place the SRO has the legal ability to operate on campus despite the direction the school might want to take. In the example at the beginning of this chapter, the SRO was technically operating within policy because of the lack of definition of the officer's role on campuses. If schools are going to consider partnering with the police, the MOUs in place need to address the concerns of the students and take into account who benefits from the relationship between schools and police.

The way many MOUs operate allow for open discretion which creates a dangerous situation for students. One student discussed fellow peers fears about having police on campus,

> "we have a huge undocumented population of students who are… in mixed status families, are undocumented themselves, have parents…undocumented… the school-to-prison pipeline is called deportation pipeline… These students deserve a place to feel safe… they should not have to feel on edge walking around on campus to go and get lunch or…walk from one building to another in between classes… they shouldn't have to tense up whenever they see an SRO walking around… fully armed… SROs aren't even in… civilian clothing they're… in the full… gear … they have… the pepper spray, the tasers, the gun, everything…" (Trish, Zoom interview, 2021).

This student makes a strong point. Why are SROs in full uniform? If the role of an SRO is intended to destigmatize the police and build stronger relationships with young people, why are they prepared for war? The answer is because they are the carceral institution. They are the tool the institution uses to uphold the power and create a racial divide. An activist discussed, before SROs were mainstream

> " … you didn't have police in the schools you had opportunity for the principal to talk to the parents to talk to the children to address the issues, but then all of a sudden, you started to have police in elementary schools, there's a proposal to have children pre-K through fourth grade be suspended, and the reasoning behind it is to get the parents attention to get their children to behave…if you're already putting police in who's going to dictate the punishment of a second grader, a first grader. What is that instilling in them?... not a sense of perspective of the police…a sense of fear… we need to get back to answering some basic questions. Why is it that you have to have police in an elementary school? Why is it that you have to kick out a kindergartner because they're hyper? What are some things we can do to address those situations…?" (Linda, Zoom interview, 2021).

It is critical that we work to address these questions brought up by this activist. If police are in schools, who are they benefiting? They are ultimately working to create a face that police can be positive and can potentially operate from a less carceral framework. However, I argue that no matter what practices or reform efforts a police department puts

in place, their foundation is carceral. There is no other option then to remove SROs from campuses because no matter what they will always be a representation of the institution itself.

SROs are not only upholding the carceral institution, but they are acting as a "quick-fix" to structural problems that must be addresses within education. The law professor furthered this point by addressing that,

> "… getting the police out of schools… forces…problem solving without the police, which I think is honestly like one of the logics of abolition more broadly is … just end it and then figure out how to do what needs doing without the police and you'll find lots of other ways that you can do things that don't require the police in the way you think they're required (Evan, Zoom interview, 2021).

Police do not solve our problems, they do not prevent crime, and they do not keep us safer. We must actively work towards removing police from schools and building a new foundation that is not connected to carceral practices. This new foundation should be built with the critiques of CRT theory in mind and the framework of abolition in order to address the long-standing racial regime dictating our practices.

How are the Police Still in a Place of Power?

The movement to remove SROs from schools can easily become invisible, which is why discussing the issue in relation to social movements is so important. One of the most dangerous arguments that is made in support of SROs is that against teachers, parents, and students. This is prevalent in the framing of the news coverage and will be

further unpacked in Chapter 3. However, it is critical to start the conversation in this chapter because of its prevalence in the interviews with SROs and teachers. One teacher said,

> "I still believe SROs play a vital part on our campus. The issue is the teachers who abused SROs and don't have to control their classrooms. It's like citizens who call the cops way too much, and are putting the cops in a bad situation … I [try] to recognize…that I could ruin a kid's life just by busting his balls too much and giving them too many referrals and getting him on …you know, what is called the school to prison pipeline… there's some teachers who aren't aware of that. But I definitely feel that like we need the SROs on campus because what if there's a situation where there's a kid who's extremely violent and you can't expect [security] getting paid 13-15 bucks an hour to want to step in the middle of that. So, you need an SRO who is equipped and knows how to handle those situations. We can talk about de-escalation and all that good stuff but once a certain student hits a certain level, there's… a point of no return then you definitely need those SRO is on campus..." (Steven, Zoom interview 2021).

The framework for this argument is extremely problematic because it does not acknowledge that policing – whether in the community or on school campuses – is a systemic issue. When we excuse police action, we are further perpetuating the idea that police are the answer and not acknowledging the harm that the carceral institution is responsible for. The institution that currently exists does not adequately address issues that arise due to society inequity and we must hold the

institution accountable. This is not an individual cop problem or an individual student problem. This is a deeply rooted systemic problem that can only be addressed by acknowledging who holds the power and how. When we hold individuals accountable for systemic problems, the institution remains in power.

In addition to placing individual blame, another tool used to justify SROs is their work to combat drugs. The racialization of the War on Drugs is still extremely prevalent. Police are the tool used to perpetrate the racialized criminalization of drugs and therefore we have seen these practices infiltrate our schools. Several teachers questioned what SROs actually do on their campuses, but one teacher elaborated on supposed role of an SROs is,

> "…anytime there's like a weapon or drugs… they call the SRO and then they come in because …they handle all that stuff. So, a teacher will call the administrator, 'hey, this kid smells like weed,' and the administrator will go there and…try to pinpoint and then if they do find anything dangerous, illegal, etc., then they call the SRO, and he takes care of that. That's from what my best understanding is what [the SRO] does" (Danielle, zoom interview, 2021).

SROs are frequently defended because of the purpose to seize drugs and weapons from students. However, one student discussed the problematic nature of having an SRO involved in drug related incidences,

> "…I don't think it necessitates a police presence… I don't think anyone that's ever been high on campuses harmed anyone else… even if it gets to the point where they are a harm to themselves or harm to someone else,

> we have a social worker on campus that can help with that… substance [use] is typically…trauma…this is …a deeper issue of…let's not punish the student for using drugs and try to understand why they're using drugs and why they're self-medicating… I don't think that drugs necessitate a police presence. If anything, I think we should have more social workers and counselors that are equipped to deal with substance [use] problems. And, you know, maybe have some community connections where if it's to the point where it's harming the student, and they're becoming a risk to themselves…that they can get the help that they need. If that means rehab if that means some sort of, you know, you know, group sessions that we could attend. Maybe we keep it internal and… have a private group on campus where they meet every week … regardless… I don't think we need an officer to keep drugs off our campus… I think we need to more address the root cause of why students are using" (Trish, Zoom interview 2021).

This student discusses the foundation of abolition. We must work to address the root cause of the problem and we cannot continue to criminalize trauma. Although, this teacher is operating from the framework of student blaming, they address a foundational point that made the War on Drugs possible,

> "there's just some kids who come to school and they're just like, 'alright, what can I fuck up… let me see how I can get my teacher. Let me see how much I can pick on this kid or let me see how many deals I can sling today,' like there's just kids who are like that. Like I said, not a lot… I know inner city schools get a bad rap and the only difference between,

> [inner city schools] and the private school up the street is [inner city schools] they sell weed and… the private school sells like cocaine and methamphetamine, all that good stuff" (Steven, Zoom interview, 2021).

The inner-city public schools are more likely to have an SRO on their campuses, which increases the likelihood of criminalizing students for using or selling drugs on campus. It is important that we remove the tools of criminalization from our schools because we are furthering mass incarceration by allowing our students to be arrested for drug offenses. One teacher discussed how they could be part of the solution,

> "I am capable of removing drugs from a student… you don't need two armed agents to do that like… or if … let's say that you did find a kid that has, I don't know his bag full of oxycontin pills or whatever… you could call the police and they could be there within 10 minutes… that's not an emergency situation that's such a bad excuse" (Emily, Zoom interview, 2021).

Police hold the power within the education space because we have allowed societal constructs to operate. The media has generated fear around drugs and by using individual blaming we have allowed the institution to remain in power. The following section discusses the movement which is a vital tool in the deconstruction of the carceral institution and the operation of racialized tactics in the schools.

Part II: The Removal of SROs from Schools as a Social Movement

This section works to situate the movement to end policing in K-12 education as an independent movement. From the perspective of key players working on the ground in Arizona, I address 1) how the movement has evolved and its intersections, 2) how we

strengthen the movement, 3) the complex politics of the movement in Arizona, 4) challenges of the movement, and 5) where is the movement going.

The Evolution of the Movement & its Intersections

The STTP is an early 20th century concept and is directly connected to the Gun Free Schools Act (1994) (Justice Policy Institute, Nelson & Lind, 2015). The fight to end policing and harsh discipline policies in K-12 education has existed for quite some time. A law professor explained, "our argument at the time was that police are an occupying force in many of the…places where the students live. And having police in the schools is a way of turning schools into an occupied place…" (Evan, Zoom Interview, 2021). When our schools become occupied it allows for those in power to perpetrate human rights abuse. Our schools are supposed to foster growth and allow students to feel safe, but when there are armed guards on a daily basis it can evoke a sense of fear that is detrimental to students learning. The professor continued to discuss the state of the movement to remove SROs from schools at the beginning of Black Lives Matter, "we weren't really working on defunding the police…it was before that demand really had developed" (Evan, Zoom Interview, 2021). However, the professor did acknowledge the movement has always been

> "making police abolition arguments, in the context of schools before those arguments were mainstream …if you just got rid of police in the schools you [can] create a more loving, warm, welcoming environment where people [support] each other better, which is essentially what folks are saying about the neighborhoods where they want to get the police [out]…" (Evan, Zoom Interview, 2021).

The connection between policing in the community and policing in schools is not a coincidence. The tactics the police use in schools are a direct reflection of what they have been taught to do in the community.

Police affect everyone. Therefore, there are several movements that overlap with the call to defund the police. A strong social movement is intersectional and acknowledges that different populations of the community are affected by the same issues differently. An Arizona School Board Member identified several intersections within the movement to remove SROs from campuses,

> "Black Lives Matters…how policing affects criminal justice reform and the LGBT community … how it affects our immigrant communities, there's lots of families… [and] students that are still very worried about immigration status with lots of students applying for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). So, all of those things… intersect and are affected by how police in our community treat members of our community and…I think all of that starts with a history of police violence and systemic racism and… those memories… start at a very young age, and… schools have to play an important role [in] making sure that we create a safe place for students to learn and feel comfortable…working towards building trust as reforms happen on the city side to make sure that policing is…really a more just system." (Bryce, Zoom Interview, 2021).

When police infiltrate schools and become an occupying force the effect of every student is different. The impact that criminalization and punitive practices is detrimental to the success and safety of students. The professor discusses other

relevant conceptualizations of the movement, "[it is] definitely about the school-to-prison pipeline movement, which is… about school equity more broadly, and school…equity and quality…" (Evan, Zoom Interview, 2021). Police do not have a place in K-12 education. When discussing abolition of police in schools, I am not insinuating that we should abolition the education system. The professor provides critical insight suggesting that, "if you care about public schooling, then you should care about policing in schools… I think it's adjacent to all kinds of civil rights demands, because education is so fundamental to so many civil rights demands and ultimately it's about making space for people to learn" (Evan, Zoom Interview, 2021).

SROs inhibit student's ability to learn, which is why they cannot be a part of our education system. One community activist, who focuses efforts on ending the STTP, says that ending policing in schools overlaps with the

> "… criminal justice [movement] because what's happening is you're getting the police in [schools]. They're labeling the children as…criminals…and then they're starting them on that track to put them in prison, which is why we say we want to stop the school to prison pipeline, because in school is when they're starting to label their children in society… at a very young age… those labels continue to move through their school career so as soon as they [become] an adult… they can then just integrate them right into the penal system… you want to talk to those who've gone through the school to prison pipeline…they don't think that

> [they] necessarily need to be in the prison system…" (Linda, Zoom interview, 2021).

The use of branding and rhetoric is being used in the community and that has a direct impact of the practices and policies that we see being used in schools. The intersections of the movements are critical to understand and should not be disregarded. However, recognizing the intersections and the impact they have on this particular movement make it equally as important there to be a distinction between ending police in schools and other overlapping movements. It is challenging to claim that the movements all have an intersection but should also be viewed as independent. This call for independence is not a call to forget about the intersections, but rather a call to devote proper resources and time to a movement fighting for our students.

How We Strengthen the Movement

In order for the movement to continue to grow independent of the intersecting movements, we must center those who are affected the most. A former student said that "… the only way to… actually…get to a safe school is…elevating voices of students. As of now student voices are not taken seriously enough. Admin is extremely dismissive of students" (Trish, Zoom interview, 2021). The professor addresses another key factor of enhancing the success of the movement,

> "I don't think that you get people to the table to start working together unless you have built power amongst the students to tell the story to open up eyes of people to what's happening because I think that most people, you know, I'm sure that most of the SROs you've talked to, they…see themselves as doing good work… the hardest thing is to get people to see

> the ways in which the work they're doing might be harmful… I don't think that brute force works because…there still is power… just by brute force, telling people with the power they have to act differently. There's just a million ways in which that is limited, so…it works best when they buy in" (Evan, Zoom Interview, 2021).

There must be buy in from everyone. In order to be successful, we must utilize everyone to generate a change. We must work within the school system itself. K-12 education should not be abolished. There are numerous reasons for the School Equity Movement, including de-racializing curriculum and abolishing standardized testing, but this thesis is simply addressing one critical facet of school equity – ending policing on campuses. In order for policing and harsh discipline to stop, there must be buy in amongst everyone because the change has to be within the system itself. Initially, some might believe that this deviates from the core arguments of abolition because the entire system is not being reimagined. However, I argue that in fact the call to end policing in schools does fit within the context of abolition because of the polices' ability to operate independently of the education system.

MOUs allow SROs to operate independently of the schools themselves. Ultimately, each party can decide and implement their own course of action when it comes to school discipline. However, there has been individual success because of the movement in different states using alternatives and centering student voices. The professor used the following example,

> "I think the most successful places I've seen it or where the organizing is happening with external support, but has the school gives it space… so… you build enough capacity within a district, this is what was happening in Denver…it was an after-school activity to go to the youth organizing… the organizer would show up on Wednesday at school, and that was your meeting…. I think it's most effective when you have a community group outside of the school. That is organizing and creating an infrastructure, but then highlighting and raising up student leaders… you don't want a community group that's like imposing its agenda. But you want a community group that…has some of the know how about organizing because you know, if you're a 16-year-old you just probably haven't, you know, read *The Midwest Manual of Organizing*…so, having people who know how to run a meeting and know how to think about organizing, and then help students build that power together is really important" (Evan, Zoom Interview, 2021).

During the summer of 2020 we saw this power build in Phoenix, AZ. The dynamics looked different; however, student voices were still centered, which led to momentum in the movement to remove SROs from school campuses.

Movement Building and Political Reform in Arizona

In the summer of 2020, a student activist started a petition to remove school resource officers from Phoenix Union High School District's (PUHSD) campuses. Once the petition was started, the student found themselves working closely with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) Arizona's Demand 2 Learn campaign, Poder in Action,

and Puente's Cops Outta Campus campaign. These campaigns led by local organizations have been working to remove officers from campuses for several years. The movement to end policing has been functioning at the local, state, and federal levels, but the spring and summer of 2020 is where we saw the most impact to date. As the professor pointed out, the ACLU's "Dignity in Schools' campaign is definitely…the place where most national work…" is done (Evan, Zoom Interview, 2021). In Arizona specifically, Poder in Action, Puente's Cops Outta Campus campaigns, and the ACLU Arizona chapter were key players.

In the years leading up to the petition to end the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA), otherwise known as an MOU, between the City of Phoenix and PUHSD, these organizations were able to "reduce the [number] of SROs on school campuses, change policies in student handbooks and create a relationship with Phoenix Union High School District to get students' input when making decisions that directly affect them" (Police Free Schools Arizona, Facebook event page). The next step was to push forward a list of demands that emphasized defunding of police in PUHSD schools.

To better understand what activists are up against it is helpful to understand the dynamics of the school board. The school board itself is made up of seven members. There had been previous votes held on whether to uphold the IGA, but they ended in a hung vote. The PUHSD school board is an elected position and in the State of Arizona an elected official can hold multiple elected positions. A State Senator and a City Council woman both sit on the current school board. The school board is currently split. Three members support SROs on campus and three do not support SROs on campus. The seventh tie breaking vote is the City Council woman who has to abstain from voting due

to conflict of interest of voting twice (PUHSD and through the city). One school board member discussed that the complex politics of the board means that the issue of removing SROs has "been deadlocked until this past summer when they decided… to kind of move forward with the participatory budgeting process…" (Bryce, Zoom interview, 2021).

In the summer of 2020, the PUHSD accepted the activist organizations demand to hold a special meeting to address the community's concerns about police in schools. According to the student activist who started the petition, prior to COVID-19 the school board meetings were inaccessible and were not being live streamed (Trish, Zoom interview, 2021). It was challenging for parents and students to attend these meetings due to their location and the time of day they were held (Trish, Zoom Interview, 2021). However, the special meeting was virtual, due to COVID-19 and organizers were able to recruit 80 people to attend and comment (Trish, Zoom interview, 2021). The Call to Public section of the meeting, where the people attending can speak, took over three hours and typically a normal meeting would be over long before the three-hour mark (Trish, Zoom interview, 2021). Once the Call to Public was over the meeting ended abruptly and the board did not comment of any of the points brought up by the attendees (Trish, Zoom interview, 2021).

The activist and community did not hear anything from the board for several weeks until a press release came out from the PUHSD Superintendent announcing that the district had terminated the IGA. The press release also addressed where the money from the terminated IGA will be invested. The $1.2 million will be reinvested in community-driven initiative on school safety (Phoenix Union Press Release, 2020). These funds will be used to launch "the largest school participatory budgeting (PB)

initiative that our nation has ever seen" (Phoenix Union Press Release, 2020). The $1.2 million that was used to fund SROS, will be split in three sums of money and split between a staff-driven process, student-driven process, and a parent-driven process (Phoenix Union Press Release, 2020).

When the press release came out announcing the termination of the IGA and the PB initiative there was no clause that stated the stakeholder groups in charge of allocating this money could not allocate it right back to funding SROs. The activist reached out the PUHSD and demanded a solution to ensure that the agreement to defund police on campuses would remain without a loophole. The former student recalled that they did not initially hear anything in response to their questions, but "eventually…they made an amendment saying no cops…" (Trish, Zoom interview, 2021). However, what did not come across was the fact that the agreement was only terminated for the 2020-2021 school year. The former student acknowledged it was hard to celebrate the victory because "it's very obvious we're not going to be going back to school physically anytime soon…it's great for this year, but it [was] a very symbolic gesture" (Trish, Zoom interview, 2021). A teacher in Arizona also echoed a similar sentiment about the announcement suggesting it was a "great way to save money and spin it as social justice" (Emily, Zoom interview, 2021).

Contextualizing Black Lives Matter's National Impact on Arizona's Movement

Defunding the police in K-12 education must continue to be at the forefront of the conversation and continue to evolve as an independent movement. Many folks identified the removal of officers from PUHSD in direct connection to the murder of George Floyd

and the protests to defund the police that followed. However, the professor discussed how the momentum to remove officers from schools has

> "ridden on the coattails of the Black Lives Matter movement…to some degree Ferguson is the time when…the ideas of abolition sort of first…jumped from extreme like fringe to a more – it's still fringe – but mainstream fringe…I think that the change… this summer, George Floyd, the…focus on defunding and abolition…has been pretty huge in terms of its popular[arity]… my law students now know what I'm talking about if I talk about it. Whereas, even two years ago, I would have had to explain to them what police abolition was and what the arguments were…" (Evan, Zoom Interview, 2021).

A teacher in Arizona also discussed the momentum of the movement to remove SROs from schools,

> "BLM didn't start in the past year… I was talking about it back in 2015 you know 2014 Trayvon Martin…there were already concerns about the school-to-prison pipeline…prior to George Floyd and this like explosion of interest this summer. So would it have happened eventually I would like to think so, but it probably would have been a lot slower. It wouldn't have happened out of the original BLM Movement and some of that stuff years ago…" (Emily, Zoom interview, 2021).

It is critical to identify that the success we saw last year would not have occurred if simply connected to another movement. The fight to remove police from K-12 campuses is its own movement and cannot be lost in the complex intersections of other movements.

The carceral institution is an immediate risk to our students' futures. By not acknowledging the removal of SROs from K-12 education as a unique and complex issue we are inhibiting the momentum of the movement and the success of our students.

There are additional challenges to the future success of the movement and buy in is probably one of the biggest. The movement

> "didn't just happen overnight… it's been going on for a few years, I think just everyone out of work and school, obviously, the George Floyd death. That was the… straw that broke the camel's back. But… if it had not happened this year, I think it would have happened within the next two years or so. I've been hearing the rumblings for a while and… I always thought like that's stupid, but it is what it is" (Steven, Zoom interview, 2021).

As mentioned above, SROs can be one of the hardest groups to have buy in from. For example, one city in Arizona removed SROs from campuses and when they brought them back,

> "there was a gap in time of at least a couple months where they were trying to work out an MOU… with our department before I was able to step foot on their campus… that had a lot to do with the minorities and how parents and what not felt their children were going to be treated with an officer on campus and how their kids were going to feel with an officer on campus, so it is definitely a different demographic…. But that is a school district as a whole that has had issues prior to all the BLM stuff.

> So, I don't know where that steams from and why they decide at certain times…" to end MOUs (Sarah, Zoom interview, 2021).

This officer referred to this event occurring "prior to all the BLM stuff," but this was actually around 2015 and BLM did exist. In fact, this was during the initial years of BLM and situated amongst two major police killings – Trayvon Martin (2012) and Michael Brown (2014).

The fight to remove police from K-12 campuses existed prior to BLM, but due to the complexities of the movement it has been hard to define. The statement of the SRO who was unsure why districts were ending MOUs, is in direct connection to the pitfalls of the movement. Folks can identity BLM as a leading force in fighting against the police and the carceral institution, but the connection to policing in education is lost in translation. Furthering this point, another SRO discussed how they would be shocked if the removal of school resource officers happened in their district. The officer discussed how the police department in their city has a "fantastic relationship" with the community (Bob, Zoom interview, 2021). However, they followed this comment up with expressing that they are "one incident away from having" the conversation to remove officers in their district (Bob, Zoom interview, 2021). There is clearly a disconnect between individual police departments and the police as a carceral system. In addition to this disconnect, there is not a blatant connection between the protests during 2020 calling to defund the police and removing officers from school campuses. The movement as it stands now is intertwined with several other movements calling

for social justice. There needs to be a clear distinction between the movement to end the STPP and abolition of the police as a whole.

Beyond Arizona: Where is the School Policing Movement Going?

The bulk of the movement is focused on the local level and we have seen this across the country. When discussing the future of the movement, once activist said,

> "a lot of success will come from grassroots efforts… that's where a lot of the decisions and the focus needs to be and so many people get so fixated on things that are happening nationally, they're forgetting what's happening around the corner, and we really need to focus on what's happening around the corner so you can then expand it out to the state and national level" (Linda, Zoom interview, 2021).

It is important to think about what the movement looks like at a grassroots level, especially because of the history of success within the movement. However, there are challenges when the approach strictly focuses on individual cities or states,

> "…there are different levels of organized communities…a lot of is haphazard depending on… whether there's a group that's organized… that was frustrating about the work… I could run the data and I could tell you that Akron, Ohio, back in 2010, was one of the worst places in the country for [the STPP] but there was nobody organizing" (Evan, Zoom interview, 2021).

We have to ensure that there are organizers that are united. We have seen national collective efforts. The protests in 2020 were a national collective of people standing up and fighting for Black lives in America. We have to prioritize the removal of SROs

collectively. Individual success is important, but it does not protect all of our students. By organizing around the issue, we leave our most vulnerable students vulnerable.

Restorative justice is a leading alternative to harsh school discipline and criminalization. It has been proven to be successful as an alternative to incarceration and within school districts across the country (Butler, 2018). In places like Denver, there has been a lot of success due to strong organizing. However, in places like Phoenix it has struggled to flourish because

> "…of frustrations around implementation of anything that looked like restorative justice or transformative justice… what are the dollars and the programming behind…executing something like that versus… seven politicians on a school board saying yes we have a restorative justice program… but what if the principals and teachers are just giving lip service to that concept… or the superintendent… says great we're implementing this but we're not putting dollars behind it… what does it actually mean. I think some students knew what it was, and some students didn't know what it was… and… a lot of teachers were frustrated that it was sort of just an extra professional development thing that you know wasn't really prioritized or given…too many resources" (Bryce, Zoom interview, 2021).

Restorative justice takes a lot of time and work to implement correctly. When the movement only focuses on individual success there is a lack of support when it comes to collective change. When it is quickly implemented simply for the sake

of good PR and there is no buy in, there is bound to be push back. One teacher said,

> "I remember I trained as someone who was like authorized to… put their hands on students if they'd been a danger to other students…but that was…years ago [in a different district]. In my current setting we don't have that we have [that]… restorative justice thing which I believe is a load of crap, just somebody put a nice little title on something and then now it's charging people money for using that title, its common sense, you learn how to talk to the student, but not like yell at them and stuff so that's the most we've had is like restorative justice…" (Steven, Zoom interview, 2021).

Reimagining what school safety looks like is not easy. Several folks believe that police equal safety. So, when alternatives are put into place, but not properly executed it does not look better than policing, even though alternatives are possible and have been successful. To simply focus of individual grassroots efforts, limits the ability for sweeping, sustainable change for all students.

CHAPTER 3

COMPLEX DYNAMICS OF MOVEMENTS

Introduction

Speaking broadly about the movement to remove SROs from K-12 education, there are several complex features of the movement at play, which ultimately determines the power the movement holds. A movement can benefit from becoming intersectional because this provides opportunities coalition building. If done well, diverse organizers can target shared problems affecting several groups and communities. At the same time, intersectional movements face a wide range of challenges. A particularly important challenge intersectional movements face is their ability to move in and out campaigns over the long-term without fracturing or facing internal conflicts between organizations. It is therefore important to view intersectional movements as being composed of core and peripheral organizations, as well as counter movements. I also argue that at times, conflicts can emerge over shifts in organization's support or opposition to the movement, which I argue forms a type of intersectional violence.

The movements working to remove policing in K-12 education are challenged by a counter movement. The counter movement is invested in maintaining and expanding the carceral system. This becomes problematic because the key intersections of this movement: immigration, youth, and race are removed from the conversation. The counter movement is successful at shifting the conversation and in combination with the lack of definition it can make evaluating and achieving success very challenging. It becomes much easier for the counter movement to continue to normalize the carceral institution. When evaluating the movement dynamics, we see several organizations take on the issue

of policing in schools as a campaign. Its complex structure falls short of being a full movement, however, there are several movements and a counter movement that have a drastic impact of the success. These complexities and constant moving parts make it hard for organizations working on this issue to clearly define the problem.

For example, March For Our Lives is a youth led organization that elevated the national movement around gun safety in America. Since their development in 2018, through a nationwide march following the Parkland, Florida school shooting, these young people have continued to fight for safer communities free from gun violence. Several chapters have formed across the country and the Arizona Chapter specifically, has had an impact on the movement to remove SROs from K-12 campuses. The impact that March For Our Lives Arizona has had on shifting the conversation around school safety is a prime example of how movements can monopolize an agenda for the sake of their own success.

Over the last two years, March For Our Lives Arizona has shifted their focus away from changing gun laws and focusing efforts on preventative measures because of the push back they were receiving from 2nd amendment activists and conservative lawmakers (Hunter, 2019). However, March For Our Lives core mission is still to free communities from gun violence through policy change (March For Our Lives Website). This shift in focus allowed this strong movement to expand an absorb key tenets of the campaign to remove SROs from schools to guide their agenda.

For years, the School Safety Grant has funded several SRO positions in Arizona schools and Arizona has not focused on funding positions like school counselors and social workers. Arizona has the biggest discrepancy in school counselor to student ratio

(Hunter, 2019). Arizona has an average of 905 students to every one counselor (Altavena, 2019). In response to this growing problem, March For Our Lives Arizona started The New Normal Campaign focusing on increasing funding for more school counselors and removing funding for SROs (Altavena, 2019). In some ways this is very positive. Counselors are necessary and tend to address student problems from a trauma informed approach. Where we see a pitfall though is the lack of action March For Our Lives takes against the carceral system itself.

As a result of March For Our Lives advocacy, Arizona Governor Doug Ducey allocated $20 million to support counselors, social workers, and SROs (Altavena, 2019). This was $80 million short of what the schools had originally asked for, but more than what was allocated before (Altavena, 2019). Through the work of March For Our Lives the School Safety Program was able to receive applications from over 900 schools for over 1,100 positions that are broken down to reflect 40% school counselors, 34% school social workers, 26% school resource officers (AZ Department of Education). Although there is an increase in funding for critical positions like counselors and social workers, there is still funding for SROs. Schools are also allowed to decide what positions they want funded (AZ Department of Education). This is problematic because it minimizes the voices of those most affected. March For Our Lives accepted the success and continues to work alongside school officials and SROs on a safety committee (AZ Department of Education). These youth are working within the carceral institution instead of working to dismantle it.

March For Our Lives was able to integrate themselves into this space easily because they are a student led movement. However, as their work progressed the issue of

removing school resource officers was minimized because their advocacy for more funding was successful. This is intersectional violence. As youth, they are a key intersect of the movement, however, they did not stay true to dismantling the carceral state, instead they upheld it. Although some may consider March For Our Lives an active player in the fight to remove SROs it becomes complicated when we evaluate their success. These complex dynamics of the campaign and the impact different movements have, is what makes measuring and determining what constitutes success to remove SROs particularly challenging. The movements at play are never static and they are able to assume different roles that either help or harm the success. In this case, I am measuring success by the positive contributions a movement makes in order to elevate diverse options and generate change that dismantles the carceral institution within education and addresses the intersectional need.

Chapter 2's primary focus was on understanding the dynamics of the racial regime upheld by the carceral system and the dynamics of the movement in Arizona. This insight came from interviews with key stakeholders working on the ground in some capacity relating to SROs in schools. This chapter expands on the prior chapter's key interviews by connecting them to critical aspects uncovered through the news content analysis of the Arizona Republic. This analysis works to unpack a deeper understanding of the intersectional features within movements taking on or challenging this campaign and the complex dynamics that make measuring success challenging.

Movement Framework

The news content analysis was qualitatively coded through NVivo. The majority of the coding was done manually. This allowed for a strong understanding of the

conversation around SROs in Arizona from 1999 - 2020. There is a total of 879 articles from this timeframe, which were all the articles available for download from the Arizona Republic on the ProQuest database. The content being analyzed in this chapter was sorted through line-by-line, text-based coding. This provided an in-depth view of the content to allow for a broader analysis.

This chapter's analysis is organized through an original social movement framework, which typologizes each organization mentioned in the news articles based on their relationship to the campaign for abolishing SROs. Specifically, I identify all National and Arizona based organizations mentioned between 1999-2020 in the Arizona Republic articles gathered through the search term ("school resource officer" OR "school resource officers"). The missions of these organizations and their affiliation with the campaign to remove SROs from schools provides a great deal of insight into the dynamics of movements and counter movements. The table below classifies their connection to this campaign as either, "leader against SROs", "natural ally", "performative ally," or a "counter movement." This allows us to conceptualize the type of involvement each organization has with the campaign and how it has a positive or negative (indirect and direct) impact of the campaign's success. It also guides this chapter's intersectional and CRT analysis of which organizations are core, peripheral and counter to the campaign, and therefore, how these organizations form a social movement.

Table 3. Conceptual Framework of the SRO Movement

	Leader against SROs	Natural Ally	Performative Ally	Counter Movement
Organizations				

First, organizations defined as "leaders against SROs" have contributed time and resources to remove SROs from campuses. This goal is part of their mission and strongly guides the work. In Arizona specifically, Puente's Cops Outta Campus campaign is youth led and Puente, as a whole, is an immigrant rights organization. Puente is one of the leading organizations fighting to remove SROs on campus in Phoenix, AZ. Their involvement makes the campaign intersectional. Black Mothers Forum is another organization that's mission is to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline. Their work aims to elevate the voices in the Black community, contributing to the racial intersections of the campaign.

Second, organizations defined as a "natural ally" are in support of the movement to remove SROs from campus and at times dedicate a great deal of resources to the work. However, removing SROs from schools is not their guiding mission, therefore, the campaign is set aside so the organization can focus resources on other issues. This is not intersectional violence because the organization is acting in the best interest of the campaign and provides additional support when needed. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is a natural ally. Their national office works on school-to-prison pipeline issues and publishes reports that support the need for a campaign. However, the ACLU of Arizona, a branch of the national organization, is a leader against SROs in Arizona

because of their Demand 2 Learn campaign. Demand 2 Learn has been alongside Puente in the fight to remove SROs from schools in Arizona.

Third, organizations defined as a "Performative Ally" have connection to the campaign, but unlike a natural ally, their ability to move in an out can be dangerous. March For Our Lives is a prime example of a performative ally. Their overall mission is not directly connected to removing police from campuses, but rather to stop gun violence. However, they were able to capitalize on the campaign suggesting less funding for SROs to promote more funding for school counselors and social workers. Although funding for these positions is necessary, March For Our Lives elevated this issue and then continued to work with the carceral institution to define school safety. This is intersectional violence because their work minimized the importance of removing SROs from school campuses for the safety of all students. They capitalized on their ability to relate because they are a youth led movement but failed to acknowledge the intersectionality of other students affected by policing on campuses.

Finally, organizations defined as supporting the "counter movement" continue to fight to uphold and expand the carceral system. The National Association of School Resource Officers and the Arizona chapter work to support and uphold policing in education. They work to train and support the work of officers, while promoting the idea that schools are safter with police officers in them. In addition to the organizations directly affiliated with SROs, there are organizations that have played a huge role in the counter movement, despite their mission not directly aligning with the cause. These organizations are gun rights activist that strongly support and defend the 2nd amendment. Organizations like the NRA rose in support of school resource officers on campuses

because of the ideology that guns equal safety. The values that equate safety to police and guns are the foundation of what supports the carceral institution. These organizations work to maintain and expand power by arming civilians and enhancing police presence in all spaces.

Table 4. Arizona's SRO Movement

National Organizations	Leader against SROs	Natural Ally	Performative Ally	Counter Movement
National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO)	No	No	No	Yes Established 1991 World's leader in school-based policing
National Rifle Association (NRA)	No	No	No	Yes Established 1871 Gun rights advocacy group
National Sheriffs Association	No	No	No	Yes Established 1940 US Trade Association upholding professionalism in law enforcement
ACLU	No	Yes Established 1920 Nonprofit defending individuals' civil rights	No	No
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People	No	Yes Established 1909 Civil rights organization advancing	No	No

(NAACP)		justice for Black folks		
			Yes Established 1993 Interdisciplinary curricular program	
Anti-Defamation League	No	No	X	No
Civil Rights Project - UCLA	No	X	No	No
Advancement Project	Yes Established 1999 Multi-racial civil rights organization	No	No	No
League of Latin American Citizens	No	Yes Established 1929 Oldest Hispanic organization in US advancing civil rights through community-based programs	No	No
Arizona Organizations	**Leader against SROs**	**Natural Ally**	**Performative Ally**	**Counter Movement**
Arizona School Resource Officer Association	No	No	No	Yes Established 1996 Non-profit that provides training, education, & resources to SROs
Arizona Citizen Defense League	No	No	No	Yes Established 2005

				Non-profit, non-partisan, grassroots organization dedicated to protected 2nd amendment rights
Arizona Education Association (teachers union)	No	No	Yes Established 1892 Teachers' union	No
Alliance Defending Freedom*	No	No	No	Yes Established 1994 Faith based nonprofit defending constitutional rights
Phoenix City Council	No	No	No	Yes Voted to fund SROs
ACLU of Arizona, Demand 2 Learn Campaign	Yes Established 1959 Nonprofit defending individuals' civil rights focusing on dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline	No	No	No
Puente Human Rights, Cops Outta Campus	Yes Established 2007 Traditionally, an immigrant rights organization but started a campaign to remove SROs from Phoenix	No	No	No

	schools			
Black Mothers Forum	Yes Established 2016 Advocacy organization to end school-to-prison pipeline	No	No	No
March for Our Lives Arizona	No	No	Yes Performative Ally since 2018 Youth led advocacy organization to end gun violence	No

*Deemed a hate group by Southern Poverty Law Center because of anti-LGBTQIA+ stance

This conceptual framework is important because it allows us to contextualize the intersectional features of the movement, as well as define the roles of each key player. Specifically, the three key intersections of this movement are youth, immigration, and race. This framework provides the dimensions to understand how specific movements elevate, minimize, and disregard these voices. Succuss is when everyone is elevating the key voices of those being affected. In this instance, the counter movement is unified and strong which makes the need for unity amongst the leaders and the allies critical. The Arizona Republic news articles in combination with the interviews from Chapter Two, allow for a deeper exploration of the intersectionality of this campaign and the dynamics of the movements involved. In the following sections, the interviews and the news articles work together to highlight how the racial regime is upheld within schools, while further elaborating on the dynamics of the movements. BLM, immigrant rights, and the counter movement become the focus of the analysis and bring forward key features that

guide our understanding of how the carceral institution is challenged, upheld, and expanded.

Part I: Power Dynamics within Schools

The foundation of the racial regime framework (MOUs, zero tolerance practices, and the use of classification, control, and branding) are key features that work together in order to uphold the carceral institution. In conjunction with the interviews, the news articles expand on how schools are allowing the carceral system to utilize classification, control, and branding to uphold power. A key point that is addressed in the work of Michele Foucault is the use of surveillance to implement control over large groups people. This method referred to as the panopticon, structurally sets up spaces to reinforce a mindset of conformity. The news articles discuss this in a way that highlights the practices put into place within schools under the justification of "school safety". For example, one article opens up with this passage,

> "Students eating lunch at Shadow Mountain High School in Phoenix better be on their best behavior. That's because the principal's new office has large glass windows overlooking the lunch courtyard. The design wasn't an accident. It's one example of the thousands of dollars Valley school districts have spent boosting safety and security in the three years since 12 students and a teacher were killed at Colorado's Columbine High School. April 20th marks the anniversary of the worst school shooting in U.S. history, a tragedy that prompted sweeping changes in school security across the nation" (Arizona Republic Data Set, 2002).

Sadly, Columbine is no longer the worst school shooting in U.S. history. We have experienced several tragic mass shootings since 1999. The protocols and structural designs of the campuses have not proven to prevent mass casualty. Instead of focusing on the safety of the children and ensuring that this was the motivation, the article discusses how this set up allows better surveillance of the students. This is a direct correlation to how prisons are set up, in the form of a panopticon, to implement order.

As carceral practices have infiltrated their way into the education system, there has been a grave disconnect between preserving school safety from outside intruders and upholding school safety from within. The news articles have framed the issue of school safety in a way that highlights the features of the carceral system. With knowing how these tools operate, it is not surprising that the conversation around school safety is frequently famed from the perspective of keeping students in line. When there are mass causalities at schools like Columbine, Newton, and Parkland it is easy to absorb the socially constructed rhetoric that police keep us safe. However, questioning the social construct of policing and safety takes a lot more work and resources than just allowing the power to remain. This conflict is what causes harm and what makes it necessary for a social movement to form and question what society has deemed safe.

The act of surveillance is racialized and subject to personal bias. MOUs provide SROs the ability to use discretion when operation on campuses and who they choose to police. A news article acknowledged an officer's ability to use discretion based on personal perception,

> "Since the day schools began posting on-campus officers, the emphasis has been on building rapport with the students rather than policing their

> actions. Good resource officers know which students are leaders, which need watching and which need someone to offer guidance" (Arizona Republic Data Set, 2004).

An effort is always made to put the emphasis SROs building relationships, but even with that sentiment, it is still clear that the officer is able to choose who to build relationships with. This discretion is tightly connected to the use of surveillance as a means of control. Officers are able to observe the dynamics of a school and decide when to implement punitive practices and when to use discretion to dictate the disciplinary decisions. The carceral system is rooted in bias and operates under a larger racial regime making it impossible to build relationships without consequence.

Part II: Challenging the Carceral Institution through Intersectionality

In Arizona, students who are undocumented or in mixed status families make up a large percentage of the student population. These students face a unique threat from the carceral system making it critical to dismantle the carceral institution in schools. This section works to highlight why Puente and other immigrant rights groups are an important part of the fight to remove SROs from schools. These voices are a vital part of the conversation in Arizona and must continue to be valued as the work evolves.

In Chapter Two, one teacher shared an encounter she had with an off-duty SRO in the community. The officer made a racialized "joke" that insinuated cops do not help people of color, they shot them. This example highlights the engrained racial biased in those who are trained within the carceral institution. This is not a unique incident. The Arizona Republic covered a story about, a school resource officer who flipped off a group pro-immigrant protester while in his police car and uniform while driving past (AZ

Republic, 2004). The officer was "given a written reprimand, [had to attend] a First Amendment training session and… talk to the department's patrol [leads] about what he learned in the session…" (Arizona Republic Data Set, 2007). The Arizona Republic also shared that the Officer claimed in a detailed report, "the incident was not racially motivated… 'let's make sure this is clear' he said… 'I'm not a racist, and my wife is Mexican. My closest friends are Mexicans, and I love Mexicans'" (Arizona Republic Data Set, 2007).

This incident and problematic defense highlights the racial biases individuals hold. This officer faced very minimal repercussions for his actions and was still able to work at a school. Through the interviews and the news coverage, Arizona's student population is described as predominately Hispanic and Latino. There is a lot of fear from undocumented or mixed status families that having an SRO on campus could increase their risk of being detained and deported (Teacher, Zoom interview, 2021). After Senate Bill (SB)1070 was signed into law, the news coverage showed a clear concern from the community about the safety of people who were undocumented.

According to the Arizona Republic article, SB 1070 allows, "an officer engaged in a lawful stop, detention or arrest [to], when practicable, ask about a person's legal status when reasonable suspicion exists that the person is in the U.S. illegally" (Arizona Republic Data Set, 2010). This raised rightful concern about the role of an SRO and their ability to ask a student's citizenship status. As we see in Chapter Two, the issues in the community are a direct reflection of the issues happening in schools. The news article continued to elaborate on what the school board members were told,

> "[the school board does not] need to do anything because school-resource officers are Phoenix Police Department employees, not district employees… it's still unknown what new immigration training and standards police officers will get to implement the new law…. the district will continue to honor U.S. Supreme Court ruling *Plyler vs. Doe*, which, among other things, prohibited public schools from enforcing immigration law, or providing information on a student's or family's status to any outside agency" (AZ Republic, 2010).

This statement highlights the problematic nature of MOUs between schools and police. The article acknowledges that the police officers are not school district employees and the school itself does not have any authority to do intervene in the training of or implementation of practice by the police. It is also important to acknowledge that the carceral system is able to challenge the past success of movements.

Plyer v. Doe was a monumental success for the immigrant rights movement and the school equity movement. However, years later we see the power the racial regime has and instead of outright denying students access to education, it is threating the criminalization of these students for getting an education. Although the school was told that their students would not be impacted, another news article uncovered that,

> "In addition to criminalizing minor, non-violent infractions, members of the Phoenix Police Department also are enforcing SB1070's "show me your papers" provision on school campuses. In one recent incident at a middle school in Phoenix, a school resource officer arrested and referred a

> 13-year-old U.S. citizen student to federal immigration officials one day after he was involved in a fight near the bus stop" (AZ Republic, 2013).

Police on school campuses harm our students. They are able to operate independently, and their discretion is rooted in biased judgements. Incidences like this show the complexity to power the carceral institution has and the need for a united movement to combat the injustice. These intersectional factors can be lost in the discussion of the movement more broadly, which is why crucial case studies are important and work to inform national efforts.

Puente Human Rights Campaign is a leader in the effort to remove SROs from school campuses in Arizona – PUHSD specifically. They have absorbed this issue a key tenant of their organization because of the impact carceral practices have on undocumented and mixed status families. As activists and scholars, we must recognize intersectionality when building movements because injustice does not occur in a silo. It is critical to view social movements from an intersectional lens because the problem can always evolve, or a new one can immerge. Puente works to challenge the carceral state in an effort to reimagine what safety looks like without policing.

Part III: The Complex Dynamics of Upholding the Carceral Institution

Throughout history we have seen racialized practices enforced by police. The War on Drugs targeted people of color and criminalized drug use. The criminalization of drugs is one of the leading factors in the development of mass incarceration. SROs who participated in interviews discussed how having drugs on campus is an automatic arrest. The news articles also showcased this mentality from other SROs, "...I tell them that if I catch them with drugs, I will refer them to Juvenile Court...if they get caught, they better

not say I did not warn them" (Carlos, 2020). Police in schools have used tools from the community (the racialization and criminalization of drug use) to justify arresting students. This supports the counter movement because it highlights issues society has already deemed criminal, therefore, justifying the need for carceral intervention.

One news article talks about the role of police on school campuses as, "a spinoff on community policing…as a society, we have to start looking at our schools as communities. They have the same threats of violence as communities… as in any neighborhood, depending on the campus, schools' problems vary widely" (Arizona Republic Data Set, 1999). When we recognize schools as a reflection of the community, we are readily admitting to the use of racialized practices aimed at criminalizing actions for the sake of control.

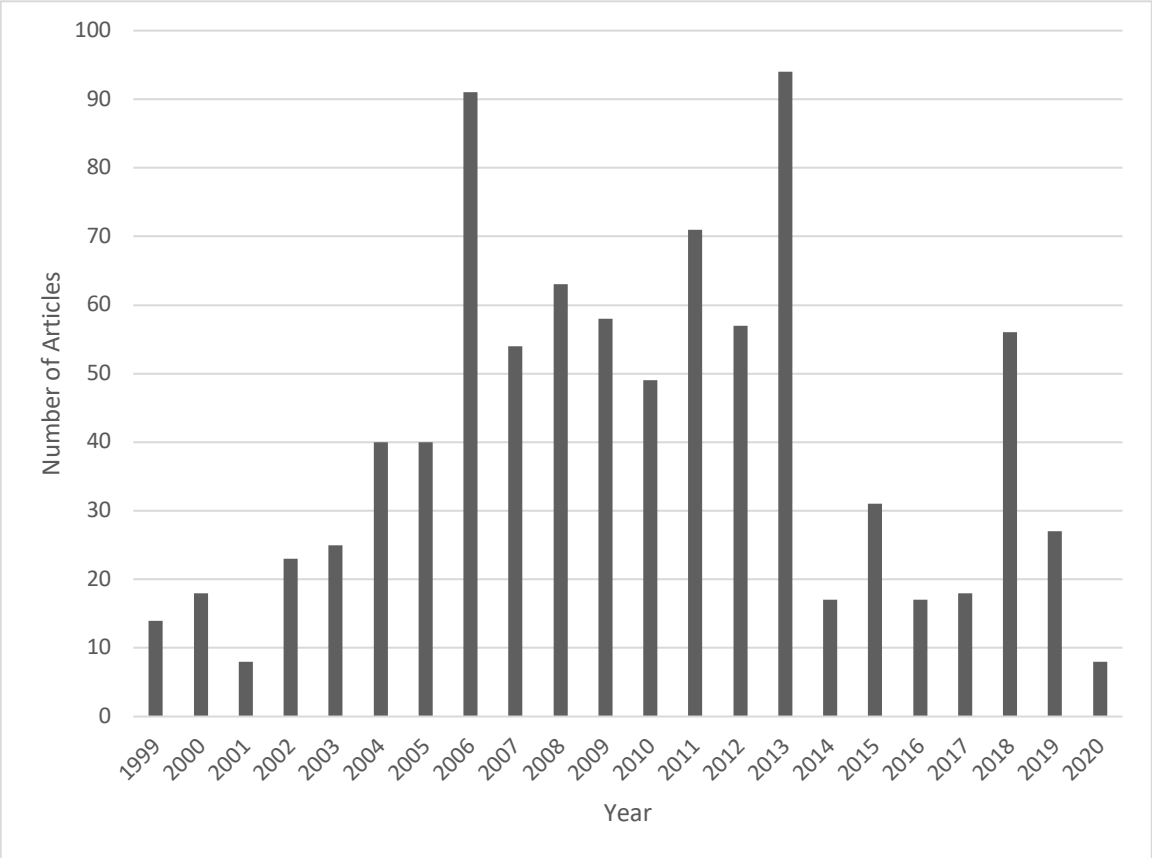
SROs are police first. The SROs that participated in the interviews discussed their roles on campuses shift, however, other interviewees recognized that the role of an SRO does not overshadow the officer's role of a police officer first. The news articles spoke to this idea, "'they are police officers first, an SRO (school resource officer) second,' Officer Mike Pena, Glendale police spokesman, said of the district's 12 such officers. 'They need to have the tools that everyone else has'" (Arizona Republic Data Set, 2004). The article continues and refers to the SROs in "Phoenix Union, Gilbert, Chandler, Mesa and Glendale schools…wear full uniform, including their weapons. Sworn officers typically carry at least one handgun, pepper spray, a baton and handcuffs" (Arizona Republic Data Set, 2004).

Police are armed and ready to take command – even in schools – this provides the counter movement with justification to support and expand the carceral system. The

movement represents our traditional thinking around safety and allows the power to remain in order to uphold the racial regime. What is interesting about the counter movement is its crossover with the 2nd amendment. These organizations strongly support SROs on school campuses and fight to expand SRO programs, therefore expanding the carceral institution. In the news particularly, we see a spike in counter movement action directly after mass shootings – specifically those at schools.

There have been several mass shootings in the United States since 1999, but there are three specifically that have had an impact on the movement to remove SROs from campuses. In 1999, there was school shooting in Columbine, Colorado. The shooter murdered fifteen people and then committed suicide (Terkel, 2012). There was a school resource officer on Columbine High Schools campus (Terkel, 2012). In December of 2012, there was another school shooting in Newton, Connecticut at Sandy Hook Elementary School. This gunman murdered 28 people and 20 of those people were under the age of seven (Ray, 2012). In 2018, there was a third school shooting in Parkland, Florida and 18 people were killed (Lynch, 2019). There was a school resource officer on this campus who actively did not confront the shooter (Lynch, 2019). When analyzing the news article count there is a spike in coverage about school resource officers after each of these tragedies. Figure 2 indicates the article increase in 1999/2000, 2012/2013, and 2018.

Figure 3. Arizona Republic Article Count by Year



The conversation that arose during these times centered a pro-gun argument and advocated for armed officers to be present on K-12 campuses. This draws a connection to between the 2nd amendment, policing, and the carceral institution. The 1994 Gun Free Schools Act prohibits firearms on school campuses except by a law enforcement officer. In 2012, arming teachers moved to the front of the debate. For example, in one article it talked about how,

> "the designated principal or staff member would get free firearms training from former-law enforcement officers…the school employee would be responsible for providing his or her own gun…they would not just get marksmanship training but also be taught good judgment, when to shoot,

> when not to shoot… [the training] would teach them the use-of-force laws, defensive tactics and properly securing the firearm…" (Arizona Republic Data Set, 2012).

Essentially, this proposed legislation suggested that teachers should straddle the role of educator and armed protector. The counter movement used this as a way to expand the carceral institution while deeming it a way to increase safety. A teacher assuming the role within the carceral system – even unofficially – demonstrates the amount of power the system holds over spaces that it simply has no place in. The protection and safety of our students is of the upmost importance, however, arming teachers and putting resources forward to support armed officers does not solve the root of the problem.

Part IV: Even in its Prime the Movement can be Invisible

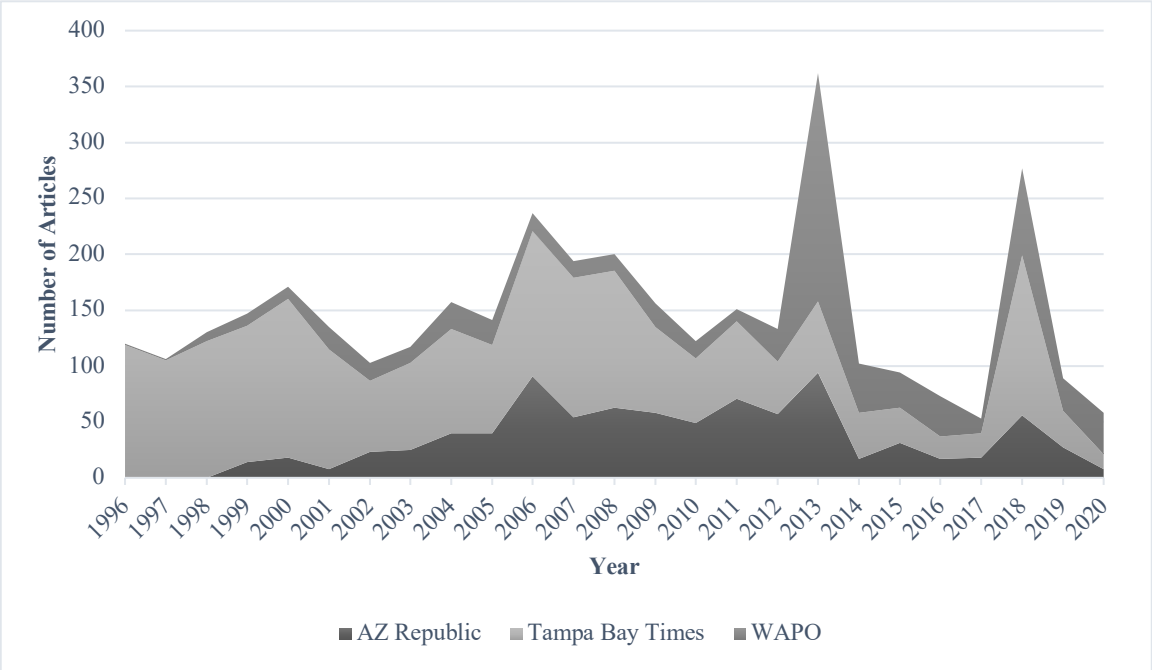
Black Lives Matter is a natural ally of the movement to end SROs on campus. The principal of this movement is to combat racially motivated police violence in the community. This crosses over to the schools setting. Black Lives Matter does utilize resources and honors the intersectionality of the fight to remove SROs from school campuses. However, their prime focus is not on policing in schools. They fight against the larger carceral institution and focus on policing in the communities and the broader justice system. This is important to recognize because it is a factor in the campaign for the removal of SROs to become invisible and then reappear.

In the aftermath of the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, BLM led mass protests across the world. This caused a mass questioning of the racial regime and the carceral tactics used to uphold it. Floyd and Taylor were both adults and murdered by police in the community. There was no direct connection to K-12 education, however, the

outcry led by BLM brought the conversation of policing to the forefront providing a platform for the campaign to end policing on school campuses to once again become visible. This led to the largest success the campaign had ever seen. Several districts across the country began to reevaluate school safety and end their MOUs with police departments. What is unique about Arizona specifically, is that PUHSD temporarily ended their MOU with police departments and started the participatory budgeting project. This move towards successes developed out of BLM protests and was carried out by Puente and other organizations in Phoenix. However, shockingly, there were only eight articles available in 2020 from the Arizona Republic. None of which mentioned the protests, Black Lives Matter, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, or the removal or SROs from PUHSD. This speaks volumes.

I was not able to code articles outside of the Arizona Republic due to time constraints. However, I was able to look up the article count for the Tampa Bay Times and the Washington Post as comparison points to the Arizona Republic. I selected the Tampa Bay Times because of Florida's prominent carceral policies in schools and the Washington Post for a larger national view. I used the search term ("school resource officer" or "school resource officers") for all three news sources through the database ProQuest. Below Figure 4 highlights the shocking decrease in conversation about school resource officers in 2020, across all three news sources, despite the national protests.

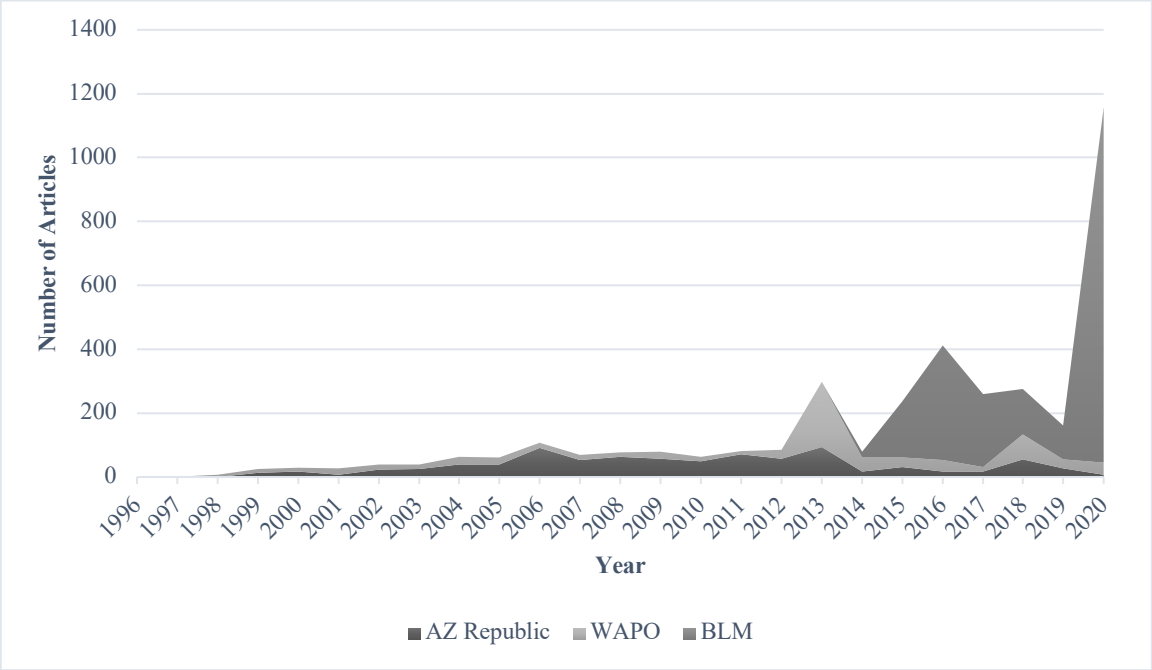
Figure 4. Number of New Articles on “SRO”



This trend sparked my curiosity about the conversation about Black Lives Matter in the news. I conducted an additional search of just the Washington Post using the term (“Black Lives Matter” OR “BLM”). Figure 5 compares the BLM article count in the Washington Post to the article count on school resource officers in the Arizona Republic and the Tampa Bay Times. There is a distinct and drastic spike in conversation about BLM in the news. This clearly depicts how the movement to remove school resource officers from K-12 education can be invisible even during a peak of success. So, what happens when the campaign is not being carried by BLM, is facing the challenge of performative allies and a counter movement, while also trying to balance elevating intersectional voices? It is simple, folks stop fighting for success. These factors are enough to kill the campaign even though our students are in desperate need of support. We must find a way to clearly define the problem, uplift and support the leading

organizations, while finding sustainable ways for natural allies to remain in the conversation.

Figure 5. Number of News Articles Comparing “SRO” v. “BLM”



The classification framework used to identify the organization roles brought clarity to the dynamics of the movement. The most important area to recognize is how these organizations are able to challenge, uphold, and/or expand the carceral institution. Lead organizations, like Puente, highlight why it is critical to view movements from an intersectional lens and ensure that a variety of voices are being elevated. However, movements must be cautious of performative allies that can easily move in and out of the cause without consideration of the larger outcome. Counter movements are complex and this one specifically works in several ways to uphold and expand the carceral institution. Arguably, sustaining a counter movement is easier than trying to dismantle the racial regime because the tools used are already normal practice. The absence of key players,

like BLM, highlights how the fight to remove SROs can so easily be overlooked as just a facet of other movements. As activists and scholars, we must find a sustainable way to support the removal of SROs as a movement because our students deserve better.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Frist, we must continue to talk about the carceral state's power within our schools. People of color are dying at the hands of police. A year after the death of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, we have seen several Black adults and children murdered by the police. The movement fought for accountability and on June 16, 2021 we won. Derek Chauvin, the police officer who murdered George Floyd, was convicted of murder. This is not justice, but yet an act of accountability that advances the conversations around reimagining policing in America. As we saw in Chapter 3, the movement to remove SROs is easily made an afterthought to police violence in the community or at times becomes completely invisible. As activists and scholars, we must recognize this and actively work to maintain visibility for the fight to remove SROs from campuses. Schools have to be considered in the efforts of reimagine policing.

Second, it is important to think about how allies influence social movements. The work to make the movement continually visible relays on leaders and allies. Chapter 3 laid the framework for conceptualizing the work of allies and the affects they can have on a movement. As we saw with March For Our Lives, they were able to gain a significant amount of traction because of their youth leadership. However, their role as a performative ally hindered the successful removal of SROs from school campuses. We must look to all the players in the movement and call for solidarity in order for the movement to maintain visible. This is especially important in the wake of several anti-protest bills that have surfaced in states across the country. If there was ever a perfect time for movement solidary, it is now.

Finally, it is vital that we elevate the voices of students. Historically, schools have been a place of organizing and the birthplace to several student led movements. Student voices are important, and we must create spaces that value their experiences. In a time where there is increasing police violence in the community, we must support our young people in the fight against carceral power. Organizing is a key tool to success. Further research must be done that works to incorporate student voices and further explore the movement dynamics in different areas of the country. This is how we can create solidarity within the movement and ensure that all student voices are being heard.

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APPENDIX A

CODEBOOK

Name of Code
Qualitative
Abolition concepts
Intervention services
Justice system
Mental health
Policing
Civil Rights abuse
Community demographic
Community Policing
Pro-Police
SRO
Demographic of students with SRO
PUHSD
Purpose of policing in schools
student rights on campus
Use of force
Restorative justice
STPP
discipline
Race
Surveillance
Zero Tolerance
War on Drugs
Interviews
Organizations
Arizona
National
Other states
Rhetoric
Bootstrap mentality
Political
Democrat
Republican

Racial Stereotypes
School safety
Student blaming
Social Movement references
2nd amendment
BLM
Immigration
LGBTQ
White supremacy

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT FOR SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS

Introduction

1. Can you take a few minutes to introduce yourself and your background before becoming an SRO?
2. How long have you been an SRO?
3. Why did you want to be an SRO?
4. What does your job entail?
5. Has your job changed at all since you first started?
6. What are your favorite aspects of the job?
7. What are your least favorite aspects of the job?
8. What would you say are the most important roles of your job?

Daily Job

9. Can you describe what your interactions with students look like on a day-to-day basis?
    a. Can you describe positive interactions or experiences you have had with students?
    b. Negative interactions?
10. Can you describe what your interactions look like with teachers?
    a. Positive?
    b. Negative?
11. Can you describe what your interactions look like with school counselors?
    a. Positive experiences?
    b. Negative experiences?

Training and School Placement Process

12. What kind of training did you receive for your role as a school resource officer?
    a. {If they had specialized training} was this a requirement to be a school resource officer or something you did voluntarily?
        i. {If it is voluntary} why did you choose to take the additional training?
    b. {If they haven't had specialized training} what kind of training do you feel you should have been offered?
13. Do you feel like the training available to you is sufficient in order to do your job?
    a. {If yes} what do you find the most valuable out of the training you have had?
    b. {If not} what trainings or supports do you think need to be added in order to feel like you are fully prepared to do your job?
14. What types of support do you receive from school officials, local police, or others, to carry out your work?
    a. Can you describe areas where you lack support?
    b. Solutions?
15. How do you think SROs on campus impact student rights?
    a. How does your role protect student rights?
    b. How does your role not protect student rights?

Before and After Summer of 2020

16. Due to recent national events, Phoenix Union High School District will no longer have school resource officers assigned to individual campuses, instead they will assign officers to the district. How do you think this will impact students?
17. Has your role as an SRO changed since the shift in policy within Phenix Union High School District?
    a. {if yes} what has changed?
    b. {if it has not changed} do you anticipate a change in your role?
    c. What might that change look like?
18. Did you have any interaction with organizations that are involved in the defund the police movement?
    a. Who would you say is leading this movement to end police presence or SRO presence on campuses in Arizona?
        i. {if have not already, can you identify organizations involved?}
            1. Follow-up: Are you familiar with Puente?
        ii. Public officials?
        iii. Specific communities or families?
            1. Follow-up:
                a. Black or Latino communities?
                b. White communities?
                c. Others?
    b. Who is pushing back against this movement?
        i. Organizations?
        ii. Public officials?

iii. Others?

19. Do you the removal of school resource officers from campuses would have occurred if BLM and related events in 2020 did not happen? Why or why not?
    a. How did these events change the direction or momentum of the movement here in Phoenix?
20. Do you know other SROs, teachers, counselors, organizations who would want to participate?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT FOR TEACHERS

Introduction

1. Can you take a few minutes to introduce yourself and your background?
2. Why did you want to become an educator?
3. What would you say are the most important roles of your job?

Daily Job

4. Can you describe what your interactions with students look like on a day-to-day basis?
    a. Can you describe positive interactions or experiences you have had with students?
    b. Negative interactions?
5. Can you describe what your interactions look like with school resource officers?
    a. Positive?
    b. Negative?
6. Can you describe how school resource officers fit into the school culture?
    a. Contributing positively, how?
    b. Negatively, how?

SROs on Campus

7. Have you ever had to call an SRO into your classroom?
    a. {If yes} Please describe what happened.
    b. {If no} What would you say are the SROs predominant roles on your campus?
8. Can you describe situations when a school resource officer was a necessary part of an intervention?

a. From the incident you just described, what are the behaviors that occurred that you felt a school resource officer was necessary?
b. Do you feel that other professionals could have successfully intervened in the situation due to the behaviors you just mentioned?

9. Are there specific student populations that you have noticed have more interactions with school resource officers than others?
    a. {If yes} how would you describe those populations?
        i. How would you describe those interactions?
10. Do teachers, school resource officers, and counselors get any training together?
    a. {If yes} what kind of training? And did you find it beneficial?
    b. {If no} what kind of training would you like to have as a team, if any?
11. Are teachers required to take de-escalation training?
    a. {if yes} can you describe the training and instances where it has benefited you?
    b. {if no} can you describe instances where you wish you had additional training in de-escalation and what was the result?

<u>Before and After Summer of 2020</u>

12. Due to recent events, Phoenix Union High School District will no longer have school resource officers assigned to individual campuses, instead they will assign officers to the district. How do you think this will affect students in this district?
13. Did you have any interaction with organizations that are involved in the defund the police movement?

a. Who would you say is leading this movement to end police presence or SRO presence on campuses in Arizona?
    i. {if have not already, can you identify organizations involved?}
        1. Follow-up: Are you familiar with Puente?
    ii. Public officials?
    iii. Specific communities or families?
        1. Follow-up:
            a. Black or Latino communities?
            b. White communities?
            c. Others?
b. Who is pushing back against this movement?
    i. Organizations?
    ii. Public officials?
    iii. Others?

14. Do you think the removal of school resource officers from campuses would have occurred if BLM and related events in 2020 did not happen? Why or why not?
    a. How did these events change the direction or momentum of the movement here in Phoenix?
15. Since the murder of George Floyd how would you describe the shift, if any, within the education system?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT FOR ORGANIZERS

Introduction

1. Can you take a few minutes to introduce yourself and your background?
2. Would you classify the work of your organization as activism, forming part of a social movement, both or something else entirely?
    a. If something, else can you please elaborate what and why?

Problem Definition

3. What are the top concerns, issues, and policies your organization works on?
4. How would you define community policing, and do you consider this to be an important type of reform?
5. How would you define "defunding police"?
6. How would you situate the police movement in your work?

Movement Definition

7. How would your organization define the problem of police in schools?
    a. Is this a new problem?
        i. [If NO] Which organizations and/or movements have been leading for reforms or activism around the issue of police at schools?
        ii. [If YES] Why do you think this problem is being raised now and why wasn't it raised much earlier?
8. Are there any movements that you consider ending police at schools to be part of?
    b. Criminal justice?
    c. Racial justice?

d. BLM?

e. Immigrant rights & sanctuary?

f. LGBTQI rights?

g. Others?

9. Which communities do you consider to be impacted by policing on campuses and the school-to-prison pipeline more broadly?

    h. How have these communities responded, and which organizations or institutions are supporting them?

Situating the Organization in the Movement

10. Has your organization played a role in ending policing in schools within the Phoenix area?
11. When did your organizations work first begin and how has it changed over time?
12. What other organizations and community players are involved in this space?
13. Do national, state and local organizations all have a role in this work? Or are organizations working at one level more predominate in leading this work?

    a. National level?

    b. State level?

    c. Local level?

14. Does this type of work include partnering with schools/districts/boards and their employees, or working with students on or off campus to support them?
15. What are challenges your organization faces in this work?

16. What are opportunities and successes that your organization has experienced in this work?
17. Will this issue continue to be important even though Phoenix Union High School removed assigned police from their campuses?
18. How do you foresee the future of the police movement in schools within the Phoenix area?