

Formerly Incarcerated Women of Color Reclaiming their Space in Higher Education

Tania Carrillo

University of California, Los Angeles

Background

- Girls are the fastest growing group of offenders in the juvenile justice system and are overrepresented. (Moore and Padavic, 2010)
- In Boston, Black girls comprise 61% of all girls disciplined and in New York they comprised 56% (Crenshaw et al., 2015)
- Girls resort to “acting out” when their needs are not being met, overlooked and disregarded. (Crenshaw et al., 2015)
- 36,030,556 female juveniles detained in 2015 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2015)
- 66% of the females that are released from juvenile hall fail to return to school (National Juvenile Justice Network, 2016)
- Nationwide drop out rates for Latinas is 37% and 40% for Black females (National Women’s Law Center, 2007)

Research Questions

For Women of Color that have been formerly incarcerated, what has been their educational experience once they pursue higher education?

- What are some of the motivational factors that have contributed to their decision to pursue higher education?
- What have been some of the obstacles that they face when pursuing higher education?

Literature Review

Rios, V.

- Rios talks about his personal transformation from being in and out of juvenile hall and accessing higher education.

Peguero et al.,

- Peguero and colleagues mention the effects of the school to prison pipeline, drop-out rates and gender disparities that lead to the incarceration of youth.

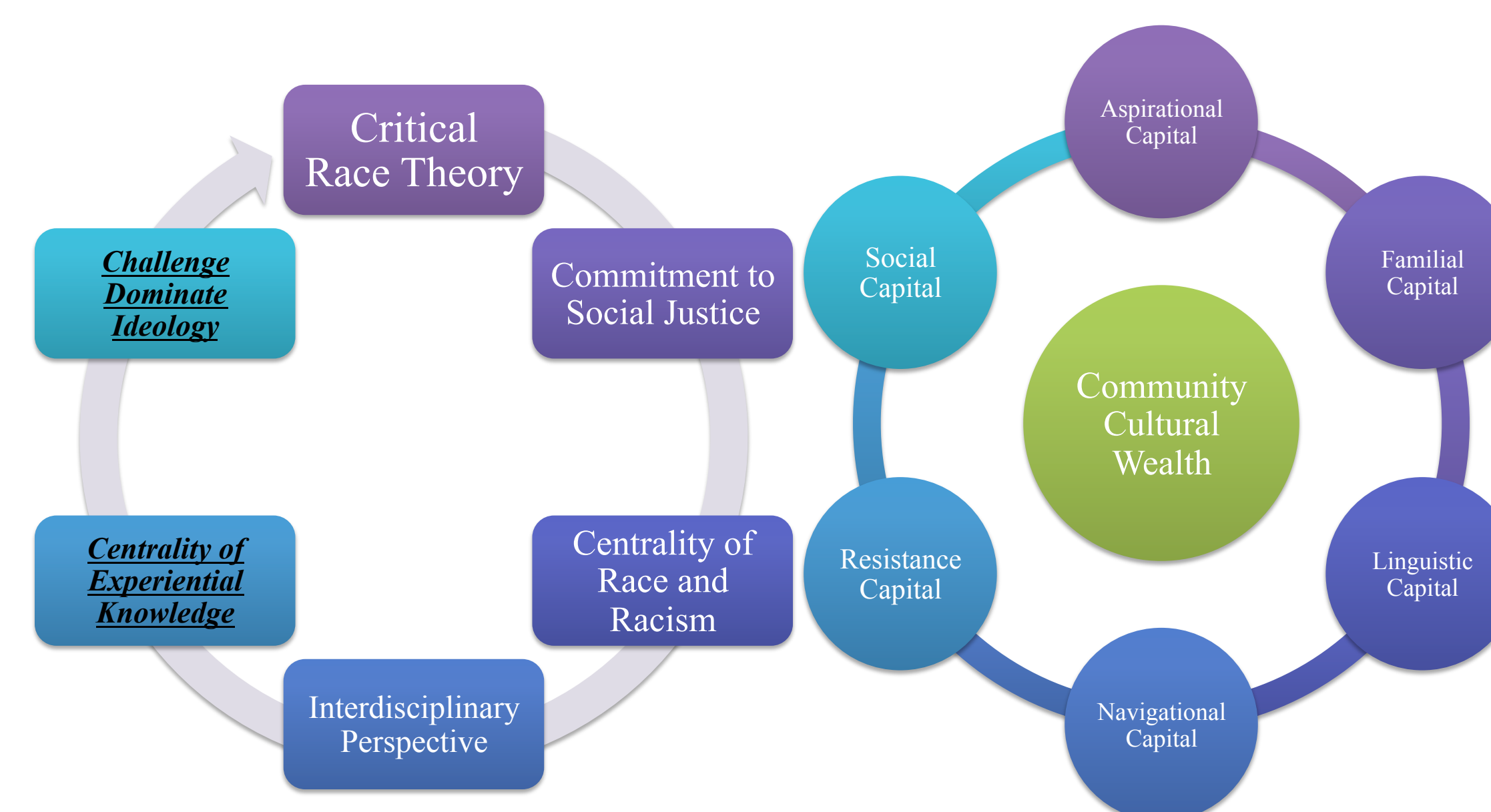
Mazzotti & Higgs

- They discuss the importance of a relationship between the school and the juvenile justice system and developing school programs.

Crenshaw et al.

- Girls should have the opportunity to engage with their teachers, school administration to reintegrate themselves in school after being disciplined.

Theoretical Framework



Methods

Methodology:

- Qualitative Approach

Methods:

- Semi Structured Interviews (4)
- Diary Entries
- Self-Reflection
- Auto Ethnography

Preliminary Findings

Motivation

“One of my biggest motivation is my family. I’ve witnessed my dad cry because he couldn’t pay any bill...then I look at my sisters and they have very little education...so I feel like I am that hope for my family.”

“They [teachers] really encouraged me to go to college, they said I was smart.”

Obstacles

“Overcoming self-doubt and self-discouragement, held me back from reaching my full potential.”

“Trying to afford my education was one of the biggest obstacle that I have faced trying to fund my education”

Mentorship

“Mentorship I received from my high school teacher, community college and professors at UCLA helped me.”

“The mentorship that I received from my community college counselor helped me because I didn’t know what I wanted to do. She pushed me to transfer to a UC.”

Preliminary Findings cont.

Other Factors

“I knew I had let my family down and till this day, I still feel guilty.”

“I had a lot of readjusting to do and there was no one to help me”

“My probation officer didn’t help me at all. He would get tired of me...he sent me to camp”

Discussion & Implications

- Not a lot is known about the experiences of women of color encounter when they are in the criminal justice system and how they are able to navigate their way through higher education.
- Find solutions and alternatives to the discipline policies and other factors that are funneling youth to be incarcerated.
- Create mentorship programs that will assist students to reintegrate themselves in the classroom to achieve academic success.

Limitations

- During the time of collecting data for this research, a significant limitation that I came across was not being able to find women of color that have the background of being incarcerated to interview
- This limitation also highlights a problem within my research because it further goes to show that Women of Color that have been previously incarcerated are not pursuing higher education.

References

- Moore, L. D., & Padavic, I. (2010). Racial and ethnic disparities in girls’ sentencing in the juvenile justice system. *Feminist Criminology*, 5(3), 263-285.
- Pantoja, A. (2013). Reframing the school-to-prison pipeline: The experiences of Latina@ youth and families. *Association of Mexican American Educators Journal*, 7, 17-31.
- Peguero, A. A., Bondy, J. M., & Shekarkhar, Z. (2017). Punishing Latina/o youth: School justice, fairness, order, dropping out, and gender disparities. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 39(1), 98-125.
- Rios, V. M. (2011). *Street Life: Poverty, Gangs, and a Ph.D.* Five Rivers Press.
- Crenshaw, K., Ocen, P., & Nanda, J. (2015). *Black girls matter: Pushed out, overpoliced, and underprotected.* African American Policy Forum

Acknowledgements