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EDUCATION

University of Maryland, School of Social Work *July 2020*
Baltimore, MD
Ph.D. in Social Work
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University of South Carolina, College of Social Work *May 2012*
Columbia, SC
MSW, Micro Social Work concentration
GPA 3.9

Wofford College *May 2010*
Spartanburg, SC
BA in Sociology, History, and German; African-American Studies concentration
GPA 3.4

RESEARCH POSITIONS

Lead Research Analyst, Starting July 2020
The Institute for Innovation and Implementation, Baltimore, MD

Research Assistant, 2017- 2020
University of Maryland, Baltimore

- PI: Dr. Karen Hopkins
- Position partially funded via Annie E. Casey Foundation and The Meyerhoff Charitable Funds
- Collect, manage and analyze web-based survey data
- Conduct qualitative interviews and focus groups with human service professionals
- Disseminate findings via academic conference presentations, grant reports to funder, peer-reviewed literature, and reports to human service agencies

Research Assistant, 2015-2017
National Institute of Justice, Washington, D.C.

- PI: Dr. Dara Blachman-Demner
- Disseminated knowledge gained from NIJ-funded research via conferences attended by researchers and practitioners, the NIJ's public-facing website, internal presentations sessions, and a peer-reviewed journal
- Participated in federal work groups on topics of teen dating violence and juvenile justice

Graduate Research Assistant, 2014-2015

University of Maryland, Baltimore

- PI: Dr. Charlotte Bright
- Read and synthesized current literature related to gender and racial disparities for systems-involved youth
- Reviewed federal requests for funding
- Analyzed theoretical literature and disseminated findings via peer-reviewed publication

Student Research Fellow, 2009

Wofford College Community of Scholars

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- Researched the role of Rock Hill, SC in the Civil Rights Movement using microfiche, first person accounts, and references
- Conducted and transcribed oral history interviews with notable figures involved in the civil rights movement in Rock Hill, SC

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Adjunct Instructor, Summer 2018-2020

Widener University

- Courses taught: SW 502 Human Behavior and the Social Environment II, SW 664 Treating Trauma, and SW 648 Children and Families at Risk for on line MSW program
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Adjunct Professor, Fall 2017 & Spring 2018

University of Maryland, Baltimore

- Instructor of hybrid (on line and in person) section of SOWK 645 Human Behavior in the Social Environment
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Teaching Assistant, Fall 2016

University of Maryland Baltimore

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Teaching Assistant, Spring 2016

University of Maryland, Baltimore

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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Social Worker IV, 2014

South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice

- Screened, assessed, diagnosed, and counseled youth involved in justice system
- Conducted medical screenings and mental status assessments of admitted juveniles
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Children's Counselor, 2012- 2014

Sistercare, Inc.

- Planned and facilitated therapeutic, psycho-educational, and socialization groups for children and adolescents residing in domestic violence shelter
- Provided in-home children's and family counseling
- Completed intake assessments for families in shelter and community
- Answered crisis calls from potential victims of domestic violence and directed clients to necessary services

Juvenile Correctional Officer, 2012-2013

South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice

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- Received Balanced and Restorative Justice training

Program Assistant, 2011- 2012

Friends of Juvenile Justice

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- Assisted with research and implementation for new grants and programs

MSW Intern, 2011- 2012

South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice

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- Organized, planned, and researched for projects
- Assisted with implantation of a new scholarship program for Midlands Technical College "Quick Jobs"

MSW Intern, 2010-2011

Sistercare, Inc.

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- Assisted with in-home counseling sessions for families affected by violence

Archival Assistant, 2009-2010

Wofford College Littlejohn Collection

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- Prepared documents for preservation through high-resolution scanning

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

Grand Challenges Dissertation Award, 2018
University of Maryland School of Social Work

- Mentor: Dr. Charlotte Bright
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President's Fellowship, Fall 2018-Spring 2019
University of Maryland Baltimore

- Mentor: Dr. Kate Tracey
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National Institute of Justice Graduate Research Assistantship, 2015 and 2016
U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, Washington, D.C.

- Mentor: Dr. Dara Blachman-Demner
- Competitively funded assistantship including full tuition remission, a stipend, health insurance, and a travel allowance (2015-2016: \$53,689; 2016-2017: \$51,807)
- Placement: Violence and Victimization Research Division, Children Exposed to Violence and Teen Dating Violence portfolios
- Disseminated knowledge gained from NIJ-funded research via conferences attended by researchers and practitioners, the NIJ's public-facing website, internal presentations sessions, and a peer-reviewed publication

PhD Program Travel Awards
University of Maryland School of Social Work

- \$600 to present at CSWE 2019 APM
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PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

Afkinich, J.L., & Blachman-Demner, D. (2019). Providing incentives to youth participants in research: A literature review. *Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1556264619892707>

- Zhao, Q., **Afkinich, J.L.**, & Valdez, A. (2019). Predictors of depressive symptoms in women with incarceration histories. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-019-00058-5>
- Hopkins, K., Meyer, M., Cohen-Callow, A., Mattocks, N., & **Afkinich, J.L.** (2019). Implementation and impact of Results-Based Accountability learning: Successes and challenges with human services of color in urban agencies. *Race and Justice*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2153368718809835>
- Afkinich, J.L.**, & Klumpner, S.A. (2018). Violence prevention strategies and school safety. (2019). *Journal for the Society of Social Work Research*, 9(4). <https://doi-org.proxy-hs.researchport.umd.edu/10.1086/700656>
- Afkinich, J.L.**, Winters, A.M., Gopalan, G., & Bright, C.L. (2018). Absorptive capacity in child welfare: Measurement challenges and strategies. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15548732.2018.1508536>
- Palley, H.A., Bright, C. L., & **Afkinich, J.L.** (2017). DNA, privacy, and social justice: An analysis from the state of Maryland. *Journal of Social Welfare and Human Rights*, 5(1), 1-14. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15640/jswhr.v5n1a1>
- Cornelius, L.J., **Afkinich, J.L.**, Hoffler, E.F., Keyser, D., Klumpner, S., Mattocks, N., & Nam, B. (2015). Reflections on engaging in social action against social injustice, while developing a survey to study it: Restorative social justice as lived experience. *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping*, 21, 26-33.

GRANT REPORTS and OTHER PUBLICATIONS

- Meyer, M., Hopkins, K., & **Afkinich, J.** (2019). *Joseph and Harvey Meyerhoff Family Charitable Funds University of Maryland School of Social Work: Year 1 Report*. Baltimore, MD: University of Maryland School of Social Work.
- Lee, Z., **Afkinich, J.**, Highsmith, L., Rao, V., Campion Dialo, N., & Egan, N. (2019). *Addressing gun violence: UMB's role as an anchor institution* (White paper). University of Maryland, Baltimore. Baltimore, MD: Interprofessional Student Learning and Service Initiatives.
- Bright, C. L., Betsinger, S., Farrell, J., Winters, A., Dutrow, D., Lee, B. R., & **Afkinich, J.** (2015). *Youth outcomes following Family Centered Treatment® in Maryland*. Baltimore, MD: University of Maryland School of Social Work.

MANUSCRIPTS IN PREPARATION

- Hopkins, K., Meyer, M., & **Afkinich, J.** (2020). *Diversifying the pipeline of social work students prepared to implement performance measurement*. Manuscript submitted for publication.

PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS

Hopkins, K., Meyer, M., & **Afkinich, J.L.** (2019, November). *Implementation of Performance Measurement Learning with Students and Human Service Professionals of Color*. Oral Presentation, Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action Conference, San Diego, CA.

Afkinich, J.L. (2019, October). *Social workers and juvenile justice disproportionate minority contact: A qualitative study*. Poster Presentation, Council on Social Work Education Annual Program Meeting, Denver, CO.

Afkinich, J.L. (2018, November). *Social Worker Impact on Juvenile Justice Disproportionate Minority Contact: A Qualitative Study*. Oral Presentation, Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology, Atlanta, GA.

Zhao, Q., & **Afkinich, J.L.** (2018, November). *Predictors of Depressive Symptoms among Women with Incarceration Histories*. Oral Presentation, Council on Social Work Education Annual Program Meeting, Orlando, FL.

Afkinich, J.L. (2018, November). *Impact of a University-Foundation Partnership: RBA Training for Professionals and MSW Students*. Poster Presentation, Council on Social Work Education Annual Program Meeting, Orlando, FL.

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Hoffler, E.F., Klumpner, S., & **Afkinich, J.L.** (2016, June). *Factors that influence social workers' engagement in social and political action*. Oral Presentation, National Association of Social Workers National Conference, Washington, DC.

Afkinich, J.L. (2016, March). *Impact of race on juvenile transfer decisions*. Oral Presentation, University of Maryland Baltimore Graduate Research Conference, Baltimore, MD.

Hoffler, E.F., Klumpner, S., **Afkinich, J.L.**, Keyser, D.R., Shdaimah, C.S., & Gioia, D. (2016, January). *Social work faculty engaged in qualitative research*. Oral

Presentation, Society for Social Work and Research Annual Conference,
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Afkinich, J.L., Winters, A.M., Bright, C.L., & Gopalan, G. (2015, December).
Absorptive capacity in child welfare settings. Poster Presentation, 8th Annual
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Afkinich, J.L. (2009, August). *Rock Hill, SC: A city with no room for racism*. Oral
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COMMUNITY SERVICE

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Journal of the Society for Social Work and Research, January 2019-present
Journal of Public Child Welfare, September 2016-present
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Student Recruitment Committee Member
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PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

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Abstract

Title of Dissertation: Social Workers and Disproportionate Minority Contact: A Mixed Methods Study

Jenny L. Afkinich, Doctor of Philosophy, 2020

Dissertation Directed by: Charlotte L. Bright, PhD, MSW, Associate Professor and Associate Dean for Doctoral and Post-Doctoral Education, University of Maryland School of Social Work

Disproportionate minority contact (DMC) is the disproportionate representation of racial minority youth at all levels of the juvenile justice system. DMC is evident in rates of initial arrests, referrals to court, delinquency findings/ adjudications, out-of-home placements, and transfers to adult criminal court. Race remains a significant predictor of legal outcomes for youth even when factors such as prior legal history and current charge severity are considered despite White and minority youth reporting similar levels of offending. This mixed methods study examined the relationship between community social workers employed by the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice (SC DJJ) in the agency's county offices and DMC.

Administrative data from SC DJJ was utilized to determine the extent of DMC in the state, to compare legal outcomes (i.e., receiving confinement dispositions and being waived to adult court) for youth in counties with community social workers to youth in counties that do not employ community social workers, and to compare the legal outcomes for youth in counties with community social workers over time. The results indicate that DMC continues to exist in South Carolina when measured via relative rate

indices. Overall, there was little evidence that employing community social workers is sufficient to reduce DMC at the disposition or waiver stage.

Qualitative interviews with nine of the 11 community social workers were used to identify and understand the mechanisms, barriers, and facilitators for reducing DMC. The findings suggest multiple nuanced ways the social workers can play a role in reducing DMC. The social workers identified two stages in the juvenile justice process in which they can and have had an impact on increasing equity: (1) out-of-home placement decisions for youth on probation or parole and (2) determining probation requirements. The social workers described a need for hiring additional social workers. They also believe they could train police officers and school officials about alternatives to making a referral to SC DJJ to reduce inequitable decisions at the front-end of the juvenile justice system. Implications for the study include an expanded role for community social workers and new ways to examine DMC quantitatively.

Social Workers and Disproportionate Minority Contact: A Mixed Methods Study

by
Jenny L. Afkinich

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, Baltimore in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2020

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Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends who have been a constant support system for the past six years. I am privileged to have so many people rooting for me and celebrating with me in the Carolinas, Maryland, Ohio, and all the way to Morocco. Thank you to my parents, Soufiane Afkinich and Peggy Amajjoute, and to my step-parents, Mina Afkinich and the late Nouredine “Nico” Amajjoute, for inspiring me. I have had so many opportunities because of your sacrifices, and I will be forever grateful to you. To my sister Kayla Afkinich, I can never thank you enough for all the effort you have put in to making sure I would reach this milestone. I am so fortunate to have you and Jonathan Alexander in my life. To Margot and Violet Afkinich-Daniels, you mean the world to me and motivate me to be better. To my wonderful spouse, Dr. Kevin Daniels, thank you for always treating *my* goals as *our* goals and never hesitating to do more than 50% of everything so that I could dedicate time to my coursework and dissertation. I know I will never be able to make it up to you, but I welcome the chance to spend the rest of my life with you trying.

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List of Abbreviations

AECF	Annie E. Casey Foundation
B	Unstandardized Beta
CI	Confidence Interval
DRAI	Detention Risk Assessment Instrument
DSI	Detention Screening Instrument
DJJ	Department of Juvenile Justice
DMC	Disproportionate Minority Contact
FTA	Failure to Appear
GJJAC	Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Council
HS/HSL	Health Sciences/ Human Services Library
IAA	Informal Adjustment Agreement
IDA	Iowa Delinquency Assessment
JDAI	Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative
JJDPA	Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act
JLC	Juvenile Law Center
NASW	National Association of Social Workers
N/S	Non-significant
OR	Odds Ratio
OJJDP	Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
RRI	Relative Rate Index
RED	Racial and Ethnic Disparities
RANA	Risk and Needs Assessment

SC South Carolina
S.E. B Standard Error for the Unstandardized Beta
SW Social Worker

Chapter 1: The Problem of Disproportionate Minority Contact

The intention of the American juvenile justice system has been rehabilitation, taking the position that adolescent delinquency should be understood and treated differently than adult criminal behavior since the founding of the nation's first court exclusively for juveniles in Chicago in 1889 (Abrams, 2004). An early proponent of the juvenile court system, Julian Mack (1909) described the appropriate setting for youth in placement as a cottage in the country under the care of "some good man and woman" in which "human love" replaces any of the trappings of a prison (p. 114). The rehabilitative model has not always been how the actual system has operated, however (Gardner, 2012). By the late 20th century and particularly in the 1990s, the juvenile justice system shifted towards a progressively more punitive model (Gardner, 2012). States passed laws allowing greater numbers of youth to be tried in adult criminal courts, and many states instituted mandatory minimum sentences for certain offenses. These policies prioritize punishment and deterring delinquent behavior over meeting the needs of the youth involved (Gardner, 2012). Youth transferred to the adult system, therefore, are denied protections against lengthy sentences embedded in the juvenile justice system (Thomas, 2016).

In recent years, juvenile justice agency policies and judicial decisions have shifted toward returning juvenile justice to its less punitive roots (Steinberg, 2017). Limited as the juvenile justice system may be, its protections exceed those of the adult criminal justice system, which has an explicit public safety focus. Concurrent with shift, national and local programs have attempted to understand how to make the systems more equitable across races (Development Services Group, 2014). These efforts will be detailed in a later chapter. In light of current trends towards pursuing rehabilitative models and eliminating racial disproportionality (e.g., reducing the use of pretrial detention and secure confinement for youth), this study will consider the

impact of an intervention with the potential to target both goals at once: hiring social workers to work within county offices of a juvenile justice agency.

This chapter will outline the problem the current dissertation intends to explore. First, the key concept of disproportionate minority contact will be presented, followed by why the problem needs to be addressed. The chapter will then introduce the context of the dissertation. Because this study is of a system change strategy introduced in the juvenile justice system of South Carolina, information about the state agency and the intervention will be presented. Potential implications of this dissertation for social work are identified. Finally, this chapter concludes with the specific aims and research questions targeted by the study.

Key Terms

Several terms will be used throughout this dissertation and are defined here for clarity. In the context of this dissertation, minority refers to youth who are African American or Black (which will be used interchangeably), Native American, Asian American, Pacific Islander, Hispanic or Latino (Kakar, 2006). This definition is in keeping with the language used in the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 2002, described later in this chapter.

Adjudication of Delinquency refers to the decision made by a juvenile court judge about whether a young person has committed a delinquent act (Juvenile Law Center [JLC], 2018). An **arrest** occurs when police take a person into custody due to a suspected crime or delinquent act (JLC, 2018). **Confinement** and **incarceration** will both be used in this dissertation to refer to the process of holding youth in a secure correctional facility, including detention centers, long-term secure facilities, and reception or diagnostic centers (Sawyer, 2018). The term **courtroom workgroup** was adopted by Eisenstein and Jacob (1977) to refer to people employed in a court setting who work together (e.g., judges, defense attorneys, and prosecutors). Eisenstein and

Jacob (1977) argue groups who may be assumed to be adversarial to one another (i.e., prosecutors and defense attorneys) choose to cooperate as a cohesive group in order to reach common goals. In the context of this dissertation, **detention** is the temporary custody of a young person before a trial has occurred. It is imposed for several reasons, including the safety of the child, the protection of society, or to ensure the person will appear in court. Detention differs from adult jail because youth are not granted bail and often receive mandated and optional services (e.g., treatment and education; JLC, 2018). Youth can also be held in a detention facility while awaiting a placement at later stages of the system. **Disposition** is analogous to the sentencing phase of a trial in adult criminal proceedings (JLC, 2018). It occurs only after a young person has entered a guilty plea or a judge has adjudicated the youth delinquent. A typical disposition includes placing the youth under supervision (e.g., probation or out-of-home placement), and it often includes mandated services. A **felony offense** is an offense for which a sentence of death or incarceration of greater than one year and/or in a penitentiary is authorized (Tress, 2009). A **misdemeanor offense** is one that does not meet the definition of a felony (Tress, 2009). A **status offense** is an offense that would not be considered a crime if committed by an adult (e.g., running away from home, incorrigibility, or truancy; National Juvenile Defender Center [NJDC], n.d.). Finally, **transfer** or **waiver of jurisdiction** occurs when a juvenile court judge or a prosecutor decides a young person's case should be heard in adult criminal court. Transfer is an option in several states. Typically, judges limit transferring cases to youth who meet a minimum age requirement and are adjudicated delinquent for certain serious offenses (JLC, 2018). Some states also allow for transfer via statutory exclusion, which means cases are automatically transferred if the young person is charged with certain offenses (Steiner, Hemmens, & Bell, 2006).

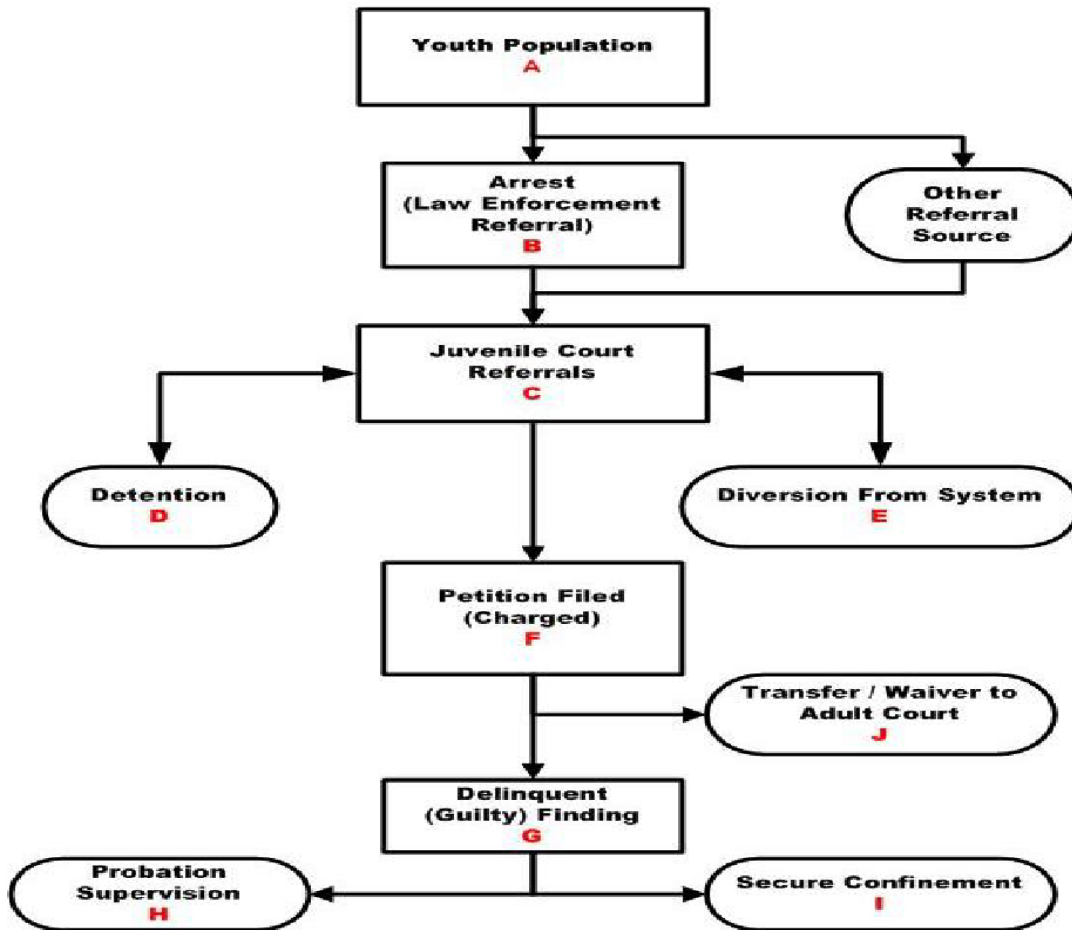
Disproportionate Minority Contact

The existence of Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC), the disproportionate representation of racial minorities at all levels of the juvenile justice system, cannot be denied (Huizinga et al., 2007). DMC is evident in rates of initial arrest and continues throughout the juvenile justice process into referrals to court, delinquent adjudications, dispositions, out-of-home placements (Donnelly, 2017), and transfer to adult criminal court (Jones, 2016). Although the causes of DMC continue to be debated, differences almost certainly exist between how minority and White youth are processed in the juvenile justice system (Piquero, 2008).

In 1974, Congress passed the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA), which has been reauthorized several times (Hughes, 2011). Originally, the law required states to comply with two core requirements in order to remain eligible for federal grants (Hughes, 2011). In 1980, the act was amended to include a third requirement (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention [OJJDP], n.d.). The United States Congress reauthorized the JJDPA in 1988 and added a requirement that states address disproportionate minority confinement (OJJDP, n.d.). The act was again reauthorized in 2002, and the scope of DMC was broadened from disproportionate minority confinement to disproportionate minority contact (OJJDP, n.d.). The law now requires states to identify DMC at nine stages of the juvenile justice process (OJJDP, 2012). This means states must measure whether racial minority youth are disproportionately represented in the justice system at multiple decision points (Piquero, 2008). Identification is not the only goal of the JJDPA. The states must also implement delinquency prevention programs and/or systems improvements to reduce existing disproportionality between White and minority youth, or they will no longer be eligible to receive Formula Grants (OJJDP, 2012). The most recent policy takes a holistic approach in which DMC is seen as problematic at all nine identified

contact points of the juvenile justice system. These range from arrests and diversion at early points of the system to secure confinement and transfer to adult court at later points (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Juvenile Justice Contact Points (Feyerherm, Snyder, & Villarruel, 2009, p. 1-5)



Huizinga and colleagues (2007) reviewed eleven studies to determine whether DMC was evident and whether it could be explained by other relevant variables (e.g., offense characteristics, prior contact with police, and self-reported delinquency) at various decision points in the juvenile justice system. Overall, the studies showed minority youth, particularly African American and Hispanic youth, were more likely to have contact with the juvenile justice

system than White youth. They found race was associated with the outcomes (e.g., referral to court, placement, and sentencing recommendation) at a bivariate level in nine of the ten studies, and the remaining two studies did not include the necessary information to answer the question. After adding control variables to the models, race remained significant in ten of the eleven studies. Six studies reported a reduction in the magnitude of the race effect when controls were included in the model, but race remained significant in all but one study (Huizinga et al., 2007).

Researchers have found an association between race and legal outcomes at several points of the justice system. Relative rate indices (RRIs) are a proportional measure used to compare the rate of minority contact with a given juvenile justice stage with the rate of White contact at the same stage (OJJDP, 2018). RRIs are calculated by dividing the rate of minority contact (or a subgroup of minority youth) at a juvenile justice stage (e.g. the rate of minority youth arrested per 1000 minority youth in the population) by the rate at which White youth are represented at the same stage (OJJDP, 2018). An RRI of 2.0 for African Americans at the arrest stage would indicate their arrest rate is twice that of White youth (Rovner, 2014).

In compliance with the JJDPA of 2002, states must notify the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention any time the RRI for any minority population is above 1.0 at any stage (Rovner, 2014). The Sentencing Project reports RRIs and found Black youth have arrest rates nationally of up to 2.5 times those of White youth for property offenses (Rovner, 2014). Black youth are also more than twice as likely as White youth to be arrested overall despite declining juvenile arrest rates (Rovner, 2014). This disparity is not limited to arrests. Only 14% of youth in the United States are Black, yet they represent 40% of incarcerated youth. Although researchers have found other variables help to explain the disparity, the unique effect of the race of youth typically remains significant (Huizinga et al., 2007). Moreover, RRIs do not appear to

be dropping over time. The RRI for waiver for Black youth was 1.1 nationwide in 2005 (Puzzanchera & Hockenberry, 2018). In 2010 the RRI was 1.2, and it increased to 1.3 by 2015. Similarly, the RRI for Black youth compared to White youth for confinement dispositions was 1.3 in 2005 and 2010 but increased to 1.4 by 2015. For the detention stage, the RRI for Black youth was 1.2 in 2005, but the figure increased to 1.3 in both 2010 and 2015 (Puzzanchera & Hockenberry, 2018). DMC has thus far proven to be intractable, and new solutions are needed.

Outcomes of DMC

The negative outcomes of DMC for individuals do not end with justice system involvement. Juvenile confinement decreases long-term educational attainment (Aizer & Doyle, 2015; Ward & Williams, 2015) as well as adult earnings potential (Jung, 2015) and increases the likelihood of subsequent adult incarceration (Aizer & Doyle, 2015), outcomes that can disproportionately affect minority communities. Even after controlling for other individual and neighborhood-level risk factors, researchers have found people who live in communities with high prison admission rates face increased odds of lifetime major depressive disorder (OR=2.5) and generalized anxiety disorder (OR=2.3; Hatzenbuehler, Keyes, Hamilton, Uddin, & Galea, 2015). Incarceration also affects family members who often struggle to handle household finances and child rearing alone while maintaining relationships with incarcerated loved ones (Arditti, Lambert-Schutte, & Joest, 2003). Disenfranchisement, or denying the right to vote to people with felony convictions, also disproportionately affects minority communities. As of 2016, four U.S. states disenfranchised more than 20% of their African American residents (Florida, 21.4%; Kentucky, 26.2%; Tennessee, 21.3%; Virginia, 21.9%) due to their felony criminal records (Uggen, Larson, & Shannon, 2016). Nationwide, 7.4% of African Americans are disenfranchised compared to 1.8% of non-African Americans (Uggen et al., 2016).

Disproportionate minority contact in the juvenile justice system can have a wide-reaching impact beyond the youth who are directly affected and their families. The procedural justice model argues people who view the justice system as unfair are more likely to engage in criminal behavior (Fine et al., 2017). Similarly, if people believe the justice system is legitimate and fair, they may be more likely to obey the law. Youth who are stopped or arrested by police have an increased likelihood of future delinquency, but the relationship is mitigated when youth believe they were treated fairly during the police encounter (Slocum, Wiley, & Esbensen, 2016). Black and other minority youth are much more likely than White youth to perceive their interactions with police as unfair (Hagan, Shedd, & Payne, 2005). Black youth also report more negative attitudes towards the justice system broadly than Whites (Fine & Cauffman, 2015). This sense of illegitimacy can create a cycle in which minority youth perceive their interactions with the justice system as unfair and thus engage in delinquency (Fine et al., 2017). Moreover, Black and other minority youth may feel less safe interacting with the police when they need help if they have come to view the system as illegitimate and unfair towards them.

Prior experience with the justice system is considered the most accurate predictor of future justice outcomes. Incarceration has not been associated with decreased recidivism (Loughran et al., 2009). In fact, incarcerated youth may actually be more likely to be rearrested than youth who remain in their communities under probation supervision (Fabelo, Arrigona, Thompson, Clemons, & Marchbanks, 2015). Juvenile justice systems often rely upon risk assessment tools to predict who is likely to re-offend and to help make decisions regarding recommendations for treatment and sanctions (Barnes et al., 2016). Unfortunately, this means disparities and bias can have a compounding effect when prior arrests and confinements contribute to current risk scores and subsequent sanctions. That minority and White youth self-

report similar levels of delinquent behavior (Piquero & Brame, 2008) and have such different rates of juvenile justice involvement makes this compounding effect all the more unjust. True justice requires equality under the law, which is unlikely when a Black adolescent is 40% more likely to be detained after arrest than a White teenager (Rovner, 2014).

Court-Based Attempts to Reduce DMC

Theories as to why minority youth are over-represented throughout the justice system vary. Blame has been attributed to differential rates of offending among minority youth in relation to non-Hispanic Whites, to bias in the juvenile justice system, and to a combination of factors (Kakar, 2006; Piquero, 2008). The OJJDP's *Technical Assistance Manual* (hereafter, the *Manual*) also acknowledges the multitude of factors that could influence DMC (Leiber, Richetelli, & Feyerherm, 2009). The *Manual*'s authors suggest differential behavior and frequency of residential moves, particularly among immigrant families, could play a role. They also note low-income neighborhoods may have less access to delinquency prevention efforts relative to higher-income areas, and prevention programs may be located in areas inaccessible by public transportation. Strategies that target youth behavior in order to prevent delinquency are identified by Gies, Cohen, and Villarruel (2009) as *direct services* interventions. These interventions are implemented by justice agencies and take a "differential offending" approach, assuming differential outcomes are due to differences in the behavior of White youth and youth of color. Notably, researchers have typically found race remains a predictor of justice system outcomes even after controlling for legally relevant variables, suggesting behavior alone does not account for differences in juvenile justice system processing between racial groups (Huizinga et al., 2007).

As an alternative to the differential offending approach, some scholars present a “differential selection” lens (Piquero, 2008). This means biased decision-making within the juvenile justice system is viewed as a significant contributor to DMC (Leiber et al., 2009; Piquero, 2008). The differential selection approach will be the focus of this study. In addition to the direct services interventions used to address differential offending, Gies and colleagues (2009) introduce two categories of strategies agencies and governments can implement to target “supply-side responses” to reduce DMC (p. 4-6). First, a focus on *training and technical assistance* can move agencies closer to having a workforce of juvenile justice personnel who know how to recognize and confront racial biases in others and who have the cultural competence work with youth from a variety of backgrounds. In addition to direct services and training and technical assistance, the *Manual* describes *system change* interventions (Gies et al., 2009). Most system change strategies involve considering whether the way the agency functions could disadvantage minority youth. This could involve reforming relevant legislation and statutes, reviewing policies and procedures, and restructuring decision-making guidelines. The differential selection approach naturally leads to considering training or system change interventions because the approach assumes disproportionality stems primarily from decisions made by legal actors (e.g., police or prosecutors) and the policies and procedures of legal systems (e.g., legislatures or juvenile justice agencies) rather than from differences in the behavior of individual youth. This study will take a differential selection lens given the evidence that individual behavior does not sufficiently explain DMC (Huizinga et al., 2007).

South Carolina DMC

The state of South Carolina (SC) will be the focus of this study because of their innovative and potentially replicable system level intervention of including community social

workers in court decision-making processes. The state has identified DMC at several contact points in the juvenile justice system (Motes, Nurse, Kimbrough-Melton, McDonell, & Waters, 2012). A 2012 report completed by researchers at Clemson University found DMC rates in SC were comparable to nationwide figures, and RRIs for Black youth compared to White youth at the arrest stage were particularly problematic at both the state (2.5) and national (2.2) levels (Motes et al., 2012). High RRIs were also identified in SC for the detention stage (1.38) and for placement (1.23). The authors also note the adjudication RRI is actually below 1 for both Black and all minority youth (young people of all races except for White and including Black) in both SC and nationwide (0.9 for all four categories). This means once Black and minority youth are charged with an offense, judges are less likely to determine they are delinquent than they are to determine White youth are delinquent at the same stage. This could indicate prosecutors are choosing to charge minority youth even when the cases against them may not be strong. Black and minority youth may also not be encouraged to participate in diversion programs for low level offenses, meaning they proceed further into the system than White youth charged with the same offenses. Once youth reach the hearing stage, minority youth are less likely to be found delinquent by the judge because the case should not have reached the court in the first place. The determination that youth are not delinquent corrects for potentially biased processing earlier in the system.

In compliance with the 1974 Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, South Carolina established a Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Council ([GJJAC]; SC Department of Public Safety, 2013). The GJJAC, comprised of volunteers who are appointed by the governor, is tasked with advising state policymakers about issues related to juvenile justice. They are also responsible for reviewing all grant applications for juvenile justice services in SC. In

2016 the GJJAC released a report about the state's DMC reduction strategies. As of 2015, SC had completed the first two phases (Identification and Assessment) of the DMC reduction plan outlined by the JJDPA. The state was actively working on the final three stages (Intervention, Evaluation, and Monitoring; GJJAC, 2016).

In the 2016 report, the GJJAC details the DMC reduction strategies undertaken by SC and how the state disbursed federal juvenile justice funding in 2015 and fiscal year 2016. First, the state continued to report age, race, and sex of all traffic stops that did not result in arrests or citations to the SC Department of Public Safety in accordance with state legislation (GJJAC, 2016). The state also received federal technical assistance to complete statewide training of law enforcement officers in the Effective Police Interactions with Youth program. The state hired a part-time DMC coordinator. The DMC subcommittee of the GJJAC was "reenergized" and began to meet regularly (GJJAC, 2016, p. 3). The GJJAC disbursed funding to seven applicants (three nonprofits, two state agencies, one city government, and one solicitor's office) for Formula II grants during the year. The grants were for projects intended to address "deinstitutionalization of status offenders..., alternatives to detention, DMC, and the Prison Rape Elimination Act" (GJJAC, 2016, p. 3). Additionally, they allotted four Juvenile Accountability Block Grants. The Children's Law Center at the University of South Carolina was funded to continue their work in reducing the institutionalization of status offenders. The City of Spartanburg received funding for their detention alternatives program. The Boys and Girls Club of York County was provided money for their efforts to provide after-school and job-training services for justice-involved youth. Finally, SC DJJ received a grant to pay for the training of social workers in cognitive behavioral therapy (GJJAC, 2016). How Formula II grant funding is used indicates the council's priorities, including reducing detention, limiting the confinement of

status offenders, and training social workers; these funding priorities guide the premise of the current study.

SC DJJ Community Social Work

Since the mid-1990s, juvenile violent crime rates across the United States have dropped steadily (Puzzanchera & Hockenberry, 2018). The decline in violence partnered with legislative changes means fewer young people are held in secure facilities (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2013). In South Carolina, the population of incarcerated youth fell a remarkable 71% between 2003 and 2012 (Barber, 2012). Agency personnel were shifted in response to the reduced population size of the secure facility, and social workers were moved into county offices within the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice (SC DJJ). Some of the licensed masters-level social workers who previously provided treatment and case management services for youth residing in the secure facility began providing treatment to youth in the community at both the front end (prevention, intake, and diversion) and back end (parole) of the juvenile justice system (C. Miner, personal communication, November 21, 2017). People working in the new position the agency created are referred to as community social workers. The social workers continue to be employed by the state agency, SC DJJ. They report to the director of community social work under the Division of Rehabilitative Services (C. Miner, personal communication, November 21, 2017).

The scope of the community social worker position has shifted over time (C. Miner, personal communication, November 21, 2017). Originally, the social workers were expected to assist the community psychologists in completing psycho-social assessments of youth. As the agency hierarchy changed, the social workers were allowed the flexibility to focus their energies on the needs they recognized within their specific communities. Social workers have played

important roles in drug court programs, which provide a diversion program for youth which substance misuse histories, and in implementing intensive prevention programs for young people at early stages of the juvenile justice system who have been identified as having high needs (C. Miner, personal communication, November 21, 2017).

The community social workers may come into contact with youth in several different ways. Agency staff may identify a particular need and refer them to the social worker. The social workers also have access to all case files and regularly participate in case staffing meetings, in which they learn about the current cases in the county. Other agency personnel, including colleagues who conduct intake assessments and those who provide supervision to justice-involved youth in the community, attend the case staffing meetings. Together the county staff members (e.g., intake staff, probation/parole workers, county directors, and social workers) agree on disposition recommendations put forth by the agency to judges. The juvenile justice agency makes a recommendation to the judge, as do the state prosecutor and the defense attorney. Regardless of the specific roles the social workers choose to fill, they are able to access and draw on a combination of risk assessments, their own clinical experience, and psychosocial reports to help inform their decisions.

The federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) maintains a list of model programs for reducing DMC in juvenile justice agencies (<https://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg>). This community social work program at SC DJJ differs from many of the model programs cataloged by OJJDP in two significant ways. First, the social workers are involved directly in the court system. The social workers are tasked with upholding the agency's mission statement which states children are expected to receive services "in the least restrictive environment" (SC DJJ, 2015, para. 1). This differs from the model programs

because the social workers can influence decision-making at the disposition stage of the system as opposed to many of the model programs which target delinquency prevention and diversion at the very front end of the process. Additionally, many model programs focus on reducing individual discretion (and thus reducing bias) through the use of screening tools and other initiatives. Although South Carolina does utilize a validated risk assessment, the social workers are not expected to make neutral recommendations based exclusively upon prior record and offense severity. Social workers are allowed to draw on practice knowledge, special circumstances, and the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) as part of their recommendation. This means social workers can play a crucial role in reducing DMC not by remaining neutral to the juvenile's race but by explicitly considering how the race of the youth has affected his or her experience both before and since entering the justice system.

Aims and Research Questions

This study has four aims, all with the ultimate goal of determining whether and how the presence of social workers in county offices has affected DMC in the South Carolina juvenile justice system.

Aim 1: To determine the extent of DMC in the South Carolina juvenile justice system.

1. What are the relative rate indices between White and minority youth at the decision points of detention, confinement dispositions, and transfer to adult court in South Carolina statewide?
2. Do the relative rate indices between White and minority youth at the decision points of detention, confinement dispositions, and transfer to adult court in South Carolina differ between counties with and without community social workers?

Aim 2: To examine whether the legal outcomes for Black youth are improved by having access to a community social worker.

1. Are Black youth in the counties with social workers less likely to receive detention, confinement dispositions, and/or transfers to adult court than they were before the position was created, controlling for other factors?
2. Are Black youth in counties with social workers less likely to receive detention, confinement dispositions, and/ or transfers to adult court than minority youth in similar counties which do not have social workers in their offices, controlling for other factors?

Aim 3: To examine the extent to which the race/ethnicity of youth involved in the juvenile justice system significantly predicts legal outcomes for youth in counties with and without community social workers.

1. Is race/ethnicity a significant predictor of detention, confinement dispositions, and/or transfers in counties with social workers?
2. Is the relationship between race/ethnicity and the legal decision points (detention, confinement dispositions, and transfer to adult court) different between youth who have access to community social workers and youth who do not have access to community social workers?
3. Is the relationship between race/ethnicity and the legal decision points (detention, confinement dispositions, and transfer to adult court) different between youth processed in counties in which they have access to social workers than it was for youth in those counties before social workers were employed?

Aim 4: To explore the perspective of community social workers regarding their role in reducing disproportionate minority contact (DMC).

1. From the perspective of social workers, what is their role in reducing DMC?
2. How effective do social workers perceive themselves to be in reducing DMC, and what are potential barriers and facilitators to doing so?

Implications for Social Work Policy, Practice, and Research

Reducing racial disproportionality in the juvenile justice system is fundamentally aligned with the core values of the social work profession identified in the NASW's Code of Ethics (NASW, 2017) and is in keeping with the grand challenge for social workers, outlined by the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare, to achieve equal opportunity and justice (McRoy, Padilla, Calvo, Goldbach, & Teasley, 2016). The study has potential implications for social work practice due to the novel role social workers play in the SC agency. If the model is found to reduce DMC, policymakers can consider how to best employ social workers in community settings. The findings of this study could suggest which specific practices community social workers engage in that are associated with a reduction in disproportionality. Once identified, the practices could be operationalized and measured for future studies. This study will add an additional social work perspective to the base of research regarding disproportionate minority contact and systems-level responses to it.

Social workers already have the ability in many cases to treat youth after they have been detained or incarcerated, and social workers are often also available for aftercare treatment in communities. By participating in staffing conversations and contributing to state recommendations, however, social workers could directly influence the decisions regarding whether young people progress deeper into the system. The initiative undertaken by SC DJJ suggests a new model for juvenile justice social work practice in which social workers have the

potential to treat individual youth while also actively working to reduce disparities in dispositions and other punitive outcomes (e.g. detention and transfer to adult court).

Chapter 2: Theoretical Explanations for DMC

This chapter will present the theoretical framework that will guide the dissertation research. Concepts from four theories will be described and applied to the current project. They are: causal attribution (Albonetti, 1991), focal concerns (Steffensmeier, Ulmer, & Kramer, 1998), court community theory (Eisenstein & Jacob, 1977), and street-level bureaucracy (Lipsky, 1980). These theories help to explain how legal decision-making occurs. The decisions members of a court (e.g., judges, prosecutors, etc.) make about how to proceed with a particular young person accused of an offense are important because youth often have little control over the legal process. The theories will be synthesized and adapted for this dissertation to include social workers as legal decision-makers within the South Carolina juvenile justice system.

Theories of Legal Decision-Making

Two theories frequently used in current criminology literature will frame the understanding of legal decision-making in this study: causal attribution (Albonetti, 1991) and focal concerns (Steffensmeier, Ulmer, & Kramer, 1998). These theories both attempt to explain how court actors make legal decisions. Together, the theories set out a framework of factors considered by judges, prosecutors, and others who must make difficult decisions about complicated cases with the limited information and options available to them. The decisions made by court actors (including, potentially, social workers) can lead to increases or reductions in disproportionate minority contact (DMC) depending on whether and how race and race-related factors are considered during decision-making processes (e.g., whether to detain a young person before he or she has been adjudicated or whether to pursue transferring the youth to the adult criminal system).

Causal Attribution Theory

The causal attribution theory of decision-making is grounded in the concept of bounded rationality (March & Simon, 1958). This means judges and other court actors do not have access to all information relevant for making sentencing decisions, so they must rely upon the limited information available to them. They may lack a full picture of who the defendant is as a person even when they are provided with presentence reports and other sources of information (Ulmer & Johnson, 2004). They cannot, most notably, know with any certainty whether a particular person will re-offend in the future. Albonetti (1991) argues judges and other court actors place a high value on reducing uncertainty in the court. To create a sense of order and clarity in the court (i.e., reduce uncertainty), court actors collectively establish patterns of behavior and communication. They come to agree on which decisions will be made in specific situations, which are called *patterned responses* (Albonetti, 1991) or *going rates* (Ulmer & Johnson, 2004). Albonetti argues, following the work of Heider (1958), behavior is shaped by both personal and environmental factors. Both are considered by the court actors when developing patterned responses. These agreed-upon norms typically remain unspoken and are established through repeatedly working together and learning of one another's expectations. The patterned responses or going rates are then collective, meaning individual people are not required to make decisions on their own. They expect one another to continue behaving in the set patterns and teach newcomers to the group to follow along (Albonetti, 1991).

In the absence of complete information regarding the offender's personal history, the circumstances of the offense, and the likelihood of future delinquent behavior, causal attribution theory argues judges and others substitute stereotypes and shorthand attributions to an offender in order to make a decision (Albonetti, 1991). This means certain legal and extra-legal factors

become associated with the same legal decisions across cases regardless of potentially mitigating circumstances. For example, whether a young offender previously experienced trauma might not be associated with the decisions made by court actors but the young person's age and whether he/she is in school might.

Shorthand attributions employed by court actors when making decisions become stereotypes, resulting in discriminatory outcomes, particularly for non-White men and boys (Spohn & Holleran, 2000). Stereotypes regarding the likelihood of racial minorities to re-offend could then become a part of the accepted, unspoken culture of the court workgroup. Specific combinations of race, gender, and other variables (e.g., employment status, ethnicity, and age) have been found to be associated with increasingly punitive sanctions, lending additional support to the theory (Rodriguez, 2010; Spohn & Holleran, 2000). Bridges and Steen's (1998) analysis of written reports by juvenile probation officers also found differential assumptions about the likelihood of Black and White youth to re-offend. Moreover, distinctly different attributions are assigned to White and Black (Bridges & Steen, 1998) or Latinx (Rodriguez, 2007) youth. Black delinquency was attributed by probation officers to immutable personality traits, whereas White delinquency was attributed to external influences (Bridges & Steen, 1998). Rodriguez (2007) found Latinx youth were significantly more likely to be detained than White youth in communities (designated by zip code) with high unemployment and to a lesser extent high poverty rates, but the ethnicity effect disappeared between White and Latinx in areas with more economic stability. This suggests decision-makers attributed White delinquency to external factors (i.e., community unemployment and delinquency), but they did not grant Latinx youth the same leniency. This theory frames one way race and ethnicity could affect legal outcomes. For

the purposes of the current study, individual factors associated with the theory (e.g., race and age) will be considered as well as county-level characteristics, including poverty.

Focal Concerns Theory

The focal concerns perspective (FCP) builds upon the concept of causal attribution by outlining three specific constructs as the dominant factors considered by court actors when they make decisions: blameworthiness, dangerousness or community protection, and practical constraints (Steffensmeier, Ulmer, & Kramer, 1998). Together these traits help the court workgroup, all members of the team working together within the court (e.g., prosecutors, judges, and defense attorneys), avoid uncertainty in sentencing and decision-making by creating a standard- if unspoken- set of criteria (Albonetti, 1991). Steffensmeier, Painter-Davis, and Ulmer (2017) argue that, unlike Albonetti's (1991) causal attribution theory, lack of accessible information about a legal case is not the primary cause of uncertainty within a court. In fact, when presented with substantial information about a specific case and defendant, the judges continue to feel a sense of uncertainty and may have difficulty processing the information (Steffensmeier et al., 2017). Judges and decision-makers are also divided between competing aims of the justice system. They may feel an expectation to ensure sanctions are viewed as appropriate punishments for a given offense. Judges may also seek to balance additional goals of sentencing, including: deterring the criminal behavior of others, incapacitating the offender so that he or she will not have the opportunity to commit another offense while under supervision, and reducing the likelihood that the person will engage in the behavior in the future (Steffensmeier et al., 2017). In light of the complicated and diverse sentencing goals and accessible information, judges and decision-makers begin to rely upon shorthand attributions to

make decisions. FCP argues judges make decisions based upon stereotypes in order to reduce uncertainty within a court.

Blameworthiness.

The first focal concern identified by Steffensmeier and colleagues (1998) as relevant to FCP is blameworthiness. The authors argue the preeminent variable associated with sentencing outcomes is the seriousness of the current charge, which serves as a proxy measure of blameworthiness. The charge represents the amount of harm the offender has caused to the community. Other factors related to the perceived blameworthiness of the defendant are his or her criminal history, the specific role he or she played in the current offense (e.g., the organizer or a follower), and his or her level of sophistication or maturity (Bishop, Leiber, & Johnson, 2010). In an ethnographic study of decision-making for juvenile waiver hearings, Harris (2008) found judges considered young people more culpable for delinquency if their daily routines mirrored those of adults. Youth who are believed to interact in the world as children are understood by court actors to be less worthy of blame than youth of similar ages who live as adults. In a notable example, a judge chose to transfer a young male immigrant to adult criminal court for an accidental homicide by arson, despite his efforts to warn residents to leave the burning building, because she viewed him as living like an adult. Harris (2008) notes the young man left school and was working to help financially support his family. In this example, the lifestyle of the young person (e.g., not attending school, working, financially supporting others) indicated to the judge that the person was capable of adult decision-making and was thus worthy of blame for his actions. This line of reasoning results in discriminatory decision-making because a wealthier and perhaps native-born young person would not have felt the same need to leave school and enter the workforce. Potentially mitigating the perceived blameworthiness of the

defendant in the eyes of the court is whether he or she has prior experiences of victimization (Steffensmeier et al., 1998), which judges more frequently assume to be true of female defendants (Steffensmeier et al., 2017). Corrigan and Shdaimah (2016) suggest legal actors have expectations of behavior for both victims and perpetrators. Decision-makers are best able to understand people who conform to the expectations (perhaps by refusing to comply with court norms only in ways that make sense to the legal actors) and, thus, treat them better. When someone does not conform to the expectations (e.g., due to a cultural difference or traumatic experience), he or she may be more likely to receive inferior treatment.

Dangerousness.

The second concern, according to Focal Concerns Theory, is protection of the community. The judge would make a determination about how likely they believe the person is to re-offend, causing further harm to the community (Bishop et al., 2010). Steffensmeier and Demuth (2000) note prior history and charge severity, both of which can indicate dangerousness, are strong predictors of sentencing outcomes for defendants regardless of race. Black and Hispanic people are stereotyped as more likely to perpetrate violence than other groups, however (Bridges & Steen, 1998; Rios, 2011; Steen, Engen, & Gainey, 2005). The shorthand means judges may enact harsher penalties against a member of a racial minority group because they assume the person will continue to engage in criminal or delinquent behavior. For adults, age has also been found to play a role, with perceived reoffending potential decreasing with adult age (Steffensmeier et al., 2017).

Practical Constraints and Consequences.

The final focal concern is practical constraints of the court and system (Steffensmeier et al., 1998). Judges may consider the residual challenges incarcerating a person might cause for his

or her family (Bishop et al., 2010). For example, a defendant with children may be treated more leniently so as not to disrupt the parent-child relationship. Judges may also have an opinion about whether a particular person is capable of serving time in a facility (e.g., whether they are particularly vulnerable to abuse by other offenders). Both factors could ultimately be associated with disparate outcomes across gender and race. Judges may, for example, believe men from racial minority groups have a better likelihood of adapting to incarceration relative to women or White men (Bishop et al., 2010; Steffensmeier et al., 2017). Aside from characteristics of the specific case and person, judges may also consider systemic constraints such as the space and financial limitations of local detention centers. Finally, judges may think through any potential negative publicity of the court stemming from their decisions (Bishop et al., 2010).

All three concepts of focal concerns will be incorporated into this study.

Blameworthiness will be operationalized by the type of charge with which the young person is accused. Violent offenses are considered most serious, followed by property offenses and then status offenses. Prior research has also found the sex of the defendant to be associated with stereotypes regarding blameworthiness. The concept of dangerousness will be indicated by the race and ethnicity of the offender. Race and ethnicity should not be associated with outcomes once legally-relevant factors are considered, so including race in the quantitative models will help indicate whether stereotypes may be employed.

Theories Related to Social Workers in Courts

Two theories will inform a framework for how social workers operate within court systems. They will both be used to conceptualize social workers as unique members of a court workgroup. Although social workers may consider many factors when making legal decisions, the influence of other professionals and colleagues is hypothesized to be a primary driver of their

behavior. This might mean that social workers behave in ways that diverge from the expectations of the social work profession because they align themselves professionally instead with other court actors and criminal justice professionals and because they are embedded in the same institutions and systems.

Court Community Theory

Court community theory (Eisenstein & Jacob, 1977) conceptualizes the people who work in the court (attorneys, judges, bailiffs, etc.) as an interwoven workgroup. Eisenstein and Jacob (1977) argue that the workgroup members have shared goals and that they understand they must often cooperate with one another to meet these goals efficiently. Court community theory can be used to understand differences in outcomes across jurisdictions (Ulmer & Johnson, 2017).

Although all American court systems operate within a similar overarching cultural framework, individual courts have their own cultures. Ulmer and Johnson (2017) note that in the federal court system, for example, all judges have access to the same advisory sentencing guidelines. The sentencing decisions within a jurisdiction have more in common with one another than those across jurisdictions, however. This means people with similar federal charges are likely to receive similar sentences regardless of other circumstances if they are tried in the same court. The outcomes may be very different if tried in another court even when the legal variables remain the same. An explanation for the difference in sentences across courts is court community theory. Judges, attorneys, and other court actors in a court have individual personalities, but they operate within the same workgroup. Together, they create the culture of that specific court and make decisions as a team to sustain their working relationship. Although the court workgroup members are thought to work cooperatively, power is not necessarily shared equally amongst

them (e.g., because some court actors may have differential access to information about the case and the court process; Rudes & Portillo, 2012).

As described by Ulmer and Johnson (2004), court community theory suggests not only will the severity of sanctions differ from one court to another because of the varying workgroups, the relative weight of individual characteristics will also differ. In a juvenile court, this means certain factors (e.g., young age) may be associated with substantial reductions in length of supervision in one jurisdiction yet be inconsequential in another. Eisenstein, Fleming, and Nardulli (1988) also hypothesize larger jurisdictions may be relatively less punitive than smaller ones for several reasons. The larger caseloads may reduce the likelihood of the greater community focusing attention on the decisions made regarding any one case; moreover, the volume of delinquent behavior may affect how harshly the court actors view individual behaviors. In addition to the influences of the working relationships between court community members (e.g., judges, prosecutors, etc.), the surrounding community can also affect court decision-making. For example, Ulmer and Johnson (2004) found a relationship between greater proportions of racial and ethnic minorities in a county and harsher sentencing for Black and Hispanic adults relative to White adults.

This theory primarily informs the qualitative component of this mixed methods dissertation. Social workers were asked to consider how closely they work with other members of the court system and whether they believe all members of the court have the same overall goals. Finally, they were asked about their knowledge of the community surrounding the court and about how well-integrated they believe themselves and other members of the court workgroup to be in the larger community.

Street-Level Bureaucracy

Michael Lipsky (1980) conceptualized street-level bureaucracy as a way to understand the role of public service workers who interface with the public in a variety of fields (Cooper, Sornalingam, & O'Donnell, 2015). The theory relates to people in direct contact with those whom they serve or regulate such as policing, corrections, education, and social services (Lipsky, 1980). Lipsky notes that these bureaucrats work in agencies where they have the power to make many decisions with lasting consequences on their clients' lives. Simultaneously, however, the needs of their clients will always outstrip the available time and resources of the worker and the agency (Cooper et al., 2015). This creates a dilemma for workers who must, within the confines of the larger agency, choose which clients will be the focus of their attention and other resources, often at the expense of other clients.

In order to reconcile the competing demands of clients and those of the agency at large, street-level bureaucrats create coping mechanisms (Halliday, Burns, Hutton, McNeill, & Tata, 2009). One such coping mechanism aligns significantly with the concepts expressed in causal attribution theory as described above in that the front-line workers develop certain patterns and routines, which streamline their work (Halliday et al., 2009). These routines can result in stereotyping because bureaucrats may apply the characteristics of one case to another because they share a similar trait (e.g., race or gender) even when other features of the case may be very different (e.g., mitigating factors in a court setting). Other coping mechanisms bureaucrats employ include limiting the scope of their work because the resources available will not be sufficient to finish everything they might otherwise want to do. The workers might then limit their conceptualization of the scope of their clients in order to reconcile the fact that they cannot accomplish everything they would like for each person seeking their resources (Lipsky, 1980).

Lipsky (1980) suggests bureaucrats may determine which potential clients are most worthy of services, most likely to respond to services, and/or evoke the most sympathy. One process of assessing clients as deserving of services and worthy of limited resources that rely on moral assumptions has been called “moral entrepreneurship” (Hasenfeld, 2000). The concept has been applied to understand the everyday ways social workers exercise discretion (Schdaimah & McGarry, 2018). In other cases, human services workers may have little power over who qualifies for services, but they may be able to determine what kind and how many services a client receives (Williams, Maynard-Moody, & Musheno, 2003). They may make little effort to learn about the variety of needs their clients have in order to simplify the number or types of services they must identify to address them (Brodkin, 1997).

Street-level bureaucracy theory has been applied to the work of social workers in many settings; in at least one case, the theory has been used to understand the role of social workers within courts (Halliday et al., 2009). Halliday and colleagues (2009) used ethnographic methods to study the work of social workers who produce reports for judges in Scotland in one urban setting and one small town. They explain that in Scotland, social workers are utilized in the criminal court system in a role as advocates for defendants not unlike those assigned to children in the child welfare system. The social workers learn what they can from the defendants and write reports generally intended to sway the judges to confer sentences in the least restrictive environment. The reports do not explicitly state what sentence the social worker suggests for a given client, but they note hardships the client has faced or difficulties they may have with substance use in order to suggest to the judges that the client might best be served by accessing treatment rather than a more punitive sentence (Halliday et al., 2009). This application of the

theory expands the original conceptualization by adding cross-disciplinary relationships and the fear of status inferiority to the list of demands faced by street-level bureaucrats.

Notably, the discretion allotted street-level bureaucrats is a fundamental aspect of street-level bureaucracy as a theory (Lipsky, 1980). The discretion SC DJJ community social workers are granted plays an important role in the context of this study. Lipsky (1980) argues that street-level bureaucrats do not have significant power outlined by the formal policies of the agencies for which they work, but they are the creators of informal agency policy because they make the decisions regarding how policies are implemented. This discretion allots them substantial power in their contact with service recipients. In addition to protecting the public, the mission statement of SC DJJ is to “reclaim juveniles through prevention, community services, education, and rehabilitative services in the least restrictive environment” (SC DJJ, 2015, para. 1). As the administrators of the policy, community social workers, in addition to other bureaucrats, are in the distinct position to determine who receives preventative, community, educational, and rehabilitative services. Moreover, social workers can advocate for appropriately restrictive environments for the youth. The NASW Code of Ethics outlines the social work value of social justice. Specifically, social workers are called to “pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people” (NASW, 2017, para. 17). Given this value, social workers are likely to interpret the SC DJJ mission statement in a way that promotes the pursuit of equality and social justice. When deciding how to implement SC DJJ policies, social workers are in a unique position to prioritize the needs of historically disadvantaged populations.

Application of Theories to this Dissertation

These theories will inform the qualitative and quantitative portions of the current study. First, the theories of legal decision-making generally outline a framework for how court actors make decisions. More specifically, both focal concerns perspective and causal attribution can be used to understand one way a juvenile offender's race can influence his or her legal outcomes. Albonetti (1991) argues judges and other decision-makers might rely (perhaps unconsciously) upon stereotypes to form opinions about whether an offender is likely to recidivate. In focal concerns, this use of stereotypes ties directly to the concerns of blameworthiness and community protection. Being of a minority race or ethnic group can be viewed as a shorthand attribution for increased blameworthiness and for the likelihood of reoffending because judges may perceive Black and Hispanic youth to be more dangerous than White youth (Burrow & Lowery, 2015).

Unique to this study is the conceptualization of community social workers employed directly by the state as members of the court workgroup. The current study will inform the field about whether social workers, in a dual role of treatment provider and court actor, also behave in accordance with the principles of causal attribution and focal concerns. Although SC DJJ utilizes an ostensibly objective risk assessment tool, the social workers are not bound by the recommendation of the tool when making decisions about disposition recommendations. Like judges and other street level bureaucrats, social workers are allotted significant discretion in their practice and are not bound to make any particular recommendations. They also share with judges the burden of balancing competing demands and goals of the juvenile justice system. SC DJJ community social workers, in keeping with their professional ethics as well as the agency mission statement, are likely to emphasize reducing the frequency with which youth are committed to institutions. They may also feel pressure from members of the court workgroup or

even SC DJJ colleagues from non-social work backgrounds not to coddle the young people. Due to the discretion they are allotted and the competing goals with which they are presented, social workers may search for a way to decrease uncertainty as has been theorized of judges. This might mean that they rely upon the risk assessment tools and the focal concerns despite having the discretion to consider a wider variety of potentially mitigating factors.

Another salient concept of causal attribution theory is that of clearly defined roles and hierarchies (Albonetti, 1991). The current study will examine how social workers fit into the predefined court division of labor. Moreover, social workers' ability to disrupt hierarchical structures will be assessed. Social workers may feel pressure to acquiesce to the patterned behaviors set by their colleagues before the arrival of the social worker, particularly when they are new to the court workgroup. Both court community theory and street-level bureaucracy theory can provide some insights about why and how they might acquiesce. Conversely, social workers may be able to counteract and even change some of the set patterns to reduce reliance on stereotypes and other attributions in legal decision-making. A finding that social workers are unwilling to accept predetermined patterns of behavior when they enter a court workgroup would be a direct challenge to both FCP and causal attribution. Social workers, unlike what is believed of other court actors, may choose to prioritize the pursuit of social justice and racial/ethnic equity over minimizing uncertainty.

Court community theory (Eisenstein & Jacob, 1977) has two direct applications to the current study. First, Eisenstein and Jacob assert the biases of any one court actor could be made irrelevant if the others (e.g., the judge or attorneys) refuse to let that bias influence decision making. Conversely, the group could allow biases and racial discrimination to affect their mutual decisions. Racism would then become a systemic aspect of the workgroup culture. Secondly, the

current study has the potential to expand the court community theory to the unique setting of a juvenile court with an active social worker. Unlike adult criminal courts, juvenile courts include additional actors representing the state agency (e.g., SC DJJ intake staff). The community social workers are also in a unique position in that they can attend court alongside other SC DJJ staff. The current study examines whether the theory is applicable to these additional people and whether they function as part of the core decision-making workgroup. Like other juvenile justice agency staff and, to some extent, defense counsel, the goals of the community social worker should differ from those of the prosecutor. Social workers operate under the mission to “enhance human well-being..., with particular attention to the needs of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty” (NASW, 2017, para. 1). All employees of SC DJJ are entrusted with the mission of rehabilitating juveniles and working towards keeping youth in the least restrictive environment (SC DJJ, 2015). The theories described above indicate court actors are likely to work collaboratively in order to reduce uncertainty and meet the shared goal of processing cases.

Castellano (2009) argued caseworkers employed by nonprofit agencies who were contracted by court systems to provide treatment services to “criminal justice clients” pretrial work separately from the court workgroups and align themselves with different goals in that they seek treatment for conditions rather than the efficient processing of cases (p. 456). She argues the caseworkers are the primary agents of social control in these cases because of the substantial power they hold. There are meaningful differences in the work described by Castellano (2009) and the work the SC DJJ community social workers do. Nonetheless, the argument that human service professionals may operate as agents of social control is an important one that informs this study. The current study will serve as an investigation of whether the social workers occupy a

role within or external to the court workgroup. Social workers operate similarly to the rest of the court workgroup if they make recommendations that are aligned with those of prosecutors and others. In this exploratory study, social workers are conceptualized as working outside of the workgroup. This perspective assumes they are more likely to combat routinized decision-making in favor of pursuing justice in accordance with the mission of the social work profession.

The work of Halliday and colleagues (2009), and the theory of street-level bureaucracy more broadly, intersects with the goals of the current study in that they consider whether social workers who operate as street-level bureaucrats may be influenced by their perceived status in the eyes of other criminal justice professionals. Prior conceptualizations of street-level bureaucracy have primarily focused on the interplay between the clients the workers interact with and the agency or system of which they are a part. This study will follow the lead of Halliday and colleagues (2009) in focusing considerable attention on the interaction of the social workers with other court workgroup members. As bureaucrats, the social workers and other agency staff create the de facto agency policy by how they choose to implement the stated policies. Whether the social workers are more heavily influenced by their own professional orientation or by the opinions of their colleagues could greatly affect the agency's overall decision-making and, thus, the lives of the youth involved.

This study will apply the theories presented in this chapter in new ways. First, unlike prior applications of the court-specific theories, this study is primarily interested in the influence and decision-making of social workers, members of the court workgroup who do not ultimately determine the legal outcomes examined (e.g., whether a young person is detained, whether a young person is adjudicated delinquent). The community social workers are hypothesized to affect legal outcomes by exerting influence on the recommendations of the state agency, not by

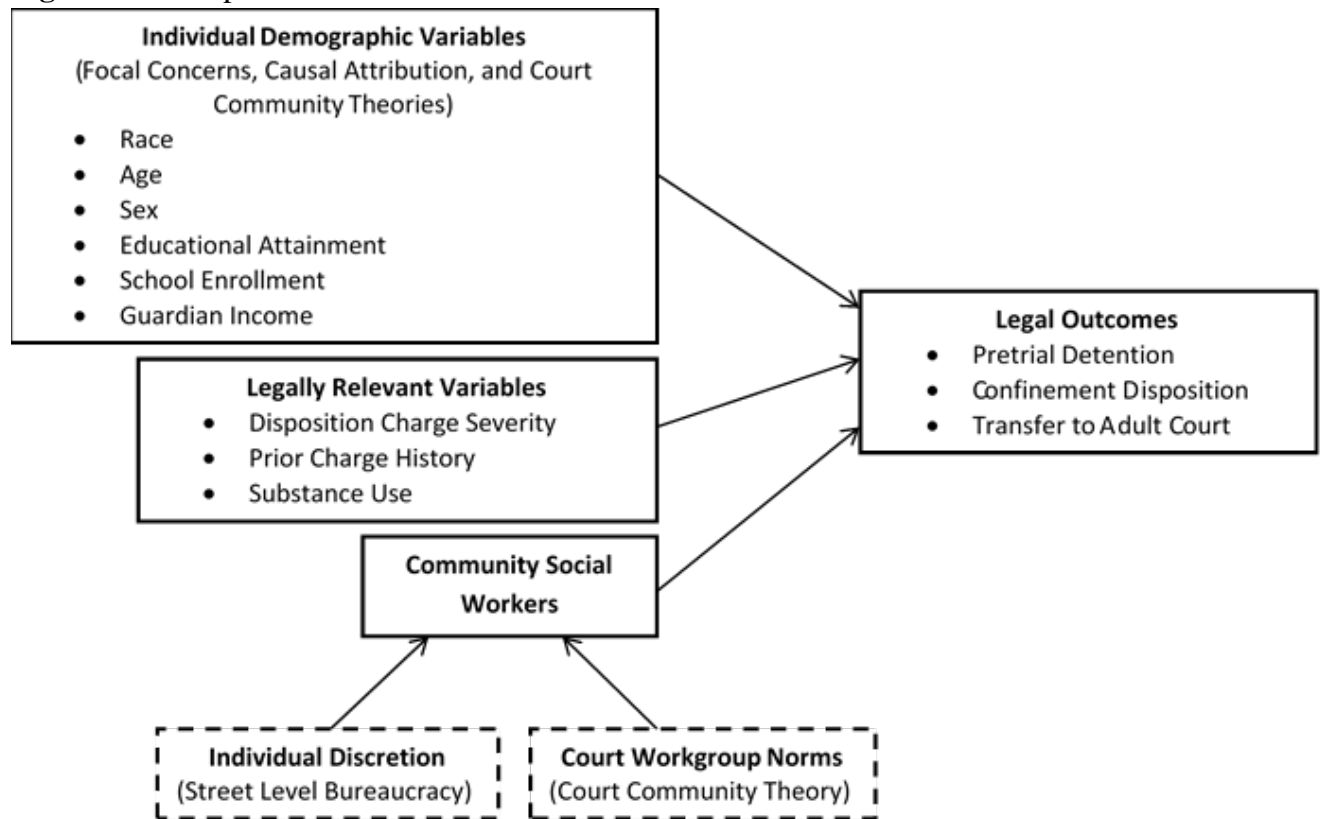
making the decisions that are ultimately in the hands of judges. In keeping with court community theory, everyone within the court workgroup, including their differing personalities and motivations, influence the legal outcomes through collaboration. This study will be the first known application of FCP, causal attribution, and court community theory to a court including social workers as a key member of the workgroup. Secondly, prior researchers have applied the theories presented here to juvenile court settings (see Bishop et al., 2010; Fader, Kurlychek, & Morgan, 2014); however, the primary application in the literature has been in adult settings. Moreover, the outcomes considered in this study are broader than just disposition as is more typical in prior literature (for an exception see Harris, 2008, described earlier in this chapter). Finally, this dissertation is a study of a DMC reduction strategy. This study will not only examine whether the theories presented here are applicable to understanding DMC in juvenile justice, but the findings will also indicate whether adding a social worker to the court workgroup can help to reduce DMC. In other words, this study aims to examine whether the inclusion of community social workers in the court workgroup is associated with a reduction in DMC.

Conceptual Model for this Dissertation

Social workers, in keeping with the theories outlined above, are hypothesized to influence the decision-making at multiple identified contact points that are within the purview of the SC community social work program. Figure 2 is a conceptual model for this dissertation depicting the concepts of interest and the social workers' potential influence on race disparities in legal outcomes. At each identified phase of the juvenile justice system, a combination of factors from the theories described in detail earlier in this dissertation are hypothesized to impact the legal decisions. From causal attribution and focal concerns perspective, concepts included in this dissertation will be: race, age, and sex of the juvenile; the severity of the current charge and prior

delinquent history; and the county in which the case is heard. Social workers will also be asked about the extent to which they believe the same factors are considered during legal decision-making. Based on court community theory, social workers will be asked about their relationship with other court actors and how they conceptualize their mission within the court setting. Moreover, they will be asked about their connection to the broader community and the connection between the community and other court actors. Finally, street-level bureaucracy theory will add to the dissertation by informing questions for the social workers about how they understand their role and exercise their discretion in practice. The theory offers further detail for forming questions for the interview guide regarding how (social workers utilize the discretion they are allotted to determine their recommendations.

Figure 2. Conceptual Model



Chapter 3: System Level DMC Reduction Strategies

This chapter provides a systematic review of the literature regarding system-level interventions to combat disproportionate minority contact (DMC). The current dissertation will evaluate whether a systems change (i.e., hiring social workers to work in county offices) can reduce DMC in the juvenile justice system, so the current chapter will help to situate the study within the existing body of related research. This literature review will identify the strategies currently being utilized and which stages of the juvenile justice system are being targeted. In addition to assessing the effectiveness of the existing DMC reduction strategies, the current review also seeks to identify the variety of programs currently in place. This includes details regarding which stages of the justice system are being affected, which specific strategies have been utilized, and how these programs are being supported. The chapter will end with implications for future systems-level intervention research into reducing DMC. Because of the pervasiveness of DMC in the juvenile justice system as well as the multitude of negative outcomes of DMC for both individuals and community, as outlined in the first chapter of this dissertation, identifying effective DMC reduction strategies remains extremely important. For this dissertation, knowledge regarding what has worked in other communities to reduce DMC and knowledge of what gaps remain in the literature will inform the quantitative and qualitative components of the study.

Search Strategy

This review was conducted electronically through databases available at the University of Maryland, Baltimore's Health Sciences and Human Services Library (HS/HSL). A search of seven electronic databases was conducted in April 2018 for articles published since 2002. Databases included: SocINDEX, PsycINFO, Social Sciences Citation Index, Urban Studies Abstracts, Family Studies Abstracts, Social Work Abstracts, and the National Criminal Justice

Reference Service. The terms ["Disproportionate minority contact" OR "disproportionate minority confinement"] AND ["juvenile justice" OR "court" OR "family court"] AND [intervention OR policy OR initiative OR program OR evaluation OR action] were entered into the databases. Identified articles were screened for relevance. Only literature found using this search strategy was considered.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Several inclusion criteria were employed to ensure only appropriate studies were included in the review. The studies were all published in English and based on data collected within the United States. Juvenile justice systems and policies differ significantly globally, making cross-national comparisons unfruitful. Only studies in which the data was collected since 2002 were included in this review. When reauthorizing the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act in 2002, Congress expanded the states' requirement from reducing just disproportionate minority confinement to disproportionate minority contact, more generally (OJJDP, 2012). Studies were considered if they evaluated an intervention implemented in an attempt to reduce DMC at any one or more of the nine phases (e.g., arrest, pre-trial detention, or waiver to adult court). Only studies with information presented about the outcomes of DMC reduction programs were included. Attempts to lessen disproportionality through delinquency prevention programs were ineligible as they did not conform to the differential selection perspective taken in the current study.

Articles found through the strategy outlined above were included if the full-text was available through the HS/HSL, publicly via the internet, or through inter-library loan. Included articles did not have to be subjected to peer-review. This decision was made because much of the identified literature evaluating DMC reduction programs has not been peer-reviewed. Federal

agencies, such as the Department of Justice (OJJDP, 2012), and private foundations, such as the Annie E. Casey Foundation (Hoytt, Schiraldi, Smith, & Ziedenberg, 2001) have prioritized reducing DMC. Publications written by and for such agencies are often not peer-reviewed, and excluding this research would have significantly limited the scope of relevant information included in this review.

Search Results

Searches conducted in April 2018 yielded 158 articles. After removing 34 duplicates, 124 titles and abstracts were screened. Potentially relevant articles were also requested through the HS/HSL's inter-library loan program for additional scrutiny. The search of National Criminal Justice Reference Abstracts database included two results which were videos as well as 10 results which were links to Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention websites and not specific articles. An additional four studies could not be located in full text online through the HS/HSL or via an internet search.

The most frequent reason articles were excluded from consideration is that they did not report on a systems-level intervention. This largest subset of articles included those which did not evaluate a DMC reduction strategy or (less frequently) evaluated a delinquency prevention program. Many of the studies identified specific circumstances under which DMC was evident. For example, one study found that gang membership was more strongly associated with arrests for Black youth than for White youth (Tapia, 2011). Although the study may have implications for understanding how DMC occurs at the arrest stage, the study did not discuss any potential interventions. Three studies reported whether DMC decreased over time but did not consider the impact of any particular intervention. Two studies relied upon data from the adult correctional system. Eight of the identified studies were excluded because they reported on data collected

before 2002. Ultimately, seven identified studies met the inclusion outlined above and are described in detail in the data matrix (see Appendix A) and below.

Systematic Review Findings

DMC reduction programs.

This review identified several strategies and large-scale initiatives operating across the country to reduce DMC. For a complete picture of the types of DMC reduction strategies identified in the literature, please see Appendix B. The most frequently implemented strategy across the studies was the creation or revision of risk assessment tools (Kusnetz, 2014; Maggard, 2015; Orchowsky, Poulin, & Iwama, 2010; Rodriguez & Eells, 2013; Simpson, 2010; Young, Yancey, Betsinger, & Farrell, 2011). These were described as more objective than previously used assessments and more focused on legally-relevant variables (e.g., charge severity and prior legal history). Risk assessment tools attempt to offer an objective assessment of how likely a young person is to re-offend (Schwalbe, 2007). McCafferty (2017) notes risk assessments are an attempt to predict future behavior better than court actors can and to reduce subjectivity that can be associated with bias. Generally, the risk assessments utilized in the identified literature were used to determine whether youth would be placed in detention to await court proceedings or whether they remained in their home communities. Risk assessment tools typically consider factors such as offense history, family or school problems, substance use, and/or peer delinquency to assign a numeric risk score to each young person (Schwalbe, 2007).

Three studies described programs which provided youth with mentors or coaches in their communities. In one community, liaisons worked to familiarize minority families with the legal process and explain the benefits of diversion programs (Orchowsky et al., 2010). African American families were electing not to participate in Informal Adjustment Agreements (IAAs), a

form of diversion, because they were untrusting of how the system would work. The court staff assigned the liaisons to build rapport with African American families to increase participation in the IAAs (Orchowsky et al., 2010). The coaches in Kusnetz's 2014 study were paired with youth already under supervision to help reduce the rate at which minority youth were violating their probations, which was higher than the rate of White probation violations. Schwartz (2013) reports mentors were also available to pre-trial youth utilizing evening reporting centers, but their duties were not detailed in the article.

Two studies identified newly implemented alternatives to detention, including a community-based evening reporting center (Schwartz, 2013) and wireless electronic monitoring (Kusnetz, 2014). The evening reporting center described by Schwartz (2013) was built in the community in which many justice-involved youth resided. Instead of utilizing secure detention for moderate-risk youth, the agency could require them to report to the center regularly. Youth were also able to access other services at the center including educational supports and transportation assistance. Kusnetz (2014) described the implementation of a wireless electronic monitoring system which also allowed for a higher level of supervision than simple house arrest but did not require secure detention. In all cases described above, strategies were implemented to target problems resulting in DMC identified at the local level. For example, when policymakers realized African Americans were electing not to participate in the available diversion program, they employed liaisons to build trust and inform families of their options. The evening reporting center was implemented to be convenient for the youth who were clustered in a particular community.

Several studies identified DMC reduction strategies that were not described in other identified articles. Additional tactics utilized to reduce DMC include the following: a

requirement for supervisor's approval to override a juvenile into detention if his or her risk assessment score was low (Rodriguez & Eells, 2013), detention release reports wherein officers must formally justify their detention decisions (Rodriguez & Eells, 2013), allowing parents to pick up youth for detention without identification (Kusnetz, 2014), and calling families to remind them of upcoming court appearances to prevent detentions stemming from failing to appear (Young et al., 2011). Young and colleagues (2011) describe several additional strategies implemented to target DMC in local Maryland jurisdictions. Not all of the strategies included outcome data to indicate success, and most are described as prevention and early intervention programs (e.g., anger management or community restitution diversion programs) rather than systems change initiatives. Maggard (2015) identified several strategies for which little detail is provided: new data collection and analysis; new meetings, subcommittees, and collaborations; additional staff training; policy changes; and a new staff position.

The work by Kusnetz (2014) emphasizes the importance of considering local policies that can inadvertently increase DMC. Kusnetz found minority families were less likely than White families to have the identification necessary to sign their children out of detention in Essex County, New Jersey. As a result, more minority youth were remaining in detention rather than awaiting hearings at home even when they were not considered more dangerous than White youth. The policy was implemented to ensure only legal guardians were able to take youth home for their own safety, but the original policy had the unintended consequence of increasing DMC. The policy was reversed after a careful look at the outcomes of local policies.

In addition to the OJJDP's influence on the states' decisions to prioritize DMC reduction, three foundations were identified in this review as instrumental in spearheading and assisting in these strategies. The tactics described in studies Kusnetz (2014) and Maggard (2015) were both

undertaken as part of the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI), which was also a driver of reforms in Maryland (Young et al., 2011). Although the overarching goal of the JDAI is to reduce reliance on pre-trial detention for all youth, the foundation highlights the particular need to measure and combat racial disparities (AECF, 2017). They also identify objective risk assessments as a critical component to the process (AECF, 2017), which may have also influenced other studies in this review (Orchowsky et al., 2010; Rodriguez & Eells, 2013; Simpson, 2010) to focus on assessments. Orchowsky and colleagues (2010) noted the jurisdictions described in the study are also involved with the JDAI, but they were not at the time the evaluation was conducted. This indicates the influence of the JDAI on DMC reduction initiatives seems to be continuing to grow. Maggard (2015), Kusnetz (2014, and Young et al. (2011) all mentioned the impact of the W. Haywood Burns Institute for Juvenile Justice Fairness & Equity (Burns Institute) on their DMC reduction efforts, which is unsurprising given that the Burns Institute’s mission statement is to “eliminate racial and ethnic disparity by building a community-centered response to youthful misbehavior” (Burns Institute, n.d., para. 5). Finally, Schwartz (2013) identified the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation as an important partner in the creation of evening reporting centers as a detention alternative, and Simpson (2010) described the implementation of a detention risk assessment tool in Louisiana as part of the MacArthur Foundation’s Models for Change multi-state initiative. The foundation reports support of research and intervention regarding a wide-range of social issues, and the Models for Change program works towards “more fair, effective, rational, and developmentally appropriate” juvenile justice systems (Grisso, 2017, p. 6).

DMC reduction.

Several of the articles reported positive outcomes in decreasing the use of detention and increasing diversion. Unfortunately, few of the strategies described in the identified articles were associated with major reductions in DMC (See Appendix A). In two of the identified studies, authors were unable to clearly determine whether the strategies were effective for reducing DMC due to limitations in the implementation of the strategies. In Linn County, Iowa, Orchowsky and colleagues (2010) found positive results for the community liaison program for increasing African American participation in diversion programs. Only 42 of 122 eligible youth were referred to the program during the study. Because the authors were not able to identify why so few eligible youth were actually referred to the program, their findings are difficult to interpret. It remains unclear why so many eligible young people remained unreferred and whether the youth who were referred are a representative sample of those who were eligible. Evidence for the effectiveness of the Iowa Delinquency Assessment is even more limited (Orchowsky et al., 2010). Fewer than half of the juveniles were administered the assessment instrument, and the disparity between rates of petitions for Whites and African Americans remained.

Simpson (2010) found officers were unwilling to utilize the Detention Screening Instrument (DSI) consistently. The instrument was only used in 67% of police contacts with youth (Simpson, 2010). Of the 14 people recommended by the screening tool for detention, only one was detained. An additional 21 youth were detained discretionarily. Despite these limitations, Simpson (2010) found a nonsignificant reduction in the proportion of detained youth who were Black compared to the year before implementing the DSI as well as a reduction in the number of youth detained overall. Simpson (2010) also reviewed case data to see how different the recommendations of the DSI would have been if the tool was modified. The author was able

to identify a potential modification for the screening tool that could further decrease DMC and also increase the ability of the instrument to predict recidivism over three and six months.

Four of the identified studies described effective strategies for reducing negative outcomes (e.g., detention or probation violations) overall but do not establish the programs as definitively useful for reducing DMC. One of the strategies described by Young et al. (2011), the respondent Notification Program in Baltimore County, substantially reduced detentions for youth who failed to appear for court hearings. Although the number of Black youth detained declined, the proportion of the detained youth who were Black remained between 70 and 80%. Schwartz (2013) argues Latino youth were well-served by an evening reporting center and avoided detention. The strategy succeeded in engaging Latino participants, which is promising for reducing DMC. Without comparable data regarding White youth in the community, however, conclusions regarding disproportionality cannot be drawn.

Kusnetz (2014) and Maggard (2015) both report mixed findings regarding DMC reduction in their studies. Kusnetz (2014) provided data about both White and non-White youth, but the findings do not convincingly indicate DMC has reduced in New Jersey as a result of the initiatives. Detention placements shrank overall, discretionary use of detention was cut in half, time spent in detention waiting for an alternative reduced, and probation violations diminished. All of these are positive outcomes, but they are not the same as a reduction in DMC. In fact, the authors report African American youth continue to be more frequently discretionarily detained (i.e., detained despite having a relatively low risk score). White youth, conversely, are more likely to be released to their families even when their risk scores are high. When assessing the JDAI in Virginia, Maggard (2015) found legal variables seem to carry more weight in the detention decision with the use of the more objective risk assessment tool, which is positive. The

odds of detention, as well as the specific variables which predict detention, remain different for Whites and non-Whites, however. The odds of detention for a non-White youth with a felony are nearly 18, compared to 12 for Whites. The findings indicate disproportionalities remain. In some cases, discretion among those who utilize the tools may play a factor in disproportionalities. In other cases, it seems likely the tools are not consistently used.

The findings of Young et al. (2011) indicate some promise for reducing disproportionality in detention, but the results were not uniformly positive. The study evaluated the implementation of a risk assessment tool, the Detention Risk Assessment Instrument (DRAI), used to determine whether a young person should be detained in Maryland. Being African American was no longer associated with increased odds for detention compared to being White after controlling for legally-relevant variables once the DRAI was implemented. Unfortunately, being Latino was still significantly associated with an increased odds for detention. The use of discretionary detentions (i.e., the choice to detain a young person even when the DRAI recommended a release to the community) was uniform for White, African American, and Latino youth; however White youth were statistically significantly more likely than Black youth to benefit from downward overrides (i.e., being released to the community even when the tool recommended they should be detained; Young et al., 2011).

One article in this review reported generally favorable results. Following the implementation of three strategies (a risk assessment tool, requiring approval for discretionary detentions, and detention release reports; outlined in more detail in Appendix B), Maricopa County saw the race effects on mandatory detentions, length of stay in detention, and case dismissals disappear completely in multiple years (Rodriguez & Eells, 2013). Although the odds for discretionary detentions remained higher for African American youth than White youth, the

difference was no longer statistically significant in 2012. The odds of Latinos and Native Americans being discretionarily detained are roughly equivalent to those of Whites (Rodriguez & Eells, 2013).

Implications for this Study

Both the substantive and methodological findings of this systematic review have implications for the current dissertation study. The findings indicate successful DMC reduction strategies are likely to be targeted to the needs of local jurisdictions. Reducing disproportionality will require a close investigation of jurisdictions' current practices, which may be inadvertently harmful. Kusnetz (2014) notes, for example, a requirement that parents present identification in order to take their children home from detention in New Jersey was implemented in an effort to keep children safe. Only by considering the data did the researchers realize the disproportionately negative effect the policy had on African American youth. The promising evening reporting centers were only founded in Pennsylvania after close consideration by researchers revealed detention alternatives were more readily available in majority White communities and not near the neighborhoods in which Hispanic youth lived (Schwartz, 2013). Orchowsky and colleagues (2010) describe a situation in which African American families were disproportionately opting out of diversion programs due to a lack of trust in the court system. By identifying the specific cause of the disproportionality, they were able to target it directly. In a later study, Rodriguez (2010) argues successful attempts to reduce DMC will require assessing the causes and extent of DMC at the local level. Although none of the strategies identified for this review effectively eliminated DMC, the implementation supports the need for localized problem-solving, a task for which community social workers are uniquely suited.

The study with the most positive findings for reducing DMC included the use of an objective risk assessment tool as well as oversight for how it is utilized (Rodriguez & Eells, 2013). Several articles studied the use of objective measures and found they were ineffective for reducing DMC, often because of the ability of staff to override the instruments' recommendations. In Arizona, staff were required to explain to a supervisor why they wanted to override a recommendation. They also began a process of maintaining records for the detained youth, noting the reason they were detained as well as the date of the person's next court appearance. This allowed supervisors to quickly review who was in detention and why, so they could make decisions about whether to release people from detention. Aspects of the effective strategy described here shares several commonalities with the community social work program in the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice. The agency utilizes an objective risk assessment tool. All of the county staff (intake workers, social worker, county director, etc.) review the recommendation of the risk assessment tool during their regular staffing meetings and come to a consensus before the intake staff person makes a recommendation to the court suggesting an appropriate disposition. The social workers have the authority to review the recommendation and consider the input of staff and supervisors before making their recommendation. Social workers and other county staff also consider a risk score when making a recommendation as to whether a young person should be detained. The findings of the Rodriguez and Eells (2013) study indicate the combination of an objective measure with subjective human oversight might be an effective strategy for reducing DMC. As part of the current study, social workers will be asked about the extent to which they consider the recommendations of the risk assessment tool and under what circumstances they might select a recommendation counter to the suggestion of the tool.

Another implication of the current review for future research is the continued need for published evaluation studies of DMC reduction efforts. The significant body of published literature regarding race and the juvenile justice system does not focus on solutions. Presumably, states, foundations, and the federal government are collecting data about effective strategies; however, these data do not appear to be used for published empirical research. This gap is also acknowledged by the OJJDP, who notes the insufficient research-base of DMC reduction initiatives (Gies et al., 2009). Much of the current literature is also lacking direct measurement of disproportionality. This study will measure disproportionality directly, via RRIs, as well as consider the influence of legally relevant variables, via multivariate statistics. Either one alone, as was typical of the articles identified in this review, runs the risk of painting an incomplete picture regarding the current state of DMC. Moreover, the current study will include qualitative data to help discern the process by which DMC can be reduced. Finally, the identified studies almost universally focus on DMC at the detention stage. Because states are required to pursue a reduction in DMC at all stages of the juvenile justice process, this study will include analyses at later stages of the system.

Chapter 4: Method

Study Design

A convergent mixed methods approach was utilized to answer the identified research questions (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). Mixed methods research was chosen because of the flexibility the approach allows. Quantitative methodology can answer the question of whether race is associated with court decision-making at several stages of the juvenile justice system in counties with social workers compared to counties without them as well as whether the influence of race seems to change over time. These analyses can answer questions about potential outcomes and progress (Glogowska, 2011). Quantitative methods cannot, however, provide much detail as to the mechanisms by which any potential change has occurred. Qualitative methods can answer questions about what makes a program work (Glogowska, 2011). Similarly, qualitative data can elucidate the specific practices the social workers have employed but cannot determine whether the strategies have been effective across the state or a given county. Qualitative methods are also useful for the current study due to the complex and flexible nature of the community social worker position because they allow for the respondents to explain and provide context (Glogowska, 2011). Combined, the two methods provide a comprehensive view of the community social work program and its association with DMC. Because of the limited existing research regarding the role social workers play within court systems, the current study is exploratory. Quantitative and qualitative findings can help guide future research, policy, and practice. See Table 1 for an overview of the study methods as aligned with aims and research questions.

In this study, as with other convergent mixed methods research, the qualitative and quantitative phases of the study were conducted and analyzed independently before being merged during a third phase of the study (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). In convergent mixed

methods designs, the qualitative and quantitative components can be conducted simultaneously or sequentially, but the findings do not necessarily interact with one another until the final phase of the study. This study, therefore, consisted of three phases. The first phase of the study involved conducting semi-structured interviews with the community social workers employed by SC DJJ. The second phase consisted of analyzing quantitative data retrieved from SC DJJ to find whether DMC has reduced over time among youth in counties which added a community social worker and whether youth in those counties experienced less DMC than counties without community social workers. Finally, the qualitative and quantitative results were integrated in the narrative to paint a fuller picture of the role community social workers can play in reducing DMC. The three-step process (qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis followed by integration) allows for determining whether employing a community social worker is actually associated with a reduction in DMC, establishing limited causality (i.e., Are the community social workers potentially a significant contributor to DMC reduction?), and providing a preliminary explanation for the causal mechanisms by which social workers may be able to affect change in this area.

Integration of qualitative and quantitative data in studies with a convergent design can take several forms. This study employed a combination of two approaches: integration through narrative and integration through joint displays (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Fetters, Curry, & Creswell, 2013). Quantitative and qualitative results were explained separately followed by narrative explanations of how the findings complimented or diverged from one another (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Additionally, a graphical display (i.e., a table) was used to organize the connections identified between the quantitative and qualitative results.

Table 1. Overview of Research Questions and Methods

Research Aim	Research Questions	Study Methods
<p>Aim 1: To determine the extent of DMC in the South Carolina juvenile justice system</p>	<p>1. What are the relative rate indices between White and minority youth at the decision points of detention, confinement dispositions, and transfer to adult court in South Carolina statewide? 2. Do the relative rate indices between White and minority youth at the decision points of detention, confinement dispositions, and transfer to adult court in South Carolina differ between counties with and without community social workers?</p>	<p>Data Source: South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice (SC DJJ) administrative data; US Census reports Analysis: Relative rate indices</p>
<p>Aim 2: To examine whether the legal outcomes for Black youth are improved by having access to a community social worker</p>	<p>1. Are Black youth in the counties with social workers less likely to receive detention, confinement dispositions, and/or transfers to adult court than they were before the position was created, controlling for other factors? 2. Are Black youth in counties with social workers less likely to receive detention, confinement dispositions, and/or transfers to adult court than minority youth in similar counties which do not have social workers in their offices, controlling for other factors?</p>	<p>Data Source: SC DJJ administrative data Analysis: Binary logistic regression</p>
<p>Aim 3: To examine the extent to which the race/ethnicity of youth involved in the juvenile justice system significantly predicts legal outcomes for youth in counties with and without community social workers.</p>	<p>1. Is race/ethnicity a significant predictor of detention, confinement dispositions, and/or transfers in counties with social workers? 2. Is the relationship between race/ethnicity and the legal decision points (detention, confinement dispositions, and transfer to adult court) different between youth processed in counties in which they have access to community social workers and youth who do not have access to community social workers? 3. Is the relationship between race/ethnicity and the legal decision points (detention, confinement dispositions, and transfer to adult court) different between youth processed in counties in which they have access to social workers than it was for youth in those counties before social workers were employed?</p>	<p>Data Source: SC DJJ administrative data Analysis: Binary logistic regression</p>

Table 1. Continued

<p>Aim 4: To explore the perspective of community social workers regarding their role in reducing disproportionate minority contact (DMC)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. From the perspective of social workers, what is their role in reducing DMC? 2. How effective do social workers perceive themselves to be in reducing DMC, and what are potential barriers and facilitators to doing so? 	<p>Data Source: Interviews with SC DJJ community social workers</p> <p>Analysis: Three step coding process</p>
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Data Source

In order to effectively answer the research questions for this study, the quantitative and qualitative components relied upon different samples. The sample for the qualitative portion of the study was community social workers employed by SC DJJ. The quantitative analyses were conducted using administrative data provided by SC DJJ in order to respond to the first three study aims. The quantitative sample included all youth who entered the juvenile justice system in South Carolina between 2005 and 2018 (N=126,902). Social workers were originally moved into the county offices beginning in 2012, so data was requested prior to that year to allow for analysis of the outcomes both before and after the position was created. Data related to all youth who were referred to the juvenile justice agency was requested to allow for the analyzing of pre-trial detention rates. Including only youth who have been adjudicated delinquent (i.e., “found guilty” by a judge) would have excluded youth who were detained and whose charges were later dropped.

Sample Characteristics

Quantitative sample.

Sample characteristics for youth in both the counties with and without social workers are provided in Table 2. These characteristics represent youth referred to SC DJJ in 2018 in any

county of the state. This sample includes only youth who received a disposition from SC DJJ, so youth who were diverted from the system or were not adjudicated delinquent are not included. A total of 1,612 youth were adjudicated delinquent and had a recorded disposition in 2018. Of them, almost 80% were male. More than half were White (58.4%), and 35.3% were Black. The remaining 6.3% of youth identified as another race. The average age of the sample was just over 15 years old with a range between 10 and 20.

Table 2. SC DJJ Adjudicated Youth 2018 (N= 1,612)

	N (%) or M (SD)
Gender	
Male	1,280 (79.4)
Female	332 (20.6)
Race/Ethnicity	
Black	569 (35.3)
White	942 (58.4)
Other	101 (6.3)
Age	15.19 (1.37)

Qualitative sample.

All current community social workers and the social work supervisors were invited to participate in the qualitative portion of the study. As of November 2018, nine social workers were employed across county offices with SC DJJ. The social workers are licensed practitioners with Masters in Social Work degrees. The counties in which the respondents work span the state, including three of SC DJJ’s four regions. The social workers cover between one and three counties, and they range between large urban centers of the state and rural areas. Two additional social workers were employed in supervisory roles for the community social workers. Both supervisors and seven of the social workers consented to participate in interviews. They reported a wide range of social work experience, with multiple interviewees having worked for the agency in other roles prior to their current position.

Procedures

All study procedures were approved by the University of Maryland, Baltimore's Institutional Review Board before any data was collected or participants were recruited.

Quantitative procedures.

In November of 2018, I sent an email request for existing quantitative data to the Director of Research and Statistics at SC DJJ, with whom I had been communicating. Attached to the email, I included both the defended dissertation proposal and the approved IRB protocol. After meeting with his colleagues to determine how to share data externally within the agency's protocols, he mailed me two data sets on a password protected flash drive in June 2019. In July 2019, I spoke to him again by phone to retrieve the password for the flash drive. The first data set included demographic data for each of the youth, and the second included legal and court information. My next step was to merge the data sets, both of which were de-identified before being sent to me.

Qualitative procedures.

In November of 2018, I emailed the supervisor of the community social workers to inform her that my dissertation proposal had been defended and my IRB protocol had been approved. I sent her copies of the approved IRB protocol and the recruitment email, and I requested contact information for the other social workers. In December 2018, she sent me contact information for her ten supervisees, nine of whom were social workers working in county offices for SC DJJ and one of whom was a supervisor herself. I invited all of the community social workers to participate in the study. Every community social worker was invited for two reasons. First, there are few social workers in the position. Inviting all of them increased the likelihood of having enough participants to reach saturation. Additionally, the

structure of the position allows each social worker to tackle the specific needs identified in the given county. As such, the potential mechanisms to reduce DMC may vary widely across individuals. Both in-person and tele-interviews were made available in order to make the interviews convenient for the social workers and to increase participation.

On January 28, 2019, I sent individual emails to each of the eleven potential participants introducing myself and inviting them to participate in one-hour semi-structured interviews during which they would be asked about their current role in the agency and the relationship to DMC. The potential participants were provided with my contact information as well as information for Charlotte Bright and the UMB Human Subjects Protections Office. Seven of the social workers responded quickly stating they would participate. I sent the seven who agreed additional emails on February 5, 2019, stating I was going through the process of receiving gift cards from UMB School of Social Work and would be contacting them again soon. On March 4, 2019, I emailed the seven who agreed and scheduled interview dates, times, and locations with them. On the same day I sent follow-up emails to the four non-responders inviting them again to participate in the study. Two of them responded they were willing to participate, so I scheduled interviews with them as well.

The original interviews were conducted in March of 2019. Eight of the nine interviews were conducted in person in South Carolina during the week of March 18-March 22, 2019. The ninth interview was conducted by phone on April 3, 2019. All of the interviewees were permitted to select a location of their choosing for the interview. Six of the interviews were conducted in the social workers' offices within the county where they work. One interview was held in the central SC DJJ office building, and one interview took place in a coffee shop. In accordance with IRB guidance, each participant received written information regarding informed consent via

email prior to the interview. At the start of each interview, I reviewed the consent agreement and asked for their verbal consent. The interviews lasted between 37 and 54 minutes each, and participants received a \$20 gift card as compensation for the time spent during the interview. The interviews were semi-structured, and an interview guide was used (Appendix C). The purpose of the interviews was to ask the social workers directly about their role within the agency and the extent to which they see DMC reduction as a primary goal of their position. The primary supervisors of the community social workers were also interviewed to provide further information about the goals and achievements of the community social work program. The interview guide included questions such as what tasks the social worker typically completes, how their caseload is selected, and the extent to which they have the freedom to define their position within the agency. The interview guide included questions about how the social workers form opinions about the appropriate recommendation and, finally, about their perceptions of their ability to influence DMC in the counties in which they work.

The interviews were each audiotaped with the participant's permission, transcribed, and coded. The interviews were transcribed verbatim by transcriptionists employed by the transcription service Rev.com. Following the interviews, each participant was assigned a pseudonym to protect their confidentiality. I then conducted open coding to develop preliminary codes and themes from the data. On December 5, 2019, I emailed each of the nine participants to request a follow-up interview with them. I sent each participant a one-page document identifying five preliminary themes and illustrative quotes from the original interviews. I informed each participant that they would receive a \$20 electronic Amazon gift card for agreeing to review the preliminary themes and consenting to a 30-minute phone interview as a form of member checking. The member checking process was an opportunity for the social workers to confirm

the accuracy of the recorded qualitative data and to provide additional detail and clarification (Maxwell, 2013). Three of the nine email addresses were no longer valid, suggesting the participants were no longer employed by SC DJJ. One participant did not respond to two email requests for a follow-up interview. Five participants agreed to the follow-up interview. One was never completed due to time constraints on the participant's behalf. Four interviews were completed between December 12, 2019, and January 10, 2020. The member checking interviews lasted between 11 and 23 minutes. The interviews were transcribed by professionals employed by Rev.com. After reading the transcriptions, I made notes and edits to the original findings.

Quantitative Measures

Table 1 provides a list of all measures along with their data source and corresponding research question. Administrative data from SC DJJ provided case-level variables, and publicly available Census data was used for additional county-level data demographics.

Race or Ethnicity Variable

Race/ethnicity was dummy coded with non-Latinx White as the reference category. The other racial categories were entered as dichotomous variables. Black youth were coded as 1 for “Black” and 0 for other racial categories. Although Latinx is an indicator of ethnicity rather than race, the SC DJJ data conflates race and ethnicity. Due to low numbers in the sample, youth whose race/ ethnicity was labeled Hispanic, American Indian/ Alaska Native, or Asian were collapsed with youth whose race/ ethnicity was identified as “Other” into a category called “Other race or ethnicity.” They were coded as 1 for “Other race or ethnicity” and 0 for all other race/ ethnic categories.

Aim 1: Relative Rate Indices

In order to determine relative rate indices for Aim 1 of this study, few measures were used. The race/ethnicity of each young person was included for analyses as well as what legal decisions were made on their behalf at the three identified stages described in more detail below (i.e., detention, disposition, and transfer to adult criminal court). These outcomes were selected because social workers have the opportunity to directly influence these decision points. Prior researchers have found DMC is evident at detention (Motes et al., 2012), disposition (Donnelly, 2017), and transfer to adult court (Jones, 2016). The sample for the first research question included all youth in the state referred to SC DJJ in 2018, and the second research question split the dataset of youth referred to SC DJJ in 2018 into those youth residing in counties in which they had access to social workers and those youth residing in counties in which they do not have access to social workers. Referrals from 2018 were selected because data was available for which counties employed a social worker during that year. The position has historically had a high turnover rate, making it difficult to determine definitively which counties employed a social worker at a given time. Finally, publicly available Census data was used to determine the numbers of White and minority youth residing in the counties in the general population.

Aims 2 and 3: Independent Variable

The independent variable for the quantitative, multivariate analyses is whether or not the county has a social worker. Whether a community social worker was employed was measured in two ways. In the cross-county comparisons, I created a dichotomous variable for whether the county had a social worker (coded as 1) or not (coded as 0). To conduct analyses for Aim 2, jurisdictions with social workers were compared across time. Referrals from two years were selected for these analyses. Referrals from 2018 were selected to represent a time when the

counties had social workers, and referrals for 2011 were selected for the comparison year because no counties employed social workers until 2012.

Aims 2 and 3: Dependent Variables

The multivariate analyses for this study were intended to have three dependent variables, each of which is a contact point at which states are expected to identify and reduce DMC. The variable representing pre-trial detention was not available in the dataset provided to me by SC DJJ. When I followed up with the Director of Research and Statistics at SC DJJ to request the detention variable, I was told whether a young person is detained is housed in a separate data set that does not merge well with the other available data and that it was unlikely I would be able to access it as an external researcher. The three stages were selected because of the potential impact community social workers have on them. Social workers in this role are not involved in the arrest stage (which has the highest rates of DMC in South Carolina at 2.45; Motes et al., 2012). DMC at referral (0.96), diversion (1.02), petition (1.07), adjudication (0.9), and probation (1.03) are all notably lower than the RRIs found at the detention (1.39) and confinement/ placement (1.22) stages. Motes and colleagues (2012) were unable to calculate the RRI for waiver in South Carolina, but they note the national rate is relatively high (1.3). Social workers participate in the case staffing meetings when recommendations for placement are decided. They are also encouraged to provide input about whether a young person should be detained. Additionally, the community social workers are consulted before youth are discretionarily waived to criminal court. The two available outcome variables (i.e., confinement disposition and waiver) were dichotomized, making them appropriate for use in logistic regression models.

Confinement disposition. A wide range of dispositions were listed as final dispositions in the data set. I condensed the dispositions into categories. If the youth was confined by the

court to an out-of-home placement under the legal responsibility of the state following adjudication (NJDC, n.d.), the case was coded 1. These dispositions included: determinate sentence (for a fixed amount of time; SC DJJ, no date), determinate sentence and continued probation, determinate sentence followed by probation, determinate sentence followed by probation and alternative placement, indeterminate sentence, probation with alternative placement, and probation continued with alternative placement. If the youth was allowed to remain in his/her community following adjudication, the case was coded 0. Dispositions included in this category include: “sanctions issued, not probation”; community service; monetary restitution; ordered to complete drug court program; adjudicated; “adjudicated, no sanctions issued”; house arrest; school attendance order, probation; probation continued; and parole continued. Suspended sentences were also coded as non-confinement dispositions. These included: determinate sentence/ discretionary suspended to alternative placement and probation, and determinate sentence/ mandatory suspended to alternative placement and probation.

Case transferred/waived to criminal court. Whether a case was waived to adult criminal court was indicated in the SC DJJ database under the variable “final disposition.” A new variable entitled “waived” was created. If the final disposition was listed as either “Waived to Circuit Court/General Sessions” or “General sessions commitment,” the case was coded as 1 for the waived variable. If the case remained in family court (i.e., any other outcome), the case was coded 0.

Control Variables

Several control variables were included in the quantitative analyses to account for any relationship they may have with the dependent variables. Variables related to the juvenile’s demographics and legal history were controlled for here.

Juvenile demographic variables.

Age. The youth's age in years at the time of referral was a continuous variable.

Sex. The youth's sex was a dichotomous variable, with youth identified as male coded 1, and youth identified as female coded 0.

Guardian income. Originally, guardian income (reported by SC DJJ in dollars) was to be entered into the model as a continuous variable. Due to significant missingness, this variable was not used in analyses.

School enrollment. This is a dichotomous variable created from the variable "school type" provided by SC DJJ. If the young person was currently enrolled in any type of school at the time of intake, they were coded as 1. Non-enrolled youth were coded as 0.

Educational attainment. The youth's grade level at the time of intake was to be entered as a continuous variable with a theoretical range of 0 (never formally completed a grade of school)-12. This variable was unable to be utilized because of the wide variety of responses in the data set. Many cases had multiple different grade levels listed here, presumably indicating multiple referrals. "Unknown" was also listed as a possible grade level alongside other grades, making the data difficult to interpret.

Legally-relevant variables.

Disposition charge severity. Because the charge could change after the original referral, the charge used by the solicitor to make a decision about the case was used to indicate severity. All charges are assigned a "weight" in the SC DJJ data set ranging from 0-25. Charges with a weight below 2 are status offenses and were not included in analyses. Charge severity was entered into the model as a continuous variable.

Number of prior referrals. This variable was a continuous count of the number of prior referrals to SC DJJ.

Substance abuse history. SC DJJ data reports whether the youth is abusing alcohol or other drugs, with three options: yes, no, or unknown. This information is collected by SC DJJ staff during an intake interview with both the juvenile and his/her guardian. The variable was dichotomized for analyses with a response or “no” or “unknown” coded as 0 and “yes” coded as 1.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analyses

Preliminary analyses. The first step was to clean the data by recoding variables as described above and identifying missing data. County-level data from the US Census was also added to the dataset to prepare for the analyses. New variables were created as described previously.

A variety of responses were entered as the final disposition in the SC DJJ database. In some cases, the response entered as “final disposition” in SC DJJ database did not actually indicate a disposition. One possibility was the response was “NULL”, indicating the case is continuing and/or no final disposition was entered into the data set. Several additional options indicated the youth was never given a final disposition. These options included: dismissed, order rescinded, charge amended, acquitted, decline of jurisdiction to other county, statutory expiration at 21 years old, pickup order/ bench warrant, or an evaluation order (i.e., competency evaluation, evaluation (community), or evaluation (secure)). All of these cases were deleted from the data set, leaving only cases in which a final disposition was available in the data set. Separate data sets were created to include only cases referred to SC DJJ in 2011 and in 2018.

Missing data. Missing data was very rare in the data. For the charge severity variable, 1 case was missing in 2011 and 270 cases in 2018. No other variables of interest were missing, so the cases without a charge severity variable were removed from the dataset using listwise deletion.

Assumption checking. The data were screened to see how well they met the assumptions of binary logistic regression. These assumptions include, for example, non-problematic multicollinearity between variables and independence of observations (Orme & Combs-Orme, 2009).

Univariate analyses. Distributions of continuous variables were analyzed to determine whether they have normal distributions. Tests of central tendency, skewness, and kurtosis were completed. Frequency distributions were calculated for each of the categorical variables.

Bivariate analyses. Bivariate analyses (i.e., chi-square tests) were used to determine associations between variables of interest (i.e., juvenile race with confinement disposition and access to a social worker and confinement disposition).

Relative rate indices: Aim 1. To respond to Aim 1 of the study, relative rate indices (RRIs) were calculated for each of the outcome variables at the state level. This involved dividing the rate of Black youth at each decision point by the rate of White youth at each phase. The number of Black youth receiving confinement dispositions (or waived to criminal court) was divided by the number of Black youth in the state to find the rate of confinement (or waiver) per 1,000 Black youth. The rate of White youth receiving confinement dispositions (or waived) per 1,000 was then calculated the same way. The Black rate divided by the White rate is the RRI for confinement or waiver in the state. In addition to statewide analyses, the RRIs for confinement

and waiver were calculated for the outcome variables for the counties with social workers and for the counties without social workers.

Multivariate analyses: Aim 2 and Aim 3.

Aim 2. Responding to the second aim of the study required two sets of analyses. The second aim intends to answer the question of whether the outcomes for Black youth are better when they have access to community social workers than for those who do not have access to social workers. Both sets of logistic regression models for Aim 2 included samples of exclusively Black youth. The first set of logistic regression models included Black youth in all of the counties throughout South Carolina. The goal of these analyses was to test whether having a social worker in the county was associated with reduced odds of receiving a confinement disposition or transfer to adult court. The second set of analyses included only the Black youth referred to counties with community social workers in 2011 (before social workers were employed in the counties) and in 2018 (when the identified counties each employed a social worker) to test whether the likelihood of receiving a confinement disposition or a transfer to adult court changed overtime after social workers moved to the county offices.

Aim 3. Responding to the third aim of the study required two sets of analyses. The third aim intends to answer the question of whether the association between legal outcomes and race/ethnicity is different between youth who have access to community social workers and youth who do not. Both sets of logistic regression models for Aim 3 included samples of youth of all race/ethnic categories. The first set of logistic regression models included youth who were referred to SC DJJ in 2018 in any county to see whether being processed in a county with a social worker was a significant predictor of the outcomes of interest (i.e., confinement disposition and transfer to adult court). The second set of analyses included only the youth in

counties with social workers who were referred in either 2011 or 2018 to test whether having access to a community social worker was associated with the outcomes of interest.

Aim 4: Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data analysis was a three-step process. First, I took notes during the interviews. After the interviews were transcribed, I listened to the audio recordings, read the transcriptions, and re-read my notes. During this process, I made memos for use in identifying codes and themes. All of these activities (note-taking, re-reading, listening, and memo writing) are important steps in the data analysis process (Maxwell, 2013). The primary form of qualitative data analysis for this study was a combination of coding first for topics then for themes. Open coding was the second step of the qualitative data analysis. I read the transcripts and identified codes describing the topics of the interviews and participants' descriptions of the topics (Maxwell, 2013). The identified codes could be in the words of the participants (*in vivo*). Some of the codes (e.g., communication with juvenile justice colleagues) were prompted by the interview guide (sensitizing concepts), and others were brought up by the participants themselves (emergent codes). This process allowed me to describe the content of the interviews and compare across participants. This phase of the coding process was primarily descriptive (Maxwell, 2013; Sandelowski, 2010). During this phase, I invited the social workers to review my findings as a form of member checking. This process led to the final step of coding. For the final step, I again read the transcriptions and considered how the identified codes connected to theory. This step was when the codes were mapped onto a framework of social work decision-making in juvenile justice agencies. The codes were based on theory and my interpretation of the words of the participants (Maxwell, 2013). If the findings of the study did not correspond to the expectations of the identified theories, I sought to identify theories which were better-suited to the data.

Mixed Methods Analysis

The final phase of the research study involved integrating the quantitative and qualitative findings. The qualitative and quantitative components of the study were conducted concurrently. After data from both the qualitative and quantitative phases were analyzed, the findings were reviewed for ways in which they both corroborate, complement and diverge from one another. As noted above, the findings of the integration process were then reported both narratively and through a visual display.

Chapter 5: Results

Results from all three phases (quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods) of the study are described in this chapter. First, univariate and bivariate results are presented. Results from Aim 1 are presented next. Then, logistic regression results related to Aims 2 and 3 are reported. Findings from the qualitative phase of the study are next, representing Aim 4. Finally, quantitative and qualitative findings are integrated for the mixed methods phase of the results.

Univariate Analyses

Univariate descriptive analyses were run on all variables included in the logistic regression models. The first sampling frame included only youth referred in 2018. A total of 1,612 youth were referred in 2018 and had a final disposition in the data provided by South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice. Characteristics of the cases are presented here. A majority of the sample was male, and more than half of the sample were identified as being Black. At the time of the last census in 2010, 68.5% of South Carolinians identified as White and 27.1% as Black (Census Bureau, 2019). The ages ranged from 10 to 20 years old at the time of referral. Both the severity of the current charge and the number of prior referrals showed a wide range in the data. Just over half of the referred youth were in a county with an active social worker in 2018 (56.9%).

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Youth Referred in 2018 Statewide (N=1,612)

Variable	N(%)	M(SD)	Range
Race			
White	569(35.5)		
Black	942(58.4)		
Other	101(6.3)		
Age (years)		15.11(1.38)	10-20
Sex			
Male	1,280(79.4)		
Female	332(20.6)		
Charge Severity ¹		4.63(4.29)	2-25
Number of Prior Referrals		2.39(2.78)	0-24
Enrolled in School			
Yes	1,468(91.1)		
No or Unknown	144(8.9)		
Substance Abuse History			
Yes	561(34.8)		
No or Unknown	1,051(65.2)		
Referred in County with SW			
Yes	917(56.9)		
No	695(43.1)		

¹Charge severity is measured by SC DJJ on a scale up to 25

The next sampling frame included youth referred in two different years (2011 and 2018). For these analyses, youth with final dispositions who were referred in either 2011 or 2018 were included but only if they were referred in a county that employed a social worker in 2018. These analyses were to compare outcomes for youth in counties with a social worker in 2018 to outcomes for youth in those same counties before social workers were employed. A total of 1,964 cases met that description. Characteristics of those youth are presented in Table 4 below. A large majority of the sample were male, and more than half were Black. A wide range of ages (9-20) and prior referral histories were included. Just over half (53.3%) were referred in 2011 when none of the counties employed social workers.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for Youth Referred in 2011 or 2018 in Counties with Social Workers in 2018(N=1,964)

Variable	N(%)	M(SD)	Range
Race			
White	702(35.7)		
Black	1,161(59.1)		
Other	101(5.1)		
Age (years)		15.38(1.33)	9-20
Sex			
Male	1,521(77.4)		
Female	443(22.6)		
Charge Severity		4.27(4.05)	2-25
Number of Prior Referrals		2.52(2.75)	0-19
Enrolled in School			
Yes	1,808(92.1)		
No or Unknown	156(7.9)		
Substance Abuse History			
Yes	794(40.4)		
No or Unknown	1,170(59.6)		
SW in County (2018 Referral)			
Yes	917(46.7)		
No	1,047(53.3)		

Bivariate Analyses

Mean comparisons between the independent variables and the dependent variables (i.e., confinement disposition and waiver) were conducted in one of two ways. Categorical predictors were cross-tabulated against the dichotomous dependent variables (i.e., confinement/ not confinement and waived/ not waived), and chi square values were assessed. Point biserial correlations were conducted between the continuous independent variables and the categorical dependent variables. The analyses were each run for two samples: youth referred only to the counties employing social workers in either 2011 or 2018 and youth referred to any county in 2018.

For the youth referred in 2011 and 2018, most variables of interest were associated with receiving confinement dispositions (i.e., the youth receives a disposition including out-of-home placement rather than probation or another community-based sanction). Age at referral ($r_{pb} = .31$; $p < .001$), number of prior referrals ($r_{pb} = .43$; $p < .001$), and charge severity ($r_{pb} = .10$; $p < .001$) were all positively correlated with confinement disposition. Being male was associated with receiving confinement dispositions ($\chi^2 = 15.54$; $p < .001$). One quarter (25%) of male youth, compared to 16% of female youth, received a confinement disposition. More youth identified as abusing substances received confinement dispositions than would be expected ($\chi^2 = 80.06$; $p < .001$) with 16% of youth identified as experiencing substance abuse receiving confinement dispositions, compared to 33.3% of youth who were not identified as abusing substances. Youth were more likely to receive confinement dispositions in 2011 (27.8%) than in 2018 (17.5%; $\chi^2 = 29.07$; $p < .001$). Race of the young person ($\chi^2 = 1.12$; $p = .57$) and whether they were enrolled in school ($\chi^2 = 1.72$; $p = .19$) were not associated with confinement dispositions. Confinement dispositions were given to 22.1% of White youth, 23.7% of Black youth, and 20% of youth in other racial groups. Of youth enrolled in school, 23.3% received confinement dispositions, compared to 18.7% for youth who were not in school.

Fewer of the variables of interest were associated with the second dependent variable which was waiver to the adult criminal justice system. Age at referral ($r_{pb} = .05$; $p = .03$), number of prior referrals ($r_{pb} = .05$; $p = .02$), and charge severity ($r_{pb} = .09$; $p < .001$) were significantly correlated with being waived to adult court. The rarity of being waived to adult court meant each of the chi square analyses had at least one cell with fewer than 5 cases, and none of the chi square analyses were statistically significant (i.e., being male ($\chi^2 = 2.34$; $p = .13$); race of the young person ($\chi^2 = 1.12$; $p = .57$); being referred in 2018/ access to social worker ($\chi^2 = 1.52$;

$p=.22$); substance abuse ($\chi^2=.31$; $p=.58$); school enrollment ($\chi^2=.23$; $p=.63$). Only 0.5% of boys were waived, but 0% of girls were. Across the three racial categories, 0.3% of White youth, 0.4% of Black youth, and 1% of youth in other racial groups were waived. In 2011, 0.6% of youth were waived, compared to 0.2% in 2018 when social workers were employed. Of youth who were identified as abusing substances, 0.5% were waived, compared to 0.3% of youth who were not. A total of 0.4% of youth enrolled in school were waived to adult court, compared to 0.6% of youth not enrolled in school.

For the youth referred statewide in 2018, most variables of interest were associated with the risk of confinement. Age at referral ($r_{pb}=.30$; $p<.001$), number of prior referrals ($r_{pb}=.48$; $p<.001$), and charge severity ($r_{pb}=.13$; $p<.001$) were all positively correlated with confinement disposition. Being male ($\chi^2=15.04$; $p<.001$), abusing substances ($\chi^2=114.06$; $p<.001$), and being referred in county with a community social worker ($\chi^2=4.09$; $p=.04$) were associated with receiving confinement dispositions. Only 11.7% of girls received confinement dispositions in 2018, compared to 21.2% of boys. One-third (33.6%) of youth identified as abusing substances received confinement dispositions, compared to 11.5% of youth who were not identified as abusing substances. Youth in counties with a social worker were less likely to receive confinement dispositions (17.5%) than youth in counties without social workers (21.5%). Race of the young person ($\chi^2=1.79$; $p=.41$) and whether they were enrolled in school ($\chi^2=.26$; $p=.61$) were not associated with confinement dispositions. Across racial groups, 17.6% of White youth received confinement dispositions compared to 20.3% of Black youth and 18.2% of youth in other racial categories. 17.6% of youth enrolled in school received confinement dispositions, compared to 19.4% of youth who were not enrolled in school.

Very few of the variables of interest were associated with being waived to adult criminal court. Only charge severity ($r_{pb} = .08$; $p = .001$), race ($\chi^2 = 13.71$; $p = .001$), and school enrollment ($\chi^2 = 8.31$; $p = .004$) were associated with waiver to adult court. Again, the low instance of waiver led to cells with fewer than five cases in all of the chi square analyses. White youth were under-represented in referrals to adult court (0%), and youth of other races (not White or Black) were over-represented (2%). Of Black youth, 0.2% were waived. Youth who were not enrolled in school were waived more frequently than youth who were enrolled (1.4% versus 0.1%). Other variables (i.e., age ($r_{pb} = .02$; $p = .41$), number of prior referrals, ($r_{pb} = .02$; $p = .33$), being male ($\chi^2 = 1.04$; $p = .31$), abusing substances ($\chi^2 = .17$; $p = .68$), and access to a social worker ($\chi^2 = .08$; $p = .78$)) were not associated with waiver in the sample of youth referred in 2018. No girls and 0.3% of boys were waived. Of youth who were identified as abusing substances, 0.2% were waived compared to 0.3% of the youth not identified as abusing substances. In counties with social workers, 0.2% of youth were waived compared to 0.3% in counties without social workers.

Relative Rate Indices

Aim 1: To determine the extent of disproportionate minority contact (DMC) in the South Carolina juvenile justice system

Research Question 1: *What are the relative rate indices between White and minority youth at the decision points of confinement dispositions and transfer to adult court in South Carolina statewide?*

The relative rate indices for Black and youth of other races/ethnicities compared to White youth indicated Black youth in particular disproportionately received confinement dispositions in South Carolina. Of 559 White youth referred in 2018 who had a disposition listed in the

administrative dataset (including “adjudicated delinquent, no sanctions”), 100 received a confinement disposition. A total of 191 of the 940 Black youth meeting the criteria received confinement dispositions, as did 18 of 99 youth falling into other racial/ ethnic categories. Dividing the number who received a confinement disposition by the number in the population (i.e., youth with a disposition listed), resulted in the following rates for receiving confinement dispositions: rate for White youth= 0.176, rate for Black youth= 0.203, and rate for other youth= 0.182. The relative rate index for Black youth ($0.203/0.176$) was 1.153, meaning Black youth were about 15% more likely than White youth to receive confinement dispositions statewide in 2018. The relative rate index for other youth ($0.182/0.176$) was 1.034, indicating youth of other races were about 3% more likely to receive confinement dispositions than White youth. Relative rate indices could not be calculated for waiver to adult court because no White youth were waived to adult court in 2018.

Research Question 2: *Do the relative rate indices between White and minority youth at the decision points of confinement dispositions and transfer to adult court in South Carolina differ between counties with and without community social workers?*

For this research question, four sets of relative rate indices for confinement dispositions were calculated. An RRI was calculated for youth who were Black or members of other racial/ethnic categories both in counties without social workers in 2018 and with social workers. RRIs could not be calculated for waiver to adult court in either group because no White youth were waived to adult court statewide in 2018. Of 257 White youth adjudicated delinquent in counties not employing social workers, 50 received a confinement disposition. This resulted in a rate of 0.195. Of 392 Black youth adjudicated in these counties, 88 received confinement dispositions for a rate of 0.224. A total of 44 youth of other racial and ethnic groups were

adjudicated with 11 receiving a confinement disposition, which resulted in a rate of 0.25. The relative rate index for Black youth ($0.224/0.195$) was 1.149, meaning Black youth adjudicated in counties without social workers were almost 15% more likely to receive confinement dispositions than White youth in the same counties. The RRI for youth in other racial/ ethnic groups ($0.25/0.195$) was 1.282, meaning youth of other races/ ethnicities adjudicated in counties without social workers were more than 28% more likely to receive confinement dispositions than White youth in the same counties.

For youth adjudicated in counties employing social workers in 2018, the relative rate indices differed substantially for Black youth versus youth of other races/ ethnicities. A total of 312 White youth were adjudicated delinquent in counties employing social workers in 2018, and 50 received a confinement disposition. This resulted in a rate of 0.160. Of 548 Black youth adjudicated in these counties, 103 received confinement dispositions for a rate of 0.187. A total of 55 youth of other racial and ethnic groups were adjudicated with 7 receiving a confinement disposition, which resulted in a rate of 0.127. The relative rate index for Black youth ($0.187/0.16$) was 1.169, meaning Black youth adjudicated in counties with social workers were nearly 17% more likely to receive confinement dispositions than White youth in the same counties. The relative rate index for youth in other racial/ ethnic groups ($0.127/0.16$) was 0.794, meaning youth of other races/ ethnicities adjudicated in counties with social workers were more than 20% less likely to receive confinement dispositions than White youth in the same counties.

The relative rate index for Black youth receiving confinement dispositions was slightly higher in counties with social workers, whereas the RRI for youth of other races/ ethnicities was much lower in counties with social workers compared to counties without them. All three sets of RRIs (e.g., statewide, counties with social workers, and counties without social workers)

indicated Black youth received confinement dispositions at a disproportionately high rate compared to White youth. Youth of other races/ ethnicities received confinement dispositions at a disproportionately high rate in counties without community social workers and a disproportionately low rate in counties employing social workers. The RRI for youth of other races/ ethnicities compared to White youth was nearly even statewide (RRI=1.034).

Binary Logistic Regression Analyses

The binary logistic regression analyses tested models predicting the odds of having one of two outcomes: confinement/ not confinement disposition and waived to adult court/ not waived to adult court. Sample sizes varied by model. Analyses were conducted cross-sectionally and longitudinally. In the cross-sectional analyses, youth who were referred to SC DJJ in any county in 2018 were included in order to compare outcomes for youth in counties with and without social workers. For the longitudinal analyses, youth referred to SC DJJ in the counties with social workers in 2018 were included. Youth in those same counties who were referred in 2011 were also included to compare results from a time before social workers were employed. For models assessing the odds of a confinement disposition, youth who were waived to adult court were excluded. All models included a number of independent variables: age at referral in years, whether the youth was enrolled in school, whether the youth abused substances, how many prior referrals the youth had, and the severity of the current charge. All models included a variable representing whether they were referred in a county with a social worker. The youth's race and gender were included in some models but not all because there was not sufficient variability to include the variables in some analyses.

Aim 2: To examine whether the legal outcomes for Black youth are improved by having access to a community social worker.

Four binary logistic regression models were conducted to examine the relationship between demographic variables, legally relevant variables, and access to a community social worker and the two outcomes of interest (disposition and waiver) for a sample of only Black youth. The fit of each model was assessed followed by an interpretation of specific odds ratios and confidence intervals.

Research Question 1: Are Black youth in the counties with social workers less likely to receive confinement dispositions and/or transfers to adult court than they were before the position was created, controlling for other factors?

Confinement Disposition.

The first binary logistic regression model was conducted to examine the relationship between the independent variables and confinement disposition among Black youth referred to SC DJJ in either 2011 or 2018 in any county that employed a social worker in 2018. Including both years allowed for comparing outcomes for youth who had access to social workers to youth referred to those same counties before social workers were employed. The sample size for this model is n=1,156. (see Table 5). Youth receiving confinement dispositions represented 23.7% of cases (n=274), and youth receiving other dispositions represented 76.3% (n=882). A total of 47.4% (n=548) of the sample were referred in 2018 when their county employed a social worker versus 52.6% (n=608) who were referred in 2011 before social workers were employed. The predictive model fit was better than the null model ($\chi^2= 275.633$, $p<.001$). Pseudo R^2 results were .212 (Cox & Snell) and .319 (Nagelkerke).

Table 5. Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Predictors of Confinement Dispositions in Counties that Employ Social Workers for Black Youth Referred in 2011 or 2018 (N= 1,156)

Variable	B	S.E. B	<i>p</i>	OR	95% CI
Male ¹	.432	.222	.052	1.541	[.996, 2.383]
Social Worker	-.072	.024	.003	.930	[.888, .975]
Age	.401	.077	<.001	1.494	[1.284, 1.737]
Enrolled in School	.055	.350	.874	1.057	[.532, 2.099]
Substance Abuse	.445	.165	.007	1.561	[1.129, 2.157]
Prior Referrals	.294	.029	<.001	1.342	[1.269, 1.419]
Charge Severity	.052	.019	.005	1.054	[1.016, 1.093]
Constant	135.925	48.464	.005	1.076E+59	
Model Evaluation			χ^2	<i>P</i>	
Likelihood Ratio Test			275.633	<.001	
Pseudo-R ²					
Cox & Snell			.212		
Nagelkerke			.319		

¹Female is reference category

Having access to a county social worker (indicated by year of referral; $p=.003$), age at referral ($p<.001$), substance abuse ($p=.007$), number of prior referrals ($p<.001$), and charge severity ($p=.005$) were all significant predictors in the model. Having access to a social worker decreased the odds of receiving a confinement disposition by 7%. For each additional year old a young person was at time of referral, the odds of a confinement disposition increased by nearly 50%. Substance abuse had a large effect size. Youth who were identified as abusing substances had odds of confinement 56% higher than youth who were not.

Waiver to Adult Court.

The next binary logistic regression model examined the relationship between the independent variables and waiver to adult court among Black youth referred to SC DJJ in either 2011 or 2018 in any county that employed a social worker in 2018. Including both years allows for comparing outcomes for youth who had access to social workers to youth referred to those same counties before social workers were employed. The sample size for this model was $n=1,161$. A total of 47.3% ($n=549$) of the sample were referred in 2018 when their county employed a social worker versus 52.7% ($n=612$) who were referred in 2011 before social workers were employed. Youth waived to adult court represented 0.4% of cases ($n=5$). All of the people who were waived to adult court across both years were male. The five youth represented three regions of the state, but three were clustered in one region. The severity of their charges ranged from three out of 25 (non-violent second-degree burglary) to 25 out of 25 (murder), and they ranged from having zero to seven prior referrals to SC DJJ. Only one of the youth was referred in 2018 when their county employed a social worker.

The model as originally planned had to be adapted because of a lack of variance given that all of the waived youth were male, but other variables in the model were not affected. The lack of variance affected the model such that the upper bound of the 95% confidence interval for the sex variable was not calculated, and the odds ratio was very large (5072579.737). For this reason, the model was run again with only male youth included. This resulted in a new sample size of $n=914$, with 0.5% ($n=5$) of the sample waived to adult court. In the all-male sample, 47.8% ($n=437$) were referred in 2018, and 52.2% ($n=477$) were referred in 2011. The predictive model fit was not better than the null model ($\chi^2= 5.824$, $p=.337$). None of the variables in the model were statistically significant predictors of waiver.

Table 6. Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Predictors of Waiver to Adult Court in Counties that Employ Social Workers for Black Male Youth Referred in 2011 or 2018 (N= 914)

Variable	B	S.E. B	<i>p</i>	OR	95% CI
Social Worker	-1.187	1.156	.304	.305	[.032, 2.940]
Age	.230	.341	.500	1.259	[.645, 2.455]
Enrolled in School	-1.283	1.166	.271	.277	[.028, 2.726]
Substance Abuse	-.058	.968	.952	.944	[.142, 6.289]
Prior Referrals	.080	.139	.564	1.084	[.825, 1.424]
Charge Severity	.113	.063	.072	1.120	[.990, 1.267]
Constant	-8.312	7.935	.110	.000	
Model Evaluation			χ^2	<i>p</i>	
Likelihood Ratio Test			6.824	.337	
Pseudo-R ²					
Cox & Snell			.007		
Nagelkerke			.113		

Research Question 2: Are Black youth in counties with social workers less likely to receive confinement dispositions and/ or transfers to adult court than Black youth in similar counties which do not have social workers in their offices, controlling for other factors?

Confinement Disposition.

A binary logistic regression model was conducted to examine the relationship between having access to a community social worker and confinement disposition among Black youth referred to SC DJJ in 2018 in any county of the state. The sample size for this model was n=940. (see Table 7). Youth receiving confinement dispositions represented 20.3% of cases (n=191), and youth receiving community-based dispositions (e.g., probation, no sanctions, or restitution) represented 79.7% (n=749). A total of 58.3% (n=548) of the sample were referred in counties

employing a social worker versus 41.7% (n=392) in counties without a social worker. The predictive model fit was better than the null model ($\chi^2= 251.008$, $p<.001$). Pseudo R^2 values were .234 (Cox & Snell) and .369 (Naglekerke).

Table 7. Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Predictors of Confinement Dispositions Statewide for Black Youth Referred in 2018 (N= 940)

Variable	B	S.E. B	<i>p</i>	OR	95% CI
Male ¹	.687	.290	.018	1.988	[1.126, 3.511]
Social Worker	-.171	.196	.384	.843	[.574, 1.238]
Age	.394	.087	<.001	1.483	[1.251, 1.758]
Enrolled in School	-.387	.360	.282	.679	[.335, 1.758]
Substance Abuse	.525	.198	.008	1.691	[1.146, 2.495]
Prior Referrals	.333	.034	<.001	1.396	[1.305, 1.492]
Charge Severity	.043	.019	.026	1.044	[1.005, 1.084]
Constant	-9.180	1.428	<.001	.000	
Model Evaluation			χ^2	<i>p</i>	
Likelihood Ratio Test			251.008	<.001	
Pseudo- R^2					
Cox & Snell			.234		

¹Female is reference category

Having access to a social worker was not a statistically significant predictor of confinement dispositions for Black youth referred in 2018. Being male ($p=.018$), age at referral ($p<=.001$), substance abuse ($p=.008$), number of prior referrals ($p<.001$), and charge severity ($p=.026$) were all significant predictors in the model. Being male increased the odds of receiving a confinement disposition by 98.8%. For each additional year old the person was at time of referral, the odds of a confinement disposition increased by nearly 50%. Substance abuse had a large effect size. Youth who are identified as abusing substances had odds of confinement that

were 69% higher than youth who were not. Each additional prior referral the young person had increased odds of receiving confinement by nearly 40%.

Waiver to Adult Court.

The next binary logistic regression model was conducted to examine the relationship between the independent variables and waiver to adult court among Black youth referred to SC DJJ in 2018 statewide. The sample size for this model was n=942. A total of 58.3% (n=549) of the sample were referred in counties employing social workers versus 41.7% (n=393) in counties without social workers. Youth waived to adult court represented 0.2% of cases (n=2). All of the people who were waived to adult court across both years were male. The youth were referred in different counties. The charges and their severity weights differed between the two in that one person's charge was first degree assault and battery (severity of 5 out of 25), and the other was an unlawful weapons sale (severity of 8 out of 25). Both had between six and eight prior referrals to the agency.

The lack of variance affected the model such that the upper bound of the 95% confidence interval for the sex variable was not calculated, and the OR was very large (5072579.737). For this reason, the model was run again with only male youth included. This resulted in a new sample size of n=762, with 0.3% (n=2) of the sample waived to adult court. In the all-male sample, 57.3% (n=437) were referred in counties with social workers, and 42.7% (n=325) were referred without them. The predictive model fit was not better than the null model ($\chi^2= 5.667$, $p=.461$). None of the variables in the model were statistically significant predictors of waiver.

Table 8. Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Predictors of Waiver to Adult Court Statewide for Black Male Youth Referred in 2018 (N= 762)

Variable	B	S.E. B	<i>p</i>	Exp(B)	95% CI
Social Worker	.469	1.694	.782	1.598	[.058, 44.228]
Age	.143	.584	.807	1.154	[.367, 3.622]
Enrolled in School	-3.290	1.703	.053	.037	[.001, 1.050]
Substance Abuse	.398	1.593	.803	1.489	[.066, 33.805]
Prior Referrals	.242	.155	.117	1.274	[.941, 1.725]
Charge Severity	.005	.152	.973	1.005	[.746, 1.354]
Constant	-7.311	8.943	.414	.001	
Model Evaluation			χ^2	<i>P</i>	
Likelihood Ratio Test			5.667	.461	
Pseudo-R ²					
Cox & Snell			.007		
Nagelkerke			.207		

Aim 3: To examine the extent to which the race/ethnicity of youth involved in the juvenile justice system significantly predicts legal outcomes for youth in counties with and without community social workers.

Five binary logistic regression models were conducted to examine the relationship between race/ ethnicity and the two outcomes of interest (disposition and waiver) for a sample of youth of all races/ ethnicities with and without access to community social workers. The analyses also included other demographic variables and legally relevant variables. The fit of each model was assessed followed by an interpretation of specific odds ratios and confidence intervals.

Research Question 1: Is race/ethnicity a significant predictor of confinement dispositions and/or transfers in counties with social workers?

Confinement Dispositions.

A binary logistic regression model was conducted to examine the relationship between the independent variables and confinement disposition among youth referred to SC DJJ in 2018 only in counties employing social workers. The sample was 34.1% White (n=312), 59.9% Black (n=548), and 6% youth of other races/ ethnicities (n=55). The sample size for this model was n=915. (see Table 9). Youth receiving confinement dispositions represented 17.5% of cases (n=160), and youth receiving other dispositions represented 82.5% (n=755). The predictive model fit was better than the null model ($\chi^2= 238.235$, $p= >.001$). Pseudo R² values were .229 (Cox and Snell) and .379 (Naglekerke).

Table 9. Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Predictors of Confinement Dispositions for Youth Referred in Counties Employing Social Workers in 2018 (N= 915)

Variable	B	S.E. B	<i>p</i>	OR	95% CI
Male ¹	.351	.287	.221	1.421	[.810, 2.493]
Black Race ²	-.039	.231	.865	.962	[.611, 1.513]
Other Race ²	.038	.501	.940	1.039	[.389, 2.773]
Age	.444	.099	<.001	1.559	[1.285, 1.891]
Enrolled in School	.258	.513	.615	1.294	[.474, 3.535]
Substance Abuse	.660	.219	.003	1.934	[1.260, 2.969]
Prior Referrals	.362	.039	<.001	1.436	[1.331, 1.550]
Charge Severity	.076	.024	.001	1.079	[1.031, 1.131]
Constant	-10.769	1.661	<.001	.000	
Model Evaluation			χ^2	<i>p</i>	
Likelihood Ratio Test			238.235	<.001	
Pseudo-R ²					
Cox & Snell			.229		
Nagelkerke			.379		

¹Female is the reference category ²White is the reference category

Race was not a significant predictor of receiving a confinement disposition for youth referred in a county with a community social worker. Age at referral ($p < .001$), substance abuse ($p < .001$), number of prior referrals ($p < .001$), and charge severity ($p = .001$) were all significant predictors in the model. For each additional year old a young person was at time of referral, the odds of a confinement disposition increased by 55.90%. Substance abuse also had a large effect size in that youth who were identified as abusing substances had odds of confinement that were 93.4% higher than youth who were not. Each additional prior referral the young person had increased odds of receiving confinement by 43.6%. Each one-point increase in the charge severity score increased the odds of receiving a confinement disposition by 7.9%.

Waiver to Adult Court.

The next binary logistic regression model was conducted to examine the relationship between the race/ ethnicity variables and waiver to adult court among youth referred to SC DJJ in 2018 only in counties employing social workers. The sample was 34% White ($n=312$), 59.9% Black ($n=549$), and 6.1% youth of other races/ ethnicities ($n=56$). The sample size for this model was $n=917$. Youth waived to adult court represented 0.2% of cases ($n=2$). The two waived youth had different charges with different severity weights (i.e., murder (weight=25 out of 25) and unlawful sale or delivery of a pistol (weight= 8 out of 25)). Both had at least one prior referral to SC DJJ.

Due to the very low number of people in this subsample who were waived to adult court, there was insufficient variance to run a binary logistic regression model with all of the identified variables. Both youth who were waived were enrolled in a school of some type, both were male, and neither was known to abuse substances. One person was Black, and one was a member of

the “other” racial category. Due to the very low prevalence of the outcome in this sample, multivariate analysis was not conducted.

Research Question 2: Is the relationship between race/ethnicity and the legal decision points (confinement dispositions and/or transfer to adult court) different between youth who have access to community social workers and youth who do not have access to community social workers?

Confinement Dispositions.

A binary logistic regression model was conducted to examine the relationship between the independent variables and confinement disposition among youth referred to SC DJJ in 2018 in any county of the state. The sample size for this model was n=1,608. (see Table 10). Youth receiving confinement dispositions represented 19.2% of cases (n=309), and youth receiving other dispositions represented 80.8% (n=1,299). A total of 56.9% (n=915) of the sample were referred in counties employing a social worker versus 43.1% (n=693) in counties without a social worker. The predictive model fit was better than the null model ($\chi^2= 444.122$, $p<.001$). Pseudo R^2 values were .241 (Cox and Snell) and .387 (Naglekerke).

Table 10. Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Predictors of Confinement Dispositions Statewide for Youth Referred in 2018 (N= 1,608)

Variable	B	S.E. B	<i>p</i>	OR	95% CI
Male ¹	.509	.214	.018	1.663	[1.093, 2.532]
Black Race ²	-.115	.168	.491	.891	[.642, 1.238]
Other Race ²	-.072	.332	.828	.930	[.486, 1.783]
Social Worker	-.240	.154	.118	.786	[.582, 1.063]
Age	.494	.074	<.001	1.639	[1.416, 1.896]
Enrolled in School	-.319	.274	.243	.727	[.425, 1.243]
Substance Abuse	.575	.158	<.001	1.776	[1.303, 2.421]

Table 10. Continued

Prior Referrals	.363	.029	<.001	1.438	[1.357, 1.523]
Charge Severity	.057	.016	.001	1.058	[1.025, 1.093]
Constant	-10.714	1.225	<.001	.000	
Model Evaluation			χ^2	<i>p</i>	
Likelihood Ratio Test			444.122	<.001	
Pseudo-R ²					
Cox & Snell			.241		
Nagelkerke			.387		

¹Female is reference category²White is the reference category

The young person's race and whether they had access to a social worker were not statistically significant predictors of confinement dispositions for youth referred in 2018. Being male ($p=.018$), age at referral ($p<.001$), substance abuse ($p<.001$), number of prior referrals ($p<.001$), and charge severity ($p=.001$) were all significant predictors in the model. Being male increased the odds of receiving a confinement disposition by 66.3%, and being identified as abusing substances increased the odds by 77.6%. For each additional year old a young person was at time of referral, the odds of a confinement disposition increased by 63.9%. Each additional prior referral the young person had increased odds of receiving confinement by nearly 44%, and each one-point increase in charge severity increased by odds of confinement by 5.8%.

Waiver to Adult Court.

The next binary logistic regression model was conducted to examine the relationship between race/ethnicity and waiver to adult court among youth referred to SC DJJ in 2018 statewide. The sample size for this model was $n=1,612$. Youth waived to adult court represented 0.2% of cases ($n=4$). The four youth varied widely in both charge severity (5 out of 25- 25 out of 25) and number of prior referrals (0-7). Two were referred in counties with social workers and

two without. The four all had different charges, including murder, assault and battery, a drug offense, and a weapons offense.

The overall predictive model fit was not better than the null model ($\chi^2= 10.593$, $p=.102$). A total of 56.9% (n=917) of the sample were referred in counties employing social workers versus 43.1% (n=695) in counties without social workers. All of the people who were waived to adult court across both years were male, and none of them were Caucasian. Because of the small number of youth who were waived in addition to the lack of variance, the model was affected such that the upper bound the 95% confidence intervals were not calculated for either dummy coded race variable (i.e., Black or “other” race) or male sex. The odds ratios were also very large (male OR= 2269300.069; Black OR= 2297622.750; other race OR= 40911898.58). For these reasons, the model was run again with only male youth of color (i.e., Black or “other” race) included. This resulted in a new sample size of n=845, with 0.5% (n=4) of the sample waived to adult court. In the all-male youth of color sample, 57.2% (n=483) were referred in counties with social workers, and 42.8% (n=362) were referred without them.

Table 11. Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Predictors of Waiver to Adult Criminal Court Statewide for Male Youth of Color Referred in 2018 (N= 845)

Variable	B	S.E. B	<i>p</i>	OR	95% CI
Social Worker	.141	1.104	.898	1.152	[.132, 10.033]
Age	.198	.377	.599	1.220	[.582, 2.555]
Enrolled in School	-2.862	1.130	.011	.057	[.006, .523]
Substance Abuse	-.573	1.233	.642	.564	[.050, 6.324]
Prior Referrals	.076	.132	.563	1.079	[.834, 1.397]
Charge Severity	.145	.069	.037	1.156	[1.009, 1.323]
Constant	-7.570	5.833	.194	.001	
Model Evaluation			χ^2	<i>p</i>	

Table 11. Continued

Likelihood Ratio Test	10.593	.102
Pseudo-R ²		
Cox & Snell	.012	
Nagelkerke	.213	

Research Question 3: Is the relationship between race/ethnicity and the legal decision points (confinement dispositions and transfer to adult court) different between youth processed in counties in which they have access to social workers than it was for youth in those counties before social workers were employed?

Confinement Disposition.

The next binary logistic regression model was conducted to examine the relationship between race/ethnicity and confinement disposition among youth referred to SC DJJ in either 2011 or 2018 only in counties that employed social workers in 2018. The sample size for this model was n=1,956. (see Table 12). Youth receiving confinement dispositions represented 23% of cases (n=449), and youth receiving other dispositions represented 77% (n=1,507). A total of 46.8% (n=915) of the sample were referred in 2018 when their county employed a social worker versus 53.2% (n=1,041) who were referred in 2011 before social workers were employed. The predictive model fit was better than the null model ($\chi^2= 479.001$, $p<.001$). Pseudo R² results were .217 (Cox & Snell) and .329 (Naglekerke).

Table 12. Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Predictors of Confinement Dispositions in Counties that Employ Social Workers for Youth Referred in 2011 and 2018 (N= 1,956)

Variable	B	S.E. B	<i>p</i>	OR	95% CI
Male ¹	.294	.163	.071	1.342	[.975, 1.847]
Black Race ²	-.033	.135	.809	.968	[.742, 1.262]
Other Race ²	.086	.306	.779	1.090	[.599, 1.983]
Social Worker	-.075	.019	<.001	.928	[.895, .962]
Age	.483	.063	<.001	1.621	[1.432, 1.835]
Enrolled in School	-.088	.255	.731	.916	[.555, 1.511]
Substance Abuse	.423	.132	.001	1.526	[1.179, 1.975]
Prior Referrals	.303	.024	<.001	1.354	[1.292, 1.419]
Charge Severity	.067	.015	<.001	1.070	[1.038, 1.102]
Constant	140.448	37.569	<.001	9.899E+60	
Model Evaluation			χ^2	<i>P</i>	
Likelihood Ratio Test			479.001	<.001	
Pseudo-R ²					
Cox & Snell			.217		
Nagelkerke			.329		

¹Female is reference category

²White is the reference category

The race or ethnicity of the young person was not predictive of receiving a confinement disposition. Having access to a county social worker (indicated by year of referral; $p < .001$), age at referral ($p < .001$), substance abuse ($p < .001$), number of prior referrals ($p < .001$), and charge severity ($p > .001$) were all significant predictors in the model. Having access to a social worker decreased the odds of receiving a confinement disposition by 7.2%. For each additional year old a young person was at time of referral, the odds of a confinement disposition increased by 62.1%. Substance abuse also had a large effect size (OR=1.526). Each prior referral increased the

odds of confinement by 35.4%, and every one-point increase in charge severity increased odds of confinement by 7%.

Waiver to Adult Court.

The final binary logistic regression model was conducted to examine the relationship between the independent variables and waiver to adult court among youth referred to SC DJJ in either 2011 or 2018 in any county that employed a social worker in 2018. The sample size for this model was n=1,964. Youth waived to adult court represented 0.4% of cases (n=8). The eight youth varied widely in charge severity (3 out of 25- 25 out of 25) and number of prior referrals (0-9). Six of the youth were referred in 2011, and they represented all three regions of the state. Two of the referrals were for third degree burglary, and two were for murder. The other four youth had different charges: assault and battery, second degree burglary (non-violent), second degree burglary (violent), and unlawful sale or delivery of a pistol.

A total of 46.7% (n=917) of the sample were referred in 2018 when their county employed a social worker versus 53.3% (n=1,047) who were referred in 2011 before social workers were employed. All of the people who were waived to adult court across both years were male. The lack of variance affected the model such that the upper bound of the 95% confidence interval was not calculated, and the odds ratio was very large (3895035.950). For this reason, the model was run again with only male youth included. This resulted in a new sample size of n=1,521, with 0.5% (n=8) of the sample waived to adult court. See Table 13. In the all-male sample, 47.3% (n=719) were referred in 2018, and 52.7% (n=802) were referred in 2011. The predictive model fit was better than the null model ($\chi^2= 15.671$, $p=.047$). The only statistically significant predictor in the model was charge severity. For each one-point increase in the charge severity score, the odds of being waived to adult court increased by 15.7%.

Table 13. Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Predictors of Waiver to Adult Criminal Court in Counties that Employ Social Workers for Male Youth Referred in 2011 or 2018 (N= 1,521)

Variable	B	S.E. B	<i>p</i>	OR	95% CI
Black Race ¹	.139	.879	.875	1.149	[.205, 6.434]
Other Race ¹	1.592	1.273	.211	4.915	[.406, 59.578]
Social Worker	-.937	.848	.269	.392	[.074, 2.066]
Age	.283	.256	.269	1.327	[.803, 2.193]
Enrolled in School	-.624	1.117	.576	.536	[.060, 4.781]
Substance Abuse	.082	.771	.916	1.085	[.240, 4.914]
Prior Referrals	.151	.104	.146	1.163	[.949, 1.426]
Charge Severity	.145	.048	.002	1.157	[1.053, 1.270]
Constant	-10.638	3.993	.008	.000	
Model Evaluation			χ^2	<i>p</i>	
Likelihood Ratio Test			15.671	.047	
Pseudo-R ²					
Cox & Snell			.010		
Nagelkerke			.161		

¹White is the reference category

Aim 4: To explore the perspective of community social workers regarding their role in reducing disproportionate minority contact (DMC).

Semi-structured interviews with nine of the community social workers were conducted, transcribed, and analyzed to explore the perspectives of community social workers employed by the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice. Five themes were identified associated with the research questions. Regarding the role of social workers to reduce DMC, the themes are *overprescribing (difficult to access) services* and *placement staffing forms key*. Three themes were identified in response to the question of how effective social workers believe themselves to

be in reducing DMC: *heart of a social worker, need for more social workers, and referrals as major driver of DMC.*

Research Question 1: From the perspective of social workers, what is their role in reducing DMC?

Theme 1: Overprescribing (Difficult to Access) Services. As noted previously, SC DJJ provides recommendations to the court for what dispositions they believe are appropriate for a given case. When suggesting probation, they also provide recommendations for what stipulations the probation order should include. Social workers described formal and informal case staffing meetings with their county agency colleagues as an opportunity to provide clinical insight about what requirements are reasonable for a young person and his or her family to complete. The participants noted two related ways that the probation orders can contribute to DMC. The first was through the over-prescription of mandated services, and the second was through mandating services that would be difficult to access.

Overprescribing Services. Social workers noted that their colleagues sometimes wanted to require more services than are necessary, which could over-burden families. Probation orders often require the support of family members (e.g., for participating in family therapy, providing transportation, or for paying fees). If a family was not able to complete all of the requirements, that could result in a probation violation, forcing the person further into the juvenile justice system. One participant, Kristin, described a routine her probation colleagues had of referring youth to a particular set of services based on what was seen as their primary need.

I think that there's a culture of that this is just the way we do things, and I know that—I suspect that they think I would be argumentative, or that I would disrupt what, for them, is just kind of an easy process. Like I know that they just refer to things as like, “This is

the druggie special,” and “This is the—”, and what that means is this list of recommendations. So, I get the sense that they think their recommendations are good as is, and that I would be argumentative with them, which is probably true. I am a big believer in that we're over-recommending services. You know, that it's unrealistic, and not helpful, for a child to go to three different therapists, and, you know. So, I think they don't like that opinion. Our intake people who mainly do that process, the pre-court staffing, are our two intake people and the county manager, and they are all very old-school DJJ 20-year employees, and they just have the way that they do things, and they're not interested in doing them a different way.

From her point of view, her colleagues may have been unlikely to listen to her input. The social worker's opinion was that each case should be considered uniquely with a mind towards not overburdening the family. She believed her colleagues were making decisions based on categories of offenses or needs rather than focusing on the individual needs. Another participant, Gabriela, noted a similar concern.

They'll make a recommendation and I'll ask, let's say for a kid that don't have a victim, we can use that as an example, why would [we] recommend a victim impact. And I know at one point they said they wanted all kids to go through it. But then I explained my view point. If it's something like that or if a kid has a certain issue, “Well okay it sounds like they might need x, y, z. Have you thought about referring them—” And even here, we can sit in a staffing meeting and I can, if it's something like, I'm not really understanding why we doing it, and if it's a thing that's just what we do, I'll leave it alone.

These social workers described a situation in which their colleagues had a certain way of doing things that seemed unlikely to change but for different reasons. Kristin was not invited into the conversation and thus felt she had limited opportunities to ask her co-workers to reconsider their decision-making strategy. Gabriela described trying to ensure that youth were not mandated to complete services she did not believe they needed but not pushing her colleagues to change their overall decision-making strategies. She elected to focus her energy where she thought she could make changes. The social workers believed their colleagues were relying on a template-style approach for youth rather than responding to individual needs. The approach led to mandates for youth that the social workers felt were excessive and difficult to complete, this putting them a further risk for continued juvenile justice system involvement.

Difficult to Access Services. Even in cases in which the social workers believed all of the services mandated as part of the probation order were necessary or useful, they described circumstances that made the services difficult to access for some families. These barriers included systemic hurdles (e.g., insurance coverage) that might prevent a family from accessing a service that was available in the area. In other cases, social workers described not having services available in their geographic area, meaning either (1) the youth were not referred to or mandated to access relevant services or (2) the youth were mandated to participate in treatment that was inconvenient.

Some social workers described filling the gap when services were unavailable for youth. One participant, Nicole, noted that not all youth have health insurance that covers mandated services, and she is able to fill that role for them: “I’m doing some individual and family services. I do those for our kids that may not qualify for Medicaid but still need those services per the court order.” Susie described families who must drive far from their homes to access mandated

services, “There isn't a [frequently mandated service] in [my county], so anyone that needs [those] services in [this county] has to go to a neighboring county, and that's a real concern.”

The social workers described the need to think about what services and sanctions were accessible for youth and their families despite limited resources. One participant, Evelyn, noted that she pushed her colleagues to consider a family’s resources when making recommendations.

I would get it from the holistic point of view. I think about the juvenile, I think about the juvenile goals to live in the environment, the family situation, the social situation, the economic situation. Because it makes no sense for you to say, you want restitution of \$1000, and she's a single mom making minimum wage. That is not feasible. So, my job as a social worker is to advocate for them to have something that's fair, just, and something that they can do.

Gabriela noted the difficulties of requiring services that were not flexible in terms of scheduling for parents who may work shift work or have limited time off from work:

And we have these hours. 8:30-5:00. Guilty of it too—don’t necessarily get outside of my hours, but that doesn't ever work for those families because they don't work traditional hours. Those kind of things, I'm trying to find resources for them, you know? You want them to be at this appointment at 1:00 in the afternoon. Well, I don't get off of work until X, Y, Z. Well, I got to be at work at, you what I'm saying? It's different things like that.

Additionally, one social worker described a need to train their probation and intake colleagues about how to best describe services to families so that they would be more willing to accept them.

You know, we just shove a court order at them without bothering to educate families on like, "Okay, it says mental health. That doesn't mean your kid's crazy." "It says family

therapy, that doesn't mean there's something wrong with you." Kind of going into the psychoeducation of, I guess, encourage the probation officers to do that because a lot of the families here, they hear "mental health" and they're immediately resistant to it because they think that that's something for when you have a really big problem. So they're just culturally going to be resistant, not want to go.

Theme 1 and DMC. By describing mandated services that were either unnecessarily prescribed or difficult to access, the social workers identified a way that DMC enters the later phases of the juvenile justice system as well as a role they can play in reducing it. When youth (or their families) were unable to complete the requirements of their probation order, they were at risk for having their probation formally violated by their probation officer. This could have ramifications such as lengthening the time they were on probation or leading to an out-of-home placement. The social workers suggested youth in families with limited resources were least able to complete their mandated services and were thus more likely to receive additional consequences. They often implied there was an overlap between youth who had limited economic resources and youth who were non-White. For example, Gabriela made the statement about what hours services were available (quoted above) when specifically asked about DMC. As a whole, this theme indicated social workers could work towards reducing DMC by ensuring youth with limited resources, many of whom are members of racial minority groups, were only mandated to receive services they would likely be able to complete.

Theme 2: Placement Staffing Forms Key. Almost every social worker reported completing placement staffing forms was a key aspect of their position. When a young person is on probation, their court order often includes a provision that they can be removed to an alternative placement (e.g., a wilderness camp or treatment facility) if their needs change or if

they are noncompliant with the requirements of the order. The probation officers or intensive supervision officers are often given the discretion to determine when a youth has been noncompliant with their requirements to the extent that their probation terms have been violated and moving them to a placement has become necessary. The social workers are then tasked with completing a placement staffing form, which justifies the necessity of the out-of-home placement.

The social workers had a range of opinions regarding whether the placements were always necessary or in the best interests of the youth. None of the social workers reported that their colleagues universally misuse placements. They generally seemed to trust the judgment of their colleagues about whether a young person needed to be placed, and they would complete the placement staffing forms so that the placement could proceed. Social Worker 5 stated, “But usually once the kid [is] out here, I’ll say they really do work with the kid. Try to keep them at home. But if it’s like a continual and they have to violate [the person’s probation], but usually when I say, very least restrictive [environment], they really try to do that.” Ashley felt some of her colleagues made a hasty decision but agreed other times.

Other counties are different on how they word things, like [one county I serve]. They’ll let a kid out on probation and do some graduated sanctions, and then if those aren’t working, they’ll call me and say, “Hey here’s everything that we’ve tried. We’re looking at placement for this kid.” And then I’ll be like, “Well I think that’s a stupid idea,” but in a nicer way obviously... And then some days I’m like, “Yeah that kid needs to be placed.” The same social worker reported she would always respond by email if she disagreed with a placement recommendation so that there was a written record. She also described a situation in which her opinion was overridden.

'Cause sometimes if I disagree with something she [my supervisor] might say, "Well you know probably, it's better to just go with it this time." Or "You don't have a leg to stand on." 'Cause we ran into it where I didn't think placement was necessary and the county pushed back real hard, and at the end of the day, the county wins. Not because we didn't stand our ground, but because there are more people on the county side and they were gonna get placement whether I agreed to it or not... They do have the option of finding a psychologist to sign off on the form, but that case in particular ended up with a huge meeting with many people who are above my pay grade, basically pleading their case back and forth on why this juvenile should be placed, and I felt very pressured to sign the form. At the end of the day, it didn't feel like I had the option to say no. It's only happened once.

Overall, the social workers described prioritizing the individual needs of youth while they also considered the available services in their home communities. For the social workers who discussed placement staffing forms, they described them as a primary way they were able to influence outcomes for youth. They were able to utilize their clinical skills to recommend that youth remain in the least restrictive environment. No social workers described a situation when they would want a young person to be placed and their probation colleagues would not. One participant, Elaine, walked through when she would disagree with county colleagues generally and what she considered when making her decision.

Every case is different... The biggest issue that is that comes up is that we have a kid who is truant, who is a status offender. Truant, a runaway, skipping school and the county will want to place them without having tried any other sanction or any other way to get this juvenile to start doing what they are supposed to. And social workers we feel

like, I feel like, wait a minute, you are taking a kid out of the home for skipping school, you know, there's a level of crime and offense needs to be reached before placement is considered. I feel like it needs to be protecting the family, protecting a kid, protecting the community, keeping the kid from re-offending or offending in a deeper level.

Elaine provided an example of how the social workers can prevent what they see as an unjust placement by first identifying the unique circumstances of the case and then considering whether the placement is in the best interests of the child and the community.

Theme 2 and DMC. The social workers generally identified placement staffing forms as a key component of their role within the agency. The social workers were clear that they had a fair amount of discretion in the decision to move a young person deeper into the juvenile justice system and out of their home community. In addition to the decision about whether to place a young person, Gabriela stated, “I’ll gather all the information and then I make recommendations based on the information that I’ve received on what level of placement.” The social workers first have the opportunity to influence *whether* a young person is removed from home. They then make a recommendation on the type of placement they believe is appropriate, providing them additional discretion. The social workers did not link their placement staffing decisions to an ability to influence DMC, but the discretion provides them a potential opportunity to do so. By considering racial justice directly, the social workers could use the decision as an opportunity to disrupt DMC at the placement stage.

Research Question 1 Summary. The most prevalent way the social workers described their role was they were the “clinical” voice at the county level. They saw themselves as representing the best interests of the youth and their behavioral health needs in particular. In practice, they identified two ways they used that clinical perspective. First, they tried to ensure

that the expectations placed on a youth and their families were reasonable and likely to be completed. They might have argued against excessive services or argued in favor of services that were more accessible. Secondly, the social workers were able to exert a great deal of influence on the decision to put youth in placements who were on probation or parole in the community. This was an opportunity for the social worker to consider the broad range of the youth's needs and what environment was best suited for meeting them. Moreover, the social workers had a chance to discuss with their colleagues whether they thought community resources had been sufficiently utilized to fill that need.

Social workers had an opportunity to disrupt DMC through both of the major roles they identified. By working to make sure probation requirements were attainable for their clients, the social workers could reduce the likelihood of having the probation orders violated. Because the social workers seemed to link youth whose families have limited resources to complete mandated services with youth of color, there was a direct connection to DMC. Social workers could play a role in keeping probation requirements reasonable for youth of color, making it more likely they would be able to complete the requirements and successfully remain in their home communities. When a young person was been unsuccessful in completing their probation requirements and a probation officer wanted to violate the probation order, the social workers could again use their discretion to reduce DMC. The social workers were often empowered to decide when an out-of-home placement was truly necessary. When a placement was deemed necessary, the social workers then had the opportunity to determine what level of placement should be used (e.g., a camp-based facility, a group home, or a secured facility). Each of these steps was an additional opportunity for the social workers to ensure equitable and just decisions were made towards a goal of eliminating DMC.

Research Question 2: How effective do social workers perceive themselves to be in reducing DMC, and what are potential barriers and facilitators to doing so?

Theme 3: “Heart and Mind of a Social Worker”. The social workers reported having colleagues who viewed their mutual clients in a variety of ways, including some who considered the clients holistically and others who focused specifically on the charges or behaviors. In several cases the social workers described these viewpoints as more than just differences of opinion on specific recommendations but rather as differences in overall philosophy or perspective. Collectively, the social workers described other social workers as sharing the same perspective and some non-social work colleagues as also having that perspective. In other cases, they noted that probation staff or supervisors had a decidedly different perspective on the clients. Using the language of Gabriela, these perspectives were identified here as colleagues who had the “heart of a social worker” and those who did not. This difference in mindset affected social workers’ ability to reduce DMC in multiple ways. First, the actions of other agency colleagues influenced how the social workers were able to spend their time. When they trusted that their colleagues were behaving justly, the social workers were able to focus their DMC-reduction efforts elsewhere. They were also more likely to believe they would be supported when they did see a need to intervene in their colleagues’ decisions. In other cases, the social workers were less likely to believe their input was valued, which could make them less likely to intervene or could mean they were unsuccessful when they did choose to speak up against decisions that could exacerbate DMC.

The social workers described multiple types of colleagues in different contexts. Generally, their colleagues in the county offices include intake staff who formally make the recommendations on the behalf of SC DJJ, probation or intensive supervision officers who

supervise youth in the community and have the power to pursue a probation violation/ out-of-home placement, and county managers who supervise the intake and probation staff. The social workers are employed by a different division of the agency, so they work alongside the county staff but report to different supervisors. Some of the social workers who worked in the community/ county offices at the time of the interviews also had prior experience working in secure facilities of SC DJJ, which was reflected in the interviews.

Facilitator: Heart of a Social Worker. Having colleagues who had the “heart of a social worker” allowed respondents to feel they were better able to make a difference in reducing DMC. Gabriela stated her colleagues usually already had a recommendation for a legal outcome set before she would become involved, and she would step in primarily if she had a concern. Moreover, she stated that the county manager in one county she serves considered other options before making punitive recommendations, which meant she rarely felt a need to intervene. She felt the clients’ needs were already being considered by the county staff.

And if it's something that raises a red flag for me, I'll share my concerns with it and we'll discuss why. [In one county I serve], even if the referral made with their county manager, she has the mind and heart of a social worker... Like, she'll go do home visit, she'll go do school visit. So I think that's what makes it different there.

Susie also described the manager of the county in which she worked as someone who shared a similar value system.

I'm fortunate in that the county manager's clinically oriented. She actually has two master's degrees... So she sees the value of social work in the community, and that's certainly a huge advantage... So I have a very good relationship with her.

She also described other colleagues who had formal education in social work or related fields. She also clearly articulated that she believed her opinions and recommendations were respected by the county manager and other colleagues. About the county manager, Susie stated, “I think I’m a sounding board for her sometimes, and she’s that for me.” When asked how involved she was in decision-making, she replied she was involved and her recommendations were respected.

Well, if I’m at the staffings, which I try to be most of the time, then I would say

I’m very involved in that. Sometimes I’ll have a conflict and not be able to be there. But if

I’m there then I feel like my opinion is valued, my recommendations are valued.

The two social workers both described a relationship between having colleagues and county managers with “clinically oriented” mindsets and believing their own recommendations and opinions were valued.

Barrier: Discordance with Social Work Values. Several participants described colleagues who made decisions for clients using very different criteria than the social workers would use themselves. These ranged from colleagues who did not consider the individual needs of their clients when making recommendations for youth to upper-level management whose priorities varied when making decisions for the agency at-large. Kristin stated her intake and probation colleagues at the county level had a “very different thinking style.”

A lot of the probation side is very cut and dry, very black and white. You know, this is the law, this is—they’re not taking things into consideration, like trauma, abuse, or socioeconomic stuff. You know, just kind of being really punitive.

Evelyn used the same phrasing “black and white” to describe police reports. She stated she played a preventative role in the agency and thus knew some youth before they became involved formally with SC DJJ. She used that knowledge as well as her established relationships with the

local solicitor (the term used in South Carolina to refer to the role commonly called a district attorney) and public defender to advocate for her clients' interests.

And if I work with the kids in [a delinquency prevention] program, that's beneficial, because either I've worked with you individually and your family and have some ore background to bring to the table... so we could suggest some things that will help and work with them. And then as far as like with the solicitor, just having those conversations, having that communication piece because they don't get all the information that we get. But also know that I have a level of confidentiality and integrity in order to get what my child needs and to provide the family with the service that they need... I do believe a lot of times when you get a police report it's black and white, but it doesn't tell the whole story. And so I feel like my job is to help the solicitor or the public defender to see the child's whole story.

In this case, the social worker did not state that her colleagues within the agency took a black and white approach to viewing the youth they serve but rather that they and the attorneys did not always have access to enough information provided to them by the police to understand their clients' needs and behaviors, which she saw as a gap she could fill.

A third respondent, Nicole, reported not only that her probation and parole colleagues thought about their shared clients differently than she and the other community social workers did but also that their behavior towards the young people sometimes reflected the difference in values. She began by describing how youth who are housed in South Carolina's secure facility were at times subjected to juvenile correctional officers who were "cussing [them] out," noting that the youth may not have felt the correctional staff were trying to protect them. She described a situation that was less extreme but still problematic between some youth in the community and the probation or parole staff.

And even here, it's some different, but I've heard a person blast a kid out and it's like, how are we teaching them the appropriate ways to manage conflict when the person that's over them and pretty much potentially got the power to like violate you[r probation]... So those are big barriers because then you've got those and then you've got the social worker over here was like trying it. Well, if you have all these other systems in place, and unfortunately I think a big barrier with DJJ, with any correctional facility, is your clinical team is not going to be on the same page as your security team. Because we're— we've got two different agendas and a lot of times they do clash.

She reiterated that the situation was worse in the secure facilities than in the community. When I refocused the conversation to the community (rather than facility) context, Nicole stated, “I think there's definitely, I think a lot of times we [in context: community staff, not social workers specifically] shut kids down without giving them the opportunity just to speak and show them a different way to address it.” Although other social workers discussed differences in viewpoints and even attitudes between the social workers and other community staff, Nicole was the only person who shared examples of colleagues treating clients this way. Beyond simple disagreements regarding the best course of action, Nicole described agency colleagues who misused their authority. Although she explicitly noted she believed the problem was worse among correctional staff in the secure facility, she said other county colleagues (probation/community supervision staff) “blast” the youth under their supervision and expected the clients to have better conflict management skills than they exhibited themselves. She made this comment when asked about barriers to reducing DMC. She did not tie the problem to DMC directly but described a climate that could result in unjust probation violations.

Two social workers discussed how their perspective and priorities differed from higher level management. Elaine stated she and the community social workers in other counties were currently supervised by a social worker who directly reports to a social worker who directly reports to another social worker. “And that's new and different for this agency. Which is wonderful. I mean that is a step in the right direction... I feel like we're more heard now than we were before.” When asked about prior leadership, the participant used similar language as Gabriela and noted a prior upper-level supervisor “was not a social worker in [their] heart.”

Rebecca noted the risk assessment tool used by the agency played a major role in the recommendations intake and probation staff made to the court. She stated that the selection of the current risk assessment tool reflected a difference in perspective between agency management and the community social workers. She reported some of the community social workers researched and identified a risk assessment tool that highlighted “dynamic risk factors” that the youth would be able to improve over time. She also felt that the tool had a growing evidence base. Instead of adopting the tool the social workers identified, the agency had a researcher design a tool based on the agency data about factors associated with recidivism. Rebecca described cost as the primary driver of the decision to use the 4th Generation Risk and Needs Assessment (RANA) rather the one identified by the social workers.

And we tried really hard to push [the risk assessment tool identified by the social workers]. It costs some money. There is initial startup and then after that it doesn't cost money, but of course, you know, they aren't going to go for that. And shortly after they then rolled out the RANA, which is just frustrating to me because there is no evidence base to show this Risks and Needs Assessment is—does anything, realistically.

She also shared concerns that the tool was not helpful because it would identify risk factors that the staff could have recognized themselves. The factors she identified could be improved with appropriate services, but she described them as unhelpful. She did note separately that the RANA tool was preferable to her than the risk assessment used by the agency previously.

All they did was look at a bunch of data of things that they see, that possibly could have to do with recidivism. Which most of them, I mean, we know— lower education, substance abuse, you know basic things. So you know, it's mostly those questions. But that's really the only risk assessment that I am aware of that is utilized.

Risk assessment tools have been hypothesized to contribute to DMC in the juvenile justice system by exacerbating inequities that enter the system at the point of arrest (OJJDP, 2015).

Theme 3 and DMC. The social workers identified colleagues at SC DJJ and other organizations with whom they worked who used their power in ways that could reduce DMC as well as colleagues who did not. The social workers also described ways that the perspectives and actions of their colleagues could allow the social workers the time and space to work towards equity and reducing DMC. Some respondents believed their colleagues (e.g., probation staff and county managers) generally made just decisions so they rarely saw a need to involve themselves in day-to-day decision-making. The social workers would then be better able to focus on individual client needs. They also had faith that their opinions would be considered when they did think they needed to interject. In these counties, the social workers did not believe the actions of their colleagues were exacerbating DMC. In other cases, the social workers identified actions and behaviors of their colleagues that could contribute directly to DMC. They described colleagues who focused only on legal factors without considering the individual circumstances of

the client. The social workers described a role for themselves as advocates for just treatment within the system who knew the details of a person's case and situation.

Theme 4: Barrier: Need for More Social Workers. Several social workers spoke about the need to have additional social workers employed in their same office or in neighboring communities in order to give them the time and support to really impact their communities. The social workers did not tie the desire to DMC specifically, but they identified ways they could be more effective broadly if additional social workers were employed. In most cases, the social workers described wanting to have someone local to them with whom they could consult and share ideas. One participant, Rebecca, emphasized this point more than once during the interview.

So, I mean most of them [other community social workers] I don't see that often. It's mostly over video conference when we do our clinical meetings... I would say the one [social worker] though, in [counties close to mine], we have a very close relationship. I actually, I think we lean on each other a lot... We can always call [our supervisor], but there is something about having— seeing someone's face and having to staff something like in the moment... And I think that is something that is hugely missing within this agency, is having more than one clinical person in an office.

When asked if she specifically thought more than one social worker should be employed in the same county, she was clear that some counties needed multiple social workers in order to meet the varying needs of the agency and their clients.

Absolutely. Absolutely. And I don't know how that would look. I don't know if it's based on the number of kids in the county. But I mean, I know some social workers are able to, I don't know how many you are talking to but I am sure you will talk to some, that are

able to do therapy and go in schools and do stuff like that. Because they have the ability to do that, like I can't imagine trying to have one therapy client for the amount of different just staffings that I get called in to. Like the idea— in the bigger counties having like four or five social workers would be huge. And I think it would make much more of an impact, also in court. They need to have spare people to go to court... I mean there is no way, I can't spend all day in court, I wouldn't be able to do anything else. But you could get a social worker in court to really advocate. I think that would be really good.

One participant brought up the need for additional social workers when asked whether social workers have the capacity to reduce DMC. Gabriela responded, "I'm one social worker in two counties." She went on to say her time was stretched thin, and some social workers worked in even larger counties than she did.

Like, this is not even the day I'm in this county. And I have a situation I need to go and help deal with so, I think we make a difference but I don't think we're that effective because like, I think it's two social workers in [large urban] county? [Large urban county]. How large is [large urban county]? You know what I'm saying? It's just hard. It's a lot on one person. Like, I think it should be a social worker in each county. And even still, one is not enough to put on some counties. You know?

Two other social workers also initiated the topic of not having enough social workers employed by SC DJJ. Ashley stated she needed someone local with whom she could consult. When discussing her relationship with the other community social workers, she stated they share resources but noted they do not speak frequently.

And everyone [community social workers and supervisors] is very responsive. We share if we find a new program that's been working in our county, we'll share the information

back and forth... I would love to have more social workers locally to bounce ideas off of more often than twice a month, but that's not happened yet. They haven't seen the way and decided that each county needs more than one social worker, but one day maybe.

Her colleague, Kristin, had a slightly different rationale for wanting more social workers because she stated she could not keep up with the needs across the locations she serves.

So I cover this county, [county name], and then also I'm assigned to [neighboring] county. That's another thing that's been kind of problematic, covering two counties.

[Neighboring county] is a good hour from here, and it's already a 30-minute commute for me to get here, so I really only do, like, placement staffing forms, and some consults, and teach a sex ed group once a month at [neighboring county]. So I'm primarily here, just because the logistics of getting up to [neighboring county]. I don't have a [agency-owned] car assigned to me, and I have last priority for this county's cars, so it becomes frustrating. Our clientele is not always reliable, especially in the more rural counties, so I was setting up appointments, driving up to see one kid, and then that kid would not show up, and it just was feeling like a real waste of time.

During the member-checking process, two respondents added caveats to this theme. Susie noted that in the rural area where she works, additional social workers would not be necessary. She did note that her experience was not universal, "I can understand when you interviewed the people from large counties they felt like maybe more than one social worker might be needed in a county, and I think that's probably true in some of the larger counties." She also suggested having social workers assigned regionally (rather than to individual counties) might help ensure all counties had access to social worker consultation. A supervisor, Elaine, stated she believed more social workers were necessary. "I absolutely think that every county needs at the very least

access to a social worker or their own social worker.” She had the additional insight to know, however, that in some cases they were receiving few applicants for posted positions even when they were making slots for new social workers.

Theme 4 and DMC. Together the four social workers who mentioned wanting more social workers identified two main reasons: (1) each county or assigned group of counties included more work than one social worker could do well and (2) having social workers geographically nearby would give them someone to discuss cases with in real time. One participant tied the issue of needing additional social workers directly to her ability to “make a difference” when asked about the role of social workers in eliminating DMC. They were clear that their time was stretched thin, limiting their ability to know their clients well and to advocate on their behalf in court and elsewhere. Additionally, the social workers noted they would benefit from having social workers who could be familiar with their local context. Real time consultation could improve the social workers’ own decision-making. Local social workers could also support one another in advocating for clients so that their opinions are less likely to be overpowered by others, which was a concern described previously in regards to placement staffing forms.

Theme 5: Referrals as Major Driver of DMC. A common thread of the social workers’ responses to the question about how effective they were at reducing DMC is that they did not believe they were in the best position to address DMC directly because the biggest disparities came from the groups who referred youth to SC DJJ. The respondents mentioned both schools and police departments as groups who referred Black and minority youth at disparate rates. Although the social workers described the referrals as a barrier to their ability to reduce DMC,

they also shared ideas for how they could best be utilized in a preventative role to teach referrers about other options available to them.

Barrier: Lack of Control over who is Referred. The social workers expressed some resignation that they could not control who was referred to SC DJJ. They identified local law enforcement agencies as well as schools (in particular, school resource officers, who function as school-based law enforcement) as the primary mechanism through which DMC entered the agency. When asked what factors contributed to DMC, Elaine stated that officers' arrest decisions played a major role. Differing levels of financial resources were also a factor.

It goes to who is arrested, more often. It goes to economics because once you are arrested, if you have the funding, the family has the money, the means, they hire a private attorney. If family has enough means, it never comes into our system. And that is very much disproportionate. One race on one side, and one race on the other side.

Unfortunately. It starts with the law enforcement but it's a bigger picture than law enforcement.

She went on to say she did not think the social workers could make much of an impact on the problem. "And I don't know what we as social workers, in the roles that we play in this agency, I don't know what we can do to affect that." Kristin identified racism among school resource officers and local law enforcement as the primary driver of DMC. Like her colleague, she also noted economic disparities played a part.

I think that there's a racial bias in the South. You know, whether that's over or not or acknowledged or not, I think it comes into play with law enforcement, and with SROs [school resource officers], and with things like that, that the kids who are a racial minority, especially boys, will get into trouble faster. I think it also is a socioeconomic

thing just in that in this county and in [a neighboring county]— I mean, in [the neighboring county], I've had to look it up before because I've never seen a Caucasian kid in there. Maybe that's an exaggeration, but, like, very rarely, so I actually looked up, "What is the ethnic makeup of [Neighboring County]?" And it was very obviously disproportionate. It is a higher makeup of African-American kids, but it's not what you see.

In identifying referrals as the primary driver of DMC, they suggested their ability to reduce DMC was limited. When asked how social workers could make a difference in reducing DMC, Kristin reiterated that the referrals were the problem. "You know, we get the kids who are referred, so I don't know how to make that change. With the referrals that we get, are just kind of the referrals that we get." Gabriela made similar arguments about both schools and law enforcement agencies. In response to a prompt about the causes of DMC, Gabriela identified differences she saw between referrals from police departments and self-referrals, which were generally requests for resources or therapy from the parents.

I tend to notice a lot of the law enforcement referrals tend to be for African-American males. Self-referrals tend to be from white women about their children. Self-referrals are not often from African American families. The school that they go to has an issue— has an impact... I feel like they're more willing to help some populations of students than others.

The social workers stated they tried to make sure their clients were treated justly once they entered the juvenile justice system. Susie stated she believed her colleagues within the county treated their clients fairly and that the problem stemmed from earlier in the process, as noted previously.

I mean I guess I just wanna sing the praises of [this county], in that they may not be that involved in the referrals that we get, but once we get the referrals, I think that we do our very best to provide the best services that we can to every family regardless of race or color or anything.

The belief that law enforcement agencies and schools were a problem extended past referrals and into decision-making around diversion and pretrial detention for Susie and Ashley. According to Susie, the agency generally did not recommend diversion for a second referral. At the discretion of the prosecutor, young people can sometimes complete a program in exchange for having their charges dropped. Often diversion is offered for a first offense, and subsequent offenses would be prosecuted (DeFosset, Schooley, Abrams, Kuo, & Gase, 2017). Susie noted she sometimes advocated for diverting a client out of the juvenile justice system more than once because of the nature of the referrals.

Because we get referrals that are ridiculous from the schools. I mean, we work with the schools and all that, but I mean it's just— we're not talking serious, heavy-duty crimes here. We're talking about things that in my opinion, typical adolescent behavior sometimes, with kids that don't have particularly good conflict resolution skills.

Ashley stated her SC DJJ colleagues aimed to keep youth in the least restrictive environment possible, but, “I think it's the other— like, the police and the schools is who, I feel like it's more opposition from them.”

Facilitator: Potential Preventative Role. Although the social workers frequently expressed that there was little they could do to reduce DMC because referrals were not under their control, many of them provided potential solutions. In some cases, they identified things they or their colleagues were already doing to reduce DMC at the referral stage or later in the

process. In other cases, they described roles they could imagine themselves or other social workers playing that might successfully reduce DMC. In nearly every example, training of employees of other agencies was seen as part of the solution.

A first step in the process of reducing disproportionate referrals of minority youth to SC DJJ would be to make sure referring groups aware of the existence of the social workers and that the social workers were available to clients in lieu of making formal referrals to SC DJJ. One respondent, Ashley, emphasized that this had been a long process.

So I try and get as involved as I can. The hard part with this position is that it's new. I know [less than five years] doesn't sound new, but it is. I try and meet with law enforcement and school officials because they don't know that my position exists. So I'll get kids who have been sent here by a school resource officer. They're like, "Just take them to DJJ" and they'll do it. I was like, well let me explain to those schools and to the resource officers exactly how it works and what my role is here so that they can be more aware. If people don't know I'm here, then they don't know how to use me. So I try and get into school and I work closely with the alternative school in [this] county and the alternative school in [Neighboring] County.

Another participant, Kristin, stated reducing DMC was a "big goal" of hers, which she worked toward by reminding others about the difficult circumstances some of the youth they come into contact with have experienced.

You know, that's one of the things that I try and remind people of, is these kids don't—they're not acting in a vacuum. You know, we were actually just talking about this morning there's a new SRO at the alternative school, and they apparently have made, like, 10 arrests this week, which is not what I thought the SRO was. But it's kind of,

"Okay, well, if a kid's at an alternative school, we know that they already have behavioral problems."

She later stated that the social workers could play a greater role educating external agencies about other community resources for youth with behavioral problems that would not involve pursuing charges against them.

I think if we could do more preventative stuff, and more education with other agencies as to— because it feels like we're just this last-ditch thing that law enforcement, or schools, will be like, "You got to take them to DJJ," or, "Get DJJ involved," and it's like, well, kids, statistically, are gonna do better if DJJ's not involved.

A supervisor believed the prevention work the social workers were already doing had been effective given that the social workers could not choose which youth were referred to the agency.

Because we play what we are given, we deal with— now, we do prevention work and I think that helps and that has made a difference. Because we can focus on preventing the child from getting in deeper into our system or getting into our system at all.

The preventative work the social workers described doing thus far mostly involved referrals to community services or the direct provision of therapy to individual clients who were at-risk for being referred to SC DJJ. One social worker described running a diversion program herself because one was not available in her county. Some participants had also fostered relationships with local schools, alternative schools, or truancy prevention programs so that the social workers were called to intervene in certain situations rather than police. Susie had ideas about additional preventative roles social workers could play in partnership with school systems.

Yeah, I do [think social workers have the capacity to reduce DMC]. If they're utilized, I definitely do. I think they can work with schools on preventive programs, second chance programs, things like that. I definitely do. And I also talk with parents about if a child is struggling in a school about advocating for a 504, an IEP, something that they have, because that's where a lot of that comes from. They act up because they can't keep up in school.

Although the social workers advocated for expanding their preventative role through training groups external to SC DJJ, they did acknowledge there would be difficulties with doing so. One supervisor, Elaine, noted some preventative work could be seen as outside of the social workers' purview, even though she believed it could be effective.

I think again education and training. I don't want to limit myself because there is nothing that we as social workers can't do, but, in this role, it is defined. If I stepped into another area it would be seen as overstepping. So I don't know that there is other than training, other than making my people [the community social workers], and my people are really aware of the disparity. Other than making my people understand it better and know what do with it and about it, and if a kid is a truant he doesn't need to be in further in our system. He or she. I don't mean to genderize. There are things you can do, other things that you can do. I think that's about, in this role, about all I can do. And that's sad. That is sad because there are things that can be done, but— and I am thinking about like working with the court system. Going to the judges and going to the DA's and public defenders and, man, that would be seen as overstepping my bounds.

Another participant, Ashley, stated making a greater impact would require a great deal of time.

I think they have the capacity to educate others on it... Because I don't actually go out and seek referrals, it's difficult, but it would involve a lot of changing the mindset of those who are sending the referrals to me, which would be a full-time job.

As noted previously, the respondents expressed having little time to focus on reducing DMC; but they were able to identify where they could be more effective if they had the time available.

Theme 5 and DMC. The respondents seemed to believe the primary cause of DMC was from referral sources. Although the social workers were not in a position to make the decision about who would be referred to the agency (and neither were their SC DJJ colleagues), they identified ways they could work to reduce DMC at the referral stage. In some cases, they also identified ways they were already involved. Training of law enforcement agencies was a potential intervention technique. Specifically, it was suggested that the social workers could speak directly to police officers in order to inform them that they could refer families directly to the social workers for community resources without making an arrest or formal agency referral. Several of the social workers were already involved in school systems. By having good relationships with school administrators, the social workers could encourage them also to contact the social workers directly to intervene with students rather than involving the police.

Summary. The social workers gave mixed answers to how effective they believed they were or could be at reducing disproportionate minority contact. The barriers to reducing DMC they identified all centered around the actions of other people. They described colleagues within SC DJJ whose goals and approaches differed significantly from their own. They noted that schools and police departments were the primary drivers of DMC because they determined who was referred to SC DJJ. They were also able to identify ways they could and already did contribute to reducing DMC. First, that would require additional social workers to be employed by the agency.

They discussed needing other social workers for consultations and support. If the time was made available to them, the social workers proposed they could engage in training people who refer to SC DJJ about other options available for youth instead of (or prior to) referring them to SC DJJ. An alternative could be to refer the youth to the SC DJJ social workers who could provide services themselves or identify other programs that could meet the families' needs without ever requiring that the young person enter the juvenile justice system formally. If the social workers are correct that the schools and police disproportionately refer youth of color to SC DJJ, ongoing training would be necessary as a preventative measure. This would require additional time and resources and would be built upon the existing relationships the social workers have with community stakeholders.

Mixed Methods Results

Although the quantitative and qualitative aims of this dissertation sought to answer different research questions, results from the two components complemented and contextualized one another. Nearly universally, the social workers who participated in qualitative interviews saw the major driver of disproportionate minority contact was the referrals the agency receives from schools and police departments. Analyzing referrals was not a focus of the quantitative aims of this study, but descriptive statistics show that the number of Black youth referred to the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice was out of proportion to their representation in the state in both 2011 and 2018. Only 27.1% of South Carolinians were Black at the time of the last Census in 2010, but they represented 58.4% of referrals to SC DJJ in 2018. In the analyses of youth referred in 2011 or 2018 in counties that hired social workers by 2018, 59.1% of the referrals were Black youth.

Access to a community social worker (as measured by year) was a statistically significant predictor of confinement disposition in the longitudinal analyses (in samples of Black youth alone and of youth of all races/ethnicities). Although case level variables were entered into the multivariate models, outside factors such as changes in overall attitudes and expectations related to confining juveniles over time were not modeled quantitatively. More than one participant stated they believe their colleagues in the county offices aimed to help their clients remain in the least restrictive environment possible, in keeping with the agency's mission statement. Similarly, many of the social workers stated their colleagues tried to treat people fairly. Combined with the finding that some of the county managers and other agency staff were seen to have the "heart of a social worker," the longitudinal quantitative results suggested agency staff may have adopted a broad commitment to providing services in the least restrictive environment. The odds of receiving a confinement disposition dropped by 7% between 2011 and 2018 for Black youth specifically and for all youth combined.

Access to a community social worker was not predictive of confinement dispositions in the cross-sectional quantitative analyses of referrals made in 2018. The social workers emphasized that they believed more social workers must be employed in order for them to make a difference collectively in reducing DMC. Some social workers described having allies in their county colleagues (e.g., intake staff and county managers) who were committed to similar value systems, whereas others described colleagues who seemed to avoid soliciting the social workers' opinions. The two experiences emphasized that the social workers were not sole decision-makers within the counties, suggesting their voices could be overshadowed by those of their colleagues. Separately, they described factors contributing to disproportionate minority contact (DMC) that were outside of the agency (e.g., differential access to resources such as private attorneys). They

identified training of law enforcement and other referring agencies as a potential way they could reduce the over-representation of Black and minority youth who were referred to SC Department of Juvenile Justice. Specifically, one social worker suggested she could provide more direct services to clients who could benefit without them being formally referred to SC DJJ if police and schools were more aware that the option was available.

Summary

Table 14 shows how the quantitative and qualitative findings relate to one another. Access to a social worker did not predict confinement dispositions in 2018. Overall, the qualitative findings help to explain the null quantitative results. The social workers do not believe they are in the best position to reduce DMC unless they are empowered to affect who is referred to the agency. Depending on the buy-in of county managers and other colleagues, social workers could influence DMC in individual counties, which would not be captured in the quantitative analyses conducted. They also described having very limited time to dedicate to DMC. The qualitative findings also suggest future quantitative studies. The social workers emphasized the importance of ensuring youth can successfully complete probation terms as well as the importance of placement staffing forms following a probation violation. The success of the social workers in reducing DMC through these mechanisms could not be determined by the quantitative analyses.

Table 14. Integration Matrix

Research Aim	Quantitative Results	Qualitative Results
Aim 1: To determine the extent of DMC in the South Carolina juvenile justice system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statewide: confinement dispositions 15% more likely for Black youth than White youth • Counties with SWs: confinement dispositions nearly 17% more likely for Black youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SWs: fewer resources (e.g., access to private attorneys) for minority youth • SWs: training attorneys and judges about bias important • SWs: county staff major decision-makers with varying value systems
Aim 2: To examine whether the legal outcomes for Black youth are improved by having access to a community social worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longitudinal: reduced odds of confinement dispositions with SWs • Statewide 2018: no association between SW and confinement dispositions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SWs: overall goal of the agency to reduce out-of-home placements • SWs: believe ability to affect dispositions was limited due to resources and relative lack of influence
Aim 3: To examine the extent to which the race/ethnicity of youth involved in the juvenile justice system significantly predicts legal outcomes for youth in counties with and without community social workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SW only counties 2018: no association between race and confinement dispositions • Statewide 2018: no association between race or SW and confinement dispositions • Longitudinal: no association between race and confinement dispositions; reduced odds of confinement dispositions with SWs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SWs: youth generally treated fairly once involved with SC DJJ • SWs: too few SWs to focus on reducing DMC specifically • SWs: overall goal of the agency to reduce out-of-home placements
Aim 4: To explore the perspective of community social workers regarding their role in reducing disproportionate minority contact (DMC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No available data on specifics of probation orders or violations • RRI results: individual county differences • Statewide 2018: no association between SW and DMC • Descriptive statistics: racial make-up of referrals out of proportion for the state 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SWs: work against over-prescribing services • SWs involved in determining placements after probation violations • SWs: county managers major decision-makers with varying value systems • SWs: more SWs needed • SWs: referrals major cause of DMC

Chapter 6: Discussion

The purpose of this dissertation study was to determine whether and how the presence of a community social worker in county offices affected disproportionate minority contact (DMC). This chapter will discuss the findings and contextualize them within prior research and theory. The strengths and limitations of the study will be identified, and the chapter will conclude with the implications of this study for future research as well as policy and practice.

DMC has been identified at all stages of the juvenile justice system. DMC has lasting consequences for the youth who are affected and reduces community trust in the justice system overall. Justice system involvement affects educational attainment (Aizer & Doyle, 2015; Ward & Williams, 2015) and long-term financial well-being (Jung, 2015). Youth of color are more likely than White youth to believe their encounters with police are unfair (Hagan, Shedd, & Payne, 2005), and people who believe the system is unjust may be more likely to engage in delinquent behavior (Fine et al., 2017). Arrest rates do not reflect the true distribution of delinquent behavior across racial groups. White and Black youth report comparable levels of delinquent behavior (Piquero & Brame, 2008), but Black youth have arrests rates 40% higher than White youth nationally (Rovner, 2014).

This study examined a systems change strategy in that social workers have only in recent years been employed in county offices of the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice. Much of the prior DMC reduction literature focuses on delinquency prevention, which cannot solve the problem of inequitable treatment by the justice system. The community social workers employed by the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice (SC DJJ) are in a unique position to enact change. The social workers are guided by their professional values and have substantial discretion in how they use their time and in how they make decisions. Their role positions them to make changes within the juvenile justice system by taking many factors (e.g.,

individual juvenile circumstances, limited community resources, or biased decision-making at the referral stage) into consideration when they make recommendations to their colleagues and the court.

A mixed methods approach was used to answer the research questions. Administrative data was provided by SC DJJ, which was used to respond to the first three research aims. First, relative rate indices were conducted to see if Black and minority youth were disproportionately represented at the stages of disposition (i.e., confinement disposition rather than a community-based sanction) and waiver to adult court. Then, multivariate analyses were conducted using multiple sub-samples of youth referred to SC DJJ in 2011 (before social workers were employed in this role) and in 2018 (when community social workers were employed). A sample of all Black youth was used for Aim 2 to determine whether social workers were associated with a reduction in confinement dispositions and waiver to adult court longitudinally (i.e., 2011 versus 2018 referrals) and cross-sectionally (i.e., youth referred to counties with and without social workers in 2018). For Aim 3, samples of youth of all races were included to examine whether race was associated with the same outcomes (i.e., confinement dispositions and waiver). Finally, qualitative interviews were conducted to respond to Aim 4. Nine of the 11 community social workers employed by SC DJJ were interviewed about their role in reducing DMC.

Findings

In sum, there is little evidence from the quantitative analyses of this dissertation that employing social workers in county offices is sufficient to reduce DMC at the disposition stage. The qualitative findings are suggestive of ways in which the social workers have worked towards reducing DMC, the limitations that keep them from fully realizing their potential to combat DMC, and their ideas about how to improve. First, the bivariate relative rate indices will be

discussed in comparison to prior research. The multivariate quantitative results and the qualitative findings will then be discussed in the context of the study's conceptual model.

DMC in South Carolina

The findings of this study indicate that disproportionate minority contact continues to exist in South Carolina, as it has historically (Motes et al., 2012), when measured via relative rate indices (RRIs). RRIs were calculated for confinement dispositions in 2018 for Black youth compared to non-Latinx White youth and for youth of other races (i.e., Hispanic, American Indian/ Alaskan Native, or Asian) compared to White youth. RRIs could not be calculated for waiver to adult court because no White youth were waived in 2018. In 2018, Black youth were more likely than White youth to receive a confinement disposition statewide (RRI= 1.15). The likelihood of a confinement disposition for youth who are members of other racial categories was similar to that of White youth (RRI= 1.03).

RRIs were also calculated for subsamples of youth referred in 2018: those referred to counties employing social workers and those referred to counties without social workers. The RRIs for Black youth compared to white youth were slightly higher in counties employing social workers compared to counties without social workers (RRI= 1.17 versus 1.15). The RRIs for youth of other races varied substantially, however, with the likelihood of confinement for youth of other races being much lower than White youth in counties with social workers and much higher than White youth in counties without (RRI= 0.79 versus 1.28). The relative rate indices suggest DMC at the disposition stage is not reduced in counties employing social workers in comparison to counties without social workers.

Overall, the RRIs calculated for this study are somewhat smaller than the ones reported previously statewide and nationally. Motes and colleagues (2012) reported an RRI for Black

youth of 1.23 at the placement stage for South Carolina. This is higher than the RRIs calculated for confinement for Black youth for this study (which ranged between 1.15 and 1.17 for all counties versus only counties with social workers). What is unclear, though, is whether the calculation reported by Motes and colleagues measured placement as a disposition requiring confinement (as this study did) or if they included youth who were moved into a placement after not completing probation requirements, which would likely be a higher number. Nationally, the RRI for confinement dispositions was much higher for Black youth in 2015 at 1.4.

Outcomes in Models including Only Black Youth

The second aim for the study included quantitative analyses of samples including only Black youth. These analyses cannot answer the question of whether social workers are associated with a reduction in DMC because they do not include White youth for comparison, but they can indicate whether having access to a community social worker is associated with positive legal outcomes for Black youth specifically. In the model comparing youth referred in counties with social workers in 2018 to youth referred to those same counties in 2011, access to a social worker (as measured by year of referral) was associated with a reduced likelihood of receiving a confinement disposition (OR=.93). This is a positive outcome indicating that Black youth in 2018 are less likely to receive confinement dispositions than they were in the past, but it should be interpreted with some caution because of the possibility that other agency-level changes have also taken place in the years between 2011 and 2018.

In the cross-sectional analyses, the likelihood of receiving a confinement disposition was assessed for youth across the state to determine whether being referred to a county with a community social worker was a significant predictor. The findings indicate the likelihood of receiving a confinement disposition was not different for Black youth referred in counties with or

without social workers. Legally relevant variables (i.e., charge severity (OR=1.04), prior referrals (1.4), and substance abuse (1.69)) were all positively associated with confinement dispositions in the 2018 samples, and the personal characteristics of age (OR=1.48) and sex (1.99) were also significant.

Conceptual Model

Individual Demographic Variables. The multivariate models predicting confinement dispositions (i.e., a disposition requiring an out-of-home placement rather than a community-based sanction) included several demographic variables: age, sex, school enrollment, and race. Race will be discussed separately from the others because it was the independent variable in some analyses. Three samples of referrals including youth of all races are discussed here. In the first models, confinement dispositions and waiver were predicted in a sample of youth referred only to counties with access to a community social worker (i.e., approximately half of the referrals in 2018). The second models predicted the same outcomes using a sample of youth referred in 2018 in any county of the state, regardless of whether they had a social worker in 2018. The third sample included youth referred to a subset of counties (i.e., those employing social workers in 2018) in either 2011 (before social workers were employed) or in 2018 (when social workers were employed).

The quantitative findings related to individual demographic variables partially adhere to the expectations of the conceptual model, which was grounded primarily in Focal Concerns and Causal Attribution theories. Both theories suggest judges and other legal actors make decisions based upon patterned resonances (Albonetti, 1991) or going rates (Ulmer & Johnson, 2004) to reduce uncertainty in the court environment. Albonetti (1991) has argued the use of stereotypes regarding who is most likely to reoffend become part of the culture of court workgroup because

the judges and others cannot accurately know who will reoffend and which sanctions would be best used to deter them. Steffensmeier, Ulmer, and Kramer (1998) further specified the types of shorthands court actors are likely to use into three primary factors: the blameworthiness of the person, the perceived dangerousness of the person to their community, and practical constraints of both the person and the environment. In the analyses conducted for this study, demographic variables age and sex speak to blameworthiness. Both age and sex are associated with perceived ability to “do time” (Bishop et al., 2010; Steffensmeier et al., 2017), which is supported by this study. Findings of this study related to school enrollment status differ from prior research and theory, as described below.

Older youth were more likely to receive confinement dispositions in all three samples: youth referred to a county with a social worker in 2018 (OR= 1.559), youth referred statewide in 2018 (OR=1.639), and youth referred in 2011 or 2018 to counties that had social workers in 2018 (OR=1.621). Waiver to adult court could not be modeled in the sample including only counties with social workers in 2018 because such a small number of youth were waived in the subsample (n=2), and the omnibus model did not significantly predict waiver for youth referred statewide in 2018. Age was not a significant predictor of waiver in the final model (i.e., youth in counties with social workers in 2018 and 2011). The perceived blameworthiness of the person has been operationalized by several factors including age and sex. Bishop and colleagues (2010) identified the sophistication or maturity of the young person as a shorthand for blameworthiness. The findings of this dissertation support that assertion because older age was associated with increased confinement dispositions even when charge severity and the number of prior referrals were also included in the statistical models. The concept of practical constraints also includes

whether the court actors believe the person is capable of surviving time in a secure facility, which may be indicated here by age.

Being male was associated with receiving confinement dispositions in this study, in keeping with prior research and theory. Male youth had increased odds of receiving confinement dispositions in two of the three models (youth referred statewide in 2018, OR= 1.663; youth referred in subset of counties in 2011 or 2018, OR= 1.342) but not in the first sample including only youth referred in 2018 to counties employing social workers. In all samples, the youth who were waived to adult court were all male, so the variable could not be included in any multivariate models. Being male has been associated with blameworthiness by prior researchers in that court actors are more likely to assume girls and women have experienced victimization and are thus less deserving of consequences than men and boys (Steffensmeier et al., 1998). Researchers including Rodriguez (2010) and Spohn and Holleran (2000) found combinations of sex and age (along with race and employment status) were associated with more severe sanctions. Like older youth, male youth may be believed to be more capable of withstanding a confinement sanction than female youth (Bishop et al., 2010; Steffensmeier et al., 2017). In keeping with the prior research, this study found being male was associated with receiving a confinement disposition versus probation or other sanctions within the home community.

The findings related to school enrollment differ from prior research. Harris (2008) found judges believe youth are more culpable for delinquent behavior if their lives are considered to be like those of adults (e.g., not enrolled in school or working full-time). In this study, whether a client was enrolled in school was not predictive of receiving a confinement disposition in any of the three samples. In the only significant model predicting waiver, which was the sample of

youth referred in a subset of counties in 2011 or 2018, school enrollment was also not a significant predictor.

Race. Race was included as an independent variable or a control variable in all models including youth of varying races, and being Black or a member of another race was not predictive of confinement disposition or waiver to adult court compared to being White in any of the models. Race did not predict confinement dispositions for the sample of youth referred only in counties with social workers, nor was it predictive in the models comparing across counties statewide or across-time. This finding is in opposition to the conceptual model based in Focal Concerns theory (Steffensmeier et al., 2017) which predicted race would serve as a proxy for dangerousness and/ or the ability to withstand a confinement disposition in the minds of decision-makers for this study.

The fact that race/ethnicity was not a significant predictor of confinement dispositions stands in contrast in some recent research. Bishop (2005) found race had a direct effect on confinement dispositions over and above the influence of legally relevant variables. Davis and Sorenson (2013) found Black youth were confined at rates up to 70% higher than White youth. Another study determined Black youth were placed in secure correctional facilities at a rate 2.5 times that of White youth (Rodriguez, Smith, & Zatz, 2009). Using a large sample of youth adjudicated in Pennsylvania, Higgins and colleagues (2012) matched Black and White youth on both legally relevant and other variables and found a confinement rate 28% higher for Black youth versus White youth. Prior researchers have not been unanimous in the finding that race is a factor in confinement disposition. One study found extraneous variables not including race or legally relevant factors were the only predictors of receiving a confinement disposition versus

probation (Cauffman et al., 2007). The preponderance of prior research has indicated race is a factor, however.

Legally Relevant Variables. All three legally relevant variables included in the multivariate models (i.e., prior referrals, charge severity, and substance abuse) were predictive of confinement dispositions with all samples. Prior legal history and charge severity are associated with perceived dangerousness by judges as well as other legal actors. Historically, both factors are strong predictors of dispositional outcomes (Steffensmeier & Demuth, 2000). In the one statistically significant multivariate model predicting waiver, charge severity was the only significant variable. Together, these findings indicate judges and other decision-makers seem to focus on legally relevant variables rather than individual characteristics.

Community Social Workers. The quantitative findings suggest social workers do not play a substantial role in determining legal outcomes for youth. Whether the youth had access to a community social worker was the independent variable in models comparing odds of confinement dispositions across counties statewide and across time. Access to a community social worker was not predictive of dispositional outcomes across counties statewide. This indicates being referred to a county with access to a social worker is not associated with a reduction in the likelihood that a young person will receive a confinement disposition, controlling for other factors. In the longitudinal analyses in which youth referred in 2011 or 2018 to the subset of counties employing social workers in 2018 were included, access to a community social worker (measured by year of referral) was a significant predictor of confinement dispositions but not of waiver to adult court. Together, these analyses indicate the likelihood of receiving a confinement disposition may have reduced for youth overall between 2011 and 2018,

and access to a community social worker does not seem to reduce the likelihood of receiving a confinement disposition for youth referred in 2018.

The qualitative findings primarily support the conceptual model for this dissertation which indicates social workers could influence legal outcomes through both individual discretion (described by Street Level Bureaucracy (Lipsky, 1980)) and court workgroup norms (described by Court Community Theory (Eisenstein & Jacob, 1977)). The social workers' experiences with their colleagues varied widely making it difficult to make generalizations about how likely they are to be in reducing DMC within their counties. Both theories work to explain the themes described by the participants through their interviews.

In the conceptual model for this dissertation, Street Level Bureaucracy (Lipsky, 1980) was used to describe and understand the behavior of the individual social workers who have substantial control over how they focus their attention in their work. The social workers did report having flexibility over their time and resources. The participants also noted, however, that the choices made by other bureaucrats within the agency were instrumental in determining how influential the social workers believed they could be themselves. They described county managers who had the "heart of a social worker" as well as county managers and colleagues who were wary of soliciting the social workers' input on cases. Social workers are limited in their ability to change the trajectory of a client's case if they are not presented with the opportunity. This is consistent with Street Level Bureaucracy in that the community social workers wield significant power but are limited by constraints from the agency and available resources.

In the only other known study to examine social workers as members of court working groups, Halliday and colleagues (2009) studied social workers who wrote reports for judges in Scotland which were used for sentencing decisions. The social workers in that study explicitly

wrote the reports to emphasize extenuating circumstances of the accused offenders and advocate for leniency, but they were anxious that judges would find them “naïve” or even laugh at them (p. 416). The social workers in this study did not describe having the same experience, but they did note a similar role anxiety. The participants who felt their colleagues’ values differed from their own expressed that their colleagues did not include them in decision-making. They also noted their colleagues might think they already know what the social workers would say about a given case. Some of the participants feared their colleagues would not respect their opinions; although none went so far as to note their colleagues might laugh at them. Additionally, one social worker stated she felt she did not have the option to say no to an out-of-home placement when people “above [her] paygrade” pushed her.

The same bounded decision-making capacity came through in other themes, as well. The social workers can play a major role in the long-term outcomes for a client by wielding their influence over whether the person is put in a placement for violating probation requirements and/or for making a decision about the type of placement to recommend. In accordance with the insights of Street-level Bureaucracy, the social workers described subjective decision-making criteria such as the needs of the client and the risks involved, but their decision-making ability is limited by the decision of the probation staff to pursue a placement before the social workers are involved. Finally, the social workers candidly described their belief that school employees and police officers use their discretion as bureaucrats in a biased way. The participants described a desire to dedicate some of their work time towards influencing the decision-making of the referring groups by training them and informing them about the services the social workers can provide to families.

Court community theory also helps to further contextualize the court workgroup norms identified by the social workers. The social workers described a variety of experiences related to the workgroups in their individual counties. Some described being invited to participate and provide input for any case decision-making. On the other end of the spectrum, some reported feeling unwelcome to provide any input in decision-making despite asking for the opportunity to participate in staffing meetings. Another aspect of Court Community Theory related to the ability of the social workers to influence agency decision-making is the physical environment of the county offices. In most cases, the social workers' offices are right alongside their county colleagues'. One social worker who experienced particular difficulty making in-roads with her county colleagues had an office space entirely separate from the rest of the county staff.

The social workers also described workgroup norms as a barrier in reducing DMC. They noted instances when their colleagues prefer to mandate a specific set of services either for everyone or for everyone with a specific risk factor. Eisenstein and Jacob (1977) note that the driving goal of everyone involved in the court is processing cases quickly, which means working together as teammates rather than adversaries. The social workers in this study stand out as not being fully integrated members of the court workgroup. They do not describe a goal of quick case processing, and they clearly expressed a desire to consider the unique circumstances of each case. For example, one social worker noted that her colleagues have a norm of requiring multiple types of therapy for a person on probation. She has been able to slowly convince them to make changes so that the youth and their families are not committed to more services than they can successfully complete. Finally, the social workers described an overall desire to see more social workers hired to work in the community. They noted a preference for being able to discuss cases

with other social workers locally in real time, which speaks to a desire to change court workgroup culture by increasing the number of social work voices in the conversation.

The social workers described a new application of the “practical constraints” component of Focal Concerns Theory (Steffensmeier, Ulmer, & Kramer, 1998). The first identified theme of the qualitative interviews was the importance of making probation guidelines that the clients could reasonably meet. The notion of practical constraints has been hypothesized previously to work against men of color who biased judges may see as able to withstand the difficulties of a confinement sentence (Bishop et al., 2010; Steffensmeier et al., 2017). In the case of the social workers, they seem to be taking a position that is almost opposite of the theory as hypothesized in that they push for lighter sanctions for clients who are seen as having few resources.

Strengths and Limitations

The limitations of this study should be considered when interpreting the generated findings. First, the quantitative component of the study relied upon administrative data. The agency selected what data were collected. Moreover, every dataset is limited in the degree to which it can provide a full picture of a young person or a family (Shaw, Lee, & Farrell, 2016). This means the ability to include variables of interest in the analyses were limited. Specifically, this dataset included very limited information about family income. Additionally, the power of the study to find an association between access to community social workers and racially disproportionate outcomes may be low. The social workers are not hired to perform the function specifically, and they are likely to vary in how much they emphasize the goal of reducing disparities. Social workers may choose to focus their efforts on high-need clients, which might mean they have a significant impact on a small number of people but a small effect size overall. In other cases, they may be given little decision-making power by their colleagues within the

county offices. The social workers reported a sense that they have less influence over the initial disposition decision than on decisions regarding out-of-home placements for youth whose probation agreements are violated, which was unable to be measured quantitatively in this study. Originally, pre-trial detention was intended to be an outcome of this study. Including the detention decision-point would have increased the ability to compare findings of this study to prior research, much of which utilizes pre-trial detention as the dependent variable.

The current study also includes several strengths. First, the conceptualization of community social workers as a DMC intervention is unlike other DMC reduction strategies that have been studied. The social workers have the opportunity to affect multiple decision-making phases and also serve other agency functions (e.g., community prevention work and clinical diagnosing). The mixed method research design and the quantitative data analysis techniques are also strengths of this study. The use of administrative data also allowed for the inclusion of all DJJ-involved youth during the identified time period, so potential sampling bias was eliminated. The convergent mixed methods design allows for the inclusion and consideration of administrative case-level data as well as the first-person accounts of the social workers, mitigating some of the concerns associated with administrative data analysis. Additionally, most published research on DMC reduction strategies has included only limited quantitative (e.g., bivariate tests) and qualitative analyses. This study utilized multivariate statistical analyses while also inviting all of the community social workers to participate in interviews.

Implications

Implications for Future Research

A major implication for this study is the need to look carefully for nuanced ways that disproportionate minority contact can manifest. One way to account for this nuance is to avoid

measuring DMC only at the statewide aggregate level. When the relative rate indices of all counties were calculated together, differences between the counties were hidden. Although some differences were slight, the RRIs for youth of other races in 2018 were very different in counties with social workers (RRI= 0.79) and counties without social workers (RRI=1.28), a finding that was completely masked by the statewide RRI (1.03). Moreover, the social workers reported the county-level leadership have widely varying approaches to how they incorporate the social workers into their daily work. The social workers also believe the county managers utilize different value systems from one another to make decisions about their clients. This could have a big impact on how effective a social worker is able to be. A social worker in a county with a manager who is receptive to change may be much more successful at reducing DMC than a social worker who finds herself constantly at odds with colleagues. Analyzing data at the county level would help to make sure the individual differences are not lost. For this study, relative rate indices were also calculated for the subsets of counties with and without social workers. This research could be continued by calculating RRIs for additional subsets (e.g., urban and rural counties or counties with larger and smaller non-White populations) to assess for additional between-county differences. Individual county RRIs could be informative for determining whether a specific social worker seems to be making a difference in DMC in a given county.

Additional qualitative research is warranted. In-depth qualitative research can provide answers to questions that may be lost in the aggregated quantitative and qualitative analyses conducted for this study. An ethnography or focused case study of an individual county could provide greater insight into what strategies the social worker employs to reduce DMC in their work with clients and colleagues, and how much latitude the social worker has to make meaningful change. Given that the social workers' environments and experiences can differ

greatly from one to another, a more individualized qualitative study is warranted. Other stakeholders should be included in future research. Moreover, the perspectives of justice system involved youth and their families should be explored for a comprehensive picture.

The study findings also suggest additional ways to measure and assess for DMC in order to have a fuller picture of the potential impacts of hiring community social workers. First, the outcomes of the quantitative analyses could be conceptualized differently. The social workers noted they recommend to their colleagues that the requirements of probation orders are reasonable for the youth and their families to complete. For a truly nuanced consideration of the potential impacts of community social workers, probation order requirements could be utilized as the independent variable in multivariate analysis. Document review of individual probation orders and client files is another option. Another arena in which the social workers stated they are influential is in the decision of whether to move a young person from their home to a placement following a probation violation. They also justify the type and level of placement where the person will go. Placement decisions made after the initial disposition could provide additional insights through aggregated analysis or case studies.

The ability to study waiver to adult court quantitatively was limited in this study due to low numbers overall and few to no waivers annually among White youth in particular. Future researchers should focus on qualitative methods to get a fuller picture of the mechanisms that result in waiver in South Carolina. Although the absolute numbers of youth who are waived to adult court are very low, the consequences are very high for the youth who are affected. Document review of individual case files could help to explain decision-making. Conversely, document review and case studies might highlight injustices that are buried in the quantitative data. Two referrals to adult court in the data were for youth with prior referrals charged with

third degree burglary, a relatively low-severity offense (3 out of 25 according to SC DJJ's severity scoring system). In-depth case studies are warranted to examine how such decisions were made.

Implications for Practice and Policy

The social workers interviewed for this study self-identified practice and policy changes that could be made to increase their ability to reduce DMC. Most clearly, the social workers suggested having more social workers employed in the community would increase their effectiveness. They described needing colleagues with similar values and roles who they can discuss cases with in real time to make the best decisions for their clients. Additional social workers could also strengthen the social workers' collective voices so that their opinions are better heard by other colleagues. During the course of this study, three of the nine social workers who were interviewed left their positions before the member checking follow-up interviews took place. One supervisor noted they have had open positions for community social workers that go unfilled. When combined with the dismay one participant expressed at their pay compared to the pay of other members of the rehabilitative services division, this suggests hiring more social workers might require increasing the salary or making the position more attractive to increase both recruitment and retention. Limited recent research on teachers in secure juvenile justice settings offers some relevant insights. Murphy (2018) conducted a study involving multiple interviews with teachers in secure juvenile institutions, some of whom left the position during the study but continued to participate in interviews. Two of their findings seem applicable to social workers, as well. She found having a strong social support network among other teachers was key for overcoming the daily stressors of the job. She also emphasized the importance of relevant and consistent training opportunities. The teachers noted the security staff had very

different priorities than they did, making it difficult at times to work alongside one another. Murphy (2018) suggests the teachers and security staff would benefit from completing some collective trainings so that they have the same basic level of understanding. The same strategy could be adapted for collective trainings with the community social workers and the county managers or other county staff. The strategy could also provide an opportunity for fostering better working relationships. Expanding these shared trainings to law enforcement or school officials could increase understanding in the juvenile justice community about the roles social workers play and how they could be better utilized. Houchins and colleagues (2017) found teachers who decided to work in juvenile justice settings in order to pursue better employment opportunities (i.e., more available positions, more opportunities throughout career, and higher pay) reported higher job satisfaction than teachers who pursued the position for personal reasons. This suggests having positions that offer opportunities for career advancement and sufficient pay are important for job satisfaction in juvenile justice settings.

The social workers could play a role in preventing referrals to the agency, which they identified as a primary way DMC enters the juvenile justice system. The social workers already play a prevention role for the agency by providing resources to families who are concerned about their children's behavior or trajectory. Some of the social workers also have relationships with local school systems and can be called when a student has a problem. In many cases, this prevention work intends to change the behavior of the kid. The social workers believe individual behaviors are not the sole reason disproportionate numbers of Black and other non-White youth are referred to the agency. Consistent with prior literature, biased decision-making on the part of the police (Claus, Vidal, & Harmon, 2018; Piquero, 2008) or school systems (Homer & Fisher, 2020; Marchbanks, Peguero, Varela, Blake, & Eason, 2018) also plays a part. The social workers

could be given the opportunity to provide training to law enforcement agencies and school administrators. They could inform them of the negative outcomes that can be associated with referring youth to justice agencies and about potential alternative options, such as contacting the social workers for referrals to community resources. These trainings should also include an explicit discussion of bias and racial discrimination. Empowering the social workers this way could have a ripple effect where they are able to deepen their relationships with referring groups and prevent referrals to the justice system. Although the respondents specifically mentioned the potential for training roles, the results have implications for the ongoing movement to replace some law enforcement duties with social workers (Walters, 2020). These effects could be tracked by continuing to assess RRI's at the referral stage before and after the community social workers become involved. Given recent research indicating that school resource officers disproportionately arrest Black youth (Homer & Fisher, 2020) and the social workers' experience that schools refer youth for relatively minor behavior infractions, the findings of this study lend some support to growing efforts to remove police presence from public school systems (Reilly, 2020).

Pre-trial detention is an important decision-making point that could not be adequately analyzed in this study. Detention data was not available from SC DJJ, so it was not analyzed quantitatively for this study at all. Overall, the social workers did not report playing a meaningful role in the recommendation to detain a youth pre-trial. Police officers contact SC DJJ staff (e.g., county managers or intake workers) who provide an agency recommendation, but the police officer makes the final decision. Two social workers reported having had (previous or overlapping) experience as a social worker in a detention facility. In both cases, they spoke fairly negatively about the experience. In one case, the social worker described correctional colleagues

who abuse their power. The second social worker stated she thinks resources are allocated to the detention centers that could be better used in the community because more youth are detained than is truly necessary. Similarly to how the social workers described DMC at the arrest stage, she noted police are the ultimate decision makers and that they detain minority youth more than White youth. Prior research has frequently shown detention rates are inequitable (Kusnetz, 2014; Maggard, 2015). In a study conducted by Rodriguez and Eells (2013), requiring an overview of detention decisions and continuous monitoring of whether of detention remains necessary for each youth eliminated the relationship between race and likelihood of being in detention. Social workers could play an advocacy role in asking for greater transparency and oversight when a police officer elects to detain a young person over the recommendation of SC DJJ staff in keeping with prior research.

In the 2018 reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, Congress made changes to the legislation that are relevant to this dissertation study. The term “racial and ethnic disparities” (RED) is now the preferred language for inequities in the juvenile justice system. The revised terminology clarifies that even if the numbers of youth of color in the justice system are proportionate to the numbers in the comparison population, inequitable decision making could still be taking place (Burns Institute, n.d.). The amended legislation also specifies what states must accomplish in order to continue receiving all of their allocated Formula Grants (OJJDP, Oct. 2019). The states are required to identify and reduce RED through the implementation of “policy, practice, and system improvement strategies at the state, territorial, local, and tribal levels” (OJJDP, Oct. 2019). The requirements also include identifying and analyzing data at multiple levels (state as well as local) and decision points. The findings of this study align well with the revised legislation. The social workers emphasized the localized

nature of their work and the influence of other decision-makers at the local level. The social workers stated biased decision-making remains a factor among agency staff and external stakeholders (i.e., schools and law enforcement agencies). This federal legislation further empowers the agency to pursue policies such as allowing the social workers to provide training and assistance to decision makers to reduce RED.

Conclusion

This dissertation study sought to examine the relationship between access to community social workers and disproportionate minority contact (DMC) for youth referred to the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice. The study utilized a mixed methods approach to meet two goals. The administrative, quantitative data was used to determine whether an association exists between social workers and a reduction in DMC. Overall, this study found limited evidence for an association between employing community social workers and a reduction in DMC. DMC, as measured by relative rate indices, continues to exist in South Carolina. Longitudinal analyses indicate the use of confinement dispositions has decreased over time for all youth and for Black youth specifically. In cross-sectional analyses of youth outcomes in counties with and without social workers, access to a social worker was not associated with the likelihood of receiving a confinement disposition. Race was not associated with receiving a confinement disposition in any multivariate models, indicating legal variables seem to carry the most weight in decision-making.

Qualitative interviews with the social workers were used to identify and understand the mechanisms, barriers, and facilitators for reducing DMC. The social workers reported having a variety of experiences within the county offices. Some described colleagues who share their professional values, and others work with colleagues who seem to hinder the social workers'

ability to influence decision-making. The findings suggest multiple ways the social workers can play a role in reducing DMC in somewhat nuanced ways. They identified two stages in the juvenile justice process in which they can and have had an impact on increasing equity: (1) out-of-home placement decisions for youth on probation or parole and (2) determining probation requirements. Moving forward, the social workers described a need for hiring additional social workers. The social workers also believe they could work to train law enforcement officers and school officials about alternatives to making a referral to the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice to reduce inequitable decisions at the front-end of the juvenile justice system.

Disproportionate minority contact is an important social justice issue. Youth who become involved with the juvenile justice system face long-term consequences and an increased likelihood of repeat referrals to juvenile or criminal justice systems. Social workers have the necessary tools as well as the ethical imperative to perform racial justice work. The SC DJJ community social workers are ideally situated to make a meaningful difference because they can work with community partners to advocate for clients at all phases of the justice system. Community social workers are also well equipped to the advocate for systemic and lead change efforts. The findings of this study indicate how the social workers could be better supported in their work to reduce DMC.

Appendix A. Data Matrix of Studies Included in Systematic Review

Author, & Year	Study Design, Data Analysis, and Research Questions or Aims	Sample and Sampling Strategy	Relevant Findings
Orchowsky, Poulin, & Iwama (2010)	Retrospective longitudinal	Juvenile Court Services data	Community Liaison Program in Iowa: African American youth before: 61 proceeded further into the system, 13 diverted/dismissed, 50 held for review
	Relative Rate Indices calculations	Linn County, Iowa: minority youth referred for a visit between Sept. 1, 2007, and Jan. 30, 2008 N= 42 referred of 122 eligible	Post-Program: 49, 22, 46, respectively; White youth before program: 86 proceeded further into the system, 52 diverted/dismissed, 152 held for review, 1 community service Post program: 75 proceeded further, 61 diverted/dismissed, 199 held for review
	Identify extent and nature of DMC problem in Iowa and Virginia		Johnson County Iowa, 2008: 29% (n=15) low risk White youth had petition requested or filed, 25% (n=1) low risk Hispanic youth, 38% (n=21) low risk A-A youth
	Assess effectiveness of efforts to address DMC	Johnson County, Iowa: Complaints from Jan. 1, 2008-June 30, 2008 eligible for Iowa Delinquency Assessment N=365	
Simpson (2010)	Prospective longitudinal	202 cases investigated by 3 law enforcement agencies in a rural Louisiana in 2008: Ages 7-17	Non-significant comparison of 2007 and 2008 detentions: 82% of detainees were Black in 2007, 77% in 2008
	Chi-square analysis	Average of 1.27 charges (SD= .84)	Race not correlated with any variables tested after DSI
	Bivariate correlations	63% African-American	DSI recommended detention for 14 youth, only one was detained; 21 of 22 detentions was discretionary
	Logistic Regression	37% Caucasian >1% Hispanic Parish-wide: 66% White	When the DSI was modified to have a lower cut-off score for recommending detention, it predicted recidivism at 3-month contact (OR=8.56), 6-month contact (OR=6.73), 3-month arrest (OR=9.85), and 6-month arrest (OR=9.07)
	Hypothesis: Rates of minority confinement would be lower following implementation of the RAI in comparison to confinement rates during the same period of the previous year, while increasing the rates of violent offenders placed in secure confinement.	Comparison group of 27 youth detained during the prior year	82% of detained youth in 2008 did not have completed DSI form; Police continued to use subjective decision-making

Appendix A. Continued

Young, Yancey, Betsinger, & Farrell (2011)	Retrospective longitudinal Logistic Regression Percentages of detentions caused by failure to appear at hearings Assessment of Maryland's DMC-funded strategies	Youth with DRAI decisions in Maryland in 2009 (authors note not all eligible youth were administered DRAI): N=5,430 Multivariate analyses: N=9,055 African American=86% White=11% Latino=2% Other=1% Youth with scheduled hearings in Baltimore County, MD	With DRAI, being African-American was not significantly associated with odds of detention; Being Latino significantly associated with detention (OR=2.05; p<0.01) White youth (6.3% significantly more likely than Black youth (3.9%) to benefit from downward overrides (i.e., less restrictive outcome despite DRAI detention recommendation) 2007: 40% of detentions due to failure to appear at hearings 2010: 5% of detentions due to failure to appear at hearings
Rodriguez & Eells (2013)	Mixed Methods Longitudinal (Both retrospective and prospective data) Trend analysis Logistic regression models Thematic coding Evaluate effectiveness of three strategies including a detention index, a procedural change in review of detention decisions, and a monitoring system of detained youth created to reduce DMC and numbers of youth in detention	Data from Integrated Court Information System (iCIS) of Maricopa County Youth referred to juvenile court and brought in by law enforcement to detention from July 1, 1999, to June 30, 2012 N= between approximately 6,500 per year (2011) and 10,000 per year (2000)	Influence of race on mandatory detention reduced over time African American youth compared to Whites: 1999 OR=2.9 2012: OR=1.2 n/s Odds of mandatory detentions dropped for all minorities 2010-2012: no race effects on mandatory detention No race effects on dismissal since the implementation of detention index African American youth compared to Whites: 1999: OR= 1.2 n/s 2012: OR= 0.8 n/s Native American youth more likely to be committed than White youth after detention index revised Native American youth compared to Whites: 1999: OR=1 n/s 2012: OR= 1.5 n/s African American youth compared to Whites: 1999: OR=0.75 n/s 2012: OR=1.6 n/s Race effects for discretionary detentions reduced since supervisor approval requirement implemented African-American youth remain at higher odds for discretionary detention than White youth after supervisor approval 1999: OR= 2.75 sig 2012: OR=1.1 n/s

Appendix A. Continued

			Latino youth at reduced odds for discretionary detention than White youth following supervisor approval 1999: OR=1.4 n/s 2012: OR=0.9 n/s
			No race effects of detention length
Schwartz (2013)	Observational, longitudinal	Berks County, PA	10 youth per night served in predominantly Hispanic neighborhood
	Participant counts	Identified as target based on RRI	Large reduction in secure detention usage
	Estimates of use of detention	“Fast-growing Hispanic population” p. 28	Successful completion of program by mostly Hispanic participants
	Measure the success of Evening Reporting Center (ERC) for reducing DMC in detention (an aspect of JDAI)		
Kusnetz (2014)	Retrospective Longitudinal	Administrative data from New Jersey between 2007 and 2009 analyzed	34.5% decrease in minority detentions 2007-2009
	Descriptive Statistics: Percentages of White youth and youth of color affected	Very limited detail	Overrides into detention higher for minorities in 2009 (12.3%) than white youth (9.9%) Overrides into release higher for white youth (6.9%) than minority youth (1.8%)
	Percent decrease/ Increase 2007-2009, 2009-2011		VOP down 84.7% since JDAI implementation
	Measure Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI)’s progress in addressing DMC in New Jersey		
Maggard (2015)	Retrospective longitudinal	One Court Services Unit in Virginia	Odds for detention for non-White youth: Pre-JDAI= 1.18 (p<.05) Post-JDAI= 1.11 (n/s)
	Series of logistic regression models: White and non-White models	JDAI site since 2005	Z-Statistics comparing difference= -0.5 (n/s, indicates minimal difference between before and after)
	Ordinary least squares regression	2005: 78% of court referees and 84% of detainees were Black	White only model, pre-JDAI (pseudo R ² =.325): Felony charge (OR=2.79, p<.01), person offense (OR=3.88, p<.01), property offense (OR=1.78, p<.05), probation/parole/contempt (OR=5.17, p<.01), additional charges (OR=3.75, p<.01), prior felonies (OR=1.52, p<.05), and being under supervision (OR=5.78, p<.01) significantly predict being detained
	Z-statistics comparing pre- and post-JDAI	22,658 intake cases	Non-significant: drug offenses, prior intake referrals, age, age at first arrest, gender

Appendix A. Continued

model coefficients	12,347 pre-JDAI 10,221 post-JDAI	White-only model, post-JDAI (pseudo $R^2 = .431$): Felony charge (OR=12.11, $p < .01$), person offense (OR=2.65, $p < .01$), property offense (OR=.447, $p < .05$), probation/parole/contempt (OR=4.21, $p < .01$), additional charges (OR=2.87, $p < .01$), prior felonies (OR=1.68, $p < .05$), and being under supervision (OR=4.72, $p < .01$) significantly predict being detained Non-significant: drug offenses, prior intake referrals, age, age at first arrest, gender
Determine predictors of receiving pre-dispositional detention and number of days in detention before and after JDAI implemented		Z-statistic coefficient comparison pre-JDAI to post-JDAI for White youth: Felony charge (4.15, $p < .01$) and property offense (-3.15, $p < .01$)
Examine whether race predicts detention and length of stay		Other variables did not significantly increase or decrease influence on detention decision for White youth post-JDAI
Assess whether statistically significant changes observed between two time periods among measures of secure detention prediction and length of stay		Non-White model, pre-JDAI (pseudo $R^2 = .372$): Felony charge (OR=3.90, $p < .01$), person offense (OR=2.32, $p < .01$), property offense (OR=.735, $p < .05$), probation/parole/contempt (OR=5.25, $p < .01$), additional charges (OR=4.15, $p < .01$), prior intake referrals (OR=1.68, $p < .01$), and being under supervision (OR=3.96, $p < .01$) significantly predict being detained Non-significant: drug offenses, prior felonies, age, age at first arrest, gender
		Non-White model, post-JDAI (pseudo $R^2 = .539$): Felony charge (OR=17.97, $p < .01$), person offense (OR=2.84, $p < .01$), property offense (OR=.487, $p < .01$), probation/parole/contempt (OR=7.07, $p < .01$), additional charges (OR=3.05, $p < .01$), prior intake referrals (OR=1.88, $p < .01$), prior felonies (OR=1.61, $p < .01$), being under supervision (OR=4.22, $p < .01$), age (OR=1.13, $p < .01$), age at first arrest (OR=.926, $p < .01$), and being female (.733, $p < .01$) significantly predict being detained Non-significant: drug offenses
		Z-statistic coefficient comparison pre-JDAI to post-JDAI for Non-White youth: Felony charge (10.73, $p < .01$), property offense (-2.34, $p < .01$), probation/parole/contempt (2.09, $p < .01$), additional charges (-3.02, $p < .01$), prior felonies (2.96, $p < .01$), age (3.54, $p < .01$), and being female (-2.76, $p < .01$) Other variables (person offense, drug offense, prior intake referrals, being under supervision, and age at first arrest) did not significantly increase or decrease influence on detention decision for Non-White youth post-JDAI Offense seriousness holds greater impact for non-White youth

Appendix B. Systems-level DMC Reduction Strategies

Study Authors & Location	Program/ Initiative Description	Was DMC reduced?
Orchowsky, Poulin, & Iwama (2010) Linn County, Iowa	Community Liaison Program: Court staff noted African American youth accepted offers of Informal Adjustment Agreements (IAAs) less frequently than other groups. IAAs allow the youth to be informally processed without a court petition as long as they follow certain guidelines for three to six months. Court staff believed the families were untrusting of the staff and that a liaison could help foster a better relationship. The liaison was hired to visit African American families at home in order to further explain the process and benefits as well as to offer referrals for other forms of assistance.	Program shows promise in increasing number of African American youth diverted and reducing number proceeding further into system, but some disproportionality remained Many eligible youth were not referred to the liaison, which should be remedied
Johnson County, Iowa	Implementation of Iowa Delinquency Assessment (IDA) tool to better identify high risk/high need youth when making decision regarding conditions for diversion; Replaced former process of subjective decision-making by Juvenile Court Officer At the time this report was written, Annie E. Casey Foundation's (AECF) Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) was also active in Iowa, but these two counties were not identified targets.	Only 135 completed IDAs of 368 complaints during study period Researchers conclude too much information is unavailable to assess effectiveness well 38% of low risk African American youth received a formal petition after IDA used; 27% of low risk White youth Disproportionate outcomes after IDA
Simpson (2010) Rapides Parish, Louisiana	Implementation of Rapides Parish Juvenile Detention Screening Instrument (DSI): DSI was created with input from juvenile justice stakeholders	Nonsignificant reduction in number of youth detained after DSI implementation and the percentage of detained youth who were Black Inconsistent DSI implementation Potential modifications to the DSI would have resulted in fewer Black youth being detained (12 versus 17) and better accuracy in predicting recidivism than police impressions or original DSI but larger percentage of detained youth would be Black (82% versus 77%); The authors emphasize need for continued testing and modification after implementation to improve accurate predictability and decrease DMC Little evidence for DMC reduction effectiveness here due to limitations
Young, Yancey, Betsinger, & Farrell (2011) Maryland	Detention Risk Assessment Instrument (DRAI)	No difference in likelihood of detention between White and African American youth but Latino youth remained more likely to be detained than White youth

Appendix B. Continued

Baltimore County, MD	<p>Writ Protocol Policy:</p> <p>Respondent Notification Program: DMC-funded staff member contacts parent/ guardian to remind them of upcoming court appearances</p> <p>Writ no longer issued for first failure to appear (FTA) in court</p> <p>Standard writ authorizing secure detention or arrest and release to parents' custody issues after second failure to appear</p>	<p>Downward overrides benefit White youth more than Black youth; authors note steps are being taken to reduce number of overrides overall</p> <p>Positive results for reducing DMC for Black youth; more research needed for Latino youth and DRAI</p> <p>Successful decrease in detentions due to failure to appear for both Black and White youth, but proportion of youth detained for FTA who were Black remained 70-80%</p> <p>Positive results for reducing detentions but little DMC impact</p>
Rodriguez & Eells (2013) Maricopa County, Arizona	<p>Revise intake instrument (the Index) to be more objective: Legal factors now hold more weight, and aggravating/ mitigating factors are excluded.</p> <p>Require supervisor approval when decision for youth is outside recommendations of the Index: Intake officers must now call a supervisor and explain rationale when discretionarily detaining a youth.</p> <p>Detention Release Report: Probation officers now required to create an electronic report of why youth is detained and when their next court date is. This allows supervisors to review and discuss if youth might be released from detention.</p> <p>Strategies chosen to affect youth when entering system and when already involved.</p> <p>Focus on decision-making.</p>	<p>No race effects for mandatory detentions since revision</p> <p>DMC for discretionary detentions decreased: Latinos received fewer than Whites, Native Americans similar to Whites, African American discretionary detentions remain higher than Whites</p> <p>No significant race effects on detention length after release report implemented</p> <p>All three strategies appear promising for reducing DMC</p>
Schwartz (2013) Berks County, Pennsylvania	<p>MacArthur Foundation Models for Change: implementation of evening reporting center (ERC)</p> <p>ERC would serve as alternative to secure detention</p> <p>ERC located within a community in which many justice-involved youth lived</p> <p>ERC included transportation, mentors, and educational services pre-trial</p>	<p>ERCs successful at keeping Hispanic youth engaged</p> <p>Reduced overall detention rates</p> <p>ERCs expanded into five additional counties</p> <p>Lack of White comparison group limits DMC measurement, but results are promising</p>
Kusnetz (2014) New Jersey	<p>AECF's JDAI:</p> <p>Risk Screening Tool (RST): objective legal factors scored to determine detention decision</p> <p>Wireless Electronic Monitoring: serves as a detention alternative with a higher level of supervision than simple house arrest; counties changed systems to avoid requiring landline phones in juveniles' homes</p> <p>Community Intervention Coaches Pilot Program: Burns Institute supported an initiative to provide coaches to youth on probation to reduce disparities in probation violation rates</p> <p>Removal of requirement for parents to have identification to pick up their children: Essex County previously required identification of parents to pick up children for their safety. This disproportionately kept African American youth in detention.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overall detentions down by one-third after RST 2. Removing requirement of landline phones was associated with 30.2% decrease in length of time youth spent in detention while waiting for electronic monitoring. 3. Coaches associated with 84% reduction in probation violations 4. When identification requirement was loosened, overrides into discretionary detention reduced from 17% to 9%. Overrides into detention remain higher for African American youth, and overrides out of detention remained higher for White youth.

Appendix B. Continued

		Overall findings suggest the methods may successfully reduce time spent in detention, but the evidence is less clear that DMC reduced.
Maggard (2015) Virginia (one court services unit)	<p>Casey’s JDAI: Detention Assessment Instrument (DAI): intended to be an objective assessment of whether a youth is considered a threat to the community and whether he or she is at increased risk of not appearing in court. Youth below the identified threshold will not be held in secure detention.</p> <p>Collection and analysis of data Monthly meetings in which detention decisions are reviewed Stakeholder collaboration Creation of a new staff position to review detention admissions and identify youth detained for long periods of time Additional tasks to reduce DMC, specifically: DMC subcommittee established Monthly meetings of DMC subcommittee to review detentions Data analysis Policy changes Community awareness campaigns Cultural sensitivity training for staff W. Haywood Burns Institute involvement in DMC subcommittee, community campaigns, and work with stakeholders</p>	<p>Results are presented as pre- and post-JDAI implementation. The effects of individual strategies are not identified.</p> <p>Offense seriousness holds greater impact for non-White youth</p> <p>Prior felonies significantly predict detention only for non-White youth</p> <p>Odds of detention for older, non-White youth were higher after JDAI</p> <p>Non-White youth who were older at first arrest had reduced odds of detention post-JDAI</p> <p>Gender not significant for White youth; More leniency for non-White girls than boys with detention decisions</p> <p>Racial disparities decreased in association with specific legal variables, but more work needs to be done. The authors suggest greater attention be placed on how youth originally enter the justice system.</p>

Appendix C. Semi-structured Interview Guide

1. Tell me about your experience working for South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice.
 - a. How long have you worked for the agency, and what positions have you held?
 - b. What counties do you cover as a community social worker?
2. How would you describe the goals of the community social work position?
3. What do you see as your professional role in the agency?
4. How involved are you in the community surrounding the office where you work? How involved are your other agency colleagues?
5. What is your relationship like with your SC DJJ and courtroom colleagues?
 - a. Prompt for specific colleagues: SC DJJ county director, SC DJJ county staff, judges, solicitors, public defenders, other social workers, other treatment staff
 - b. What is the culture like among your colleagues, meaning how well do people interact with one another?
 - c. With which colleagues do you work most closely in your capacity as a community social worker?
 - d. What opportunities do you have to discuss your work with other social workers?
6. How involved are you in making recommendations for legal decisions, including, for example, whether youth should be detained, whether they should receive a confinement disposition, and whether they should be waived to adult criminal court?
 - a. What factors do you consider when making a recommendation?
 - b. To what extent do you and your colleagues rely on the risk assessment tool when making decisions?
 - c. How do you communicate your opinions and recommendations about legal outcomes for youth (e.g., whether the person should be detained; appropriate dispositions) to your colleagues?
 - d. How valued do you believe social worker recommendations are when staff members come to a consensus on recommendations for a young person's legal outcomes?
7. Disproportionate minority contact (DMC) is the disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic minorities in the juvenile justice system.
 - a. What factors do you believe contribute to DMC?
 - b. To what extent do you consider reducing DMC to be one of your goals in your social work practice?
 - c. Do you believe community social workers have the capacity to reduce DMC?
 - d. What aspects of your role do you think could work to reduce DMC?
 - e. What barriers do you perceive in reducing DMC in your agency?
 - f. What supports and facilitators are available for reducing DMC?
8. What else would you like to share with me regarding your position as a community social worker and/or how DMC is being handled by your agency?

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