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Childhood Trauma and the Unsuccessful Navigation of
the Public Education System in the United States*

TARA-JENEIL S. FENTON

University at Buffalo

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**Avenues into the Street Economy:
Childhood Trauma and the Unsuccessful Navigation of the Public Education System
in the United States**

TARA-JENEIL S. FENTON
University at Buffalo

The constituencies of the street economy (including itinerant labor, sex work, the selling and distribution of narcotics) serve as a suitable though non-ideal substitute to the formal economy (the macro, traditional, socially acceptable and politically approved labor market) for the purpose of acquiring monetary resources. The prerequisites for entry into the street economy are non-standardized, non-discriminatory, and inclusive of all individuals from varied racial and social backgrounds. However, an analysis of street economy demographics within the United States reveals that this population is predominately comprised of Black (African American) and Latino/a racial identities within an approximate chronological age range of 15-23 years. Factors contributing to participants' initiation into the street economy are multifaceted and include past experiences of trauma, financial instability, as well as the inaccessibility or unsuccessful completion of public formal education. This research explores these and other factors, evaluates corporate responses to the effects of the street economy, and makes recommendations on how these issues may be addressed.

Keywords: *street economy, education, privatization, social justice, trauma-informed care*

The American street economy commonly refers to an alternately developed socio-economic system that provides tangible, social, emotional, and financial resources for the benefit of participants who face multiple barriers for entry into the formal economy. These barriers include but are not limited to educational deficiencies, homelessness, mental health problems, and histories of incarceration (Gwadz et al., 2009). As a result, the structure, function, and organization of the street economy makes it a direct contrast to the formal economy. Research shows that the street economy facilitates and promotes a precarious and marginalized liberal culture, pertaining to the non-traditional means of monetary accrual (Gwadz, et al., 2009). Youth, including children and young adults, are a disproportionately represented demographic within the street economy, and participation in the activities of the street economy are the result of numerous factors with varied degrees of severity (Gwadz, et al., 2009), including trauma.

The neuroplasticity, heterogeneity, and multifactorial effects of trauma-reactive behaviors in their simple and most complex forms are direct contributors to participants' entrance into the street economy (Braga, Fiks, Mari, & Mello, 2008; Gwadz, et al., 2009). In fact, trauma from a humanistic and experiential perspective is presented as a violent psychological shock capable of producing impact(s) that affected individuals cannot resist but respond to by developing adaptation mechanisms as part of their coping strategies (Braga et al., 2008; Fecser, 2015). For the youth demographic, being excluded from the formal economy can lead to trauma. For example, a lack of employment may result in homelessness which leaves the youth vulnerable to physical or sexual violence, unsafe environmental exposers, and social humiliation (Bentovim, Cox, Bingley-Miller, & Pizzey, 2009; Gwadz et al., 2009).

Participation in the street economy can create conditions that make it difficult for later integration into the formal economy. Most prominently, youth participants of the street economy may

lack functional literacy, professional aptitude, appropriate business acumen, and academic prowess (earning a high school diploma and/or post-secondary education degree) – all of which are basic requirements and standards for employment within the corporate world (Gwadz, et al., 2009). Additionally, victim-participants find ways to anesthetize their emotional and psychological pain and loss of social capital by indulging in the use of narcotics and/or alcohol, which can lead to addiction, sex work, and involvement in itinerant low paying labor that support a disempowered self-concept (Berk, 2012; Gwadz et al., 2009).

Researchers surmise that the early childhood experiences of participants in the street economy may be a contributing factor to their entrance into and involvement in the varied activities associated with its culture and operations (Gwadz et al., 2009; Levenson, 2017). In support of these claims, scholars have long argued that the period of early childhood to adolescence (ages 0-18 years) include the most critical developmental stages of an individual's life (Berk, 2012; Ritblatt, Hokoda, & Van Liew, 2017). A person's biological, psychological, physical, and social stability are dependent upon passage through these developmental periods. These periods are crucial for successful transition through the anticipated stages of the human existence (Berk, 2012; Ritblatt, Hokoda, & Van Liew, 2017).

The vulnerability of this population has led to the development of laws and policies focused on their protection. These policies are derived from state and federal legislative mandates and implemented by local authorities to achieve rational outcomes in the prevention of childhood maltreatment. Also, it can be inferred that the most influential entities for successful childhood development are those which promote and foster their multifaceted growth and health. These include the home and educational environments. However, further research postulates that exposure to childhood maltreatment may result in long-term social, emotional, and psychological damage (Levenson, 2017). This trauma may be the result of actions perpetrated by a stranger or by adults who, in many cases, share close relational interactions with victims, as some of these perpetrators are members of the victims' family (Gibb, 2002). Furthermore, such exposure has the ability to increase the likelihood of victims resorting to criminal behavior or involvement in illegal activities in adulthood (Currie & Tekin, 2006; Gwadz et al., 2009).

Additionally, children's psychological, intellectual, and cognitive advancement also may be disrupted by this trauma. Research in child development and educational psychology strongly suggests that early developments include the initiation and maturation of their individual self-concept (Berk, 2012). Self-concept is defined as:

the set of attributes, abilities, attitudes, and values that an individual believes defines who he or she is. This mental representation of the self has profound implications for children's emotional and social lives, influencing their preferences for activities and social partners and their vulnerability to stress. (Berk, 2012, p. 365)

Research also reveals that the development of unhealthy self-concepts has neurological and biopsychosocial implications on oppositional reactive disorders in children (Fecser, 2015; Taylor, Green, & Stout, 2006). These findings indicate that faced with the daily operations of the U.S. educational system, traumatized children are likely to experience a lessened capacity to learn and retain information, and may be unsuccessful at navigating academic challenges (Bell, Bayliss, Glauert & Ohan, 2018; Berk, 2012). Other findings reveal that the manifestation of trauma exposure is seen through affected children's inability to focus on their learning objectives, which can be expressed behaviorally

through consistent reflexive hyper-vigilance—a survival response by their body’s sympathetic nervous system (fight or flight response) based on the anticipation of perceived danger within their learning environments (Fecser, 2015; Taylor, Green, & Stout, 2006). As time progresses, affected children’s lack of success in the academic setting may create opportunities for their entry into the street economy.

As such, this paper explores the connection between early exposure to childhood maltreatment and entry into the street economy. It also looks at problems within the U.S. public education system and the connections between issues such as limited funding and the street economy. First, the street economy will be described. Then, the connection between early childhood maltreatment and the street economy is examined. After demonstrating this connection, this paper explicates a greater systemic issue, namely the street economy’s connection to the privatization of public education in the United States. It also addresses social injustice in this context and identifies the implications of trauma and its impact on participants of the street economy. Finally, the conclusion provides policy and practitioner recommendations to further address this issue.

Defining the Street Economy

Participation in the street economy often coalesce around life experiences that have resulted in their exclusion from the formal economy. This phenomenon can create a sense of commonality among participants, which, in some cases, may optimize the potential for peer pressure and subsequent peer acceptance, resulting in the uniformity of behaviors associated with alternative measures of survival. Researchers show that these survival strategies are socially rational, rather than economically optimal, as they create social and financial capital in the form of non-structured, non-discriminatory, and non-regulated opportunities for economic profit (Gwadz, 2009; Sherman 2006). The aforementioned social, socio-political, economic, financial, and educational issues facing maltreated youth serve as a barrier to victims’ progression within the traditional labor markets, as these youth do not easily assimilate into the corporate social order—the macro, traditional, socially acceptable and politically approved labor market. Hence, these youth develop a reliance upon the alternate social order of the street economy.

Researchers suggest that individuals of color, including those of Latino/a descent and those who identify as Black (African-American) are disproportionately represented within the growing street economy (Gwadz et al., 2009; Miller, 2015). The street economy involves the use and selling of narcotics, such as cocaine, heroin, and marijuana, sex work (prostitution or pimping someone in exchange for cash, drugs, food, or shelter), and misdemeanor activities, such as burglary or theft. These activities increase the likelihood of victimized youth falling prey to the criminal justice system or incarceration (Gwadz et al., 2009). Furthermore, homelessness is a major characteristic of the street economy due to its unstable socioeconomics. Homelessness may increase victimized youths’ experience with depression and anxiety, as well as other mental health problems. The worsening of the psychological condition of these youth can in turn lead to increased involvement with the variety of street economy behaviors outlined above in a vicious cycle (Gwadz et al., 2009).

Many of the previously noted activities for survival come in response to the lack of fulfillment of victims’ basic human needs, which include physiological provisions such as food and physical security. Researchers elucidate this situation through use of a biopsychosocial model called

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. This model demonstrates that basic survival needs take priority over the accomplishment of self-actualization needs, or behaviors that support realizing one's full potential (Huffman, 2012). If survival needs are consistently unmet, vulnerable youth may remain positioned within the street economy, as their inability to achieve the necessary qualifications for entry into the traditional economy intensifies.

Connections between Childhood Maltreatment and the Street Economy

Scholars hold that childhood maltreatment is the highest empirical and theoretical contributor to the development of negative childhood cognition (Gibb, 2002). Childhood maltreatment takes many forms, including but not limited to parental neglect, direct exposure to domestic violence, adult drug or alcohol abuse, and verbal, physical, psychological, and sexual abuse (the latter of which is the most commonly reported) (Levenson, 2017). Gibb (2002) suggested that when these negative events occur, children seek to understand the cause(s), as they are motivated by the intent to search for and to develop strategies to prevent its recurrence. Research in child psychology shows that children are prone to egocentrism and self-blame related to the onset of problems in their immediate environments (Berk, 2012). They tend to focus on their own behavior(s) as the cause and solution to the dysfunction around them. These detrimental tendencies and ideologies may lead to the experience of self-reproach and false hope—both of which are inimical to children's development of a healthy self-concept (Berk, 2012).

Parental neglect is one example of these dysfunctions as the effects of this neglect on the developing child may lead to multiple dysfunctionalities in their psychosocial states, especially if this neglect creates an opportunity for the experience of sexual abuse. Varied disciplines and organizations define sexual abuse in psychosocial, relational, and criminal terms. Psychiatrists state that sexual abuse occurs when a "sexually mature individual involves dependent developmentally immature children and adolescents in contact sexual activity, breast, oral, anal, or vaginal" (Glasser et al, 2001, p. 483). Sociologists, like Watts and McNulty (2013), have defined sexual abuse in relational terms, as "being touched in a sexual way, being forced to touch a parent or adult caregiver in a sexual way or being forced into sexual relations by a parent or adult caregiver" (p. 3030). Further, organizations such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) adds that forcible rape, which is also a type of sexual abuse, is defined as "the penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim" (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016, Rape, para. 1). Such abuse has important implications for education as research estimates that every 1 in 6 male children, and every 1 in 4 female children will be sexually abused prior to the of age 18 years (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2005).

Developmental dysfunctions related to neglect and abuse may be manifested in victimized children's inability to form close social familial bonds and secure social attachments throughout their adulthood stages. Levenson (2017) spoke about the fundamental need for established trust between parents or caregivers, as trust within the early stages of the relational context is fundamental for the establishment of healthy personalities in children, as well as the development and appreciation of personal values, norms, and mores. Consequently, the unsuccessful acquisition of this trust (based on exposure to sexual abuse, neglect, violence, and substance abuse within familiar settings) may

compromise children's subsequent development of competence, autonomy, initiative, and feelings of safety. These effects may increase feelings of low self-actualization and esteem, fear, depression, and anxiety—all of which are symptomatic responses to childhood maltreatment (Levenson, 2017).

Social expectations of the home environment require that it stand as the first line of defense against all forms of childhood maltreatment. However, when there is a breakdown in the familial setting, then the educational institution usually becomes the alternative source of refuge through the involvement of educators, administrators, and other staff members to mitigate these negative experiences by providing immediate care and support. Unfortunately, public educational institutions currently are under a state of politically motivated re-evaluation mainly due to consistent neoliberal and neoconservative negative comparisons to private institutions. These policies threaten the critical social position of public schools within the framework of the general society.

Connections between Public School Funding Cuts, Privatization, and the Street Economy

Historically, school districts were divided into two major geographical groups: urban and rural. DeNisco (2015) stated that “funding cuts since the recession have drained the accounts of rural districts, which cannot rely on a resurgence in property tax as heavily as urban school systems can” (p. 22). Traditionally, urban school districts receive higher percentages of monetary investments in comparison to rural schools based on many contributing economic factors, including high real estate value and population density (DeNisco, 2015). Currently, the increased number of state government budget cuts to public education has resulted in the experience of harsh financial distress for many school districts.

These budget cuts have resulted in drastic measures to lay off staff members including teachers, as well as the lack of recruitment of specialists such as school psychologists and social workers who are trained to provide clinical and social support to victims of childhood maltreatment. Leachman, Masterson, and Figueroa (2017) revealed alarming K-12 federal employment data that in the year 2012, cuts to local school district funding resulted in the loss of 351,000 education jobs nationwide. Wisconsin serves as an illustrative case of the detrimental effects of public education budget cuts. Here, state lawmakers eliminated nearly \$800 million from public school funding in 2011 (DeNisco, 2015). In another example, Texas state legislators cut \$5.4 billion from public school funding in 2011, which led to a drastic reduction of state aid invested in urban and suburban school districts, as well as reduced salary and health benefits for educators among others (Lemke, 2017).

Educational budget cuts intensify school push-out rates. Sociologists like Bradley and Renzulli (2011) have preferred the term push-out versus drop-out, as drop-out implies personal and educational deficits while push-out refers to systemic factors that do not support student success. Additionally, the term drop-out is laden with negative social stigma as a defining identity. Many members of the street economy are burdened with this label (Bradley & Renzulli, 2011; Gwadz et al., 2009). Research indicates that there is a correlational relationship between low-income and racially minoritized groups and push-out of students from the traditional education system, versus that of their high-income and White counterparts. Data analysis of trends in high school push-out and completion rates from the National Center for Education Statistics (2018) demonstrated that between October 2013 and October 2014, of the 10.9 million students enrolled in grades 10-12 within the United States, approximately 567,000 of these students ages 15-24 exited the educational system

without obtaining a high school credential, such as a diploma. This population represented 5.2% of the total student enrolment nationwide. The National Center for Education Statistics (2018) data showed that 94.8% of this push-out population was comprised of 22.8% Black (African-American), 31.6% Latino/a, and 40.4% American Indian/Alaska Native students. Additional supporting statistics show that the low to middle household income earning bracket constituted 59.2% of the total number of students who left their secondary education systems without graduating (37.6% of low-income and 21.6% of middle-income earnings) (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2018).

High push-out rates can lead to privatization as a response to perceived public school inadequacy. For example, school districts within cities such as Chicago, Illinois, have experienced wide scale privatization of their public school system because of their volatile public school districts with low graduation rates (Ayers & Klonsky, 2006). In addition, the charter school movement has been motivated by a socio-political ideology which supports the use of school vouchers, sourced through public funding, to support schools with selective admissions. Thus, in this context, public funding is being used inequitably (Ayers & Klonsky, 2006; Smith, 2004). The socio-political actions, decisions, and philosophies of lobbyists, including corporate and conservative educational reformers in favor of the privatization of the American public educational system, pose numerous threats to social justice and the welfare of victims of childhood maltreatment—whom researchers suggest may include students who were pushed-out of the U.S. educational system (Ayers & Klonsky, 2006; Barry & Reschly, 2012; Smith, 2004).

Privatization of public education inevitably and systematically excludes minoritized students and may perpetuate alienation from public schools and the formal labor economy. Consequently, researchers surmise that the street economy becomes a compensatory resource of social acceptance and economic sustainability for these vulnerable youth (Barry & Reschly, 2012; Gwadz et al., 2009). Students who are pushed-out of the educational system are more likely to become a part of the street economy and engage in behaviors typical of that economy such as substance abuse, criminal activity, and sex work which may lead them to succumb to mental health disorders (Barry & Reschly, 2012; Gwadz et al., 2009). Nationwide budget cuts within these public institutions have resulted in cuts to needed human resources such as teachers, mental health professionals, mentors, and advisers, as well as academic resources. Diminished educational and social supports add to the growing population of the street economy, which disproportionately is comprised of low-income and minoritized groups.

Concerns about Social Injustice

Social justice is defined as an endeavor to achieve equality among diverse communities through the provision of basic social services, which accommodate healthy living standards (Cortez, 2013). Cortez (2013) further elaborated that:

public education is an entity that ideally enables communities to prosper culturally, intellectually, and economically. It is a public service that demands proper appropriation of resources, especially in disenfranchised communities. Its role to serve all communities is linked to the core principles of social justice-equality and solidarity. When local public schools lack proper resources to serve their students, they violate social justice values. (p. 8)

Therefore, it is critical for U.S. public school districts to make provisions for social justice values to be implemented within the bureaucratic and fiduciary operations of these institutions. Additionally, Robertson and Dale (2013) provided anthropological support in identifying that the intrinsic power of education lies in the fact that it is the only institution within the general status of the society that all individuals are required to pass through.

The powerful influence of corporate interests regarding the state of social justice within the United States' public education system has resulted in indelible impressions of fear on those affected by their authority. Affected youth include those from low socio-economic and racially minoritized statuses (Cortez, 2013). Federal legislative actions taken to appease corporate interests have resulted in an increased focus on standardized testing in schools and also influenced enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002 under President George W. Bush (Cortez, 2013). This Act resulted in several pedagogical paradigm shifts to the educational curriculum of all public schools, as the federal stipulations regarding standardized testing mandated that educational institutions "face a decrease in federal funding if their students perform poorly on tests" (Cortez, 2013). The learning atmosphere resulting from continued reform renders at-risk students even more insecure in school settings. High stakes testing and the threat of not progressing with peers intensifies the cognitive vulnerabilities of maltreated youth. Student victims also may experience impairments to their emotional, linguistic, logical-mathematical, naturalistic, inter and intrapersonal intelligences and changes in their bio-neurological learning process, which may potentially lead to re-traumatization effects (Gibb, 2002; Levenson, 2017).

The educational and social consequences of these policy and funding trends only will exacerbate as time progresses. In 2015, 29 states were still providing less total school funding per student than they did in 2008, before the national recession (Leachman et al., 2017). Disenfranchised communities, especially those within rural districts of southern states, which are commonly populated with majority Black (African American) and Latino/a groups, are left to suffer the consequences of insufficient resources within their local public schools (Cortez, 2013). Thus, educators who are concerned with instituting socially just responses to youth victimization must find ways to engage in professional development. Such trainings will both assist in the early detection of childhood maltreatment and work to prevent student entry into local street economies. Even within an era of increased budget cuts and privatization, one area of needed educational professional development that must be continually advocated for is trauma-informed care.

Trauma-Informed Care

The American Psychiatric Association described trauma "as an exposure to an extraordinary experience that presents a physical or psychological threat to oneself or others and generates a reaction of helplessness and fear" (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013, p. 105). Clinical psychological and social work practice, specialized evidence-based practice, and therapeutic interventions are vital components of trauma-informed care. Levenson (2017) explained that the research structure and the clinical framework of trauma-informed care allow practitioners to understand, identify, and respond according to the signs and symptoms of the varied manifestations of trauma, including those resulting from childhood maltreatment. It is critical to note that, trauma-informed care intervention strategies help previously mentioned practitioners develop effective and appropri-

ate relational approaches in identifying “what happened” to these victimized youth, rather than an exclusively behavioral approach to address “what’s wrong with them” (Trauma-Informed Toolkit, 2013).

Gibb’s research (2002) on the effects of maltreatment on the developing child showed that trauma has a negative and direct impact on cognitive functioning, which inevitably affects the learning outcomes and academic performances of the victims. Hence, some victims face the reality of being pushed-out or voluntarily exiting the school system due to their failure to meet the scholastic expectations of the institution. As a result, some may potentially join the growing population of youth who are associated with the culture of the street economy, which, in many cases, may result in isolation from economic and social institutions. A knowledge of trauma-informed care practice also provides an awareness of youth vulnerability based on race, gender, or sexual orientation, as well as socioeconomic status to inform effective intervention strategies (Gibb, 2002).

Researchers’ analyses of homeless youth belonging to the population of the 1.5 million documented affected youth of the street economy in the United States showed that Black (African American) youth contributed to the highest percentage at 38.8% of the street economy population, Latino/a individuals accounting for 35.0%, and biracial, multiracial and others contributing 26.3%. Additionally, 52.5% of these youth identify as heterosexual, 38.8% identify as bisexual and homosexual, and 13.8% identify as transgender youth in their association with the street economy (Gwadz et al., 2009).

Gwadz et al. (2009) and Miller (2015) found that 79.0% of these youth reside in hotels, motels, shared single room occupancy, transitional housing arrangements, shelters, and other forms of homelessness. The majority of these living conditions, which reflect these victims’ low socioeconomic backgrounds, were shown to have resulted from inherited poverty or some who face mistreatment as a result of their family’s harsh financial constraints due to nationwide economic and banking defaults, such as the subprime mortgage crisis which occurred during 2007-2009 (Cohen & O’Byrne, 2011; Gwadz et al., 2009). Collectively, these situations further exacerbate the problems associated with trauma and its relations to victims’ poor academic performances, as acts of childhood maltreatment are most prevalent within these circumstances (Gibb, 2002).

Therefore, it is critical to note that all academic environments, including rural and urban primary and secondary educational institutions, should have among their full-time faculty, school social workers, educational or counseling psychologists, nurses, or other clinical practitioners as part of their primary organizational structure. As previously alluded, the presence of these specialists serves as the first point of contact in identifying the physical and psychological signs and symptoms of trauma, which may also include experiences of poly-victimization. Lemke (2018) reiterated this recommendation and included educators in this group of specialists, articulating that the role teachers played within educational institutions and in the lives of students made their involvement fundamental in identifying childhood and adolescent traumatization, especially based on the consistent and close interactions they experience with students. The involvement of these specialists also creates the opportunity for them to advocate on behalf of the victims via means of the bureaucratic and fiduciary organizational structure of the education institution, as well as through private and government agencies that enforce child welfare policies (Gibb, 2002; Lemke, 2018; Levenson, 2017; Rafferty, 2013). Through their involvement in these cases, investigations for suspect apprehension

may progress, and victims may experience needed protection, improved living arrangements, and psychological treatment (Gibb, 2002; Levenson, 2017; Rafferty, 2013).

Unfortunately, many school districts across the United States are unable to respond to the needs of victims with trauma-informed care and also are incapable of implementing measures and resources for trauma-informed care practice. This inability is due to financial limitations, which are tied to conservative educational reform efforts that reduce educational funding (Barry & Reschly, 2012; Cortez, 2013; Gibb, 2002; Levenson, 2017). Therefore, the present public education system that should support the positive development of youth instead works to push youth, especially those already underserved, into the street economy. When schools lack basic educational and human resources necessary to address the immediate academic and emotional needs of its vulnerable student population, the resultant deficiency may further increase the proclivity of victim re-traumatization amongst other consequences due to the lack of direct action taken to address these critical psychological needs.

Recommendations

Need-based Treatment Methods

Direct, active, and wide scale focus is needed to promulgate advocacy efforts that target the factors that contribute to youths' entry into the street economy. These actions may be based on the development and diversification of intervention practices geared at measures of prevention and rehabilitation. Farran, Schwartz, and Austin (2011) and Sanabria (2006) reiterated that the accessibility of needed services that offer community-based housing to directly address homelessness, such as residential care facilities—with a focus on HIV and mental health treatment, as well as suicide and drug use prevention—are vital. Educational, counseling, employment, food, and clothing support services also are critical in addressing these issues.

Coalition Campaigning Efforts

Access to adequate funding sources are vital components of effective and long-term advocacy efforts. Advocacy support groups such as Larkin Street Youth Services in Buffalo, New York, and other local non-profit organizations require the assistance of specialized human resources and reliable sources of monetary support (Farran, Schwartz, & Austin, 2011). Therefore, strategies regarding the accessibility of funding should be based on efforts that include the involvement of effective grant writers, policy analysts, and local supportive legislators.

The development of community-based partnerships with rapid response agencies, as well as the inclusion of active members of local, national, and international associations, such as The American Civil Liberties Union, Amnesty International USA, Project Equality and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), also are critical. These organizations support social justice initiatives through strong geo-political campaigning efforts. Such social justice campaigning efforts could include members of nationwide Local School Council (LSC), constituting school principals, teachers, parents, students, and community partners, such as psychological and medical associations in efforts to protect vulnerable student populations (Cortez, 2013). These efforts may aid in the prevention of

public school budget cuts, thereby facilitating an increase in educational resources, subsequent job maintenance, or recovery of teachers and academic staff, as well as the recruitment of clinical specialists within the schools' organizational structure for the implementation of trauma-informed care practice (Cortez, 2013; Levenson, 2017).

Educational and Relational Measures

It is highly recommended that trauma-informed care intervention methods be applied across the U.S. educational continuum and designed with a multi-tiered system of supports, especially for public schools (Cavanaugh, 2016). As such, the development and implementation of school-based trauma-sensitive support groups are critical to address the symptomatic manifestations of trauma-reactive behaviors. As previously discussed, these behaviors are commonly expressed in the educational setting through overt pro-active aggression (impulsive behaviors that fulfil a need(s) or desire(s)) or reactive aggression (oppositional behaviors such as repeatable distracted focus, or lack of corporation), as well as feelings of rejection, detachment, fearfulness, and social isolation among peers (Berk, 2012; Gibb, 2002; Levenson, 2017; Lemke, 2018).

The framework for these support groups may include age appropriate grief and distress counseling techniques, training, and coping strategies utilized by teachers and clinical specialists in the early detection of trauma and its re-enactments. One K-6 example of responding to the emotional onset of trauma symptoms within the classroom are calming techniques which include: deep breathing exercises, body movement, sensory massaging, rocking and rhythm, as well as dancing with scarves (Curriculum Review, 2016). From a direct interactive standpoint, teachers may encourage victimized children to form positive relationships with them. As a result, they are able to redirect the children's attention to the safety of the classroom setting (Curriculum Review, 2016). By performing these actions, teachers are able to help these students to "attend to the sensations, images feelings, and thoughts that foster their curiosity and enthusiasm rather than those that trigger lethargy and despair" (Curriculum Review, 2016, p. 31).

Additionally, the dimensions of the therapy relationship of the multi-tiered approach for school-based support groups may include Care-Based, Strengths-Based, and Individual to School Community Intervention methods (Breckenridge & James, 2010). The centrality of these intervention methods could create opportunities for increased classroom awareness of trauma and its effects. As a result, the positive therapeutic responses of inclusivity, encouragement, empathy, restoration, and reconciliation takes precedence. Through these interventions, affected students may receive the support needed to accomplish healthy emotional and behavioral regulation, and positively move toward academic resilience and rehabilitation necessary for the successful completion of their secondary education (Graig, 2016).

Family-based approaches in public education initiatives can be a preventative measure and should be implemented within local schools and appropriate community-based organizations. Family-based approaches provide practical guidelines on effective parenting techniques, establishing healthy and progressive home environments, as well as educating parents and caregivers on local, state, and federal family law and its associated expectations of parental responsibilities for child welfare (Levenson, 2017). These measures may help to reduce trends of childhood maltreatment within households.

Restorative Justice

The normative acts of punishment as a societal response to crimes, disruptive incidents and the violation of zero-tolerance policies has moral and legal implications. In particular, the quality of life of victim-participants of the street economy is negatively affected. As a result, restitution through a practical restorative justice approach is beneficial for victim-participants of the street economy, especially those charged with minor criminal offenses.

Theoretical frameworks associated with restorative justice focus on reflexivity and social justice in dismantling the effects of the street economy (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012; Mustafic, 2016). Restorative justice is “a distinct praxis for sustaining safe and just school communities, grounded in the premise that human beings are relational and thrive in contexts of social engagement over control (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012, p. 139). Restorative justice frameworks can be implemented in corporate and societal efforts to re-integrate victims of the street economy. These acts may lead to social inclusion and the applicable expungement of criminal records for misdemeanor crimes, such as petty theft and illegal sex-work on the basis of survival and desperation. Such methods help to improve their network relationships, which increases the likelihood of non-discriminatory employment and the use of appropriate socio-psychological intervention methods to aid in the reduction of recidivism, all of which are practical measures that can be taken toward establishing restorative justice (Mustafic, 2016).

Conclusion

The problem of childhood maltreatment along with its subsequent effects has the potential to create permanent harm to the lives of victims. It is critical that the protection of children and youth become the priority of all individuals, educational and corporate institutions, agencies, and organizations that have the ability to stand against effectual threats to their social status, including the unsympathetic nature of the American socio-economic strata, education reform, and adult violators. The establishment of competency-based trauma-informed care curriculum is vital for educators and practitioners who through intervention might better support student academic persistence and retention, amongst other efforts to prevent student entry into the street economy. The welfare of these children, especially those of disenfranchised racial, social, economic, and gender identity backgrounds, are important to the overall functioning of society, as the intrinsic value of the life of each child is infinite and incomprehensible.

TARA-JENEIL S. FENTON, EdM, is a graduate candidate at The State University of New York at Buffalo (UB) in the Higher Education Administration program. Tara’s undergraduate work included two undergraduate degrees, one of which is a BA in Psychology from UB. During her academic tenure, Tara was the recipient of 11 scholarships including the Arthur O. Eve (New York State sponsored) Graduate Education Opportunity Program Scholarship, as well as participated in service learning and internship programs, including those of the Interdisciplinary Science and Education Partnership (ISEP) within the Buffalo Public Schools system—sponsored by the National

Science foundation (NSF). Tara's research interests include clinical mental health practitioner engagement with the American public education system, as well as strategy leadership, management, finance, and policies in U.S. higher education.

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