

Deficit-Thinking, Race, and Dis/ablement:
A DSE Perspective on the School-to-Prison Pipeline

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This paper uses contemporary deficit-thinking (Valencia, 2010) and racial literacy (Stevenson, 2014) as lenses to understand the experiences of Youth of Color who were incarcerated in adult jails as children (under 18 years of age.) Using qualitative methods and a phenomenological approach, the study deconstructs the narratives surrounding the criminalization of the youth, while emphasizing the importance of critically analyzing deficit-thinking and theories of dis/ability (Baglieri & Knopf, 2004) in both research and practice.

The analyses highlight the inherently racialized categories of dis/ability that drive the school-to-prison pipeline. In education, we must uncover tools of oppression to both inform pedagogy and research and have an immediate impact on the ways we teach and learn. Specifically, the paper understands the emotional experiences of marginalized, dis/abled, and raced communities as powerful and their social experiences as interrupted, through the language of dis/ability and the process of dis/ablement (Jones, 2015).

Bio:

Dr. Kelsey M. Jones is currently a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education working within the department of Human Development and Quantitative Methods as well as in Dr. Howard C. Stevenson's Racial Empowerment Collaborative. Her interests include the school-to-prison pipeline, dis/ability and giftedness in the narratives of and about Black and Brown youth, and the education of Black and Brown children in special education spaces. Prior to her work in academia, she taught self-contained special education for second, third, and fourth graders in Brooklyn.