Implications for Youth Identified on a Criminal Justice-based List

Lisa Borneman

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Implications for Youth Identified on a Criminal Justice-based List

Lisa Borneman

Banded Dissertation

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Saint Catherine University | University of Saint Thomas

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Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the implications of being identified on a list based on criminal justice involvement. The list of interest was the Downtown 100 (DT100), a list of youth and adults with significant involvement in the criminal justice system in an upper Midwest urban center. The main identified commonality for those identified on the DT100 is homelessness, while the commonality not readily identified is that most people on the DT100 are people of color. Issues common to youth identified on this criminal justice-based list include a potential for criminal identity, increased risk, and stigma. The three products that made up this dissertation include a conceptual article, a research article, and a paper presentation based on the findings of the research study.

The conceptual article laid the foundation of the dissertation by exploring the literature related to youth homelessness and the criminalization of young people of color. Discovery of the common issues noted above informed the focus of the research study. A conceptual framework was developed that provided the lens for the dissertation and plan for future research. The research study employed a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews for data collection. Seventeen professionals who were key informants of the DT100 team were interviewed to discover their perceptions of the DT100 strategy and of the youth who have been identified. Findings reinforced the issues identified in the literature. The goal of the paper presentation was to disseminate the research study findings and underscore the potential concerns of identification on a criminal justice-based list. The future research plan includes interviewing youth and adults identified on the DT100 to uncover their lived experience of being identified on a criminal justice-based list. Ultimately, the plan is to bring the professionals, adults, and youth together to develop best practices for working together.
Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to the research study participants. Their support and willingness to contribute made this possible. I also dedicate this dissertation to the voices I have yet to hear. I look forward to the opportunity to listen and learn from their lived experiences.

Acknowledgements

I have wanted to teach since I left my master’s program, a very long time ago. Since that time, I have searched for a doctoral program that fit my goals. I had lost hope when my partner found the St. Catherine University – University of St. Thomas Doctorate in Social Work program. This has been an amazing journey and I would not have made it without the love and support of my cohort, friends, and family. I wish to thank my “Quadlings,” Dr. Teresa Beadlescomb, Dr. Shannon Cassidy Cousineau, and Dr. Judy Zimbelman, for their endless encouragement and comradery throughout our doctoral journey. My fellow “Cohortians” put Facebook to good use, creating a virtual holding environment that I hope will stay active as we move on in our careers. I would also like to thank Deborah Smith for strapping on her research beanie and being an integral part of the research study that is the basis of my second article and presentation. My friends and family have been so kind as I have had to beg off of one gathering after another to read for a class or write a paper. I am grateful for the guidance and support my advisor Dr. Ande Nesmith offered throughout this process. She has been an ideal mentor. Thanks goes out to my YouthLink family, whose support and understanding of the importance of this educational milestone has been remarkable. Hats off to Susan Everson, editor extraordinaire, you helped me polish this tome and encouraged me through the process. Finally, I want to thank Kerstin Hammarberg, my favorite human and loving partner, for listening to a never-ending litany of draft changes and for keeping the house running, the dog fed, and the bills paid. You are my superhero.
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Implications for Youth Identified on a Criminal Justice-based List

Lists have long been employed to categorize or identify people by their propensity for causing harm to the community. Their use includes the witch trials of the 1600s and the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s 10 Most Wanted list. This dissertation focuses on the benefits and deficits of the use of lists by criminal justice professionals to identify young adults considered to be chronic users of the criminal justice system, and looks at how different constituents perceive the Downtown 100 (DT100). The DT100 program, located in an upper Midwest urban center, includes two lists, one of the top 100 adults consistently engaged in the criminal justice system, and another of the top 100 youth. The commonalities among youth identified on the DT100 are homelessness and being persons of color. People of color are over-represented in both homelessness (Wilder Research, 2015b) and criminal justice involvement (Mannix, 2016; NAACP, 2016). These issues, as well as concerns about the use of a criminal justice-based list to identify people for service engagement, were at the core of this dissertation.

The DT100 strategy parallels the “Broken Windows” approach based in New York and other large cities. The Broken Windows theory was developed by Wilson and Kelling in 1982, and posits that when cities do not attend to small issues (i.e. broken windows, graffiti, litter, people sleeping in public, loitering, and panhandling) the problems may grow into more significant criminal activity (Harcourt & Ludwig, 2006; Miller, 2016). New York, Chicago and Los Angeles have all developed enforcement practices based on this theory. The enforcement has been called “order maintenance policing” (Harcourt & Ludwig, 2006, p. 272) or “zero tolerance for quality-of-life infractions” (Miller, 2016, p. 3) and imposes penalties on minor infractions with the goal of discouraging higher-level crimes and improving community perceptions of safety. At first blush, the data seems encouraging. There was a significant decrease in crime in
New York in the 1990s (Harcourt & Ludwig, 2006). However, Harcourt and Ludwig’s (2006) replication of three different studies during this time showed mixed results and demonstrated some possible confounding variables (i.e. the rise and fall of the crack epidemic, distinct characteristics of different neighborhoods, and the nationwide decrease in crime during the 1990s). Likewise, Miller (2016) found no clear answers about how policing impacts crime. Miller (2016) offered one possible key to impacting crime, looking for creative options in training officers and collaborating with communities. Collaboration and a search for creative options make up the cornerstone of the DT100 strategy.

The DT100 program began in 2010. Using funding from the Downtown Improvement District, a team of representatives from neighborhood associations, downtown businesses, the criminal justice system, and two non-profit agencies, working primarily with adults experiencing homelessness joined forces to develop a holistic plan to reduce petty crimes in the downtown area and assist those most likely to commit such crimes (Segal & Conroy, 2011). The plan included alerting team members of interactions with police, encouraging connection with case managers to improve stability, active probation, and stiffer penalties for violating probation.

Data from the first year showed a significant reduction in recidivism, increased engagement in probation and services, and greater stability (Segal & Conroy, 2011). The strategy worked. It would be easy to move forward with this information and not consider the broader impact of identification on a list or to delve into the data collected to discover its underlying meaning. This dissertation aimed to discover how different professionals perceive both the DT100 strategy and the people identified on the list.

The literature directly related to identification on a criminal justice-based list is limited, with the closest match addressing the sex offenders’ registry (Craun & Simmons, 2012,
Mustaine, Tewksbury, Connor, & Payne, 2015; Tewksbury & Lees, 2007). The main difference between these lists is that the registered sex offender (RSO) list is specific to sex offences and exposes individuals to the public on a national scale for many years. Involvement on the DT100 is based on livability crimes (e.g. fare evasion, loitering, open drug dealing, panhandling, or public drunkenness), is local, and is most often for just one year. This dissertation aimed to compare experiences and develop an understanding of the multiple perceptions of identification on a criminal justice-based list. The perspectives highlighted in the literature were those of professionals working with RSOs and of individuals identified on the RSO list.

RSOs identified stigma and discrimination as the most significant issue (Tewksbury & Lees, 2007). Perceptions held by professionals of the ability of RSOs to change and of the severity of policies varied in terms of the amount of time spent with an RSO and the type of interaction (i.e. solely at time of arrest, as a part of the therapeutic process, or as a part of the penal system) (Mustaine et al., 2015). Several studies indicated the importance of a registry, yet none of the participants believed it would make the community safer or reduce recidivism (Craun & Simmons, 2012; Mustaine et al., 2015; Tewksbury & Lees, 2007).

The lack of literature associated with the use of lists illustrates the benefits of further study to expand the body of knowledge for social workers and criminal justice professionals. This dissertation explored issues related to homelessness and criminalization of people of color and the views of professionals interacting with young adults on the DT100. Future research will include the voices of those who are identified on the list.

**Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework shaping this dissertation included Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Wilmes’ (2014) use of a survival versus privilege model to understand youth experiences of
homelessness. CRT informs the work of this banded dissertation because people of color are over-represented in homelessness and in the criminal justice system. In 2015, Wilder Research completed a survey of individuals and families experiencing homelessness in Minnesota, finding that men and women of color represented 67% and 79%, respectively, of participants experiencing homelessness. According to the NAACP (2016) Criminal Justice Fact Sheet, people who identify as African American and Hispanic made up 58% of the U.S. prison population in 2008, yet represented only 25% of the U.S. population as a whole. CRT speaks to the ways in which racism is institutionalized and goes unnoticed by most whites. According to Tyson (2015), CRT includes six basic tenets: 1) racism as an everyday occurrence, 2) racism based on social advancement, 3) race as a social construct, 4) racism based on shifting stereotypes (“differential racialization”), 5) identity intersectionality, and 6) “voice of color” (p. 353). The three that best fit the conceptual framework for this banded dissertation are everyday racism, differential racialization, and intersectionality.

Everyday racism (Tyson, 2015) is the way in which people of color are treated differently every day. These racist interactions are often not overt but reinforce an “othering” by whites that promotes the notion that people of color are different, less than, or unimportant (Tyson, 2015). According to Tyson (2015), this erodes the spirit and creates stress in most interactions with white people. Differential racialization is the practice of shifting stereotypes of people of color to influence the societal view of a specific group (i.e. the shifting view of Black men as simple children in need of care, to aggressive brutes, to sexual predators) (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Youth of color are over-represented in homelessness and in many formal systems. These systems employ many white people who may not fully understand how they participate in the daily impact of racism and the reinforcement of societal views. Intersectionality reminds us that “race
intersects with class, sex, sexual orientation, political orientation, and personal history in forming each person’s complex identity” (Tyson, 2015, p. 359). Oppression, then, can come from many angles, making it difficult for a person to identify the reason for discrimination. Youth experiencing homelessness have complex identities and are often discriminated against in work, education, housing, and the criminal justice system. It is often difficult to tease out which piece of their identity is causing the discrimination they encounter.

Wilmes’ (2014) model of survival versus privilege may cause some resistance. Privilege is a complicated and sensitive topic. It is defined, in this framework, as access to support and resources, emotional and/or financial. Wilmes (2014) identifies seven key concepts that demonstrate the differences experienced by people who are survival-based versus those who are privileged. The first is the concept of needs. This can be seen in action in a banquet line, with one person taking more than they need and another person taking just enough. Both have scanned the room to determine how many need to eat but one sees the food layout as not enough (survival) and the other sees it as plenty for all (privilege). Another difference relates to views of the system (i.e. police, government agencies, educational systems, etc.), with people who are survival-based seeing it as broken and not available to help, while people who come from a privilege base might perceive it as flawed but generally trust it to work in their favor. Also different are relationships; these are key to people in survival mode, and engender extreme loyalty with which people will go to their identified “families” before the police. Privilege, according to Wilmes (2014), perceives relationships instead as a form of popularity, with loyalty less important.

Because the future is unpredictable, another difference results in survival-based choices being grounded in the present. Privilege, in contrast, promotes future planning, because the
future is seen as predictable. People who are survival-based also have limited organizational skills. They lose things frequently, have difficulty keeping appointments, and exist in a consistent state of crisis. People who come from a space of privilege have the tools to keep their lives organized, make and keep appointments, keep track of their things, and manage most obstacles in their paths (Wilmes, 2014). Another difference is seen in the locus of control—external for those who are survival-based, often presenting as an inability or unwillingness to take responsibility for one’s actions, and internal for those who are privileged-based, presenting as an understanding of how one’s actions impact others. Finally, respect is a key difference. For survival-based people, respect and safety are linked; if others respect you, your safety increases. Respect is derived externally; it is earned and not easily given. For people coming from a base of privilege, in contrast, respect is assumed, and is derived internally (Wilmes, 2014).

According to Wilmes (2014), we are all a mix of these two ways of interacting with the world. His point is that youth experiencing homelessness are often rooted in survival mode while attempting to access services that are established in privilege. He encourages service providers to teach young people the language of privilege, so they can access the systems and services they need, and do so with fewer difficulties. This model fits well with the youth on the DT100. It is this writer’s hypothesis that many on the list will be coming from a survival base while interacting with a criminal justice system based in privilege.

**Summary of Scholarship Products**

This banded dissertation is comprised of three products. Product One is a conceptual article focused on the common concerns of youth experiencing homelessness. Product Two is a research-based article on the benefits and deficits of the DT100 youth list. Using an exploratory study, professionals who work with youth on the DT100 list were interviewed about their views
of how the DT100 list either helped or hindered their work with youth and its potential impact on the identified youth. Product Three was a paper presentation at the 35th Annual Conference of the Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors (a peer-reviewed professional conference), focusing on results of the research-based article.

The conceptual article investigates the literature, exploring the potential impact of being identified on a criminal justice-based list. Homelessness and race are identified as specific issues for youth and young adults on the DT100, while stigma, risk, protective factors, criminal identity, and the fallacy of colorblindness are identified as potential areas of impact. The article identifies and reviews the conceptual framework guiding the dissertation, and discusses implications for further action as they relate to issues identified (i.e. addressing covert racism and engaging youth in privileged systems) and practices to be reinforced (i.e. strength-based, harm reduction, collaboration, trauma-informed, and attending to judgement). This conceptual article demonstrates the need for further study in the area of identification on a criminal justice-based list.

The research article focuses on perceptions held by professionals toward the use of criminal justice-based lists and toward youth identified by their criminal justice involvement. A qualitative research design was implemented. Twenty-one key informants were recruited, with 17 completing in-person interviews. The key informants included police officers, probation officers, prosecutors, public defenders, and social service professionals.

The interviews employed a semi-structured format, allowing the researcher to follow up on statements made by participants. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. Phenomenological and content analysis were applied to the data. The phenomenon under study was the professionals’ perceptions of the DT100. The data were analyzed using both inductive
and deductive approaches to identify themes (Padgett, 2017). Exemplar quotes were gathered to underpin these themes. The themes that surfaced revealed tensions across perception of behavior, and included criminal vs. survival behavior, intent vs. practice, and intersectionality of experience. Homelessness was identified by all participants as an issue for youth on the DT100, as was the escalation of crimes from misdemeanor to felony level. Differences in participant perceptions were often related to roles and relationships with youth. Many positive ideas were offered related to improving the strategy. Future research with the youth and adults on the DT100 was indicated to gain further understanding of the benefits and deficits of identification on a criminal justice-based list.

The paper was presented on March 15, 2018. The focus of the presentation was dissemination of the data collected and analyzed in the research study. The target audience was social work educators and students. The future dissemination plan is to present to criminal justice, social work, and community professionals who work with at-risk youth.

**Discussion**

Results of the research study mirrored the literature related to risk, stigma, and the potential for a criminal identity related to the youth on the DT100. Young people experiencing homelessness who engage in survival strategies are at higher risk for criminal justice involvement and for escalation of the level of crime from misdemeanor to felony. Study Participants noted that actions can easily reach the level of a felony. Stealing a car to stay warm, for instance, or entering a store after being trespassed (due to a previous theft) can lead to felony charges and convictions. Many study participants also acknowledged the stigma of being targeted because of identification on a list, and commented that police know the places...
frequented by the youth and what they look like. Being part of the top 100 at a young age and
being monitored so closely can reinforce a criminal identity.

The potential for targeting or labeling a young person as a criminal supports the use of
CRT as a conceptual framework in this dissertation. Everyday racism was demonstrated by
participants when they spoke of the targeting of youth on the DT100. Differential racialization
was apparent when a member of the legal team discussed the reasons people might call the police
when encountering a young person of color; their assumption that the young person will cause
trouble is based on skin color. And young people on the DT100 have multiple points of
intersection associated with their life experience; they may have long histories in multiple
systems (i.e. child protection, juvenile justice, foster care, and residential treatment), and they
encounter opportunities and barriers based on the multiple intersections of systems and identities
they possess. The survival versus privilege framework guided the understanding of how youth
might perceive systems and service engagement, but it shed less light on the overall research
results in this dissertation. Future research with the youth on the DT100 should find this
framework more suitable.

There is no doubt that the DT100 strategy is having an impact on youth and adults
engaged in services. Disagreements about the strategy relate to the effectiveness of identifying
youth solely by their criminal justice involvement, and to ways of interrupting the criminal
justice cycle at an earlier point. Participants shared many creative ideas for positive changes to
the DT100 strategy, such as the use of a more holistic set of criteria for choosing people for the
list, including readiness for change, a young person’s developmental stage, and level of need.
Another idea was to increase the use of problem-solving courts to focus on the barriers that keep
people involved in the criminal justice system (i.e. chemical use, homelessness, lack of community support, and mental health concerns).

**Implications for SW Education**

In terms of social work education, the lessons from this dissertation center around race, discrimination, and privilege. We need to constantly strive to center classroom discussions around overt and covert racism and the roles privilege can play in practice. Conversations often stall when these issues are confronted, and it can be difficult to identify how we each might be complicit in maintaining covert practices—and even harder to know how to intervene. The classroom is the best place for critical examination of policy, practice, and education. It is also the best place to establish plans of action for systemic intervention.

This research applies to well to internships in the social work field. The DT100 team is an example of interdisciplinary work. DT100 team members in the criminal justice and social service systems are all people with whom social workers will interact at some point in their careers. Another connection to the field is the reinforcement of using a strengths-based lens in our work. Many systems in which youth and adults engage, including the criminal justice system, are deficit-based. Social service study participants reinforced the importance of using a strengths-based perspective with youth identified on the DT100. Reframing behaviors from this lens can be challenging for students as they enter their field placements, and they can be overwhelmed or underwhelmed by the responses they receive as they attempt to assist clients. It can feel personal when parents don’t show up to a group a student has spent hours developing or when a young person uses a system or a service to their advantage. Negative thoughts and feelings can arise that need to be explored and reframed.
Implications for SW Research

The DT100 strategy would benefit from a mixed methods study because the lived experiences of youth and adults have yet to be explored. Comparing experiences of identification on a criminal justice-based list and the data collected by the team related to criminal justice and social service involvement may shed more light on the effectiveness of the strategy. Another avenue of study could be establishing learning sessions for youth, adults, and professionals associated with the DT100. The learning sessions could allow members of these different groups to come together, listen to one another, and develop best practices for working together.

Another potential area of research relates to the survival worldview framework presented by Wilmes (2014). There is little research on this framework and how it might apply to other groups, specifically police officers, who experience stigma, trauma, and significant unpredictability in their work. Police officers are subject to considerable stigma and distrust, and are often thrust into situations that can be devastating and perilous. The development of an exploratory research study to discern the impact of work experiences on the worldviews of police officers may shed light on similarities they have with youth experiencing homelessness.

Conclusion

The dissertation process has broadened this author’s perspective on DT100 team members, especially the police officers assigned to the team. While the DT100 strategy could benefit from a more holistic look at how people are identified for inclusion, its overall intent is good and encourages connections. The goal of reducing recidivism by increasing stability and service connection does help youth and adults who are ready for change, and DT100 team members are motivated to help youth change the trajectory of their lives. Team members must, however, pay attention to the impact of this strategy on the youth included on the list.
Comprehensive Reference List


Stevens-Watkins, D. & Graves, S. L. (2011). Risk and protective factors among African American adolescent males that predict adult involvement in the criminal justice system:


Street Survival: An Intersection of Race, Criminalization, and Homelessness for Youth

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Abstract

This conceptual article reviews the intersections of race, criminalization, and homelessness among youth of color involved in the criminal justice system—specifically, youth identified on a list based on their criminal justice involvement in an urban center in the Midwest. Race is inextricably linked to the criminalization of youth and yet is not a part of the selection process of adults or youth on this list. The criminal justice system purports color-blindness, and yet statistics do not support this claim. When homelessness is added to the equation, further marginalization is encountered. Critical Race Theory and a survival worldview framework are the theoretical lenses used for analysis.

Keywords: survival, criminalization, race, color-blindness, youth, homelessness
Street Survival: An Intersection of Race, Criminalization, and Homelessness for Youth

The focus of this conceptual article is the intersection of race, criminalization, and homelessness of youth identified on a criminal justice-based list. The list was developed by an urban city in Minnesota using funds from the city’s newly developed Downtown Improvement District. It highlighted the 100 adults and youth (24 years old and under) with the highest use of the criminal justice system. Program participants are tracked within the criminal justice system, and plans for intervention are made among the prosecutor, parole officers, police officers, and social service representatives (Segal & Conroy, 2011). Research indicates that race is inextricably linked to criminalization (Brewer & Heitzig, 2008; Rios, 2006; Welch, 2007), and yet it is not part of the program’s selection process.

The DT100 strategy was developed to impact the increasing problem of property and livability crimes that are indicative of survival strategies. Livability crimes are defined as: public urination, public drunkenness, panhandling, loitering, open drug dealing, and intimidation (Berg, 2011). “Survival strategies” (Hickler & Auerswald, 2009, p. 828) are defined as: “panhandling, prostitution, survival sex (sex for food, shelter, etc.), dealing drugs, and theft” (Kidd, 2007, p. 292). Persons associated with the DT100 and who commit livability crimes for survival purposes are often homeless (Segal & Conroy, 2011).

The stereotypical image of homelessness is a disheveled white adult male standing by the side of the road with a sign asking for money. The Minnesota Homeless Study completed by Wilder Research (2015a) shows another picture entirely. Wilder found that, in Minnesota, “unaccompanied youth ages 24 and younger” make up 16% of the homeless population (p. 2). While youth of color ages 24 and under constitute only 19% of the total youth population in Minnesota, they make up 62% of the homeless youth population. And while African American
youth make up just 8% of the total youth population in Minnesota, they are grossly over-represented in the homelessness population, at 42% (Wilder Research, 2015b).

An examination of the intersection between race, criminalization, and homelessness is timely, as the belief that the criminal justice system is color-blind might underlie the DT100 strategy’s lack of focus on race. Statistical reports indicate the need to examine racial disparities among youth of color who experience homelessness and are identified on the DT100. The 2014 census estimated African Americans made up only 6% of the total population in Minnesota, but 37% of the prison population. Native Americans made up 1% of the total Minnesota population, and 9% of the prison population (Mannix, 2016, April 14). People of color are clearly over-represented in the criminal justice system, yet race as a specific issue is not addressed by the DT100 strategy.

**Theoretical Framework**

As we contemplate the youth identified for the program, we must consider race and the challenges these youth experience being people of color in the U.S. It is possible that their worldview is demonstrated through the necessary acts of survival on the streets. Critical Race Theory and Wilmes’ (2014) survival-privileged worldview framework are lenses for understanding the potential issues demonstrated by this group.

**Purpose**

This conceptual article examines the intersection between youth of color who experience homelessness, criminalization on the streets, and in the criminal justice system. The youth on the DT100 experience homelessness and criminalization. The color of their skin and their survival worldview consistently clash with systems and agencies who are white-dominant and operate from a privileged worldview.
Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework that shapes the context of this article includes Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Wilmes (2014) model of understanding youth experiencing homelessness through a survival worldview. CRT informs this article because people of color continue to experience racism and oppression. This is clearly demonstrated by the over-representation of people of color in homeless populations and in the criminal justice system. In the 2015 Wilder Research survey, men of color represented 67% of the men experiencing homelessness and women of color represented 79% of the women (Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 2015).

According to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) (2016) Criminal Justice Fact Sheet, people who identify as African American and Hispanic make up 25% of the U.S. population, and yet in 2008 they represented 58% of the prison population.

CRT was developed in the late 1980s by a group of lawyers, legal academicians, and activists who recognized the slow regression of civil rights for people of color taking place in the U.S. (cummings, 2013; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). This group joined forces to explore how they might work together to “combat the subtler forms of racism that were gaining ground” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 4). CRT identifies and critically analyzes the ways in which racism is institutionalized and goes unnoticed by most whites. There are six basic tenets, three of which fit the theoretical framework for this article: everyday racism, intersectionality, and differential racialization (Tyson, 2015).

Everyday racism is defined as daily interactions between whites and people of color that create a feeling of otherness, dismissal, or incompetence. These interactions erode the spirit and increase stress for the persons involved. Microaggressions are an example of the daily cumulative impact of racism (Tyson, 2015). Microaggressions are defined as daily affronts
toward people of color that are neither noticed nor acknowledged by the people who commit the aggressions (Sue et al., 2007). Intersectionality reminds us that, “race intersects with class, sex, sexual orientation, political orientation, and personal history in forming each person’s complex identity” (Tyson, 2015, p. 359). Oppression arises from various points of intersection, making it difficult for a person to identify the reason for discrimination. And differential racialization is the practice of continuing to oppress individuals by reinforcing different stereotypes at different times (Tyson, 2015). CRT acknowledges the many aspects of being a person experiencing oppression, but cannot begin to include all perspectives. Several offshoots of CRT have been developed, including “Latino-Critical,” “queer-crit,” and “Asian American jurisprudence” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 3). Another missing intersection is the worldview of youth related to their homelessness. For that, we turn to Wilmes (2014).

Wilmes (2014) proposes a worldview model of survival versus privilege. Privilege is defined, in this framework, as access to support and resources, emotional and/or financial. Wilmes (2014) identifies seven key concepts (needs, view of the system, relationships, choices, organizational skills, locus of control, and respect) that demonstrate the differences experienced by people whose lives are survival-based versus those who are privileged. The concepts demonstrate a polarized worldview that often creates clashes and a sense of mistrust between the two populations.

Based on the knowledge that people of color are over represented in the criminal justice and homeless populations (Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 2015; NAACP, 2016), it can be assumed that most of the youth on the DT100 are youth of color and are experiencing homelessness. Youth experiencing homelessness are more likely to express a survival-based
worldview, and the criminal justice system is more likely to express a privileged worldview. Race and privilege are central to how people experience power and status. This contextual understanding is key, as it illuminates a layer of potential stigma and powerlessness among youth on the DT100.

**Literature Review**

**Background on DT100 Strategy**

The DT100 strategy appears to be related to the research and programs based in New York and other large cities which use the “Broken Windows” theory, developed by Wilson and Kelling in 1982 (Harcourt & Ludwig, 2006; Miller, 2016). This theory posits that when cities do not attend to small issues (i.e. broken windows, graffiti, litter, people sleeping in public, loitering, and panhandling) the door is opened for more significant criminal activity (Harcourt & Ludwig, 2006; Miller, 2016). New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles have all developed enforcement practices based this theory. The enforcement has been called “order maintenance policing” (Harcourt & Ludwig, 2006, p. 272) or “zero tolerance for quality-of-life infractions” (Miller, 2016, p. 3) and involves cracking down on minor infractions with the goal of discouraging higher-level crimes and improving community perceptions of safety in the city.

Initial data looked encouraging, with a significant decrease in crime in New York in the 1990s. However, Harcourt and Ludwig’s (2006) replication of three different studies during this time showed mixed results and demonstrated possible confounding variables (i.e. the rise and fall of the crack epidemic, distinct characteristics of different neighborhoods, and the nationwide decrease in crime during the 1990s). Likewise, Miller (2016) found no clear answers related to how policing impacts crime. Miller (2016) recommended researching creative options for
training officers and collaborating with communities as strategic methods to impact crime.
Collaborating and creating new initiatives shaped the cornerstone of the DT100 plan.

In 2010, the city hired a program-specific prosecutor and probation officer. A team comprised of neighborhood associations, downtown business representatives, the newly developed Downtown Improvement District, representatives from the criminal justice system, and two non-profit agencies that work primarily with adults experiencing homelessness joined forces to develop a holistic plan to reduce petty crimes in the downtown area and assist those most likely to commit those crimes (Segal & Conroy, 2011). The team reviewed records and established a list of the top 50 offenders in 2010 and 2011. Crime records included one-year and ten-year reviews in both the central business district and the city as a whole (Segal & Conroy, 2011). Once selected, individuals on the DT100 list were tracked whenever a police report was filed. Once notified of a filed report, the team came together to create a plan for the individual and alerted the members of Court Watch, a group of community members and criminal justice professionals who review the program list monthly (Segal & Conroy, 2011).

Tools used to work effectively with individuals on the DT100 included a weekly warrant report, active probation, geographic restriction, stiff penalties for violation of the geographic restriction, and revocation of a probationary sentence if the individual did not follow his or her case plan or committed further crimes. Other tools included housing subsidies and assistance with basic needs, improved access to mental health and chemical health assessments, and increased use of specialty courts (i.e. drug, mental health, and homeless courts), as well as the empowerment of business owners to give troublesome individuals increased consequences for multiple trespasses and opportunities for community members to submit impact statements (Segal & Conroy, 2011).
In the first year, the DT100 boasted a 74% reduction in crime by individuals on the DT100. Also of note, was a 70% increase in active participation with a probation officer. Ninety-four percent of those identified on the DT100 served their full probationary sentence without revocation, and 70% of those who received a geographic restriction stayed out of downtown. Thirty-six and 32%, respectively, accessed chemical and mental health services, and 50% obtained or maintained housing (Segal & Conroy, 2011). These statistics are impressive, and make it seem that this is an effective program. But a deeper look is necessary, because there are no data on the impact of being identified on the DT100.

**Impact of Identification on the DT100**

This section will address the stigma of homelessness, the risks and protective factors for youth experiencing homelessness, the criminal identity placed on youth of color, and the fallacy of colorblindness. The primary commonalities of youth identified on the DT100 are: experiencing homelessness, being a youth of color, and engaging in survival strategies.

Stigma surrounds engagement in survival strategies and homelessness (Hickler & Auerswald, 2009; Kidd, 2007; Yoder, Bender, Thompson, Ferguson, & Haffejee, 2014), and youth of color are often criminalized (Brunson & Miller, 2006; Rios, 2006; Stevens-Watkins & Graves, 2011). The societal stigma attached to homelessness has a varied impact on youth (Kidd, 2007; Hickler & Auerswald, 2009; McCarthy & Hagan, 2005). Some youth embrace the term “homeless” as a statement of freedom, while others eschew the connection with their current circumstances (Hickler & Auerswald, 2009). Youth experiencing homelessness often engage in survival strategies that put them at higher risk for incarceration or physical harm. There are intervening variables that youth must consider when choosing to engage in risky behaviors,
including arrest, physical harm, social stigma, acceptance, respect, and level of need (McCarthy & Hagan, 2005).

Youth identified on the DT100 engage in a worldview that perceives survival strategies as one of the few options available for meeting their needs. The criminal justice system views these activities as criminal, even if they recognize the survival nature of the youth’s actions. Stipulated consequences that do not account for the youth’s situation may not have the intended impact on behavior. For example, a youth who commits crimes (engages in survival strategies) in the downtown area could be geographically restricted from that area for up to three years. The intended impact is to shift a youth’s behavior by keeping them from their downtown routine, which may include committing a crime. The actual impact, however, is a loss of access to many of the services the youth regularly uses in the restricted area. Youth identified on the DT100 who engage in survival strategies encounter stigma related to their actions and circumstances.

**Stigma.** Rarely is there one factor that leads to homelessness for youth. Often youth experiencing homelessness come from homes where there has been domestic violence, familial disruption, housing instability, abuse, neglect, mental/chemical health issues, severe dysfunction, or a rejection of the youth. Stigma begins in difficult family situations and is reinforced as youth move into life on the streets (Kidd, 2007). Homelessness carries a societal stigma of personal responsibility (Kidd, 2007). Youth internalize negative societal beliefs related to homelessness and the survival strategies in which they are forced to engage (Kidd, 2007). Youth experiencing homelessness possess limited protective factors. Adults might devalue societal expectations to protect themselves from negative societal beliefs. A young person’s developmental need to fit in drives the desire to present in a way that society expects. It is difficult to protect oneself by devaluing those things that help you fit in (Kidd, 2007).
Hickler and Auerswald (2009) identified differences and similarities between white and African American youth experiencing homelessness. They found that both white and African American youth engaged in similar survival strategies—primarily, hustling. Hustling was defined as using what you have available to make money, including selling drugs, trading sex for money or other basic needs, and stealing (Hickler & Auerswald, 2009). White youth also engaged in panhandling, selling items, and looking for needed items in dumpsters and on the streets. African American youth, however, denigrated these activities as “something a ‘homeless person’ would do” (Hickler & Auerswald, 2009, p. 828). Another difference for African American young men was that they did not readily identify themselves as homeless. Their identity (i.e. hustler or pimp) became connected to their survival strategy (i.e. selling drugs or exploiting others) which required them to be on the streets making money (Hickler & Auerswald, 2009). It is important to note that both white and African American young women identified sex work as a way to make money. African American young women, however, were more likely than their white counterparts to have a pimp (Hickler & Auerswald, 2009). Youth experiencing homelessness are often exposed to extreme hardships, forcing them to make difficult decisions to survive. Those decisions elevate the youth’s risk for criminal justice involvement (Yoder et al., 2014).

**Risk and protective factors.** Several authors reported on the correlation between survival strategies (i.e. theft, drug selling, and sex work) and danger among youth experiencing homelessness (Kidd, 2007; Hickler & Auerswald, 2009; McCarthy & Hagan, 2005). Youth experiencing homelessness are at higher risk of physical or sexual assault and exploitation (Kidd, 2007). Youth who engage in survival strategies often do not apply the potential risks to themselves, believing they know more or can avoid potential harm (McCarthy & Hagan, 2005).
McCarthy and Hagan (2005) identified typical deterrents for or costs of engaging in criminal activity (identified in this article as survival strategies) as: “formal sanctions…informal sanctions… commitment to normative values and beliefs… and the guilt or shame that norm violations and sanctions may elicit” (p. 1069). Engagement with peer offenders and the commonplace nature of crime due to circumstance removed the guilt and shame of a norm violation. The perception of danger, rather than a perceived sanction or norm violation, is the main variable that decreases engagement in survival strategies, except for those who feel they can beat the odds (McCarthy & Hagan, 2005). When a person experiences marginalization on many levels his or her need to abide by societal norms decreases, and crime becomes a justifiable avenue for need attainment (McCarthy & Hagan, 2005). The potential for harm is significant for youth engaging in survival strategies; trauma is a frequent cost.

Yoder et al. (2014) identified trauma and physical abuse as significant risk factors for youth experiencing homelessness, increasing the potential of involvement with the criminal justice system. Physical abuse is also linked to difficulties with emotional regulation and diminished coping skills, increased risk for mental health symptoms, and an internalization of modeled behaviors then used on others. Yoder et al. (2014) stated that “the broader juvenile justice system lacks understanding of the role trauma plays in the etiology of delinquent behaviors and how rehabilitative efforts can be enhanced through trauma-informed approaches” (p. 142). Trauma is another issue that is not identified as a part of the DT100 strategy. Youth identified on the DT100 have experienced trauma as a result of their lives on the streets. Their risk levels are high, and they have minimal protective factors.

Stevens-Watkins and Graves (2011) identified risks and protective factors for youth that predicted involvement in the criminal justice system as adults, showing that substance use by a
close friend was a significant risk factor for youth (Stevens-Watkins & Graves, 2011). Substance use among youth experiencing homelessness was high (Yoder et al., 2014); it was a form of self-medication and a way to fit in with other youth. Yoder et al. (2014) also found substance use to be a significant predictor of criminal justice involvement. A protective factor was academic achievement. Youth who achieved academically were less likely to be involved in the criminal justice system (Stevens-Watkins & Graves, 2011). Youth experiencing homelessness often did not attend school, as they were busy with street survival activities to gain access to resources and meet their basic needs (Yoder et al., 2014). A final protective factor was involvement in religious activities (Stevens-Watkins & Graves, 2011). Youth experiencing homelessness are often disconnected from support systems including family and religious or spiritual connections.

These factors are key to the DT100 population, as they are directly linked to issues the youth are experiencing associated with their homelessness. Youth identified on the DT100 have had significant involvement with the criminal justice system, potentially creating an identity as a criminal.

**Criminal identity.** Young men of color are disproportionately involved at all levels of the criminal justice system, including police stops, arrests, and incarceration (Brunson & Miller, 2006; Rios, 2006; Stevens-Watkins & Graves, 2011). Many young men of color experience stigma and criminalization as an everyday occurrence (Rios, 2006). Rios (2006) conducted an ethnographic study of Black and Latino youth with non-violent charges, he postulated that the youth had been “hyper-criminalized” by their involvement in juvenile justice services (p. 40). Hyper-criminalization was defined as the daily stigmatizing and criminalizing of youth of color, demarcating them as deviant (Rios, 2006). The young men in Rios’s (2006) study, were engaged in intensive services that seemed more appropriate for involvement in serious crimes. They were
required, for instance, to attend weekly meetings with a probation officer at a community recreation center. For many of the youth this increased the public awareness of their misdeeds. Rios (2006) witnessed a criminal identity being imposed on the youth by people in the community, even as the youth were trying to escape that identity. Youth on the DT100 are monitored by probation officers; while this monitoring is not as close as that given to the youth in Rios’ (2006) study, it is possible they feel some of the same pressure and criminal identification.

The imposition of criminal identity or intent arises in many ordinary activities of life. Youth gathering on the street, for example, can increase the likelihood of police involvement. Even a youth’s neighborhood can put her or him at more risk (Brunson & Miller, 2006). This connects directly to youth on the DT100. In urban centers, youth experiencing homelessness often gather downtown on the streets and in the skyways (elevated enclosed walkways) for safety or warmth. This places them at higher risk for police interaction, especially when they gather in places of business.

Welch (2007) and Tyson (2015) both identify a common practice of stereotyping black men as criminals. Tyson (2015) uses the term “differential racialization” to define the dominant society’s propensity for defining different minority groups as the “other,” maintaining the status quo. Kilgore (2015) references the Broken Window theory as one part of the ongoing assault on specific neighborhoods where there is a high concentration of poor or working-class individuals. There is a juxtaposition between stereotyping youth of color as criminals and the notion of a post-racial colorblind society. The final section will look more closely at how colorblindness impacts youth identified on the DT100.
**Colorblindness.** The belief that justice is blind has given credence to the notion of colorblindness within the criminal justice system. Colorblindness as an ideal has roots in the teachings of Martin Luther King, Jr., who dreamed of a nation in which the color of a person’s skin would no longer condemn him or her to a life of inequality or subservience (Hill Collins, 2015). Since then, however, colorblindness has become a form of covert racism. According to Gotanda (2013), colorblindness “…is an attempt to hide the underlying racial oppression” (p. 37) by engaging in a practice of nonrecognition of race—claiming to notice the color of a person’s skin but not considering it in decision-making. Critical race theorists believe that colorblindness, especially in the criminal justice system, has further instilled racism in society while making it less overtly identifiable (Brewer & Heitzeg, 2008; Hill Collins, 2015; Norris & Billings, 2017). Colorblindness in the criminal justice system has been linked to the mass incarceration of people of color, specifically Black men. Mass incarceration began following the passage of the Civil Rights Act and escalated during President Ronald Reagan’s war on drugs (Alexander, 2013; Brewer & Heitzeg, 2008; Norris & Billings, 2017). Colorblindness reinforces institutionalized racism and promotes the ill-conceived notion of a post-racial society (Alexander, 2013; Norris & Billings, 2017). Events such as the Republican Presidential campaign rallies and the 2015 shooting of Black Lives Matter Protestors in Minneapolis, Minnesota, indicate the prevalence and existence of racism in communities across the U.S.

Youth on the DT100 are a part of a system that is rarely in their favor. Race is not a part of the inclusion criteria for those identified on the DT100, despite clear statistics showing disproportionate racial representation in the criminal justice system. There is a reference to identifying “systemic issues” that might hinder the group’s work with persons identified on the DT100 (Segal & Conroy, 2011). This broad term does not, however, fully represent the daily
experiences of youth on the DT100. While Segal and Conroy (2011) make a case for the positive outcomes of the DT100 strategy, they do not address the potential drawbacks the youth experience as a result of their inclusion. The discussion section will demonstrate the ways theory and reality come together for youth on the DT100.

**Discussion**

**Critical Race Theory**

CRT has engaged scholars, lawyers, and social justice activists to address the rise in covert racism following the Civil Rights era. The tenets of CRT that best fit the experiences of youth identified on the DT100 include everyday racism, differential racialization, and intersectionality.

**Everyday racism.** White supremacy, both overt and covert, is an integral part of the everyday experience of racism for people of color. A visual representation of overt versus covert racism can be found on Boing Boing BBS (2016). The image depicts an iceberg with a small triangle, on the surface, of overt racist practices that society no longer condones (e.g. hate crimes, the N-word, racial jokes, and racial slurs) and a much larger section of the iceberg, under the surface, that represents socially acceptable covert racist practices. A few of these include mass incarceration, the denial of white privilege, colorblindness, the downplaying of experiences of people of color, and tokenism. Microaggressions are not included on the iceberg diagram but are a significant form of everyday racism. Youth identified on the DT100 experience these racist practices both directly, through their involvement with the criminal justice system, and indirectly, through the thoughts and actions of people they encounter on the streets. Engaging the DT100 team in discussions about covert racist practices might begin to mitigate the effects of everyday racism.
**Differential racialization.** Criminalization of people of color is a prime example of differential racialization (Alexander, 2013; Norris & Billings, 2017; Welch, 2007). The imposition of a criminal identity creates among whites a fear of people of color. Whites can freely believe that these “criminals” “get what they deserve in life” (i.e. arrests, harassment, underemployment, and housing discrimination). Identification on the DT100 presumes significant criminal involvement and encourages the labeling of youth as criminals. Survival strategies like hustling, stealing, and dealing are often framed as severe crimes that reinforce a criminal label. Youth identified on the DT100 are known by their crimes rather than their circumstances. Reframing the activities in which youth engage for survival is one way to shift the perception away from criminality.

**Intersectionality.** Homelessness and criminality are two points of intersection identified by several authors in the literature reviewed (Brewer & Heitzeg, 2008; McCarthy & Hagan, 2005; Yoder et al., 2014). Youth identified on the DT100 have intersections of age, race, sexual orientation, gender, socio-economic status, criminal justice involvement, and personal history. Brewer and Heitzeg (2008) noted the intersections of race, class, and criminality. Considering the intersection of homelessness and race, one young person stated, “People aren’t afraid of me because I am homeless. People are afraid of me because I am Black” (Kidd, 2007, p. 296). Youth who are experiencing homelessness and express a non-normative sexual or gender orientation are more likely to experience stigma-induced guilt and self-blame (Kidd, 2007). Youth identified on the DT100 are often youth of color who are experiencing homelessness; these intersections compound the difficulties they encounter. Opening dialogues between youth and DT100 professionals to engage in conversation around common points of intersection may assist in easing tension between groups.
Survival Worldview

The tenets of CRT identified do not completely address the youth’s worldview. Wilmes’ framework of survival versus privilege (2014) reveals another piece of the intersection puzzle. Youth experiencing homelessness often present a survival worldview, while the systems and agencies they encounter exhibit a privileged worldview (Wilmes, 2014). Wilmes (2014) identifies seven key concepts that demonstrate the differences experienced by people who are survival-based versus those who are privileged. This section will connect a survival worldview with the youth identified on the DT100.

Needs. The concept of need is the first place of difference between survival and privilege (Wilmes, 2014). Youth identified on the DT100 engage in survival strategies like theft and hustling. These strategies could be considered an expression of taking what you want to get what you need. In this case, hustling might include knowing which agencies assist with transportation, gathering available tokens and bus passes, and then selling or trading the tokens or bus passes for needed items (i.e. food, money, cigarettes, etc.). When a staff person realizes the hustle, the youth’s behavior might be defined as abusing the system (privilege worldview), when in the eyes of the youth it is resourceful (survival worldview). Youth identified on the DT100 are resourceful in meeting their needs. Cultivating an understanding of the circumstances by which youth engage in survival strategies might help the professionals on the DT100 team reframe their perceptions of youth. Survival and privilege worldviews regularly collide when youth attempt to access systems.

Systems. Wilmes (2014) posits that youth experiencing homelessness perceive the systems they encounter (i.e. the criminal justice system, government agencies, educational systems, social service agencies etc.) as broken and unhelpful. He goes on to state that people
working in those systems generally trust that they work in everyone’s favor. For youth identified on the DT100, however, many systems seem inaccessible and unsupportive. A criminal history on a background check for housing or employment does not explain the circumstances of the charges, but it does disqualify the person. Youth identified on the DT100 are often disqualified for employment, housing, education, and financial assistance because of their criminal histories. Their trauma background may make it difficult to access stable housing and employment due to triggers impacting their emotional regulation. One can see the pressure to engage in survival strategies when there is little support for legal acquisition of income. Financial assistance through the county or the federal government requires a diagnosed disability, and access to stable, supportive housing is often based on disability or homelessness status; the accompanying stigma deters youth identified on the DT100 from applying for these programs. Youth on the DT100 instead prefer to rely on street family relationships for shelter. Partnering with youth to break down barriers inherent in systems can begin the process of establishing equal access.

**Relationships.** Those with a privileged worldview will look to the police in times of danger, and base relationships on convenience rather than loyalty (Wilmes, 2014). For youth with a survival worldview, in contrast, loyalty is the hallmark of relationships. When threatened, these young people will go to their street family before the police. Youth identified on the DT100 distrust police officers, seeing them as hindrances rather than helpers. Establishing trusting relationships with youth on the DT100 and opening spaces for dialogue with police are possible ways to impact negative relationships. Providing options and engaging in goal planning can afford some forward motion for these young people.

**Choice and organization.** For youth experiencing homelessness, the future is unpredictable; choice, therefore, is based on present rather than future thinking. Their ability to
organize is limited due to a lack of tools and to their mobile existence (Wilmes, 2014). The privileged emphasis on timeliness, keeping appointments, and keeping track of possessions clashes with the seemingly haphazard existence of survival on the streets. For youth on the DT100, jail is constantly looming. Many youth of color, including DT100 youth, envision their future options as prison or death. The risks related to life on the streets are less ominous when options seem limited, and living life in the moment makes sense when the future looks bleak. Providing opportunities for experiencing the world outside the city and speaking with people of color who have broken down the barriers that youth encounter are possible ways to impact the lack of control youth identified on the program feel over their lives.

**Locus of control.** Youth with a survival worldview experience an external locus of control, which often presents as an inability or unwillingness to take responsibility for one’s actions. Those with a privileged worldview, in contrast, experience an internal locus of control, presenting as an understanding of how one’s actions impact others (Wilmes, 2014). A youth on the program interacts with a criminal justice system filled with people who have a plan for that youth, often developed without his or her involvement. Involving youth in planning meetings to voice what they think can be accomplished and how they might change their behavior would assist in establishing trust with representatives of privileged systems.

**Respect.** Youth expressing a survival worldview identify a link between respect and safety. When a youth is respected by others in the street community, safety increases. Respect is derived externally; it is earned and not easily given. For people coming from a base of privilege, respect is assumed and derived internally (Wilmes, 2014). Youth on the DT100 attain respect through taking risks and being dominant. They share little of their inner selves, establishing instead a persona of strength, power, and disregard for others. Engaging youth on the DT100 in
IMPLICATIONS OF IDENTIFICATION ON A LIST

The previous section offered ideas for influencing the perceptions of the professionals on the DT100 team and assisting youth skill development. The tenets of CRT and the survival-based framework lay a foundation for practice considerations and future research. This section will identify implications for social work practice related to youth identified on the DT100 or in similar situations, including addressing racism in its many covert forms, teaching youth the language of privilege to assist in accessing systems, and engaging social work principles and practices to effectively engage youth in services.

Addressing Covert Racism

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) both require education and efficacy in diversity. Diversity comes in many forms, and microaggressions can affect anyone who is considered different. Racism has a long and complicated history in the U.S. It is woven into the very fabric of our society. To address covert racism, whites must reflect on their privilege and intervene to end the racist practices they encounter. Social workers must address the habits of systems that reinforce oppression.

“Bi-lingual” Interactions

Wilmes (2014) identified the importance of teaching youth to be “bi-lingual,” developing the ability to speak the language of privilege to better access those systems. He acknowledged the ongoing need for a survival worldview and the ways in which that worldview interferes with interactions in privileged systems (Wilmes, 2014). This teaching might be accomplished by modeling conversations and interactions, attending appointments with youth to help navigate
conversations, discussing ways to positively interact by replaying conversations, or role-playing interactions for learning. In some ways, however, this reinforces a privileged worldview. Social workers must lead the charge to shift perceptions within systems, to encourage acceptance of other ways of interacting, and to develop practices that invite participation and trust building.

**Social Work Practices**

Social workers can use the principles and practices that are an essential part of their work, including a strength-based framing of behavior, a trauma-informed practice, a harm-reduction perspective, collaboration, and attention to judgment. Through these practices, social workers can become allies to youth like those on the DT100. Practicing a strength-based perspective includes reframing youth behavior, assisting youth in identifying strengths, and shifting conversations with deficit-based systems to include strengths. Harm reduction takes into consideration a youth’s risk tolerance and stage of change. Working together with youth, a social worker establishes a trusting relationship and begins to explore risks the youth is taking and how he or she might diminish them. For example, if a youth is involved in sex work and not ready to leave, does he or she have clothing that is easy to pull on, shoes to run in, a working phone, a contact who knows where the youth is, a meeting place that is familiar, and cash for emergency transportation?

Collaboration with youth can mean creating a partnership to establish goals and providing support to meet those goals. Collaboration can also mean inviting youth to a DT100 meeting to provide an opportunity for self-advocacy and involvement in planning. Goal or treatment planning should include access to trauma-informed treatment or practices, when a youth is ready. Examples of trauma-specific healing include trauma-informed cognitive behavioral therapy, eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR), narrative therapy, psychotherapy, yoga,
energy healing, and meditation. Many youth identified on the DT100 have experienced trauma, through their encounters at home or on the streets. Social workers who are trauma-informed can assist youth in identifying and managing triggers, developing resources, and acquiring skills in emotional regulation. Finally, social workers must attend to their judgment. As humans, we are prone to judgment or bias based on differences. The ways in which social workers manage those biases and reflect on their own interactions with others can help in reducing microaggressions and other covert racist actions.

**Implications for Research**

This author’s research program includes studies on the perceptions held by professionals and youth about the effectiveness of being identified on the DT100. Future studies that include the voices of youth on the DT100 could establish a more complete picture of the impact of identification on a criminal justice-based list. Development and trauma are areas ripe for further study, including the ways in which trauma interferes with social emotional development for youth experiencing homelessness and its impact on brain development. Developing a better understanding of how trauma and homelessness interact with involvement in the criminal justice system might positively influence the plans professionals develop with youth.

**Conclusion**

Youth identified on the DT100 experience stigma and criminalization based on their intersections of race, homelessness, and criminal justice involvement. Social workers who engage in principles and practices such as a strength-based framing of behavior, a trauma-informed practice, a harm-reduction perspective, collaboration, and attention to judgment will increase their ability to create trusting relationships with youth. When youth are recognized for
their strengths, resiliency, and independence, and when their struggles are acknowledged as societal defects and not personal ones, a significant shift in perspective could take effect.

There is a lack of research on the perceptions of professionals working with youth identified on the DT100, and of the youth themselves. There is also limited research on the intersection of social emotional development and youth experiencing homelessness who are involved in the criminal justice system. While youth identified on the program comprise a specific population, the issues and circumstances they encounter apply to a broader set of youth. This conceptual article and future research expand the growing body of knowledge related to youth experiencing homelessness and youth of color involved in the criminal justice system.
References


Benefits and Deficits of the Use of Lists for Service Engagement: Professionals’ Perceptions

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Abstract

This study set out to discover the perceptions of professionals toward youth identified on the DT100 and toward the DT100 strategy. The DT100, developed in an urban city in the Upper Midwest, is a list of 100 youth with considerable involvement in the criminal justice system. Youth on the DT100 are most often youth of color and experiencing homelessness. Crimes committed by youth on the DT100 include livability crimes—the more acceptable crimes, and survivability crimes—which have a stigma. Those interviewed made up the team of legal, police, and social service professionals that was developed to work with youth on the DT100. Seventeen professionals were interviewed as a part of a qualitative exploratory study. Key findings were grouped as criminal vs. survival behaviors, intent vs. practice, and intersectionality of experience. The findings suggest integrating the issue of over-representation of youth of color in the criminal justice system into the discussion of work with youth on the DT100. Practice implications include an emphasis on harm reduction and relationship development at all levels of intervention. Suggestions for improvement in the approach of the DT100 strategy encompass the development of a holistic set of criteria for inclusion on the list that emphasizes age, developmental stage, level of need, and readiness for change.

*Keywords*: criminal justice, homelessness, lists, survival, youth, young adults
Benefits and Deficits of the Use of Lists for Service Engagement: Professionals’ Perceptions

The use of lists, whether formal or informal, to identify persons of real or perceived danger has a long history. People need only recall the witch hunts of 1660s, the McCarthy era blacklisting of the 1940s and 50s, and the development of the FBI’s ten most-wanted list as evidence of this practice. In our more recent history, the national sex offender registry, officially launched in 2006 (Craun & Simmons, 2012), has been one of the most significant lists designed to warn the public of potentially dangerous persons. The DT100 is also a list, one used to identify people by their crimes. Though it is one with a shorter reach, it holds significance for those included on it.

The DT100 was developed in an urban city in the Upper Midwest to identify the top 100 adults and youth (24 years old and under) with the highest use of the criminal justice system (i.e. police interactions, tickets, arrests, warrants, and jail time) (Segal & Conroy, 2011). Program staff track participants within the criminal justice system and, with the goal of reducing recidivism and increasing stability, create intervention plans with the prosecutor, parole officers, police officers, and social service representatives (Segal & Conroy, 2011). Those on the DT100 list can choose whether to engage with these service plans, but inclusion on the list itself is involuntary.

Segal and Conroy (2011) identified homelessness as the primary concern facing DT100 participants. People experiencing homelessness are often arrested for livability crimes, which are defined as: public urination, public drunkenness, panhandling, loitering, open drug dealing, and intimidation (Berg, 2011). The DT100 strategy was developed to impact the increasing problem of property and livability crimes that are indicative of survival strategies. “Survival strategies”
(Hickler & Auerswald, 2009, p. 828) are defined as: “panhandling, prostitution, survival sex (sex for food, shelter, etc.), dealing drugs, and theft” (Kidd, 2007, p. 292).

Race is of concern when looking at the DT100 strategy. Several authors have argued that race is inextricably linked to criminalization (Brewer & Heitzig, 2008; Rios, 2006; Welch, 2007), yet race is not indicated as a part of the DT100 selection process, and people of color are over-represented on the DT100 list. The present study singled out race and homelessness as key problems for youth identified on the DT100, who are primarily youth of color and experiencing homelessness. These issues guided the development of the theoretical framework.

Two theories provided a framework through which this study was developed and the data analyzed: Critical Race Theory (CRT) and a survivor-privilege worldview framework. Critical Race Theory was developed as a reaction to the shift, during the post-civil rights era, from overt to covert racism in society as a whole and in the criminal justice system (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Wilmes’ (2014) survivor-privileged worldview framework demonstrates the different ways people experiencing homelessness view the world as they are forced to engage in survival strategies.

In its first year, Segal and Conroy (2011) noted, the DT100 boasted a 74% reduction in crime related to the youth and adults on the DT100 list. Also of note was a 70% increase in active participation with a probation officer. Ninety-four percent of DT100 list members served their full probationary sentence without revocation, and 70% of those who received a geographic restriction stayed out of downtown. Thirty-six and 32%, respectively, accessed chemical and mental health services, and 50% obtained or maintained housing. These statistics are impressive. It seems this is an effective program. What is left to study?
What remains are questions about the significance of being identified on a list. Using a qualitative method, the professionals who make up or are associated with the DT100 team were asked about their perceptions of youth on the DT100 and of the use of the list as a tool. Youth on the DT100 are predominantly youth of color and are experiencing homelessness—thus they among two groups highly likely to experience stigma and criminalization in society (Kidd, 2007; Rios, 2006). The absence of race as an identifier in the development of the DT100 deserves exploration. The intent of the DT100 strategy is to identify and engage youth and adults to increase stabilization and decrease recidivism. While the statistics indicate success, and a team approach is often most effective when working with people who have multiple barriers, a team like that established for the DT100—one based primarily in the criminal justice system—has not been adequately studied.

**Literature Review**

**Background on DT100 Strategy**

Segal and Conroy’s (2011) implementation guide for the DT100 strategy implies a relationship to research and programs based in New York and other large cities and using the “Broken Windows” theory, developed by Wilson and Kelling in 1982 (Harcourt & Ludwig, 2006; Miller, 2016). This theory posits that when cities do not attend to small issues like broken windows, graffiti, litter, people sleeping in public, loitering, and panhandling, the door is opened for more significant criminal activity (Harcourt & Ludwig, 2006; Miller, 2016). New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles have all developed enforcement practices that mirror this theory.

Initial data looked encouraging, with a significant decrease in crime in New York in the 1990s. However, Harcourt and Ludwig’s (2006) replication of three different studies during this time showed mixed results and demonstrated possible confounding variables (i.e. the rise and fall
of the crack cocaine epidemic, distinct characteristics of different neighborhoods, and the nationwide decrease in crime during the 1990s). Likewise, Miller (2016) found no clear answers related to how policing impacts crime. Miller (2016) recommended researching creative options for training officers and collaborating with communities as strategic methods to impact crime. Collaborating and creating new initiatives shaped the cornerstone of the DT100 strategy.

In 2010, a city in the Upper Midwest began the DT100 strategy. Using funding from the newly developed Downtown Improvement District (DID), the city hired a program-specific prosecutor and probation officer. A team comprised of neighborhood associations, downtown business representatives, the DID, representatives from the criminal justice system, and two non-profit agencies that work primarily with adults experiencing homelessness joined forces to develop a holistic plan to reduce petty crimes in the downtown area and assist those most likely to commit those crimes (Segal & Conroy, 2011). The team reviewed records and established a list of the top 50 offenders in 2010 and in 2011. Crime records included one-year and ten-year reviews in both the central business district and the city as a whole (Segal & Conroy, 2011). Once selected, members of the DT100 list were tracked whenever a police report was filed. Once notified of a filed report, the team came together to create a plan for the individual and alerted the members of Court Watch, a group of community members and criminal justice professionals who review the DT100 list monthly (Segal & Conroy, 2011).

Tools used to work more effectively with DT100 members included a weekly warrant report, active probation, geographic restriction, stiff penalties for violation of the geographic restriction, and revocation of a probationary sentence if the individual did not follow his or her case plan or committed further crimes. Other tools included housing subsidies and assistance with basic needs, improved access to mental health and chemical health assessments, and
increased use of specialty courts (i.e. drug, mental health, and homeless courts), as well as the empowerment of business owners to give troublesome individuals increased consequences for multiple trespasses and opportunities for community members to submit impact statements (Segal & Conroy, 2011).

**Problem-Solving Courts**

Problem solving courts (PSC) began in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Berman & Feinblatt, 2001; Casey & Rottman, 2005), the most common of these being adult drug courts. It is said that necessity is the mother of invention, but in this case, it was frustration. Both the courts and the public were frustrated with a revolving door of cases that had no long-term resolution (Berman & Feinblatt, 2001; Casey & Rottman, 2005). More recently other types of PSCs have been developed to target mental health, domestic violence, homelessness, and low-level livability crimes (Berman & Feinblatt, 2001; Casey & Rottman, 2005). The goal was to “incorporate new and innovative court practices, while seeking to achieve therapeutic outcomes” (Payne, 2006, p. 1). According to Berman and Feinblatt (2001) PSC’s have five common features: “case outcomes, system change, judicial monitoring, collaboration, and non-traditional roles” (p. 131-132).

Problem-solving courts were added to this literature review after interviewing one of the legal team participants in the current DT100 study. She expressed the importance of recognizing each youth’s circumstances and level of development, thought that engagement in a community court would be far more beneficial to young people on the DT100 than the current system, and believed that, developmentally, people under the age of 24 could benefit more from the supportive services that are a part of PSCs than from the longer-term probation agreements of the
DT100. The DT100 attempts to engage youth in appropriate services, but maintains a significant oversight by the criminal justice system.

Identification on a List

A review of the literature found little related to the impact of being placed on a list that is based on criminal justice involvement. Expanding the range of criteria, however, uncovered the sex offenders’ registry, which offered a grounding of perceptions of being on a list. Individuals who are required to register as sex offenders are similar to individuals identified on the DT100 in that they cannot choose whether to be on the list nor whether the list is made public. The DT100 list and the registered sex offender (RSO) list differ in that the former is local and the latter is national; RSOs are most often white adult men; and the crimes committed by RSOs are more significant than those of the youth identified on the DT100; and RSOs are aware of their inclusion on the list, while youth on the DT100 are not. Articles from the perspectives of professionals (criminal justice and mental health) and sex offenders were reviewed. Both groups indicated the importance of a registry and, yet, neither group believed it would make the community safer or reduce recidivism (Mustaine, Tewksbury, Connor, & Payne, 2015; Tewksbury & Lees, 2007).

Professionals. Research on the impact of RSO lists has included questions about the effectiveness of management policies (including registration, community notification, and residency requirements) and about attitudes toward sex offenders. Researchers noted that there was a positive relationship between the level of interaction with RSOs and perspectives related to policies (Call & Gordon, 2016; Mustaine et al., 2015). For example, police officers who spent limited time with sex offenders and interacted with them only during an arrest believed that policies should be tougher on this group; probation officers and prison officials, in contrast,
sought fairer policies (Mustaine et al., 2015). Mental health professionals were less likely to support stricter management policies for RSOs when compared to criminal justice professionals (Call & Gordon, 2016).

Other factors that influenced attitudes toward sex offenders included professionals’ philosophy of punishment, their beliefs about the causes of sex offenses (Call & Gordon, 2016), their level of professional involvement with sex offenders (Call & Gordon, 2016; Mustaine et al., 2015), and their demographics (including age, gender, level of education, and geographic location) (Mustaine et al., 2015). Professionals who believed sex offenders were predisposed to this behavior demonstrated less support for current policies for managing sex offenders. Professionals who believed sex offenders lacked virtue or were selfish supported current policies, and indicated a desire for more punitive ones (Call & Gordon, 2016). Criminal justice professionals who took part in the arrest and prosecution of sex offenders assumed a more punitive stance compared to those who worked more closely with sex offenders, like probation officers (Mustaine et al., 2015) and mental health professionals (Call & Gordon, 2016). Mustaine et al. (2015) found that age, gender, and achieved education were related to a belief in the effectiveness of registries reducing recidivism (i.e. older men with lower levels of education believed registration was effective). As stated previously, many of the participants recognized the flaws of a registry in keeping sex offenders from recidivating, yet felt it was still necessary (Mustaine et al., 2015). Professionals on the DT100 team may also have different perspectives based on the amount of time spent and the type of interaction they have with youth on the DT100. Different professional roles may also influence the professionals’ views of the underlying reasons youth engage in criminal behavior.
**Offenders.** Tewksbury and Lees (2007) sought to discover the perceptions of RSOs toward registries—whether registries promoted safety and created awareness in the community, whether the current registry format was effective, and what changes the participants might make. Each of the 22 participants recognized the value of a registry, yet many felt that their situation was different and did not call for registration. Many did not believe registries improved community awareness, and doubted their effectiveness in keeping others from recidivating (Tewksbury & Lees, 2007). Participants indicated that the way in which determinations were made about registering and the amount of information made public should change, and identified the social stigma related to the registry requirement. One participant remarked, “It’s degrading and dehumanizing to know that people can pull my picture up and compare me to the guy under me or the guy they saw before me” (Tewksbury & Lees, 2007, p. 396). Youth and adults identified on the DT100 are known to the DT100 team and to community members who attend the monthly Court Watch meeting. Knowing about their criminal history and what they look like, professionals and community members may target these youth.

There are many differences between RSOs and the youth on the DT100. The reason for considering the literature was to examine professionals’ perceptions of the effectiveness of identifying people on a list and explore the potential stigma attached to being thus identified. The main commonalities shared by youth on the DT100 are experiencing homelessness, being a youth of color, and engaging in survival strategies. Stigma surrounds engagement in survival strategies and homelessness (Hickler & Auerswald, 2009; Kidd, 2007; Yoder, Bender, Thompson, Ferguson, & Haffejee, 2014), and youth of color are often criminalized (Brunson & Miller, 2006; Rios, 2006; Stevens-Watkins & Graves, 2011).
Stigma, Risk, and Criminal Identity

There is limited literature on youth experiencing homelessness and the issues surrounding survival strategies, yet these are the key elements that link youth on the DT100. In considering this topic, three additional elements arose in the literature: stigma, risk, and criminal identity. Youth engage in many survival strategies that put them at high risk for incarceration or physical harm. There are intervening variables (i.e. danger vs. invincibility, cost vs. profitability) that youth must consider when choosing to engage in risky behaviors (McCarthy & Hagan, 2005). The societal stigma attached to homelessness has a varied impact on youth (Kidd, 2007; Hickler & Auerswald, 2009; McCarthy & Hagan, 2005). Some youth described embracing the term as a statement of freedom, while others eschewed the connection with their current circumstances (Hickler & Auerswald, 2009).

Stigma. The causes of youth homelessness are varied. Often, youth experiencing homelessness come from homes where there has been domestic violence, familial disruption, housing instability, abuse, neglect, mental/chemical health issues, severe dysfunction, or a rejection of the youth. Stigma begins in the difficult family situations and is reinforced as youth move into life on the streets (Kidd, 2007). Kidd (2007) discovered a significant relationship between stigma and “low self-esteem, loneliness, suicidal ideation, and feeling trapped” (p. 297). Homelessness bears a societal stigma of personal responsibility (Kidd, 2007). Youth risk internalizing negative societal beliefs related to homelessness and to the survival strategies in which they are forced to engage (Kidd, 2007). Youth experiencing homelessness often possess limited ability to devalue societal expectations like financial stability, education completion, or a normed presentation of physical appearance. A young person’s developmental need to fit in drives the desire to present in a way that society expects (Kidd, 2007).
Hickler and Auerswald (2009) identified similarities and differences in the internalized stigma of homelessness among white and African American youth. They found that both engaged in similar survival strategies (i.e. “hustling” and selling drugs). However, African American young men did not readily identify themselves as homeless, because of the associated stigma. Their identity became connected to their survival strategy (i.e. “‘hustlers,’ ‘players,’ or ‘pimps’”) (Hickler & Auerswald, 2009, p. 828) which required them to be on the streets making money. White young men were more likely to embrace a homeless identification and engaged in survival strategies like panhandling, loitering, fare evasion, or theft (Hickler & Auerswald, 2009). White and African American young women experiencing homelessness identified sex work as a way to increase income, but African American young women were more likely to have a pimp (Hickler & Auerswald, 2009). The stigma related to engagement in sex work is significant (Kidd, 2007).

**Risk.** The literature reviewed described the danger faced by youth when they engage in survival strategies like theft, drug selling, and sex work (Kidd, 2007; Hickler & Auerswald, 2009; McCarthy & Hagan, 2005). Youth experiencing homelessness were also at higher risk of physical or sexual assault and exploitation (Kidd, 2007). Youth who engaged in survival strategies often did not apply the potential risks to themselves. They believed they knew more or could avoid potential harm (McCarthy & Hagan, 2005). With a decrease in the fulfillment of basic needs, and an increase in the length of time a youth was homeless, the willingness to engage in risky behavior rose (Kidd, 2007; McCarthy & Hagan, 2005). The perception of danger was often the main variable that appeared to reduce engagement in survival strategies, except among those who thought they can beat the odds (McCarthy & Hagan, 2005).
McCarthy and Hagan (2005) identified typical deterrents for and costs of engaging in criminal activity (identified in this proposal as survival strategies) as: “formal sanctions…informal sanctions… commitment to normative values and beliefs… and the guilt or shame that norm violations and sanctions may elicit” (p. 1069). They discovered that “economic and social marginalization minimized a person’s ties to normative society and could encourage the view that crime was a legitimate means for meeting one’s needs” (McCarthy & Hagan, 2005, p. 1069), and establish the idea that engagement with peer offenders and the commonplace nature of crime due to circumstance removed the guilt and shame of a norm violation. Per McCarthy and Hagan (2005), formal sanctions (incarceration) and informal sanctions (rejection by family or friends) had limited impact, while fear of retribution by a victim or other community member had more influence on dissuading a youth from committing a crime.

Yoder et al. (2014) identified trauma as another significant risk factor for youth experiencing homelessness and for their potential involvement with the criminal justice system. A young person who has experienced physical abuse was most likely to be involved with the criminal justice system. Other connections with physical abuse included difficulties with emotional regulation, diminished coping skills, increased risk of mental health symptoms, and an internalization of modeled behaviors that were then used on others. Yoder et al. (2014) stated that “the broader juvenile justice system lacks understanding of the role trauma plays in the etiology of delinquent behaviors and how rehabilitative efforts can be enhanced through trauma-informed approaches” (p. 142).

**Criminal identity.** Young men of color are disproportionately involved at all levels of the criminal justice system, including police stops, arrests, and incarceration (Brunson & Miller, 2006; Rios, 2006; Stevens-Watkins & Graves, 2011). Many young men of color experience
stigma and criminalization as an everyday occurrence (Rios, 2006). The literature on criminal identity can shed light on the experience of youth identified on the DT100. Rios (2006) interviewed a group of youth who had non-violent charges and yet were receiving intensive services that seemed more appropriate for involvement in serious crimes. The youth were monitored at school, home, and a recreational center, and were required to meet weekly with a probation officer. The probation officer was located at the recreation center, which increased the public awareness of the young men’s misdeeds. Rios (2006) noted, “The youth felt on an everyday level, their lives were being defined and controlled through discourse and practices of crime and policies related to crime even when they were not committing crime” (p. 43-44).

Youth on the DT100 are also monitored by probation officers; while this monitoring is perhaps not as close as that given to the youth in Rios’ study (2006), it is possible they feel some of the same pressure.

The imposition of criminal identity or intent arises in many ordinary activities of life. Youth gathering on the street can increase the likelihood of police involvement. Even a youth’s neighborhood can put her or him at more risk. Brunson and Miller (2006) stated that “They [the youth interviewed] believed officers viewed them as criminals because they were young Black men living in poor neighborhoods” (p. 541). This connects directly to youth on the DT100. Youth experiencing homelessness often gather downtown on the streets and in the skyways for safety or warmth. They often have nowhere else to go. The community’s discomfort with groups of youth in areas of business forces interactions with police officers, reinforcing the notion that the youth are criminals or are engaging in criminal activity.

A complex constellation of issues faces youth who are identified on the DT100. The current literature only scratches the surface of understanding. The proposed program of research
seeks to understand how criminal justice professionals, social service professionals, and youth on
the DT100 perceive the list. It seems clear that further study of the use of lists would be
beneficial to the body of knowledge for social workers and criminal justice professionals, as
would a better understanding of the stigma attached to being identified on a list. This study
sought to explore the views of professionals who interact with youth identified on the DT100—a
current, contemporary, and prominent use of one such list.

**Conceptual Framework**

Race and worldview are two significant matters for youth on the DT100. Most of the
youth are youth of color, and present a survival worldview based on their homeless experience.
Both criminal justice and social service professionals are primarily but not exclusively white, and
come from a “privileged” worldview, one in which they have experienced support (financial
and/or emotional) and through which they see the world. This study engaged several
professionals of color, which enriched the data collected.

Three tenets of critical race theory and of Wilmes’ (2014) survival worldview framework
were applied to aid in the development of interview questions and guide the process of data
analysis. The tenets of critical race theory include everyday racism, differential racialization, and
intersectionality (Tyson, 2015). The tenets of survival worldview include needs, systems, and
locus of control (Wilmes, 2014).

**Everyday racism.** Everyday racism is defined as the practices, interactions, and
experiences encountered regularly by people of color, including the denial of racism by whites,
paying more for goods and services, being ignored or under surveillance, a white-dominant
narrative in education (e.g. the lens through which history is taught), negative comments or
assumptions, and exclusion (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Trahan & Lemberger, 2014; Tyson,
Youth on the DT100, primarily being youth of color, are therefore regularly exposed to both overt and covert racist practices.

**Differential racialization.** Differential racialization involves the shifting of stereotypes about people of color to suit the needs of the dominant culture (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Criminalization of people of color is a prime example of differential racialization (Alexander, 2013; Norris & Billings, 2017; Welch, 2007). The imposition of a criminal identity promotes fear and distrust of people of color. Persons identifying with the dominant culture perceive criminals as deserving of arrests, harassment, housing discrimination, and limited employment opportunities. Identification on the DT100 indicates chronic criminal involvement, which can encourage a criminal label. Youth on the DT100 are known by their crimes rather than their circumstances. Survival strategies like hustling, stealing, and dealing are often framed as severe crimes, reinforcing a criminal label.

**Intersectionality.** The term *intersectionality* was created by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in 1989 (Kennedy, 2011). Each person’s identity is unique and complex. Race is not the only way a person might identify him or herself, but is rather one of many intersections that encompass class, political orientation, sexual orientation, gender expression, personal history, and generational history (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Tyson, 2015). Youth on the DT100 have multiple facets to their identities, but the DT100 strategy focuses only on two—age and criminality.

**Needs.** To meet their needs, youth on the DT100 engage in survival strategies like theft and hustling. Survival strategies like these could be considered an expression of “taking what you want to get what you need” (Wilmes, 2014, handout). Hustling, for example, might include knowing which agencies assist with transportation. A youth might gather the available tokens
and bus passes, then sell or trade them for needed items (i.e. food, money, cigarettes, etc.). When a staff person realizes “the hustle,” the youth’s behavior might be defined as abusing the system (privileged worldview), when in the eyes of the youth it is resourceful (survival worldview). Survival and privileged worldviews regularly collide when youth attempt to access systems.

**Systems.** Wilmes (2014) posits that youth experiencing homelessness perceive the systems they encounter (i.e. criminal justice, government agencies, educational systems, social service agencies etc.) as broken and unhelpful. They lack trust in systems they perceive as denying access or providing unfair treatment. Wilmes (2014) maintains that people working in privileged systems generally trust that the systems work in everyone’s favor. Youth on the DT100, however, are often disqualified for education, employment, financial assistance, and housing because of their criminal histories.

**Locus of control.** According to Wilmes (2014), youth with a survival worldview experience an external locus of control, both developmentally and circumstantially. This often presents as an inability or unwillingness to take responsibility for one’s actions. For a privileged worldview, an internal locus of control presents as an understanding of how one’s actions impact others (Wilmes, 2014). Youth experiencing homelessness can experience a loss of control through trauma and exploitation, involvement in the criminal justice and foster care systems, and limited options for safe, stable living environments. This loss of control can in turn create a limited capacity for taking responsibility.

This conceptual framework guides the use of a phenomenological method of data collection and analysis. A phenomenological study is set up to “…explore not only what participants experience but also the situations and conditions surrounding those experiences”
(Padgett, 2017, p. 41). Professionals perceive the DT100 and the youth identified on the DT100 from their own worldviews and experiences with systemic racism.

**Methods**

This article is the first part of a larger program of research that hopes to include the voices of youth who have been identified on a list based on their criminal justice involvement. This qualitative and exploratory study focused on the perceptions of professionals toward the DT100 strategy and the youth identified on the DT100 list. Future studies will include the perceptions of youth and adults on the DT100.

**Sampling**

Purposeful sampling was used to identify potential study participants. For this study, purposeful sampling was defined as the identification of specific individuals who represent both the uniqueness of their position and an informed understanding of the phenomenon under study. The purposeful sampling strategy that best fit the study was criterion sampling. Potential participants were recruited based on the following criteria: either direct involvement with people identified on the DT100, or a close association with the DT100 (i.e. oversight of the DT100 program, assistance with developing the profiles for DT100 meetings, or supervision of others who work directly with the DT100 participants).

**Data Collection**

This study was approved by the University of St. Thomas’s Institutional Review Board and all participants provided informed consent. Participants were recruited through email invitations and in-person requests at DT100 or Court Watch meetings. The DT100 team meets weekly to discuss youth and adults who have pending court hearings or whose cases will be presented at the Court Watch meeting. Court Watch meetings are held monthly to discuss youth
and adults on the DT100, and include a larger group of community stakeholders. Interviews were held in the participant’s workplaces. Digital recordings were made of each interview and then transcribed. Questions were developed by the researcher, and addressed demographics, current position and involvement with the program, types of criminal histories and offences encountered, impact of the list on the research participant and the youth, over-representation of people of color on the list, and a “magic wand” question. This question encouraged participants to consider options for change without boundaries of time, money, or resources. Questions were not tested for reliability nor validity as they were exploratory in nature. A possible limitation in the data collection was the duration of interviews. Most interviews were 30-40 minutes in length. The response rate was 17 out of 21, which is high for a qualitative study and indicates a willingness on the part of DT100 team members to engage in dialogue about the strategy.

Data Analysis

A combination of phenomenology and content analysis were used to analyze the data. Phenomenology includes the experience of interest and the broader circumstances that surround it (Padgett, 2017). The phenomenon being studied was professionals’ perceptions of the DT100 list and of the youth on the list. The factors that might have influenced participants’ views of youth identified on the DT100 included everyday racism, differential racialization, and intersectionality as identified in CRT (Tyson, 2015), along with potential worldview differences related to needs, systems, and locus of control (Wilmes, 2014). These factors were the framework used to provide one possible interpretation of the themes identified during the content analysis process.

The content analysis process, illustrated by Padgett (2017), included an initial review of transcriptions and field notes using an inductive approach. The focus of this review was on the
major themes and sub themes arising from the data. A second review of transcripts and field notes employed a deductive selective approach, seeking responses that reinforced the main themes and responses that diverged from them. A third review identified exemplar quotes that highlighted themes and sub themes. A second coder was engaged to increase the reliability of the themes and sub themes identified (Haight & Bidwell, 2016).

Protection of Human Participants

The study application required an expedited review as there were no vulnerable populations included as participants. It was approved through the Institutional Review Board at the University of St. Thomas. The primary researcher was employed at one of the sites of social service professionals, and supervised three of the potential participants. A research assistant was engaged to mitigate issues of possible coercion. The research assistant contacted participants from the researcher’s place of employment, completed interviews and transcriptions, and deidentified data to safeguard any participants who chose not to participate. Identifiable information was removed from transcriptions and field notes. Codes were assigned to each of the 16 participants, and all digital recordings were deleted. Participants reviewed, discussed, and signed an informed consent form prior to participation, and a copy was offered to each participant. Interview questions focused primarily on routine encounters in each participant’s work and their thoughts about the DT100. Demographic information was the only personal information requested.

Results

The study included interviews with key informants on the DT100 team. The themes identified from the transcripts included: criminal vs. survival behaviors, intent vs. practice, and intersectionality of experience. Across the different professions these themes were consistent, but
the perception or view of them shifted. This section will begin with a review of the demographic data collected.

Sample

Twenty-one key informants of the DT100 team were recruited and 17 agreed to an interview. Of the four who did not participate, two declined due to work constraints and not feeling equipped to respond; and two did not respond to email requests for participation. The 17 participants were divided into groups based on their roles with the DT100 team: legal, police officer, and social service professional. The legal team included a prosecutor, probation officers, public defenders, and a paralegal. Police officers represented the city police department and the transit police. Social service professionals included persons from two agencies serving people experiencing homelessness and from an arts organization that works with youth experiencing homelessness. The study participants do not fully represent all the people associated with legal services, police, and social services who may come in contact with youth on the DT100; this group, however, had the most knowledge of the intent behind the program and of the youth identified.

Participant demographics included the following: 10 participants identified as female, seven male; 12 identified as white or Caucasian, five as persons of color (African American, Latino, and African and Native American); education and age were varied. Social service professionals were predominantly white and female, police officers were predominantly male and people of color, and the legal team was predominantly white and female. Three of the five social service professionals held Masters’ degrees, four of the six police officers held a Bachelors’ degree, and four of the six members of the legal team held either a Masters’ or Juris
Doctor degree. By age, 29% of participants were 20–29 and 35% were 50–59; the 30–39 and 40–49 ranges each accounted for 18%.

It was beneficial to have an almost equal number of participants in each employment category, as it gave depth and breadth to the information gathered. What is not evident in the demographic description is the diversity of positions among the legal team, which included a prosecutor, probation officers, defense attorneys, and a para-professional. These positions are on different sides of young person’s case and have different goals. The prosecutor is often on the side of individual/community safety. Public defenders are advocating for a young person’s rights and the least severe intervention, and probation officers are charged with supervising a young person’s fulfillment of court-ordered requirements. The diversity in perspective and role on the team created a less cohesive set of responses as compared to the two other groups.

**Themes**

Three themes emerged from the data: criminal vs. survival behaviors, intent vs. practice, and intersectionality of experience. Criminal vs. survival behaviors demonstrates the beliefs participants hold related to the crimes identified. Intent vs. practice expresses the differing views participants hold related to the intent of the DT100 strategy and the resulting practices—i.e., how participants experience the convergence and divergence of intent and practice. Intersectionality of experience explores participant perception of the many systems and circumstances youth on the DT100 are exposed to, and the impact of that exposure.

**Criminal vs. survival behaviors.** Examples of interview questions that contributed information to this theme included: the character of offences (i.e. criminal, survival, youthful pranks), what participants first think when encountering youth identified on the DT100, and whether a participant identifies a youth by the list. There was agreement about types of crimes
youth identified on the DT100 engaged in, with the top ones being disorderly conduct, drug offenses, and theft. Other lower-level crimes included fare evasion, loitering, public urination, smoking in a transit station, and trespassing. Felony-level crimes were reported as being on the rise, and included burglaries, assault, first-degree aggravated robbery, and drug possession.

Perceived reasons for the increase in felonies varied.

The participant groups expressed differing perceptions of what constituted criminal versus survival behavior. Members of each group could see survival as the root cause of many of the felonies. One police officer indicated that youth might perceive criminal activity as “the only way for them to survive out here, to make a little money.” A member of the legal team noted the ease with which a youth can attain a felony conviction: “we occasionally see people who are trespassed from businesses for prior thefts; who go back to that business and all of a sudden it’s a burglary because you’re in that business without permission.” A police officer echoed that sentiment, saying that “with some of the crimes you can just about do anything (e.g. certain drug sales and possession or car theft for a place to sleep) and catch a felony…it doesn’t justify what they are doing but I can see the rise in felonies.” A social service professional stated that livability crimes are the ones we talk about in the meetings…the more acceptable crimes.

Any felony is not viewed as part of survival life. When I think of crimes of survival, that’s when I think of the felony-level offenses, whether it’s theft or burglary. There are sometimes violent offenses but usually it’s just coming from a way to survive or get some money to make it through.

Another social service professional stated that “so even if it was more serious charges, I feel like the root of it was survival.”
Other group members focused on the rise in violent offenses among this age group. One member of the legal team stated that

It’s hard for me to think about why they would be doing (this) because a lot of them come up from behind someone, hit them in the head, go through their pockets, and run away…to me that’s not survival on the street, that’s just making a buck.

A police officer characterized the more violent crimes as

…criminal behavior. We’ve all been kids at one time or another, but I don’t think we’ve all robbed somebody, or pointed a gun at somebody, or threatened to kill somebody…it’s not just typical things that you’d expect from a young person.

A legal team member indicated a desire to separate out youth who commit survivability crimes from those who commit violent offenses, which she indicated are linked more to gang affiliation than survival. A police officer noted that “A lot of them are just kids doing their things, it just depends on the level of the crime. When they are violent crimes they need to be punished for it.”

Central to this topic was the language used to identify young people and the concern over labeling them. Among the study participants, police officers commonly referred to youth as kids, youth, juveniles, and offenders, legal team members used terms like client, youth, kids, young adult, and chronic offender, and social service professionals used the terms folks, youth, young people, and participants most frequently. While these terms may seem common jargon for each of the different groups, it is important to consider how language can separate or devalue people. Labels of any kind create a sense of othering that can interfere with and influence our work, as shown here:

I kind of treat every interaction I go into (as) a new interaction. With that in mind it’s always in the back of my head that I know this person is a DT100 offender, I know that
they’re a repeat offender and they’re kind of a constant nuisance in the particular area…I do enforce their offences a little bit more heavily because that’s the idea behind the DT100 program is to get them the dedicated prosecution and other social service help…it just lets somebody else know that this person is down here doing these kinds of things.

Labeling was brought up by social service professionals and members of the legal team. Participants suggested that the crimes committed by the youth often developed from a root of survival, but were misinterpreted as a criminal mindset. Age was also offered as a mitigating factor in the identification of the criminality of youths’ behavior. Concerns included marking “these kids as chronic offenders”; “I feel like it’s a scarlet letter (being on the DT100)”; “…I think they are too young to be on a DT100 list…how are you a top offender at 18 or 19?...don’t give them a label at 18”; it’s “just another label that we throw on young people”; and having the DT100 label “…keeps people from believing in them and keeps people from understanding them. Understanding that they could be different…. …” Participants who spoke of developmental issues indicated the extensive trauma experienced by many youth on the DT100 and the effect of this on brain development. One social service professional provided an excellent summation: “…think about how the brain isn’t even fully developed by 25, and when you experience trauma, that impacts the development of the brain, that executive functioning, that ability to plan, that ability to think ahead…impulse control.”

Every participant pointed to homelessness as an issue for youth on the DT100. As possible reasons for homelessness, social service professionals brought out issues of possible abuse or neglect, and police officers highlighted the breakdown of the family and the lack of supervision for young people. Legal teams often had access to a broader history of each youth, depending on their system’s involvement, that could draw a clearer picture of a youth’s
homelessness. One member of the legal team detailed a few reasons that a young person might be out on the streets,

    Some come from what would appear to be happy home lives, they don’t report any sort of violence in the home, just starting out with the wrong people, maybe started using controlled substances and that’s what led to it, and others just had a wrecked childhood from the beginning.

A police officer reported hearing from a young person “I’m just doing this to feed my family,” and said “I understand this but it’s still illegal.” A young person’s perceived need to be on the streets to create income or because there is nowhere else to go increases the likelihood of interactions with police. Many participants indicated the importance of having more places for youth to go so they are not out on the streets and therefore getting into trouble.

**Intent vs. practice.** In this study, “intent” was related to the original goal of the strategy—to reduce recidivism and increase stability—while “practice” was linked to the ways in which the strategy was carried out. Examples of interview questions shedding light on this theme included: what it means to be identified on this list, what the participants think of the list as a strategy and in practice, and the magic wand question. There was general agreement about the intent of the DT100 strategy, and enthusiasm about identifying young people to help them access more resources: “…I feel really good about living in a city that does that.” The concerns identified were related to the practice of the DT100. Among the social service professionals and a few members of the legal team, targeting was a significant concern. When asked what should be changed in the DT100 strategy or what else could be done to help the youth, there was considerable diversity among the answers.
Most participants saw the intent of the DT100 as identifying youth and adults who commit low-level crimes and have frequent involvement with the criminal justice system, and connecting them to needed services. Many valued the ability to identify people. Police officers, for example, appreciated the DT100 list and the meetings, finding them helpful for identification of youth and adults on the DT100. They saw the strategy as a helpful way to pass along messages from probation officers, check in with probation officers about plans, and connect youth to services. Social service professionals found the team aspect helpful. One social service professional stated, “Having the whole team come together definitely streamlines communication” and “The purpose can be beneficial to a community that has been overlooked.” The legal team had a more mixed reaction: a probation officer stated that “I think what it takes is a concerted effort to all be on the same page, bring in folks from all agencies, and work together to make certain things a priority and make them work.” while a public defender stated that “…it is a tool for people who are willing and looking for a change.” Probation officers appreciated the flexibility they had with youth, including using a harm reduction approach, having more time to develop relationships with youth, and the ability to assist youth in getting directly into services.

Participants also identified issues related to practice, including a shift in policing that reduced the use of tickets and arrests for common livability issues like fare evasion; the stigma of being identified on the DT100 and the potential for targeting those youth; and the over-use of techniques like geographic restriction (in which a person is banned from entering specific sections of downtown). The practice of sign and release, in which the youth is not arrested for a lower-level warrant but instead given a new court date and released, along with the relaxing of arrests for livability crimes, has caused concern among some of the police officers and legal team members. Concern was voiced over the relaxing of what one participant deemed “the quality of
life crimes and misdemeanor warrants.” He stated that the sign and release warrants and the lack of pressure he could place on “chronic quality of life violators” made his job more difficult and left the public frustrated that police were not responding. A legal team member indicated that fare evasion is no longer enforced as strongly as it was in the beginning of the DT100. A member of the legal team summed up some issues of concern, stating that “…if you are responding to less day-to-day nuisance behavior does that in and of itself pave the way for increased nuisance behavior to then escalate to other greater behaviors?”

On the other side of this issue, a few police officers and a member of the legal team indicated the need to work with youth and to limit the arrest focus to more serious issues, indicating that there are offenses that are not worth an arrest or criminal charge. Trespassing was commonly identified as something that did not seem criminal. Four of the officers indicated the effectiveness of pulling youth aside to talk with them about a situation. One stated, “When you separate these kids, you get them away from their cronies, they’re totally different people, and I think that is HUGE.” Interestingly, all four are officers of color. One officer summed it up this way, “…I try to explain that to them and they just sit and listen. There’s no rejection, I think what happens is because it’s coming from a black man. So, I think it holds a lot of water.”

Youth and adults were not notified of their inclusion on the DT100 list. Police officers and most of the legal team were under the impression that the youth had no idea they were on the list. Here is an example of an exchange between a police officer and a youth:

“(Youth) how do you know my name? (Officer) Everybody knows your name. You shouldn’t be hanging out down here because your probation officer…(Youth) How do you know my PO? (Officer) I’m just telling you, you should probably call your probation officer.”
Social service professionals, in contrast, noted that youth engaged in services were very aware they were on the list, with one noting the following from an adult participant: “Well my name’s on a list, everybody gets to see my name, everybody gets to hear about my life….” Another social service professional offered an example from a Vimeo, in which the youth said “Sometimes when I did bad, like steal from stores and things like that, yeah, that’s my fault; but don’t arrest me for walking down the sidewalk and minding my own business. Don’t arrest me for that” (Kulture Klub, 2015, Time Stamp 2:14).

Thirteen of the 17 participants indicated either directly (n=8) or indirectly (n=5) that youth were targeted as a result of their involvement on the DT100. In addition to the term “targeting,” they used words and phrases including community bullying, zeroing in on problems, harassing, being more visible, and putting a stamp on them. An example of an indirect form of targeting was a comment made by a legal team member to a youth: “Look, I don’t know if you realize this (being on the DT100), but any time your name is on a police report, I get an email. I get notified.” A direct acknowledgement of targeting was offered by a police officer who stated, “I think sometimes they might be targeted more…you know somebody is on the Downtown top 100 and I guess maybe they get looked at a little different.” A legal team member offered some advice she gave her clients: “I know who is targeted. I can explain to a client, ‘they know who you are, they know where you hang out, they know where you live. Have you thought about moving?’”

Geographic restriction (geo-restriction) is a tool used by the DT100 team to restrict youth and adults who have had several offenses in a specific geographic area, and who do not live there, from the area. In terms of the DT100, this pertains mainly to the downtown zone, and has caused difficulties in the past, as many services frequented by youth identified on the DT100
were in the restricted area. Provisions were made to carve out specific service areas, and youth traveling through downtown by bus are not picked up for violating their geo-restriction if they are at a bus stop. Social service professionals in the study expressed concerns over the use of geo-restriction: 1) the long timespans youth were required to stay out of downtown (six months to three years), and 2) the apparent over-use of the restriction with youth of color. One social service professional stated that “Geo-restriction is very unevenly handed out to people of color. I’ve never had a white person I’ve worked with been given a geo-restriction.” Geo-restrictions were halted in 2016 and the first half of 2017 to re-evaluate their use. A legal team member indicated that “There will be a tool coming back into place, the geographic restrictions, those will be coming back. People hate them. I can guarantee that if you abide by the geo-restriction, the reduction in (a youth’s) cases is astronomical…. While it is true that a young person’s cases can be dropped if they abide by the geographic restriction, a crucial question arises: what does a young person learn from the restriction? The restriction is in place to change a person’s patterns of behavior, to get them to stay out of trouble by staying out of downtown. What it does not do, however, is help young people understand how their behavior might increase their risk for police involvement or engage them in services that might improve their stability and thereby reduce their need for engagement in survival strategies.

The study question that garnered the most diverse answers was, “If you had a magic wand and could change anything about the DT100, what would it be?” The diversity of answers was extensive, and few answers were repeated. The two responses that were repeated by participants were increasing services available to youth and removing youth from the area. The list included:

- Creating a recreation or youth engagement center
- Arresting people for payable misdemeanor offenses
Developing a holistic way of choosing people for list that is more about need and readiness for change

Facilitating a conversation between police officers and youth on the DT100 to discover best practices for working together

Getting rid of the list

Providing housing – especially felony-friendly housing

Letting youth know they are on the list

Getting more youth involved in specialty courts

Providing a greater number of positive role models

Providing more services (mental health, chemical health, psychiatric, intensive)

Making sure there are people in positions of power who care and will get things moving

Taking youth out of the area, perhaps to camps or…and having services available to help them change their heading in life

One of the most intriguing answers, and a suggestion difficult to achieve, was offered by one of the police officers: “I would take away the music…because it would definitely stop them cursing out the kids, it would definitely stop promoting violence.” A viable option came from a member of the legal team: “I would find a way to partner with more community advocacy groups and look at this recidivism on low-level offenses as a livability and social justice issue rather than a criminal issue.”

**Intersectionality of Experience.** Youth on the DT100 encounter intersections within systems and related to experiences. Interview questions that explored this theme addressed knowledge of a youth’s history and participant interactions with youth on the DT100. Participants noted the young persons’ involvement in child protective services, foster care, and juvenile justice. The youth are, however, also affected by the racism that is endemic in our community. The lack of overt discussion about race related to the DT100 list could be construed as evidence of the implicit racism within the criminal justice system. Detachment is a familiar experience for people experiencing homelessness. Detachment could show through a rejection of societal norms or a feeling of rejection by the community. Participants identified many circumstances where the safety and rights of the community (i.e. tourists, workers, and residents)
were perceived as of higher value than those of the youth. Due to many negative experiences, youth experiencing homelessness often display a sense of mistrust of systems and people. Youth on the DT100 display this mistrust, and experience rejection from the place they consider home because of the restrictions placed on their movements, the perceived lack of inclusion in safety or rights decisions, and the community’s response to their presence in the downtown area. These experiential intersections become difficult to separate as program staff create intervention plans.

Through the Computer Assisted Police Reporting System (CAPRS) or relationship development during service delivery, social service professionals and members of the legal team often had a window into a young person’s past. Police officers also learned of the youths’ pasts through interactions and conversations on the streets. Phrases used by participants to describe young people’s histories included: broken homes, lack of trust in parents, a parent in prison, limited contact with family, abuse, neglect, trauma, lacking family structure, kids having kids, and lack of support (emotional and financial).

The topic of race was noticeably absent in conversations about youth on the DT100. When asked why there was an over-representation of youth of color on the DT100, police officers pointed to breakdowns in family systems and to differences in the downtown and suburban populations, indicating that there are more people of color in the downtown area. One police officer noted that “we can only police what is happening in the area.” Several officers explained that the process of choosing the DT100 list involved names, dates of birth, and number of arrests, and several stated that race was not an issue in the DT100 strategy. “I don’t believe race has any part in how we create the list,” stated a police officer.
Social service professionals spoke of intergenerational poverty, oppression, and systemic racism through the overrepresentation of people of color in the criminal justice system and in youth homelessness. One social service professional noted, “I think there are a lot of disparities in how, particularly, young African American men are treated downtown.” Members of the legal team were split in their thoughts about race and the DT100. Thoughts ran the gamut from “I don’t see race,” to understanding racism as an issue and being overwhelmed by it because it seemed too large to be easily addressed, to noting the institutional nature of racism related to poverty and law enforcement. One member of the legal team summed up the larger issue of race by stating,

I think that people who call the police on youth of color do it because they are conditioned to believe [the youth] are going to be trouble or that there is going to be trouble…they are brought to the attention of police by people who don’t see them as anything but color.

A member of the legal team indicated the importance of having discussions about who is on the DT100 list beyond their ages and number of contacts with the criminal justice system.

Three participants (two on the legal team and one social service professional) broached the subject of how people experiencing homelessness are devalued in society, which carries over to the DT100. Participants stated that “Our clients don’t feel a part of the whole community”; “They are not welcome in the city…”; and “They don’t have value in this community anymore.” Each participant was speaking to a different issue faced by people experiencing homelessness. The first was related to cleaning up the city for the Super Bowl. There was increased concern for the safety of people attending the Super Bowl, and a spot light was shone on sexual exploitation, but, according to a social service professional, the homeless—who are also victimized—were not
considered. The second statement addressed geo-restriction and the many hoops youth are required to jump through to complete their probation. According to the member of the legal team, most do not complete probation and “wind up serving their entire sentence on the installment plan.” The third statement related to a recent murder of a homeless woman in our community. She was on the DT100 and had been represented by this member of the legal team, who asked, “What did we do for her? She ended up being murdered in a homeless camp…”

Systems and situations collide for youth identified on the DT100. Shining through the many complexities are the youth, with resilience and plans for their futures. Several social service professionals spoke to the strengths of the youth with whom they work: “incredibly smart…they had a lot of street sense and survival skills…. They were brilliant…it was fascinating the amount of insight they had.” “I see it as, this is a survivor, let’s see what we can do.” “They are so resilient, that’s the biggest thing. If we just break down who these youth are, they’re just really resilient people who may be facing significant prison time but they’re still working toward their goals, that’s incredible to me.” While not every participant identified strengths of the youth on the DT100, overwhelmingly the participants wanted to be a part of moving youth in a positive direction and out of the criminal justice system.

Discussion

All three groups of participants agreed that homelessness was a significant issue for youth on the DT100, but differed in their interpretations of the reasons youth are homeless. Police officers identified problems within family systems. Social service professionals noted systemic issues that create and sustain racist practices. The legal team was divided between systemic issues and balancing community demands with youth needs.
All three groups also agreed that the intent of the program was noble and has had some success; opinions here differed in terms of the methods used in practice. Police officers appreciated that, after DT100 meetings in which youth photos were shown, they were able to identify youth and connect them to services. Social service professionals thought the practice of identifying youth by their crimes created a negative view of young people. The breadth of roles represented on the legal team made consensus difficult. Prosecution and probation have many stakeholders to whom they are responsible for positive outcomes—the community is looking for a reduction in crime, youth are seeking a fair outcome, and social services are advocating for leniency as they work on stability. Public defenders expressed their roles as advocates for the youth, and perceived the DT100 strategy as a set up for youth to fail. Specifically, they identified the amount of work required to be successful on probation. In their haste to stay out of jail, youth will choose three years of probation with many conditions, conditions with which they are not prepared to comply.

A surprising finding was the variety of ideas for improving the DT100 strategy. These ideas arose organically during the interview and were often repeated in answer to the magic wand question. It was assumed by this researcher that most participants would talk about housing, but this was not the case. Ideas that seemed easiest to implement were an increased development and use of problem-solving courts with youth who committed livability crimes, and the creation of a more holistic approach to creating a list that takes the focus off criminal behavior and places it, perhaps, on readiness for change, a young person’s developmental stage, and/or level of need.

The study findings had many links to the reviewed literature. Three of the stronger connections were problem-solving courts, perceptions of professionals, and identification on a
list. Members of the legal team and social service professionals echoed ideas in the literature about the potential for more positive outcomes with increased use of problem-solving courts. As Berman and Feinblatt (2001) and Casey and Rottman (2005) identified, individualized approaches and increased support early in a young person’s involvement in the criminal justice system might improve outcomes and stop the revolving door. Many participants agreed that jail is not always the answer. When young people go to jail they are not committing crimes, yet time in jail is not necessarily helping them change their behavior, nor is it increasing their stability. Young people exit the prison system in the same situation in which they entered, but have acquired a distinct disadvantage for gaining employment and a stable living situation.

The literature on RSOs indicated a difference in perspective on the part of the criminal justice and mental health professionals, showing that different roles with an offender, impact thoughts on harsher penalties or on the ability offenders to change behavior. Mustaine et al. (2015) found that police officers looked more harshly on RSOs than probation officers or mental health professionals. This study, in contrast, found that perspectives toward youth and their behavior fell along criminal vs. survival lines, and were very mixed among police officers and the legal team. Most likely this is because of the nature of the crimes youth commit, their age, and the goals of the DT100 strategy. An emphasis on relationship development among many of the DT100 team created sustained contact with youth. DT100 team members also had more access to the histories of the young people. It is possible that the combination of time spent with the youth and an understanding of their history encouraged empathy on the part of the participants.

While this study did not directly include youth voices, several participants spoke to the stigma related to being on the DT100—a subject also addressed in the literature on RSOs
(Mustaine et al., 2015). It is uncomfortable and seemingly unfair to be publicly on display for crimes one has committed. The crimes of the youth on the DT100 are not at the level of a sex offender and the list is not as public, but the information shared at meetings can move into the private realm when mental health or chemical health issues are discussed. The question of how and why information is shared in meetings and whether youth are fully aware of being on the list was asked by many participants. Unlike the sex offender registry, youth and adults on the DT100 may not be aware of their inclusion on the list. When a youth is approached on the street and told about a housing opportunity or told to call their probation officer, how do they interpret this interaction if they are unaware of being on the DT100?

**Effectiveness of the Conceptual Framework**

This study’s conceptual framework included three tenets of critical race theory and three tenets from a survival worldview framework. CRT fit well with the data presented. Participants’ identification of targeting and labeling indicated the presence of everyday racism. The over-representation of people of color on the DT100 suggested a form of differential racialization in our society. Intersectionality was denoted in the complex experiences youth have had with systems associated with their histories, homelessness, and race. Issues related to race were not shared by all participants, but the topic remains important as we consider who is regularly chosen for the DT100 list. Reflecting on the responses related to race (i.e. “it’s who is downtown,” “people of color are noticed more,” “we are socialized to see trouble”), many questions arise. Why are so many people of color, primarily African Americans and Native Americans, involved in the criminal justice system and experiencing homelessness? When did homelessness become commonplace and acceptable for young people? How do we shift perceptions from distrust to engagement on all sides?
The tenets of the survival worldview framework were less clearly identified in the responses to the interview questions. This framework may be better suited to a study of the youth themselves. Need was clearly identified by the participants, and youth voices were reported related to doing what is needed to care for self and family. While distrust of systems was less evident in the results of the study, it could be inferred from the limited success youth have on probation, as some members of the legal team identified. Locus of control was evident in some of the participants’ views of taking responsibility for one’s actions. A worldview that begins from a place of receiving support often embraces responsibility for self. One can infer that a young person who has not experienced a strong base of support may look externally for responsibility for behavior. These are weaker links that only future research can hope to strengthen.

Implications of this research for improvements to the DT100 included: increasing the use of problem-solving courts, using a holistic set of criteria for inclusion on the list, and involving social services earlier in the process (at first appearance). Practice implications included an emphasis on relationship development and harm reduction at all levels of intervention. Finally, the over-representation of youth of color should be an integral part of the discussion of work with youth on the DT100.

The social work profession has long emphasized the importance of engagement, trust building, and relationship development. Harm reduction and holistic practices are more recent additions. As social workers increase their interactions and involvement with multi-disciplinary teams, these tools and approaches can be shared. Problem-solving courts are a perfect place for social workers to engage people in services that could potentially reduce recidivism before it becomes a DT100-level problem.
Strengths and Limitations

This study was exploratory in nature. One strength of an exploratory study is the depth of information gathered. The number and breadth of positions of the participants was another strength. It was encouraging that so many professionals, especially police officers, were willing to participate in the study. Limitations included the specificity of the DT100 and its location. This makes replication improbable and generalization of findings problematic. In the end, as often happens with qualitative studies, there are more questions than answers. A final limitation is the focus on professional voices. Most participants did not have specific examples of what youth thought about identification on a criminal justice-based list. To understand the true impact of this type of identification, it is important to speak with those who have lived experience, and this leads to suggestions for future studies.

This study was a part of a larger planned program of research that will include both youth and adults on the DT100, and will use a mixed methods approach to compare their lived experiences with recidivism data collected by the city. It is hoped that the culmination of the research program will be a series of learning sessions for youth, adults, and professionals related to the DT100. The learning sessions will be an opportunity for these different groups to come together, listen to one another, and develop best practices for working together.

Conclusion

This exploratory study set out to identify the perceptions of professionals toward the DT100 strategy and the youth identified on the list, and explored issues of over-representation of people of color in the criminal justice system and in homelessness. The conceptual framework that best fit the main issues incorporated two theories, CRT and a survival worldview framework. Study participants represented a diverse professional field and included police
officers, probation officers, legal team members (prosecution and public defenders), and social services professionals. This diversity increased the extent of the results. Harm reduction and relationship development were highlighted as key practices for working with youth on the DT100. Changes that could positively impact the DT100 included developing holistic criteria for inclusion on the DT100, increasing the use of problem solving courts, and intentionally decreasing the over-representation of any group on the list. Future research is warranted to include the voices of all the stakeholders: youth, adults, professionals, and community members.
References


How Youth Identified on a Criminal Justice-based List are Viewed: Perceptions of Professionals

Lisa Borneman

Saint Catherine University | University of Saint Thomas
Abstract

Youth and adults with significant criminal justice involvement comprise the Downtown 100 list. A team of criminal justice and social service professionals work with the youth and adults to create stability and reduce recidivism. The goal of this study was to explore the team’s perceptions of the youth and list.

*Keywords:* criminal justice, homelessness, lists, survival, youth, identity
This PowerPoint presentation was given on Thursday, March 15, 2018. It was the second presentation in a paired paper session. I presented at the 35th Annual Conference of the Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors, held in Atlanta, GA. The conference was titled The Grand Challenges of Political Change. This presentation was based on the research study completed for Product 2 of my Banded Dissertation. The following slides and brief descriptions offer the reader a summary of the information presented.

Described the goal of my research project: to understand the perceptions of professionals.

Described the goal of the DT100: to increase stability and reduce recidivism.
Introduced myself, talked about where I am finishing my doctoral program and how this presentation fits in with my educational goals.
Briefly described the historical use of lists to warn the public of potentially dangerous persons.

Authors cited: Craun & Simmons, 2012.
Provided background information on the DT100 strategy: who is part of the team and how they engage youth identified on the list. Talked about the involuntary nature of the list. Defined livability crimes and survival strategies. Described the most common tools used for goal attainment (i.e. reduced recidivism and increased stability).

Described the achievements of the program after the first year:

- 74% reduction in crime related to the members on the DT100 list
- 70% increase in active participation with a probation officer
- 94% served their full probationary sentence without revocation
- 70% of those who received a geographic restriction stayed out of downtown
- 50% obtained or maintained housing

Described what is left to study: personal impact to those who are identified on the list.

Authors cited: Segal & Conroy, 2011.
Identified the most common circumstances for youth identified on the DT100: homelessness, youth of color, and engagement in survival strategies.

Identified the three main elements in the literature related to this population: stigma, risk, and criminal identity.

**Stigma.** Described the stigma associated with homelessness: personal responsibility, lack of protective factors, and internalization of negative societal beliefs.

**Risk.** Described the risk associated with engaging in survival strategies and the drive behind this engagement. Identified trauma as a risk factor that increases the likelihood of involvement in the criminal justice system.

**Criminal Identity.** Described the overrepresentation of young men of color at all levels of the criminal justice system. Described the everyday occurrence of stigma and criminalization of people of color based on where they live, where they congregate, and the people with whom they associate.

Described how these variables connect with the youth identified on the DT100.

Methodology

**Phenomenology.** Defined phenomenology and described my phenomenological approach.

**Data collection.** Described the data collection process.

**Data analysis.** Defined content analysis and how the interview data were analyzed.

**Theoretical Framework.** Described the tenets of critical race theory that were applicable to the study: Everyday racism, differential racialization, and intersectionality.

- **Everyday racism.** Defined everyday racism and how it impacts youth identified on the DT100.
- **Differential racialization.** Defined differential racialization and how it impacts youth identified on the DT100.
- **Intersectionality.** Defined intersectionality and how it impacts youth identified on the DT100.

Described the sample for the study and how representative this group was of the population who work with youth identified on the DT100.

### Demographics

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<th>Category</th>
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Described the demographics of the respondents.
Identified the themes discovered in the data: criminal vs. survival behaviors, intent vs. practice, and intersectionality of experience. Described the flow of the rest of the presentation: use of exemplar quotes as a depiction of the theme.
Described the types of crimes participants identified and the rise in felony level crimes among youth identified on the DT100.
Identified the consistent theme of youth engaging in survival-driven activities/crimes among participants. Participant differences appeared when discussing how to intervene.
Described the issue of labeling among social service professionals and legal team participants.

Discussed the problem of othering and how common language like the term “client” can create a power differential that “participant” might not. Described how this is similar to the use of “offender” with youth identified on the DT100.
Revisited the intent of the strategy. Described the opposing views on practices like “sign and release” or increasing leniency related to lower level crimes. Included Broken Windows theory from conference plenary session by Dr. Carol Anderson.
Identified the positive interactions that can happen as a part of this strategy. Noted the example of practice aligning with the intent of the DT100 strategy.
Described the concern social service professionals and some members of the legal team have about targeting. Identified that most participants acknowledged the youth are targeted as a part of the DT100 strategy.

“
I know who is targeted. I can explain to a client, ‘they know who you are, they know where you hang out, they know where you live.’

LEGAL PROFESSIONAL

Intent vs. Practice: Targeting
Defined geographic restriction and the impact it can have on a young person identified on the DT100.
Described the differences of perception of the overrepresentation of youth of color on the DT100 among the participants, primarily based on role.
Identified participants concerns for youth identified on the DT100 related to disconnection and estrangement from the community, provided examples.

Identified the strengths of youth as reported by participants.
DT100. Described ideas generated by participants for improving the DT100 strategy: development of holistic criteria for inclusion on the DT100, increased use of problem solving courts, and intentionally decreasing over-representation of any group on the list.

Practice. Identified the importance of: engagement, trust building, harm reduction, holistic practices, and relationship development in practice. Endorsed the inclusion of social workers in multi-disciplinary teams like the DT100 and in problem-solving courts to encourage early intervention.

Education. Identified the importance of discussions in classrooms that focus on discrimination and privilege. Connected the plenary speaker’s use of “black pathology” to the critical race theory tenet of differential racialization. Identified the classroom as the best place for critical examination of policy, practice, and education.

Described the application of this research to field, including: interdisciplinary team work and the likelihood of social workers interacting with the criminal justice system during their careers.
Identified the importance of reframing a strengths-based lens with students as they are challenged by actions or responses of the people they encounter in their field placements.
Described future research plans, including mixed methods studies with both youth and adults identified on the DT100, and development of learning sessions for professionals, youth, and adults associated with the DT100 to discover best practices for working together.
“Sometimes when I did bad, like steal from stores and things like that, yeah, that’s my fault; but don’t arrest me for walking down the sidewalk and minding my own business. Don’t arrest me for that.”

Youth Voice (Kulture Klub, 2015)

Future Research: Voices of Youth

The presentation ended with the voice of a young person.
References


