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Beyond Recidivism: Learning with Formerly Incarcerated Men About Youth Incarceration

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LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Beyond Recidivism: Learning *with* Formerly Incarcerated Men

About Youth Incarceration

by

Scott P. Bastian

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the School of Education,

Loyola Marymount University,

in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

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Beyond Recidivism: Learning *with* Formerly Incarcerated Men

About Youth Incarceration

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This dissertation written by Scott Bastian, under the direction of the Dissertation Committee, is approved and accepted by all committee members, in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

_8/5/2015_
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Without the early life lessons of remaining true to self, all the while acknowledging how my actions may affect others—this step likely would not have been taken. Without the careful attention paid to me and my adolescent missteps and recoveries—this door likely would not have been opened. Without my father teaching me how things work, and my mother teaching me to find out why some things don't work— this journey likely would not have been imagined. Mom and Dad, you are and always have been my inspiration—for which I am ever so grateful. Thank you!

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To my team of experts—JQ, B, David, and Clark—thank you all for your passionate contributions and honesty. My passion for this grows because of you all! I am ready to continue where we left off. Lift off!

DEDICATION

To my favorite sister Jenny,

May you live eternally in the shadow of your own smile.

Which is how I choose to live.

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ABSTRACT

Beyond Recidivism: Learning *with* Formerly Incarcerated Men

About Youth Incarceration

by

Scott P. Bastian

Too often, the truth behind a phenomenon is not sought through the perspectives of the

people who lived that phenomenon—"the masters of inquiry" into their own realities, as

Paulo Freire (1982, p. 29) has explained. *Voice* is the most powerful, reliable medium for

collecting data based on lived experiences, if we are to gain genuine insight into the

phenomenon (Freire, 1982). Focusing on the lived experiences of four formerly

incarcerated young men of color, this study gave each participant the space to not only

recall specific events and times, but to critically reflect on their lives—becoming more

critically aware of their individual journeys and constructing new knowledge of the

injustices that relate to the school-to-prison pipeline, including recommendations for

change. This study sought to answer the following research questions through the voices

of the participants: (a) Based on their collective and individual journeys through the

juvenile justice system, how do formerly incarcerated youth describe their experiences?

(b) What recommendations do formerly incarcerated young men have for reducing youth incarceration and recidivism rates? The participants provided rich narratives that answered each research question with the expert knowledge that can only be derived from firsthand experience. Through careful analysis of the data, several major themes emerged, tying together the experiences of each participant with the findings from the literature. Each participant spoke passionately on not only the need for change, but also specific recommendations for change. It is the power of their poignant insights that ground conclusions offered in this study.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

It was May 7, 2009. I was told my 15-year-old student, Michael, who had just gone home two days earlier, was dead—shot several times in his own neighborhood in a notoriously dangerous area of Los Angeles known as "the jungles." He only lasted one day after being released . . . just one. And although I hated to see my students return over and over to the lockdown correctional facility where I worked, I would have rather seen Michael walk back through those double doors once again, shackled and draped in orange, than to receive such harrowing news of his unfortunate, but unsurprising death. That sort of negotiation in my mind—rearrest versus early death—just seemed so unfair, but so logical given the destructive pathways in which many youth like Michael seemed to remain. It is sad, but after the nearly two years that Michael had been incarcerated, he was still so entrenched in gang life and so pessimistic about his chances for success, that it just seemed like a death sentence to release him back to his old community. And so it was. With that, I realized that there was a series of broken bridges throughout the various settings and contexts through which Michael transitioned. And this final transition was tragically predictable, as if he were placed into the boat with that grim ferryman from Greek mythology, who took souls from the living side to the other side, never to be seen or heard from again.

After Michael's death, I was left with many questions that begged for answers. What was missing from his experience through the system that could have saved him? Or was it already set in motion before he ever got locked up? What could I have done

differently for Michael? What could the courts, probation officers, his elementary and middle schools, parents, community, and church all done differently? All these heavy questions swirled through my head. However, there was one thing I was sure of. Children, including children in Michael's predicament, should never wind up in the position where incarceration is the only chance to save their lives in the first place.

"Incarceration is becoming the new American apartheid, and poor children of color are the fodder," proclaimed Marian Wright Edelman (2009, p. 67), founder of the Children's Defense Fund. What Edelman was referring to is the alarming rates of incarceration for youth of color, as a result of policies and institutional practices that ultimately reroute youth of color through what is referred to as the *school-to-prison pipeline*, defined by Amy Swain and George Noblit (2011) as "the collective systems of local, state, and federal policies and procedures that siphons children out of school and into prison" (p. 466).

Statement of the Problem

With more than 70,000 youth under age 18 incarcerated (Children's Defense Fund, 2012), the United States has the highest juvenile incarceration rate of all nations (Levitt, 2010). With various factors contributing to the fast-paced channeling of many of our youth into the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems, the typical cycle of events for many is as follows: (a) Get arrested and placed in juvenile hall; (b) Become adjudicated and placed in a long-term correctional facility; (c) Reenter community (home, group home, placement, independent living, etc.); (d) Get rearrested; (e) Repeat cycle. This cycle illustrates what is understood as the phenomenon of *juvenile recidivism* (Harris, Lockwood, Mengers, & Stoodley, 2011, p. 2).

As a response to the high occurrence of recidivism, various organizations and agencies provide services, called *transition services*, to help facilitate a successful *reentry*—the process of being released from a juvenile correctional institution and reintegrating into the community, which is a challenge for many youth, according to Heather Griller Clark, Sarup Mathur, and Brandon Helding (2011). Heather Griller Clark defined transition services as "a coordinated set of activities for a juvenile offender, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement . . . from a correctional setting to post-incarceration activities including . . . education, vocational training, integrated employment, continuing education, adult services, independent living, or community participation" (as cited in Griller Clark et al., 2011, p. 512). Advocated by the California Juvenile Justice Reentry Project (2007), *aftercare services*—supportive services provided upon an adolescent's release from a secure facility back to the community—are in short supply in California, but are one of the most important forms of support that formerly incarcerated youth need. Aftercare services may include support in school enrollment, health care access, and job skills development (California Juvenile Justice Reentry Project, 2007).

There has been extensive research on policies, programs, services, and outcomes for youth incarcerated in juvenile correctional facilities (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011; Holman & Ziedenberg, 2006); however, the problem is that the findings have rarely been based on the voices of the youth who are, as Paulo Freire (1982) has described, the "masters of inquiry into the underlying causes of the events in their world" (p. 29). I argue, then, that there is a great need for research on the effectiveness of policies, programs, and services from the critical perspectives of youth who have

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firsthand experience with the juvenile justice system—a need that is addressed by this study through use of a critical narrative model of inquiry.

Unlike traditional research on recidivism, this study focuses on the lived childhood experiences and events prior to the initial contacts with law enforcement, as well as the firsthand experiences and understandings each participant has of the juvenile justice system. This study moves beyond the traditional, narrow focus on recidivism, attempting to grasp a real understanding of the effects of the discriminatory practices and policies that too often trap poor, working class youth of color into the phenomenon of the school-to-prison pipeline, defined as "the collective systems of local, state, and federal policies and procedures that siphons children out of school and into prison" (Swain & Noblit, 2011, p. 466). The most effective and permanent way to dismantle the pipeline is to end youth incarceration altogether—a key objective of today's prison abolitionists, led by organizations like Critical Resistance (2015), which has fought for alternatives to punishment and imprisonment, and activists like Angela Davis (2003), who has argued for alternatives to incarceration, beginning with the transformation of traditional methods and strategies for addressing youth crime, with a critical look at how to end the "social and economic conditions that track so many children from poor communities, and especially communities of color, into the juvenile system, and then on to prison" (p. 20). With the objective of *learning* about the pipeline and how it can be dismantled, participants were prompted and challenged to identify key recommendations for improvements to policies, practices, and programs in the contexts of school, community, and the juvenile justice system.

Research Questions

The research questions directly linked to participation of formerly incarcerated 18–22 year-old males and guided this qualitative critical narrative research were:

1. Based on their collective and individual journeys through the juvenile justice system, how do formerly incarcerated youth describe their experiences?

2. What recommendations do formerly incarcerated young men have for reducing youth incarceration and recidivism rates?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative research was to discover, from the perspectives and voices of the participants: (a) the lived experiences that contribute to being incarcerated; (b) the effects of the juvenile justice system on the lives of incarcerated youth; and (c) the experiences of rejoining the community-at-large after being released from juvenile corrections. In the spirit of Freire's (1970) teachings on critical pedagogy and emancipatory education, critical analysis was applied to the interpretation of data, with each participant playing an active role in critical reflection and dialogue. Too often, policy-makers make decisions based solely on data collected from observation and reports, without ever recruiting the youth who are affected to make meaningful contributions to policy-making based on their real lived experiences. Freire (1998) stressed the importance of making an "intimate connection between knowledge considered basic . . . and knowledge that is the fruit of the lived experience" (p. 36). This study follows that philosophy in order to contribute to more comprehensive future efforts to make policies that effectively address the problems facing incarcerated youth.

Significance

The disproportionately high rates of incarceration among working class youth of color and other marginalized youth, and the high incidence rate of early violent death for formerly incarcerated youth, make a strong case for conducting a social justice-oriented critical narrative study. Michelle Alexander (2012) argued that incarcerated and formerly incarcerated youth and adults should not be permanently labeled as criminals and cast into a perpetual subordinate class with reduced rights and lesser opportunities than the rest of society. And those youth who get caught up in the prison pipelines deserve and need to have their voices heard and be part of a process that allows them to contribute to solving the larger problem of youth incarceration. In fact, the only way for society to gain genuine insight into the problem is to learn firsthand from those closest to the problem (Freire, 1982).

The findings from this study will be worthy of attention from researchers and policy-makers in education, law enforcement, social service, and civic government—all of whom make impactful decisions that impact the well-being of youth from marginalized communities. More importantly, the use of critical narrative inquiry as the methodology serves to further promote the notion that all people deserve to be heard and involved in the construction and conveyance of new knowledge—something that many marginalized communities seldom experience, due to the hegemonic policies and practices of schools and local government (Darder, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

This qualitative critical narrative inquiry was conducted and analyzed through the lenses of critical narrative pedagogy (Goodson & Gill, 2014) and critical bicultural

pedagogy (Darder, 2012), both grounded in Freire's (1970) emancipatory perspective.

This combination provides a theoretical framework that engages important

developmental aspects of working class youth of color and their navigation through

everyday conditions in which social and material inequalities are central features of their

personal and community lives. This conceptual framework is discussed more fully with

respect to its specific relevance to the study in Chapter 2.

Research Design and Methodology

Through a qualitative research design, I investigated the experiences leading up to

juvenile incarceration, through the juvenile justice system, and after being released from

juvenile (or adult) corrections. This investigation was based on the firsthand experiences

of formerly incarcerated 18–22 year-old males, told from their perspectives, through their

own voices. I relied on a *narrative inquiry* model (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) to collect

data in a way that gathered the rich stories from participants' voices, allowing them to be

heard and to realize, through a sense of human agency, that we are, as Ivor Goodson and

Sherto Gill (2014) have proclaimed, "actors in . . . the production of culture, construction

of meaning, cultivation of ways of being and identification of paths of future social

actions" (p. 15). Based on the combination of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly,

2000) and critical narrative pedagogy (Goodson & Gill, 2014) with the application of

critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970), this study's research method constitutes *critical*

narrative inquiry. Data were collected in the following ways: (a) digital audio recordings

of each critical narrative session; and (b) researcher field notes taken during individual

critical narrative sessions. As recommended by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), the

interview questions during the critical narrative sessions were designed according to an

"inward, outward, backward, forward" (p. 50) model of inquiry, in order to elicit responses reflecting participants' emotional feelings (inward), perceptions of their environment (outward), and their past (backward), present, and possible future (forward) experiences.

There were specific criteria upon which to base candidate selection: Participants had to be (a) Formerly incarcerated in a juvenile correctional facility; (b) adults (18-to-22 years-old at the time of selection); (c) male; and (d) willing and available to actively and cooperatively participate in dialogue about potentially sensitive experiences related to their personal journey through the juvenile justice system and any related issues and concerns.

Delimitations and Limitations

A delimitation of this study was the small sample size of only four participants; thus, it is not generalizable to any larger sample or population; however, Creswell (2009) has shown us that the value of qualitative research does not lie in generalizability, but rather in the particularity and themes within the context of a specific study.

One limitation of this study was the possible reluctance of participants to open up to me, which could have affected their ability to be forthright and honest; however, to determine the accuracy of findings, individual follow-up interviews were offered to participants to give them the opportunity to comment, clarify, or add to the findings (Creswell, 2009). *Triangulation* techniques were used with the different sources of data and the perspectives of the participants in order to establish themes, adding to the validity of the study (Creswell, 2009). Another limitation of this study was researcher positionality, which could have been a major limitation if it not addressed.

Positionality

Reflexivity and ongoing or periodic monitoring of my positionality was required throughout the study—not just at the beginning or end. Farhana Sultana (2007) argued that ethical research is produced through negotiated spaces and practices of reflexivity that is critical about issues of positionality and power relations at multiple scales" (p. 375). As the researcher, a former juvenile court schoolteacher, a current juvenile court school administrator, and a student of social justice, I had to be very mindful of my own perspectives and constructed meanings based on personal and professional experiences. As a juvenile court school administrator and former juvenile court schoolteacher, I have been significantly affected by the daily reminders of the school-to-prison pipeline and my regular observations of recidivism. While I oppose the mass incarceration of youth, the devastating effects of youth incarceration, and the reproduction of a social underclass, I had to remain cognizant of the difference of perspective between my own and those of the participants. Because I am, in reality, part of the broken system that is the focus of this study, I had to constantly reflect on my own assumptions, while listening intently to the voices of the participants. The practice of reflexivity was not only crucial during the critical narrative inquiries, but even more so during the interpretation and analysis of the findings.

As a critical researcher, it was important to seek out and challenge my own assumptions, as well as assumptions held by the participants. While maintaining the subjective lens of critical narrative pedagogy, I needed to remain aware that some of the participants' interpretations of their own experiences could be tainted by the conditioned misbeliefs imposed by a hegemonic cycle of labeling and victim blaming. The task of

recognizing participants' voices as the most realistic of data, while analyzing for accuracy, proved to be very challenging—challenging in the sense that I also did not want to devalue their own perceptions of their lived realities. By deliberately prompting the participants to critically reflect on their lived experiences during the critical narrative inquiries, and by thoroughly analyzing the data through a critical lens, I was able to find that balance between participants' assumptions, researcher positionality, and existing scholarly research that addressed some of the issues raised by the critical narratives.

Recognition of my positionality in the study made it necessary to avoid objectivity in exchange for a more subjective, but flexible stance. Too often, studies that embrace and maintain objectivity fail to discover the deeper truth behind findings (Freire, 1998). It is through subjectivity that research follows the complex pathways to the deeper meanings and truths associated with the initial observations and findings. Farhana Sultana (2007) explained: "The very conduct of fieldwork is always contextual, relational, embodied, and politicalized" (p. 383). Thus, researcher positionality, when practiced with ongoing reflexivity and subjectivity, gives strength to a study, as opposed to operating as a limitation.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

With over 70,000 youth under age 18 currently incarcerated in correctional

facilities (Children's Defense Fund, 2012), the United States has the highest juvenile

incarceration rate of all developed nations (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011; Levitt,

2010). The Children's Defense Fund estimated that every three minutes a child is arrested

for a drug offense, and every six minutes for a violent offense. In California, on any

given day, there can be more than 100,000 youth under the jurisdiction of the juvenile

justice system in some capacity (Hennigan & Kolnick, 2007). These youth are either

supervised in the community or placed in out-of-home settings, such as group homes,

county-run probation camps, juvenile halls, or state-run facilities.

Based on findings from the Juvenile Justice Data Project, Karen Hennigan and

Kathy Kolnick (2007) estimated that more than 16% of all youth, under jurisdiction of

the juvenile justice system in California, were residing in out-of-home settings.

According to the California Department of Justice (2011), out of almost 15 million youth,

age 24 and under residing in California, more than 34,000 were detained in a secure

facility, nonsecure facility, or home supervision. A *secure facility* is a facility where the

juvenile is prevented by responsible staff or by a locked structural barrier (e.g., door,

gate, fence, etc.) from escaping or departing the facility (California Department of

Justice). This study uses the definition of *detention* as defined by the W. Haywood Burns

Institute (2013)—the placement of youth in a secure facility following the arrest, but

prior to the court hearing. Furthermore, this study refers to the court-ordered placement

of adjudicated youth into secure correctional or residential facilities as *confinement* (W. Haywood Burns Institute, 2013). These terms are used according to these definitions while discussing the various inequities that exist throughout the juvenile justice system.

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the United States has the highest juvenile incarceration rate of all developed nations, with a rate almost five times greater than the second leading nation in juvenile incarceration—South Africa (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011). California leads the country as the state with the highest number of incarcerated youth, with records from 2011 showing a total of 9,807—more than twice as many as the second leading state, Texas (W. Haywood Burns Institute, 2011). And among those 9,807 incarcerated youth in California in 2011—only 1,353 were White. According to California Department of Justice (2011), while White youth, age 24 and under, accounted for more than 31% of the total youth population, they comprised less than 19% of the total juvenile detainee population. While Hispanic youth made up less than 48% of the total population, they accounted for more than 54% of the total juvenile detainee population. In contrast, Black youth, who only made up 6% of the total population, accounted for 22% of the juvenile detainee population, an upward difference of 16%.

Upon adjudication of delinquency, the court typically sends the juvenile detainee home on probation or places him or her in an out-of-home setting (e.g., group home, residential treatment center, youth correctional facility). Annie E. Casey Foundation (2011) found that, in California, adjudicated Black youth were more likely than White youth to be placed in an out-of-home setting, and more likely to be sent to a county- or state-run correctional facility. According to a 2011 data analysis on state and county data,

W. Haywood Burns Institute (2011) found that Black youth were six times more likely than White youth to be committed to a correctional facility following adjudication. Latino youth were almost three times more likely than White youth to be committed.

At the county level, when calculating the disparity gap for Los Angeles County, W. Haywood Burns Institute (2011) found that Black youth were 14.6 times more likely than White youth to be incarcerated, while Latino youth were 4.3 times more likely than White youth. These statistics are representative of the overrepresentation of youth of color, particularly Black youth, within the juvenile justice system. The Children's Defense Fund (2012) attributed this mass incarceration of youth of color to part of the "school-to-prison pipeline," a trajectory that leads to marginalized lives, imprisonment and early death. Amy Swain and George Noblit (2011) defined the pipeline as "the collective systems of local, state, and federal policies and procedures that siphons children out of school and into prison" (p. 466).

Over the years, studies have been conducted on the possible causes of high youth incarceration rates and the various outcomes that incarcerated youth may experience upon their release—the two most notable negative outcomes identified as high risk of early death (Teplin, McClelland, Abram, & Mileusnic, 2005) and the increased likelihood recidivating (California Juvenile Justice Reentry Partnership, 2007). According to an Annie E. Casey Foundation report (2011), within two to three years of being released, 70 to 80% of formerly incarcerated youth were rearrested, with 38 to 72% adjudicated for a new offense.

The purpose of this qualitative critical narrative inquiry was to learn about the collective and individual experiences of youth involved in the juvenile justice system

from their own perspectives, through their own voices, seeking to discover through those voices, a more insightful description than that from traditional studies, of the actual experiences youth contend with as they move through the juvenile justice system. Particular attention is given to factors related to the mass incarceration of youth of color and/or lower socioeconomic status, the school-to-prison pipeline, high rates of recidivism, and sources of resiliency.

This chapter contains the review of contemporary literature in order to examine prominent studies of the juvenile justice system in the United States, comparing, contrasting, and presenting it in a way that offers some clarity into the shortcomings of our traditional approaches to understanding and dealing with the problems surrounding juvenile incarceration and recidivism. Through the lenses of Paulo Freire's (1970) educational perspective, critical bicultural pedagogy (Darder, 2012), and critical narrative pedagogy (Goodson & Gill, 2014), I establish the conceptual framework for critical narrative inquiry as a primary, viable, and salient qualitative approach for a study in of juvenile incarceration and recidivism.

Protection of Incarcerated Youth

One of the most important duties of the juvenile justice system, other than rehabilitation, is to keep its prisoners safe from harm, including potential harm from other youth and adults within the system. Despite recent research suggesting that the United States has failed these duties (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011), there have been efforts through policy and reform to reduce the risks for exposure to violence and abuse in juvenile and adult correctional facilities (Levitt, 2010).

Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act

In 1974, Congress passed the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA), requiring states to provide certain protections to juveniles incarcerated in juvenile correctional adult correctional facilities (Levitt, 2010). Unfortunately, laws do not always guarantee adherence. For example, Lacey Levitt (2010, p. 45) found, through two separate studies, evidence that juveniles in the jurisdiction of adult facilities were being regularly "housed with general prison populations," despite requirements under JJDPA that strictly prohibit any form of contact between juveniles and adults. In fact, according to the law, "they cannot see nor have conversations with adult inmates; they cannot be housed next to adult cells, share common spaces . . . or be placed in circumstances in which they are vulnerable to abuse from adult offenders" (Levitt, 2010, p. 45).

Most youth, however, are not committed to adult facilities, but are detained in juvenile detention centers or sentenced to long-term secure facilities, such as juvenile probation camps (Holman & Ziedenberg, 2006). Nevertheless, these youth remain at-risk of being exposed to violence and abuse (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011). In studying the effects of incarceration on the health and wellbeing of youth, Holman and Ziedenberg (2006) found that incarceration resulted in more devastating effects than for youth treated through alternative community-based programs. Such detrimental outcomes of youth incarceration included the deterioration of their mental and physical health, poorer educational outcomes, decreases in their ability to enter and remain in the workforce, and a higher likelihood of recidivating (Holman & Ziedenberg, 2006).

Based on data from several studies conducted in different states, Barry Holman and Jason Ziedenberg (2006) identified incarceration as the single biggest predictor of recidivism. This study uses the same definition of recidivism that the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators (CJCA) has recommended: "1) the commission of an offense, 2) by an individual already known to have committed at least one other offense" (Harris et al., 2011, p. 2). Other studies have also found that incarceration leads to more incarceration (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011; Holman & Ziedenberg). For instance, an Ohio study found that low- to moderate-risk youth who were formerly incarcerated, reoffended at a rate five times as high as youth who were placed in community-based supervision programs instead of confinement (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011). Another study in Arkansas found that 60% of youth who were released, returned within three years (Holman & Ziedenberg, 2006). In addition to the increased risk for recidivism, severe mental health disorders have been attributed to incarceration, which then can make reentry much more difficult.

In their study of the prevalence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among youth in the juvenile justice system, Julian Ford, John Chapman, Josephine Hawke, and David Albert (2007) found that many incarcerated youth are subject to very traumatic experiences, including abuse, illness, assault, and the loss of loved ones, often leading to symptoms of (PTSD). Thus, when youth return to incarceration, their mental health, physical health, and educational abilities will likely deteriorate, making it less likely that they will transition into healthy adults and more likely that they will reoffend as adults, ultimately entering the adult criminal justice system. The JJDPA may not have been entirely effective in protecting incarcerated youth from harm or reducing the number of

youth recidivating in and out of the system, however, it did provide ways to begin monitoring and coordinating the numerous juvenile justice agencies throughout the nation.

The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act mandated the establishment of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), which is directly responsible for coordinating programs, policies, and research related to juvenile justice. As the OJJDP set standards for the operations and evaluations of juvenile justice programs, the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators (CJCA) established standards for measuring recidivism as the central measure for program effectiveness (Harris et al., 2011). Therefore, state and county juvenile justice agencies are now required to be more transparent than before. This does not mean, however, that children are automatically safe from the violence and harmful effects of the juvenile justice system. Compared to many other nations, the United States still has a long way to go in terms of adequately protecting youth, as it has remained the world leader in the number of persons incarcerated (Children's Defense Fund, 2012), yet has refused to join the United Nations's efforts to promote a safer world for children.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

In 1990, the United Nations enacted the Convention on the Rights of the Child, guaranteeing a number of specific rights for children, including safety, education, culture, housing, food, and the prohibition of capital punishment. It has since been signed and ratified by all of the U.N. member nations but three—the United States, Somalia, and South Sudan. According to Rosemary Sarri and Jeffrey Shook (2005), there has been a historic and ongoing disregard by the United States for the existing international

conventions on human rights for children, including a lack of adherence across the following five areas of juvenile justice: "representation, transfer, minority overrepresentation, conditions of confinement, and the death penalty" (p. 26).

An example of this lack of regard for the wellbeing of youth in the United States ,is the hundreds of thousands of youth who have been victimized inside its juvenile and adult correctional facilities. In one study conducted by the Human Rights Watch Children's Rights Project, the investigating project members interviewed over 60 incarcerated youth detained at long-term juvenile correctional facilities in Louisiana (Levitt, 2010). They found "pervasive physical abuse of incarcerated youth and excessive use of restraints" (Levitt, 2010, p. 47). Levitt (2010) also found even more disturbing findings on victimization of youth detained in adult correctional facilities; although there is always the likelihood that much of the abuse and violence experienced by youth in adult facilities was underreported, for fear of retaliation from adult inmates and staff.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child establishes the age of majority as 18 and prohibits the inclusion of children in adult criminal processing, requiring a distinctly separate system to adjudicate the criminal offenses of children (Sarri & Shook, 2005). Although the United States originally established a separate system for juvenile prosecution during the early part of the twentieth century, provisions were made in almost all the states to make exceptions to the protective requirements of the early juvenile court to process all cases for children under the age of 18. These provisions, mostly enacted during the later part of the 20th century, allowed for the transferal of youth cases to the adult criminal courts, resulting in youth being processed and convicted as adults (Sarri & Shook, 2005).

Furthermore, once youth enter the adult criminal justice system, many states require all subsequent offenses to also be processed through the adult system (Sarri & Shook, 2005). Therefore, once transferred to the adult criminal justice system, it is unlikely that a child will ever return to the juvenile justice system (Sarri & Shook, 2005). In contrast to the intentions of the United Nations in their attempt to standardize the protection of children's rights, the United States allows its individual states to determine their own set of rules governing the processing of juvenile offenders. For instance, states are allowed to set their own minimum age requirements and types of offenses for qualifying the transfer of juvenile offenders to adult criminal courts for processing (Sarri & Shook, 2005).

Prior to states creating their own rules for transfer, the juvenile courts required hearings to take place to determine if it was appropriate to transfer a child's case to adult court. However, once states created age and offense criteria, they were able to bypass the juvenile court altogether and automatically process and try a child as an adult (Sarri & Shook, 2005). The Constitutional protections of states rights is what allows individual states to create and enact their own laws governing how courts respond to and process criminal offenses committed by juvenile and adult offenders. It is primarily for this reason that the United States refuses to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It would therefore take an act of Congress to force states to maintain a totally separate justice system for children. The United States is one of the few nations that process children as adult criminals (Children's Defense Fund, 2012).

Common Disparities

When one considers the criminal justice system at-large to be a system built primarily to serve the interest of those in power, there exists the likelihood that conditions maintaining the status quo will be reproduced, resulting in what Henry Giroux (2004) has described as a reinvention of the future in the interest of preserving the present. Thus, it is no surprise that there are overrepresentations of various subgroups among the United States prison populations.

Racialized Disparities

Some estimates have shown that juvenile incarceration decreased in the United States by 39% between 2000 and 2010 (National Juvenile Justice Network, 2013). But, although juvenile incarceration may have decreased, racial and ethnic disparities persist, especially in nonviolent offense categories (Children's Defense Fund, 2012). For instance, Barry Holman and Jason Ziedenberg (2006) reported the findings from a comparative survey study conducted during the 1990s of White youth versus African American youth for drug use versus drug convictions. They found that although White youth self-reported using drugs at almost seven times the rate of African American youth, African American youth were almost three times more likely to be arrested than White youth (Holman & Ziedenberg, 2006). Thus, incarceration rates for African American youth remained higher than those for White youth, accounting for nearly half of the total number of youth in the United States incarcerated for drug offenses (Holman & Ziedenberg, 2006).

Since the 1990s, studies have shown the connection between school- and community-based policies and the increased incarceration rate of youth of color

(Children's Defense Fund, 2012; Swain & Noblit, 2011). A sharp increase in arrests and incarceration of youth of color, particularly Black youth, was witnessed during the 1980s and 1990s, as a result of school-based, politically driven "get tough" policies, known as "zero tolerance," aimed at combating America's drug epidemic and gun violence (Hatt, 2011).

Effects of zero-tolerance policies. Often involving harsh school-based punishments and arrests, zero tolerance policies resulted in the mass rerouting and expedited processing of students of color into the criminal justice system (Swain & Noblit, 2011). Swain and Noblit (2011) have described schools as "sites of criminalization for many of today's youth" (p. 468). Claiming that they were taking a firm stance against drugs and violent crime, politicians quickly jumped onboard to support and promote zero tolerance policies (Swain & Noblit, 2011).

Swain and Noblit (2011) pointed out "that the War on Drugs has been almost solely responsible for raising the rates of imprisonment for black males to an astonishing one of every nine" (p. 469) and further argued that zero-tolerance policies bypassed the educative responses to misbehavior and minor infractions, which effectively function to immediately criminalize youth, especially youth of color. Criminalizing youth, without educating them initially about their behavior, has been shown to increase the likelihood that they recidivate, thus remaining locked into the school-to-prison pipeline (Swain & Noblit, 2011). Swain and Noblit (2011) argued that through punitive approaches and policies, "power is exercised through control and punishment to maintain marginalization of specific groups of citizens" (p. 472).

Another culprit in the funneling of youth through the school-to-prison pipeline has been the overuse and over-reliance on compulsory high-stakes testing protocols (Swain & Noblit, 2011). High-stakes testing, for example, which mostly tests the abilities of students to emulate the cultural values and knowledge base legitimated by the mainstream, has been shown to negatively impact the academic experience and performance of working class youth of color (Darder, 2012). Swain and Noblit (2011) asserted that high stakes testing resulted in disproportionate numbers of students of color being (a) disciplined with long suspensions (and even expulsions) during testing time; (b) placed into special education in order to avoid being counted in the test results; and (c) retained in grades not being tested. Plus, teachers lose the ability and freedom to teach meaningful curriculum, administration can be fired over poor test scores, and the local community winds up suffering the same stigma as its "failing school" (Swain & Noblit, 2011). Thus, schools and communities often experience the reproduction of the same social maladies that have historically functioned to keep students of color in marginalized conditions (Darder, 2012).

Disparities Based on Mental Health

It is not unusual for incarcerated youth to struggle with mental health issues. In fact, just as there is a disproportionate number of youth of color incarcerated, there is also a high number of incarcerated youth who suffer from serious mental health disabilities, at one time estimated to be as high as 20% (Cocozza & Skowyra, 2000).

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Ford, Chapman, Hawke, and Albert (2007) found that many incarcerated youth have been subjected to very traumatic experiences, including abuse, illness, assault, and the loss of loved ones, often leading to symptoms of

post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD). PTSD among adolescents is much like that seen in war veterans; however, the prefix "post" may not be an accurate descriptor of what many youth go through when experiencing traumatic events. Pepperdine University researcher, David Foy, pointed out that, whereas a soldier may "get airlifted out of the warzone," these youth often experience their traumatic experiences on an ongoing basis in their present environments, having not yet escaped their dooming conditions and dire circumstances (Foy as quoted by Viadero, 1995, p. 2).

Perhaps a more accurate description of the phenomenon lies in the research of adverse childhood experiences (ACE)—a term coined by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) for "a specific set of traumatic experiences occurring before the 18th birthday" (Evans-Chase, 2014, p. 2). Such traumatic experiences include physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, emotional and physical neglect, and certain household dysfunctions, such as household mental illness, incarcerated family members, and violence inflicted on the mother (Evans-Chase, 2014). In a study of the relationships between adverse childhood experiences and adult risk behaviors, disease, and other causes of adult death, Vincent Felitti (2004) found that there was a strong relationship between the extent to which someone was exposed to childhood trauma "and multiple risk factors for several of the leading causes of death in adults" (p. 251). However, while Felitti focused on the adulthood outcomes resulting from adverse childhood experiences, the findings of the study still did not investigate outcomes occurring during a person's adolescent years.

Studies of youth who have reportedly experienced ACEs have discovered links between exposure to ACE and involvement with the juvenile justice system. In a study of data taken from a sample of 64,000 adjudicated juvenile offenders, ages seven to 17,

Michael Baglivio, Kevin Wolff, Alex Piquero, and Nathan Epps (2015) found that youth who were exposed to high numbers of ACEs were arrested at an earlier age, and that those who had experienced an even higher number of ACEs were arrested at every age (p. 235).

To address the crucial need for effective youth therapeutic programs, many facilities have begun to use such evidence-based models like Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and other therapeutic models derived from CBT, which is a short-term treatment for youth suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a result of being physically or sexually abused or from experiencing losses and/or traumatic experiences of violence (Ford et al., 2007).

Richard Dembo, Wansley Walters, and Kathleen Meyers (2000) conducted a study in which a family-oriented intervention approach showed promising results with youth suffering from mental health issues. In a 12-month follow-up on youth who had completed a family-oriented intervention, Dembo et al. (2000) found that these youths recidivated at a significantly lower rate than the comparison group who had not participated in the intervention. One very extensive study, conducted by Charles Borduin and Cindy Schaeffer (2005), compared the long-term effects on recidivism of two very different therapeutic approaches—multisystemic therapy (MST) and individualized therapy. MST, which addresses both the cognitive aspect of the participant and the systemic factors, such as family, school group, and peer group, in comparison to individualized therapy, resulted in a 31% lower recidivism rate during the 13.7 years of focus, which included criminal offenses committed as adults—demonstrating the lasting effects of MST through early adulthood (Borduin & Schaeffer, 2005).

Sawyer and Borduin (2011) reported that MST participants also showed a lower incidence of family instability compared to those in individualized therapy. Additionally, only 34.8% of the MST participants had recidivated, which is significantly lower than the individualized therapy group's 54.8% recidivism rate (Sawyer & Borduin, 2011). One of the key components of the MST approach is the thorough training of both the youths and their caregivers, conducted in multiple settings (Sawyer & Borduin, 2011). MST has appeared to be a viable option for agencies in correctional facilities to use; however, it is not a "one size fits all" approach. Some youth are also in need of more intense, individualized therapeutic interventions.

Dembo et al. (2005) discussed in their study a protocol for screening, identifying, and treating juveniles with mental health disorders separately from juveniles with substance abuse, with regard to providing appropriate interventions for reducing the risk of recidivism. Thus, it can be seen that more recent research is focusing on designing more problem-specific interventions, instead of just applying a one size fits all approach, which had been the common practice for years. One common mistake of recidivism studies has been the over-generalization of findings to the whole juvenile offender population. John Scanlon and Larry Webb (1981) criticized various recidivism studies for interpreting results as "definitive measures of the effectiveness of programs" (p. 1). Scanlon and Webb (1981) pointed out that there are going to be social and economic risk factors that can influence recidivism rates in various ways, despite which type of intervention or program is being used.

A more recent therapeutic approach, dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT), was developed by Marsha Linehan to treat suicidal behaviors and later expanded to treat

borderline personality disorder (BPD) and substance abusers (Linehan & Schmidt, 1995). DBT is based on the natural tension that exists between the emphasis on change and the need for radical acceptance, which Linehan stressed as a necessary strategy and skill for treating patients with severe impairments. At the heart of DBT is the philosophy of dialectics, which Linehan and Schmidt (1995) credited to the works of Marx and Hegel, positing that "specific forms of arguments come and go . . . with each argument creating its own contradiction, and each contradiction in turn being negated by a synthesis that often included or enlarged on both preceding arguments, beginning the entire process anew" (Linehan & Schmidt, 1995, p. 554). DBT is operated according to a strict schedule of specific skills training and practice. Skills include mindfulness and tolerance, emotion regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness skills, which are taught in such a way that individuals with BPD are able to not only possess positive interpersonal skills, but also be able to apply them at the right moment, which can be crucial in reducing the likelihood for crises (Linehan & Schmidt, 1995).

One study evaluated the effectiveness of DBT with incarcerated female juvenile offenders in the state of Washington (Trupin, Stewart, Beach, & Boesky, 2002). As part of a collaborative project sponsored by the State of Washington Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee, the researchers worked collaboratively with staff from the juvenile correctional facility. DBT was selected as the model for this setting, because many incarcerated female juvenile offenders have exhibited similar (if not the same) symptoms as the women with BDP for whom Linehan had developed DBT. From analyzing data from prepost intervention records, the researchers discovered that the intervention was effective in one residence, resulting in a decrease in behavioral

incidents, but there were no noted decreases in the other residence (Trupin et al., 2002).

The researchers attributed the lack of change in behavioral incidents to the possibility of a

poor quality of training, and to the frequent transfer of new residents with suicidal

behavior and/or aggression, to the residence, keeping the problem behavior rates high

(Trupin et al., 2002).

DBT was then modified and adapted for the juvenile correctional setting and

renamed DBT-CM (Linehan & Schmidt, 1995). Deborah Shelton, Karen Kesten, Wanli

Zhang, and Robert Trestman (2011) studied the effectiveness of Dialectical Behavioral

Therapy—Corrections Modified (DBT-CM) intervention with 38 male adolescents with

impulsive behavior problems who were committed to the State Department of

Corrections. Through their pretest-posttest one-group design, they found that there was

an improvement in impulsive and aggressive behaviors after completing the DBT-CM

intervention, as supported by correctional officers' observations and a reduction in

disciplinary reports. One other promising factor in this study was that upon the

completion of the DBT-CM intervention, youth were helped and encouraged to create

personal plans for applying DBT-CM skills in their lives outside of the correctional

facility. What is not clear is whether there was a community-based therapy component or

someone to follow up with youth during the reentry process and for a substantial time

period after.

Disparities Based on Learning Ability

Estimated at over a third of the total juvenile justice system (Griller Clark et al.,

2011), youth with learning and behavioral disabilities are also prevalent within the

juvenile justice system. According to Griller Clark et al. (2011), the number of youth

with disabilities and behavioral problems in the juvenile justice system is more than four times higher than their representation in regular public school populations. Within the subgroup of youth with disabilities, there are a disproportionate number of students of color, thus we see overlapping of both subgroups overrepresented among the incarcerated juvenile populations (Skiba, Knesting, & Bush, 2002).

Russell Skiba, Kimberly Knesting, and Lakeisha Bush (2002) explored possible sources of bias in assessments that ultimately resulted in students of color being over-identified for special education eligibility. Standardized tests are not a true measure of a student's ability, but rather a measure of how much they know, understand, and agree with the values and knowledge of the dominant culture (Skiba et al., 2002). What often happens after students of color are misplaced into special education classes is that they become labeled and demotivated, placed into a lower learning track, and expected to do much less than the students in general education classes.

The damage this pattern creates is compounded by years of inequities in education. First, resources (human, monetary, and material) are spent on keeping the special education population performing at a minimal level, including paying teaching staff to stick to the IEP goals and timelines (Skiba et al., 2002). Second, the physical attributes of students' race and ethnicity begin to stand out to the community and the special education students themselves (Skiba et al., 2002). Thus, it begins to seem as though the White students in general education are inherently smarter than the students of color, whom everyone believes to be "appropriately" placed in special education. This eventually leads to a widened performance gap between the general population and the special education population, which happens to be overwhelmingly students of color

(Skiba et al., 2002). An additional outcome of the over-identification of youth of color for special education eligibility is the resulting lack of college preparation. Through this process, the original racial inequities are reproduced, primarily as a result of biased tracking and testing (Skiba et al., 2002).

While there are effective therapeutic programs at some facilities designed to help incarcerated youth with mental health disabilities develop self-regulatory and coping skills, problems usually continue when their incarceration ends—during their return to the community (Griller Clark & Unruh, 2010). Research has found that there often exist gaps in the coordination between agencies and professionals (Griller Clark & Unruh, 2010), as well as breaks in communication, making transition for youth very difficult. Some of the major barriers facing formerly incarcerated youth are the difficulties trying to enroll in school, the lack of service coordination between the various agencies that are supposed to be working together to support the youth, difficulties in seeking employment, the scarcity of alternative healthy activities and positive peer groups, and the pull back into criminal behavior upon returning to the same environment where they lived when they began committing crimes in the first place (California Juvenile Justice Reentry Project, 2007).

Heather Griller Clark and Deanne Unruh (2010, p. 49) have argued, "The transition . . . needs to start the day the youth is placed into a secured setting and must continue into the community until the individual is stabilized in typical, developmentally appropriate life activities." Shay Bilchik (2011) took it a step further, arguing that while transition desperately needs to start on day one of incarceration, the battle to improve the prospects of youth most at-risk for involvement in the system must begin during early

childhood (Bilchik included in Dowd, 2011). In other words, if we do not start early in the lives of youth most at-risk for incarceration, there are many potentially grave outcomes that they may face, including an early death.

<div align="center">**Outcomes for Incarcerated Youth**</div>

Upon release from incarceration, there may be numerous outcomes for the youth returning to the community. While re-arrest appears, at first glance, to be the most troubling, there are far more devastating outcomes facing formerly incarcerated youth—the most grim being death. Recidivism, which is by far the most common outcome and measure of program effectiveness, is not always the worst outcome for a kid, for at least he/she is alive to keep trying. Traditionally, however, recidivism has remained the primary measure used for evaluating program effectiveness.

Recidivism

Harris et al. (2011) defined recidivism as "the commission of repeat offenses," and cite recidivism as the "most commonly used indicator of program and system effectiveness" (p. 1). Thus, it makes sense that juvenile justice studies over the years would focus mainly on whether formerly incarcerated youth were reoffending and returning to correctional facilities. However, studies have gradually begun to shift their attention to other signs of effectiveness of programs and services.

Traditional research on recidivism. There has been research on the recidivism rates for juvenile offenders for over 65 years, most of which focused on the causes of juvenile recidivism (Clayson, 1961; Grunwald, Harris, Lockwood, & Mennis, 2010; Wattenberg, 1953), with the exception of some studies that sought to study the effects of specific interventions on reducing recidivism (Cunneen & Luke, 2007; Harris et al.,

2011). Among the research concerned mostly with the causes of recidivism, William

Wattenberg (1953) discussed the existing juvenile delinquency studies of his time.

Highlighting common findings, the research approach and methods used, along with a

particular study comparing a 1946 predictive study with a 1948 retrospective study, were

included. In this study, Wattenberg (1953) compared the factors affecting those juveniles

predicted to recidivate, with the factors affecting the predicted reoffenders with those

who actually did end up repeating criminal behavior. Wattenberg (1953) found that

"there is a shift in the way the boy is treated by the schools and the police . . . and he is

likely to be shunted into special schools for behavior problem children" (p. 635). These

increased socioenvironmental pressures, he noted, result in the child becoming frustrated

and seeking out those with similar problems as his support group, or the other extreme of

isolating himself (Wattenberg, 1953).

Wattenberg's (1953) view reflects Albert Bandura's (2002) social cognitive

theory, in which a person's behavior is the result of the environmental factors,

constraints, and pressures. Applied to Wattenberg's (1953) example above, in which the

child becomes frustrated by socioenvironmental pressures, social cognitive theory posits

that increased self-efficacy beliefs empower a child to resist and defy the expectations of

the biased, oppressive schools and police. Bandura (2002) explained that self-efficacy

beliefs "affect whether individuals think in self-enhancing or self-debilitating ways; how

well they motivate themselves and persevere in the face of difficulties" (p. 270). Another

theoretical framework, social disorganization theory, related to Wattenberg's (1953)

scenario, negates the idea of self-efficacy and being able to defy the odds, almost

contradicting Bandura's social cognitive theory.

According to social disorganization theory, "socially disorganized neighborhoods lack informal social controls which in turn increases crime and delinquency in those neighborhoods" (Grunwald et al., 2010, p. 1068). From the perspective of social disorganization theory, Grunwald et al. (2010) argued that juveniles who have offended in the past are much more likely to reoffend, but especially if there are high levels of disadvantage and low levels of social capital in the neighborhood context. Another possibility in Wattenberg's (1953) study is that the boys may have learned more delinquent behavior from each other, being that they were placed in special schools for delinquent youth. It is possible that placing a somewhat delinquent youth within a very delinquent setting will produce a more delinquent youth.

According to Travis Hirschi's (2002) social control theory, which is based on social bonding, it would make more sense to construct a more supportive group, encouraging positive social bonds between its members, and place a delinquent youth within that group to begin a transformational process of respect and affection for others. While Wattenberg's (1953) study was similar to some recent studies, such as the study of the effects of neighborhood context on recidivism (Grunwald et al., 2010), it similarly did not prescribe any effective measures for reducing recidivism. What it did do, however, is begin to paint a clear picture of part of the problem—the inappropriate responses of society and institutions to juvenile delinquency and the ineffective interventions resulting from those responses.

Among the literature focusing mainly on youth who recidivate, M. David Clayson (1961) conducted a study of 150 African American boys who had all been arrested and sentenced through the juvenile courts of Washington, DC, seemingly unaware of the

likelihood that racial profiling may have played a part in some of the boys' first and subsequent arrests. The focus of the study was on the effects of early incarceration for first offense versus probation and the effects of short-term versus long-term incarceration. Using Data from the National Training School for Boys (NTS), a rigorous juvenile correctional institution, Clayson (1961) found that there was an increase in recidivism tendencies for boys who experienced numerous probations and dropped charges. In fact, the data showed that the higher the number of probations and dropped charges prior to incarceration, then the higher "the boys' recidivism tendencies" (Clayson, 1961, p. 305). Based on these results, Clayson (1961) concluded that incarceration on an early arrest and placement in a rigorous institution for a longer period of time will lessen the chances of recidivating, but the research did not show extensively the ways that those factors were influential, nor did the study include a long-term follow-up to see if the boys recidivated later on.

  Contemporary research on recidivism. Although most research on juvenile justice is based on the perspectives of adult researchers and adult professionals who work with youth, there has been a growing body of literature that reports the voices and experiences of the youth themselves. According to Ariel Marshall (2012), "There is sparse research directed specifically at the ways in which young people are participating in the implementation of remedies pertaining to youth incarceration" (p. 12). Marshall conducted a participatory action research study with incarcerated youth in New Orleans and Cape Town, focusing primarily on community-based organizations operating at the grassroots levels to facilitate the positive self-development of incarcerated youth.

  Working within a combination of theoretical frameworks and qualitative

methods, mostly influenced by the work of Freire (1970), Marshall (2012) gathered

qualitative data through participant observations of incarcerated young adult males and

interviews with formerly incarcerated young adult males, community residents, nonprofit

staff members, prison wardens, and advocacy groups. The comparative findings from

Cape Town and New Orleans revealed that the community strategy-oriented programs

generated "counter-hegemonic discursive practices in response to structural violence,"

while "addressing the criminalization and warehousing of their youth" (Marshall, 2012,

p. 110).

Marshall (2012) continued to analyze the findings through the lens of resistance

theory, arguing that the expression of the resistance is "activated in building agency and

political visibility on individual, community and policy levels" (p. 110). Daniel

Solorzano and Dolores Delgado-Bernal (2001) also emphasized, through discussion of

resistance theory, the role of human agency, explaining how through specific forms of

resistance, we gain the confidence and skills to act on our own behalf. However, not all

forms of resistance result in the building of human agency. According to Solorzano and

Delgado-Bernal (2001), there are four forms of oppositional behavior—three of those

behaviors being specific forms of resistance. The first nonresistant behavior is reactionary

behavior, characterized by a student acting out in response to an oppressive social

condition, but has no interest in critiquing, let alone understanding the oppressive

conditions leading to his/her frustration (Solorzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001). This

reactionary behavior therefore will not desire for social justice as the intended outcome.

Solorzano and Delgado-Bernal (2001) argued that resistance must involve a critique of

the oppressive social condition and a desire for social justice. This can exist with varying

degrees of each factor, resulting in each of the three defined forms of resistance: self-defeating, conformist, and transformational.

The self-defeating form, which is also the most studied, is characterized by critique of one's oppressive social condition, but a lack of interest in social justice (Solorzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001). For example, a student may understand that the tracking system that unfairly placed him in remedial classes is unfair, yet his response is not to change it, but rather to resist participating, therefore failing the course and leaving the unfair system intact. The second form of resistance involves some degree of critique of the social oppression in addition to some interest in social justice, yet not enough drive to change (transform) the oppressive social condition. This leads us to what Solorzano and Delgado-Bernal (2001) defined as transformational resistance, which involves a deep understanding of one's oppressive social condition and a strong desire to achieve social justice through changing that oppressive condition. In order for true change to occur at the community level, the process of transformational resistance needs to happen on the part of those most affected.

Julio Cammarota and Michelle Fine (2008) described transformational resistance as a process that leads to a "deeper level of understanding and a social justice orientation" (p. 3). Indeed, this concept is in concert with Freire's (1970) notion of praxis, which involves the application of critical reflection and knowledge to actions directed to counter hegemonic practices that operate to control and subjugate youth of color and youth from other marginalized groups. Similar to Marshall's (2012) study, Cammarota and Fine (2008) argued that youth participatory action research "teaches young people that

conditions of injustice are produced . . . but are ultimately challengeable and thus changeable" (p. 2).

When oppressed people come to the point that they recognize the possibility and likelihood of actively changing their oppressive circumstances, then the atmosphere suitable for social movement is created. Indeed, Marshall (2012) witnessed the evolution of youth social movement in both Cape Town and New Orleans, which she explained are informed by earlier social movements. Marshall (2012) pointed out that those social movements "are characterized by community-mobilization and the development of youth participation . . . and affect social change through restorative praxis in the promotion of youth-agency, cultural reproduction, collective efficacy and political identity" (p. 111).

What does all this have to do with recidivism? If we take the concept of youth agency as it pertains to the capacity for youth to act in purposeful ways to influence positive change, then we can see youth agency as a necessary component to transformational resistance as a tool for reducing recidivism. Youth engaged in transformational resistance are, by definition, engaged in praxis, which means that they understand the cultural forces and power relations that are working against them (Darder, 2012), thereby, transforming into change agents themselves to counter those forces (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Solorzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001).

Marshall (2012) used the concept of cultural reproduction to describe how youth finally have the opportunity not to recreate the same subordinate social positions prior to their critical consciousness, but rather to reproduce their own cultural positions with a more positive identity and a sense of agency based on their own choices, beliefs, and a new understanding of empowerment. Political identity and collective efficacy will

naturally occur as part of the process of collaborative critical reflection and restorative praxis—praxis "with an emphasis on communication- and skills-building to facilitate greater individual agency and conflict-resolution" (Marshall, 2012, p. 111).

What Marshall (2012) found through her studies in Cape Town and New Orleans is that there are many factors to consider when motivating youth to fully participate as agents of change. It was observed that the youth in New Orleans, upon reentering the community, were viewed as just that—agents of change. In contrast, youth in Cape Town still carried the stigma of being labeled troublemakers by the communities they reentered, thus resulting in a reluctance or flat-out refusal to continue participation as social change agents.

It appears from Marshall's (2012) comparative youth participatory action research study that there needs to be a strong community-based component of critical dialogue, reflection, and empowerment in order for the community to understand and support youth in their transformations (Darder, 2012; Freire, 1970). Marshall (2012) acknowledged that the participatory action research study in New Orleans demonstrated that when people come together to have meaningful dialogue at the community level, they can begin to effectively deal with society's very difficult problems, such as employment problems, racial problems, land use and housing problems, and other problems that function to reinforce the same old power relations, including recidivism. Of course, recidivism is not the only outcome facing incarcerated youth. Studies have shown that there is one other much graver outcome—early death (Teplin et al., 2005).

Early Death as an Outcome

Probably the most disturbing finding of all the research is that delinquent youth are at a much higher risk of being killed at a young age after release from correctional facilities. Teplin et al. (2005) conducted a longitudinal study of 1,829 youth enrolled in the Northwestern Juvenile Project that resulted in 65 youth dying during the follow-up period. Ninety-five percent of those deaths were the result of homicide or legal intervention—law enforcement using deadly force.

Additionally disturbing, but relevant to today's gun control debates, was that 90% of those violent deaths were from firearms (Teplin et al., 2005). When comparing mortality rates between the participants, who had been released from the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center in Chicago, and youth from the general population, Teplin et al. (2005) found that the mortality rate for formerly incarcerated youth was more than four times the mortality rate for their counterparts who were never incarcerated. For females, the comparison shed light on a new disturbing outcome—the mortality rate of the formerly incarcerated female youth was close to eight times the mortality rate for females never incarcerated (Teplin et al., 2005). In response to these grave findings, Teplin et al. (2005) suggested future research should investigate the most effective risk factors and preventive interventions, looking deeper into the likely causes of the high mortality rate for females, and figure out if there is a suicidal intent on the part of minority youth increasing their own risks for homicide.

Countering Recidivism: Approaches and Models

Nationally, intervention programs have been initiated with the intention of preparing incarcerated youth for a successful re-entry into the community, continuing the necessary services for those youth, and avoiding reincarceration. In contrast to the numerous studies that only have focused on incarceration as the intervention, many have sought to investigate the effectiveness of particular interventions on reducing recidivism. Richard Wunderlich, Jewell Lozes, and James Lewis (1974) compared recidivism rates between non–drug related juvenile offenders who had undergone traditional legal consequences with drug-related offenders who had completed a drug therapy program for one calendar year. In this study, they found that the drug-related offenders recidivated at a lower rate than the non–drug related offenders.

The implications of the study are that a problem-specific intervention program will be more effective in reducing the risk and likelihood of recidivating. Another significant study on program effectiveness was one carried out by Michael Maskin (1976), in which two distinct interventions were compared—a work-oriented one and a communication-oriented therapeutic intervention. Maskin (1976) found that recidivism rates were highest in the work-oriented sample, suggesting the need for an increase in family relations–oriented therapy. This is in contrast, however, to recent studies on work-related reentry programs.

For example, Barbara Moody, Gordon Kruze, Jeffrey Nagel, and Bill Conlon (2008) found through a qualitative study of 73 students over six years that a well-designed career development program could effectively stem the tide of recidivism in youth. Their study focused on participants in the Career Development Project at a school

located in an Oregon Youth Authority correctional facility (Moody et al., 2008). The

State of Oregon now requires the completion of a career development project for

graduation from high school. Therefore, students attending school within juvenile

correctional facilities must also complete the project in order to graduate. This

requirement more than likely was the impetus needed for the correctional school to

become career-oriented; however, the results of the study show that it had a positive

effect on the participants—all of whom responded favorably in support of the program

(Moody et al., 2008).

According to Mary Visher (2004), students who participate in career development

programs are much more likely to complete high school graduation. Visher (2004)

studied seven different types of career exploration programs—career majors, cooperative

education, internships/apprenticeships, job shadowing, mentoring, school-sponsored

enterprises, and tech prep. Visher's (2004) study also showed that "students in internships

and mentoring programs had the lowest dropout rates" (p. 138).

Although Deanne Unruh, Jeff Gau, and Miriam Waintrup (2009) focused on a

general community re-entry program for juvenile offenders, their research sought to

identify specific, individual factors that may have a significant influence on success rates,

such as mental health or special education diagnoses. One major problem facing juveniles

is that "few receive any sort of coordinated services combining educational services,

employment supports, and community-based social service agencies" (Unruh et al., 2009,

p. 285). Unruh et al. (2009) studied a program called Project SUPPORT, whose goals

were to initiate and expand a participant's engagement in gaining employment and

enrolling in school. Project SUPPORT's recidivism rates were significantly lower than those of the traditional sample.

For instance, after one year, the SUPPORT participants only recidivated 15%, while 30% of the traditional sample recidivated after one year. Edward Ameen and Debbiesiu Lee (2012) integrated three different, but related theories—emerging adulthood, sociopolitical development, and social cognitive career theory. Ameen and Lee (2012) referred to emerging adulthood as the development of adult responsibilities that many incarcerated youth experience. In terms of sociopolitical development, it was noted that the dreams and aspirations of youth were limited by the poor neighborhoods in which they resided. Social cognitive career theory holds that it is important to develop a strong sense of self-efficacy in the students if they are to increase their outcome expectations as well as select a career—all in line with their long-term goals (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994).

One model organization that has shown success with young people (primarily gang members) who have had trouble with the law is Homeboy Industries, a nonprofit organization founded by Father Greg Boyle located in East Los Angeles, which focuses on jobs as the solution to recidivism. Their mission statement is: "Nothing stops a bullet like a job" (Homeboy Industries, 2010). Guided by this mission statement, their primary tool for assisting the targeted population is their job-training and placement program. In addition to their job-training program, Homeboy Industries has its own small businesses, such as Homeboy Bakery, Homegirl Café, Homeboy Embroidering, and several other businesses. They actively train and place some of the participating youth into these small

businesses, with the expectation that the jobs will build a strong sense of hope and purpose in the youth, as well as their families and the surrounding community.

This approach seems to mirror the belief posited by Hirschi (2002) in his social control/ social bonds theory, in which he argued that youth engaged in prosocial activities with prosocial others will be more likely to engage in prosocial behavior, as opposed to antisocial, criminal behavior. Homeboy Industries's approach also seems to agree with Lent et al. (1994) social cognitive career theory, which posits that youth involved in steady employment develop a sense of purpose and an increased adherence to their own values, leading to a personal expectation of successful outcomes aligned with realistic personal goals.

Mentoring as a Prevention Strategy

A significant amount of research has identified mentoring as an effective tool for reducing recidivism (Giguere, 2009; Grossman & Garry, 1997). Jean Grossman and Eileen Garry (1997), reflecting on the serious attention given to the power of mentoring during the 1990s, described the findings from two key program evaluations: OJJDP's Juvenile Mentoring Program (JUMP) and the well-known Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America mentoring program. OJJDP's JUMP program was designed with the intentions of reducing gang involvement, delinquency, and school dropout rates, and improving academic performance through the careful matching of a child between the ages of five and 20 and an adult volunteer (Grossman & Garry, 1997). Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America, founded by Ernest K. Coulter in 1904, first involved mentors as role models who would "reach out to children who were in need of socialization, firm guidance, and connection with positive adult role models" (Grossman & Garry, 1997, p. 1).

JUMP, which was the result of the 1992 Reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, provided funding for programs offering mentoring services consistent with the guidelines of the JUMP grant—resulting in nationwide attempts across 25 states to keep more than 2,000 at-risk youth "in school and off the streets through one-to-one mentoring" during the programs first year (Grossman & Garry, 1997, p. 2). The nonprofit social research organization Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) conducted an evaluation on the effectiveness of eight different Big Brothers/Big Sisters program from geographically diverse regions, but all with large caseloads (Grossman & Garry, 1997). The findings of the study by P/PV identified several positive outcomes of an effective mentoring program. First, mentored youth were significantly less likely than nonmentored youth to initiate drug or alcohol use. Second, they were less likely to skip school and more likely to receive higher grades. Third, they demonstrated improved relationships with parents and peers. Fourth, effective mentoring programs were found to facilitate specific types of relationships between the adult mentor and the mentee—relationships characterize by high levels of contact and in which the role of the mentor is that of a supportive friend, not an adult trying to deliberately change the mentee. Evaluations of both programs—JUMP and Big Brothers/Big Sisters—showed how powerful mentoring can be as an effective tool for combating the high incarceration rates of youth of color in American society.

In Mark Freado's (2005) description of his experience mentoring and interviewing a young man who had spent much of his adolescent years in and out of juvenile correctional facilities, he noted how determined the young man, named Sako, had remained throughout his ordeals with the juvenile justice and criminal justice

systems, never giving up, even as he faced the possibility of deportation back to his birthplace of Cambodia, where he had not been since a baby. According to Freado (2005), Sako held onto the dream of one day being able to mentor and help out other young people, and eventually became a volunteer with Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and later a street-worker/counselor with a nonprofit called United Teen Equality Center, where Sako maintained a high level of credibility with the hundreds of youth he counseled— credibility gained from living through the same social injustices and struggles as the youth.

The 2007 Prisoner Reentry Initiative (PRI) Grant Program intended to promote and support reentry programs aimed at helping people returning to their communities following incarceration, included the provision of Department of Labor grants to faith- and community-based organizations (FCBOs) to provide services that focus on mentoring (Giguere, 2009). As part of a toolkit for PRI grantees, Rachelle Giguere (2009) prepared a detailed set of research-based strategies and suggestions for implementing effective mentoring programs. Giguere (2009) highlighted the effectiveness of programs such as OJJDP's JUMP and a nonprofit program in Indiana that focused on providing a combination of life skills training and mentoring services to all participants. A four-year follow-up study showed that when program participants received both services (life skills and mentoring), they were 62% less likely to recidivate than those who did not receive any services.

While the data from these various studies support the use of mentoring services to help youth involved in the juvenile justice system, data obtained from the voices and perspectives of those with first-hand experiences are more useful in creating much more

meaningful services that include the youth as active participants in the potentially transformational process of mentoring. One organization that focuses on youth voice is the InsideOUT Writers (IOW) nonprofit, created in 1996 by a juvenile hall chaplain, Sister Janet Harris, that provided a creative writing program as an outlet for the frustration and hopelessness felt by incarcerated youth (Cascio, 2012). The program expanded to serve hundreds of incarcerated youth at all three Los Angeles County juvenile halls, one juvenile probation camp, and many formerly incarcerated young people. IOW relies on the contributions of many talented and committed volunteers, included poets, authors, screenwriters, educators, and journalists, who help the students experience the freedom to be themselves, while engaging in critical reflection and dialogue, sometimes becoming mentors to one of their peers. Upon release back to the community, IOW students often rely on the mentoring services from IOW and sometimes become volunteers themselves to help others, just as Sako had done through UTEC in fulfillment of his dream to engage in transformative work with other youth (Freado, 2005).

Discussion of Theoretical Frameworks

The fact that the school-to-prison pipeline begins in educational settings sheds new light on the powerful effects of our educational system on the whole of society. If the mass incarceration and overrepresentation of youth of color occurs primarily as a function and result of the hegemonic practices of our assessment-driven school system (Darder, 2012), then the responsibility to reduce juvenile incarceration and recidivism does not lie solely in the hands of juvenile justice agencies and law enforcement, but also in the hands of educators—beginning in early childhood (Bilchik, 2011). This study of

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youth incarceration and recidivism as told through the voices of the participants was

conducted through the theoretical frameworks of critical bicultural pedagogy (Darder,

2012) and critical narrative pedagogy (Goodson & Gill, 2014).

Critical Bicultural Pedagogy

Formerly incarcerated youth share similar experiences with others who have been

stigmatized by the racist hegemonic viewpoints and policies of the dominant culture. One

such group that also overlaps the population of incarcerated youth is immigrant youth. In

her book, *Youth Held at the Border: Immigration, Education, and the Politics of

Inclusion*, Lisa Patel (2013) discussed the various borders that exist in society, primarily

for immigrant youth—undocumented and documented. In a largely ethnographic study,

Patel used a participant action research model to examine, discuss, and analyze the

complex ways in which immigrant youth must negotiate the implicit and explicit rules of

inclusion and exclusion, largely based on issues of document status (documented vs.

undocumented), race, gender, age, social class, culture, and education. Similarly,

formerly incarcerated youth, youth of color, and youth with disabilities all are faced with

the difficult task of negotiating the implicit and explicit rules of inclusion and exclusion

in almost all aspects of their lives.

In *Culture and Power in the Classroom*, Darder (2012) explained that people of

subordinate cultures, primarily poor people of color, must learn to navigate the various

cultural power relations that exist in society. Forced to learn to function in both their own

primary culture and the dominant mainstream culture, youth of color live what Darder

(2012) has referred to as bicultural lives. Due to the prevalence of youth of color in

juvenile correctional settings, a bicultural theory explaining the relationship between

culture and power is relevant to this study. In her work, Darder (2012) has argued that a critical theory of cultural democracy can emerge by examining the link between culture and power in the classroom. With the emergence of a critical theory of cultural democracy, a pedagogy of critical biculturalism begins with the needs and realities of the most vulnerable populations and serves as an effective foundation for educational programs with youth of color.

Grounded in the writings of Freire (1970) and other critical theorists (i.e., Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren, bell Hooks), Darder's (2012) critical bicultural pedagogy is a crucial component of any educational process that seek to contend with and counter the negative effects of the school-to-prison pipeline on youth of color. A critical bicultural pedagogy creates the conditions and contexts for students of color, previously silenced by the hegemonic practices of traditional schooling, to develop their voices and seek possibilities to rethink their lives and their relationship to oppression within their lives, thus engaging marginalized youth in ways that help them collectively to live as empowered human beings, rather than powerless objects.

Through the incorporation then of a theory of cultural democracy, Darder's (2012) concept of emancipatory pedagogy is built on critical bicultural principles of classroom practice that consider it imperative to begin with students' actual relationship to their lived experiences by recognizing and engaging forms of cultural invasion (i.e., poverty, racism, few labor prospects, increasing incarceration, etc.) that negatively impact the lives of poor and working class youth and their families. Also important, as mentioned earlier, are the ways in which a critical bicultural approach employs critical dialogue "to create the conditions for students of color to find their voice through

opportunities to reflect, critique, and act on their world to transform it" (Darder, 2012, p. 102). Moreover, a critical bicultural pedagogy, in concert with critical pedagogical principles, is uncompromisingly committed to the social and political empowerment of youth of color, in ways that support them in becoming subjects of their histories and authors of their destiny.

Freire (1970) argued that when students and teachers work together in a critical process of learning, reflection, and action, they move toward a greater sense of command over their lives. Freire (1970) and Darder (2012) have both offered a critical process of learning and action, emphasizing the importance of empowerment, voice, consciousness, social agency, and acknowledgment of the political nature of educational processes whether in schools, communities, or prison programs. The underlying aim for emancipated youth within a critical pedagogical context, then, is the continuous evolving process of consciousness, personal empowerment, and transformation, inherent in a collective praxis of critical reflection, dialogue, and action.

For an intervention to be proactive, rather than reactive, as noted earlier, it must involve youth in constructing new knowledge by creating their own meanings based on their real lived experiences, while developing awareness of the existing relations between culture and power. Darder (2012) stressed the importance of supporting the emancipatory needs of youth by "incorporating the participation and voices of students into the discourse of public schooling" (p. 24). Similarly, when dealing with youth involved in the juvenile justice system, their voices and participation must be incorporated in the discourse of their ecological settings. Thus, a critical narrative inquiry model is a more

effective intervention than traditional models—if we are to truly effect positive change in the lives and communities of our most vulnerable and most stigmatized youth.

Critical Narrative Pedagogy

According to Cammarota and Fine (2008), critical educational experiences can lead students to discover the sometimes discomforting realities of their exploitation and oppression, but can also lead them to realize the "possibilities for resistance" (p. 1). The qualitative research design of critical narrative inquiry selected for this study will necessarily involve critical pedagogical principals of resistance, which are also at the heart of a critical bicultural pedagogy. It is the essence and purpose of critical narrative pedagogy (Goodson & Gill, 2014) to awaken the voice of the participants, engage them in critical dialogue and reflection, support them in becoming aware of the possibilities of changing for what once seemed unchangeable as young agents of change in their own world (Cammarota & Fine, 2008). Equipped with a new sense of empowerment and critical awareness, the participating youth are motivated to engage in transformational resistance when confronting social justice problems—in other words, seeking actions to effectively address the social injustice (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Solorzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001).

In comparison to traditional approaches to studying juvenile recidivism from perspectives of adult professionals, a critical narrative inquiry provides rich data that is more meaningful to those who are primarily affected—the youth themselves (Cammarota & Fine, 2008). Through their voices, new knowledge can be constructed with them as significant agents (Goodson & Gill, 2014), which can help inform future research and

policy in ways that may potentially have profound effects on the recidivism outcomes for

formerly incarcerated youth.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative critical narrative inquiry is to learn about the collective and individual experiences of youth involved in the juvenile justice system from their own perspectives and through their own voices, while engaging the youth to consider critical questions regarding the juvenile justice system as it relates to their own individual and collective experiences. Too often social scientists attempt to capture the characteristics and causes of a certain phenomenon by relying on the discovery and analysis of concrete facts (Freire, 1982). Freire (1982) argued that we must delve deeper if we are to gain a more authentic understanding, and seek to understand the reality as perceived by those who live that reality. In this study, the participants, having been formerly incarcerated youth in the juvenile justice system, are, as Freire (1982) said, the "masters of inquiry into the underlying causes of the events in their world" (p. 29). Thus, it makes sense for their first-hand experiences to be narrated and interpreted through their voices, and co-constructed into new knowledge of the juvenile justice system and its effects on criminalized youth.

This study sought to discover through the voices of the participants, a more insightful description, than that from traditional studies, of the juvenile justice system, looking at what works and does not work to lower incarceration rates and reduce recidivism, especially for youth from marginalized communities. This study engaged participants through critical inquiry, dialogue, and reflection to arrive at the outset of

what Freire (1970) referred to as praxis—the transformative work of critically reflecting and acting upon the world in order to effect positive change.

Research Questions

The research questions, directly linked to participation of formerly incarcerated 18–22 year old males, that guide this qualitative critical narrative research are:

1. Based on their collective and individual journeys through the juvenile justice system, how do formerly incarcerated youth describe their experiences?

2. What recommendations do formerly incarcerated young men have for reducing youth incarceration and recidivism rates?

Methodology and Rationale

The purpose of this qualitative research was to discover, from the perspectives and voices of the participants: (a) the lived experiences that contribute to being incarcerated, (b) the effects of the juvenile justice system on the lives of incarcerated youth, and (c) the experiences of rejoining the community-at-large after being released from juvenile corrections. The value of qualitative research is that it can focus on many more aspects of a particular context than can quantitative methods, resulting in a collection of data rich in meaning and relevant to those involved in the contextualized phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2009).

The main goal of critical narrative inquiry was to give the participants—in this case formerly incarcerated 18-to-22-year-old males—a voice and to give them the opportunity and ability to make their voices heard—a process that involves the relearning of one's own "memories, stories . . . and other accounts (Goodson & Gill, 2014, p. 15). Darder (2012) has taught that voice is developed "through opportunities to enter into

dialogue and engage in a critical process of reflection from which they can share their thoughts, ideas, and lived experiences with others in an open and free manner" (p. 62). For a study such as this, which intends to uncover the truths behind a particular social problem, a critical narrative inquiry can act as a mechanism for liberating the consciousness of the people affected by the problem, bringing them into a "reflexive process," where they evaluate their actions against their intentions and "thus 'write a further part' of their histories" (Goodson & Gill, 2014, p. 33). This type of outcome of critical narrative inquiry coincides with the concepts of critical bicultural pedagogy (Darder, 2012), Freire's (1970) ideas, and transformational resistance (Solorzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001).

Qualitative research is useful for investigating, understanding, and describing the meanings people assign to a particular context and/or social problem (Creswell, 2009). The practice of conducting critical narrative inquiry is emancipatory in and of itself, in a way that mirrors Freire's (1970) emancipatory ideals that inform Darder's (2012) critical bicultural pedagogy, which support Cammarota and Fine's (2008) view that data can be much richer and more meaningful when it is derived from the voices of those directly involved and affected by the problem being studied. Freire (1982) asserted that too often, social science researchers seek to discover the concrete realities of the problem of focus; however, what those researchers are simply trying to identify are the physical structures and the observed concrete facts. Freire (1982) proposed that if we are to learn the true reality of a problem, then we must learn how the people involved in the problem perceive the concrete facts, in addition to how they perceive themselves in relation to those concrete facts. Through critical narrative inquiry, participants are able to formulate a

new, clearer self-identity—the result of understanding the connections between one's own intentions, actions, values, and purpose (Goodson & Gill, 2014). The actions of recalling and telling one's own story (narrative) to a nonjudgmental listener allows participants to "adapt, modify and shift" their story, ultimately transforming their own interpretation of lived experiences (Goodson & Gill, 2014, p. 32).

Through a critical bicultural pedagogical process, critical narrative inquiry engages participants in critical reflection and critical dialogue about their experiences, where their bicultural voices (Darder, 2012) can offer new meaning through their stories about youth incarceration. As explained by transformational resistance theory (Solorzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001), participants are moved to "a deeper level of understanding and a social justice orientation" (Cammarota & Fine, 2008, p. 3). Thus, critical narrative inquiry brings together an individual's quest for self-meaning and the realization of future actions for positive change. Goodson and Gill (2014) have explained that the combined reflexive processes of "narrating lived experience and examining human life as a whole can help us forge a vision of our reality and our purpose in the world, which considers how it was constructed in relation to others, within the wider contexts of our communities and of the social and cultural systems that provide meaning to our existence" (p. 35). An examination of individual and collective lived experiences and human responses to the conditions of those experiences, learned through the narratives of the people involved, is a necessary approach to attempting to understand and getting a grasp on the complex phenomenon of mass incarceration of youth. The value of such an approach is the key reason for conducting this study through the lenses of bicultural pedagogy and critical narrative pedagogy.

Role of Researcher

In preparing for the critical narrative inquiry sessions, the primary researcher must attempt to build rapport with each participant in order to establish an open space for personal memories, opinions, and feelings to be shared. The closeness that will need to occur between the primary researcher and participants make it extremely necessary for certain safeguards to take place. For instance, in order for a safe space to be created and to remain "safe" enough for each participant to engage in meaningful, risky dialogue, the primary researcher must facilitate continual and purposeful episodes of reflection (Bergold & Thomas, 2012).

Jarg Bergold and Stefan Thomas (2012) recommended that this process of regular reflection should be focused on the following factors: individual attributes and dispositions; the context conditions (social, political, and economic) of the research theme and the research project; and the research process. This form of ongoing reflection must occur in order for the primary researcher to remain aware of and responsive to the needs of all participants, as this is the only way the primary researcher can establish and maintain a level of trust.

Participants

Participant selection is very important in a critical narrative inquiry, because whoever is selected will need to be able to have meaningful dialogue regarding potentially sensitive issues connected to the research themes. The following criteria was used to select participants:

- Formerly incarcerated in a Los Angeles County juvenile correctional facility.

- Male.

- 18–22 years old.

- Willingness and availability to actively and cooperatively participate in
  dialogue about personal experiences and knowledge of incarceration and
  related issues, experiences, and concerns.

These criteria meet the requirements of the study, in bringing together people with

firsthand experience and insight into the central theme of the study. Bergold and Thomas

(2012) have stressed the importance of selecting participants with similar connections

with the research problem.

Purposive sampling was used in order to select three of the four participants

meeting all of the above criteria. Convenience sampling was used to select the fourth

participant—one of my former students, whom I personally had agreed to keep in contact

with as a mentor and support during his difficult transition phase. Upon approval from

the IRB, I sought contacts from local nonprofit organizations that maintain contact with

formerly incarcerated young adults who fit the criteria for this study. Through my

professional connections at the juvenile hall, I attended a Saturday retreat at the juvenile

hall where I worked, hosted by InsideOUT Writers (IOW) program. The IOW retreat

featured poetry and spoken word performances by incarcerated youth who had been

working regularly with the IOW program. Attending the retreat as a representative of my

school, I met some of the staff members and volunteers from IOW. Among them was

film producer and advocate Scott Budnick—founder of Anti-Recidivism Coalition

(ARC). Upon explaining my dissertation research needs to him, Scott Budnick offered to

provide access to potential candidates through the membership of ARC. I took Scott up

on his offer and followed through by contacting the ARC coordinator of member services.

A couple months later, the ARC coordinator called and invited me to the annual ARC retreat held at a campsite near Lake Castaic, located in northwestern Los Angeles County. I attended the retreat on a Saturday, all-day, participating in all of the activities, which included small group activities, community meetings, a soccer game, lunch, a community meditation, and dinner. Throughout the day, I met many wonderful individuals—Arc members and volunteers. Through word-of-mouth, the ARC members helped me find participants who fit the criteria for my study. Every ARC member I spoke to was very interested in helping me with my study—reinforcing my belief that it is through their voices that their stories must be told.

Still at the retreat, while meeting with each individual, I provided the purpose and a detailed description (verbally and in writing) of the research project, expectations for participants, benefits of participation, and description of the forms of compensation for participation, as approved by the IRB. Participants were selected for the study and, through phone calls, text messages, and emails, provided with a tentative schedule and convenient locations for the critical narrative sessions. All participants completed consent forms, prior to each participant's critical narrative session.

Data Collection and Analysis

The primary methods of data collection included critical narrative session field notes taken by the primary researcher and digital audio recordings of all critical narrative sessions, which were professionally transcribed. The transcriptions were analyzed for common themes and issues, and significant findings from the voiced perspectives of each

participant as they addressed the major research questions that informed this study. Prior to having the audio transcribed, at the conclusion of each critical narrative session, I recorded on paper the major themes that I identified at that time. Later, when coding the transcriptions of the critical narratives, I further identified emergent themes in each narrative while reading through each one's in its entirety. Once the emergent themes were identified from each narrative, I rated them according to the commonality of themes, significance to the individual's experiences, and relevance to this study. Next, I collapsed the identified themes into groups of subthemes in order to narrow my focus of analysis. At all times, I reflected back on what each participant felt were the most significant themes according to their personal narratives. This ensured that I would not misrepresent their views. Finally, I compared/contrasted the identified emergent themes to the themes discussed in the literature review.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Critical Narrative Summaries

This chapter attempts to carefully describe the experiences of the four participants during their childhood, leading up to and including the time period of their lives affected by incarceration in the juvenile and criminal justice systems, as well as the period of their lives after their last incarceration. The following descriptions of the narratives include the profiles of the young men, their critical reflections and insightful perspectives told through their own voices, and their ideas about how this information can be used to make a meaningful contribution to the field of juvenile justice policy and studies. Moreover, the underlying purpose of this chapter is to retain, as much as possible, the voices of the participants in relaying their stories; in that they not only gave of their valuable time to this study, but also trusted me with their experiences. That said, some of their quotations in this chapter may seem longer than expected; however, this is done deliberately to maintain the integrity of their insights and perspectives.

Participant One: JQ

Demographics

JQ, a 19-year-old Salvadoran young man, born and raised in South Los Angeles to immigrant parents from El Salvador, told his personal life experiences from early childhood until young adulthood, including a period of incarceration in juvenile correctional facilities. JQ was born on August 12, 1995, in South Los Angeles, where he continued to live. JQ explained that his family grew up very poor; however, after recently purchasing their own house, he described his family's socioeconomic status as lower-

middle class. His immediate and extended family, while growing up, consisted of 10

members living together in one house—JQ, mother, father, older sister, younger cousin,

grandmother, two uncles, and two aunts. Within the last couple years, he stated, he had

grown into his own spiritual state, in which he believed in God, but not in religion.

Pre-Incarceration Years

  Early childhood. JQ described his earlier childhood, prior to the incarceration of

his father, as being fairly normal, with the exception of the exposure to violence in and

out of the home. He felt that others saw him as a good kid, getting good grades and

playing on a soccer team. It was not until he turned 10 that things began to take a sharp

turn downward. This was when his father was incarcerated. JQ explained that time period

of his life according to how he perceived things at the time:

  I think in childhood I wasn't really looking within myself. I was just observing

  everything and what was around me. And what I used to see around me was my

  parents always working—my parents working and my neighbors doing drugs as

  well. My house used to be the party house. Every Friday and Saturday, it's a party

  at my house. And it used to just be like my father and his friends were in the front

  lawn doing their gambling. They were young themselves at that time, so it was

  pretty wild. And then the whole family would just be in the driveway and the back

  yard having fun partying. I'd walk down the streets. All I used to see was gang

  members. My father, himself not being a gang member, but highly involved. And

  a lot of his friends and cousins were really involved within that gang life, so that's

  what I used to really see in childhood. In the beginning, my mother used to walk

  us and bring us to school. But when my father got incarcerated, she picked up an

extra job, and that's when I practically had to just raise myself, and all I saw was pretty much violence—a lot of violence in my childhood.

Before the age of ten, my dad was an alcoholic, so I witnessed him beat my mother once in a while, as well. So the violence started pretty young. But I could still say I was raised pretty well compared to all the obstacles I had. Like I was on a soccer team, and I did get pretty decent scores on my tests while being in elementary, but once my father went to prison I can say things started to change quite quickly.

JQ also recalled how his feelings and behavior changed once his father was incarcerated, particularly with respect to his freedom from his father's discipline. As he explained:

When he left, I felt free actually. I felt able to do what I wanted to—stay out late, walk home by myself, maybe go out, maybe go the long way home just so I could see a couple friends. Because he was really the heavy hand, he would try to discipline you. So when he went to prison, I felt free, like I could really do what I really always wanted to do.

I think before my father [got incarcerated], I think people just saw me as a normal little boy—into sports, just hyper, all over the place. I used to just walk around and bug people. But they never saw me as a troublemaker. I'm not saying that as soon as he went into prison I just [dove] into that extreme gang-banging world or the hustling or drug dealing world, but . . . once he left, people started seeing me outside a little bit more, becoming more aggressive, and not afraid to talk back so much anymore . . . thinking I'm grown . . . I was probably getting to twelve.

Middle school. Middle school was, according to JQ, established his pathway to incarceration. In other words, the school-to-prison pipeline began for him around age 12. JQ narrated his attempts to navigate this new world of middle school at the age of 12. At that time, JQ recalled, teachers were regularly kicking him out of class—sending him to the dean's office. JQ recalled the counselor telling him, "Oh, you're at it again. JQ can't stay in class, huh?" Isolation began in middle school for JQ, as it often is for other students labeled as "bad kids." He explained that the school put a high emphasis on the difference between good and bad, including posting names visibly outside the dean's office onto two distinct lists—Honor Roll and Detention. According to his school, the purpose of the detention list was actually for you to see how many detentions you have so that you could go serve them. However, JQ recalled that he and his friends saw the list more as visible proof that they were the bad kids—something they took pride in at the time, feeling like they were the young rebels of the school. Ironically, the school's visible detention list encouraged the "bad kids" to get into more trouble, so that they could see who would earn the most detentions.

JQ recalled how they labeled and segregated the kids into the "good kids" and the "bad kids," providing distinctly different opportunities for each group:

> They made a class where they used to take us all from . . . different classes and put us in one class, supposedly called a counseling class to . . . somewhat rehabilitate us to help us navigate with teachers. And in that class, they sent us to this field trip, and it was to juvenile hall . . . It was supposed to let us know, "This is where you're going to end up if you keep doing bad. You know you're going to

end up in a dark place like this." It was supposedly to awaken our mind, but I just felt it was all-wrong. I just felt like we were just getting isolated and labeled.

During his middle school years, JQ remembered his friends all saw him as just a normal kid, maybe a clown sometimes, but not too different from other kids. His immediate family at home, including his father's side of the family, also saw him as a normal kid. However, his mother's side of the family viewed him as a troublemaker and tried to keep him away from their children—his own cousins, because they perceived him as a bad influence on their kids. Eventually, JQ just accepted that his mother's side of the family saw him that way.

JQ described what he perceived as the various forces that led to him getting into serious trouble and eventually incarcerated:

I feel like the establishment of leading into my incarceration started in middle school for the reason that the teachers were just so quick to kick you out for any disobedience with no type of mentoring . . . not even an objective to motivate you to stay in class. So I'm already in middle school, and I'm getting kicked out for all these nonsense reasons. It's like three strikes and you strike out. So they would give me a chance or two in the beginning of the school, but then the teacher, after like the two chances, for any little reason, "Get out. Go to the dean. Go talk to your counselor." So automatically they're taking time out of my learning. I'm not learning anything. All I'm doing is taking trips back and forth from the office to school to the office, so off the top, I'm not sitting in class, and I'm not being forced to learn. My study habits are not being ingrained.

High school. Here, JQ described his high school years as a more difficult time in his life:

> And then I move on to high school, much tougher. It's much more [about]
> enrollment rate and competition. Now you're dealing with the cool kids, the
> jocks, the gangsters, the hustlers, the nerds. There's all these factors, and I walk
> into high school and then, like all right. Fresh start. New beginning . . .
> supposedly. And then it's practically the same thing! The teacher starts labeling
> as soon as you come in—starts isolating the good kids from the bad kids. Then as
> soon as you're marked as a bad kid, the tolerance is real low.

JQ briefly recalled the lack of preparation in middle school for high school. He attributed much of his lack of preparation to his constantly being kicked out of class for behavioral reasons, as well as the unwillingness of the school to work closely with him. Basically, the teachers, counselors, and administration displayed a very low tolerance for his difficulties to sit quietly in class. JQ argued that they never actually taught him "how to learn," which he says was the biggest problem he faced. He simply did not understand how to learn like the other kids. However, his difficulties were never properly addressed in middle school. Thus, he entered high school facing the same difficulties he had faced in middle school. JQ commented on his early experience in high school:

> So, like after the three months being enrolled in high school and me already
> feeling like I belong where all the bad kids are—already being labeled like, "Oh,
> this is who I am. Oh, that's my group. These are my friends over here."

Carrying the same feelings toward high school that he developed in middle school, JQ felt like he simply did not belong. JQ described the curriculum as being

uninteresting and did not see anything he could relate to in school, which intensified his feeling of being disconnected from school. Additionally, he expected that the teachers were just going to continue to kick him out as soon as he entered class. Therefore, he began ditching regularly in the ninth grade. JQ recalled how he saw himself during his middle school and early high school days prior to incarceration:

It felt like it was never going to end. Like the prize is the money and the women. All I wanted was to get the money so I could leave the hood. I felt a part of my community, because we all did the same thing—drug dealing or whatever. But I just felt we were just crabs in a bucket—just using each other to prevail with no type of guidance and no help—just a bunch of dumb little kids running around.

JQ explained the powerlessness he felt he felt in his life, preceding his first incarceration:

It was like I had no power. I was actually seeking that power. Wanting that power is what got me all into drug dealing, got me all into trying to be the big man, and trying to learn how to fight because I know if you know how to fight then that gives you some type of power over people . . . What difference would it make if I was taught "What is power?" The power of choice. You know? Taught temptation and the real long-term effects of drugs—not just a simple overview but like a complete systemic process?

Incarceration Years

Initial incarceration. During his 10th-grade year, JQ got into more serious trouble, which led to his first incarceration. He ended up getting caught for graffiti outside of the school late at night, taken to the police station, and then transported to the

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juvenile hall. JQ remained at the juvenile hall for about one month, waiting for his court hearing.

Recalling his first time being incarcerated, JQ described how he perceived himself at that time:

The first time I was—the first time I was incarcerated, I actually laughed because I went back and remembered that same moment when I was in middle school, and the counselors took me to that same jail. When they gave us the tour, there was at least ten of us kids in middle school. We went to that juvenile hall, and they put us in a room—in a small room—and they made all ten of us sit around, and they asked us, "How do you feel in here all squished up and tight up, locked in this room?" Like there's no pictures, no nothing. And I kept—different kids were saying, "I don't care. I'm going to end up here anyways. I already know I'm going to end up here." And some kids were like, "No, I don't like this." So when I walked into that same room and they told me to sit, I laughed because I remember one of the counselors saying, "If you all keep doing that same thing, this is the place you're going to end up at. And this is no good place."

I never thought I was going to end up there. When I was a kid I always knew I wanted to go to college. I just didn't know how. And the circumstance I was raised in made it real hard for me to even find out for myself. So that's why I laughed, because when I was in there I laughed because I never imagined myself in there. And I laughed because I'm like, "Who knew that counselor was right?" [laughs] I was like, "Who knew that counselor was right? But fuck it. I'm in here." I seen myself low . . . real low. Family wise, I seen myself low. But as

friends and street wise, I'm like, "Oh, shit. I made it in here. I made it. Like I'm bad. I'm real bad if I made it in here." You know? But once I spoke with my mom that first phone call, and she dropped the phone—like that's when it hits you. Damn! I made it into a real—like I'm low. I'm a real low person. I'm just a statistic. I'm in here.

Well, the first time I got incarcerated, to tell you the truth I wasn't ready to change. I didn't want to change. Like yeah, I used to get the glimpse of like, damn, this sucks. I want something new. I want something different. I don't want to see my mom crying. I'm low for that. But that was all I knew; therefore, that was all I was going to do because that's all I knew. And I was not stopping any time soon at that point. I was just going to keep on going. It wasn't till the fourth time, which I got arrested. I was probably already seventeen. I was already like seventeen—about to turn eighteen real soon. And that's when I sat there and I perceived myself real different. I sat there, and I looked at myself. I'm like, "Damn! I'm back here again. I'm going to be eighteen real soon." That age eighteen got to me. I used to just tell myself, "I'm going to be eighteen real soon, and I'm still here. I'm still doing the same thing four years later."

JQ described how he perceived that others saw him during his years of incarceration and period of recidivism:

At that time coming in and out of jail, my family was already losing hope, for sure. They had already been losing hope. Actually, the first reason I ever went to placement was because my parents gave me up. They were like, "We don't want him in our house. He's too crazy. We don't want him in our house. He just causes

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trouble. He's too much. He's never home. He doesn't listen. Take him away." My

immediate family was already pushing me away—just basically gave me up. To

me, in my head at that age, I don't care if I'm bad. You're my mother. So what if

I'm out there? At least I'm not incarcerated. But in her point of view, she said,

"I'd rather have you in jail safe than being in the streets." "I worry about your

life." But that was her ignorance of the juvenile system itself.

And then my friends—my friends loved me. They were like, "Oh, you're a

soldier because you're always down and you're a warrior. You do what you got to

do. You made your little money. Oh, you're cool. You're the homey." They loved

me. But being in jail—that's a whole different ball game because it's a hundred of

you in there—a hundred of you with the same background, a hundred of you with

the same mentality, and they all want to be the big dog. So a few of them you

click. You get along and it was cool. And then there's the other ones that you just

don't like. So some saw you as like a cool guy, like a warrior. "Oh, he's down."

And the others just despise you, but they always acknowledge the fact that, if you

were willing to fight, people respected that like, "Oh, he's down." But some

people got marked out because they wouldn't fight.

JQ discussed the helpful versus harmful features of the juvenile justice system,

based on his experiences of being incarcerated:

You become real gang entrenched, and then they discipline you with this military

structure, basically. Then the staff themselves—"Oh, you think you're bad?" All

these fights—like it really damaged you. If you're not ready to change, it really

damaged you. Plus the education at that time was nothing. I wasn't learning. They don't teach you nothing. They just teach you the basic one plus one, two plus two.

Basically, the system itself treats us as livestock. Like since you can't [function] in a real society and we have to separate you, why not make money off of you? Like why not have investments? Why not create all these juvenile halls or prisons? Less human—Isolated for sure. They made you feel like you were useless, that you weren't going to be anything, that you're just going to graduate to prison. You're going to go back home and do the same thing at that moment— like this is who you are. This is who your parents are, and this is who you're always going to be—this dog in a cage.

As a young youth, your emotions are all over the place. So you're sitting in these four white walls with this bright light just looking at the sky, not knowing who you are, still in a transition of figuring out who you're trying to be. And here's everybody in your life telling you you're bad, you're a gang member, you sell drugs. That's what you're always going to do. You're in jail. You just don't come back. You can say you're going to do good, but once you get out you're going back to the same thing. But inside, you want to do good. You want to succeed. You're just trying to make it. You're trying to survive. So for sure, in that part, it really damaged us in that way.

But in a sense of a person who's ready to change, it could help you for the reason that you actually find the time to pick up a book and read. It took me three times going back and forth to jail. The fourth time is when I actually picked up a decent book and read. It took me three juvenile hall terms. There were books

there, but the gang culture and that incarceration culture is so much that you'll get distracted. You'll just be like in a whole little world. But then the fourth time is when I picked up a book, and I just saw that there's a different world in there as well. Like I feel like there's a different world because I got something else to do. I actually started writing poetry the fourth time. It was big, but I think the major [reason]—I was just tired. I got real tired that last time. I got tired going back to the same thing. By watching my same friends come back and now we're cool— we know each other from different camps. Anywhere you go you're going to know at least three people in there. And you just get tired of that. You can't go home. You're being told what to eat, shower, and use the restroom. It gets overwhelming, and that fourth time I was just tired—like completely tired of being sick and tired. Therefore, I'm like how am I going to escape these walls? How am I going to get out of here with not actually leaving physically? And that's what got me into reading. That's when I started reading, and it made the time go by fast. That's the good thing. You have the time to work on the ugly and the bad of you to really look within. You really have the time to really look within yourself and figure out who you are. But what makes that process difficult is that the juvenile hall—it's not meant for that. They can say it's a rehabilitation, but what type of services are they offering us? Especially the time I was going. We weren't getting any type of services if it wasn't Catholic services.

And then I think the major reason that made me really succeed from my transition out the fourth time was going to Camp Gonzales. I feel like if I would have went to a different camp—to any other camps, which they didn't really offer

services—I thought I would have fell back into that camp mentality of making a reputation for you and making sure no one gets over you. By making sure no one gets over you—because I remember going like getting sentenced to a year and then going to Camp Gonzales and my first mentality was like, I got to establish myself in here. If I see someone I don't like, I'm going to just quick rush him the first day I'm here, and everybody's going to think I'm crazy, and then they're going to leave me alone. And then I tried it but the guy didn't want to fight me. [laughs] So I let that slide. Because I think he really wanted to go home. He was about to go home, too, and supposedly that camp was a one fight re-file, and I was new. So I knew me being my first day there, they would have given me a chance. They would have given me one more chance. Like the minute he got here, we're going to let this one slide. But do good now because we will give you more time.

JQ discussed activities he experienced—just simple things—and how this made the last camp at which he was incarcerated so significant:

It was for sure their extra programs. They have poetry. They had rap. They have yoga. When I saw all of that I tripped out. Imagine going back to elementary and receiving yoga in elementary—like how different my mentality [would have been]. Imagine having a piano class, having yoga, having poetry—learning how to write poetry in middle school—like looking within yourself already in middle school as a kid, even if it's writing roses are red and violets are blue. And in middle school . . . having life skills, real life skills . . . like learning how to manage a budget . . . like being taught sociology in middle school . . . like having

real fine art—not just go to class and write and draw whatever you want. Just simple things—real simple things that we were missing.

JQ described what he perceived as the most harmful feature of the juvenile justice system: probation. He explained that the effects of having a probation officer overseeing your difficult transition after your release is detrimental and is a major reason why recidivism is so high and consistent. JQ explained that the anger from being incarcerated is so intense and long-lasting that it remains with you when you get released. To make things more difficult, you have a probation officer who, as JQ explained it, "views you as a criminal" and treats you as such during your postrelease transition phase. JQ described some of the harmful effects of his incarceration:

I think the most harmful thing that a juvenile facility offers—having a probation officer once you're released. I felt that's the pipeline that keeps recidivism so strong—the invisible moving hand that makes this whole thing function. Because you get out of jail angry. You just got out of jail, being locked up in a cell for hours dealing with other kids who got anger issues, you got to act tougher than everybody else, and you have staff screaming, whining at you in your face. You just walk out of there angry. And then you get on probation, and your probation officer is so entrenched in his training that he just views you as a criminal—that you're bad, and "If you want to be good you've got to follow these fundamentals," "I don't care what's wrong with you," and "I don't care what type of situations you're dealing with." They just care that "these are your requirements, and this is what your court has asked me for. You reach them. If you don't you go back to jail."

JQ recommended that all probation officers be trained as social workers, that way, they can help youth on probation get their lives on-track, helping them with things like enrolling in school, getting their juvenile records sealed, or finding resources to address their various interests and needs, such as finding a sports league or taking care of housing and health-related needs. A probation officer, in JQ's eyes, is in a good position to become a young probationee's mentor.

The release. When JQ got released, he recalled seeing himself as a great person—something he attributed to his decision during incarceration to cultivate his own mind through reading and writing. Through participation a nonprofit program at Camp Gonzalez, called New Roads/CEE (Coalition for Engaged Education), he learned how to write poetry, and began to see value in developing new habits, such as reading, writing, and self-reflection. JQ explained that these new habits, developed prior to his release, helped him to cultivate his mind, leading to a personal desire to engage himself in more critical reading and reflection. JQ recalled how he used to take advantage of the services provided by the afterschool programs at Camp Gonzalez, such as New Roads:

> We used to have different teachers for all these different programs, and I used to just ask them, "Can you give me a book?" *Malcolm X.* I used to ask for *Malcolm X.* "Can I get a Buddhism book? Can I get a meditation book?" And they used to just feed me books after a while, helping me cultivate—actually learn and read. Just a whole new curriculum—a whole class reading the *Malcolm X* autobiography. So if I was a teacher, I'll present the Malcolm like, "Oh, today and throughout this whole month we're going to have to read this *Malcolm X* autobiography. See the comparison and differences and how this relates to your

life." And then you're reading, and Malcolm X himself was a troublemaker, and he got incarcerated, and he got out and became this great leader. Imagine being in class: "Malcolm X—one of the greatest leaders in the world, was in these same chairs that you are in right now. He sold drugs just like you. He came out and he tried to change the world." And then, tell them, "How do you feel? Do you feel like discrimination is still in the air? Do you feel like you're still living in the Malcolm X time where the whites are still superior and you're still looked down upon?" Imagine how that would awaken their head . . . and then going back to their rooms and having nothing but time to analyze what they just received. That would be real deep.

Postrelease

During the reentry phase of his life (the immediate time period following his release back to the community), JQ described his self-image as a new, determined man, ready to claim the rewards for working hard and cultivating his mind. He also remembered his family seeing him in a different light—more mature and independent. Although his family and friends were impressed with his transformation and seemed hopeful for him, during the immediate time period following his release, JQ stated that they still carried doubt, telling him things like, "I understand you're determined. I'm happy to hear that, but you know that's just talk. Actions speak louder than words." JQ stated that he had been out for a year now and the doubt was still there with his friends and family; however, he now used that doubt as motivation to succeed in school. He explained that if he let himself worry about other people's doubt about his success, then he was just as weak as they are.

Prior to being released, JQ graduated and earned his high school diploma while incarcerated at Camp Miller. (He had spent the remainder of his sentence at Camp Miller after Camp Gonzalez closed for reconstruction). With a high school diploma in hand, and assistance from the New Roads organization, JQ was able to enroll in community college prior to his release. Therefore, he was able to begin attending community college as soon as the new semester began. JQ explained that neither probation nor school staff assisted him with college enrollment. Even after being released, the staff from New Roads stuck with JQ and provided as-needed support for him to remain resilient and avoid recidivating.

JQ attributed his ability to remain resilient and successful to the connections he made while incarcerated in camp. While there, he was able to network with staff and teachers from the various nonprofit programs, such as New Earth and CEE Hope/New Roads. Visitors through these programs would tell him to call them after he got released so they could sit down and talk about his plans over lunch. Having written down all of their contact information inside his composition book, JQ followed through after his release, reaching back out to the various people who initially had reached out to him. He explained how these connections led to connections with other programs, like Inside Out Writers (IOW) and Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC). In addition to becoming active with these new organizations, JQ remained a part of New Roads and New Earth, eventually getting hired to work for New Earth. JQ stated that these opportunities were intended results of the reentry programs the nonprofit organizations offered. These organizations also scheduled activities and events that JQ felt they made the members want to attend—movies, member meetings, poetry classes, outings, field trips, life skills

classes, and so forth. JQ identified these obligations, opportunities, and social networks as the reasons he was able to remain resilient. As JQ explained, he did not feel capable on his own following his release without the support and attention that the nonprofit personnel provided. These activities kept him focused and busy in ways that helped him to remain resilient. JQ described the challenges of resisting negative influences upon release and benefitting from the help of reentry programs:

> That's what helped me stay focused, but I still had my friends, which were a distraction because of alcohol and drugs. I didn't finish cold turkey. I got out and I still smoked and I drank. But I couldn't do too much of that for the reason that I kept getting invited to dinners. I kept getting invited to events or just to show up to an office. I had to. My time was already being consumed, so I didn't really have too much time to mess around in the street like before, where all I did was have time. I didn't have the summer programs that the rich kids had. I didn't have any more soccer practice like some of the rich kids had. I didn't have piano practice. That's what they—a lot of rich kids maintain to stay out of trouble because their parents have all this money to afford to put them into these extracurricular activities, and we were extremely poor. For sure my mother would have loved to have given me some type of musical classes, but they're too expensive. So once getting released, all these reentry programs . . . they offer what our parents couldn't afford. Probation is the people who allowed them to come in. But they didn't allow them to come in with warm hands. But, because they were supposed to be reformative, they allowed a few people to come in. And because I took the initiative to really go upon their word once I got out, that's

when I really started getting involved community-wise. That's when I really

started awakening to how oppressed we were—how really oppressed we were in

jail. And how there's this emphasis of them trapping a lot of young kids in at an

early age.

Mentors. JQ also attributed his resiliency to his access to mentors. JQ explained

how important it was to have mentors, not *one*, but different mentors and different

experiences. JQ offered the following scenarios as examples of the value of mentors:

Different mentors and experiences . . . those different experiences . . . like just

going to a conference or to a seminar. That experience of being able just—even

though you're not a college student—to walk into these [classes] . . . they [the

mentors] were like, "Come with me. Let's go to a UCLA class and see how it

feels to sit in one." And just sitting there and watching these two hundred students

in one class. It gives you some motivation. "Oh, cool! I think I like this a bit!"

Being exposed to different things. That's what really helped, too.

Critical Reflection

In our conversation, JQ was able to make the connection between needing

mentors and experiences, like college trips, not just following incarceration, but

particularly during the elementary and middle school years before youth start getting into

trouble:

I never went to a college campus in elementary. But don't get me wrong. Now I

walk the college campuses, and you do see little kids walking in school. But it's

crazy at how you see their color. If they're not Asian they're white. You don't see

any blacks—straight kids from south central going into a city college for

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vacations [field trips]. So that definitely was missing. We didn't have any

mentors. Even our after school programs. I remember in middle school, for after

school program we only had two staff. We only had two after school staff, and we

used to have one checkerboard, three basketballs, and a soccer [ball]. So you

couldn't even do a bunch of activities at one time. If you got bored, you're going

to have to sit there and wait because there's not enough staff to even take care of

you. And for the fact that there were two staff, it was really too easy for outsiders

to come in. So, cool. If you're not playing soccer, basketball, or checkers, then

you end up going with the outsiders. They brought in drugs—just a different

mentality of trying to recruit or whatever.

JQ further discussed the types of problems and the improvements he felt are

needed in the public school system:

I just feel like growing up in South Central L.A., that we got it the worst. And it

just starts with the simple fact of the funding these public schools get because

these public schools are funded through the community income. Therefore, like

this is a poor community. They don't really have enough money to give to these

schools, and then you have in Santa Monica, and they have money to spend. So I

feel that's the first thing that keeps the social classes sustained. I feel that they

should just get a big bucket and throw everybody's tax dollars to schools who

need it the most. Like what do you need? You need a sports program? Then let's

donate this much to your sports program. Oh, not Santa Monica High School.

They're doing real good. Here, let's just give them a few monies for new books

because they have all these programs available for them. But let's go over here. Oh, they need computers. They don't have any type of technology.

JQ continued to point out that, without adequate funding, schools in poorer areas could not afford to hire good, qualified teachers. He explained that they were stuck with teachers who do not even feel motivated to teach, due to low wages and pay cuts, and lower benefit contributions. JQ argued that when teachers are angry, dissatisfied with their jobs, and feel devalued by the school districts, then, "why should we expect them to teach well?" Further, he noted, "With all the restrictions and curriculums they have, they can't even teach us what they really want to teach us, which is how to navigate in life."

JQ contrasted the expectations that schools have for their students at public schools in affluent communities and public schools in poor communities. He discussed the emphases on proper language usage and good manners at affluent schools, whereas schools with poorer student populations tend to allow the students to slack off, a sign that these teachers believe the stereotypes that students cannot help but to speak poorly and display bad manners, because that's just the way kids from bad communities are. In contrast, JQ explained that affluent schools stress the importance of good manners, appropriate language, and life skills. JQ warned that, without those basic, but necessary skills, your ability to attain a good job is greatly reduced. JQ expressed his feelings and own interpretation of how teachers in poorer, overpopulated schools navigate the day:

> I feel like public schools are really impersonal. Really impersonal. Hire more teachers. Each class should have lower enrollment rates so the teacher could have more time to focus on each individual and how they learn and make it become real personal. Not like having thirty kids in one class where it becomes

impersonal, and the teachers don't have to worry . . . like she's not even worried about teaching any more. She's just too busy worrying about the safety of the class and just making it through the day without a fight. It's not really about the lesson any more. It's just about making it through the day without anyone getting harmed. And when it becomes too populated, when the teacher's just trying to keep the safety of the class, people like me, who found it difficult to learn, or who are just impatient or just real active and can't stand still—it makes it difficult to even stay in class.

At one point, nearing his final release date, JQ explained that he began to experience a sort of major awakening of his mind—an increased awareness and understanding of his surroundings. At the time, JQ only had about three more months to serve, but had been incarcerated for about nine months already, and was becoming more critically aware of the effects of incarceration on him and the other incarcerated youth. He spoke about what he experienced:

> People came in after me and left before me. And then people left home and still came back in, and that's when I used to notice . . . And soon as I started realizing that they're literally killing my people when they're alive—not physically but mentally. And I noticed, because I'm reading these books, which I feel like I understand, and I'm learning from them. And then I go in class and I'm like, "What the hell are you teaching me? Am I literally just doing adding and subtracting? Are you making me do crossword puzzles right now? Are you serious? And then you give us a bag of chips after class? Like are you serious?"

After a while, I start getting angry. I start telling the teacher, "What is this?" Like

rebellious but in a real activist way, which got me in trouble in there as well.

There's this point I took a vow of silence in jail, in Camp Miller, where I decided

to stop talking for a whole month. It was a real powerful moment in my life, to

tell you the truth, because I really saw that the youth are not the only ones trapped

within the system. But the staff and probation itself was as trapped as we were.

Including school staff. They've been working there. They're a product of the

system itself. And it's not the staff and probation and teachers to blame for that.

And it ain't the youth because it's just a cold system that was just meant to do

what it has done—treat us as livestock and everybody in there as just an

investment.

JQ recalled where he originally got the idea and motivation to take a vow of

silence for a whole month. One day, JQ overheard a teacher explain to another teacher a

high school assignment she had completed that dealt with empathy toward others. In this

assignment, the teacher explained that she had to pretend like she had a broken leg for

two weeks, essentially putting herself into someone else's shoes. This was interesting

enough to JQ, that he wondered, what it would be like to be deaf. In addition to thinking

it would be a pretty cool experiment, JQ was also reading the autobiography of Gandhi at

the time, in which Gandhi takes a vow of silence. Making up his mind to carry out the

experiment, JQ took a piece of paper, wrote that he took a vow of silence, and ceased all

speech. According to JQ, this was the most powerful experience he had while

incarcerated. JQ elaborated on the experience:

And what made this moment so powerful, not only my atmosphere but a lot of the camp atmosphere was starting to change. Out of nowhere the whole camp knew I wasn't speaking. And first in the beginning, the first two or three days I wasn't speaking, the staff didn't say anything about it. They were actually like, "Oh, you finally stopped talking." They were making fun of me and joking around. "Oh, that's better." Whenever I wanted to say something, I used to just write it. And then all my neighbors, my bunk buddies who were sitting around me, they're like, "You ain't speaking. You ain't speaking?" And they were actually trying to make me talk. But I wasn't. And I started being real disciplined about it. And then staff started feeling uncomfortable. They started feeling uncomfortable around me. And then other minors started saying, "Oh, I think I should do it. I think I should do it." [laughs] And then a teacher—I can't believe it. Some teacher will kick me out. I wrote down to her that I took this vow of silence because I'm trying to increase my awareness and my discipline. I wrote it down, and then she wasn't going for it. She was doing roll call, and she was like, "JQ?" And I raised my hand. I raised my hand, and then she looked at me like JQ? I raised my hand, and she was like, "Oh, so you're not going to talk in my class, huh? I don't care if you're not talking to any of the staff or you're being disobedient." But last time I checked, a vow of silence is kind of a religious thing as well. I thought they respected religion or whatever. And she just stopped letting me go in class just because I refused to say I'm here. I even explained to her why I'm taking it on a piece of paper, but she was not having any of that. "You'd better talk to me now or you're being disobedient!" I went to the box [isolated confinement] for not

talking. They almost gave me a re-file [new charge]. I was like, "What can you do? You get in trouble for talking, and you get in trouble for not talking. What do you want?" That's what really made me realize that the staff and teachers themselves were victims of that system, because they were confused. They were really confused. That's when I was confused. "What do you want me to do then when I can't do both?" They just want you to bow down and listen and do whatever the hell they want you to do, which doesn't work like that. I'm a growing man. How am I supposed to cultivate making the right choice when you're making all the choices for me? It just became real [enlightening] to watch how minors started witnessing. They said, "Come talk to me. Damn, bro! Why are you getting in trouble? You're not even saying anything!" They used to start getting angry for me. They started being rebellious to the staff. "He isn't even doing anything! He's quiet! You're tripping on me because I'm always talking. He's doing what you want him to do, and you're right here!" I really started thinking. That's what made that moment powerful. I started seeing even my neighbors wake up to the staff.

During his vow of silence, probation held an emergency MDT [Multi-Disciplinary Team] Meeting, which was a collaborative meeting between the various stakeholder agencies—probation, school, mental health, New Roads caseworker, JQ, and the camp director. JQ stated that this MDT meeting was set-up solely to discuss the problem of his refusing to talk. Just as had been done by the staff before the meeting, JQ was misunderstood and accused of trying to be defiant and disobedient. He described the meeting as follows:

I was going to get more time if I wouldn't speak. They actually made a whole meeting . . . and I'm still not talking at that time. And they're talking about, "What's wrong with you? What are you going through? That's weird. There's something wrong with you. If you don't talk and you're trying to be disobedient and not listen, then we're going to give you more time. This is not your camp program. This is not your camp. You don't do what you want around here." And they let me know if I didn't speak I was going to get re-filed. And I'm sitting here and I'm watching my mental health, probation, and everybody going at it about what's wrong with me. My mental health said, "No, I don't think anything's wrong. He just took a vow of silence. He's just doing his own thing right now. I don't see anything wrong with it." And then probation—not going along with it. He was like, "No, but he has to listen. He's got to be obedient. He's got to basically jump when I say to jump." I let them all talk. They all went in a circle, and then it was my time to speak, and I just said one sentence, and I walked out.

They were going to re-file me. For not talking. For not talking! For taking a vow of silence! You just had to be there to witness it from my shoes. It's hard to explain at this moment because a lot of things started happening after that. I really started having students write their grievances because of that. Something [awakened]—it was real cool. I can't explain it, but that was a real significant moment being in camp. It made me realize how fucked up the juvenile system is—how confused and trapped the staff is. I was transforming. I was growing. I was going through a path, and they still were denying that fact. All they care about was, "Oh, you're a criminal. You've got to serve the time, and you've got

to do A, B, C." Not about, "Oh, he's growing. He has grown." Or, "He's better than he was before. He's doing better than yesterday."

Critical Outlook: Looking Forward

When asked about looking forward, JQ first reflected on how powerful he felt when he first got released, as compared to the time of this study. He explained that, although he retained the same amount of self-determination and motivation as when he got released, he was frustrated with the stigmatization as someone who was once incarcerated. He described a feeling of powerlessness in identifying his own character, or reconstructing his self-image, due to the image he perceives others have of him: a formerly incarcerated kid who made it out. This feeling of being constantly labeled frustrated JQ to the point where he had become more pessimistic toward people who volunteer in programs, talking to and building relationships with JQ and others who had been labeled the same. JQ described this frustration and growing pessimism about being labeled a statistic:

> I'm still labeled. I'm still a statistic, and I will always be a statistic, and I will always be a label. I will always be that juvenile kid who made it out. And then everywhere I go, with these programs you have all these high bullshit people. They come in and they talk and you build a relationship with them. But you know all they see you as is that juvenile kid who got a mind in him now and is being smart and might do something with his life. But that label will always be there. It gets me angry. I t makes me real angry because then after a while, it all seems fake. I was real optimistic when I got out, but now my attitude has become pessimistic about things.

JQ recalled a recent retreat in the mountains, in which a volunteer hosted a personal narrative session with three young, formerly incarcerated people who told their own stories to the community about difficulties they had faced in their lives. From JQ's perspective, since he had been participating in meetings like this, he saw these activities as redundant and overwhelming. This is not to say that JQ does not feel empathy for others who shared what they have gone through, but he felt that there was an expectation for them to all get up onstage and tell their stories of being formerly incarcerated. JQ explained his frustration more in-depth:

It frustrates me because I'm at the point that that's just how it is. But it's really frustrating to me because that's not how it's supposed to be. I'm still fresh out. One year's being fresh out. You have these kids who have been five years out already. They're already twenty-three. And they [program volunteers] still look at them like they've been the same juvenile kids. They're still going on to expressing their story. That's what made me feel real uncomfortable expressing my story because I just see all these kids expressing their story and then how these people who don't even—like they could—sympathize for us . . . they don't put themselves in our shoes because they really can't. They really can't. They've been upper class their whole lives, and then they walk up to us like they knew us our whole life and be like, [applauding] "Oh, yeah. I'm glad you're doing better. I'm glad you're doing better." I'm glad you're glad for me, but I'm still going home to that same bullshit I was talking about five minutes ago. You think my whole life has changed. No.

JQ discussed the prospects of helping others who were going through what he had gone through. He explained that he did not necessarily feel pressure or the expectation to help others; however, he identified as being the type of person who would love to help others. It is a responsibility, he explained, "for every human being to give to some type of struggle."

Desired Audience and Purpose

When addressing what function his critical narrative should serve and the question of whom he felt should hear his story, JQ responded:

> I don't think it's about my story. It doesn't matter if they hear it. It's not about my story. It's about what's right, about what's right morally. I just feel it would be real difficult because it's not only the government's fault, but the people themselves. How are we ever going to escape this inequality when we're too worried about how green is our grass? You know? We don't escape the perception that Jordans are better than Vans. We don't escape the perception that marble is better than rock. Then how the hell do you expect us to even teach our children right? It's got to do a lot with values.

<center>**Participant Two: B**</center>

Demographics

B was a 19-year-old Guatemalan young man, born and raised in Los Angeles, primarily in the Hollywood area. He lived at home with his mother, father, eight year-old and 14 year-old sisters, and his girlfriend. He described his family's socioeconomic status as middle class. Being raised Catholic, he attended church regularly with his family as a

child; however, he did not have as much time to attend church very often, due to school and work.

B described the schools he had attended as predominantly Hispanic. He attended the local elementary school, then experienced trouble during his middle school and high school years, then moving through several different schools, including during the time of his incarceration. Despite these setbacks, B graduated high school on time in 2013. At the time of this study, he was attending Glendale Community College, working on his AA degree. He was working at a well-known bakery near his the community college.

Pre-Incarceration Years

Early childhood. B did not speak a great deal about his early childhood, beyond a general description of elementary school. During his elementary school years, B and everyone around him saw him as a normal kid, going to school everyday, playing soccer, and attending church with his family on Sundays. According to B, elementary school was normal until lots of kids started fighting in the fourth and fifth grades, although he remained a good student all the way through sixth grade.

Middle school. When B got to middle school, there was even more fighting, in addition to lots of gang activity and tagging. He explained that in middle school, kids started segregating themselves according to personality and appearance, creating sort of a social pressure to join the group that appeared to be your fit. This new group would ditch school and do drugs at someone's house. This is when he joined a "crew" and continued to ditch and do drugs. He experienced no motivation in middle school or high school. In seventh grade, B began to bully other kids like he had witnessed others do in fifth grade.

He and his new friends did not graduate from middle school; they were not allowed to attend the eighth-grade graduation ceremony.

High school. When B got to high school, he continued to behave badly, as a result of already being labeled as a bad kid in middle school, he said. The teachers and administrators already knew about him. He attended high school and rejoined with the "old fellas" who were now hanging out with older guys. They got "jumped in" to a "tag-banging" crew. He moved through a few different high schools, due to his involvement in the "web" of the tag-banging crew. He had a school probation officer who tried to help him—bought lunch and counseled him about life. B felt that this was good, but it was already too late. B explained that, while he saw himself as an athlete in middle school, as soon as he hit high school, he developed a self-image as a "bad-ass." He described how rapidly this transformation occurred:

> I saw myself as athletic—trying to get into all these sports and stuff. But, once high school reached, there were no more sports. I didn't even think about what am I going to be one day. I just thought about myself at the moment. I tried to show myself to others, like "Who's the boss?" So by doing that, I started doing like a tag banging crew, and I would do what they do. And I saw myself like an individual that could do whatever he wants. Unstoppable, untouchable, especially where you have your friends and everything. It felt like a family but not really a family, you know? At the end it's not a family, but in the beginning it feels like a family. They've got your back and everything. So I felt unstoppable.

B recalled how others used to view him during his "athletic" middle school years and then in his "bad-ass" high school days:

I felt good because everybody would see me like a hero because I was a goalkeeper and I would do all these unstoppable blocks. They saw me like a good boy, a student and everything. I guess I kind of liked that attention. But once it transitioned to a bad-ass, there was no more hero. No one liked what I did. My parents, they didn't like what I did. They cared about me, but they didn't like it. My neighbors, they would just look at me; they would talk to my parents and tell them, "Oh, you should maybe change the way he dresses." Because dressing was a certain way and people would look at you, and they would quickly judge. I was dressing with colors as in black, gray, blue, baggy shirts, baggy jeans, and dark shoes and hats as well. It's just like every other individual who was my age and liked tagging and stuff. So people knew who taggers were. So they would just look at you and they'd be like, "Oh, he's a mess-up." Neighbors, some staff in school, and security guards . . . I felt it through them. And you get used to it, so when you see other people who don't smile at you or greet you like "How you doing?" or anything, then I felt the same. I felt like they probably think the way other people think of me.

B described the relationship he felt he had with the outside world as being full of problems, but not really fully aware at the time. He explained that he felt a sense of power, but not to do good things:

I felt really special. Not that I had motivation to do good things. But I felt like I had the power to do anything bad. Maybe just because of the friends I was hanging out with. I was on top of my world, and I could drink whenever. Just

going out with the friends and they're having girls there. And that was the only motivation—drinks and girls.

B discussed what he perceived were some of the major forces involved in his life that led to his incarceration:

No motivations. No plans. I can't even think of one because I know if I did have one, it would pop out. But nothing, I had nothing. The only thing—it was just alcohol, just having fun. I would do whatever I want. I would go to my friend's house, and I would sleep there on the weekends. And that led to all this bad stuff. And my parents, they would let me. So that's kind of why. It's not their fault, I kind of lied to them, too. It goes back and forth, me lying and them letting me, trusting me. I would go to their house, and then we would all sneak out and rob people, choke them, and then they would take their money and I would search them. Stuff like that, you know? You know it's going to get you one day, but you never think about it like that. And nobody's there to stop you because you don't tell nobody. The only way they're going to find out is when you get caught. So I got caught up with a knife. It was nothing big. I got a house arrest. So it's sort of like incarceration at home. But it's nothing, you know? Maybe you could learn your lesson there, but not me.

House arrest was going good. I had a girlfriend at the time, so she would come over. I wouldn't go to school, because I was home schooled. So I think that was a bad thing to do at the moment. Since I was home schooled, I always lied to my PO, "I'm going to go pick up my homework and turn this in," which wasn't true, because I didn't even turn in homework. So house arrest wasn't really good.

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Being under house arrest, my friends wouldn't tell me anything like, "Oh, you

should stay home and let this come off and then you can come back and tag with

us." They would just tell me, "Oh, I used to cut that off." So they would like

motivate you to do it, but you wouldn't do it. And then I got stopped on a Friday.

I had to take it off on a Monday. And I told my PO I was going out, and my

parents, they weren't home. So the fact that they were working, hard workers and

stuff, they weren't there to like watch me and stuff, which is not even their job

when I'm old already. I was about fifteen. So they were both working. That's why

I sneaked out as well. If they were there, I'm pretty sure they would be the reason

why I would have stayed. But I left to go drink. And we were on a rooftop, just

looking at a view, drinking. And alcohol was a main external reason because I

was an alcoholic. A few hours before I got incarcerated, I was drinking. So I'm

sure that was one of the decisions why I didn't go back home. I went with them.

And that's when we found somebody in the street who didn't belong there and we

didn't like. And I'm the one who pointed it out. And that's how everything started

right there.

The officers didn't even know [about the house arrest order]. I was just

giving them a fake name. I thought I could get out of it. But I didn't know what I

was getting into. And I just remember the officer telling me, "Take a look at this

woman. This is the last time you'll see something like this." And I was young.

They were surprised that I had an ankle bracelet and I was out doing these type of

things. So then when they saw me, they were just like, "Damn, get rid of this

guy." And they got me in for attempted murder. That's what they wrote it down

as. They didn't care because they saw me like, "Oh, look what he's doing."

Incarceration Years

 Initial incarceration. B described the regret he felt and how he saw himself at

the time of his initial incarceration:

> I just felt regret, you know? I felt like I don't know why I did that because that
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> wasn't me. I was just like, damn, what the hell did I do? Why did I do this?
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> Thoughts just keep coming back, like I don't know why I did it. That wasn't me.
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> Maybe I just wanted to show everybody that I could do this. But it's not worth it,
>
> you know? You've got to do good things so they can see who you really are. And
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> I was just trying to show them who I was by doing bad things. I felt like, oh,
>
> they're going to see me as a god.

> B described how he was immediately placed in the "72-hour lock-up" at Central

Juvenile Hall, including how he felt during and after the 72-hour lock-up. He explained

that the 72-hour lock-up is for high-risk offenses—serious crimes. He described his

experience during those hours:

> So they put you in the seventy-two hours just to observe you, calm you down
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> maybe, because you've been caught, and who knows what's going on in your
>
> head. So they put you in there, and then they take you out and they put you in a
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> unit, depending on your age. You can see doors outside your door, and you just
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> see heads. People are in their own rooms. It makes you feel like shit, like "I ain't
>
> nobody." And then you start to see people going home, and you think about, okay,

when I go, people are going to think of me as a god. So just being around the same people that I was, motivated me to do the same thing again.

B discussed his perceptions of how others saw him during his incarceration, as well as the impact of certain interactions with others at the time:

I remember being transferred a lot. LP [Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall] was my favorite. And I would go to church a lot because there were these ladies that would talk to you and they would bring out the Bible. And they would tell you how God will forgive you. So I thought like, damn, she's looking at me in a different way. She's looking at me like I have hope and there's somebody out there who cares about me. And then I got used to going to church. And I got my confirmation at LP.

I was really into church. I don't know why. Maybe because they would give ice cream, like sundaes. But I was still a Catholic as well, so I would go before with my parents. So I was like, this is nothing new, I like it, I know it, so I'm going to go. And I would go to church. And you would see the girls, too. So it'd be the guys on this side, the girls on this side, and then they talk about hope and maybe they talk about how people care about you still and that your parents are still out there. And I think it would be the same day of visitation [family visitation]. So it would really pump you up, as in, "I've got people who care about me," like my parents, because they would see me right after. It was really powerful. It wasn't just me. It was like a group of us. And then people would express themselves, too. So it was good.

Within the juvenile hall environment, B described, was a prevailing fear of looking "soft" or weak in the eyes of the other inmates. For many, that fear resulted in attempts to appear brave by proving yourself through fights and public displays of anger and aggression toward others. Fortunately, B stated that he resisted that pressure and, instead, tried to hang out with more mellow people that didn't get into trouble.

B finished his time at Camp Gonzalez, the probation camp where he spent the last nine to 10 months of his incarceration. He discussed the environmental differences between the juvenile halls and Camp Gonzalez:

I felt like at [the juvenile halls], I don't know how they teach. People come every day. So they get all these people. They don't know their people well. So you don't get used to them. So I remember a teacher always had a favorite because that person had been there long [in the juvenile hall]. So you'd be like, wow, he is a god. He gets respect. There was leaders and people who would do stuff . . . positive. They would clean up and they would get phone calls and stuff. So they'd make them feel like home. And you want to be like that, too. You want to feel like at home. So then you start doing good. But then there's also bad stuff. It's just hard. You want to be brave, and then you want to be good because you want to get phone calls. You want to get that extra lunch. You want to do all this. So, going back to the teachers in juvenile hall. They didn't spend that much time with you. So they didn't have too much to give to you. They would just have their lecture and that's it.

But my camp was really good. There were no fights basically. You would have a period of time of school where there's no staff [probation staff], so you

feel like you're in school. I think in the juvenile halls, there's a probation [staff] in the classroom. In the camp, it's only one staff [probation staff]—one that's outside the classroom, but that's it. So I remember that they [the camp teachers] always reward the students. So they really cared about us. And then you would always want to get that reward, too.

B described a relationship with the camp teachers that contrasted with that of his public middle school and high school days prior to incarceration:

They [the camp teachers] saw us as a good person, you know? They didn't know what we did, but we were their students and we were their favorite, and they knew that we could do something one day. I felt like the people locked up—the teachers at the camps and stuff—they see you more like they really cared about you. Maybe because we're all the same in there. And we're all wearing the same color. So they see us all the same.

While in the probation camps, B was impressed and motivated by the frequent awards given by the teachers. In addition to the positive reinforcement of being recognized, accumulating school-related awards also helped the students in court, especially when considering an early release date. The combination of acknowledgement from the school with the prospects of leaving incarceration served as a major motivation for B and many other students at the probation camps. One award, which had a major impact on B's postreentry decisions, involved a field trip to a major university while he was doing his time at Camp Gonzalez. He described this award and related experiences in some detail:

They rewarded about ten of us for being top students, and we went to Pepperdine University for a volleyball game. And it was a girl game, so of course we were going to go. I don't know, maybe if it was a guy game, some of these guys wouldn't go. But I still would have gone just because the school is nice, and we took a tour. We had tutors from Pepperdine University, because our teacher went to that school. So he would call the school and bring tutors. And since they were girls, we would be all happy and excited and we would learn. They would tell us about college. We would ask them like, "How is it over there?" And once we went there, it really motivated me to go to college.

When asked about opportunities to visit colleges or learn about college in his elementary, middle, or high schools, prior to being incarcerated, B explained that he had not had any such opportunities. He tried to recall if there were any college prep programs or college field trips:

Actually I think only certain people would go—or certain teachers would go. So I think like the honor classes—not everybody would go. That would be really good if the whole school were to go. They [teachers] wouldn't tell us that, "Oh, I hope you guys go to this university or to this university." Nothing. I don't know.

B had no trouble returning to the discussion about the field trip to Pepperdine from Camp Gonzalez:

There was that one teacher who graduated from Pepperdine. So he wanted us to be like him and graduate. He would bring the tutors from there. So he always had that Pepperdine flow in the house. And it just felt good. And we were like, "What's Pepperdine?" And once we went there, we knew what it was. And the

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only way to go there was to finish high school. And that was a little motivation. I wish they would take us on trips like that from the start, maybe from middle school.

In our conversation, B identified what he saw as the harmful versus helpful features of the juvenile justice system:

Juvenile halls were really harmful. Just being in a room by yourself—it makes you feel more locked up. And then when you get out of there [72-hour lock-up], you're already in anger. And you have emotions. And your emotions trigger your behavior. So from there, people start fighting and stuff.

And then in camp, that's actually a helpful place because you're around everybody, and you get to talk. And you don't feel like you're locked up. And you're actually there learning your lesson because you're not home. I think it starts with the dorms, because if you're in the dorms and you're well communicated with everybody, you have like your playtime. I know that sounds childish, but you've got your playtime, and you get to do whatever you want. You have good communication with people, and then when you go to school, you act good and there's no fights in school or anything. You're just cool and you go to school for school. Wake up like at 6:00, go eat, then go to school. It feels really good, and if people want to go to this program—Gonzales had that New Roads Program, where they do art and construction; when people go there, and you're well communicated with those people, then you're going to go there. That's where I went.

B explained that, while there was motivation to attend programs like New Roads at the camps, in the halls it was a different story, due to the perceived necessity not to appear weak to the other inmates. B described how not having peers to regularly communicate with at the halls created a reluctance to do anything different from the other inmates. He contrasted the positive impact of regular dialogue on program participation to the negative impact of not having that dialogue, resulting in miscommunication and misunderstandings between inmates. This pattern ultimately led, B observed, to low program participation rates in the juvenile halls. He explained how dialogue creates a freedom of the mind, particularly in decision-making and contrasted this experience with being locked-up:

> It helps you do stuff with other people, and it helps you make your own decisions because you don't have to worry about what others are thinking. But when you're locked up, it's another world. So you have to worry about what people are thinking and you're worried about everything. So that kind of stops you from doing what you want to do.

During his incarceration at Camp Gonzalez, B noted that he actually forgot about the outside world and became accustomed to the camp environment; however, he also acknowledged that there were many good things taking place there—something he could not say about his school experiences prior to getting incarcerated. B described some of his camp experiences, which illustrated how he was more invested in a new world that was invested in him:

> I forgot about how the world was out here. And then I got used to it—it became my world. But there was a lot of good things going on there, as in school, art

programs, New Roads. They would give you all these fancy cameras and then you would take pictures. And it was just fun. And there was mechanic class. So you were working on a car. And then the teacher, he was really cool, and he wasn't strict. You could chill back and nobody would tell you what to do. He was actually a teacher from LA Trade-Tech. After school, we had this schedule. You go to the dorm and you take like an hour break, or you could go to some classes.

When prompted with the question of how much power B felt he had in his life at the time of his incarceration at Camp Gonzalez, he talked about power he felt with the availability of opportunities to earn privileges and jobs through positive behavior and merit. Such jobs included kitchen staff, office cleaning staff, and laundry. B identified two jobs that he held as office cleaner and laundry boy. Each job included certain privileges that one would not have without having those jobs. For instance, the office cleaning staff would be allowed to make phone calls every night, and the laundry staff was permitted to go outside the gates—a position built around increased trust.

Although there was a feeling of increased control over one's daily life at the camp, B stated that the restrictions and policies imposed by probation were necessary to ensure the safety and success of each minor. For example, B credited mandatory bedtimes with reducing the opportunities for fights and drug use. Also, he saw probation's strict policy on daily school attendance as necessary for running the camp in the first place. B stressed that being made to attend school was good for him and the other inmates.

The release. Nearing the date of his release to go home, B recalled how he felt around that time, as well as the role that his family and certain friends played in motivating him to go home:

I saw myself as like, people are going to congratulate me. They'll feel good about me. People as in my friends, my girlfriend, my family, and my cousins. They would write to me, so they were happy to see me. So that's going to motivate me to do good, because they like that you're going to be out. So I couldn't wait, and I was just happy. I wasn't thinking no more like, oh, I'm going to get out and people are going to think of me as a bad-ass, thinking that, damn, he got locked up. I knew that was going to happen, but it didn't really get me pumped up. It was more of family and the people who wrote to me. That's who kept in touch, and that's who I thought about when I left. I thought about how they were going to come and hug me and stuff. I would see some of them during special visitations. My parents would come and my cousins and I would eat at a big table. And my PO was there. We would all eat anything from home. So those thoughts were really good, too. Not everybody gets the chance to have those visitations, but I got them. And they pumped me up to go home. It reminded me that I have a home out there. People would also come from Pepperdine on Friday nights. And they would teach you about God and how he cares about you.

Postrelease

After getting released from a probation camp, B attended eight more months in high school, at a small-size continuation high school. He caught up on his credits quickly and attended the larger high school adjacent to the continuation school. At the larger high

school, he continued to excel, earning "Student of the Month" four times. He soon got a part-time job at a restaurant during his senior year. Once he began attending community college, he left that job and got hired at a well-known bakery near his community college, where he used to study and eventually became noticed by the management. Management offered him a job there and he was still working at the bakery at the time of this study. B described the feelings he had, as well as the significant help he received from one of the nonprofit programs that was at the camp:

> When I got released, I felt really good. I felt like a new person. And I wasn't going to school for a week until a counselor called me and told me, "Oh, B, it's Lucy from this program [New Roads], and I'm trying to get you into school." I told her, "Oh, this is a program from camp." It brings back good memories, so of course I do what she tells me like, "Let's meet up. Let's have lunch. And let's talk about your school." And I told her I didn't want to go to those schools. Give her a few days, she calls me back, and says, "Which school do you want to go to?" And that's how I got into school. That was a positive reward. So not only did they help us in there, but they got me as an alumni, which means that when I get out, they're going to help me. When I got out, I forgot about them, because I was so excited. I had so many things I wanted to do. I forgot about them. And I was like, how am I going to get in school? And I just get this call—the call that helped me get into the school I wanted and transfer to high school. And that's when I graduated.

B described how he saw himself after getting out and succeeding in high school, including the role he could play in the lives of some of his friends:

I saw myself like somebody someone would want to be one day. My friends haven't accomplished high school yet. So I wanted to be like a role model. That's what I saw myself as. But then, I did have my old friends calling me here and there. I would kind of hang out with them, but I saw myself like a positive role model to these guys because they didn't get locked up. They were my close friends from the middle school. I was like, "All right, you guys didn't get locked up, but you guys are still into this. Look at me. I'm going to go to school, and I'm going to graduate. And I'm at the same level as you, but I did time." And that time helped me to change. And then when I changed, some of them started changing and they saw motivation in me. And their parents would always tell them, "Go to school. Graduate." And when they saw me graduate, "Oh, I want to be like him, too." If I would have got out, and I would have done bad things that would have motivated them to do bad things. But when I got out [of camp], I had the respect to motivate them, and I did motivate them to do good things. And they actually got out [of the gang]. And when they got out of the gang, I kept in contact with them, and my gang got mad.

After B was released, he still was considered part of his gang, although he no longer participated in gang activity. However, because he was still "officially" part of the gang, he was expected to disaffiliate himself from his friends who got out of the gang; even though his new, healthier lifestyle inspired them to get out. B explained that he did not want to get out of the gang right away, because he did not want to be seen as a follower or risk something terrible happening to himself. His gang was already becoming hostile toward him in response to his inspiring some of his more motivated friends to

leave the gang. Therefore, it was not until after a series of conflicts with his gang that B decided to sever ties with the gang. After leaving his gang, B was free to choose whom he hung around and how he lived his life; however, he still had to remain aware that his former gang was out there and did not feel kindly towards him. He recalled how he finally found a new group of friends—a decision that reinforced B's new choices in life:

> So during that conflict [with his former gang], I didn't want to be lonely, right? With no friends. Of course, I'm going to have my friends who got out [of the gang]. So I went to school with them, and that was my new group. And I had my best buddy. He actually got out [of the gang] when I was locked up. So he was one of the ones that I would hang out with after the conflict with the other guys. So we're like our own little group. We were still hated and still had problems with the people from before, because that won't go away, you know? It's still going to be around, people who don't like you because of what you did. They [the gang] used to jump people and stuff; I used to motivate people to do good.

Critical Reflection

Focusing on the period of time shortly after his release, while attending the LAUSD continuation high school, B described how others saw him at that time:

> They didn't see me as an evil person or like a crazy-ass dude. They saw me like, "Wow, you're out, congratulations!" And that feeling got me like, "Damn, I'm a good person now after what I did." People would tell my mom over time, "Your son is changing." Like they could see the way I dress. And my mom would be happy. And I would be like, "Wow, so this is how I have to be. This is me then." This brings happiness, not people talking. Like teachers . . . I would tell them my

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story at the continuation schools, and then they'd be like, "Wow, you're getting through in another month." And they just saw me as an excellent student, like not even worrying about what I did in the past. They just saw me like one of those students that were in high school, the ones that would have those AP classes. They would treat us just like that. That made me want to do good and get through in another month. It was a smaller community, and the teacher cared about you. It was just about the same as LACOE, but this was LAUSD.

B described a dilemma he faced when trying to figure out his college plan—a decision he was able to make with the help of his high school counselors after transferring as a senior from the smaller continuation school to the larger comprehensive high school next door:

I was getting ready to graduate and they had this college center with all the universities. And I would just look at them, and I'd be like, "I can't go there. I messed up." I'd just be like, damn, I wish I could have done this. I couldn't do it, though, and then I was like I don't know what I'm going to do. They [college recruiters] didn't even tell me anything, though. My counselors did. They told me, "B, I want you to start at a community college, and then transfer to a four-year." They [the counselors] came to me. They were following my tracks. They were like, "Oh, it's time for graduation." They would check up on you sometimes, like every two weeks, and tell you, "How are you doing? What do you want to do? And where do you want to go to school?" But my friend, he went to Glendale College, so I was like, "I want to go to Glendale College." And then she told me,

"Oh, yeah, that's good. You're going to go to a two-year and then transfer." So it

was kind of them checking up on me and asking me what are my further goals.

B described how he felt when others saw him now that he was in college,

referring primarily to college faculty and other students:

Everybody's treated the same. When you're in college, they see you as the same.

And you look at everybody like we're all the same. Some people come in

pajamas. You don't judge, because everybody's got things to do. You know how

it is to work hard all night for your homework, and when you wake up, you're just

like, I'm really tired. I'm just going to put this on. So you don't judge, because

everybody's been through a lot.

B described how he saw himself in relation to his world and how empowered he

felt he was to inspire change:

I feel like I have power. I feel like I could do anything at the moment. I think

words can change a lot of things, just telling people [about my] experiences. This

is going to help change the world. So I am part of that group that can help,

probably not just one person, but I am part of it; so I feel like I am empowered

and I could help make these changes, starting with our community and our

brothers and sisters.

Reflecting on his life prior to getting incarcerated, B identified what things should

have been different—things that may have prevented him from ever getting into trouble

in the first place:

I feel the high school, if it was way different. Since we have a lot of cultures, a lot

of people coming in to high schools, from everywhere—I mean, I feel like

everybody should have the possibility to do what everybody does in high school. Nobody should be left out from cooking class, from field trips, from sports. Sometimes you struggle with your grades, but if you don't have sports, what are you going to do? You're just going to go home and probably get in trouble— hang out on the block. You don't want to do that. You want to stay in school, even after school, playing sports. And sometimes even the cooking class wouldn't let you let you join. Only certain people would get to go in that class. So if you're going to have a cooking class, other people are going to want to do it, too. And that's going to motivate some people to do good. People want to do stuff like cooking, art, sports, and if you limit them from doing it, it's going to be difficult. What else could have prevented me? Having mentors or siblings. I know we all don't have older siblings.

B also considered the possibility of having a formerly incarcerated person come and talk to students about his/her life. He stated that this experience can have a good side and bad side, but nevertheless should be considered. B recalled that he did not have any knowledge of college prior to being incarcerated:

Ninth grade, tenth grade. I just used to see on the—you see a lady on the bus, the number two—oh, this girl says she goes to UCLA. But I didn't know what it was. I wish I had the chance to go to those schools, and then something fun there would motivate me. Especially because my parents didn't go to college, that motivation never came. I would have needed it from school. Some people get it from their parents, which is really good. And then they could also get it along the way. But then, I didn't get it at all.

B suggested that middle schools begin addressing college requirements and opportunities for all students, because once they start getting bad grades in middle school, it is likely that they will continue getting bad grades in high school, which will lessen their options for college. B also identified his problems with alcohol as playing a major role in his becoming incarcerated. He stated that it was not until college that he observed the drunk driving awareness program and lecture from law enforcement, during their visit to his college campus, complete with the wrecked DUI car. B regretted that his schools and community did not offer any kind of alcohol awareness campaign when he was younger—something he felt he may have been able to persuade him to stay away from alcohol. He recalled that there actually were very few, if any, programs to engage and educate the youth in his community:

> There was nothing in my community. My community was dead. There was no programs. Maybe just a park. That's it, but they didn't have sports. But there was a little out of my area, and that's when I was beginning not to go to certain areas because I was not allowed to. So that had to be like at my brother's age, which is eight. He's in third grade. He's getting into programs in these parks. So I think he started young, so that's going to be good. You've got to keep motivating them. I had to learn the hard way. And I feel like my community didn't have nothing for me. And now my brother's going through all these programs. He goes to school after school, and they teach him about behaviorism and stuff I never learned— how to control anger. He's young and he's going to all these classes. And me and my girlfriend were just like, oh, that's good, he needs it. So by the time he grows up, it's not going to be a problem for him. And my mom, she's not the type to go

look for these programs. Sometimes her family. . . . they go to these programs, and they tell her. Some of these programs need to be more exposed to everybody, not just certain people. I don't know why my mom doesn't know about it much. It was just exposed to certain people or certain schools. But everybody should hear about it, because my mom only learned it through other people.

Critical Outlook: Looking Forward

After graduating from community college with an AA degree, B planned on transferring to UCLA to major in English, and eventually go to law school. He was very interested in psychology so he could learn what makes people do the things they do. He also saw a connection to himself through the study of psychology. He planned to talk to a professional who had majored in psychology to give him more insight and motivation. Looking forward to the future, B explained how he visualized himself in relation to his world:

I visualize myself as an inspiring person to a lot of young people, because I know a lot of people don't have big brothers like I do. So a good big brother would be somebody who's been through it all and knows a lot of stuff. So I see myself as an inspiration to those that don't have a big brother. And the only way to get in contact with them is to engage them in the community. So I see myself as an inspirational person. I want to change a lot of stuff. I don't how good a lawyer could be, but that's my big goal right there, being a lawyer.

B also described the motivations for his positive self-images:

Being involved with family and still engaged with people who have gone through the same as me. So we all think about doing the same things, so that motivates

me. Sometimes in school, you meet people. And then programs like CEE Hope and ARC. That's a big community where you meet a lot of people, even people older than you who are going through the same thing as now. So you could think like, damn, that could've been me. So it's all motivation with these programs. We need more of them.

B emphasized the positive ways his family treated him now that he was no longer incarcerated, indicating the level of love and trust he shared with them:

I see myself as a family person, giving back to my parents, because they deserve it all. I know they didn't mean for me to go through these certain steps. They were just trying to do the best for me. But I guess they didn't know much, you know? They didn't know much, and they would let me out a lot. So they weren't experienced with like suspicious stuff, like me coming home drunk. They didn't know, you know? And maybe when I have kids, I will know because I went through it. So, I give it up for them, too, like hanging on and going to see me every week at camp, because my old friends' parents wouldn't come because it would be too far and they wouldn't drive. So I give it up for them. And I see myself as a family man, doing what every other parent does, creating something, creating a next generation and making the life—making the world better.

B was trying to get back to spending time doing his favorite hobbies—sports and art. Specifically, he was interested in playing soccer again and becoming a tattoo artist. He had some experience already doing tattoos and had tattoos on his own body, as well. B explained that his tattoos were representative of his love of art, not representative of his

old gang. His plan was to start playing soccer and doing tattoos at the same time. He felt that both these activities would help him stay positive and out of trouble.

B explained how his values were integrated into the major areas of his life. He identified his values as family, education, and justice. He discussed in depth why justice was one of his major values and how it was shaping his life, including motivating him to become an attorney:

> Because I got charged with attempted murder, and I knew somebody, somebody looked out for me and they dropped my charges. And the judge was really nice. She's the one that gave me justice. She gave me assault with a deadly weapon and no strikes. It's a juvenile felony but no strikes and no attempted murder. So I felt like she knew I had something good in me. She knew that she didn't have to give me attempted murder, which was a lot of years. That would have messed up my teenage years and my early twenties. So she knew that I didn't deserve the attempted murder. And everybody was happier.

Desired Audience and Purpose

In the process of our conversation, B discussed whom he thought should hear his story and how it might help inform future policy:

> Definitely parents and the community, because they are the ones who choose where their students are going to go to school, so they need to know about the school and what the school has to offer. Some of these schools don't offer a lot of motivation. They're just there to teach the students, and sometimes they don't even teach. So they should listen to this because they are the ones who are going to choose a school for the students. And then for the school, this should be

addressed to people who make decisions and programs in school. You know how they make the decisions on what type of programs they make and who gets to be involved with them, maybe they should hear it, too. And then we're going to city governments, mayors, Governor's office . . . the government that helps education.

B discussed more about the power of motivation in children's lives and how that motivation appeared to be missing through his elementary and middle school experiences. B re-emphasized how schools should do more to implement programs that motivate kids to do well in school and strive for bigger things, like college.

Participant Three: David

Demographics

David, a 21-year-old African American man born in West Los Angeles, narrated his personal experiences from early childhood up to the present, including a period of time recidivating through juvenile detention and correctional facilities. David was currently homeless, sleeping in the back of his friend's truck in West Los Angeles for the past two months. Before that, he was staying with his mother and other family members' homes. Growing up, David's immediate family consisted of his great-grandmother, grandfather, grandmother, mother, aunt, and younger brothers and sisters.

Prior to his incarceration, David attended local elementary and middle schools. He currently attended a continuation school operated by Los Angeles Conservation Corps, where he received job training and education. He was on track to graduate with his high school diploma in Spring 2016. His employment experience included a couple months as a sandblaster at a warehouse and packing/shipping at another warehouse for two months.

Pre-Incarceration Years

      Early childhood. David described his earlier childhood as a "decent" experience. It was not until age 11 that he began to have problems. This was when his mother lost one of her twin premature babies at birth—David's first baby brother. David described that period of his life according to how he perceived things at the time:

      For the most part, I had a pretty decent childhood. My mom was there. I didn't

      have my dad, didn't really need him because I didn't know him. I stayed with my

      grandparents for a couple of years until my mom could get her own [home]. I

      don't know, it's really a blur, kind of. But, I always thought I was a pretty good

      kid. I could have used more guidance. I would say more male role models. You

      know, somebody to keep you in line when you're messing up, keep you in check.

      Somebody to look up to really is what I needed. But childhood, it had your good

      times, your bad times. I think childhood for me started taking its turning point

      when my little brother died. When my little brother died, I was eleven. He was a

      preemie. He was a twin with my sister. My sister, she lived, but he passed away.

      Almost up until my mom's water broke, they didn't know that my brother was

      even in her stomach. He was hidden from my sister. She was getting all the

      nutrients and everything, so she was a little bit more developed. She had to fight

      for her life, too, but she was just a little bit more developed. But my little brother,

      he didn't make it. His organs and his lungs and stuff, they weren't properly

      developed yet. So he passed away. That just forced my mom to be away more,

      because she had to be in the hospital with my sister all the time. So, I don't know,

      that's when everything took a downfall. I felt like I didn't have nobody. I lost

somebody. I know my mom lost her kid, but I lost my first little brother. And I didn't really have nobody to talk to about that. So, I started acting out in school, all kinds of stuff. That's when I really was going downhill in a real way.

David described the negative ways that he felt others saw him during his early childhood years, with the exception of his grandmother:

Man, I honestly feel the only person who didn't give up on me was my grandma. Everybody else, I feel they thought I was either just a screw-up, I wasn't headed nowhere, or they thought I would probably end up like my dad—my real dad. He went to the penitentiary around the same time that I was born. I'd say probably a couple of months after I was born, he went for attempted murder. So everybody thinking that I'm going to end up like him, end up in jail. And sure enough, slowly but surely, I was kind of taking that path, without even realizing it. I felt my mom thought I was a screw-up. She was the main person that used to tell me, "You're just like your daddy. You ain't going to be nothing really." So, from her telling me that, that's how I thought everybody else saw me, as somebody who's just not going to go nowhere in life, somebody who's just going to be stuck, either in jail for the rest of their life or end up dead somewhere, or just not doing nothing with themselves.

High school. Since 11 years of age, David seemed to have major difficulty dealing with his anger that stemmed from the loss of his baby brother, steadily getting into more trouble at school, while not really caring about the consequences. By the time he was about 14 years old, he was getting into more serious trouble, as he explained in-depth here:

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I'd say a good fifteen [15 years old] is when I actually went to Los Padrinos
[Juvenile Hall]. That was the first time I went to Los Padrinos—for a robbery at
school. I feel, if I would have had a little bit more guidance, I probably wouldn't
have even come in contact with the police. I was just so mad with life around that
time. I knew I was mad, but I didn't know how angry I really was. I knew I was
always, always pissed off, but it didn't really hit me yet. Just looking back, now I
understand it more. Back then, I just don't know what was wrong. I stopped
caring a lot. So I wasn't thinking about certain stuff back then.

Regarding school, David felt that there was a mixture of people who cared and
some who did not:

I feel there was people who could have helped and didn't, and then I feel there
was people who actually were trying to help me by getting me to play sports and
stuff, like my uncle did. I went to the same high school as my uncle. He was one
of their star linebackers at Gardena High. So a lot of his coaches knew me from
when I played Pop Warner [local youth football league]. So they already knew
me. Like my whole family went there. So there was people actually trying to help
me, but then there was people who didn't care. I was just another student to them.

David described how he saw himself in relation to his outside world during his
childhood years prior to incarceration:

I felt like I was in harmony with my outside world more than my inside world,
like with my family and everything. I felt like the outside treated you better than
the inside. So I felt like I had a sense of power over it. Like I thought I was in
control of what was going on, but you never got control really. You're just living.

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David discussed what he perceived as some of the major forces (internal and external) that led to him to being incarcerated:

I was just at that age where I was trying to do too much, and I really just wasn't caring because I felt nobody else cared. Nobody was trying to stop me from what I was doing. Nobody offered me help or sat me down and said, "You know, what you're doing could either get you this or you could end up like this." Nobody ever told me that.

David also identified missed opportunities for others to intervene in his life:

After my brother died, I wasn't really with my mom, so I was with my granny. I feel my big cousins could have come and told me something when I was messing up in school, or even my uncle, before he went to the Army. So I feel like there was a lot of opportunity that somebody could have sat me down and said, "Hey, if you keep going on this path, this is what's going to happen to you. Your life's going to end up like this or it could end up like that."

Incarceration Years

Initial incarceration. David discussed his self-perception at the time of his first incarceration at age 15 and the anger that he experienced:

Around that time, man, I felt like I honestly was a complete fuck-up. Honestly. That's how I felt. I was just a fuck-up. I really just didn't care about nothing, though. So that just got me even angrier that I felt that way about myself, and it made me keep doing stuff that ended me back up in jail. It was crazy. It honestly hit me after I got arrested and was sitting in [unit] CD at LP [Los Padrinos]. That's when you're getting processed in, the first couple of days before you can

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go to a unit, an actual unit. I was in CD for about a week, just thinking like,

"Damn, I'm in jail. I'm a fuck-up. This is going to be the rest of my life." That's

what I was thinking, like this is going to be the rest of my life. And there'd been

times in jail where I just got completely comfortable, like I said, "Fuck it, this is

my home. This is me."

I was so used to like my mom telling me, "Yeah, you're going to end up

like your dad." And as soon as I went to jail, I'm like, "Damn, I'm here, I'm just

like this dude." And so it just pissed me off even more. I just kept getting angrier

and angrier as time goes on.

Similarly, David described the negativity with which he thought others saw him

during the years of incarceration:

Like staff, you always got your staff who really don't care. They just want their

paycheck. And then you have staff who are there to help and make a difference.

That's why they applied for the job. So I had some staff who knew, "Yeah, he's a

fuck-up, but he has potential to be somebody in life." So they would try to tell me

little stuff so I wouldn't keep showing that repetitive behavior of going back and

forth to jail.

David estimated that he recidivated back to jail about six times between the ages

of 15 to 20 years old. David identified and described some of the harmful versus helpful

features of the juvenile justice system based on his own experience during his period of

incarceration and recidivism:

I think the helpful features in the Juvenile Justice System are staff who really

care. I can honestly say that's the only helpful thing about the Juvenile Justice

System—your staff that really care and really want to try to make a difference. They really care about you. And they really give a lot of advice to help them change what they're doing so they don't have to keep coming back and forth to jail. I feel that the only helpful thing in the Juvenile Justice System is the staff that actually care and come into their job every day to help at-risk minors. That's the only thing. And the bad part I feel is all the staff who come there for their check, because they don't really care about you. Then when you get out, you have your probation officer. Your probation officer is only really there to violate you or keep you out, and I feel half the time, the PO only wants to violate you. They don't really actually give you a chance to see what you can do. I'd say, I was out for a good two months and my PO wanted to violate me already. I think I was sixteen at the time. I couldn't find a school that would take me, so I was just at home. And she was trying to rush me to get in school. She wanted to violate me. She thought I was just at home doing nothing. And then another bad part is the influence the parents have. Like the parent is not on probation. I am. Like, you could get into an argument with your parent, and then she's going to come into your meeting and talk to your probation officer. Your parent could be mad at you, so she's going to tell your PO everything that they see in their mind as being bad. So that, off the top, gives the PO more ammunition to give you another violation. So when you go to court, you can end up back in. That happened my whole probation. Since I was on probation that happened every time I'd go see my PO. My mom. We'd get into a big argument in front of the PO. She'd violate me.

We didn't have assistance [with school enrollment]. My mom's like, "You're either going to go find a school, or I'm going to find one for you." And she'd find a school that was in a bad area. You can't go there. Or if you try to go there, you end up fighting or something happens to where you get kicked out. So I'm getting violated anyway at this point. It's hard when you get out. It's hard being on probation, parole, period. It's really set up for people to go back to jail. It's not set up for you to make it.

David described his feelings of powerlessness and stress during the five years he spent recidivating:

Man, at that point in my life, I felt like I had no power, because it was so easy for me to get violated and sent back to that environment. So I felt like I was powerless at the time in a sense, like I didn't know what to do with myself, because I knew I could get violated every time I had to go to court. So that made me just go on a run, do all of this that would cause conflict between me and my mom. It was real hard being on probation. It was real stressful.

The release. David addressed the question of what types of services and/or assistance, if any, he received when he got released, and from whom:

They try to give you mental health services, anger management services, and family services, so you can try to fix the problem, like what's going on with your parent. But nine times out of ten, the parent didn't want to do it or I didn't want to do it, so it would be a waste. I feel I got more help from you guys [teachers from his probation camp placement] than anybody else. You guys all really cared about us, so it made you want to do better. It made you want to care about yourself in a

sense so you can do better. We shine because you all shine. I don't know. It's weird. You all just gave us a different way to look at stuff. Like even when Ms. Walton used to say, "You all are not bad kids. You all just made bad decisions. It's all right." Some of us have parents who feel like we are the bad mistake, like it's our fault we're doing everything. It's just all who you're around most of the time when you're in jail, like who you're blessed to have looking over you or looking out for you in a sense.

Postrelease

David described his self-image from the last time he was released from a juvenile probation facility until now.

I felt like a brand new person. I felt like that was the only actual time incarcerated where I felt like I got help, and I was actually able to change myself and who I was in a sense, because I had people like you [the primary researcher of this study who was David's former teacher] and Ms. Walton. So when I got out, I felt like I was powerful in a sense, like I could do whatever I wanted. And now, I still kind of feel that way. It's just my predicament—well, my situation has changed a little bit, but I'm still keeping my head up, do the stuff that I learned from when you guys had me at Kirby [last probation camp placement from which David was released]. So, I feel more at peace with myself since the last time I got out.

David noted how he felt others saw/see him since his last release:

I feel there's some people who saw a change. They saw that I wanted to do more with myself. And then you had the same people, like my mom, who were like, "Oh, well, shit, he'll be back in jail in another six months or something. I don't

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believe anything that he's been—I don't think he's progressed since he's been in jail." She always had that attitude. But for the most part, a lot of people saw the difference, and they saw that I calmed down a little bit.

David recalled feeling an increased sense of self-empowerment around the time of his last release from a juvenile correctional facility:

At that time, I learned that I had all the power in my hands. This was before I was released. These are the thoughts that I was thinking before I actually went home. Because I knew I either had a power to stay out of jail, or I have the power to come back. Because at that time, I wasn't on probation anymore, so it was really up to me if I wanted to go to the county [Los Angeles County Men's Central Jail] at that point. But, I was scared to go home because I didn't want to go home and get too comfortable and then end up back in jail. So it was like fifty-fifty. I felt in control, but then I felt powerless at the same time, too, just because I knew that it's so easy to go back.

David further described his present feelings of self-empowerment by saying:

Right now I feel I have a lot of power. I have to stay focused, stay motivated. I can't let my situation [homelessness] get the best of me and keep me down. I still feel like I can do whatever I put my mind to in a sense. I just don't want to lose that focus.

David also spoke of a more recent experience, in which he was re-incarcerated as an adult—this time at the county jail, for not paying his juvenile probation restitution fees. He interpreted the experience as harmful, yet eye-opening, which would serve to strengthen his motivation and resolve to stay out of jail:

Well, this situation I'm about to tell you right now, it kind of hurt me in a sense, but then it humbled me. Man, this is probably the most real-life experience I ever had. Before my twenty-first birthday, I went to the county jail for not paying restitution for my juvenile probation. And while I was in there, I was with a lot of people facing a lot of time—like double life, eighty-something years, a hundred years. So that situation kind of calmed me down in the sense like, "Yeah, this is definitely the last time that I can come back to jail, because I know if I go back again, I'm going to be facing probably the same amount of time." So that was a humbling experience. I talked to a lot of the dudes that was facing that much time, and they told me, "Man, you don't want this feeling right here. You don't know if you're going to spend the rest of your life in jail or go home with your family. Man, you don't want this feeling." So that really helped me look at what I was doing. Like anything, any bullshit that I was on before I went to the county, I cut it out as soon as I stepped out of that gate, because I knew, if I go back to jail again, it's going to be for something serious. And I don't want that to happen. I know it's going to be on my adult record this time, so they're really going to charge me. So I don't want that.

Critical Reflection

Reflecting on his childhood, David discussed things that, if they had been different, possibly could have prevented him from ever being incarcerated in the first place:

Maybe if my mom would have just stuck around with me, or maybe if I had like a role model to look up to. When I was little, I really didn't have people that taught

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me nothing. Everything I know now, I either learned from you, Ms. Watson, or other people from me being incarcerated, but I really didn't have anybody as a kid.

I feel honestly, when I was in school, when I was younger, I feel that all my teachers, they did the best job they could with me. It was just me who was the screw-up really. But my teachers, elementary school, they did everything right. They helped me as much as they can. And I remember I used to have teachers that really cared about me. And we'd have parent conference meetings. They'd start crying to my mom like, "He's a real good student. We just need him to calm down." But, I feel like they did everything they could. It's just that at home I needed it, because at home I could roam around the area. I could venture off, and I could either pick up on some things that's bad or I could pick up on some things that's good. And I felt like all I was getting was bad. I didn't have any positive role models. I needed more positive role models.

Critical Outlook: Looking Forward

David described more confidently how he visualizes himself in the future:

Man, I see myself as being someone that's productive, always getting something done, handling business, and I feel like even through everything I've been through up until now, I feel like I could help someone that's going through what I went through, or a young kid that's growing up and needs somebody to look up to. I feel like I could step up and do that now because I know things that can shed light on the situation for a young kid. So I feel I could be a positive influence in a community.

David expressed his satisfaction with the current path he had chosen in his life and reaffirmed his self-identity at this time of his life:

It's better than anything I've done in life. I'm waking up early in the morning at four o'clock to go to school, and that's something I've never done. So it makes me feel good. Even through what I'm going through right now, it makes me feel good. So, who am I? I would say I'm just somebody who's trying to get something done in life. I want to be better than everybody before me, or everybody who gave up on themselves. I want do what they stopped doing. From everything I've been through, it molded me to this way right now, like from just going through the halls, the county, and dealing with you guys [former camp teachers]. I feel you guys played a big role in that. If I didn't have you all that last little year before I turned twenty, I would have been lost. So I feel you guys [former teachers at last probation camp] had a big thing to do with that. Kirby [Dorothy Kirby Center] saved my life.

David saw "not giving up on himself" as an important value and explained how he had integrated that personal value into the major areas of his life:

By just waking up every morning. Waking up every morning and trying to go to school. I'd say that's how I integrate it in my life . . . because even right now, I'm homeless. I sleep in my friend's truck. So I feel like me waking up every morning is like . . . it shows my true character. It shows my resiliency to my situation. So that makes me feel good, just waking up every morning.

Desired Audience and Purpose

David felt that the probation department should hear narratives such as his, because they could begin to see what areas they need to improve in, such as the field probation officer. For example, David explained that if probation understood that the parent can sometimes hinder progress, then they may consider sometimes keeping the parent out of the meetings, especially when the probationee and parent have not been getting along well.

David also suggested that other youth in the community should hear his story and others' stories, so that they can combine the lessons learned by David with whatever problems they were experiencing, hopefully becoming a chain reaction of lessons to be shared between other youth. In other words, David saw his critical narrative becoming a spark for community-based dialogue. He also stressed the importance for everybody to hear his story and other stories like his:

> If everybody heard this story, they would know what all at-risk youth go through, like not just black, but Latinos, Asians, because we're all at-risk. So they would just learn what we go through. I mean, I know my story might be different from somebody else's, but at the end of the day, it's kind of all the same. We go through the same struggle, especially with that probation stuff. For an at-risk minor, it's hard. So I feel if people heard this, then they would just understand more of what we go through. I hope that all the young kids right now, that's probably messing up in life, get the chance to evaluate themselves . . . really reflect on what they're doing so they could wake up. Because, I've been to the county. I've been to the hall. I've seen ugly. Camp don't got nothing on the

county jail. So I feel like no young kid [should] have to grow up, turn eighteen, and go through the county jail and be facing a lot of time. So I just hope and pray that all the at-risk minors, like at least half of them, really check themselves before they let the system check them. I feel like they need to just hear people who've been through it. That's the only way, because honestly, if someone who's never been to jail and never been through a struggle came and talked to me and told me different ways to try to get out of my situation, I'm not going to connect with him more than somebody who's actually been through the struggle and knows what's going on. Because, if I could have actually talked to somebody who's been through what I've been through, and they're doing good now in life, I could learn from that person. I can't learn from somebody who's never been through it. So, I feel they just need to hear somebody who's been there and done it. And that'll wake them up.

Participant Four: Clark

Demographics

Clark, a 21-year-old Mexican young man, was born in Mexico City, Mexico, came to the United States when he was six years old, and settled down in East Los Angeles, not far from where he resided at the time of the study. He identified his socioeconomic status as "poor." Raised Catholic, Clark explained that he became Christian (nondenominational) while incarcerated, but since had declined to follow any specific religion. He simply stated that he believed in God—that it was not important what religion he chose, but rather that he believed in God and the Bible. Currently a second-semester freshman at East Los Angeles College, Clark grew up attending various

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public schools in the Greater Los Angeles area. Because he did not understand English when he began school, he experienced a tremendous amount of difficulty in school. Clark grew up in a home with his mother and an older sister, but now rented his own apartment in East Los Angeles. He stated that the only family he had out here was his mother, older sister, and an uncle. He currently worked at Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, in what he describes as his first real job, since all his prior work experience was while he was incarcerated—jobs such as cooking, janitorial, landscaping, and office assistance. Clark's current position at LA Chamber of Commerce was assistant in Education and Workforce Development, a job that he said was perfect for him, since he could learn about policy that could potentially help other undocumented youth who may also have criminal records.

Pre-Incarceration Years

Early childhood. Recalling his early experiences as a first grader, new to this country, and unfamiliar with the English language, Clark described himself, at that time of his childhood:

> I see myself as a young kid that doesn't know what's going on, because first of all, I don't even know English. I'm going to school and everybody's talking English. The teacher expects me to do homework, when I don't even understand the things the teacher is teaching, and I'm getting in trouble because of it. My mom's struggling to help me on the homework, because she doesn't even know [English] herself. So, since First Grade to Fifth, I was just struggling. It's like I didn't understand what was going on. I didn't even learn how to read until I went to like 8th grade, 9th grade.

Clark added that he had no father growing up—something he connected to his decisions that led to more trouble, since he had had no father figure to teach him how to approach life's challenges and problems. This was looking back in retrospect, because Clark stated that he was too young to understand, at the time, how the absence of a father figure was affecting his life. Clark also realized that the friends he was hanging out with were lacking father figures, as well. He saw similar backgrounds across his group of friends, but the lack of a father figure had the biggest impact, as he discussed more in-depth here:

They all have the similar background as me. Either they were undocumented, had family members that were from gangs, and ultimately had no dads in their life. So growing up around people like that, it kind of becomes normal not having a dad. First of all I started using drugs, I feel, because of not having a dad. I joined a gang because I liked the connection I was always seeking for and I wasn't receiving. I was making decisions by myself, even though I had a mom. So whenever I encountered problems throughout my childhood, situations where I needed the help and I want answers and I have questions, I don't want to go to my mom because, first of all she's a female, and I don't know how she's going to react. And my uncles . . . I don't want to reach to them. I have questions about girls or about guys, you know, about things like that. I started seeking my own answers. So growing up, when I was introduced to gangs and all that, I always had questions about gangs. But I never seek for those answers. I always answered them myself, through my actions, like joining a gang.

Clark grew up in an environment where he was constantly exposed to gang activity and drugs. This exposure affected the way he began to see himself. Clark discussed his experiences as a young boy trying to grow up in that environment:

I grew up in a neighborhood where the gang that I got into was already there. So growing up, I have seen gang members on my porch outside. I'm a little kid, and they are on the porch. And not only that, but I had uncles at that time when I came from Mexico who were dealing drugs. So, I witnessed a lot of little traumas with my uncles, with my mom, in my house. Not them harming me, but I seen other things like gang members come into the house trying to steal from my family and things like that. Or like, a lot of corrupted things going on in my house. Like, I used to go to my kitchen and open a container of oatmeal, and find big-ass pieces of crack. I just look at it and leave it. Go back to my backyard and see a balloon. So, I didn't know. My mom used to tell me it was medicine for old people, but it was really drugs that my uncles were selling. Not because they were bad persons, but because they were undocumented. And the only way for us to make money at that time was selling drugs, at least for my uncles. That's what they were doing. And me growing up, that was affecting me, because if they could do it, why can't I do it?

Reflecting on his early experiences in school, Clark described feeling like an "outcast," how he thought others saw him at the time, how it impacted his own self-image and self-esteem, and how that affected his attitude toward school:

I felt outcast in a way, because I didn't know English. And it's embarrassing when the teacher tells you here's your time to read, and when it was my turn I feel

embarrassed. And people would look at me. It decreased my self-esteem. It made me silent. It made me be not able to speak up for myself. I used to hate my teacher. Growing up, I always felt like hitting them. I don't know why, because I don't know if it was the school I went to, or the teacher itself. It seems like every time I was in school, I would get in trouble. I don't know why I would get in trouble. I think it's just because of English, but sometimes I would be in the corner standing for an hour just holding textbooks. And I always used to have thoughts in my head like, "I want to kill this teacher. I don't like this teacher." Because he's always putting me in the corner holding the books. And I'm not telling my mom. I'm just letting it happen. And I don't know why they used to treat me like that—the teacher. I always used to hate my teachers. I wanted to just hit them or something, because I was too young. I remember having those thoughts like, "I wish the teacher could just like die or something." I remember everything.

Clark described how he saw himself during childhood in relation to his world, including how much power he felt he had:

I feel I didn't have power. That's why I joined the gang, because I wanted to have power. I was seeking some type of authority, some type of power. I had a lot of friends after elementary and middle school, and I used to hang out with friends exactly like me. They don't know English. They were immigrants. They had no fathers in their lives. They only had a mom and they were poor like me. So it's like we'll get together and we all start developing. All right, we want power now. We want to be somebody. We start creating little crews just so we could feel some

type of power and feel some type of connection, at the same time. Because like I said, as an immigrant you feel outcast. Any human being in the world does not want to be outcast or to be alone, because every human being wants to be part of something—some type of group, because that's just human nature. And that's how I was feeling with my friends. We wanted to be part of something because we were so outcast and segregated from a lot of things. We wanted to be part of something, so we said we're going to do it ourselves. Let's make a little crew and let's kick it. And we're going to have power, because we're a little crew. And if someone wants to start something with us, we can just fight or something. And that's when it led to something.

Middle school. Clark pointed to middle school as the time in his youth when he first started getting arrested:

Well, it started all in middle school and 6th grade is like when I started to ignore— middle school is where everything like kind of molded me in a way. Not knowing English—you know—the cool crowds like the people that do know English or the people that—you know—the cool crowds in middle school. It's like used to hate them with my friends. Like we used to hate them. And like it goes to that power thing again. We created this crew—you know—and eventually we were the cool crowd. We became the cool crowd because we started fighting. We started doing things we shouldn't be doing. And none of this my mom was aware of. Yet again, because—it's not only my fault, but it's the fault of the school at that time. The school system—they used to report nothing to my mom. So when I was ditching or something, I already knew I shouldn't be worry about my mom finding out,

because I know they wouldn't find out—my mom ain't going to find out because the school's not going to report it.

Clark continued, speaking more about his conduct, experimentation, and his sense of being a leader with power in the gang:

I started getting into fights. I started slowly—you know—fights. Then drinking— out of nowhere—my friends—part of it was my friends too. You know, you believe to it being something wrong. But when I was with my friends, it's like I want to experiment that. I say experimenting, because since I already knew it was bad, I knew—but it—I just wanted to see—I want to feel how it feels. Just like my mom always used to tell me—like after all this—way when I was a little older—like when I was already 15, already in the gang, she always used to tell me like, "Why are you joining a gang? It's bad." And I always respond—"I already know, mom. I know it's bad. But let me do it. I want to see how it feels." I felt good, because I was kind of like the leader. Me and my other two friends, we were like the leaders and we had other people listening to us. So I kind of felt good because . . . I had power. I had a status, like a little rank at a middle school—you know—and that feels good—like having power—like having authority.

Clark did state that the school made few attempts to intervene and try to help him with his problems, but his feeling of invisibility and disconnection from the process of schooling was evident:

I don't think the school never did nothing for me. Well, I used to get in trouble. Sometimes they did—I'd go to detention or something and things like that. But

they—it's like I wasn't even there for them. Like I wasn't—it's like I'm invisible, if anything. I ran into some teachers that were—they were nice and everything. But I didn't really care. I didn't really value—I didn't care about their life. But there were some times when the teacher used to try to like lecture me because I messed up or something, I would always feel that they're against me, because of my middle school and my elementary experiences. But knowing that they had good—some good—and some teachers had good intentions. But me, right away, I would think this teacher hates me already. I created this defense mechanism, like I hate this teacher now.

Clark also noted that during middle school, he received about 40 tickets (citations) from the police and school police for violations like truancy and tagging. He was arrested at least 20 times, but did not get "locked up" until he was 15 years old. After getting kicked out of one middle school, Clark attended another one that he stated had a reputation for being an extremely bad school. Clark described in detail the series of events leading up to his initial incarceration:

So in 6th grade I was with my friends. Didn't really know English. Didn't know how to read. You know, I had anger toward those kids—the cool crowds. In 8th grade, me and my friends become the cool crowd. Through 6th grade to 7th, we created our little crew. We started fighting people and we started building a little reputation. So now 8th grade comes . . . we're the ones running the school. We had the girlfriends and everything now. And that felt good, until I got kicked out. When I was in 8th grade, I got kicked out of school because I fought some African-American kid. They were trying to say that I was being racist. And

actually I wasn't. I went another school and that was like the worst school I have ever seen in my life. It was too crazy for me. So I was new to this school and right away, when I got there, I have to decide who I have to be with. There are two different groups—two different gangs. And it's a middle school and they're already segregating each other. You had the bleachers for this one gang. And then you have another side with the tree. And you have like half of the school in the bleacher side, half of the school in the tree side. I have to decide what side am I going to go to. I went to the tree side and every day someone fights. And for some reason, I never used to do nothing at school. Like in class, I never even did no work or nothing. I was still getting grades for some reason. Cinco de Mayo came one day. Everybody ran out of school. There was like a big riot. The teachers were letting them pass like nothing. I'm just going to go home too, and I just went.

Clark further spoke about the sense of having the whole school hate him and his subsequent behavior:

It came to the point where the whole school hated me because I was already kind of affiliated with the gang I eventually joined. So, eventually I started fighting with people to the point where some guy took out some brass knuckles. He broke my nose. So after that day, I'm like "I'm not about to go to that school ever again. It's too dangerous for me." So I never went. For the last three months of 8th grade I didn't go to school. So me and my friends found an abandoned house. It was a huge. It was two houses connected. And they were not even old, just abandoned. They had couches. They had movies, like they just left it like that. And this house

was with us for more than three months, until one of my friends burned it. He was

drunk and he was on drugs. This was when I was 14. So we started going to this

abandoned house. And in this abandoned house, that's when I started smoking

and drinking a lot, every day.

Just imagine that instead of going to school, I'm going to this abandoned

house. No rules. And there's another school next to that abandoned house. So we

would take girls from the other school into the house. And I started experimenting

with things like that too. We started getting into it with this gang called MS13. So

they used to go to that abandoned house with guns, chasing us out of the house,

and we used to run. I was getting into the gang war now a little bit more. I started

hanging out with the local gang that was there. The first time holding my gun was

in that abandoned house. First time doing a lot of drugs was in that abandoned

house—like crystal meth, ecstasy, all that. My mom never found out. I just told

her like 3 months ago that I ditched middle school.

High school. Clark spoke of his high school as one of being in "another messed

up school." An experience that was short-lived, in that he was incarcerated three months

later:

So I went to [high school], which was another messed up school. My mom

decided to move me from that school because my sister was going to Eco

Academy. She said it's better and it's close by . . . literally like 2 blocks away

from where I live. And the gang that I eventually got into is in that area. So I

started going to this school and all the guys from the gang that I lived in were

deep in there. And I kind of always grew up liking that gang, because for people

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that come from the similar backgrounds as mine, growing up, if you live in this neighborhood, you're thinking, "Okay, eventually I'm going to get into this hood." That's how I was thinking . . .like eventually I'm going to join 18th. I don't know when, but I'm going to join it. And that's how I was thinking. So I joined 18th eventually when I was like 14-15. I joined it and literally, like 3 months after joining it, I got incarcerated. I was expecting to do more crimes before getting locked up.

Once released from juvenile probation camp 18 moths later, Clark did return to ECO Academy for another brief period, prior to once again being arrested and sent to a juvenile justice facility. When asked about the major forces that led to his incarceration, Clark responded with the following:

I had a low self-esteem. I was afraid of speaking up. I was afraid of just seeking help from my mom. Like when the teacher had me standing in the corner for an hour, I didn't used to tell my mom. I used to let it go. I didn't like to talk. I was really quiet. And I think the surroundings too, my environment where I grew up. It's all ghetto. And my family, my household, like everything that we're going through . . . we barely have enough money. My uncle is selling drugs and I'm being exposed to all these things. I don't have no father figure. That's already making me feel bad. I think ultimately what affected me the most is not having a father, not having that one person there that would come and hug me and tell me that he is my father. Because I had it in my mind that he used to do it. There's two worlds . . . two places that influence someone like me: school and the outside.

Whatever happened in school, it stays in school. After school, I don't really care about school. I'm already on the streets.

Incarceration Years

Initial incarceration. Clark described the time of his initial incarceration and the experiences that followed within the confines of the juvenile halls and camps:

Joining the gang felt good, first of all. I felt like, "Oh, I own this block now." That felt good, just hanging around being part of something. But when I got incarcerated, the first night I was crying, because that was my first time really about to be incarcerated.

Remember how I told you I had so many tickets? Eventually they caught up to me. And one time I committed a crime with one of my friends. I was drunk. We did something stupid, and the police got us. They caught us on the scene and everything, but they just took us to the police station and they let us go from there, but they gave us a ticket. So I just thought it was going to be a regular ticket like all the rest. But this ticket was serious. I actually went to court for that ticket. I went to court with my friend. But I stayed in that court. I got locked up that same day. I was in Central Juvenile Hall first and that was my first time being locked up. I had already been gang-banging, but outside. Never inside. So it was my first time really being put next to a lot of gang members. And 18th has a lot of enemies. And I started realizing that "Damn, this gang is really serious," because I started seeing how people hated me. And like, "Oh, fuck 18th!" and people dissing me. And I'm like, "I don't even know you." This is what gangbanging is. I started fighting.

Clark described juvenile hall as a place where he adjusted by hanging with his friends, although initially he missed his mother:

So the first day I was crying because I kind of missed my mom. I remember just crying like, "Damn, my mom." Because I had made her cry so many times, I was just feeling bad about that. After several months of my incarceration, that went away. I was just like in my own little zone. I was with my friends in the juvenile hall and now I got comfortable. I got the hang of it and I'm right here in jail hanging out with my homies, and we were right here fighting.

Clark also spoke more about the lack of staff at Challenger Memorial Youth Center – Camp Scobee, the fights, and feeling persecuted by youth inmates from other gangs:

I was in the hall for several months, for four months fighting my case. And then I took a deal. I took nine months camp. I went to Challenger Memorial Youth Center—Camp Scobee. And at that time it was kind of active . . . like fights. And in the school area, they don't have staff supervising inside the classes. Now they do. They changed all that. But when I was there, I'd go to class—it's only the teacher. So you already know what's going to happen . . . and it happened that in Camp Scobee, out of like 100 something people in one camp, I was the only one from 18th. And out of all of them, like 20 were not my enemies, and the rest were all my enemies. I think my whole incarceration, I was always being persecuted because of my gang.

The issue of feeling alone and the impact of this isolation is reflected in Clark's narrative, as he spoke more about his experience in the camp:

That was my first time being in camp too. So when I was there, I was a little

paranoid. I didn't know what was going to happen. The first day I got there, I

went to the box, and after a while, I'd say, "You know what? I'm by myself. I'm

going to just do it by myself. I'm going to just rush anybody that says something.

Because if I don't do it, then they're going to try to pick on me." So, I started

attacking people. I started just doing it by myself. Because it's something I always

felt throughout my whole jail incarceration. I always felt by myself. I hated all my

enemies, because I felt like they all hate me. Sometime my enemies will come to

me and they would be like, "Hey . . . we're going to start a riot with the blacks."

And I'm like, "So what. Don't tell me." I never used to like Surenos [Spanish

slang term for Southern California Latino gangs]. When they go to county and

prison, everybody is Sureno.

Clark explained that, although the 18th Street Gang is considered "Sureno" in jail

and prison, he still considered Sureno gangs his enemies and would refuse to take their

side during riots.

That's why they're [18th Street] hated too. So when I went in there [camp], I say,

"You know what? I don't consider myself a Sureno." This is in camp still, so they

used to tell me to get in the riot. I used to be like if I'm going to get in the riot,

I'm not going to rush no Black. If I do rush a Black, he's going to be a Blood

because that's my enemy. But if I see someone from Rockwell, which is a Sureno

gang . . . if I see someone from MS, and it's a riot, I'll rush them too. And I did.

You know, when the riot cracked, I didn't rush no Black. I rushed this guy from

MS, and that kind of put everybody against me even more. So I was by myself

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constantly fighting. It got to the point where I used to get tired of fighting. I would

have at least five fights in one day and not get tired. They used to call it training.

You get trained.

Clark described that there was a "closet" for fighting and the staff would allow the

youth inmates to fight it out amongst themselves in the closet, without intervening.

Holding their own in these fights earned inmates respect with the staff and other inmates:

So they have like a closet. And the staff used to let us fight. So I would go to this

closet and I would fight with some guy. And he'd always be like, "Stay there.

Someone else is going to fight you." Because everybody wanted to fight me, it

was just like they would rotate me. But at the same time, even though I was

getting tired of this, I kind of felt good. Because at the end of the day, after those

fights and probably like a busted nose and a little black eye, I would gain respect.

Everybody would like, "Oh, that guy from 18th, he's small but he will get down!"

So it came to a point where even the staff respected me. One of my friends

eventually came for two months and left. When he came, he was hearing good

things about me from staff and from other guys. They used to tell him, "Hey, your

homie right there . . . he's cool." So that kind of made me feel good at the same

time.

Clark explained that, because of the numerous fights, his sentencing time was

extended from nine months to 18 months:

I went from nine months to 18 months, because of fights at the same camp. In

school, I was rushing people. In the dorm, I was rushing people. At night I used to

curse out some staff that I didn't like, or like just get caught with lighters, weed, things like that.

Clark also talked about his behavior after leaving the Juvenile Probation Camp and his subsequent arrest that got him into the Division of Juvenile Justice, formerly known as California Youth Authority (CYA):

I got out for three months. I maxed out in camp. I got released. I made it. I never thought I would make it. I got released with a bigger ambition of gangbanging. I wanted to gangbang all the way. I wanted to get tatted on my face. I wanted to just do crazy things when I got out. I started doing drugs . . . still gangbanging. So I was hanging out, fresh out of jail, and I wanted to gangbang still. I wanted to go and do crazy things. So I only lasted three months out. So after three months of being destructive again, I got caught up with a serious case and I had another crime partner. For my first crime I had a crime partner. For the second one, I had another crime partner. And both crimes I was drunk. So, I did a crime with my friend in my neighborhood. And I didn't get locked up that same day, but like a week after. I was in school in Eco Academy, selling weed and crystal meth at that time. So, the detectives came to the school one time and I had a lot of weed in my backpack, because I was selling it in school. I thought it was for that and for something else I had done. So one day, I was in school, actually in my class. I was really into focused in my class. I really liked that class. It was math class. I remember. You know when math is being taught to you and when you get the concept of it, you kind of get into like, "Oh man!" It gets fun. I was kind of trying, because I wanted to lay low a little bit too . . . my probation. So I was kind

of doing good in school now, and I was into my math. I was getting into it like "I want to finish this class. I want to pass it." But I was still gangbanging. I still had negative thoughts and everything, but I somehow was into math. And the dean came to my class and told me, "Come here. Bring your stuff." "For what?" "I want to talk to you." And then my friend was saying it's probably because of the weed you have in your backpack. And I was like, "Okay, fuck it." So they took me to the office and I seen two detectives and they introduced themselves to me. And I started to go "What? Why are they here? What did I do?" There were so many things I had done that I was thinking of. They [asked] me if "You have something in your backpack?" "Nah, no I don't have nothing." But they looked at it and I had a lot of weed. They just put it back in my backpack. They didn't even care about it. And then they just told me, "You know what? We're going to book you in. Just don't make a big deal right now. We don't want the whole school to know. We're going to sneak you out of here and you're just going to be in the car and we're going to handcuff you in the car."

When Clark realized that he was going to be incarcerated again, he immediately started thinking about how he was going to have to get a "fresh start" at earning his reputation by fighting at the new facility:

I honestly thought I was just going to get an interview. Because they were telling me, "Oh, we're going to interview you." So I went . . . they did interview me, but I was acting up. And I didn't end up going home that day. So I went to the police station. I was mad because I was saying, "Damn, I'm going to go back to camp. Now I'm going to have to fight all over again—start my reputation from the

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beginning. Start fresh. And damn, which camp am I going to land?" I'm thinking now about what I'm going to do now. "Okay, if I go to this camp, I'm going to rush as soon as I get there." I'm already mad . . . I'm mad at the point that I'm going to have to go back to camp and I'm going to have to fight all over. And I'm already planning. So as soon as I get there, I'm going to have to rush them so I can show that I'm no bitch. I started thinking like this.

It wasn't until the next day, that Clark realized that he was not going to camp but rather would be going to "the compound," as what they termed "a direct file," meaning that he would be directly processed and held until his court hearing:

But it was actually more than just camp this time. They took me to Central Juvenile Hall in the intake. I stayed there for one night. The next morning, they woke me up, put me on the van, taking me to Sylmar. I'm like, "Why are you guys taking me to Sylmar?" I was handcuffed, chained up—all the way from my legs . . . And I'm like, "Why are you guys taking me to Sylmar? How come I'm all by myself in the van? What the hell?" I was like, "I just got here. I got court tomorrow in Central." They're like, "No. It's saying you're a direct file." "What is that?" "You're going to the compound." I'm like, "What the . . ." I started tripping out. "Why am I going to the compound? That's only for people that did serious crimes." "I know. You did a serious crime." And I started tripping out and it started hitting me, like "Damn, I'm going to the compound."

Clark was transported to the compound at Sylmar Juvenile Hall. The compound is where the juveniles being charged as adults are housed, while they continue to go to court for their cases. It is also known as the juvenile high-risk offender population. Clark

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described how he felt and his experience after being taken to the compound at Sylmar Juvenile Hall:

> And I was kind of worried. So I went to the compound. They give me my phone call. I call my mom and I started telling her, "Hey mom, I'm in the compound." And I started feeling bad, like "Damn - I don't know why." Like, I honestly felt like I was being played . . . like I shouldn't be there. So I landed in the compound . . . got adjusted to the compound over a while. I was stressing it all the time . . . I was facing life in prison . . . they give me life at the age of 17. I would pray to God, like "Damn, get me out of here. I don't want to do life." And this was something that I was always feeling—like sad, lonely. But as soon as I stepped out of that room, I wouldn't show that because I couldn't. I was from 18th. How would an 18th look if you showed that. I feel that the compound kind of helped me out. It made me think, because it forced me to put myself in a situation where I have to think.

Feeling a sense of desperation, Clark began to read the Bible in its entirety and allowed others into his life that want to help him:

> I read the whole New Testament two times when I was in the compound. I got into my Bible and started reading books. That's when I met Scott—Scott Budnick [InsideOut Writers Volunteer and Founder of Anti-Recidivism Coalition]. So I met Scott Budnick and remember how I told you about a father figure? So this is how I would feel when Scott would come visit me. You know, in the beginning I would push him away—like I don't want to talk to this white guy . . . he's a weirdo. Even though I felt I wanted to talk to him. He was really caring. He was

consistent. So that kind of showed me that he did care for me, you know. And I think that's something that really helped me. There was like the little seed of me wanting to change, because I always wanted to be cared about by someone like him. I wanted to be acknowledged and be told like, "Man, don't worry. You're going to get out. You're going to do the good things. Don't trip." "I'm an immigrant." "So what." "But I'm going to get deported." "No you're not." Hearing that all the time . . . he would say it with confidence and it will make me feel confident too. So it was him being consistent and actually not lying to me that started making me wanting to change.

Although Clark wanted "a different lifestyle," he still felt he had to fight in order to "claim his neighborhood" inside the compound. And despite receiving support from a mentor, Scott, he nevertheless felt depressed, still hated, and fighting his way through the experience:

Don't get me wrong. I was still fighting in the compound, you know. You don't change overnight. In the compound, that's where I developed the thirst of wanting to change. I was still doing bad things. I was still claiming my neighborhood with passion. And I was all the way committed. But deep inside, I did want a different lifestyle. Because Scott [Budnick] had just planted that on me. I used to pray for little things and they would come true. I used to pray for simple things like I want double portions today at lunch, and I would get it. And little signs like that would make me think like, "Yeah, I think I could get out." I asked for little things and it would happen. And for 7 months I was going through this. I was depressed, sad, but at the same time, gangbanging. But I had Scott in my life. I started reading

books. He used to bring me books. And one day I went to court and I hate going to court because I always had to fight. When you're in the compound, they put you in the county bus. You're young, you're going to the county. And everybody hates me. The whole cage is talking shit. And I always have to deal with this. I'm like, "Damn." I can't even worry about my own court, because I have to worry about my enemies. They're going to put me in the room where the Sheriff take off all of our chains and all that because they think we're Surenos and we get along. They put me with ten other guys that are all my enemies, and I have to fight all of them. And that will get annoying during a court thing. I'm already stressing over facing life, and I already have to go to court dealing with these guys. I have to fight right after court. It would be like after, and I already knew they're going to jump me. So one day I went to court and before going to court, I always prayed for like 30 minutes. I wake up early and I start praying. And sometimes I had drugs on me too in the compound. I had crystal meth and weed. And I used to do it just to relax. Before going to court, I used to do some crystal meth, because I knew if I'm going to go to court right now, I'm going to fight. But with this crystal meth, I won't feel the punches.

When the day came for court, Clark described his personal preparation for the hearing and the outcome:

So, I went to court that day. And that day I didn't do no drugs or nothing. I said, "I'm going to just go for it." I prayed. I went to court. And I think I not only prayed just for something good to happen in court, but I used to pray to God, "Come on God. Let me be in that tank [holding tank] by myself. I don't feel like

fighting today." I was like, "Come on. Just me and my crime partner . . . just let us be together. That's it. No enemies. Just let us relax already." You know, I prayed for that. I went to the tank. It was just me and my crime partner. It came true! And little signs like that would tell me a lot of things. Throughout my whole time, I could tell you things about what I prayed for and I got them. But it really is true. So that was one of them. I went to my tank. There was nobody in the tank. It was just me and my crime partner and some Black guy. But he was a cool person. It was just us. I didn't have to stress about fighting. I was good. Finally I don't have to fight. And even my friend would tell me, "You got lucky. No enemies." "I know, huh. That's cool." And I went to court that day and we went inside. The witnesses came. They talked and everything. My case was dismissed that same day. Everything was dropped. I don't know how it happened.

Although his case was dismissed, Clark was sent back to juvenile hall, where the fighting persisted, with the staff's knowledge, as he worked to rebuild his "reputation." Eventually the fighting got him kicked out and sent to the county facility, when he was accused of being involved in a "racial fight":

But as soon as I stepped out, I was so happy. Like, damn! We beat our case. No more life. What does this mean? We're out of the compound! We went to the compound and that same day they took us out of the compound. I went to Central [Central Juvenile Hall], but they had me in PQ, in the box because I was still high profile. I was stressing it in PQ. Even though I had beaten my case, I was still stressing like, "I'm in the . . . I don't get out." Scott [Budnick] and Cheryl [ARC member recruiter], they got me out of the box. And I was in the regular units. I

was in M&N [living unit]. And in M&N, I started building my reputation again, like in camp. You know, I overcame this struggle and right away I forgot that I was going through it. Right away I forgot that my life was just in danger, then I'm over here gangbanging again. And I'm in M&N . . . you know . . . I get juiced up [receive preferential treatment] with staff and got MP3's. I have lighters, I have weed. I'm fighting—staff letting me fight in the rooms. I'm juiced up in school. I graduated in the compound, and so when I was in Central, there was no more school for me. So, I didn't have to go to school, but I did. And the teachers liked me and I got a little job right there in school, in Central Juvenile Hall. They never had done that before. So I had a little job. And I got too comfortable. I started getting into little troubles. And eventually, because there were so many fights and they always used to say I was racist . . . I was never racist. Like . . . I don't know why . . . every time I fight a Black guy, for some reason the staff would be like, "Oh this is a racial fight." And I always tell them, "Why do you say that? I got homies from my hood. They're all black and they're my homies. I don't hate blacks. He's a Blood. That's the difference." So I went to court and they kicked me out of Central Juvenile Hall, and I had already turned 18. I went to county - my first time going to county. They kicked me and my crime partner out. We had fought the same Black guy and they were saying that it was a racial thing. It wasn't. So they took us to the county and the county is crazy.

When he was sent to the county facility, Clark reached out to Scott for assistance, fearing that he was being placed in protective custody (PC). Instead of the nightmare he

was expecting, Clark was placed unto the school dorm and he felt fortunate to end up there:

So I called Scott [Budnick] and say, "Hey, I'm going to the county man. They kicked me out." He was like, "I got you. Don't trip." And again, another way of him being consistent . . . being there. I go to the county. I don't know nothing about county. I heard a lot of things about county. I went through the whole intake process, ready to go to my cell. But they pulled me out. The Sheriff said, "Hey [participant's name], come here." And I'm like, "What the hell." "You're going to this dorm." And I'm like, "What's this? Is this PC?" [protective custody]. "Nah." "Are you sure?" "Yeah." Once you're PC, it's like you're no good. You're like a target for the main population. Like you're PC-ed up—you're scared. I thought Scott was trying to put me PC-ed up. But when I went in that dorm, everybody is coming up to me, talking to me nice. I'm like, "This is PC?" "No, this is main line." I go, "Yeah?" "Yeah. And you never been to county?" Everybody will always tell me. I'm like, "No." They're like, "Damn. You're so lucky." I'm like, "Why?" "Because you're landing in the best dorm in the whole county institution." "What you mean?" Like, "This is the school dorm. This is the merit program." So I was actually in the first dorm ever where there's no politics in the dorm. Everybody gets along. Nobody knows that I could sit with the Blacks, eat with the Blacks. This is something that's going on in this dorm itself. And I was lucky to be there, because if I would have gone to another dorm, I would have gone straight to gangbanging again, because they're so active. So everybody would tell me, "Damn you're lucky you're here. You don't want to be in those

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dorms over there. You don't want to. Trust." So I got into that dorm. It was chill. I

didn't have to pay taxes. Because in the main line, I had to pay taxes. I had to

have my shoes on all day. If I take them off, I get beat up. I had to follow basic

rules in main line. But in this dorm, I didn't have to do none of that. So I was in

this dorm.

Unfortunately, Clark's case was refiled by the district attorney, whom Clark

seemed to believe was against him. He noted here about the "juvenile life" deal he was

offered, which he accepted:

For some reason they re-filed my case again. I was going to juvenile court from

the county. They tried to put on my case all over again. The DA was against me.

But again, in the county, I started leaning towards my spiritual side a little bit

more. I was going to mass every single day, from 8:00 pm to like 10:00 every

single day. And over time, they offered me a deal. They told me, "We'll give you

juvenile life." You get 7 years till I turn 18. "Just take the deal and a strike and

you'll be good. And you can get out like in 2 if you do good." I didn't want to

take it, but I just said, "Fuck it. Let me just take it." So I took that deal. Eventually

I got kicked out of the merit program. I went to main line, so I was still able to

experience main line.

In the following, Clark described his life as an inmate in the California Youth

Authority program, commonly referred to by inmates as YA:

After being 8 months in the county, I went to Y.A.—the Department of Juvenile

Justice in Northern California—Stockton. So this institution is like a prison . . .

it's just that it's juveniles. Young people, like 25 and under . . . with serious

crimes, even people that are doing life. If they're young and they're doing life, they go there first. Then they go to prison. So I went to Y.A. And in Y.A., that was the first time I actually denounced my gang. That was the first time I actually was capable of denouncing my gang. I think what helped me out was county, too. Going to mass every day, that kind of helped me a little bit. And plus, I was in the county, with people twice my age - 50, 60. My bunkie was 52 and I was chill with him. So I was able to interact with people that were older than me—mature—so that kind of made me a little bit more mature. And they're going to church, mass and all this, so it was kind of helping me. So when I went to Y.A., I said I don't gangbang no more. I'm good . . . although I was still persecuted though. And even if I said I don't want to gangbang, they're still going to be people [who will say], "I don't care. You're still my enemy."

Clark described a time when he became aware of how much influence his own thinking and decisions could have over the relative amount of stability in his life. He explained how he began to monitor his personal growth and change, in order to cope better with his situation:

It's like I always see my life like this [On a piece of paper, Clark draws on a graph what appears to be very high frequency and very low frequency wavelengths, fluctuating rapidly]. So I see my life was like this, and it's slowly started going like this [Clark continues the same graph of wavelengths, but with less extreme frequencies and less fluctuating—relatively calmer wavelengths]. Where to a point it was like this [Clark draws wavelengths that seem to hardly fluctuate at all]. So I always like to define my life like this, because I feel like my

process of changing—everybody's changing has to go through this [Clark refers

to the entire graph of wavelengths that he just drew]. You're still going to mess

up. But slowly, probably two months you'll get in trouble. And then it's probably

three months. It's like the older I get, the more I learn about myself, the more I

feed myself with knowledge, the more I'm becoming aware too of myself, of who

I am—my identity. So, I'll probably get in trouble right here [pointing at busier

wavelengths]. And I don't know how to control it. I don't know how to handle it,

so it leads to more trouble. But over time, through my experiences, my traumas,

Scott [Budnick], religion, uphill scenario, life—that helped me think a little.

Finding my identity . . . finding who I am. What is my triggers? How I could

handle myself? Then slowly, if I get into trouble, I kind of learn how to cope. So

I do good for like 6 months or 3 months. But, then I kind of relapse. But I learn

again from this one: "Oh, I did it here" [pointing to graph]. I'll learn again. And it

keeps going until the point where it just becomes a straight line [referring again to

the graph].

Clark eventually was transferred to another facility within the Division of

Juvenile Justice (being referred by Clark to as Y.A.), located next door to the first Y.A.

facility. He described how much more violent things were in the new Y.A. facility and

how he worked to cope with this environment, through an increasing sense of compassion

for others like him:

And in this Y.A., that's when I started to get attacked even more. There's Bloods,

there's Crips, there's Surenos, there's Nortenos, there's Bulldogs. And

everybody's younger there too. So when I went up to that Y.A., everybody was

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trying to tell me like, "Hey, you got to get under the wing" [slang for accepting protection from someone else], and I say, "I'm good" [slang for 'no, thank you' – 'or never mind']. You guys could rush me. I don't care. I'll get down" [slang for fight]. And I went like that for my last months in Y.A.—fighting every day. So it was something that I was coping with. I wasn't going crazy no more. I was getting attacked, but I was dealing with it. Because I go back to my religion. I read the New Testament two times. And a lot of the things that I read from that book . . . I still remembered them. Like, if they ask, "If your brother needs some money, just give him $2.00 if he asks you for $1.00." You know, those little things, they work. They're staying with me, and they're still staying with me right now. So whenever my enemies would rush me in Y.A., now after going to county, after already expressing so many things and becoming aware of myself and others - feeling empathy . . . It's like when I was to get rushed, I wouldn't be mad at them. I'd be on the floor already and I'd be like, "You're good." They'll be like, "What the fuck are you talking about?" I'm like, "You're still fucking up. You'll get it when you get older." You know? And throughout my whole time . . . I always used to think, "You know what? He's lost. I was like that too one time." So I started thinking like that, like . . . I was a fuck-up. I used to rush people that probably didn't even want to fight me. So I started seeing I could put myself in someone else's shoes now.

The release. Nearing his release date, from the DJJ facility, O.H. Close, Clark began to more vigorously monitor and regulate his behavior through practicing coping skills and constant self-reflection and self-monitoring. He described his attempt to

persuade the parole board to grant his release, by sharing with the board a graph he had drawn that provided an illustration of his awareness about the periods of instability and stability in his life:

I actually presented [the graph] to them. You know, I went to board . . . I didn't know if I was going to get released. The Parole Board is where you sit down in a table kind of like this [refers to the long rectangular conference table at which this interview is being conducted]. And there's four people right there and I'm right here, and my case manager and my psychologist is here [points to various chairs on each side of him]. And, depending on my behavior, they'll support me. And they're [parole board] going to ask me questions. They're going to come at me rough. "So how do you feel about your victim?" And even if you answer right, they still push you to the point where they want to see if you're going to snap— how you're going to respond. So I went to this board. I took a poster that had "Old Me - New Me." And on the "old me" I put a gun, I put drugs, I put this, that. And then I put the cell, the light, and then I put my future. So I took that with me and I presented to them. I presented this to them [referring to the graph]. And for a moment, I thought I wasn't going to get released, because one of the ladies—she went rough at me and I kind of got stuck and I answered wrong. But I didn't realize she did it on purpose. Because after me being stuck, I went, "Damn." She told me, "You know what? I like that." And everybody was like, "Yeah." I was like, "What?" "I just got on you right now. I just went at you hard. And most of the kids that I call like this, they will snap. And you're not. I see like you're calming yourself down. I see it in you." And then they tell me, "What are you

thinking? What skills are you using now?" And I was like, "Well, actually I used

positive self talk. You know, I try to calm down because I know you're . . ." like I

started explaining myself. And then out of nowhere they discharged me. They told

me, "You're discharged." I'm like, "What? I'm really discharged?" I'm gone.

That's it.

Clark explained that at the time of his discharge from DJJ, he had not been home

for three and half years. He recalled that during the first few months home, he felt like he

was still locked up, because he was doing the same bad things he had been doing while in

the juvenile hall and camp. Clark identified what he felt were the positive versus harmful

features of the juvenile and criminal justice systems, based on his own experiences:

Well, I honestly don't hate the fact that I was incarcerated. I always felt like I'm

blessed to have gotten locked up, because I feel that jail worked for me in a

positive way. I felt that if I would have never gotten locked up, I would have

probably been dead right now or I would probably still be gangbanging even

worse, or probably already doing life. But . . . jail . . . put me in a situation where I

had to think about my life. That's what I needed. I was destructive and I needed to

be checked. I know it took some years, but I could have ended up dead. So I

actually do appreciate the fact that I got locked. Although I hate it, I still love it

because it made me change. It made me think. It was my meditation moment. It

was my moment to just to think about myself. And not only that, but people came

to my life. Scott [Budnick] came to my life. Mentors came to my life while being

incarcerated. And that's essential for anybody that's going through things like

that. You need a mentor. You need people that keep that positive voice next to your ear, you know.

Clark also pointed to the phenomenon of "glorifying of gangs," within the facility in which he was incarcerated and the trauma he experienced:

But something I don't feel was good while being locked up would be the glorifying of gangs. We're in there because of gangs, and sometimes we'll run into staff that are like, "Oh, you're from 18th? Oh yeah, I know your homie." I think that's one of the things that plays a big role in a kid's life. Just like when you've been traumatized for other things when you're young . . . that's a trauma right there. It might not be as impactful . . . it's just words. But it's worse. They're saying to you it was cool. When I was in Y.A., and they liked us to go to groups, they used to tell me about my traumas. I always used to tell them, "You know guys, you guys don't realize that being right here in Y.A. . . . this is a real trauma itself." Being locked up, we focused about my past . . . but how come we don't focus about my time being locked up in camp? That was a trauma itself. County—another trauma.

Clark described the experience of incarceration "like when you go to war" and discussed more in depth the traumatizing effect of incarceration, including the loss of a certain closeness of friendship after being released from the facility:

I was telling one of my friends from ARC [Anti-Recidivism Coalition]. It's like when you go to war—if you go to war for like a year or two, you come back traumatized. And you might not show it, but in reality you are. It's the same thing with prison or jail. I went in jail. That's a trauma. Getting out, I was gone from

my family. I didn't experience high school. I didn't go to prom. I lost five

birthdays in jail. That's a trauma. A lot of people that are locked up doing time,

they wish they could be there—outside when they're 18, 19. They wish they

could go to high school and experience prom, but they can't. And that's already a

trauma because it starts affecting the person. And then . . . getting out. I've been

out for ten months, and sometimes I feel like getting locked up again. I don't want

to do bad things. Sometimes I feel like I wish I could be in my cell, just chilling

for a little bit, because I don't have that. It's too many distractions I'm having

right now, where I can't actually think. I want to meditate. I could express myself

to my friend, my roommate and my cellmates, you know. Because everybody is

going through the same struggle in there. And you get attached to people in there

sometimes— your own friends. And then you don't experience that type of

friendship outside no more. Because inside, everybody is alone and everybody is

going through a struggle, so it's easier to get connected. And out here there's too

many things going on in the world, too many distractions.

Postrelease

Focusing on how he felt now that he had been out for several months, Clark

discussed his complex feelings regarding the types of stress he endured in his life:

I don't feel less connection with the world, but I feel less connection with myself

now. Because you stress over there [in jail] about just being locked up. And out

here, you stress about work, school, and all this. And it's good stresses, because at

least you're not stressing about being locked up. But it doesn't give you the time

to keep seeking your identity or just for yourself . . . it doesn't give you time to

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stop yourself and feel all right. Sometimes we need to be isolated in little places to

visualize life, because out here, it's hard to do sometimes. It's hard and it's

painful, because it makes you stress. It makes you want to go crazy. It's like you

could be physically locked up or incarcerated in your mind . . . in your

consciousness. Someone could be incarcerated, but they could be free in their

mind. And I run into a lot of people like that and I don't know how they used to

do it. Out here you could be free, but be locked up in your mind. And be stressing.

That's why people kill themselves, because they don't have time to think about

themselves. They don't have time to meditate and just be aware—you know—

monitor themselves. So in there you have that. And that's something that I miss

sometimes.

Critical Reflection

Clark also described how he saw himself now and how he perceived others saw

him since his last release:

Well, after being released, I see myself with the same thirst that I had when I got

released that other time. Remember I wanted to gangbang to the fullest? Same

thirst, but for something different. I came out with a thirst of wanting to go to

school. My image changed. I really see myself as someone that's undocumented,

that is just trying to reach for that American dream that everybody's trying to do.

And I just feel that, since I got out, I've been in school nonstop—In college. So

this is my fourth semester, and I haven't even been out for a whole year. I want to

finish school so bad. I want to go to USC. I want to be settled. I always hear

people telling me, "Damn, fool. You're always like inspiring—like you pump me

up to want to go to school." Hearing that makes me feel good too, because every time I meet people, especially in school, I always have compliments. And they tell me, "Hey, your personality stands out." I'm like, "What you mean?" "I don't know, man. It's in a positive way. I don't know. I feel like you just have this— like you're committed. Like you really want to do something. It's inspiring because I know your background. You told me that you did time and that you went through all this. And it's like—you're right here. You're doing better than the average person." And hearing that makes me feel good too.

Clark discussed the experiences he had had since being released, which he felt had helped him the most in making a positive transition in life, particularly the importance of having a support system in place:

> Support system is the essential thing for anybody that's gangbanging, because I don't know how it would have been if I would have never met Scott [Budnick]. I think this is something everybody needs when they're getting out, because I was just talking to one of my friends two days ago. He's going through some really rough times. And something he's lacking is a support system. And I just talked to him. He's going crazy. He lost his mom, his girl. And I was talking to him for like two hours. He's a hardcore gang member too—tatted up, big. And talking to him made me see something—like made me see that a support system is really essential. A support system is not just a support system—it's caring, it's acknowledgement, positive voices in your head. And talking to my friend . . . he's going through some rough times. And when I was talking to him, he was drunk. He was talking about he wants to go kill someone and go kill himself in the end.

And me and Scott were talking to him on the phone, trying to help him. But I talked to him by myself, and in the end of the conversation, after me trying to inspire him and everything, he tells me, "You know what? Damn fool, I like talking to you. I need to talk to someone. I feel lonely. I feel lonely. I need—like I don't know. What if you are—are you distracting me? And that's good. I like this." And I never heard that from someone like him. He's a hardcore gang member, and that shows that when you get out and if you don't have a support system, you're going to feel lonely. And when you feel lonely, that's the worst thing. You could get depressed. You go and do crazy things. You know, you kill yourself. And a support system avoids all that. And people—when they get out of jail, they don't want to be alone. That's why people go back to their gang. So I think support system is the best thing anybody could have.

Clark considered how, if certain things would have been different in his life, he may have avoided incarceration in the first place. The major missing element that Clark felt could have played a major role in his childhood was a father figure, whom he could have relied upon when faced with difficult problems and decisions. Clark also felt that he and his family would have benefitted more if there had been more family members around, so that he could have enjoyed time together with extended family. As an undocumented child, Clark also recalled how, as an outcast in his elementary and middle schools, he needed more positive attention and involvement from his teachers and staff; something that could have played a significant role in making him feel more included. He explained what students need, especially undocumented students who must contend with very similar experiences as those that Clark has already undergone:

One thing that I said that a lot of people want—they want to be cared for, be

acknowledged. And that's something they [Clark's teachers] didn't do. That's

something Scott [Budnick] had to do for them. He had to give me that

acknowledgement. How are you going to have this white guy just coming out of

nowhere and he's the one? That tells a lot. I'm over here like, "Damn, I might get

deported." And he's like, "No, you're not! Stop saying that." "But I am. How the

heck you know?" "You're not!" Someone that can just be confident to tell you

those things. That's what you need. That's what anybody needs—like anybody

that's gangbanging or that wants to change. They need that voice, because it stays

in their mind, like "I can. I can."

Critical Outlook: Looking Forward

Looking forward, Clark described a sense of purpose in his life and how he

visualized himself in relation to his own world:

I have a purpose in this world now. I found who I am. I found my triggers. I found

what gets me mad. I found what gets me sad. But I also found what I'm destined

to be . . . work for something good. You know, being an immigrant, I feel like that

is my obligation to advocate for immigration, to be involved in politics, especially

since I have the background. I could do a lot of great things now—things that I

never saw myself being able to back in the day. Because I always hear

compliments all the time now, those keep me pushing like, "Damn, I am good at

this." You know, telling me compliments is like feeding me. I value myself now. I

value my life. I mean, I'm not perfect. Sometimes I do feel sad or something,

because I think that everybody goes through things like that. But in the end, I

value myself and I know what's going to lead me to bad things and what's not. And right now all I want—I want to be successful, like all the way. I'm trying to just get done with college, and I'm trying to transfer and just be set. I want to do things that my people couldn't do, you know. I came to this country for a purpose. And gangbanging and doing that is not the purpose. I just feel I have to show people, "Hey look, I'm undocumented, but I can still do something." That's what I'm aspiring to do, especially since I work where I'm working in this [public policy work]. I feel like everything is meant to be.

Clark identified his own personal values and how those are now integrated into the major areas of his life:

I value family. I value relationships. I value my health. I value my creativity. And I value my knowledge. I value the fact that I could be happy now—could wake up and be happy. It's up to me if I want to be sad. I value knowledge because knowledge makes me happy. I like knowing things. I like to feed myself with knowledge, because it makes me aware. It makes me feel good. It's like eating, but it's my mind. Creativity—I like to imagine. I like to be creative, you know. I love it. It makes me feel good. It's a way of meditating, you know. And my health—I value my body. I have to value my physical body, and I do. And that's my good life plan.

Desired Audience and Purpose

Clark identified whom he felt should be the audience for his critical narrative and how his personal story might help inform future policy:

Well, honestly, I think Republicans need to hear my story, because they want to

kick me out of this country. But I feel that, just like with ARC, how we make laws

pass and we accomplish several bills and props, we do it through going to that one

person that doesn't want to do it, and just showing them, "Look, you're a

Republican or you're this, and you don't want this law to pass. Why not?" "Well,

because . . ." "Well, let me tell you something. I've been there. I did this. I went

through this. But look at me. I'm trying to do this, this, and that. Do you still want

to pass that law?" You see, I get to show them—I could change perspectives.

And changing perspectives is a lot. As an immigrant, I feel that if I have five

Republicans right here, right now, and I tell them the same thing I told you, but

differently—more in depth, I could get them engaged. Because again, I value my

creativity and I know how to use it, too. And if I use it with them, through just

explaining my story like if it was a movie—but it's not, it's reality—they're going

to change. They're going to think differently. They're going to feel empathy for

me. They're going to feel empathy for the people that are like me. Empathy for

criminals, empathy for immigrants. And that's the perfect way to advocate for

something—sharing your story, your experiences. That's what everybody has

done. Martin Luther King, all of them—their voices—they use their voices to

make something happen, and it did happen. And that's the only way anybody

could make something happen—that and through actions. So I think my

experiences are essential for people to hear, because it makes them become

empathetic about things. They make decisions with empathy. And when it comes

to policy, in order to get something done, you got to do that—get them to understand your perspective.

Clark concluded our discussion with the importance of persuading people who are not pro-immigrant rights, placing heavy emphasis on the power of the word to become more empathetic to the needs of others.

Summary

The narratives presented here are complex, pointing to a number of major themes shared across the participants. These major themes will be identified and discussed in the next chapter, integrating the participants' experiences and perspectives, in conjunction with the literature, to explore those themes as they apply to the larger question of youth incarceration and recommendations and conclusions that emerge from these powerful narratives.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This study sought to discover through the perspectives of four formerly incarcerated young men, their experiences during childhood that led up to incarceration, their experiences during incarceration, and their experiences following incarceration. Through critical narrative inquiry, the voice of each participant provided a much more poignant and realistic critical account of the youth incarceration phenomenon than generally found in the traditional literature in juvenile justice studies. This chapter of the study provides an analysis of the narratives, discussed through an integrated examination of the data, literature, and major themes that emerged within the narratives.

Major Themes

Several major themes were discovered through a comparison of the perspectives of the four participants, in describing their experiences with the juvenile justice system. Each major theme will be discussed here in its relationship to the data and literature discussed earlier in this study. These major themes are integrated into the discussion of the findings, including recommendations, and conclusions.

Power of Mentoring

All four participants were convinced that mentors and role models could play a significant role in helping a formerly incarcerated person remain motivated and on the right track. JQ stated that to have just one mentor would not be enough—"different mentors and experiences" he stressed were important for motivation and "being exposed to different things." The participants' identification of mentors as a missing component in

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their lives reinforced the findings on the effectiveness of mentoring services on helping

youth contend with the many challenges they face. In contrast to the research that

overwhelmingly supported the availability of mentoring programs for at-risk youth, none

of this study's participants had any mentors growing up—a missing critical factor that

could have influenced the participants from many of the mistakes that got them into

serious trouble (e.g., drugs, alcohol, gangs, etc.) (Giguere, 2009; Grossman & Garry,

1997).

B stated that his friends saw him as a role model when he graduated high school

and enrolled in college. He explained how he wanted to inspire his friends to change,

because they had not yet been locked up and still had an opportunity to get out of the

gang and change their lives. B attributed his decision to become a role model, to simply

having the respect to do so for his friends. It was as if B became a mentor to his friends—

likely the result of being exposed to mentors himself through programs like CEE Hope

and ARC. B's influence on his friends' lifestyle changes is also illustrative of the

powerful effect that mentoring has on positive peer relationship skills (Grossman &

Garry, 1997). After seeing B make positive changes in his life, including going to school

and graduating, his friends decided to leave the gang and change their own lifestyles—a

decision on their part that later inspired B to also officially leave his gang. It seems that

the prosocial bonding that took place between B and his friends generated a cycle of

reciprocated motivation for one another. In other words, B inspired them; they inspired B.

This relationship between prosocial bonding and leaving one's gang is reflected in

the work of Hirschi (2002), in which he posited that youth engaged in prosocial activity

with prosocial others will be more likely to engage in prosocial behavior—an alternative

to some of the more deviant gang-related activity. Another more recent study on possible ways to help youth desist from gangs conducted an analysis of qualitative surveys given to 58 adolescent youth residing at a minimum-security probation camp. In a survey study on youths' recommendations for helping youth desist from gangs, Jill Sharkey, Skye Stifel, and Ashley Mayworm (2015) found that more than a quarter of the surveyed youth advocated for an increase in community-based support, including the availability of mentors.

David did not join any organizations or gain any new mentors or role models after he was released; nor did he speak of any specific prosocial groups. It was interesting to note that David did stress the importance of having someone to talk to who has been there and experienced similar challenges and struggles to his, stating, "If I could have actually talked to somebody who's been through what I've been through, and they're doing good now in life, I could learn from that person." This remark mirrors the narrative of Sako as described by Freado (2005), in which Sako had an enormous amount of credibility with the hundreds of youth he mentored through United Teen Equality Center. Although he did not note any mentors after being released, David did acknowledge that his role models existed for him at Dorothy Kirby Center—his last camp placement before he was released. He stated that his teachers played a significant role in preparing him with a new self-image and outlook on life, recalling how his English teacher used to remind her students, "You all are not bad kids. You just made bad decisions. It's all right." David credited his Kirby teachers with helping to inspire him to see himself differently. David stated in his narrative, "I felt like a brand new person . . . I felt like I was powerful in a sense, like I could do whatever I wanted." David's new self-image was in sharp contrast

to his self-image prior to and during his years of recidivating, in which he saw himself as the failure his mom had predicted him to be.

Clark emphasized how important it was to have a mentor while incarcerated, especially when he was facing adult charges, not knowing what his future would be, and dealing with the realities of living through the constant fear of being attacked by opposing gang members. For Clark, his mentor was Scott Budnick, founder of Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC), a youth advocate and volunteer for InsideOUT Writers (IOW). Scott would persistently offer positive reassurances that everything was going to be alright, and that people cared for Clark—something Clark was not used to hearing, but felt the need to hear, in order to stay motivated and keep the faith. This type of mentoring is consistent with the descriptions from the literature about the powerful impact the IOW program has on incarcerated youth (Cascio, 2012).

The participants also pointed out how the lack of mentors and roles models in their childhood led to poor self-images and disastrous decisions. Without being prompted, each participant reported never having had a mentor or positive role model during childhood—a missing factor that they felt may have changed their circumstances had it existed. For example, David felt that he had no one to go to after his baby brother died. He stated that he needed a positive role model as a child—someone to look up to and to "keep you in check." Some of his teachers tried, but once he got home, David said he had no one to talk to. He was free to roam the streets, becoming influenced by the wrong people, with a growing sense of anger and no one to help him address that anger.

Trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress

Research has shown that traumatized youth "who experience significant early life trauma often come from environments in which they are subjected to more stress and have fewer resources to help them develop than children who do not suffer early life trauma" (Ford et al., 2007, p. 2). In a study of trauma histories and mental health problems for adolescents with recent involvement with the juvenile justice system, Carly Dierkhising et al. (2012, p. 9) found that "justice-involved youth have strikingly high rates of trauma exposure," typically beginning early in life, across multiple contexts, and persisting over time. While there is much less treatment available for children than for adults suffering from trauma, Kimberly Bender (2010) found that 70 to 92% of delinquent youth report experiencing prior traumatic experiences.

Anger or aggression is not an unusual response for youth who have suffered traumatic conditions or are responding to post-traumatic stress (Damian, Knieling, & Ioan, 2011; Ford et al., 2007). All four participants in this study reported experiencing anger as children, with very few outlets or sources of support to help them cope with their anger. This anger often led to poor personal decisions and a lack of concern for the outcomes. Stemming from the grief of losing his baby brother, David remained angry from elementary all through middle school. With no one to whom he could go for help, David would express his anger in negative and aggressive ways at school. Unfortunately, as Bender's (2010) study has shown, little assistance was available at the school and, of those who were present, no one was successful in helping David; however, it is unclear how committed the school was in helping him contend with his anger-related issues and exploring the source. David had suffered what would be an incredible loss for any young

child to deal with—the loss of a younger sibling, certainly a traumatic experience for anyone to contend with. Not only had he lost his baby brother, but he also lost his mother in a sense, being that she remained away much of the time after losing her baby.

Based on these experiences, it is quite possible that David was suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD) at a very young age, due to the loss of his brother and perceived loss of his mother. However, Foy explained, the term "post-traumatic" may not be accurate for adolescents, as they generally are still suffering within the same contexts as when the trauma initially occurred (as quoted by Viadero, 1995). Thus, the term Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) would be a more accurate description of David's circumstance at a young age (Evans-Chase, 2014; Viadero, 1995). Either way, there can be serious symptoms experienced by youth as a result of exposure to traumatic events. According to Ford et al. (2007), "Youth exposed to traumatic events exhibit a wide range of symptoms, presenting with not just internalizing problems, such as depression or anxiety, but also externalizing problems like aggression, conduct problems, and oppositional or defiant behavior" (p. 1). As David explained in his narrative, he exhibited some of these external symptoms, such as aggression and conduct problems. When prompted with the question of who was there for him, David gave credit to his elementary school teachers whom he said tried to help him by doing "the best job they could." The problem is that he still felt that original anger and still exhibited the same aggressive and negative behaviors throughout the rest of elementary and all of middle school.

At some point, there should have been some serious intervention and a system of support for David, starting at school. Ford et al. (2007) explained that traumatized youth

generally experience so much anxiety, anger, and/or confusion, that they are too overwhelmed to rely upon their personal values and sense of right and wrong to contend with circumstances of danger. Thus, David's anger was so great that he could not be successful in school without effective help from someone else. The teachers may have very well done all they could; however, the school is responsible for educating "the whole child," including the socioemotional part of a child.

At home, David had no support, and his mother may have also been experiencing depression due to her loss, leaving her unable to properly care for and support David with his emotional needs. Hence, the family, as a whole, was in need of support services. David's anger issues should have been recognized and addressed by a more comprehensive effort on the part of the school, and even the school district, which would have recognized the family's need for overall support. However, it would not be rare to find that school personnel may not have been educated on the prevalence of PTSD among their student populations nor adequately staffed to intervene, thereby leaving them thoroughly unprepared to help students with similar situations as David's. Unfortunately, this seems to be an often-repeated scenario for youth who become mired in the juvenile justice system (Bender 2010).

Moreover, Cocozza and Skowyra (2000) found that as much as 20% of incarcerated youth suffer from serious mental health issues—a problem that likely begins prior to incarceration—opening up the question as to the types and availability of school-based and community-based interventions. In a one-year follow-up to their study on a family-oriented intervention approach, Dembo et al. (2000) noted that a significantly lower recidivism rate was achieved for youth who had participated in family-oriented

intervention, as compared to a control group that had not participated in such intervention. If family-oriented intervention could be effective with incarcerated youth, then what is there to prevent schools and communities from using a family-oriented approach for nonincarcerated youth exhibiting serious mental health symptoms? Would David have avoided incarceration altogether, if he and his family had access to quality resources in the community where they lived and attended school?

Given the lack of intervention services for children experiencing trauma, it is conceivable that there were many other youth in David's school community who also experienced undetected childhood traumas, yet had very few, if any, resources available to help them cope with their distress (Bender, 2010). Being that David grew up in a poor working class and predominantly African American and Latino community, it is logical then to attribute untreated cases of early childhood PTSD among youth of color as a possible contributing factor to the phenomenon of their mass incarceration. Moreover, the absence of school support contributes directly to the perpetuation of the school-to-prison pipeline.

Andrew Davis, Theresa Kruczek, and David McIntosh (2006) argued that a school-based treatment for disorders, such as PTSD, anxiety, and depression is logical, given that the school context functions as a major ecological system within a child's life. Furthermore, failure to address a child's emotional difficulties could lead to a decrease in personal and educational achievement. As part of a collaborative effort between school personnel and community resources, Theresa Kruczek and Jill Salsman (2006) explained that school personnel could function as monitors, effectively identifying potential students with trauma-related stress disorders, while the school mental health provider

serves as the liaison between the school and community-based mental health service providers.

As an undocumented immigrant, Clark described how the effects of neglect and mistreatment by his teachers in elementary and middle school caused him to remain angry and hateful towards his teachers throughout all of those years. Lisa Patel (2013) described the difficulties of immigrant youth experience in constantly negotiating the implicit and explicit rules of inclusion and exclusion that exist within US society. As an undocumented, non-English-speaking first grader, Clark could not be expected to acknowledge and navigate the boundaries of inclusion versus exclusion in the classroom. As a result of several more years of being ignored by the teachers, labeled a troublemaker by the school, and feeling more and more like an outsider, Clark inevitably also fell victim to the school-to-prison pipeline phenomenon as an adolescent full of anger and loneliness, but without the resources or support to help him cope with what he was undergoing. It was as though he were being deliberately pushed into the pipeline from the first day of school.

JQ's anger stemmed mainly from incarceration, due to the effects of being locked up alone in a room (72-hr lockup), dealing with other youth with anger issues, staff with anger issues, and the pressures of acting tougher than everyone else to avoid being targeted by bullies. JQ singled out the postrelease supervision by probation as one of the biggest reasons for his anger, in that his probation officer would look for reasons to violate his dignity, but would not offer any support in assisting JQ in becoming resilient. The issue of ineffective aftercare services will be discussed further as a separate theme.

Anger associated with isolation of youth upon incarceration appears to be a common experience. Yet, there seems to be "no easy answer to the question of why the practice of isolating young inmates persists despite extensive evidence of its harm (Birckhead, 2015). In this study, for example, all four participants experienced anger upon their first time being incarcerated at the juvenile hall, where they were systematically isolated into their own locked rooms—an anger that they all stated did not go away for a very long time. David did have access to mental health support, anger management, and family services; however, most of the time neither he nor his mother would want to participate in family services. B did not describe a childhood full of anger, but rather a building up of anger during his incarceration. He stated that the juvenile halls were a source of anger, due to being locked inside a room by oneself. B seemed to be more aware of his anger and therefore tried to hang around other more mellow youth, so that he would avoid having to fight.

Violence

According to the 1974 Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA), states are required to provide certain protections to incarcerated youth from physical harm, including from harming one another (Levitt, 2010); however, the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2011) found, similar to this study, that incarcerated youth remained at-risk of being exposed to violence—prior, during, and, often, after incarceration. True to the findings above, three of the participants were affected in some way by violence, beginning at a young age and were involved in physical assaults while incarcerated.

JQ witnessed a lot of violence in his neighborhood and in his home, including seeing his alcoholic father beat his mother on numerous occasions, until his father was

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incarcerated when JQ was 10 years old. Again, the occurrence of ACE is seen here, in the constant exposure to community violence, as well as the violence inflicted on his mother by his father—one of the highlighted forms of ACE that result in serious symptoms in a child (Evans-Chase, 2014). As a result of his mother picking up an extra job that kept her away from the home, JQ began staying out later and going out more often, leading to an increased exposure to violence in the community. Violence was prevalent in JQ's life prior to incarceration, but even more so during incarceration. Once incarcerated, JQ felt the pressure to fight, in order to gain respect from others and not be labeled as weak. The more JQ would fight, the more gang-involved he became, which just led to more fighting and more violence. Although he didn't report ever being seriously injured in a fight, the potential was still there—not only for him to get injured, but also for his opponents.

B's exposure to violence began in elementary school in the fifth grade, when kids started bullying others and a lot of fights were occurring on a regular basis. However, he did not experience any violence directly until middle school, when he began to bully kids, just as he had witnessed others do in elementary school. There were never any serious attempts made by the schools to intervene in the lives of the kids who were committing acts of violence. Rather, they were just moved around from school to school, which was the case for B, as he was kicked out of one after another. This failure (or refusal) on the school's part to be more equitable in its interventions with students whom they deemed problems only further demonizes those students and reinforces the negative self-images already assigned to them. Sharkey et al. (2015) found in their study that 10% of the youth surveyed recommended that schools begin to treat everyone the same, including youths

involved in deviant behavior—an approach that shows that they will never give up on any of their students.

For Clark, much of his exposure to violence was linked at an early age to gang activity in his neighborhood and his later decision to join the local gang. Violence became almost a daily part of his life during most of his incarcerated time—eventually causing Clark to become somewhat desensitized to the violence—expecting everyday to wake up and fight more of his so-called enemies.

Gangs

The question of gangs inside and outside of juvenile detention is a constant concern in the lives of incarcerated youth (Dowd, 2011). A report from a recent investigation of the Walnut Grove Youth correctional Facility by the United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division (2012) noted that the facility personnel were not only indifferent to gang affiliations, but also failed to take reasonable steps to protect youth from assault from other youth. Moreover, physical assaults among incarcerated youths has increased significantly, with the rate of confirmed youth-on-youth physical assaults at state secure facilities increasing from 17 assaults per 100 in 2007 to 54 assaults per 100 youths five years later (Grissom & Aaronson, 2012). These findings were unfortunately echoed in the finding of this study where gangs played a major role in the lives of three of the four participants—each actually becoming an active gang member. These decisions led to committing crimes for which they were arrested and incarcerated.

In a report on juvenile reentry in Los Angeles County, Michelle Newell and Angelica Salazar (2010) explained that, primarily between the ages 14 to 17, teens are

more susceptible to peer and gang influence, essentially seeking the acceptance, yet fearing the rejection of peer groups—including gangs. The desire for such approval and attention from peers was illustrated through the experiences of B in his attempts to take on the image of a *god* in the eyes of his peers—leading to an increase in fighting and gang-related activity, and ultimately to his incarceration. Denied any opportunity in school to change his image to a positive one, B was determined to hold onto his negative self-image as a troublemaker and "bad-ass," hoping to maintain respect from his peers, illustrative of the power of labels—which will be discussed later in this chapter (Kramer, 2015).

JQ grew up exposed to gangs as far back as he could remember, including friends and family who were highly involved in gang activity. Thus, JQ likely imagined himself inevitably following the same footsteps as those around and before him, taking on a self-image as a gangster—a stigma amplified by media outlets that portray poor working class youth of color as destined to becoming gang members. Of course, the act of becoming one's stigma appears counterproductive; however, as Alexander (2012, p. 171) has argued, "severely stigmatized groups" of people will embrace their "stigmatized identity" as a coping strategy and as "the only apparent route to self-esteem" in a hegemonic culture that uses stigma to distort the self-images of poor working class youth of color.

Alexander (2012) further argued, "The problem . . . is that embracing criminality—while a natural response to the stigma—is inherently self-defeating and destructive" (p. 171). As learned from this study's powerful narratives, each participant in this study proceeded at some point during his adolescence to embrace his negative self-image and begin to act out the expectations assigned to that self-image—sell drugs,

gangbang, commit robberies, and so forth—eventually landing him in jail. Once incarcerated, these participants each experienced violence that was magnified by the fact that they now had to fight rival gang members. Clark's story seems to illustrate most powerfully this dynamic.

Clark grew up exposed to constant drug and gang activity in his neighborhood, but did not participate in any violent activity until middle school—the time he and his friends started their own "little crew" in an attempt to gain respect from others by fighting, with the intentions of becoming "the cool crowd." After fighting other gangs and crews throughout middle school, Clark joined his neighborhood gang, 18th Street. Three months after joining that gang, Clark was arrested and incarcerated. From that point forward, Clark's direct exposure to violence increased dramatically, becoming involved in multiple fights almost on a daily basis, due to the enormous number of "enemies" that the 18th Street Gang has in the juvenile justice system and throughout the community.

Thus, for about six years, violence was a normal part of Clark's everyday life, even while incarcerated. During his first sentence in the probation camp, Clark's sentencing time was extended from nine months to 18 months due to his being involved in too many fights. Ironically, these fights were sometimes arranged by probation staff, who set Clark up to fight his opponents in a closet as part of what they nicknamed "training." Clearly, the involvement of probation staff in the arranging of fights between minors would have been a clear violation of JJDPA (Levitt, 2010). Again, it is likely that Clark, having been exposed to so much violence in his life, could very well have experienced traumatic symptoms associated with PTSD—a condition that would have

played a significant role in the ways he approached problems. Evans-Chase (2014) found that almost 93% of youth entering the juvenile justice system have experienced at least one adverse childhood experience (ACE) prior to their detainment. It is well documented now that one of the effects of overexposure to ACEs is the perpetration of violence and aggression toward others (Adams, 2010; Evans-Chase, 2014). Thus, it is likely that Clark ended up getting stuck in a cycle of violence as an ACE and the resulting perpetration of physical violence within the context of frequent gang-related fights—a cycle that traps so many incarcerated youth, leaving them with less chance of successful rehabilitation. This is an illustration of the phenomenon described by Erica Adams (2010), whereby children who have been exposed to violence often become repeat victims of violence, or perpetrators of violent acts themselves.

JQ characterized the juvenile halls as heavily "gang entrenched," making it very difficult to experience any positive change, and most likely leading to a deeper, longer involvement in the system, described by Nancy Dowd (2011) as a common phenomenon for many incarcerated youth. Dowd found that many youth just become more "enmeshed in the system, leading to deeper problems . . . and even the adult criminal justice system" (p. 2). Despite the frequent gang activity and fights, JQ did recall how there were opportunities to engage in healthier activities, such as reading. However, JQ explained, "The gang culture and the incarceration culture is so much that you'll get distracted," causing one to forget about healthier activities. Feeling the effects from being stigmatized as a gang member, a drug dealer, a bad person, JQ realized how hard it was to break away from those poor self images, and how easy it was for others with similar

experiences to return to the same self-defeating behaviors that resulted in their incarceration in the first place (Kramer, 2015).

Drugs and Alcohol

In a comparative survey of drug conviction rates versus drug use for White youth versus Black youth, Holman and Ziedenberg (2006) found that the drug conviction rate for Black males was triple that of White males, although White males self-reported drug use at seven times the rate of Black males. This is illustrative of the problems inherent to the so-called "War on Drugs," described by Swain and Noblit (2011) as being "almost solely responsible for raising the rates of imprisonment for black males to an astonishing one of every nine" (p. 469). Thus, it is not hard to see the trap that youth of color may find themselves when making poor choices typical of most adolescents, including White youth, but much more detrimental to the lives of these four young men of color.

All four participants in this study grew up exposed to drug activity—an exposure that had a profound effect on the types of legal trouble they got into. JQ stated that his friends in high school were selling drugs as soon as he started high school, but he had already been exposed to drug activity as a young child in his own neighborhood. B was not exposed to drug activity in his home or neighborhood; however, once he started going out while his parents worked, and hanging with his friends, B stated that he started experimenting with drugs. As for David, he used to observe his stepdad sorting out marijuana for selling. Thus, he began to take his stepdad's marijuana and sell it at school.

Clark grew up around drug activity as far back as he could remember, with his uncles being heavily involved—something he saw as necessary for survival as undocumented immigrants trying to make a living. Clark began using drugs when he was

13 years old inside an abandoned house that he and his middle school friends would ditch to. Clark stated that he began "doing a lot of drugs" in the abandoned house. Eventually, Clark started selling drugs—continuing to use and sell drugs later, even after serving 18 months in juvenile probation camp. For B and Clark, alcohol also played a significant role in the types of decisions they would make, due to alcohol-impaired judgment. Both participants stated that they had committed some crimes while under the influence of alcohol—something they both attributed to some of the mistakes they had made that got them in serious legal trouble.

Although the participants interpreted their drug and alcohol use as a consequence of their earlier exposure to drugs and alcohol in their homes, Felitti (2004) found that exposure to ACEs can lead to increased risk of drug and alcohol use. Thus, the combinations of ACEs reported by the participants increased the likelihood of high-risk behaviors, including drug and alcohol use. However, Clark had reported using meth to numb the pain he expected to experience when he was sent to court and placed into a room with other inmates from rival gangs, whom Clark felt obligated to fight. Although it is possible that Clark had an addiction that could not be easily controlled, he also had a fear of impending violence and pain on an almost daily basis—a pain with which he decided to cope by using drugs. Here again, we see a devastating cycle of various ACEs and high-risk behaviors trapping a young individual.

Probation Aftercare

The California Juvenile Justice Reentry Project (2007) has advocated for aftercare services that provide support in school enrollment, health care access, and job skills development. Reflecting this type of philosophy regarding aftercare, JQ believed that the

use of social workers, as opposed to probation officers, would better aid formerly incarcerated youth during their difficult phase of transition back to the community, after being locked up for so long. All four participants, however, reported receiving very little, if any, support from probation after they were released.

When B was released from probation camp, he had his family there to support him while he proceeded to enroll in school and live a healthier lifestyle. Also, his family had visited him regularly during his incarceration—something B attributed to his motivation to get out and graduate high school. With this motivation, B did not have to rely on or worry about the aftercare probation officer as much as the other participants.

Two participants, for example, experienced major frustrations after being released—with probation aggressively trying to violate them for failing to do things that the participants desperately needed help with, such as enrolling in school, or just trying to readjust to life outside of the correctional facilities. Again, as David and JQ noted, they were already angry upon their release—the same anger from when they were first locked up all alone in the juvenile hall. It is easy to understand then, why David and JQ identified probation's aggressive practices of violating probationees after release as a key contributor to the school-to-prison pipeline.

These criticisms of probation's aftercare practices—supportive services provided upon an adolescent's release from a secure facility back to the community—seem to contradict the types of support advocated by California Juvenile Justice Reentry Project (2007) and other literature on the topic (Griller Clark & Unruh, 2010; Griller Clark et al., 2011), which identify transition planning and the coordination of aftercare services as

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some of the most important forms of support, if formerly incarcerated youth are to become resilient.

Support Groups

Chapter 2 discussed literature on therapeutic approaches versus recidivism rates, identifying multisystemic therapy (MST) as a viable option for treating incarcerated youth within the various systems to which they belong—family, peer, and school groups (Borduin & Schaeffer, 2005). MST has been shown, through a long-term study, to decrease recidivism rates by 31% as compared to individualized therapy (Borduin & Schaeffer, 2005). As a therapeutic approach that resembles the types of support groups recommended by this study's participants, MST shows the benefit to the individual, by from having him participate in focused dialogue within his own social systems.

Upon release from juvenile probation camp or other correctional facilities, all four participants acknowledged that some sort of support group is necessary to remain motivated. Both JQ and B relied on the support of New Roads for New Visions re-entry program during their transitional phase between probation camp and home, up to the present day. JQ got hired through New Roads following his release and continued to work for them at the time of this study. JQ, B, and Clark relied on support from another nonprofit organization that helps incarcerated and formerly incarcerated youth and adults—Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC).

ARC is comprised of a membership base of formerly incarcerated individuals who function as a support group for one another. Through direction of a dedicated staff, they hold monthly member support meetings, help their members connect with important resources for jobs, school, and housing, and plan events designed to encourage dialogue

and action with the purpose of reducing incarceration and recidivism. Thus, Clark was able to connect with others who had similar circumstances as his; because, as he explained, "A support system is not just a support system—it's caring, it's acknowledgement, positive voices in your head."

The continuous process of group support and encouragement reflects Travis Hirschi's (2002) social control theory, in which he posited that prosocial bonding influences members of the group to develop a greater sense of respect and affection for others, leading to more positive choices. However, one is not limited to just one prosocial group; B actually belonged to multiple prosocial groups, which included the high school community, his family and girlfriend, his coworkers, and organizations comprised of members with similar experiences, such as CEE Hope and Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC). Based on the examples from B's narrative, it appeared better to belong to more than one prosocial group, echoing JQ's perspective about how it is more beneficial to have multiple mentors with different experiences. However, it is unclear whether the greater impact on B's lifestyle was derived from the greater number of prosocial groups, or rather the total amount of time spent on positive activities and endeavors. Either way, there appears to be a strong benefit to belonging to and spending time within prosocial groups, especially for formerly incarcerated young people.

David had not joined any organizations or formal support groups, but he acknowledged the support he felt from his previous teachers prior to and following his release. David stated that he probably would not have believed in himself, had his former teachers as well as some helpful probation staff not supported him. After being labeled so negatively throughout their childhood years, each participant developed a more positive

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self-image of himself, partially due to the positive support and encouragement they had received from others.

Isolation and Loneliness

In the actual or perceived absence of a support group, another issue raised by Clark, is the occurrence of loneliness for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals. There, unfortunately, appears to be a dearth of literature on this matter. Nevertheless, Kao et al. (2014) studied the possible association between past trauma and loneliness and found that certain types of interpersonal trauma (sexual abuse, crime-related abuse, etc.) "are associated with lower levels of perceived support and higher levels of loneliness in prisoners" (p. 8). Kao et al. (2014) explained that this loneliness may continue and should be addressed during the period of "post-release community re-entry" (p. 1).

In their work, Louise Hawkley and John Cacioppo (2010, p. 10) explained that humans, as "meaning-making creatures," might perceive relationships where none really exist (e.g., performer and audience). However, as Hawkley and Cacioppo (2010) continued to explain, humans may also "perceive social isolation when social opportunities and relationships do exist but we lack the capacity to harness the power of social connectedness in everyday life" (p. 10). To understand the devastating effects of loneliness resulting from the isolation experienced by the participants, Hawkley and Cacioppo asserted that "chronic perceived isolation (i.e., loneliness) is characterized by impairments in attention, cognition, affect, and behavior" (p. 10). As a social species, it is against human nature to be isolated from other humans—thus, it is inhumane what the participants experienced through their incarceration-based isolation and perceived

isolation—an isolation exacerbated by the labels with which they were so often burdened (Kramer, 2015).

Effects of Labeling

Alexander (2012) has argued that incarcerated and formerly incarcerated youth and adults should not be permanently labeled as criminals and cast into a permanent subordinate class. In her participatory action research study with incarcerated youth in Cape Town and New Orleans, Marshall (2012) found that formerly incarcerated youth in Cape Town, who had participated in community-based projects as change agents, still carried the stigma of being labeled as troublemakers and therefore became reluctant to continue to work as agents of change in their own communities. What this shows is that the stigmatizing effects of labeling are debilitating to formerly incarcerated youth, just as they were to the participants here leading up to their initial incarcerations.

In a critical narrative study on the harmful effects of labeling, Kara Allen (2014) discussed how labeling a student as *at-risk* places the blame on the labeled student, while overlooking the deficiencies of the school system. Allen found that, as a result of being labeled *at-risk,* the participants in the study all had seen themselves as deficient and as lacking what was necessary to be successful—all experiencing the brutal effects that labeling has upon young children. At some point in their childhood, each participant was negatively labeled and treated differently than others who did not carry the stigma of being viewed as a "problem"—a stigma that is still felt, even as adults.

The phenomenon Allen (2014) identified was also noted in this study. For example, JQ stated that he is tired of being labeled as a former juvenile offender—a stigma that he felt would never go away. Although he was referring to the support group

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setting in which members of the group participated because of their history of incarceration, and not there because of any wrongdoing, he still had a strong desire to be perceived and treated as if he had never been incarcerated. Although the support groups advocate equal rights and treatment for formerly incarcerated people, JQ's concern of being labeled "different" from the rest of society rings as valid and registers as a key concern expressed by all participants in this study.

Labeling at school. In her study of the long-term effects of labeling on students, Jacqueline Ercole (2009) found that negative labels assigned to students during middle school could last well beyond middle school and even beyond high school. A negative label has the potential to cause a student to begin to see himself as that label, eventually becoming as unproductive as they were expected to become—totally disengaging from school. Ercole (2009) also noted that the more a student disengages from the schooling process, "the more isolated and helpless they become" (p. 24).

Schools routinely stereotyped and identified students who were not adapting to classroom expectations and categorized them as "at-risk" or "problem students." (Allen, 2014). Once classified, they had a separate school experience than their peers who were not labeled as problems. True to the concerns expressed by the literature on this issue, the academic track for the participants was limited to re-addressing their behavioral problems and trying to convince them that they were going down a self-destructive pathway. Meanwhile, their peers were still expected to graduate from high school and attend college.

JQ explained that he did not see himself as a "bad student," but rather as someone who still had not learned "how to learn." JQ acknowledged that he had a difficult time

focusing in school and was sometimes disruptive, yet no school staff ever spent any time or energy teaching him "how to learn"—something that he felt he needed but never received. Instead, he would constantly get kicked out of class, which ultimately led to an avoidance of school, altogether. B was labeled a "troublemaker" as soon as he entered high school, because the middle school had already advised the high school of B's behavior. Therefore, the high school was already viewing him as a problem, which made it an easy choice for B to re-join the "old fellas," who were now involved in gang activity.

Clark did not recall a specific label; however, he felt he was constantly treated as though he were a problem, when in actuality, he could not read or understand much of what was spoken by the teacher and peers. He could not speak English when he started in first grade and did not learn how to read until eighth grade. Therefore, he felt the stigma of being the non-English-speaking undocumented immigrant, a feeling that caused him to shut down and not speak up for himself at all.

There do exist opportunities for educators to counter the devastating labels that their students bring with them to school. For example, the ability for David to transform his self-image when he was released resulted from the critical dialogue, learning, and reflection that occurred between David and his teachers at his last placement. David's new sense of empowerment seems to reflect the outcome of what Darder (2012) has referred to as a critical bicultural approach to critical dialogue, which creates "the conditions for students of color to find their voice through opportunities to reflect, critique, and act upon their world to transform it" (p. 102).

Labeling at home. Labeling at home also impacts youth, as it does in other contexts of their lives, often leading to what appears to be a self-fulfilling prophecy (Baras, 2011). At home, David was constantly labeled by his own mother, who told him that he would grow up to be just like his father, who was incarcerated for attempted murder when David was still a baby. Combined with the unaddressed anger from the loss of his baby brother, David's self-image began to grow closer to the label assigned to him by his own mother. Each time David was arrested or stopped by the police, his mother's prediction seemed to become closer to a reality, until one day David found himself sitting in juvenile hall, thinking to himself, "Damn, I'm in jail . . . This is going to be the rest of my life."

Although this study did not consider the relationship between labeling and youth incarceration, labeling theory (Kramer, 2015) does present a reasonable explanation for the self-image that David developed as an adolescent boy hearing his mother predict his failures, as well as the poor self-images that the other three participants adopted—JQ as a "bad kid," B as a "bad-ass," and Clark as an "outcast." This is not to say that the blame should be placed on David's mother, or the family members of any of the subjects, for that matter. After all, David's relationship with his mother was not the only social factor in his life; David's social system included family, neighborhood, school, and peer groups (Borduin & Schaeffer, 2005).

The stigma that David carried was reinforced by other stigmas acquired each time he got into trouble at school, or was confronted by law enforcement, or accepted by peers when he was doing wrong—all factors playing roles in reinforcing the label with which he was stigmatized. Reflecting Alex Kramer's (2015) application of labeling theory, once

David became labeled by his mother and others then everyone with whom he came into contact began to treat him differently than other classmates, other family members, or other children in the community. For all four participants, the various stigmas they carried, compounded by the ways in which they were treated, had powerful effects on their behaviors and outcomes, including the self-realization of those labels as shown through their decisions and actions (Kramer, 2015).

Educational Discrepancies

The issue of *unequal education* was present throughout each participant's descriptions of the challenges they faced at school at very young ages, illustrating how schools regularly categorize and treat students of color in ways that may limit their academic potential for short-term and long-term success (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Darder, 2012; Dowd, 2011). Theresa Glennon (2011) has described a dangerous cycle of mutual feelings of "failure, frustration, and disappointment" between the student and the teacher (or administrator), resulting in blame being placed solely on the student and negative labels being assigned to the struggling student—"incapable, uncooperative, delinquent, dangerous" (p. 120). Once labeled, a student can forget about seeking motivation from the school, because there will be none for that student (Glennon, 2011).

For example, B recalled that in middle school, there was a complete lack of motivation for him to do well at school, with very low, if any, expectations from the school faculty and staff—in sharp contrast to elementary school. Therefore, not only did the middle schools fail to intervene, but they also reduced his potential to achieve, essentially contributing to the reproduction of social capital deficits in his community through the marginalization of poor students of color with high-stakes testing, exclusion

from school activities, and the subjugation to a perceived underclass of so-called "at-risk" students (Allen, 2014; Darder, 2012; Giroux, 2004).

All participants noted the absence of college and career awareness programs for *all* students in elementary and middle school. As discussed in Chapter 2, the State of Oregon requires all students to complete a career development project in order to graduate from high school (Moody et al., 2008). Moody et al. (2008) found in her study of the Oregon requirements that youth (including incarcerated youth) responded favorably to the state graduation requirement. Visher (2004) found that other types of career exploration programs had positive effects for youth as well, showing that "students in internships and mentoring programs had the lowest dropout rates" (p. 138).

According to the participants of this study, while some students were included in such activities or programs, the participants remembered not belonging to groups, such as the honor students. Therefore, none of the participants was ever educated about college opportunities prior to becoming incarcerated. It is disheartening that these opportunities were only offered to them while they were incarcerated in the probation camps, and not when they were in elementary, middle, or high school. B even went on a field trip to Pepperdine University during his incarceration at Camp Gonzalez, something he never had the opportunity to experience in elementary, middle, or high school prior to incarceration.

Knowing that college awareness opportunities were presented during their probation camp incarceration speaks highly of efforts to provide them with beneficial transition-related services. However, as Bilchik (2011) argued, while transition does need to start during incarceration, the battle to improve the prospects of all youth must begin

during early childhood. In other words, interventions must begin during early childhood to ensure that youth never become candidates for the juvenile justice system.

In concert with literature that questions "Scared Straight" tactics as behavioral deterrent (Lilienfeld, 2005), participants in this study seemed to confirm that positive interventions worked better than negative ones. In response to a lot of trouble that JQ was getting into, his middle school counselors formed a special behavioral intervention type of class to which they would bring just the "bad kids" together to learn about improving their behavior. Scott Lilienfeld (2005) has argued that such tactics could be detrimental by actually increasing the levels of antisocial behaviors in a process known as "deviancy training"—in which "youth acquire antisocial behaviors through observations of, and interactions with, troubled peers" (p. 763). So, the counselors at JQ's school, by bringing the "bad kids" together to learn about improving behaviors, were actually just training the youth to continue their antisocial behaviors.

As a Scared Straight–type of tactic, the counselors took the group on a field trip to juvenile hall, warning them that they were headed in that direction if they did not change. When recounting the experience, JQ stated that he had laughed when he was first incarcerated, because he ended up in the same room he had visited during the field trip, saying to himself that the counselor was correct. Rather than a deterrent, all the field trip did was essentially help JQ visualize himself as an inmate. Hence, based on JQ's experience and the absence of positive interventions, Scared Straight tactics may very well be a waste of time with youth like JQ. Students need expectations and motivation from school, not predictions and warnings of doomed futures through useless Scared Straight tactics that have been shown through research to be ineffective (Lilienfeld,

2005). Looking back, JQ felt that if he were given the same opportunities as all students to learn about college and career opportunities, he probably would have never gotten into so much trouble. This sentiment was repeatedly echoed among the other participants, as well.

While at a probation camp, JQ began reading more engaging books, such as The *Autobiography of Malcolm X*, and realized that the teachers were not engaging the students with relevant or rigorous assignments. Instead, they were teaching them very basic academic skills, and giving them crossword puzzles followed by bags of chips for rewards. This was very offensive to JQ, who felt like his people were systematically being mentally killed. Most of JQ's rigorous academics were being provided by teachers from the New Roads afterschool program, whom he credited with assigning Malcolm X for the group to read and discuss—something JQ says awakened his mind. Because of that reading experience with New Roads, JQ began to read independently, which he explained he would not have done otherwise. This phenomenon is in sync with Darder's (2012) notion that when the educational process affirms the histories and cultures of working class students, they begin to experience an awakened sense of their bicultural voices, social agency, and self-determination.

Absence of Father Figures

Three of the four participants identified the lack of a male role model as a major contributor to their pathway to incarceration. JQ's father was incarcerated when he was 10 years old. David's was incarcerated when he was a baby. And Clark simply stated that he had no father. Deborah Cobb-Clark and Erdal Tekin (2011) found that adolescent boys who have a father figure in their lives are significantly less likely to engage in delinquent

behavior than adolescent boys without a father figure in their lives. Cobb-Clark and

Tekin (2011) also found that fathers are associated with a reduction on violent behavior

among adolescent boys. Based on the results of their study, Cobb-Clark and Tekin (2011)

distinguished between the effects of the types of relationships the fathers had with their

sons, notably that just the mere presence of the father protected against delinquent

behavior more than the father's level of involvement or financial contribution to the

household. Cobb-Clark and Tekin (2011) suggested that, although a father may not spend

much time talking to or doing things with his children, he still has a "protective effect in

reducing the chances their children will engage in delinquent behavior" (p. 28). What

they concluded is that "the sense of security generated by the presence of the male role

model in a child's life has protective effects for the child irrespective of the degree of

interaction between the child and the father" (p. 28).

The three participants of this study who grew up without their fathers attributed

the poor decisions they made to the absences of their fathers; however, it still is not clear

as to whether the major issue was the actual absence of a father figure, or rather the self-

perceptions these young men had as being "fatherless." Unfortunately, the study

conducted by Cobb-Clark and Tekin (2011) did not address the reasons for the adolescent

boys' delinquent behaviors—only that there was an association between the two variables

of absence of father and subsequent delinquent behavior. The hegemonic dominant

culture that dictates how we define the healthy family acts through media and education

to condition us to believe that a father figure is essential for boys to grow up and lead

healthy lives (Darder, 2012). This, for example, is disturbingly reflected, historically, in

public policy conclusions such as those found in the 1965 government report on *The*

Negro Family: The Case for National Action (Moynihan, 1965), which attributed the absence of fathers and the predominance of single mothers in the Black family to "an entanglement of pathology." Such victim-blaming racialized notions as those formulated by the Moynihan report persist today (Darder, 2012). Therefore, it is possible that the participants all saw themselves and their own families as faulty or problematic due to what they had absorbed from commonsensical mainstream messages, which only served to reinforce poor self-images and a deep sense of innate, familial, or cultural deficiency.

Whether it is the absence of fathers or the self-perceived devalued status of being fatherless, there definitely appears to be an increased risk for engaging in delinquent behavior when the father is not present at all (Cobb-Clark & Tekin, 2011). What is troubling, then, is that many poor youth of color get trapped within a self-perpetuating cycle of pathology. In this repetitive cycle, mass numbers of fathers of color get incarcerated, which results in fatherless households. In turn, because of either the increased insecurity or the perceived self-worthlessness, the affected children become entrapped in a self-fulfilling prophecy of self-doom and self-destruction, involving violent behavior, drug and alcohol abuse, risky sexual behavior, withdrawal from school and from other healthy activities, and a general self-defeatist attitude—all in the name of living up (or down) to one's assigned label (Kramer, 2015). To complete the cycle of doom, the youth get arrested, detained in juvenile hall, and incarcerated in a long-term correctional facility—which research shows often leads to further recidivism (Holman & Ziedenberg, 2006).

While many young men become fathers, unfortunately, the ones trapped in this cycle of recidivism only end up perpetuating the cycle of the fatherless home, its

potential impact on the psyche and life choices of the incarcerated father's adolescent children, and their ultimate fate of repeating the cycle themselves. This cycle is even more notably pronounced in the fates of millions of Black men who become incarcerated, thereby reproducing social situations in which more Black children are without their fathers—a strong example of social reproduction theory (Giroux, 2004). As Alexander (2012) stated in *The New Jim Crow*, "The mass incarceration of people of color is a big part of the reason that a Black child born today is less likely to be raised by both parents than a Black child born during slavery" (p. 180).

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This last chapter of the study provides a critical discussion of the power of youth voice to gain insight into the complex phenomenon of mass incarceration of youth, as well as recommendations for policy and practice related to halting the school-to-prison pipeline, based on the perspectives and experiences of these young men. Generated from the participants, these recommendations will be described in a way that closely reflects the intentions of the participants, but is also supported by and compared to existing studies.

Youth Voices on the Juvenile Justice System

What is most apparent in the literature on the juvenile justice system is the absence of youth voices in making sense of their experience and the phenomenon in which they have been immersed. It is precisely this gap that the study has sought to redress; hence, speaking to this question is key to the findings. The young men in this study spoke eloquently about the conditions they have faced, based on their own lived experiences with the juvenile and criminal justice systems. Each one spoke of the need for change—some desired changes were common, while others were unique to the situation. However, each one spoke of clear, logical, and meaningful reasons for change. Goodson and Gill (2014) emphasized the emancipatory effects of critical narratives on individuals as a transformative pedagogy—one that realizes the critical aspect of education by engaging critical reflection, demystifying the "politicalized societal narrative intended to sustain a power imbalance" (p. 65), encouraging individuals to "reconstruct their own vision of good life" (p. 65), supporting individuals to realize their

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true selves within the contexts of time and space, and making it "possible for individuals to de-associate themselves from a discourse or vision of life that is being imposed on them" (p. 66)—ultimately leading to the reintegration of their own realized values in their lives.

Thus, through the telling and reliving of one's life journeys, a new sense of self is awakened—one that sees self and the world in a new more realistic, untainted view. The critical narratives in this study not only accompanied the participants as they relived their personal experiences, but also gave them the opportunities to truly understand their own being and redefine their purposes and their possibilities. By doing this, the participants became experts into their own phenomena of youth incarceration and resiliency; they imagined and endorsed logical recommendations for positive change; and they began their quests to becoming fully human (Darder, 2012; Freire, 1970; Goodson & Gill, 2014).

The biggest needed change that the participants identified was related to aftercare probation officers, whom they believed needed to function in a more resourceful way, reaching out through the aftercare program to actually help youth who have been released. JQ addressed this need by proposing that the probation department train its aftercare probation officers to function more as social workers than law enforcement agents. This means they would at least provide and/or support all the things that the California Juvenile Justice Reentry Project (2007) has identified as important aftercare services: school enrollment, health care access, and job skills development.

David also addressed the need for aftercare probation officers to deal directly with the probationee and not the parent during meetings, especially when the parent and

probationee do not get along. Situations like this would require the aftercare probation officer to have some training and experience in deciphering whether the parent is speaking out of concern for their child or out of anger stemming from past arguments with their child. David stated that most of the time, he and his mother would get into an argument shortly before probation meetings, at which time his mother would complain about David and try to get him violated by probation so that he would be taken into custody again.

Participants also noted, as discussed earlier, that there is something very damaging about locking-up youth in small rooms, where they essentially feel alone and become angrier due to their isolation. All four participants identified the juvenile halls as extremely harmful, especially during the 72-hour lock-up when they are all isolated in a room after arriving on their first day. If there were more humane alternatives to youth incarceration, all of the participants felt that these would be worth considering, principally as a way of reducing the anger experienced by inmates—anger that all participants in this study felt only exacerbated their many difficulties.

Based on the experiences of the four participants, there is a value in preparing all youth for college or a clear sense of future direction– not just those who have already proved themselves as ready. On the contrary, it is the youth who have had very little opportunities in life who could benefit most from college opportunities or other clear educational alternatives in considering their future. Three of the four participants were attending college at the time of the critical narratives, while the remaining participant was finishing up his high school diploma, with aspirations to attend college upon completion of his high school graduation requirements. As stated earlier, none of the four participants

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had ever been exposed to college prior to incarceration. About this, their narratives pointed to the idea that no youth should be doubted in their ability to go to college and their ability to learn.

Moreover, at the very least, the juvenile justice system should ensure that each and every youth is exposed to college in some meaningful way and educated on college requirements and enrollment procedures during their time of incarceration, as prison education programs have been shown to have positive impact on the sense of self of inmates and reduces recidivism (Steurer & Smith, 2003). Of the positive impact of prison education, Rebecca Ginsburg, Director of Education Justice Project, at the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign has asserted, "There's such pride in seeing how our students have developed into scholars and getting validation" (Education Justice Project, 2014).

In addition to implementing a comprehensive college preparation program in the halls and camps, it is also necessary to ensure that teachers are prepared adequately and dedicated to educating their students in meaningful ways that engage and stimulate them (Darder, 2012; Freire, 1970; Lawton, 2012). As JQ pointed out, it was as if they are being mentally killed while recidivating in and out of the system, without even learning anything in school. Incarcerated youth have the civil right to learn a rigorous, relevant curriculum just as much as any other youth does.

The participants found that mentors, role models, and support groups were vital to the success and resiliency of formerly incarcerated youth. Just as Camp Gonzalez partnered with CEE Hope and New Roads programs, the other probation halls and camps should do likewise. Providing youth with mental health, anger management, and family services are helpful and important (Sawyer & Borduin, 2011), but support groups where

they can have meaningful dialogue with others like them is more desirable to formerly incarcerated youth, who could easily find themselves feeling extremely lonely and depressed without a support group (Anthony et al., 2010). B stressed how important it was for there to be regular dialogue between incarcerated youth and Clark emphasized repeatedly how easy it was to feel alone while incarcerated, but also after being released. Therefore, support groups should be offered also inside the halls and camps to encourage positive communication between the youth, which could ultimately break down some of the perceived barriers to their social interactions.

The probation staff members in the halls and camps play a major role in the lives of incarcerated youth and, as such, their supervisory strategies have a deep impact in the youth incarceration experience (Davis, Irvine, & Ziedenberg, 2014). JQ explained how constant yelling and whining by the staff would contribute to his and others' anger, while David noted there were some staff that genuinely cared and made a positive difference in his life and the lives of others. Clark identified one area of staff conduct in which he saw a need for serious change – how the staff dealt with the gang situation. Clark recalled how some staff would glorify gangs, which would only confuse and frustrate youth like Clark who were trying to change their lives. Also, going further than the glorification of gangs, some staff actually instigated and arranged fights between rival gang members—a problem that has since been addressed and ceased by probation in this county, however persists in other parts of the nation (United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, 2012). However, the problem of gang glorification is one that could still occur without anyone knowing, since it is most often manifested through tacit approval.

Nonetheless, it is something that could be addressed through better preparing supervisory staff on this issue.

Recommendations

The following set of recommendations is based upon the perspectives of the youth who participated in this critical narrative study. Each perspective was offered through the voice of someone who has lived the realities of the school-to-prison pipeline, as well as the experience of being resilient, which is an important question to consider when examining the phenomenon of youth incarceration. This set of recommendations is divided into two parts: (a) Recommendations for Avoidance of Incarceration; and (b) Recommendations for Resilience.

Recommendations for Avoidance of Incarceration

- Provide more attentive and interactive educational experiences

If we are to avoid the pipeline altogether, then we must begin when the problems actually originate—during early childhood and early adolescence. As the findings from this study have shown, there is little equity in how children from different socioeconomic backgrounds are educated and prepared for life. This study recommends that all children be exposed to attentive and interactive educational experiences throughout their K–12 experience, not just for those who the school perceives as "smart enough" or as "good kids" or for the children of the wealthy and influential.

An important lesson from this study is that we never know who might be a good candidate for college until they are given the opportunity to try it. However, with that opportunity must come preparation and a series of other opportunities to increase support of the desire and belief that youth from oppressed communities could one day be college

students. Such opportunities include, but are not limited to: college tutors and volunteers on campus, college field trips, on-campus college fairs, middle school and high school workshops on college preparation and admissions, and actual ongoing assistance with applying to college. Many students suffer from poor self-images, attributed to various factors beyond their control, such as race, ethnicity, gender (dependent upon the context), socio-economic status, and so forth (Allen, 2014). However, just as stigmas and the rejection of positive opportunities can impact a student's self-image and behaviors, exposure to positive opportunities and high expectations from teachers can transform a student's self-image, which can then propel that student to make great progress in school (Allen, 2014; Kramer, 2015). In other words, all students should be given the same opportunities to learn about college and careers, whether they are experiencing behavioral difficulties or belong to a gang, or just do not seem motivated at all. It is the school's function to serve all students equitably, not based on stereotypes or assumptions.

Assumptions should not be made by school officials, teachers, or counselors as to who is probably not going to be interested in college or would not make it in college. School counselors and officials should be vigilant in finding out which students still need more information on colleges and what preparation is required. This is not to say that college is the only pathway to success for everyone; however, it should be available for every student to consider and to pursue, if it is their choice.

- Provide free community-based programs for all children

One of the participants, B, recalled how there were absolutely no youth programs in his community when he was a young child, referring to his community as "dead." However, he spoke of how impressed he was now that his eight-year-old brother was

involved in community-based programs and classes for youth, including anger management, which B stated his brother needed badly. Although not all the participants focused on a lack of youth programs in their communities, JQ did explain how his mother could not afford to place him into soccer programs or music classes to keep him out of trouble, because of the cost. JQ participated in activities and programs after he was released from incarceration, through programs like ARC and New Roads.

Therefore, instead of only providing those opportunities for youth to participate in programs after they have already been incarcerated and involved with a re-entry program like New Roads, schools and local government should ensure that free program participation is available to every family with young children, particularly in poor working class communities where these programs are most needed. However, just making programs available is not enough; parents need to be integrated in ways that assist them to recognize the benefits of their children participating in these activities, as well as providing youth support needed (i.e., transportations, materials, etc.) to participate. Sharkey et al. (2015) found that almost half of the youth surveyed advocated for more positive community-based activities to keep kids engaged through positive outlets—activities provided at little or no cost to youth, since many parents are not financially capable of providing such opportunities for their children.

- Integrate approaches that affirm youth and result in true equity

Instead of addressing negative behavior in school with negative responses like a field trip to juvenile hall, schools should consider integrating approaches that affirm youth. In different ways, the participants spoke to the positive impact of providing students programs related to their own interests and that effectively support youth, as they

struggle to develop a more positive self-image and a greater sense of social agency and empowerment. It is detrimental to take a child who is already experiencing difficulties and show him how much worse things can get, particularly if he has never been shown how things could be better in his life. For JQ, the field trip to juvenile hall only reinforced his negative self-image, eventually leading him to fulfill that prophecy of negative self-image. Schools should consider the effects of their interventions upon youth before addressing negative behaviors in authoritarian ways that have been shown to be counterproductive. Approaches that affirm youth mean that they receive what they need, academically, emotionally, and socially. With this in mind, schools should make sure that they offer children who are struggling the services, programs, and benefits that will allow them to be as successful as the rest of the student population. At times, this will mean that children who have less must receive more (Darder, 2012) than the general student population. Otherwise, schools will neglect to ensure that equity is truly being practiced at the school.

- Drug and alcohol awareness should begin in elementary school

Drug and alcohol awareness campaigns are crucial before children even enter middle school, which is where the participants of this study all started having problems related to either drugs or alcohol. Not only should they be educated often on the risks of using drugs and alcohol, but children should also be educated on where to go for help, if they or loved ones are experiencing difficulties related to drugs and/or alcohol. Moving beyond stigmatizing by instituting more compassionate approaches to working with youth who are consuming drugs and alcohol should also be a significant aspect of our

practice, in that their behavior may tell us much about what is going on with them socially and emotionally, which needs attention.

- Nurture compassionate and ethical communication styles

JQ's recommendation that schools in poor communities begin to teach and enforce the use of proper language and good manners for all students could greatly benefit all student populations and the greater community-at-large, especially if the entire school were regularly involved in cultivating and strengthening communication skills that would nurture more ethical and compassionate relationships among students and between teachers and students. It would be of great value to their communities and for students to clearly understand what is expected of them, with respect to the manner in which they interact and participate within different contexts. Also important here, however, is to create on-going opportunities and spaces for youth to bring their voices to the table, with respect to issues that directly impact their lives, within the classroom, in policy arenas, program development efforts, and the assessment of services. This dimension must be of key concern, in that any effort to nurture such communication in the absence of genuine forms of dialogue and participation *with* youth can easily degenerate to forms of authoritarianism or coercion, despite the rhetoric (Darder, 2015; Freire, 2000).

Recommendations for Resilience

- Develop supportive approaches to aftercare services

Probation needs to work with other stakeholder agencies, such as Los Angeles County Office of Education, local school districts, Department of Mental Health (DMH), Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), and New Roads to New Visions (NRNV) to develop supportive approaches to providing aftercare services for youth. A

supportive approach should involve more positive contact with the probationee, focusing on his individual needs. As part of this aftercare plan, there should be an ongoing effort to connect formerly incarcerated youth with appropriate support groups and/or mentors, wherever needed and desired. This integrated planning should already be completed *prior* to the release date, including school enrollment, therapy schedules (if-needed), and other specific extracurricular activities, such as sports and other forms of recreation. A list of resources in the Los Angeles area that serve incarcerated, formerly incarcerated, and underserved youth is included in Appendix D.

- Eliminate the use of isolation in juvenile halls

The structure and operations of juvenile halls needs to be reconsidered in a way that does not result in an extreme build-up of anger and increased youth-on-youth violence. The participants of this study, as does the research, all point to the act of isolating an individual in a room as being psychologically and emotionally harmful to that individual. According to each participant, the anger produced from the first isolated lock-up never goes away, but rather becomes compounded with other anger-provoking experiences associated with incarceration. This is based on their firsthand experience—data that is more valid than any professional assumptions made decades ago regarding how to treat an incarcerated minor—generally developed based on authoritarian attitudes justified by racialized attitudes that perceive poor working class youth as intellectually deficient, emotionally deviant, or as criminals.

- Provide an emancipatory pedagogy in court school classrooms

In court school classrooms (classrooms located in the juvenile halls and probation camps), the curriculum needs to critically engage the students in a way that, as

JQ explained, awakens their minds and supports their participation in their own learning, as well as their empowerment as human beings. This points to the integration of an emancipatory pedagogy in court school classrooms, where the bicultural histories and identities of incarcerated youth of color can be seen as strengths (Darder, 2012). Incarcerated youth need to learn in ways that not only assist them in fulfilling graduation requirements, but also open their minds up to greater possibilities than those they knew prior to incarceration. In his narrative, in regards to the scenario of every year having a teacher lead the class through an analysis of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, JQ asked "How powerful would that be?" This type of question should be essential for all teachers engaging together on curriculum development—*How powerful would that be?*

If schools were to focus on truly empowering their students, they would see the birth of a transformative school culture—one which continuously reflects and addresses the wholeness of the child by engaging them "in ways that respect their minds, bodies, hearts, and spirits" (Darder, 2012, p. 165). Of course, for the teachers to provide learning experiences that result in the empowerment of their students, the teachers themselves must also feel empowered to teach with the authority to "create the conditions for a critical transformation of consciousness, which takes place in the process of interaction of teachers and students and the knowledge they produce together" (Darder, 2012, p. 113).

Sharroky Hollie (2014) argued that educators have "a moral imperative to provide equitable and excellent education for all children" (p. 13). But how do schools provide an education that fits *all* children? The answer is that there cannot simply be a one-size-fits-all approach to learning. Hollie (2014) has argued that what is needed in order to avoid the traditional "sink-or-swim approach to teaching and learning," is

"culturally and linguistically responsiveness," or CLR (p. 23). Hollie (2014) defined CLR as a pedagogy that involves "the validation and affirmation of the home (indigenous) culture and home language for the purposes of building and bridging the student to success in the culture of academic and mainstream society" (p. 23). Essentially, CLR prepares bicultural students to successfully navigate the various cultural power relations that they experience (Darder, 2012), but also requires teachers learning to change their own mindsets—rejecting the "deficit oriented" views of what underserved students bring to the class as being liabilities, rather than assets (Hollie, 2014, p. 31). The contrary must be sought through a critical, emancipatory pedagogy that works to uncover and oppose the pervasive effects of the "deculturalization" of bicultural students—"the divestment of students of important social and cultural resources" (Hollie, 2012, p. 28). Accompanying the undoing of the deculturalization effects, the teacher must employ validation and affirmation of all students' cultural and linguistic behaviors. Through a critical bicultural pedagogy of teaching and learning, combined with specific strategies of CLR, schools can begin to create a transformative culture of critical and emancipatory learning that seeks outcomes of youth praxis—the required result for transforming students' lives and realizing greater possibilities (Darder, 2012; Freire, 1970; Hollie, 2012).

The mission of the court school should be to provide youth with both meaningful and emancipatory learning experiences that they did not get when they were being labeled, isolated, and neglected at their previous schools. Court school students need to be treated as if they have the same aspirations and interests as students at the most affluent schools in the county. It can never be safely assumed who is going to college or not; rather,, all students should be safely provided the education to begin their preparation

for accessing higher education; and more important, as Darder (2012) has argued, to move toward a sense of themselves as both individually responsible human beings, as well as full cultural citizens of their world.

- Prepare staff to enact socially responsible practices

The staff from all agencies located within juvenile detention and correctional facilities need to maintain a sense of emotionally healthy and socially responsible behavior, at all times. When staff glorify gangs or allow youth to be involved in dangerous activities, such as fighting or drug use, it not only risks the safety and lives of incarcerated youth, but also causes confusion and psychological trauma, as explained by one of participants. Socially responsible practices speak to practices that are both culturally relevant and dialogical. As such, it is a way of communicating with youth and adults that is respectful and humanizing (Freire, 1970). To this end, effective communication and culturally relevant sensitivity work should be instituted for all staff, including staff from the various agencies that work directly with youth at the halls and camps. If youth are to receive the assistance and support they require during such difficult moments in their lives, everyone needs to be on the same page and understand each other's agency role, as well, in order to coordinate efforts in ways that maximize its positive impact on youth.

Implications for Future Research

One of the purposes of collecting data through critical narrative inquiry in this study was to discover what should be further researched that could provide meaningful data for preventing poor working class youth from entering the school-to-prison pipeline and to better support those youth who have already fallen victim to this phenomenon.

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There were several areas in the findings of this study that allude to the need for future research.

First, there appears from this data to be a lack of role models and mentors for youth of all ages, but primarily for youth of color. This is not surprising. Given the prevalence of African American and Latino men in the county jails and state prisons, many youth of color will likely have adult family members who are incarcerated, and therefore may perpetuate a familial acceptance of this way of life. Thus, research needs to be conducted on how mentors and role models can be made available for youth of color, especially from lower socioeconomic communities. Additionally, research should be conducted on the possible benefits of one child having more than one mentor, as suggested by the participants, who saw a benefit in the value of being mentored by people with different experiences.

A second area for further research is in the area of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and how to recognize and address it in youth *before* they come into contact with law enforcement and the juvenile justice system. Youth who exhibit greater-than normal levels of stress, anger, and anxiety should be recognized and supported through appropriate services through school and community efforts. Research needs to be conducted in how to better identify and serve youth who may have been exposed to adverse childhood experiences and suffer from issues of anxiety, anger, or depression, or other symptoms of PTSD, while symptoms are still in the early onset stages. This research should include a focus on providing community-based therapeutic intervention for youth, to protect their privacy at school.

Thirdly, further research on inclusiveness in education should be conducted to discover how to promote academic environments that do not label and isolate poor and racialized individuals or groups of students, and do not make students feel like outcasts, but rather promote community and dialogue among students and faculty. Research on inclusiveness should also involve a critical look into comprehensive college and career awareness programs in the elementary and middle school grades that involve every single student. As part of research on inclusiveness, there should also be an investigation into positive behavioral interventions as opposed to negative ones that, wittingly or unwittingly, reinforce a negative sense of self and a limited sense of their future opportunities.

From the findings of this study, it appears that once involved as an active member in a gang, it is very difficult to break free from that lifestyle, which leads to many more problems. A fourth area for future research is in continuing to find ways to deter young people from joining gangs. This is likely a very busy field of research; however, a critical narrative inquiry approach should be considered to get a better grasp on the actual realities experienced by young gang members themselves and the individual and societal factors that compel them to join gangs in the first place.

Finally, future research should look at programs for youth who are having difficulties, not only in other counties within California, but also in other states and even in other countries. Our current mode of placing a minor in an isolated, confined room is outdated and appears to be nonrehabilitative; however, that model still exists today. Although probation must consider safety first, the long-term psychological effects of isolation on a child must also be considered as an impetus to conduct future research in

this area. Moreover, there is also the need here to explore genuine alternatives to incarceration that would make the need for a juvenile justice system, as it now exists, unnecessary.

Epilogue

When I first decided to conduct a study on the juvenile justice system, I was only focusing on recidivism; how can we reduce recidivism? However, as a juvenile court school teacher, witnessing the constant return of many of my students who had already been released, I began to focus on other aspects of their lives, besides incarceration. I had many questions for them. Sometimes they had answers . . . other times a simple "I dunno?" Either way, it became clear to me that many of the policies, services, and even the academic curriculum offered to them were based on assumptions of what they needed, without the participation of youth in such decisions. Some people assumed that all youth needed was to prepare for the GED exam and an entry-level job. Others thought they needed to just learn basic reading, writing, and arithmetic, and that they would be prepared to enter the workforce with those basic skills. Then there were those who thought that every child needed to be exposed to the arts. And, actually all of them were, to a certain extent, correct, but only for specific students at certain times.

I came to realize from talking to my students that they needed everything that had often not been given to them before with educational institutions: love, reassurance, security, positive self-image, self-confidence, rules, boundaries, self-advocacy, and the list goes on. I also discovered that, upon news of their upcoming release, many of my students would begin to act strangely each day closer to their date of release, sometimes acting out in a way that seemed to be a deliberate sabotage to their going home. They

were terrified, because they had no solid, dependable network on which they could rely to navigate them through their difficult lives. There appeared to be serious breaks in communication between the many agencies and organizations outside of the secured facility.

What I soon realized through my practice in the field was that the juvenile system was not the only thing that was broken—the whole educational and social welfare system was. And although there are many improvements currently taking place, there still are, however, many serious symptoms that we cannot afford to overlook. In the course of this study, for example, I found existing research on juvenile incarceration, on recidivism, on re-entry programs, etc.; however, I found little data that emanated from the voices of those most affected by the problem—incarcerated youth themselves. Thus, I decided to conduct a study in which their voices would be heard. To increase the scope of my findings, I decided to include only those who are now formerly incarcerated and no longer on probation or parole. This would allow me to get a better sense of what might be attributed to the participants' resilience. After all, we need to know how to simultaneously work toward youth resiliency, as we work to transform the nature of the system that leads to their incarceration—otherwise we will continue to perpetuate false assumptions that make it impossible to escape the school-to-prison pipeline.

As an assistant principal at a juvenile hall, I have begun to see my work environment from a new perspective regarding emancipatory educational practices and how we can motivate our students toward a renewed sense of themselves as valuable and capable human beings. The participants in this study taught me that the key is to discover how to awaken the minds of our students—not unlike what Freire (1970) proposed in his

Pedagogy of the Oppressed or what Darder (2012) has argued with respect to awakening the bicultural voice in *Culture and Power in the Classroom*—in ways that promote their positive self-regard, social agency, and sense of belonging, in order to support their motivation to strive toward their dreams and aspirations.

My students, as well as the participants in this study taught me that all youths want to learn, but inside the juvenile hall setting, there are so many obstacles that can cloud their thinking and control their decisions, ultimately limiting their decision-making and empowerment. However, within my school setting, I am seeing some hope: teachers collaborating more regularly on developing more engaging curriculum with incarcerated youth; students participating in poetry and art activities; and students in the compound enrolling in college courses. There is some progress being made, but I constantly remind our staff that our students need us to always find a way to make it even better and that there is still so much more work to be done.

The young men in my study are nothing short of remarkable. The insight they carry is heavy; they are experts in their own realities and passionate about their goals. Yet, they remain humble in the way they deal with others. One of my participants, David, who is also my former student, is the most humble person I have ever met, and steadfast in his plan to reach his goals, one by one. I am certain I will see him graduate and enroll in college by fall 2016, which is how he has planned it. Clark is determined to achieve to the level where he is able to help other undocumented people and work in public policy to create a much more just world, where others in his earlier predicament will not have to feel like "outcasts.". JQ, with the drive and critical awareness that he has, will be an asset to anyone else who needs guidance in understanding and navigating their world. B, the

future psychologist, maintains such a positive and calming demeanor that he will continue to inspire others as he did his friends after graduating high school.

Ultimately, I hope that I can complete further work and research with this group of young men. Each of them expressed a desire to turn this study into a larger participatory action research project, ultimately using the results of such a study to influence public policy and public opinion. My hopes and dreams are that this and more will be the outcome of this powerful moment to learn from the participants in this study—young men who, although early in their lives were forced to struggle to survive the dehumanizing conditions of the school-to-prison pipeline, have now become thoughtful and hopeful human beings, with an eye toward social change.

LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Date of Preparation: August 29, 2014

Loyola Marymount University

(Title in Lay Language)

1) I hereby authorize_____ Scott Bastian, LMU Doctoral Candidate_____ to include me in the following research study: Beyond Recidivism: Learning *with* Formerly Incarcerated Men About Juvenile Incarceration.

2) I have been asked to participate on a research project which is designed to inform future research and policy in the field of juvenile justice by learning about the collective and individual experiences of youth who have been involved in the juvenile justice system, directly from their own perspectives and through their own voices, as collective agents of change and which will last for approximately 2 months.

3) It has been explained to me that the reason for my inclusion in this project is that I am male, 18-22 years old, formerly incarcerated in a Los Angeles County Juvenile Facility, and no longer on probation or parole.

4) I understand that if I am a subject, I will voluntarily discuss my personal experiences and own knowledge of the juvenile justice system in Los Angeles County, as well as any other relevant information that I would like to discuss as it pertains to the study's focus.

   The investigator(s) will facilitate these group discussions and activities.

   These procedures have been explained to me by _ Scott Bastian, LMU Doctoral Candidate.

5) I understand that I will be audiotaped in the process of these research procedures. It has been explained to me that these audio recordings will be used for research purposes only and that my identity will not be disclosed. I have been assured that the recordings will be destroyed after their use in this research project is completed. I understand that I have the right to review the recordings made as part of the study to determine whether they should be edited or erased in whole or in part.

6) I understand that the study described above may involve the following risks and/or discomforts: dialogue about sensitive topics relating to juvenile incarceration and the opportunity to discuss any personal experiences related to the topics within the study.

7) I also understand that the possible benefits of the study are my increased understanding of my personal experiences in the juvenile justice system and similarities/differences between mine and other participants' personal experiences and perceptions. Another benefit of the study is that I will be given the role as co-researcher along with the other participants, which is a skill that I can use in other academic and/or professional contexts.

8) I understand that the following alternative procedures (and/or drugs) are available. The reason these are not being used is: **N/A**_____
   _____.

9) I understand that Scott Bastian who can be reached at (562)480-2597 will answer any questions I may have at any time concerning details of the procedures performed as part of this study.

10) If the study design or the use of the information is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent reobtained.

11) I understand that I have the right to refuse to participate in, or to withdraw from this research at any time without prejudice to (e.g., my future medical care at LMU.)

12) I understand that circumstances may arise which might cause the investigator to terminate my participation before the completion of the study.

13) I understand that no information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent except as specifically required by law.

14) I understand that I have the right to refuse to answer any question that I may not wish to answer.

21) I understand that in the event of research related injury, compensation and medical treatment are not provided by Loyola Marymount University.

22) I understand that if I have any further questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may contact David Hardy, Ph.D. Chair, Institutional Review Board, 1 LMU Drive, Suite 3000, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles CA 90045-2659 (310) 258-5465, david.hardy@lmu.edu.

23) In signing this consent form, I acknowledge receipt of a copy of the form, and a copy of the "Subject's Bill of Rights".

Subject's Signature _____ Date _____

Witness _____ Date _____

<div align="center">OR</div>

Subject is a minor (age_____), or is unable to sign because _____

_____.

Mother/Father/Guardian _____ Date _____

CRITICAL NARRATIVE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Research Study Title: Beyond Recidivism: Learning *with* Formerly Incarcerated Men

About Juvenile Incarceration

Questions w/ Answers
1. Demographics
    a. When/Where were you born?
       Participant:

    b. Where do you live?
       Participant:

    c. How would you define your Socioeconomic status (Poor, Middle Class, Upper Middle Class, Upper Class)?
       Participant:

    d. Spirituality/religious preferences?

       Participant:

    e. Schooling
       Participant:

    f. Employment
       Participant:

    g. Describe your immediate family make-up
       Participant:

    h. Describe your race/ethnicity
       Participant:

2. "I want you to focus on three distinct period in your life – (1) Childhood before incarceration; (2) The period of time during incarceration; and (3) The period of time after your last "juvenile" incarceration (Post-Release), including the "now."
    a. Childhood
        a) Inside: "Tell me how you saw yourself during this time."
        b) Outside: "Tell me how you think various others saw you during this time."
        c) Forces: Thinking back, what are some of the major forces (causes) that you feel lead to your initial incarceration?
            i) Internal vs. external

d) At that time of your life, how did you perceive yourself in relation to your world? How much power did you feel you had in your own world?

    b. Juvenile Incarceration
        a) Inside: "Tell me how you saw yourself during the time of incarceration."
        b) Outside: "Tell me how you think various others saw you during this time."
        c) Forces: "Thinking back, what are some of the helpful vs. harmful features of the juvenile justice system?"
        d) At that time of your life, how did you perceive yourself in relation to your world? How much power did you feel you had in your own world?

    c. Post-Release
        a) Inside: "Tell me how you saw/see yourself after being released back to the community at-large."
        b) Outside: "Tell me how you think various others saw/sees you during this time."
        c) At the time of your last release, how did you perceive yourself in relation to your world? How much power did (do) you feel you had (have) in your own world?
        d) Forces: "From the time of your last release until now, what experiences have you had that have helped your transition?" What experiences have you had that have hindered/hurt your transition?"

    d. Backward
        a) Looking back, what are some things that you feel should have been different that may have prevented you from getting incarcerated in the first place?
           i) What was missing?
          ii) What could have been done differently? (Internal and External)

    e. Forward
        a) Looking forward, how do you visualize yourself in your world and to what can you attribute that vision? Explain.

7. "Are you or were you satisfied with the current path that you have chosen? If so, why? If not, what should you have done/will you do differently?"
Participant:

8. Take a moment to re-consider the following questions:
    a. Who am I?
    b. How have I become the person who I am?
    c. What are my values and how do I integrate my values in the major areas of my life?

9. How can your personal story help inform future policy? Who do you think should hear your story?

11. "Is there anything else that you would like to discuss?"

APPENDIX C

CANDIDATE RECRUITMENT APPROVAL LETTER

ARC
Anti-Recidivism Coalition

October 30, 2014

To Whom It May Concern,
Please consider the following letter proof of agreement between Loyola Marymount University Doctoral Candidate, Scott Bastian and The Antirecidivism Coaltion (ARC). ARC will provide Mr. Bastian with the assistance and access to potential candidates for his research project titled: "Beyond Recidivism; Learning *with* Formerly Incarcerated Men About Juvenile Incarceration".

ARC will provide access to potential candidates who meet the following criteria:
- Male
- Age: 18-22
- Formerly incarcerated
- No longer on probation or parole

As an organization that values social justice and advocacy for fair and just policies, we feel Mr. Bastian's project will enrich policy discussions surrounding system change. It is these stories and personal narratives that help ensure policy makers and representatives understand the impact of the juvenile justice system upon individual lives and communities. ARC supports this project and will work in collaboration with Mr. Bastian to help organize these interviews.

Sincerely,

Anna Cho Fenley, MSW
Program & Policy Director
acfenley@antirecidivism.org
www.antirecidivism.org

"ARC changes lives and creates safe, healthy communities by providing a support and advocacy network for, and comprised of formerly incarcerated young men and women. Together we are a bridge to transformation, purpose, and redemption."

APPENDIX D

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

1. Anti-Recidivism Coalition

    448 South Hill St.

    Los Angeles, CA 90013

    (213) 955-5885

2. Homeboy Industries

    130 Bruno St.

    Los Angeles, CA 90012

    (323) 526-1254

3. InsideOUT Writers Program

    1212 N. Vermont Ave.

    Los Angeles, CA 90029

    (323) 660-1866

4. New Roads School/ Coalition for Engaged Education

    3131 Olympic Blvd.

    Santa Monica, CA 90404

    (424) 272-9900

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