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**NEGOTIATING AN IDENTITY IN AN
ALTERNATIVE TO INCARCERATION PROGRAM**

By

Nadia Minian

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

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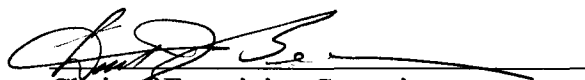
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Approval Page

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Abstract

Negotiating an identity in an Alternative to Incarceration Program

by

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The impact of being sentenced to an Alternative to Incarceration (ATI) program was the study of investigation for this dissertation. Starting from a Vygotskian, socio historical theory and narrative theory, the identities of ATI clients were conceptualized as social positions that developed through a historical process.

The aim of the present study was to understand how youth transform their identities at an ATI program in New York City. This period of transition was not conceptualized through focusing on a single aspect of living, as many investigations are, but rather through examining the overall life structure, which requires the consideration of both the self and the world. Thus, the present study can be seen as an application of the Vygotsky/Scribner framework which posits that, in order to understand a psychological system such as identity, one has to also understand the general history of humanity, the history of individual societies, and the life history of the individual in society.

Data collection included semi-structured life history interviews with fifteen participants (eight male and seven female participants). The interviews were coded using NUD*IST 6, using both an inductive and a deductive process. Themes and patterns across the interviews were identified and presented as the content analysis. Two case histories were created to contextualize how the themes gain importance in individual lives.

Findings indicated that after participating in an ATI for three months, most participants developed a “hybrid” identity that incorporated both the experience and expectations of the ATI and prior positive and negative school, family and community influences. Gender identity played a key role in the processes by which participants’ constructed an identity during their adolescent years.

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the hopes to build a better world and his ability to combine serious intellectual thought, with meaningful social change are an inspiration in my work. Further, I thank my readers Dr. Fine whose continuous and solid commitment for social justice and for her students are an example to follow, and to Dr. Ruck, who, even though he was never my professor, gave me crucial feedback while I was working on the proposal for this study. The work, conversations and/or classes I took with Dr. Glick, Dr. Statsenko and Dr. Solis were also valuable for this work and my professional development. In their own way, all of them influenced my academic growth far beyond the scope of this research.

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Introduction

Youth, particularly minority youth, have increasingly been viewed and represented as “dangerous.” Males clearly points this out in his book *Framing Youth*: “From criminology 1 to the anti-crime echelon, the dogma is simple: adolescents’ equal villainy. Just abolish the word “crime” and substitute “teenager, as in ‘the coming teenager wave.’” (Males, 1999 p. 29.) When we look at the number of arrests in the United States this image seems to be confirmed. In 2001 an estimated 9,324, 953 youth under the age of 21 were arrested in the United States of America (excluding traffic arrests) (FBI Uniform Crime Report, 2001) In New York alone 43,460 youth were arrested in 2001. However, it takes a closer look to deconstruct this view of the “super-predators.” Most of the crimes that youth committed, and are committing today, are non violent. Five percent of youth arrests (1,931) were for violent crimes (murder, forcible rape, robbery and aggravated assault) leaving 95% of the arrests due to non-violent offenses.

What happens to these youth once they are arrested? There are more options than the dichotomy that most people believe (jail vs. freedom). While some youth end up in juvenile detention facilities, some go to adult prisons, others are given a probation sanction, others are dismissed (let free), and others are placed in an Alternative to Incarceration (ATI) program. ATIs are program where people receive treatment, education, and employment training in the community, while remaining under strict supervision. Some of the ATIs are residential, where the clients live in the program, while others are non-residential, where clients go on a daily basis. Of the 43,460 youth arrested in New York, 600 were sent to an ATI program. When I read these figures I

could not stop wondering, “Who are these youth who are being arrested and sentenced?” “Are they the super-predators that the media had warned us about?” “Which youth end up in ATI programs?” “What happens to those youth who end up going to an ATI program?” “What is it like to spend part of your adolescence in an ATI program?”

Myths About Perpetrators of Crime

Theorizing in criminology is an arduous but fascinating task. Perhaps more than any other phenomena the subject matter of crime is engulfed by myths that abound in popular explanations. Myths are typically based on media and political exaggerations and distortions of single incidents that come to represent whole categories of events or “types of people” (Barak, 1993; Cohen & Young, 1980; Surette, 1992). Often these myths involve gross omissions and stereotypical classifications. For example, African American males commit most violent crimes in the US. This myth only holds if corporate violence, domestic violence and abuse by White males are not counted (Henry & Einstadter, 1998); young people commit most property crime, if occupational crimes in the workplace are overlooked. Typically these myths, like most others, are extremely simplistic; they characterize a group of people as “bad” or “perpetrators” and another group as “good” or “victims”.

Racial Disparities

Unfortunately, it seems that these myths which affect the general public also influence the criminal justice policies. There is a growing body of research which shows that youth of color receive disparate treatment in America’s juvenile justice system. In the most recent reports to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the US Department of Justice, every state but one that reported data found a disproportionate

confinement of minority youth compared to non-minority youth (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1999). More than two-thirds of all youths confined in American prisons belong to a minority group, even though minorities make up only about one-third of America's youth population (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1999). . Between 1989 and 1999 African American juveniles between 12-17 years old were roughly three times as likely as White adolescents in that age category to be detained upon arrest even when controlling for prior criminal history and seriousness of offense (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2001)

Furthermore, an analysis of court reports prepared prior to sentencing by probation officers found that the probation officers consistently portrayed African American youth in a more negative manner than they did White youth. This was the case even when the researchers controlled for offense behavior and prior record. Thus probation officers recommend harsher sentencing for African Americans (Bridges & Steen, 1998). Bridges concluded that, "The children would be charged with the same crime, be the same age and have the same criminal history, but the different ways they were described was just shocking." (Bridges & Steen, 1998).

Not only do people get different punishments; but that the general ways of "punishing" have changed over time. Foucault (1979) documents a major shift in the late eighteenth century, from corporal punishment, such as public floggings, brandings, and stocks, to the beginnings of the modern prison bureaucracy where punishment looks more rational, almost clinical. Barbaric forms of bodily retributions gave way to the allegedly more humane modern prison system. But Foucault insists that the whole idea of humanitarian progress is illusory. Prison's major goal was to reduce crime by punishing the criminal. Prisons also should deter others from committing crimes. According to

Foucault, prisons did not meet their objective; in fact they made criminals worse, as he clearly states in his book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*:

The prison cannot fail to produce delinquents. It does so by the very type of exercise that it imposes on its inmates: whether they are isolated in cells or whether they are given useless work, for which they will find no employment, it is, in any case, not ‘to think of man in society; it is to create an unnatural, useless and dangerous existence’ . . . The prison also produces delinquents by imposing violent constraints on its inmates; it is supposed to apply law, and to teach respect for it; but all its functioning operates in the form of an abuse of power. (Foucault, 1979, p.266)

Recent statistics about the relationship between detention and crime trends support Foucault’s ideas. These statistics show that there is no correlation between increased use of detention and lower crime rates. In fact, cities that reduced the number of youth in detention experienced similar or greater juvenile crime drops than cities like New York, which increased the number of youth being held in secure detention centers. During the early 1990s, Chicago reduced its detention population by 31% while seeing a 33% drop in violent crime and 41% drop in youth homicides (Illinois Research and Analysis Unit, 2001). Portland trimmed its detention population by 64% over the decade; at the same time violent crime declined by 24% and property crime fell by 40% (The Multnomah County Department of Community Justice, 2001).

Alternative To Incarceration (ATI) Programs

Even though the jail system is being used more than it has ever before in the US, new methods have arisen to sentence people. One of these “alternative” options are non-

residential Alternative to Incarceration (ATI) programs. These programs require offenders to attend counseling, classes, and treatment for a period of six months to a year in order to avoid a prison sentence. Little is known about ATIs, since most social scientists studying the criminal justice system in the US have given little attention to them and have emphasized prison settings. This is due to the dramatic increase in the rate of incarceration in the last decades.

A literature survey on Psychlit and Sociofiles revealed only thirty-three articles using the words: “Alternative to Incarceration” or “Alternative to Sentencing” programs; all these articles were descriptions or evaluations of the programs. These evaluations have, for the most part, provided a positive portrait of these programs. Hunter College Center on AIDS, Drugs and Community Health conducted an evaluation of the Peer Education Program within an ATI program. The results were encouraging: a pre/posttest showed that after participating three months in the Peer Education Program, peers’ social support and self-esteem were higher (Minian, 2001). The Vera Institute also conducted evaluations of different programs offering alternatives to incarceration in New York City (for both adults and for youth) and has shown their success in reducing recidivism rates and changing participants’ lifestyles to reduce the use of drugs (Kramer & Porter, 2001; Porter, 2001; Trone & Futransky, 2001).

Although this evaluation-based research is useful in answering the question: “Does this type of program work?” or “Does this program work better/worse than other kinds of programs?” it tells us little about the process of how it works, and why it works with some clients and not with others (Chen, 1990; Pawson & Tilley, 1997). Clients do not experience an undifferentiated program (Lewis, 1990). The long tradition of change

process research in psychotherapy has taught us that every intervention or program consists of thousands of different micro mechanisms of change (e.g.- confrontation, learning to trust, and self reevaluation). Whereas macro level research asks, “Does the program work?” the micro level research that is presented here starts a few steps back and asks, “How do different individuals react to the program?” “How does the program affect the identities of its clients?”

Identity

To some studying identity might seem too academic, and far removed from the everyday problems youth face; however, I argue that it is an essential concept to understand. If we want to help youth in any aspect of their lives (jail, education, health) we must first understand them as people. In this case identity can be seen as a mediational tool (Vygotsky, 1978) between participants’ desires and social realities. Furthermore, identity is a way of making sense of the world, and of one’s position in relations to others.

This dissertation is an exploration of what identities develop at ATIs. It is an analysis of the stories court-involved youth attending an ATI program tell about themselves, about their relationships, beliefs, values, experiences, fears, joys, motivations and views of their future. It is as much about the mundane and the every day, as it is about the exciting and turning points in their lives. It is a portrayal of what it is like to be a court-involved youth, who is attending an ATI program in New York City.

By analyzing these stories, this dissertation looks at how ATIs are sites for the development and articulation of hybrid identities: complex ways of representing and positioning oneself within larger social constructs of racial, social class, gender, and

cultural differences. For the purpose of this study hybrid is more than a combination, accumulation and synthesis of various components, it is rather as a collected field of different forces, where elements encounter and transform themselves in this third space (Papasteriadis, 1997). My aim is to examine how young people in an ATI program transform their identities.

Questions about how youth come to be who they are calls for a developmentally oriented approach that assumes a lifelong change. Life course developmental perspectives emphasize both the role of agency in behavior and the ways in which the choices available are channeled by past experience in a particular culture and situation (Scribner, 1997). Furthermore, Vygotsky and Scribner's socio-historical approach posits that in order to understand a psychological system, such as identity, one has to understand the general history of humanity (in this study, the history of incarceration and youth in the US); the history of individual societies (in this case the society is: 1) the ATI, 2) the neighborhoods participants live in and 3) the schools they have attended), and the life history of the individual in society (the experiences of the participant). This framework is adopted in this study, in order to reflect how the communities that individuals come from may react very differently to the same historical event, and conversely, that the same historical event can have a very different meaning and impact on different communities. Thus, the reactions of the community that people belong to will influence how they react to events. Even within the same community, the impact of an event will be different for people of different ages or at different developmental phases. How an event shapes a person will depend on what role it plays in his/her life when it happens, how much he/she is aware of any long term ramifications, and to what extent he/she can respond to it. Thus

the history of the individual, as well as that of the society and of humanity, are needed to understand the process that shapes the identities that are being developed at an ATI program.

By focusing on the tension between the individual and his/her perception of society, this dissertation considers the emergence of the individual's identity as one possible historical situated identity. This historical situated identity takes into consideration issues regarding the criminal justice system which are controversial and politically charged. Laws set limits or boundaries by defining what behavior a society is unwilling to tolerate. As many sociologists have suggested, in the process of creating outlaws, we also create social identities (Chancer, 1992; Durkheim, 1982; Erickson, 1966). The creation of the outlaw or the "other" brings together members of a society in a common conviction, to direct their disapproval against those who are outside the social boundaries. Some sociologists, such as Madriz (1997) have proposed that the increased economic inequality of the 1990's has had profound implications in the production of the outlaw. Resources and opportunities believed to be the patrimony of all Americans - health care, education, social security, voting rights, a steady job- are becoming limited to certain persons. The need to define who belongs has profound implications: those who belong will more likely benefit from the available resources. Only "real Americans" have the right to these scant entitlements. And in a society deeply divided by class, race and gender those benefits will be distributed accordingly.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into eleven chapters. I begin chapter one by looking at the different ways of conceptualizing and studying identity, as well as providing an overview of the literature of “criminal identity.” Given that most of the youth involved in the criminal justice system are minority, I also provide a brief overview of the academic research that has looked at the identity development of minority youth in the US.

Chapter two reviews the two theoretical frameworks on which this work is based- 1) Vygotsky/Scribner’s sociohistorical theory and 2) narrative theory. Drawing from sociohistorical psychology this study examines the formation of identity in societal, institutional and individual contexts. Narrative theory offers an elegant way of understanding all these levels, in a meaningful and coherent manner. In a narrative, the self and the context, are interwoven into one story, thus making it easy to gather data from the four levels at one time. But even more important, the self is defined, in narrative terms, as an ongoing story, thus in order to study identity one has to gather a personal narrative. In this study it is assumed that personal narratives, imitate life and present an inner reality to the outside world. At the same time stories construct the narrator’s personality and reality (Bruner, 1991; Bruner, 1996; Gergen & Gergen, 1986; Hermans, Rijks, & Kempen, 1993; McAdams, 1993; Polkinghorne, 1991). Thus a life history story/narrative is one’s identity.

Chapter three focuses on 1) how the research emerged, 2) the ethical considerations that I took into consideration while designing and conducting the study, 3)

the design of the life history interview and 4) the research questions I pose for this study. All these factors guided the design, collection, analysis and write-up of this study.

Chapter four describes the methodology that informs my approach to this dissertation. The principal method I used to understand the experiences of court involved youth and the identity that they develop in an ATI program was to analyze the findings from life history interviews. Life histories are particularly useful in gathering information about stigmatized, or otherwise difficult circumstances in the participants' lives.

The results and analysis of this study take up six chapters, chapters six to ten. The first four chapters correspond to each level of history outlined in the Vygotsky/Scribner framework. Thus, chapter six presents the history of the criminal justice system in the US, Vygotsky/Scribner level one. Emphasis is given to the history of the New York City Juvenile Justice System. While reviewing the New York Juvenile Justice System, a thorough review of ATI programs in New York and their history is included. The data presented in this chapter provide the general historical trends and movements that are directly and indirectly shaping the culture of many neighborhoods, and thus the lives of the people who live there.

The next five chapters present the results from the life history interviews. I struggled to represent the lives of the youth in their own voices and on their own terms, and at the same time to show the patterns that emerge from their stories; the differences and commonalities between the stories, between male and female participants; and the lives that need to be lived in order for these patterns to emerge. I was also concerned on whose voice had to be heard on this section. On the one hand this is my dissertation, the topic I chose to study; the answers to the questions I pose; but on the other hand these are

the lives of the youth; their stories. I needed a way to situate my ideas and interpretations, among the youth's voices and lives. This task ended up being a lot more complicated than I had first thought. Thus I decided to present the results from the interviews in five chapters; shifting from their voice to my voice.

Chapter six shows Vygotsky/Scribner's level two, the history of the society and its institutions. This chapter is mostly descriptive, as it shows how participants talked about the schools they attended, the different neighborhoods they lived at and their perceptions of the ATI. Participants' experiences in these places are examined in chapter seven, which is an analysis of the personal histories of participants (Vygotsky/Scribner's level three). Chapter eight shows the analysis of the identities participants formed before attending the ATI (Vygotsky/Scribner's level four), and in chapter nine I present the identity transformations that occurred at the ATI (a continuation of Vygotsky/Scribner's level four).

Detecting the topics was not a straightforward task as many researchers present it. While NU*DIST was of great help for the quickly and easily seeing the different topics that youth talked about, and the different ways that the data could be presented, the coding of it was quite a demanding task; first I read the interviews several times to see what patterns emerged. Then I had to code the information not only related to my protocol, but also by the themes that the youth described.

Chapter ten presents two case histories. In this chapter I present the reader with a developmental trajectory for a male and a female participant. Participants' narratives have been reorganized in a non-repetitive temporal sequence. Following each case

history is my interpretation showing how the topics I mentioned in chapter seven came to be so important characteristics for the youth.

By moving across several levels of complexity, and presenting the results in different ways (the main patterns and the case histories) I hope to do justice to the participants' lives, and at the same time offer my analysis of it.

The last chapter, chapter eleven, presents the conclusions, showing my interpretations of what is happening at the ATI, and how these findings are relevant to the criminal justice system.

Chapter 1: Theories on Identity

The importance of studying identity is multi-purpose. Firstly, identity deals with one of the most pervasive beliefs about adolescents –that they are struggling to create/find an identity (Blos, 1979; Erikson, 1963, 1968). Most, if not all, psychologists will agree that the process of identity development is crucially important and deeply felt during adolescence. Whether they follow psycho-analytical theories of identity development, such as that of Erikson's, Blos', or feminist theories such as Gilligan's (1982), Way's (1998), all agree that adolescence marks a critical era for identity development. The identity struggle of adolescents has become the topic of hundreds of articles, books, novels, documentaries and movies, and has become an essential part on how we define adolescence (Blos, 1979; Erikson, 1963, 1968; Kohlberg, 1981; Selman, 1980).

Secondly, the study of identity offers a way to link the phenomenological domain of lived, moment- by-moment experience and the enduring cultural and social systems of beliefs, attitudes, and meaning making practices. Identity mediates between the participants "*desires*" and "*previous experiences*" with what they "*have*" to be in order to avoid a jail sentence. In short, identity mediates between the individual and social conditions. Dorothy Holland and her collaborators (Holland et al., 1998) show how long term, larger scale social institutions of a culture can provide resources, materials and symbolic interactions and situations which identity-in-practice can use to re-construct both itself and ultimately these social and cultural systems.

Thirdly, by studying identity, it is recognized that participants can determine the choices they make, while at the same time allowing us, the outsiders, to understand how different forces act and limit their agency. Recognizing the participants' agency and ability to make decisions for themselves, instead of having choices made for them, is a position lacking in most of the literature regarding criminality. There is a fine line between having limited choices and having no choices at all, and between viewing participants' actions as determined either by biological or social factors or as being co-produced by a variety of factors including their own will. The perspective taken in the present study is that adverse conditions affect behavior by limiting or restricting one's options instead of determining one's choices. Even though the choice process itself may be influenced by certain factors, such as cognitive maturity, environmental, political, and economical factors, the individual still opts to engage in particular actions. The concepts of "culture" and "choice" have been beset by considerable confusion resulting from the conflict between structural and individual levels of explanation. The development of the participants' identity, viewed from a Vygotskian perspective, will help ease this tension, not in the sphere where it is usually debated, namely why or how the participant became involved in illegal activities, but in the type of identities that are developed in an ATI program. From this approach, individual choices will be seen as having taken place within socially bounded spheres of interactions. This will allow us to understand how participants understand what they have done, and what they want to do, as well as how societal institutions, such as the ATI program, have shaped their identity.

In the perspective adopted in this study, the concept of self is the central point of an individual's perceptual sphere. It provides the field of reference from which all other

perceptions acquire their meaning. Thus, to comprehend people's behaviors and motivations, it is essential to first understand their concept of self. The participants' narratives will offer a "reconstruction of the past, shaped by the particular context of its telling" (Mischler, 1990, p. 427), as well as a view to the future. For example, Mattingly (1994) noted that the stories that people tell enable them to act with a view of how to shape their own future: "We are situated with an eye to the future and the future saturates each present moment with meaning" (p. 819). In a similar way, McAdams (1989) defines self-identity as a life story that is "an internalized narrative integration of past, present and anticipated future which provides lives with a sense of unity and purpose" (p. 161). Hermans, Kempen and Van Loon (1992), in discussing the dialogical self, state that "People have told each other stories and listened to stories in all cultures at all times. In doing so people arrive at an understanding and ordering of the world and the self." (p. 25). As one tells and relates one life story, one's personal identity gets revisited. The story of 'who we are' is a life long ongoing "narrative project" (Coupland & Nussbaum, 1993). This process not only offers individuals a sense of order to their lives but also a feeling of continuity over time. Periods of disruption and change are seen as turning points under this perspective.

Turning Points

Life stage theorists map out predictable sequences of transitions in life (Erikson, 1963; Gould, 1980; Levison, 1978); whereas theorists who favor a life course perspective emphasize social context and roles (Cohler, Hosteler, & Boxer, 1988; Elder, 1995). However, whether they talk in terms of stages or contexts, they both focus on socially

scripted transitions such as getting married, having children, retiring as well as “unexpected” turns such as divorce, winning the lottery, etc. To study these phenomena, psychologists have developed a refined and wide range of methodologies and techniques. The research literature on life transitions is full with surveys and questionnaires, where the emphasis is quantification and hypothesis testing. Unfortunately this literature leaves us with little sense of the developmental history, the process of events, and the meaning-making that accompanies life changes.

The experience of life transition is one that is narratively constructed rather than imposed by social reality. People choose to make changes in their lives in response to external events. Sometimes there is awareness of being in a transitional state. Other times people may realize that their lives are different only after the changes have occurred. People choose from among a number of events, thoughts, and interactions to form their life story. In studying these life stories, or narrations, we come to understand better the ways in which meanings of transitions are constructed. It is these meanings that guide the person through the next phase of their existence.

Life transitions, or turning points, have been hard to define in the field (Wheaton & Gotlib, 1997). In an attempt to define life transitions or turning points, Wheaton and Gotlib, (1997) state that a turning point should include: a) a “disruption in a trajectory, a deflection in a path” (p.1) b) more than a temporary detour, and c) knowable only after the fact, only postdirectively. Alternatively, Wethington, Cooper and Holmes (Wethington et al., 1997) define turning points as shifts in the meaning, purpose or direction of a life and stress they “must include a self reflective awareness of, or insight into, the significance of the change” (p. 217). Under this definition “self realizations or

reinterpretations of past experiences might bring a turning point” (p. 217). Clausen (Clausen, 1993) regards turning points as perceptual reinterpretations or reorientations directed at the self and requiring changes in perceived identity. He listed four types-reformulations, of: 1) life role, 2) life perspective, 3) life goals, and 4) self, the latter including realizations about one’s strengths and weaknesses. This study questions whether the participants’ life goals or their self changes once they are in the ATI, and whether this event is a turning point in their lives.

Life transitions may be experienced as changes for better or for worse, depending on how they are viewed and storied. Many psychologists have studied the theme of loss as an important turning point in people’s lives (Schultz, 2001; Singer, 2001). Bruner (Bruner, 1988) sees, not loss exclusively but “trouble” as the engine of a narrative. Any kind of trouble will do, just as long as a “canonical state of the world has been disrupted” (p.324). Thus, under this definition “self realizations or reinterpretations of past experience may bring on a turning point” (p. 217).

Another useful way of understanding turning points is offered by a metaphor Bermann uses in his book *Crossing the Postmodern Divide* (Bermann, 1992). Turning points are like journeys. Once on the other side, the traveler remains the same person, carrying the same baggage. But on the other side of certain divides, the traveler senses a new identity; that same baggage now seems useful for a new purpose. Sometimes these differences of having crossed the divide are clear, but usually they are subtle, things just feel different.

Some psychologists have focused their studies on the emotions that surround a traumatic experience, such as the imprisonment of a parent, and how this can become a

turning point initiating a pattern of unfavorable life choices (Hagan & Palloni, 1990). Rutter (1989) discusses chains of adversity in the life cycle (see also Caspi & Elder, 1988) and suggests that " . . . the impact of some factor in childhood may lie less in the immediate behavioral change it brings about than in the fact that it sets in motion a chain reaction in which one 'bad' thing leads to another" (p. 27). Rutter further observes that "antisocial behavior. . . will influence later environments through the societal responses it induces—such as custodial or correctional actions that may serve both to 'label' and to strengthen antisocial peer group influences" (p. 42).

The concept of life transitions is very useful for this study. I have previously described that the goal is to examine how youth attending an ATI program negotiate their identity while attending the program. This experience seems to be a turning point in people's life. Although most life story analyses of identity have focused on the "normal" trajectory of events (getting married, having kids, graduating from college, etc), this concept is equally useful with events that disrupt the "normal" trajectory. For the purpose of this study, I am predicting that a turning point in the participants' lives is attending an ATI program. It is at this point that the participants' lives have to change; their legal status has been altered as well as their daily routine. Even though they will still live at home, they now have to attend the ATI program at least three times a week and meet with a case manager.

At this point I would like to clarify, once again, that I am not interested in understanding the identity that youth develop as "criminals" but their identity as a whole. Most psychologists studying criminal behavior and turning points have emphasized "desistance." The criminal justice literature usually imagines "desistance" as an event—

an abrupt cessation of criminal behavior. The assumption is made explicit in both the statistical models (Barnett, Blumstein, & Farrington, 1987) and on the rare occasions that researchers define desistance on the literature. For example Shover (1996) defines desistance as: “The voluntary termination of serious criminal participation” (p.121). Farall and Bowling (1999) describe it as the “moment that a criminal career ends.” Unfortunately this way of viewing desistance misses the point that Matza and Glazer pointed out, namely that crime is sporadic, therefore termination takes place all the time. Farrington (1986) warned that “even a five-year or ten-year crime free period is no guarantee that offending has terminated” (p.201). Most researchers that use the term *cessation* or *termination* seem to imply that this is a permanent change. Yet such permanence can only be determined retrospectively (Fraizer, 1976) presumably after the ex-offender is deceased.

I mentioned a few of the difficulties that one encounters while researching the termination of a given criminal identity—for a complete review see Maruna’s *Making Good* (Maruna, 2002). Given these vast obstacles I will try to avoid making claims as to whether the youth will stop committing crime, and look at what are the changes as a whole. I might be able to predict, from such information, what might happen in the future, with the clarity that deciding to desist and actually desisting from criminal activity are two very different things. Phenomenological criminology also speaks to this point by trying to understand criminal decision-making through an examination of the offender’s self-project- the self image they are trying to uphold (Toch, 1969), the ends they aim to achieve (Shover, 1996), and their strategies to create meaning in their lives (Irwin, 1970; Hall, Shoham, & Seis, 1993). In the phenomenology of crime Katz (1988) described this

as the “foreground of crime.” Whereas most criminologists focused on the “background” of crime (the social, biological and psychological characteristics that predisposes one to crime), foreground research focuses on the “underlying cognitive mechanisms by which information about the world is selected, attended to, and processed” (Clarke & Cornish, 1985, p. 147).

Theories of Self Identity

Numerous psychologists have theorized about the nature of the self. The core principles of these theories are critical to spell out because they reside in our psyche and in culture at large; and because they determine, to a large extent, what is considered sound and accurate data on adolescents. There are several studies on personality and self within the “simple trait” perspective, which argue that personality is fixed in a limited number of labels and that it consists of no more than a particular form of behavior by which individuals are said to differ from one another. The most cited framework within this perspective is the five-factor model of personality, typically called the “Big Five” (Goldberg, 1981; John, 1990; McAdams, 1996b). Advocates of the Big Five taxonomy have synthesized the results of many factor-analytic studies to produce a compelling framework for organizing information on people in terms of five broad trait categories: extroversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience. There are a number of examples of this framework in the criminal justice literature. Cloninger (1987), using his three factor bio-social model of personality, suggests that those subjects who score high in novelty seeking and low in harm avoidance and reward dependence are likely to be today’s delinquents and tomorrow’s violent adults (Cloninger,

1987). Psychologists who try to link personality with health problems have also extensively used the Big Five taxonomy. For a review on this topic see the work of Ouellette (Ouellette, 1996, 1999). However, many psychologists disagree with the idea that a few labels can describe the personality of a human being and the claims that personality is fixed.

Another point of conflict in the literature of the self is whether there is a unity to the self. Brewer and Gardener (1996), for example, distinguish three levels of self construal: 1) the personal self -the differentiated self concept; 2) the relational self- the interpersonal aspect of the self that is derived from connections and role relationships with others and 3) the collective self- the aspect that is derived from membership at large. Presenting experimental evidence, the authors propose that these three levels of self-definition “represent distinct forms of self representation with different origins, sources of self worth, and social motivations” (p. 83). Deaux (1992, 1993) maintains that social identities are integrated into personal identities. She views the distinction between personal and social as somewhat arbitrary. Rather than being cleanly separable, social and personal identity are fundamentally interrelated. Personal identity is defined, at least in part, by group memberships, and social categories are infused with personal meaning. From a developmental perspective, I view identity formation as an ongoing integrative process with a certain amount of situational variation and possible shifts because of changing sociocultural as well as historical contexts. Furthermore identity acts as one’s social position; it is a point of convergence of both societal and individual levels (Gergen, 1991).

Criminology and Identity

A similar division than that is described in the work of personality; self and identity in general can be found in the study of the literature of “criminal personality.” Several psychologists adhere to a “trait” conceptualization while others to a more holistic understanding, such as “labeling theory.” However, it should be noted that most psychologists that studied criminal behavior and identity have been interested in the causes of crime and not the consequences of being labeled a criminal. Following is a description of the trait theory and the labeling theory.

Trait Theory

In the 1970's and the 1980's many personality psychologists proposed theories linking personality to crime and other antisocial behaviors. For example, Eysenck (1964, 1977) associated crime with extreme individual values on three personality factors: extroversion, neuroticism and psychoticism. Zuckerman (1989) regarded criminality as a hallmark of individuals characterized by impulsivity, aggressiveness and lack of social responsibility. Studies following this philosophy have commonly used personality instruments such as the Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPQ), the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) and the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) (Arbuthot, Gordon, & Gregory, 1987). These scales are constructed to detect criminal deviation and thus differentiate most clearly between criminal and non-criminal behavior.

Other ways psychologists have looked at personality and criminal behavior is by studying the role self-image plays in deviant behavior. Wells (1978) speculated that behavior is an attempt by the individual to construct, validate, and express one self. Wells views deviant behavior as stemming from the incongruence between the self-image

and self-demands. Following the same idea that self-image is linked to deviant behavior, Cohen (1983) hypothesized that if people have a low self-concept, it would be reflected in a wide array of negative behaviors that would include alcohol abuse, depression and criminality. Reckless and his colleagues (1956, 1957) conducted several studies to understand the relationship between criminality and self-concept. They concluded that high self esteem and personal pride serve to protect boys, who have been court involved, from future episodes of deviant behaviors. Sykes and Matza (1970) analyzed the thinking patterns of groups of juvenile offenders and concluded that “much delinquency is based on what is essentially an unrecognized extension of defenses to crime, in the form of justifications for deviance that are seen as valid by the delinquent but not by the legal system or society at large.” (p. 259). Finally, the work of Martinez and her co-workers (1979) also emphasized the idea that having a positive or “good” self-concept serves to steer Mexican boys living in the US away from delinquent behavior.

Although some researchers are convinced that personality variables are essential to understand crime (e.g. Eysenck & Gudjonsson, 1989), this belief is far from universal. In particular, critics of empirical efforts to link personality to crime have pointed to problems in measurement of personality (Caspi et al., 1994; Tennenbaum, 1977), measurement of delinquency (Caspi et al., 1994; Hindelang, Hirschi, & Weis, 1981; Hirschi, Hindelang, & Weis, 1980; Tennenbaum, 1977) and sampling (Hood & Sparks, 1970; Klein, 1987).

These theories have also been criticized for their associated methodologies throughout which participants are asked to fill out a questionnaire indicating the degree to which specific traits describe them. This method can be criticized under the same rubric

that the Big Five approach has been examined (McAdams, 1996a; Mischler, 1968; Ouellette, 1999). There is ample evidence that personality is not stable across situations (Mischel, 1969), an assumption that is needed to rely on psychometric tests. It should be noted that these tests might be appropriate if the intent is to establish the predictive role of personality on delinquent behavior. On the other hand, if the study is on how personality might change as a result of attending an ATI, as this study is, then conceptualizing personality as stable is contradictory to the current theoretical commitment. Following this line of thought, the Big Five approach has been criticized as not paying enough attention to the context in which a person participates (McAdams, 1996b). As Ouellette (1999) explains, being court involved is influenced by a variety of specific situational as well as social, cultural and political factors, an approach that captures the person in isolation from situations and contexts poses the threat of reductionism.

Labeling Theories

The emphasis that social scientists have put on the “system” has also challenged the idea of personality traits being the causes of criminal behavior. The labeling perspective of Becker (1963) Schur (1965, 1971) and Goffman (1959, 1963), proposed that criminal “careers” were shaped progressively over time. Goffman (1963) explains this phenomenon:

The moral career of a person of a given social category involves a standard sequence of changes in his way of conceiving of selves, including importantly his own self . . . each moral career, and behind this, each self

occurs within the confines of an institutional system . . . the self can then be seen as something that resides in the arrangements prevailing in a social system for its members.” (p. 43).

One can apply Goffman’s analysis to the case of the accused person who moves from civilian to criminal. The often-quoted statement of Becker sums up the labeling approach:

Social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitute deviance, and to applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is not the quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an “offender.” The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label (p.9).

Deviant status, Becker (1963) has emphasized, tend to exhibit “master status” quality. They “override others all others and have a special priority” (p. 33). The imputation of an identity that is deviant “proves to be more important than others. One will be identified as a deviator first, before other identifications are made” (p.33).

There are numerous ways in which labeling might interface with criminal behavior. It has been theoretized, for instance, that labeling exerts its effects through the development of a negative self-image. Lemert (1951) retorts that assigning a criminal

label to a juvenile may eventually lead that individual to begin treating himself as such. A second possibility is that labeling might restrict one's access to legitimate opportunities and make illegal avenues appear more attractive (Tennenbaum, 1938). Finally, labeling may create a personal aura that makes the individual less attractive to "conventional" cohorts but more attractive to antisocial peers (Wilkins, 1965).

Labeling theory has been criticized on several grounds. First by minimizing the importance of explaining the initial (primary) deviance, whatever meaning the behavior originally had for the deviant is ignored as a contributor to the subsequent behavior (Bahr, 1979; Gibbons, 1971; Rutter & Giller, 1984). Another common criticism has been the lack of agency that this perspective assigns to the "labeled individuals." According to Kitsuse (1980) under this perspective the "labeled individual" is "seemingly incapable of resisting or opposing the inexorable process of attributions of abnormality and inadequacy, stigmatized as morally defective, progressively excluded and subordinated as deviant, and driven to seek comfort and support shelter of deviant subcultures" (p. 7). On more philosophical grounds, labeling theory has been criticized as lacking an understanding of power

Of all the theories and studies reviewed, the labeling perspective is the only one that looked at the consequences of being labeled a criminal. However, this perspective considers the consequences of being labeled a criminal in terms of the probability of committing another criminal act. In the present study, I am interested in the consequences of being labeled a criminal with regards to one's entire identity. Thus, this study differs from the labeling perspective because it does not attempt to determine what causes criminal behavior. This study will focus on the effects of being labeled criminal,

with regards to identity in general (not only criminal identity). Another way in which this study differs from labeling perspective is that it recognizes agency in its participants. The present study will try to understand how the participants decide who they are once they have been labeled as “criminals” by the criminal justice system.

Both trait and labeling theories seem to adopt the concept of the chronic, incorrigible or hardened criminal fated to a lifetime of criminality. Matza (1964) was among the first to illustrate that criminality was more accurately described as something that individuals sporadically “drift” in and out of, during certain periods of the life course, instead of viewing it as a permanent characteristic of individuals. In the same year that Matza’s (1964) *Delinquency and Drift* appeared, Glaser (1964) described a typical offending history as a “zigzag path” between crime and non-crime. In his exhaustive study of former prisoners, Glaser found that there was little support for the idea that criminality was a stable trait:

These are the cases that justify the maxim that no human being should ever be regarded as hopelessly criminal. Today all are law-abiding and orderly, yet a decade or less earlier most were condemned as psychopaths. They include men who were considered the most criminal and intractable prisoners in the entire federal system. (p.56)

Theories of Women’s Criminality

Of the numerous approaches to the study of criminal behavior, relatively few are gender specific. Consequently the conventional theoretical explanations of women’s criminal activities are characterized by universalistic assumptions of gender,

race/ethnicity, and class that characterized much of the social science research (Morris, 1964). Morris (1964), in one of her first studies of female juvenile delinquency, interviewed fifty female delinquents. She then matched these females with non-delinquent girls, with delinquent boys and with non-delinquent boys for social class, intelligence, age and grade in school. She found that illegal behavior of adolescent girls is the result of failing to accomplish their primary developmental goal: to formulate satisfying personal relationships. She explains that delinquency is caused by sexual and emotional frustrations that results when intimate relationships fall apart.

Ward, Jackson and Ward (1986) offer a different explanation. Their findings suggest that women commit crimes in a supportive or accomplice role to men rather than initiating the illegal activity themselves. Ward's work has been challenged by the work by Kempinen (1983). Kempinen's longitudinal study of differential sentencing by gender found that women are no more likely to be the accomplice (as opposed to the primary offenders) than men. Her findings, which represent a significant shift in the heretofore assumed leniency towards women in the criminal justice system, indicate that women actually got harsher sentences after 1975 than in 1970 on six kinds of offences: involuntary manslaughter, robbery, minor fraud, weapons possession, drug charges, and child abuse. Kempenin concludes that the discrepancy that once existed in the sentencing pattern that favored women offenders is disappearing rapidly.

Theory that explains criminal activity: Oppositional Identity

Adolescence is a period when a normative identity crisis is experienced. This crisis involves the exploration of many new roles in preparation for adulthood (Erikson,

1968). The difficulty of this developmental period is exacerbated when the adolescent is a member of a minority class. As a minority group member, the adolescent may encounter difficulties that compromise positive outcomes because of prejudice, discrimination, or barriers to full opportunity for personal growth (Erikson, 1980; Gibbs & Huang, 1989). Political, cultural, economic, and social factors interact in complex ways with particular developmental concerns of adolescents, such as identity and self-image, increased autonomy, relations with peers, school achievement, and career goals (Spencer & Dornbush, 1990). One of the most studied phenomena of minority youth coping with these challenges has been the concept of “oppositional identity” and “resisting to act White.”

For more than four decades, social scientists have enlisted the concept of “oppositional identity and culture” as an explanation of why subordinate group members reject certain norms, values and behaviors that they consider the province of the dominant group. The discourse of oppositional identity and culture has a long history in the US, a society in which the notions of power and domination are woven throughout the social, civic, and political culture (DuBois, 1903; Kelly, 1994; Marx, 1972). Researchers of oppositional identity maintain that because the possibility of real upward mobility and equal access to the polity seem so remote, some members of those social groups that are oppressed and alienated begin to challenge and question the legitimacy of dominant ideology (e.g. about the value of education).

The notion of “acting White” and its implications in the lives of adolescent racial minorities also has been documented by social scientists (Anderson, 1990; Fordham, 1996; Kelly, 1994; Ogbu, 1978; Soloman, 1991; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995).

Minority youth might refrain from identifying collectively with those individuals who are benefited and awarded more in society. As a result collective and cultural responses to dominant White society might engender an oppositional identity among racial and ethnic minorities, particularly those who belong to the poor working class (Anderson, 1999; Ogbu, 1978). This concept is of particular importance in the present study since one of the negotiations that I am predicting is that between being “real” and “acting White.”

Fordham (1996) has traced the notion of “acting White” to the post-civil war era in American history when Whites defined as their prerogative such behaviors as going to school, learning to read and write, and seeking and obtaining jobs above the “job ceiling.” Because of social and legal sanctions forbidding African-Americans from engaging in such behaviors, the association of these behaviors and values with “acting White” began. Fordham explained that persistence of the belief that behaving in certain ways and displaying skills, abilities, and credentials that were traditionally associated with White Americans, is a legacy of social and legal sanctions. Further, Wilson (1987) has written that within the central cities of urban America, low-income minority youth are concentrated in areas where there are few African-American or Latino adult models that display those behaviors and skills deemed as “acting White”.

Fordham and Ogbu (1991) claim that African-Americans develop anti-school cultural forms (lowered aspirations, lack of effort) in order to distance themselves from White discrimination (i.e. job ceiling) and at the same time maintain group solidarity. This creates strict peer sanctioning against “acting White” in which school effort is seen as group disloyalty (Fordham, 1996; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Gilmore, 1985). In this

perspective, African-Americans do not achieve levels of attainment on par with Whites, because as Fordham and Ogbu claim, they “put brakes” on their willingness to achieve.

Some studies have found similar behaviors and attitude patterns among urban working class and poor Whites (Gans, 1962; Whyte, 1943; Willis, 1981). Such patterns were labeled as resistance to “acting middle class.”

These concepts seem particularly important for this study because the “oppositional” identity of members from minority communities might be a critical factor in determining who they are, who they want to be, and how they experience their encounters at the ATI.

Chapter2- The Life History Method in the Development of Identity

Sociohistorical theory and narrative theory have largely influenced the way I conceptualized, analyzed and presented this work. These two frameworks complement each other extremely well. Following is a brief summary of each theory as well as how they have influenced this study.

Sociohistorical Theory

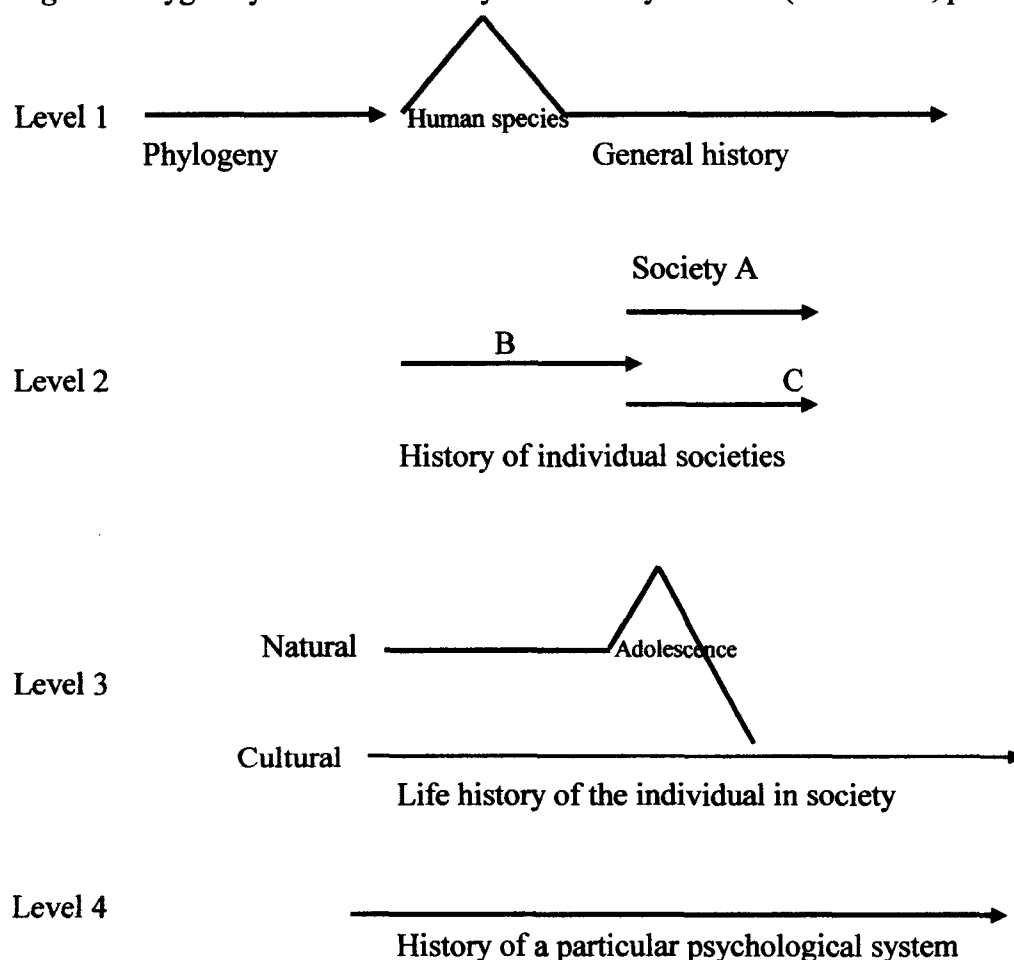
I am basing my dissertation within a Vygotsky/Scribner framework, along four levels of historical analysis (Scribner, 1997). In Vygotsky's sociohistorical theory, he attempted to interweave general history, ontogeny and the history of mental functions into a single framework to interpret human nature. As Scribner (1997) explicated, Vygotsky comes from a materialist perspective that regards the human species, unlike other animals, as fashioning their own nature through productive activities. Thus, Vygotsky believed that as socially organized activities change in history, human nature changes. He further alleged that historical changes in social activities have a directionality, and therefore, are developmental. Higher mental processes are rooted in the general history of humanity.

Each individual also has his/her own developmental history, which consists of two lines: biological and cultural. Higher psychological functions have their own genesis and they form the third line of history. This was a poorly researched area in Vygotsky's time.

In Scribner's (1997, p. 258) view, Vygotsky's work "may be read as an attempt to weave three strands of history general history, child history, and the history of mental functions-into one explanatory account of the formation of human nature" (p. 259).

However, “he did not encompass the full range ‘phenomena in movement’ on the level of either general history or individual history” (p. 259). As societies and cultural groups participate in world history at different tempos and in different ways, “the Vygotskian framework needs to be expanded to incorporate a ‘fourth level’ of history-the history of individual societies” (p.260). At the level of ontogeny, Vygotsky also focused primarily on child development. To expand it to a life span perspective, Scribner replaced ‘child history’ with ‘life history’. Thus Scribner laid out four levels of historical analysis: 1) the general history of humanity; 2) the history of individual societies, 3) the life history of the individual in society and 4) the history of a particular psychological system (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Vygotsky's levels of history modified by Scribner (1985/1997, p.261)



In the present study, I will use these four levels to understand how clients of an ATI program negotiate their identity:

The General History of Humanity- Level 1

There are many things that I could include in the general history of humanity. On the most general basis there is the life story itself. Since the life-story telling, which serves to formulate self-identity as well as cultural identity, constitutes a universal form of expression that has evolved through human history, it may be seen as part of the level 1 phenomenon. In a more specific basis for this dissertation, I included the history of incarceration in the US, which has a very specific history. For example, most of the arrests made in the US are of people in their late adolescent years or young adulthood. For most individuals, participating in “street crime,” like burglary, robbery and drug sale, generally begins in the early teenage years, peaks in late adolescence or young adulthood, and drops before the person reaches 30 (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Other trends have to do with race and ethnicity; for example, from 1986 to 1991 the number of blacks imprisoned for drug offenses increased four times as much as that for Whites (66,000 vs. 15,000), while the number of Blacks imprisoned for violent offenses rose by about the same amount as that of Whites (31,000 and 33,000, respectively) (Mauer, 1997). This occurred at a time when survey data showed that five times as many Whites were using drugs as Blacks (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1998). Understanding these trends dramatically

shapes the way people react to the Justice System in the US, and, in turn, the identity they form.

The History of Individual Societies-Level 2

Scribner believed that hypotheses about psychological change should be informed by knowledge and conditions in a particular culture, in the “here and now”, and not derived solely from historical reconstructions. An event is usually understood from the ways that a community reacts to it; and each community may react differently to historical incidents. Thus, the communities that the participant belongs to, will impact his or her reaction to events. To gain a better understanding of the individual society of my participants they will be asked to describe the different neighborhoods they have lived in and their different networks of friends and relatives. While this information might be supplemented with census data as well as previous studies that describe the neighborhoods mentioned, the ATI, and other institutions that they have belonged to, most of the data will be the one the participants describe. I am mainly interested in the “societies” as they live them, because:

We do not only sense the physical Euclidean space; we sense our situation there. We sense what might happen to us there . . . it is much more than the space and the things around me. A situation is not a view of things over there. My . . . is my bodily sense of living (planning, feeling, being about to act . . . in my situation (Gendlin, 1997, p.15).

The Life History of the Individual in Society- Level 3.

To gain an understanding of this level, I will analyze the participants' personal experiences and the "turning points" that they mention as being key to their identity development. I will use Wethington, Cooper and Holmes' (1997) definition of turning points as shifts in the meaning, purpose or direction of a life. Wethington, Cooper and Holmes (1997) stress that turning points "must include a self reflective awareness of, or insight into, the significance of the change" (p. 217). Under this definition "self realizations or reinterpretations of past experiences might bring a turning point" (p. 217). In the section on identity, I describe how the concept of turning points has been defined by several social scientists and how it has been used in the past.

The History of a Particular Psychological System- Level 4

Identity is a psychological system that individuals use to position themselves in certain ways within external structures. For example, "criminal" is available as an identity before anyone commits a "criminal" act. Therefore, the idea of a "criminal" is a category that pre-exists individual people. At the same time, the particular label functions as identity when individual people adopt it in order to organize around it. For example, "court-involved," as an identity, serves as a political and moral divider, one that validates some as insiders while positing others as outsiders who have committed an illicit act. Thus, we need to understand how identities become a tool for court-involved youth to identify themselves in their own terms and in relation to the world as they see it.

Scribner, like Vygotsky, assumed that different levels of history take place concurrently and mutually influence each other, but in her view, as Cole (1995) relates,

“neither Vygotsky nor contemporary researchers had made sufficient progress in finding ways to study these mutual influences” (p. 169).

Very few researchers (Dien, 2000; Solis, 2001) have used this theoretical framework to study identity, as a particular psychological system (level four). Dien’s study is an autobiography where she analyzes how her Taiwanese background and her experiences of living in different countries have shaped her identity. Her data is her life. Alternatively, Solis’ study is on the identity formation of children who belong to an organization that helps Mexican immigrant families. To analyze this, she utilizes activities (such as having participants develop a booklet) as well as written texts from the organization. The present study is similar to these studies in the following ways: 1) It is similar to Dien’s study since it uses life histories as its data. 2) It is similar to Soli’s study since it analyzes the experience of a group of people that belong to a specific organization.

Even though there are certain similarities between these two studies and my dissertation, there are considerable differences, the major one pertains to the differences in data gathering and methodologies used to examine the data. Dien’s study uses her own life as data and thus self-reflection is the way she analyzes it. Solis uses activities, focus groups, and newsletters as data and thus studies them using activity theory and discourse analysis. This study gathered life history interviews and uses biographical and content analyses.

Narrative Theory

To some researchers familiar with Vygotsky's work, it might be surprising that I chose narrative theory instead of activity theory to complement the Vygotsky/Scribner framework. Within narrative theory, identity is viewed as a story rather than as an activity. Given that activity is always contextualized, it loses the nuances and all inclusive nature that an identity may have. More importantly, the motivation for the action is never examined. This misses what I believe to be the essence of identity; something that guides behaviors, not necessarily the behavior itself. People can act in certain ways and not incorporate it into the view of who they are. Identity is important, in part, because it acts as the lens that shapes what one sees.

Several researchers and social scientists have focused on individuals' narratives as a form that interweaves and creates both personal and cultural meanings (e.g., Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998; Mumford, 1989; Skinner, Bailey, Correa, & Rodriguez, 1999; Strauss, 1990). In many of these works, authors have drawn upon Bakhtin's (1981) notions of voice, heteroglossia and dialogism to account for mind as socially generated and serves as dialogical. From a Bakhtinian perspective, narratives are externalized, multi-voiced utterances that originate from the author's internalization of past and imagined dialogues and encounters in the social world. As such, they become a primary site for analysis of the mutual constitution of the self and social world; of meanings at the personal and cultural level. In weaving a narrative, the speaker places him/herself, the listeners, and those who populate the narrative in certain positions and relations that are figured by larger cultural meanings or worlds. Narrative acts may reinforce or challenge these "figured worlds." Thus, narrative theory offers an elegant

way of understanding all of Vygotsky's/Scribner's sociohistorical levels, in a meaningful and coherent manner.

Apart from being a way of weaving together Vygotsky's/Scribner's sociohistorical levels of analysis, life histories and narrative theory offered many other advantages. Life histories show how individuals make sense of their lives (Cohler, 1988). In life story, the narrator selects from a huge array, those moments that the narrator deems significant and arranges them in a chosen order that is, in fact, much more telling than a chronology (Gergen & Gergen, 1983; Mischler, 1992). Similarly, life stories create tension, and describe how a series of events was built up into a significant problem and how it was overcome (Ochberg, 1988). "Stories are like containers that hold us together; they give us a sense of coherence and continuity" (Mason-Schrock, 1966 p.176)

The self has been defined, in narrative terms, as an ongoing story. It is through an examination of the self-narrative process, in maintaining an interpretive vigilance over the data, and in looking for possible inconsistencies, that the researcher secures useful information and comes to the desired understanding of the self as meaning-maker with a place in society, culture, and history (Freeman, 1992). Further, McRae (1994) and Ochberg (1988) show how telling a life story is a way of organizing experiences and verifying identity.

Personal narratives not only present an inner reality of who the narrator is to the outside world; but also construct the narrator's personality and reality. This concept has been well argued by several psychologists and sociologists (Bruner, 1991, 1996; Gergen, 1991; Gergen & Gergen, 1983, 1986; Hermans et al., 1993; McAdams, 1993; Polkinghorne, 1988, 1991, 1996).

Building largely on McAdams's (1993) notion of the "personal myth" theorists in sociology (Giddens, 1991), criminology (Canter, 1994), addiction research (Singer, 1997), and psychology (Bruner, 1987) have started to view the life history method as much more than a retrospective record of life events. The self-narrative is increasingly understood as a critical part of an individual's personality and inner self. Giddens (1991) wrote: "A person's identity is not to be found in behavior, nor- important though this is- in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going." p. 54).

The life history method was selected for the present study because it is particularly useful in gathering information about stigmatized, uncomfortable, or difficult circumstances in participants' lives (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Compared to other, more structured qualitative methods, life history interviews offers a more intense opportunity to learn about participants' backgrounds, opinions, feelings and the meaning they give to mundane events as well as exceptional experience in their lives (Mischler, 1986; Watson & Watson-Franke, 1985). Given the objectives of this research, the life history method of data collection was selected since several scientists have claimed it to be the most effective means for gaining an understanding of how the self evolves over time (Atkinson, 1998), and understanding "the individual in its human fullness" (Watson & Watson-Franke, 1985). Another reason why life history interviews were chosen was the results from a literature review showed that studies with similar populations and objectives have successfully utilized this qualitative methodology.

Life History Studies About Minorities' Life Experiences and Identities

Lander's (1972) study of an African-American community in the late 1970's was based on 30 systematic open-ended life history interviews about the attitudes and

behaviors of adolescent girls. Her study was concerned with the choices of the participants' role models and the influences of values, customs, and traditions of the African-American community on their gender identities. For her study, as well as for the present study, it was important to learn from the participants themselves rather than approach the interview with preconceived notions-especially in terms of normative and delinquent behavior.

Stack's (1974) study on urban kinship networks also used an open-ended interview schedule designed to detect and describe the most meaningful elements of daily life for African-American women in their communities. She characterizes her interview as "informal conversations" based on general theoretical issues of interest to her sample, including social and domestic relations, gossip, and child rearing patterns.

Lankenau (1999) also used in-depth, open-ended interviews to understand the identity of panhandlers. He conducted thirty-seven interviews with pan-handlers in the Washington DC area and concluded that they develop different identities in response to the hostile environment in which they live in order to adapt to their circumstances.

Life History Interviews on People Involved in the Criminal Justice System

Miller (1986) conducted seventy life history interviews with women who were involved in criminal activities to understand what leads them to that path. The interviews yielded detailed accounts of the roads women took from their families of origin to "street life". Miller was not only able to describe individual cases, but also to document a general pattern that incorporated individual differences, structural influences, and cultural factors that were critical to interpreting the criminality of the women in her sample.

Richie (1996) interviewed twenty-six battered African-American incarcerated women in a New York City correctional facility to understand what lead them to commit their crimes. These women had been physically battered, sexually assaulted, and emotionally abused; all which led them into illegal activities. She also showed how the legal system continues to penalize the women and deny them access to counseling and other services that they so desperately need to change their lives.

Currie (1991) based his study on a series of interviews with twenty delinquents, nine males and eleven females, ages 14 to 17, in a juvenile hall in a Western city. The participants represent various races, social classes, and degrees of education. His study illustrates the complexity and uniqueness of his participant's lives. By understanding the uniqueness of their lives, as well as general trends, Currie is able to break the stereotype of troubled delinquents, which, according to him, is a cause of the failure of the juvenile justice system.

Corey's (1996) study used the life histories of fourteen young men with the goal of understanding the cultural and social values implicit in their narratives. The narratives were also done with a therapeutic purpose. It was proposed that, by telling one's life history, participants would be able to examine how they want to present themselves and their values. Corey found that the participants were able to critically analyze the way they viewed and presented themselves, and, thus managed to change their identity from that of a "criminal" to that of a "homeboy." They were able to break the labels that society had placed on them as "criminals." Although the present study is not a "therapeutic" one, it will try to understand the effects of being labeled "criminal" on the participants.

These studies are particularly important for the present study. They used life history interviews, and showed insights that can be achieved from it. The major difference between the present study with those mentioned above is the way of analyzing the data obtained from the life histories. All the studies mentioned above analyzed their data according to themes from the literature and their interviews. In this study I not only conduct a content analysis but also a biographical one (see section on data analysis).

While none of the mentioned research focused on the same type of population that I interviewed, the methodology that was used in these studies—in depth interviews- served to establish the rationale for using the life history approach in the present study. In sum, the life history method has proved to be appropriate and effective in discovering the complex interactions of events of the ongoing processes that are associated in identity role development.

Chapter 3- Background of this study, Ethical Considerations, and Research Questions

Inception of This Study

I became interested in studying the identity youth develop in an ATI program, after spending a year and a half as the project director at Hunter College Center on AIDS, Drugs and Community Health (Hunter Center) where I evaluated the HIV Peer Education Program of an ATI program in New York City. As part of the evaluation study, I conducted focus groups, life history interviews, and was a participant observant in several of the classes in which the youth partook. This data served as the pilot work for the present study and taught me about the social knowledge of individuals who attend an ATI. While conducting this research, I became aware that the participants were battling with their identity. For example, in one of the focus groups, a female participant who had been several years at the peer education project at the ATI, told me how she had changed:

I used to be mean, just to anyone, I was in the train and I was at the shelter, there was too much anger in me. Now I have learnt to deal with my anger, I have more people to talk to . . . I am still real and have my problems but now I know what to do. Female Participant.

Many participants talked about changes that had happened since they had joined the peer education project, and the battle they had between still being “real” (i.e., not acting “White”) and becoming acceptable members of the society.

I was also interested in studying gender differences given that within the ATI program, the discrepancy between male and female clients is enormous, ninety percent of the youth that attend ATI programs in New York City are males. Given these numbers, ATI program might develop programs tailored to a male population. Although this assumption is a speculation on my part, there is a considerable body of research that supports the existence of gender based discrimination in the juvenile justice system. Several researchers have noted that a protective philosophy often works against juvenile females. Studies show that girls are more likely than boys to be arrested, held in detention and given harsher dispositions, for minor offenses and certain status offenses such as running away and sexual activities (Anderson, 1976; Schlossman & Wallach, 1978, US Department of Justice, Juvenile Justice Bulletin, 2003).

Further, Giallombardo (1966) found that the experience of females in the criminal justice system is substantially different than the male experience. In her study of the Alderson prison, she found that unlike the social system of male prisoners, where solitude is a major factor, the female inmate community consists of large networks of loosely structured nuclear families. According to Giallombardo the adult male and female inmate cultures developed as a response to the deprivations of imprisonment, but the nature of the response in both prison communities was influenced by the differential participation of males and females in the world outside the prison. Given this data, I thought that for my dissertation, studying gender differences was important.

After being immersed in the ATI for a year and a half conducting the evaluation, I found more and more instances of the youth negotiating their identity and thus decided that I wanted to study the identities that youth develop at the ATI in a systematic way. Yet, I had several concerns about doing this. What was I doing studying court involved youth? Who was I to study them? How will I represent their stories? These concerns shaped the methodology I used as well as the presentation and form of the present work. Thus, it is important for me to outline my concerns and the way in which I dealt with them.

Ethical Considerations

One of my initial concerns was how the public would interpret the topic of my dissertation. By choosing to do it on what many would call “youth violence” I could be part of the “anti-youth scare campaign” that has been trying to create an identity of minorities as “criminals” and as “violent” even though many crime sources –FBI Uniform Crime Reports, National Victimization survey and crime reports from major states such as New York, California and Pennsylvania— consistently show that youth crime has decreased.

So why did I decide to study how court involved youth negotiate their identity? There are several answers to this. First, even though crime might be at a low point, this does not translate, in any way, to the increasing number of youth that are being sent to jail and to ATI programs. Second, the identity that youth develop in the ATI programs and in jail might be linked to recidivism rates, which are very high in the US (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2002), as well as with health issues and educational attainment. Thus, this

study is an attempt to understand the lives of the youth, in order to help them in areas where they are having difficulties, and to learn directly from them in which spheres they are successful.

Once I was sure that this was the topic I wanted to pursue, there were still several ethical considerations that I had to take into account before I began my research. One of my initial concerns was that of representation. How could I make sure that I was not making an exhibition of my participants' lives, and the stories they shared with me, but that I was representing them with the respect they deserve? After all, these youth were willing to put their lives in public display in the hope that it will make it better for others. An objective of this study is to disseminate information about the complexities of being young and involved with the criminal system in New York City in a way that would educate the readers and motivate improvements to the quality of life of young people involved in the criminal justice system. The question remains on how to achieve this without exposing people in a dangerous way, or exploiting an already severely exploited population.

I was also concerned about reducing my participants to just being "court-involved", or to place this as their "primary" identity when it is not necessarily so. Michelle Fine and colleagues (2000) have noted the tension between representing individuals, particularly historically oppressed groups, as either victimized/damaged or resilient/strong. They question these categories as our only choice for representation.

We share the worries, but worry more about the fixed "choices" that are being offered. Simple stories of discrimination and victimization, with no evidence of resistance, resilience, or agency are seriously flawed and

deceptively partial; they deny the rich subjectivities of persons surviving amid devastating social circumstances. Equally dreary, however, are the increasingly popular stories of individual heroes who thrive despite their difficulties, denying the burdens of surviving amid such circumstances (Fine et al., 2000, p.125).

The same dichotomy applies to the effects the ATI has on the participants. Institutions' effects on individuals are usually complicated, multi-dimensional with both positive and negative effects on them. Thus throughout this study I was careful about not representing the ATI and its effects on the participants as uni-dimensional .

The methodology I used helps me solve some of these problems. By using a life history interview, I will understand my participants as complex individuals where their involvement with the criminal justice system is one of many events in their lives. It is by showing participants lives and their experiences at the ATI that I achieve to show the intricacies of their lives and of the ATI.

Another issue I had to deal with was that of my position of power. My position of power in conducting a study with a "vulnerable population" was of great concern. This influenced the design of the study, the way I conducted the interviews and the manner in which I analyzed the data. Even though I am Hispanic, I look White, and share many of the "privileges" that the White middle class has—as a child I attended private schools, had the privilege to go to graduate school, and live legally in the US. Thus, I was concerned about studying adolescents who might not have had these privileges and thus perpetrating a historical inequality that places the White researcher in charge of conveying the words and meanings of the less powerful. I believe that adopting a

narrative stand point starts to solve this problem. I do not present myself as the holder of an objective truth; instead the interviews are a process of joint construction of meaning between my participants and me. Participants shared the experiences they wanted with me, and answered my questions in the way that they wanted. Each of my questions and each of their stories are filled with our own assumptions, expectations and desires. However, there are places where the participants had a lot more power than I, and vice-versa. My participants not only had the power to decide whether they wanted to participate or not, but they also had the capability to show up or not show up at the interview. I was there at least fifteen minutes before each interview was scheduled to start, waited at least 45 minutes after the scheduled time for the participant to show up, and scheduled and rescheduled the interviews at their convenience. By the end of the interviewing period I had spent countless hours waiting for participants to show up. However, I had the power to decide what questions to include, how to code the data, how to present it, what to include in my analysis and what not to. I assume this power with great care- I try to stick close to the interview texts. In one of the results chapters I present part of an interview and in the other result chapters I quote from the interview transcript at length, so that their voices can be heard through my interpretation. By acknowledging that this study is based on the relationship that I developed with the participants I also limit my power.

While the ethical considerations played a large part in shaping this study, the theoretical framework and the literature review also influenced it. Below I talk more about the process of creating the interview protocols.

Creating the Life History Interview

I designed two life history interviews for this study. All participants were supposed to participate in both.

- 1) A general life history interview covering all aspects of one's life (see Appendix III- Life history interview protocol #1)
- 2) A more specific life history interview emphasizing their identity and their experience at the ATI(see Appendix III-- Life history interview protocol #2).

The design of the interviews had to be shaped in order to obtain the data needed. To do this I reminded myself that what I wanted was to gain an understanding of the general issues that had gone on in the lives of court involved youth, while emphasizing the most recent months/years of their lives, the time that they had been involved with the criminal justice system and particularly with the ATI program. Thus, I took several factors into consideration. Apart from the ethical concerns, the following aspects also guided this process: 1) I wanted the interviews to be broad enough to allow room for the participant to talk about Scribner's levels of history; and 2) in the interviews I wanted to probe for the different explanations the previous researchers have identified as being "at risk" factors for criminal behavior. The following is a summary of the factors most commonly mentioned as being risk factors for criminal behavior that I took into account when designing the protocols:

Failure in school.

Many scholars have looked at the psychological dimensions of the way minority students respond to teachers and work requirements. They have thus explored the ways the self is defined through publicly available categories and the effects that dropping out of school has in the creation of a “criminal” identity. For example, Steele and Aronson’s (1994) “stereotype threat” model assumes that African-Americans think Whites and educational institutions question their intelligence and that the anxiety this produces may partially explain why they under-perform from Whites on standardized tests. It is suggested that African-Americans score lower because they are caught in a web of “self-fulfilling prophecies” about how society regards them as incompetent.

Similarly, Heath (1998) argues that African-American students possess a low academic self-concept or feelings of low self-worth that stem from identification with a marginalized group status. Self-concept is an important factor in academic success and reflects students’ feelings about their group and the importance of that group in the environment where they are learning. According to Heath, students view themselves in terms of dominant group notions of their abilities, and hence experience alienation and ambivalence in educational settings. This claim is further evidenced by studies that show that African-American students who attend historically African-American colleges outperform those who attend predominantly White institutions (Fleming, 1984; Gurin & Epps, 1975).

Fine (1991) shows how race, gender, class and politics are involved in creating “achievement” and “identities” in high school students. She documents the role public

high schools have in (re) producing unequal outcomes in the lines of race, gender and class.

Family problems.

As one of the principal organizing units of our society, the family serves several functions: to socialize its members, to provide a vehicle for meeting basic material and emotional needs, and to transmit social norms and values. It is also considered a key determinant in the development of individual identity and the subsequent behavior of social actors. Thus, family background influences a youth's career in at least two important ways through socialization and through the resources provided by the family. Richie (1996) found that women who had been incarcerated at Rikers Island had been significantly influenced by the structure of their households, their cultural frame of references, the gendered and generational divisions of labor, and the positions of their families in the dominant social order.

Within the family structure, a question that needs to be asked is whether any of the participants' family members had been incarcerated in the past. It is well established that family dissolution can adversely affect children. Therefore, the incarceration of a parent will increase child difficulties. The few studies of this phenomenon document the theoretical and practical significance of the problem (see, for example, Gabel, 1992; Lowstein, 1986) and it disproportionably affects families of color (King, 1993).

The effects of incarceration on children and families are emotional and material. Material consequences include problems that result from the loss of childcare and financial support. In the process of responding to the disruption, secondary changes may

also occur such as address or school changes, alterations in the composition of the family unit, and reductions in financial security.

The emotional consequences are less obvious but potentially more significant. Depending on the age of the child, removal of a parent to prison may promote acting out, especially in school. Children may feel shame, humiliation, and a loss of social status. They may come to distrust or even despise the symbols of authority (laws and the state) that have removed their parent. The chances of new parenting combinations increase, and this may mean more inconsistent or fractious relationships and disciplinary practices with children. Some might argue that removing a criminal parent likely takes away an abusive or abusing influence from the home. The net gain of taking away such a parent may outweigh the net loss, but it may not. A child will respond in a variety of ways, some of which are negative. Specifically, the future criminality by children of incarcerated parents is worth exploring. Certainly, poor school performance, unsupervised free time, financial strain, decreased contact with adults, and suppressed anger are precursors of delinquency (Wright & Wright, 1994).

Neighborhood environment.

Building on a long history of research on urban communities, the study of neighborhood effects has generated a multidisciplinary research agenda with a strong focus on child and adolescent development living in disadvantaged neighborhoods (Sampson, 2002). Several researchers (Bellair, 1997; Roundtree, 1999; Warner, 1997, Veysey, 1999;) have found a strong tie between the structure of the neighborhood and the number of residents involved in the criminal justice system. According to Sullivan

(1990), residents residing in neighborhoods with less economic opportunities are more prone to illegal activities.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

What are the circumstances and the choices that ATI participants see in their lives? What values do they develop while attending an ATI program? It might be that these questions shed light on the causes of why they became criminally involved to begin with, but the emphasis will mostly focus on “what happens next.” More specifically, the purpose of this dissertation is to investigate how youth that participate in an ATI negotiate their identity both within their new environment and within themselves. Here participants’ identities might be reshaped by: 1) their legal status, 2) the new activities in which they participate, and 3) the “surveillance” that is added to their lives. The main question I want to answer is “*How do male and female participant’s previous experiences (level 3) and their attendance to the ATI program (level 2) affect their identities (level 4)?*” In order to answer such a complex question I first asked seven smaller questions:

- 1) What is the history of the juvenile justice system in the US, and how does it influence individual lives?
- 2) How do participants view the places they grew up and attended (e.g. schools, neighborhoods)? How did these places affect their identities?

H1: Participants will identify their neighborhoods and schools as crime and drug infested places, which have affected their identities as being rough or isolated.

H2: Male participants will be more likely to develop a tough identity while female participants will more likely be isolated.

- 3) What have been the major turning points in the participants' lives? How do these turning points affect their identities and in turn their experience at the ATI?

H1: The death of close family members, the change of schools, neighborhoods, the incarceration of a close friend or family member, will be common turning points in the participants' lives. These events will partially shape participants' identity towards deviance.

- 4) What was the identity of the participants before becoming court involved? And how do these identities affect the identities that are negotiated at the ATI?

H1: Before becoming court involved, the participants will identify themselves as the "tough guy/girl" where his/her motivational impetus in interpersonal relationships was the preservation of autonomy and the need for self-expression.

H2: Participants who base their identity on being "tough" will have a harder time adopting and negotiating their identity at the ATI than those who do not rely on this identity as much.

- 5) What are the identities of the participants while participating in the ATI program?

H1: Participants will feel a loss of personal autonomy, a feeling of being stigmatized, but, at the same time, a greater sense that they can change their lives by finding a legal job and feeling that they have a larger support system. They will be faced with confusion between remaining "real" and "acting White."

H2: Female participants will have less of a sense of being able to find a legal job once they leave the program. Their identity as a minority within a minority will be enhanced.

- 6) Is the experience of participating in the ATI program a turning point in their lives?

H1: Both male and female participants will view this as a turning point in their lives, especially with regards to their identity.

7) How is this program, reshaping their sense of self-identity and their behavior?

H1: The program is reshaping the participant's identity in feeling "valuable" members of their communities by offering employment opportunities as well as a stronger support system. At the same time the program is a constant reminder that they are different from other adolescents who are not labeled "criminals."

Chapter 4- Methods

Participants

The youth whose stories are told in this dissertation were attending an ATI in New York City. Male and female participants were recruited using different techniques due to the huge discrepancy in numbers between male and female clients at the ATI. Male youth were recruited utilizing a quasii-random procedure. During a five-week period I approached every sixth male client I saw at the ATI's entrance hall. I explained to the clients who I was and the purpose of the study (see Appendix I- Description of the Study). Seventeen participants were approached; three (18%) were ineligible since they had been in the program for less than three months; eight (48%) were interviewed; four (23%) refused; and two (11%) were scheduled and never showed up. One of the male participants never completed the second interview. However the data that I collected during the first interview were analyzed for this dissertation.

Female participants were recruited through class presentations. Most female clients at the ATI participate in the "GirlRising program." I gave five presentations during GirlRising classes. In total 21 participants were approached; nine were not interested in participating (42%); two (9%) were ineligible (one was younger than 15 years and one had not been at the program for three months); three (14%) scheduled and never showed up; seven (33%) were interviewed.

Thus in total 15 youth, eight male and seven female youth, participated in this study. Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the sample.

Table 1- The demographic profile of the sample

	Male	Female
Age		
15 years old	0	1
16 years old	3	2
17 years old	3	1
18 years old	2	3
Raised by		
Both parents	2	2
Mother	4	3
Father	0	0
Grandmother	1	2
Foster Care	1	0
Education (highest level)		
No high school	4	2
Some High school	4	4
High school Diploma	0	0
College	0	1
Neighborhood where they grew (multiple responses are allowed)		
Bedford Stuyvesant., Brooklyn	1	3
Brownsville, Brooklyn	0	1
Midtown west, Manhattan	0	1
Harlem, Manhattan	3	0
Hunts Points, Bronx	2	0
Mt. Vernon	1	1
South Bronx	2	1
Queens	1	0

The demographic characteristic of the sample I interviewed are similar to all youth enrolled at the ATI and to what other studies have reported during different times (Porter et al., 2002). In 2003, participants' age ranged from 13 to 24. Most participants were 17 years old. Thirty three percent lived in Brooklyn, 39% in the Bronx, 27% in Manhattan, and 1% from Queens. The most common neighborhoods that ATI youth clients came from, during 2000 to 2004, included: Bedford Stuyvesant, East New York, Brownsville, Bushwick, Flatbush, and Canarsie in Brooklyn, Hunts Point, South Bronx, and Tremont, in The Bronx, Central Harlem and East Harlem in Manhattan. A snapshot of 103 youth

clients in 2002 showed that 70% had a family member who had been incarcerated, and that in the previous two years, 19% had lived in two or more places.

Procedures

Once clients agreed to participate in the study a meeting date and place (within the ATI program) was selected for the interview. Participants met with the researcher at the ATI program. At the beginning of each interview, I gave each participant an honorarium of two movie tickets. Participants were informed of their rights as participants of this study both verbally and through the informed consent (see Appendix II-Informed Consents). I read aloud the consent form and asked the participant if he/she had any questions. One copy of the informed consent form was filed in the researcher's office, and another was given to the participant. The first life history interviews lasted approximately 1-½ hours and participants were asked to talk about their growing up experiences and their current experiences. The second life history interview inquired into how participants' view themselves and how they think others view them. (See Appendix III- Interview Protocols). I also used this second interview to probe for any information that I missed during the first interview. The two interviews were separated by at least one day. This gave me time to go back listen to the tape, and take notes of the probes I missed in the first interview. All interviews were audio taped. I took notes right after the interview was completed in order to record the reactions that participants' had both to the questions being asked, and the way they answered them.

A research assistant transcribed the tapes. After, I checked and corrected all the transcripts to make sure they had been transcribed verbatim.

Coding the interviews.

NUD*IST 6, a computer program, was used to code the interviews. NUD*IST was chosen for several reasons; it could be learned quickly, others recommended it, and it had an impressive array of functions which are very useful aside from its basic ability to index and later retrieve categorical interview segments.

NUD*IST organizes data into a system of nodes, grouped together in a tree structure (Qualitative Research and Solutions, 2002). Main categories, 'nodes', are given 'parent' status, and sub-categories, also 'nodes', are 'children.' The result is a diagram that can be called up on the computer screen, with many branches at whose nodal points relevant data can be stored is a diagram that can be called up on the computer screen, with many branches at whose nodal points relevant data can be stored. The indexing process began very early on, as I introduced the concepts that had emerged from the literature review and the theoretical framework as being important in understanding the identity and experiences of court involved youth. Thus, most of the parental nodes (such as: 'demographics' 'location' 'location characteristics' and 'identity') were created early on. After reading the transcripts several times, I created more nodes, some to be children nodes of the ones I had originally created and others to be parental nodes. Thus, apart from indexing an entire transcript, sections of each transcript were also coded under certain themes, nodes. Inevitably, some text units were indexed under many different nodal headings, whereas others were not indexed at all (except as base data). This was due to the fact that once sentence uttered by a respondent could contain information

relevant to understanding eight or nine concepts whereas others could be completely irrelevant to answering research questions.

Thus, coding data is neither an inductive nor deductive process, but it is based on qualitative induction and abduction, as Kelle (1997) explains:

With qualitative induction a specific empirical phenomenon is described (or explained) by subsuming it under an already existing category or rule; whereas abductive inference helps find hitherto unknown concepts or rules on the basis of surprising and anomalous events (Kelle, 1997).

Kelle's words aptly describe the way in which I view the analytical process I had theoretical preconceptions, but revisions and modifications of these were possible, and to be expected on immersion of the data.

The tree nodes that I created to code the transcripts can be seen in Appendix IV- Coding scheme.

Data Analysis

According to the theoretical framework used in this dissertation, I analyzed the life history interviews in the three levels of history (out of the four) outlined by Scribner. As mentioned before, the data for the first level of history (the history of US justice system) was gathered from a literature review and not from the life history interviews- this data is presented in chapter 6. The rest of the data were gathered from the life history interviews. For the history of a society (level 2) the variables of interest are what participants said on:

- a) Neighborhood/s- how does the participant view the neighborhood(s) in which she or he grew up, and that in which she or he is currently living? What are the salient features of the place? What activities happen there and how does the participant relate to the neighborhood?
- b) Schools. How are these institutions perceived by the participants? What activities happen there and how does the participant relate to the institution?
- c) ATI- what were the participants' preconceived notions of the ATI? How do they view the ATI while attending it? Does this change with time? How? What activities happen there? How do participant relate to the ATI?

N.B. - Here the variable of interest is not the participants' experiences in these places, but the participants' perceptions of the place, and what they perceive as being the culture that predominates the place.

For the personal history of an individual (level 3) the variables of interest are:

- a) The participants' experiences with their family
- b) The participants' experiences at school(s)
- c) The participants' experiences with their peers
- d) The participant's experiences in their neighborhood
- e) The participants experiences at court and any other criminal justice setting
- f) The participants experience at the ATI
- g) The participants experiences with other institutions.

For the history on identity (level 4) the variables of interest are all self referential statements including :

- a) How does the participant view him/herself-

- b) What does he/she like/dislike?
- c) How does the participant think others perceive him/her?
- d) What forces, institutions, and people affect who the participant is?
- e) Who would the participant want to be?

Once I had all transcripts the data were analyzed using two different techniques.

1) **Content Analysis-** This approach involves coding participants' open-ended talk into categories that summarize and systematize the content of the data. These categories will be the three different levels of history described by Scribner. The characteristics that the participant mentions of the ATI will be coded as level two; all events "turning points" enumerated by the participant will be coded as level three and all self-referential statements will be coded as level four. The content analysis will serve as a way of understanding general trends, what are the most common behaviors, places, adjectives to describe themselves, family members, friends, mentioned by the participants. However content analysis by itself obscures a number of developmental problems such as contradictory information and developmental paths that lead to a particular identity. Thus the in-depth analysis will constitute a biographical analysis.

2) **Biographical Analysis-** This approach involves analyzing each life history interview individually. To show this analysis the developmental trajectories of two participants were created. These vignettes contextualize the experience of attending the ATI program in the participants' lives, and thus help with the understanding of how different turning points create identities. Biographical analysis, unlike content analysis which divided the talk into fragments and regrouped these fragments into categories (or themes), treats the individual as the unit of analysis and explores how biographical

continuity is achieved. (Bury, 1982; Wilkinson, 2000). Thus biographical analysis shows the complexity and individuality of each life. This is crucially important; too often, we stereotype troubled and delinquent youth (something that content analysis does not avoid). While most stereotypes hold some truths, they also obscure the forces that have influenced the paths young people take. In short, biographical analysis will show the interactions of how the different levels of history shape the identity of the participants.

I present these two analysis as interconnected, so what was learned from the biographical analysis influenced the content analysis and vice versa. Thus these two analysis helped me gain an understanding of the lives of the participants and the process through which they negotiate their identity, and thus will illustrate how Scribner's levels of history interact with one another to construct the self.

In order to show the reader how an interview progressed, and some of my thought processes that went behind an interview I included part of the transcript of one participant, Forest in Appendix V. It has my comments and analysis. By showing part of an interview I not only illustrate the dynamics of the interview, but also how Forest spoke about his life, his fears and hopes, families and friends, frustrations and dreams. This narrative was selected because Forest was one of the most eloquent and articulate male participants and his narrative embodied many of the topics that other participants spoke about. His story is neither the most dramatic nor the harshest one.

In the result chapters there are many quotes from participants' narratives. Participants' narratives are presented almost verbatim, however following my committee's advice they have been slightly edited. I removed all the "umms" "and "you know" from the narratives. Some unfinished sentences and repetitions were also omitted.

Also at times I use ellipses “. . .” to indicate that part of the narrative has been omitted for reasons of brevity.

Limitations of the Methodology

While the strength of qualitative research is that it provides in-depth information about the interactive variables of the participants weaknesses are inherited in the method. The particular limitations of the life history method used in this study fall into three categories:

- 1) The validity of the information presented. There is rarely a way to confirm the veracity of information communicated during interviews. This problem is increased when one considers that those being interviewed are having to recall and reinterpret their experiences. At best, all self-reports are subject to memory errors and unconscious distortions of what is reported (Arias & Beach, 1987). However, it should be noted that I am not that interested in what really happened but in what participants recall as having happened and how they “lived” those experiences. As Clifford Shaw pointed out: “The validity and value of the personal document are not dependant upon its objectivity or veracity.” Rather, “rationalizations, fabrications, prejudices, exaggerations are quite as valuable as objective descriptions, provided, of course, that these reactions be properly identified and classified.” (Shaw, 1945).
- 2) The generalizability of the research findings. As I previously mentioned, to get in touch with the participants I am proposing to use a random sample. Although this method of sampling is one of the most accurate ones to account for external validity, it still leaves the question of not knowing how representative the sample I am using is of the

larger population of youth that attend ATI programs. Are ATI clients who decide to participate different than the ones who refuse? How about to the ones who were not invited? Since my aim is to be able to make accurate statements about the clients of the particular ATI program, and not just describe the people I interviewed, not knowing whether or not there are any significant differences is problematic. In other words, I may make unknown and unknowable errors when I generalize from the fourteen youth I am planning on interviewing to the entire population of the ATI program. Generalizations should be made with the utmost caution, but it is of just such generalizations of which science is made. Research such as this, then, provides generalizations grounded in data that become the source of testable hypotheses for subsequent research.

3) The timing of the interviews. The timing of the interview is an essential consideration when analyzing the interviews. I interviewed participants who were still in the ATI program, and had been there at least three months. This timing allows me to capture the daily experiences at the ATI and the negotiations that take place there; however it might be an inappropriate time to capture whether the ATI is a turning point in participants lives. A turning point might be knowable only after the fact, thus interviewing participants while they are still at the program might lead to an erroneous conclusion, that the ATI is not a turning point when it is. Thus I am extremely careful to make this assumption, and I only talk about participants' thoughts of whether the ATI is or isn't a turning point in their lives.

RESULTS

The results section is divided into six chapters. The first four chapters represent one of the levels of history outlined in the Vygotsky/Scribner framework. The first result chapter, chapter five, presents the history of the US justice system. As I explained earlier, this accounts for the first level of the Vygotsky/Scribner framework. The information presented in this chapter comes from secondary data- census data, the Bureau of Justice, the juvenile justice system, and social scientists that have collected data on this topic. At the end of this chapter I show how such a broad level can affect the lives of individuals, and I provide some references of how participants talked about the effects of the criminal justice system in their lives.

The following four result chapters show the patterns that emerged from the life history interviews. Chapter six corresponds to the second level of analysis in the Vygotsky/Scribner framework, and shows how participants talked about their social environment, particularly their neighborhoods, schools, and the ATI. Chapter seven presents the third level, participants' personal histories. Chapter eight presents the fourth level, participants' identities before attending the ATI. Chapter nine looks at the transformations that took place in the ATI. By seeing the patterns one can understand the similarities and differences of participants and understand why the ATI had different effects on different participants.

For these last four chapters I present not only my voice, but also that of participants, since I illustrate the points I am making with their narratives. While I would have liked to use equal number of quotes from each participant, this was not possible,

given that some participants talked more about more topics than others. I also use a few quotes in two sections, given that the information that is contained in them pertains to both subjects.

Chapter ten, the last chapter of the results section, shows how the themes of the content analysis are embedded in actual lives. I show the developmental trajectories of two participants, Tanesha and Frank. These two lives contextualize the themes mentioned in the content analysis and show how those themes became to hold such an important place on who the participants are, who they want to be in the future, and the effects of the ATI program.

Together these different analysis (content and biographical analysis) show how participants' histories, the histories of their neighborhoods, and their previous identities all play a critical role in the transformation of the self at the ATI.

Chapter 5- The History of the USA Justice System (level 1)

In this chapter I present the history of the criminal justice system in the US, as it pertains to the first level of analysis of the Vygotsky/Scribner framework. This allows us to understand participants' development as being partially socially organized and socially produced, not only by what happens in early life, but also by the effects of social structures, social interactions, and the effects of social structures on their effects on life chances throughout the life course. Thus, understanding the US criminal justice system is essential to understand participants' lives and the identities that they develop.

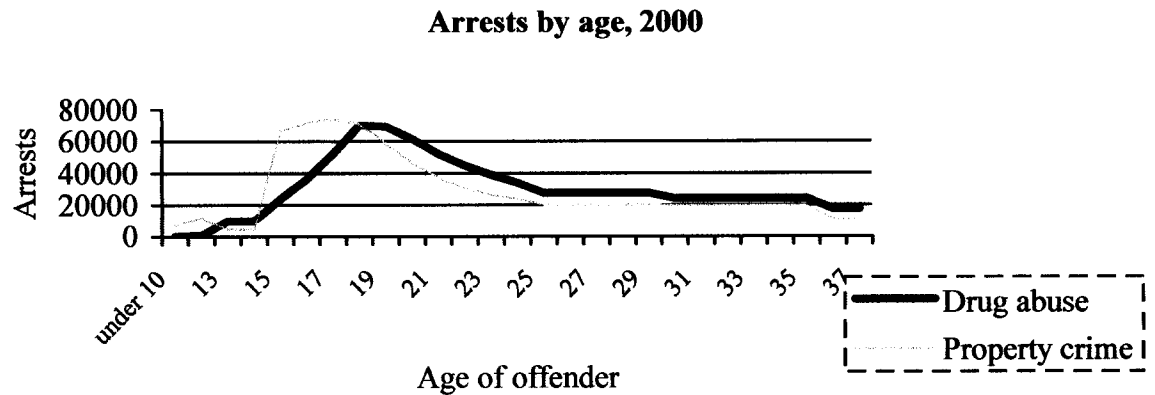
As the millennium turned, America's prison and jail populations approached the two million mark (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2001), at midyear 2003, there were nearly 2.1 million inmates in the nation's prisons and jails representing a 2.9% increase from the previous year (US Department of Justice- Office of Justice Programs- Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2004). These figures are even more astounding if one sees the trend that America's prisons have experienced in the last four decades. In 1970 there were 338,029 Americans in prison, in 1980 there were 474,368, in 1990 there were 1,148,702 (Younge, 2003). Today, five percent of the US population can be expected to serve an average sentence of 60 months of incarceration in federal or state prison in their lifetime. The cost of this massive growth is staggering, Americans spent close to \$40 billion on prisons and jails in the year 2000 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2001). Almost \$24 billion of that went to incarcerate 1.2 million non-violent offenders (Ziedenberg & Schiraldi, 2000). In

New York, the prison budgets outstripped the budget for higher education during the mid 1990's (Schiraldi & Ziedenberg, 1998).

Several studies have shown that the social costs for people who are incarcerated and their families and communities become more substantial each year (Anderson, 1990, 1999; Bourgois, 1995; Richie, 1996; Richie, Freudenberg, & Page, 2001; Sullivan, 1990; Thomas, 1967). Inner-city minority communities have lost large proportions of their young men, and increasingly women, to prison and jail (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1999). Although the removal of some "criminal" offenders can provide benefits to the community in reduced crime rates, this varies greatly depending on whether the offender is an armed robber or a low-level drug seller. Imprisonment also deprives children of their parents, couples of their significant others, and the community of resources that provide positive benefits, including supervision of young people and other elements of informal social control. As more young people grow up with parents and siblings incarcerated and come to view time in jail as a normal aspect of one's life experience, the deterrent effect of prison is diminished as well. Among African-American jail inmates surveyed in 1996, 49% had a family member who had been incarcerated (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1999). In 1997 there were 7 million children with a parent in jail or prison or recently released on probation or parole (Butterfield, 1997).

Youth are not only in contact with the justice system by having a family member incarcerated. Most of the arrests made in the US are of people in their late adolescent years or young adulthood. For most individuals, participating in "street crime" like burglary, robbery and drug sale generally begins in the early teenage years, peaks in late adolescence or young adulthood drops before the person reaches 30 (see figure 2).

Figure 2. Arrests by age of offender.



FBI- Uniform Crime Report, 2000 (http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius_00/contents.pdf)

Some even argue that this well known “age crime curve” has remained virtually unchanged for at least 150 years- that is to say that young people have always been the ones arrested and incarcerated for criminal activity (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990).

Therefore it is not surprising to see that the number of juvenile arrests followed a similar trend as that one from the general population. Juvenile arrests in the US increased in the late 1980s and peaked in 1994 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1999). Between 1985 and 1995, the average daily population in the Nation’s publicly operated juvenile detention centers increased by approximately 72 percent (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000) which resulted in overcrowded facilities.

A large cause of this increase in incarceration is the spread of the “war” on drugs across America. The arrests of juveniles charged with selling drugs skyrocketed; in the US as a whole, the number sent to public juvenile institutions for drug and alcohol

offenses leaped by almost 150 percent from 1985 to 1989 alone (Currie, 1991). The harm of incarceration for drug offenses has by no means fallen equally across race or age categories, with young, African American men suffering unprecedented rates of incarceration for drug offenses. According to the Sentencing Project, nearly one in three (32%) Black men between the ages of 20 and 29 were under criminal justice control in 1995 (Mauer & Huling, 1995). A recent report by the Building Blocks for Youth Initiative found that Black youth were admitted to state public facilities for drug offenses at 48 times the rate of White youth (Jones & Eileen Poe-Yamagata, 2000).

From 1986 to 1991 the number of African Americans imprisoned for drug offenses increased four times as much as the increase for Whites (66,000 vs. 15,000), while the number of Blacks imprisoned for violent offenses rose by about the same amount as Whites (31,000 and 33,000, respectively), (Mauer, 1997). This occurred at a time when survey data showed that five times as many Whites were using drugs as Blacks (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1998). It seems that who ends up in the criminal justice system provides a sharper image of who is at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder at that given time, than of the types of criminal activity.

Recent research also found that Black men born in the United States in 2001 will have a one in three chance of going to prison during their lifetime if current trends continue (Younge, 2003). In 2001 one in six of African-American men were current or former prisoners, compared with one in 13 Latinos and one in 38 Whites.

Juvenile Court Processing

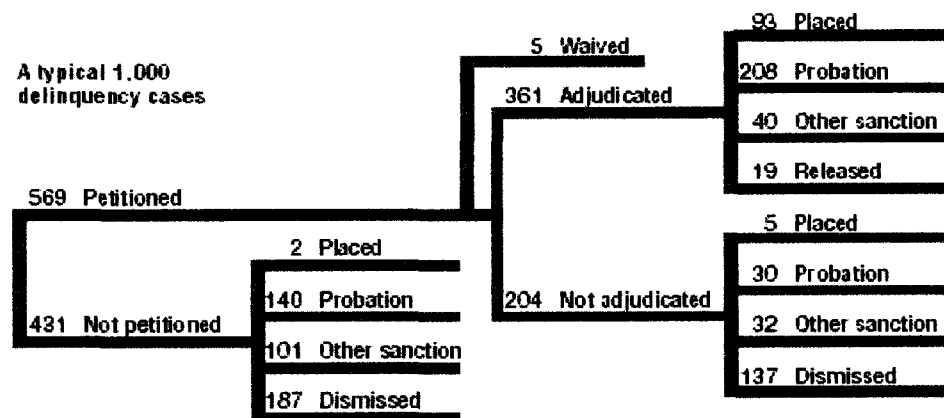
Although there are several paths that young people involved with the criminal justice system might take, depending on the court, a general model of the key decision points in the juvenile justice system process and juvenile court procedure is as follows:

- 1) **Intake-** Referral cases are first screened by an intake department. The intake department may decide to dismiss the case for lack of legal sufficiency or to resolve the matter formally or informally. Informal (i.e. non petitioned) dispositions may include a voluntary referral to a social agency for services, informal probation or the payment of fines or some form of voluntary resolution. Formally handled cases are petitioned and scheduled for an adjudicatory or waiver hearing.
- 2) **Petitioning-** If the intake department decides that a case should be handled formally within the juvenile court, a petition is filed and the case is placed on the court calendar (or docket) for an adjudicatory hearing. A small number of petitions are dismissed for various reasons before an adjudicatory hearing is actually held.
- 3) **Judicial Waiver-** The intake department may decide that a case should be removed from juvenile court and handled instead in the criminal (adult). In such cases, a petition is usually filed in juvenile court judge to waive jurisdiction over the case. The juvenile court judge decides whether the case merits criminal prosecution. When a waiver request is denied, the matter is usually scheduled for an adjudicatory hearing in the juvenile court.
- 4) **Adjudication-** At the adjudicatory hearing a youth may be adjudicated (judged) a delinquent or status offender, and the case would then precede to a disposition hearing. Alternatively, a case may be dismissed or continued in contemplation of

dismissal. In these cases the court often recommends that the youth take some action prior to the final adjudication decision such as paying restitution or voluntarily attending drug/alcohol counseling.

- 5) **Disposition**-At the disposition hearing, the juvenile judge determines the most appropriate sanction, generally after reviewing a predisposition report prepared by a probation department. The range of options available to a court include: commitment to an institution; placement in a group or foster home or other residential facility; probation; referral to an outside agency; day treatment or mental health program.

Figure 3. The juvenile court processing in 1998 in the US (Sickmund, 2003)



Once a juvenile has been judged and found guilty, there are several options available to the court. He or she can be “placed” (i.e. sent to a correctional facility, a detention center, shelter care facilities, training school, ranches, forestry camps and farms, half way houses or group homes), receive some other sanction (such as an ATI), or be placed on probation (i.e. postponing a sentence or pronouncing sentence but suspending

its execution, with the offenders being required to meet certain conditions during a specified period of time, such as an ATI program.)

I would like to note here that figure 3 is a “typical” case for every 1,000 cases, however there are some differences among gender and ethnic background that should be noted. In 1998, a greater proportion of cases involving males were waived (sent to criminal court- adult court) than cases involving females. African American youth were more likely to be waived than youth of other races (Sickmund, 2003).

New York’s Juvenile Justice System

Up to now, I have included a brief history on the general trends and processing systems in the US. However it is important to note that each State has its own way of enforcing the law and its own system on what punishments should be. Thus, I think it is important to emphasize the Juvenile Justice system in New York City since that is where this research took place.

Brief history of New York’s juvenile detention centers.

For decades, New York City had only one secure detention center, Spofford Juvenile Center. It was opened in 1957 in Hunts Point in the Bronx. This 289-bed youth jail has long been considered a symbol of overcrowded conditions and brutality against children. Spofford has been largely criticized by its poor design, its remote location, and its lack of needed services such as education, mental health and recreation. In addition, there have been many reports of incidences of physical and sexual attacks by staff against youth (Faruquee, 2002)

In 1989 the city decided to construct two state of the art secure detention centers, to replace Spofford. The new facilities were designed to be smaller and look less like jails (holding up to 125 young people in each) and more like community centers. Horizon Juvenile Center in the Bronx and Crossroads Juvenile Center in Brooklyn opened in 1998.

In addition to working to close the notorious Spofford, New York City took other important steps in the early 1990s to improve the juvenile detention services and reduce the number of young people entering secure detention. In 1993, the Annie E. Casey Foundation selected New York City as one of five national sites for its Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI). The main goal of the initiative was to reduce the unnecessary or inappropriate use of secure detention for juveniles.

However, the political situation in the city changed dramatically in the ten years since public officials first approved plans to replace Spofford with smaller more modern detention facilities. In 1989 the average daily population of young people detained at Spofford was 191, by 1998, the average daily juvenile detention population had jumped to 318, an increase of 65% (Faruquee, 2002). The election of Rudolph Giuliani as mayor in 1993 brought into power a “tough on crime” administration oriented towards locking up people for less serious offenses. Moreover the new administration’s centralized approach to decision-making undermined the collaborative approach of the JDAI initiative (Hoytt, Schiraldi, & Ziedenberg., 2002 p.53). Recognizing that the city’s policy directions were no longer compatible with JDAI, the Casey Foundation dropped New York City from its group of detention reform sites in 1998.

Since 1998 the story of juvenile detention in New York City has been a series of provisional measures that deal with growing numbers of children entering and staying in the city's youth jails. As the Giuliani Administration prepared to close Spofford, it faced a crucial decision: it could expand alternatives to detention to divert the growing numbers of youth entering the system or it could increase its locked up capacity. The administration chose the latter course. In December 1999 Department of Juvenile Justice reopened Spofford as an intake facility. In the fiscal year 2001-2002 Capital Budget included an allocation of \$65 million to construct wings at Horizons and Crossroads that would each hold 100 more juveniles. It is important to note that from 1993 and 2000, as juvenile crime and arrests dropped by 28% the number of youth remanded to secure detention soared by almost 60% (Faruquee, 2002). Contrary to public perception, the majority of youth were not jailed because they were a threat to society or because they had been charged with a serious crime. In the fiscal year of 2001 youth charged with the most serious violent crimes – murder, arson and robbery—compromised only 10% of all youth admitted to secure detention. During this same period, violent juvenile crime declined by 30% in New York (New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, 1994-1998). This dramatic rise on the daily population of youth in secure detention at times when crime was decreasing can be attributed to several factors. First there was a shortage of non-secure detention beds resulting from the closing of two group homes in 1997. In response to this shortage, the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) house youth eligible for and/or referred to non-secure detention in secure facilities. Second, with the laws of “harsh on crime” an increasing number of youth who have a history of truancy or who have been arrested for misdemeanors are often referred directly to secure detention

bypassing non-secure detention. Finally, the increased length of trials for juveniles has resulted in longer stays in detention for youth (NYC Department of Juvenile Justice Website,)

Notable, at the end of the fiscal year (June 2001), the Department of Juvenile Justice experienced a 15% drop in its secure detention population from the fiscal year 2000- the first drop in its annual population rate in over six years. The city's secure detention continued to decrease in the first half of the fiscal year 2002 (July to December 2001) and by December the city's three detention facilities were all operating at around 70% of capacity (Testimony of Fred Patrick- Commissioner of Department of Juvenile Justice, 2001).

Virtually all the people confined to juvenile detention centers in New York City, as well as in the country, are African American and Latino and come from the city's poorest neighborhoods. Research conducted by Building Blocks reveals that youth of color experience more punitive treatment than their White peers in every stage of the justice process. In fact, youth of color suffer from a "cumulative disadvantage" from the point of arrest to incarceration, a process which results in stunning examples of racial disparity in our juvenile justice system.. The Building Blocks for Youth study found that in 1998 African American youth represented 15% of the nation's total youth population, but 26% of the youth arrested, 31% of the youth referred to juvenile court, and 44% of the youth detained. Moreover when White youth and African American youth were charged with the same offenses, African American youth with no prior admissions were six times more likely to be incarcerated than White youth with the same background. Latino youth

were three times more likely than White youth to be incarcerated. (Poe-Yamagata & Jones, 2000).

ATI programs in New York City and the populations they serve.

The criminal justice system in New York City includes a unique network of alternatives to incarceration: a coordinated set of programs to which judges may send criminal offenders instead of sentencing them to jail. The programs are designed and operated independently, but all require offenders to attend counseling, classes, and treatment for a period of six months to a year in order to avoid a threatened jail or prison sentence. Most are non-residential. New York City currently is spending approximately \$12.5 million on ATI programs, responsible for the punishment and treatment of approximately 4,000 people on an annual basis (Porter, Lee, & Lutz, 2002).

The ATI system in New York City differs from other programs nationwide in at least three ways. First, its programs are more carefully targeted than most “alternative” sentences in the United States, screening offenders to maximize the chance that the programs admit only those genuinely bound for jail or prison. Defendants whose charges carry potential jail time, but whose charges are likely to receive only a probation sentence, are screened out. Second, the ATI system emphasizes treatment and onsite supervision as opposed to around the clock surveillance, avoiding such devices as electronic bracelets. Each program serving felony defendants is under contract to treat a general population of offenders or one of three special populations- substance abusers, women or youth. Third, the system is not operated by the government probation or correction department but entirely through contracts between non-profit organizations and the mayor’s Criminal Justice Coordinator and the New York City Council.

Judges in New York, as in most states, are not required by legislation or sentencing guidelines –nor are they encouraged- to send offenders to ATI programs. In the absence of such formal encouragement, the use of ATI programs is left to the initiative of individual judges, prosecutors, or defense lawyers. City officials have created an ATI system that includes not only programs for offenders but also court representatives whose job is to persuade judges, assistant DAs and public defenders to use these programs routinely in appropriate cases. As a result the ATI system in New York City plays a dual role in the criminal justice process, trying to shape plea bargains and sentencing decisions in court, as well as administering the sentence themselves.

History of ATI's in New York City.

Most of the individual programs that today comprise the ATI system for felony defendants in New York City began as independent efforts. The Court Employment Project (CEP) opened in 1967 as the country's first pre-trial diversion project to use rehabilitation services explicitly to help manage the size and shape of the criminal justice system. For another decade and a half, community based organizations across New York City developed a number of programs designed as substitutes for jail or prison, each funded through private grants or the sponsorship of individual government officials. During this early period, the city was dotted with small experiments, but it had no real system of alternatives to incarceration.

New York State's Classification/Alternatives to Incarceration Act of 1984 brought increase funding and government management to this array of experiments. The Act provided funds for programs that diverted convicted offenders from jail terms of at least 180 days; it required each county or city in the state to establish a committee to coordinate

the distribution of these funds, and it began a regular state monitoring of the funded programs. While experimentation continued with other private and public funds, the 1984 Act created a dedicated funding stream that continues to support New York City's ATI system to this day.

The Act came in the middle of the largest expansion of jail and prison capacity in New York State history. For both officials and program operators, the Act represented a small but significant counterweight to the pressure of forcing unprecedented constructions of new jails and prisons. The rhetoric of rehabilitation had been largely abandoned, leaving punishment for crime as an end in itself with a rapidly growing popularity. Between 1980 and 1990, for example, the New York City Department of Correction increased its spending on the city's jails by more than 450% (Jacobson & Tarlow, 1990). In this context, ATI program operators emphasized their role in diverting offenders who would otherwise go to jail or prison and moderating, however slightly, the enormous cost of expanding the prison system. At the same time, the ATIs responded to some judges' and prosecutors' frustration with the limited sentencing options. To those who wanted options more rigorous than probation but less harsh than incarceration, ATIs began to serve as intermediate sanctions. In short, the newly formalized ATI system was implemented as a means of expanding sentencing options while saving money.

In the early 1990's, the Office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator (OCJC) substantially increased city funding for ATIs as part of the expansion of the city police department's tactical narcotics teams. The new spending of ATI was designed to free space in city jails to handle a part of the anticipated increase in felony arrests. OCJC

specified that ATIs should displace misdemeanor sentences for at least 20 days in jail and felony sentences of at least six months.

New York City supports ten felony ATI programs that specialize in one of four subpopulation groups: 1) substance abusers, 2) women, 3) youth and 4) general population. Two of these ten programs are dedicated to youth.

The placement process.

A remarkable characteristic about alternative sentencing is that it does not occur at any particular point in the legal proceedings. Only occasionally is an offender sent into the ATI system at a straightforward sentencing hearing following a conviction. Instead offenders enter ATI programs whenever judges order them to do so: before a plea of guilty, after plea but months before formal sentencing, or actually at the sentencing itself. The decision process to send an offender into an ATI program is embedded in a negotiation process that involves judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and ATI court representatives and begins when a defendant is first brought to court (Porter et al., 2002).

The ATI screening process focuses first on finding felony cases in which defendants are likely to receive incarceration in the absence of the program. The suitability of defendants for particular programs is determined by their gender age and individual needs. For the juvenile ATI programs suitability is determined by age. Since 1997 the process has begun with the Criminal Justice Agency (CJA) using statistical models to target new felony arrests who are predicted to receive sentences of at least 180 days in jail. According to a research study conducted by the Vera Institute of Justice (Porter et al., 2002), court representatives, employed by the ATI programs, rely on interpersonal relationships with court staff, judges, and persecutors as a way to identify

defendants who are likely to receive custodial sentences. After examining defendants who qualify to participate in the ATI program, court representatives interview defendants using a standard four page interview. Using this information the court representative decides whether to advocate for ATI placement.

Having decided to advocate for an ATI placement, the court representative becomes immersed in the plea bargaining process. Nearly all criminal cases in New York City are disposed by plea bargains rather than trials. Pleas are reached through negotiations between defense attorneys who seek to have charges reduced and a light sentence imposed, and prosecutors, who generally aim to maintain the highest charge and impose sentence. The involvement of judges in the plea negotiation process varies from case to case. ATI placements are most often negotiated as a deferred sentence. The defendant pleads guilty to a specific offense and agrees to a specific term of incarceration, but the judge holds the sentence in abeyance, permitting the offender to attend an ATI program. The defendants agree that if they fail in the program, they will be sentenced under the agreed sentence. If the offender completes the ATI program successfully, the court voids the original guilty plea. At that point, the judge will either dismiss the case or permit the offender to plead guilty to a lesser offense with a sentence of "time served" or probation.

In New York City, about 15% of the youth that are adjudicated are placed in an ATI program (Fasoldt, 2001). The ATIs for youth in New York City are based on a restorative justice philosophical framework that addresses crime in ways that are more direct, personal, and constructive than the typical "solutions" of the formal criminal justice system. By redefining crime as harm done to both victims and the community, restorative

justice recognizes crime as more than an affront to the state. It is a breach of community, in which individuals are harmed.

A recent report from the New York City Criminal Justice Agency found that ATIs are more effective in reducing recidivism than jail and probations. This holds true for the different types of ATIs; those serving youth, women and men (Savolainen, 2003).

Another report by New York City Criminal Justice Agency showed that ATI programs met the City's goals for displacing days that these defendants would have served in jail had they not been sent to an ATI program (Phillips et al., 2002). Avoiding time in jail does not only reduce the recidivism rate but also saves City dollars. According to the City's Department of Correction, the average annual cost per jail inmate is \$62,595. By contrast ATI services cost as little as \$1,400 to \$13,000 per person served (CASES, 2003).

As we can see the history of the criminal justice system in the US, is a very specific one, which has targeted certain groups and thus influenced the lives of particular individuals in very specific ways.

In reviewing the history of the juvenile justice system in the US, we can see how its philosophy has a direct impact on what is called a "crime," the sentence that goes with it, and the conditions that are present in jails, prisons and ATIs. Participants of the present study showed that the changes in the criminal justice system and the unclear guidelines that guide the decisions of who ends in the ATI and who in jail or prison. For example:

When everyone around you has been locked, you ain't surprised
when you are there. . . It ain't always [our] fault. It's just that they jail
Blacks. Frank

Results from the Life History Interviews

Although all participants had a unique personal history, they share common characteristics, such as neighborhoods they lived in, schools they attended, etc. In the following four chapters I examine these trends, taking a close look at gender differences. In order to contextualize the quotes, I included Table 2 which represents demographic characteristics of each participant.

Chapter six presents participants' environment, the neighborhoods that they have lived in, their schools, and the ATI (level 2). This chapter is mostly descriptive; it presents how participants and the census describe the places that participants inhabit. After showing the reader what the participants surroundings are like, I analyze the experiences participants had in these settings- (level 3) in chapter seven. I then continue in chapter eight to show the identities participants had at different times in their lives (level 4). Finally, the chapter nine examines the effects that the ATI had on participants' identities.

Throughout these chapters participants' narratives are used to illustrate the findings. I would have liked to use participants' narratives equally, however I did not do this since some participants provided more detailed narratives than others. Since female participants talked a lot more than male participants, they are also quoted more often. Several symbols are used in the transcripts:

. . . Omission of a sentence, several sentences or a paragraph from the text

[] signify the addition of a missing word or phrase by the author. Or a comment by the author of the participant's reaction (e.g. laughs, cries, coughs, etc).

Table 1- Participant's characteristics

Name	Age	Ethnicity	Time at ATI	Highest level of Education	Neighborhoods lived	Charged at time admitted to ATI	Major turning points before ATI
<i>Tanesha</i>	17	African American	4 months	Some high school	Brownsville, Brooklyn	Robbery	Mother giving her away Having a Baby Starting high school Starting using drugs Robbery Cousin/Friend killed Being detained by the criminal justice system
<i>Saundra</i>	15	African American	3 months	Some junior high school	Bed Stuyvesant, Brooklyn	Prostitution	Prostitution Starting high school Juvenile detention center Disappointing/Hurting mother (emotionally)
<i>Francine</i>	18	Latina	4 ½ months	Some college	Midtown West, Manhattan, Mt. Vernon, NY	Robbery	Starting high school Relocating Mother placing her in mental health institution Father requesting PINS Friend killed Drug use Jail- Rikers Island
<i>Natasha</i>	16	Latina	4 months	Some junior high school	Bed Stuyvesant, Brooklyn	Robbery	Raped Pregnant Death of grandmother Juvenile detention

<i>Kimberly</i>	16	African American	3 months	Some junior high school	Bed Stuyvesant, Brooklyn	Robbery	Drug use Stealing Jail Junior high school
<i>Nancy</i>	18	Latina	3 months	Some high school	South Bronx	Drug possession	Father incarcerated/ deported Relocating Jail High school Prostitution
<i>Laura</i>	18	Latina	3 months	High school diploma	South Bronx	Drug possession	Father and step father stealing from her. High school Drug use/sell Relocating
<i>Shakim</i>	18	African American	4 months	Some high school	South Bronx	Robbery	Using drugs Dropping out school Friend killed Jail
<i>Mark</i>	17	African American	5 months	Some high school	Harlem	Violation of probation	Relocate Joined gang Dropped out school Jail
<i>Frank</i>	18	African American	4 months	Some junior high school	Mt. Vernon, South Bronx, Harlem, Queens	Drug possession	Relocating Foster care Death grandmother

<i>Nico</i>	17	Latino	3 months	Some high school	Hunts Point	Drug possession	Relocating Jail
<i>William</i>	16	Latino	3 months	Some junior high school	Bedford Stuyvesant	Possession of a weapon	Jail Working
<i>Forest</i>	17	African American	4 months	Some high school	Harlem	Gun possession	Jail Started selling drugs and pimping. Disappointing family
<i>Damon</i>	16	African American	3 ½ months	Some junior high school	South Bronx	Violation of probation	High school Friend killed
<i>Larry</i>	16	African American	4 months	Some junior high school	South Bronx	Gun possession	Parents separated Junior high school Relocating

Chapter 6- The History of Society and its Institutions (Level 2)

It is not new or surprising to report that the social environment that we live in shapes our experiences and our identities. Individuals exist within the basic structures of society; structures that circumscribe present experiences and set limits on future actions (Giddens, 1976, 1981). Thus, it is important to have an understanding of these places to understand the participants. In this section I present how participants characterized three of the settings where they spent a lot of time 1) their neighborhoods, 2) their schools and 3) the ATI. The participants' data is supplemented with census data.

Neighborhood

Neighborhoods have a large impact on their residents. Research has found that violence is less common in neighborhoods with a strong sense of community, cohesion, strong values and willingness by residents to intervene in the lives of young children and discourage delinquency (Sampson, 2000). In a city with the diversity that New York City has, neighborhoods might be even more influential on the development of their residents. New York City is a city of great inequalities. While being one of the richest cities in the world it has some of the poorest neighborhoods in the United States. According to the 2000 Census between 1991 and 2001 the US had an average of 11.6% people living in poverty; New York had 14.1% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

In New York City, during the 1990s, 34% of Dominicans, 22% of Caribbean and Africans and 27% of African Americans were living in apartments that suffered from rat infestation, lacked water or heat or had no kitchen or bathroom (Bracher, 2000)

Almost all of the participants in this study lived in one of the poorest neighborhoods of New York. Five participants lived, or had lived during part of their lives, in Bedford Stuyvesant, or Brownsville, Brooklyn; seven participants lived, or had lived during parts of their lives, in the South Bronx, or Hunts Points, the Bronx; and three participants lived, or had lived during parts of their lives, in Central Harlem, Manhattan. One participant also lived part of his life in Mt. Vernon, New York and in Queens. Data from the census, from the New York Police Department and from the New York City Department of Health give us a glimpse of the conditions in and histories of some of these neighborhoods.

Hunts Points, a sub-borough in the south east of the Bronx, has had the lowest median household income in New York City since 1989. Even after a 22% increase in the 1990s, the median income in 2000 was \$17, 250. Only 33% of the residents have work, the lowest rate of employment in the city. Educational attainment was also the lowest in the city with only 5% of adults holding college degrees in 2000. In 2000 Hunts Point continued to have one of the highest murder rates in the city at 14 per 100,000 residents.

Central Harlem has the third lowest median income of any sub-borough, and this is after an income rise of 17% during the 1980s. In 1999 Harlem remained the neighborhood with more apartments (12.8%) suffering from heating problems, rodent infestation, cracks/holes in the walls, toilet breakdowns, and water leaks (Daniels & Schill, 2001). At the start of the decade, it had the second highest murder rate in the city and the highest rate of drug-dependency deaths. Even though the murder rate and the

drug-dependency death rate fell in the 1990s, Harlem still has the highest murder rate and the drug-dependency death rate in the city.

Bedford Stuyvesant is a neighborhood in north-central Brooklyn. According to the 2000 census 69% (99,375) of its residents have incomes at or below the poverty line. It also has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the city (11.3 per 1,000 infants), and one of the highest single family rates, with 43% of its residents living in single family houses, and 36.5% living in houses where the female is the head of the household and there is no husband present. Seventy seven percent of its residents are Black, non-Hispanic and 18.1% are of Hispanic origin.

Brwonsville, a neighborhood east of Bedford Stuyvesant, has similar characteristics, its infant mortality rate is somewhat higher, 12.9 per 1000 infants, 49% of its residents living in single family houses; 43.3%, living in houses where the female is the household and there is no husband present. Seventy eight percent of its residents are Black, non Hispanic and 18 % are of Hispanic origin. All these neighborhoods have had a long history of poverty.

Consistent with this data, all participants spoke about their neighborhoods as being poor places, dominated by gangs, violence, drugs and/or prostitution. All the participants described at least one of the neighborhoods they had lived in, or the one they were living in, as being dangerous, violent, and drug infested:

Very drug related. It's the projects Bad area but it never really affected me because I was never there. My mom always kept me in

programs after school, basketball this, everything so I was really never in the projects like that. Laura.

Well, it's not a really good neighborhood because there's a lot of shoot-outs happen, a lot of fights happen, a lot of gang related, related people is over there and it's not really good at all. Natasha.

It's a bad neighborhood. But I got to live there, so I deal with it . . . The people in the neighborhood . . . They do things for no reason. Stupid things. They'll write on your door. Throw eggs at your door. Knock all your lights out on your floor. Everything. Burn your house door. Burn the elevators. It's not nice. They be knocking niggers out for no reason. They went around with boxing gloves, whoever's on the streets gets knocked out. . . . The Chinese won't even deliver food to my projects no more. Dominos, nobody deliver over there any more. Because every time they deliver over there, because every time they come in, somebody rob them. So they don't even deliver. We got to go out and get the food now. It's crazy. People in the stores sell drugs for people on the corner. The Arabs, I seen it last night, they be selling drugs with the people who work in the store. So the drug dealers that are in front of the store, they don't have the drugs on them. So when the cops come for them, they don't get caught. But the drugs, they go in the store and do everything. It's crazy. Forest.

Hunt's Point, it's a drug area. And prostitution Every other neighborhood is the same thing. Drugs, gangs, fighting shooting. It's the projects and that's the way it is. Nico.

The above quotes not only illustrate the harsh conditions of these neighborhoods but also how participants were affected by them. For example, Laura states how she was not affected by her neighborhood because she spent a lot of time in after school activities; Forest, on the other hand, states how he "deals" with the conditions, given that he has no option of living somewhere else.

Aside from these detrimental comments about their neighborhoods, participants also had positive things to say, either the same neighborhoods that they described as drug infested, or other neighborhoods they had lived in:

My idea of Harlem is like it's dangerous but, at the same time, if you grew up there and everybody knows you then it's like kind of fun.
Forest.

It was like a small tenant building and it was like everybody knew everybody. It was like one big family. Francine.

We live in the projects in the Bronx. It's cool. There are basketball courts there and stores and community centers. The junior high I went to is right there. Shakim.

It's got a little store, got the park, got the building where you hang out, got the blocks. Everybody is outside you know. It's relaxing, playing basketball. People are chilling on the steps having a good time, talking. That's how it is out there. William.

There were as many positive as negative neighborhood comments, however, negative remarks were usually longer and more detailed. When discussing their neighborhoods participants also spoke about “the block” they lived in. Interestingly, participants usually talked about their block in more positive terms than their neighborhood. Four female participants commented that their block was a friendly place, while male participants usually spoke about “belonging” to a block. For six male participants, the block not only represented a place to “chill” but also a dangerous place, where you can get arrested for just being there and where people have to “watch their backs.” Thus, for male participants the block affiliation serves as a safety net and resource in a conflict or a potentially violent situation; belonging to a block enables them to feel safer and it is assumed that it acts as a deterrent to being picked on or victimized by others. Below are some ways that participants spoke about their block:

Oh as soon as I got in [back from jail] the block everybody, give me a hug, you home, all that other stuff. They bought me some food. I was outside. People on my block. It was fun. I was happy. Saundra.

I have one friend Nicky, she braids my hair and she lives down the block from me, you know. We smoke weed together too but yeah, she braid my hair and she's a good friend. Francine.

I don't chill on my block; I chill on like two blocks away from my block . . . That's where we just chill out, chill in the apartment, chill in front of peoples' houses, chill on their stoops. Larry.

The blocks stick together. They don't turn against you. Like the blocks they never turn on you, they are always with you . . . we are like a family. We don't mess with them [people from other blocks] and they don't bother us. They are not from our block, so we don't care. It's only about our block. Damon.

The division of the neighborhood into blocks, and the social rules that operate within the neighborhood and across blocks, influenced the daily lives of the adolescents. While these are participants' descriptions of their neighborhoods, we start seeing how they have shaped what they did and who they became; Laura' mother sent her to different programs to keep Laura far away from the drugs that dominated the neighborhood, Tanesha states that violence does not face her since she has seen it all her life, further, in this short quote we learn what Tanesha's desire to "not become the streets." This phrase illustrates how much the society shapes the identity.

Schools

Most of the youth who participated in this study attended or were attending public schools in their neighborhoods. The schools they attended had predominantly poor minority students. According to the New York State Education Department, 79 to 98 % of the students, attending the schools in the neighborhoods participants lived in, are African American or Hispanic, and most of the students are poor- between 80-98 % of the students are eligible for free lunch (Division of Assessment and Accountability, 2002). Two female participants, Laura and Tanesha, were the exception, since they went to private schools for a few years.

Participants, particularly female participants, had attended many different schools. Females had gone to an average of six schools while male participants reported an average of four schools. Sandra's recital of her long list and Francine's comments talk to this point:

Kindergarten at Flatbush, PS135. I went to a different school in the fifth grade. PS 262. And I was at Bed Sty. Then I was at a different one in second grade, from second to fifth and it was SIS 308. And I left there in fifth grade. I graduated in the sixth grade I went to a different school. Then I went to one in Bushwick and I graduated from there in eighth grade. Sandra.

I've been to so many schools. It's unbelievable. . . . My sister was always going to Catholic school. My brother and me were in public

schools so my parents . . . they just decided to move us there and I was going to school in Chelsea for and it was Guardian Angel [a private Catholic School] until about like until I got into the seventh grade. So about three years I went to Catholic school . . . [Then] I was at Fashion Industry. . . . I forgot to mention that I went to Clinton School for writers and artists and I was there at eighth grade and actually I graduated . . . then I went to a different school, started high school when I was 13. Francine.

Female participants talked a lot more, and in more detail, about the schools they attended than male participants. For most female participants, their elementary school was an agreeable place:

They were real good. It was like all smart kids. In my opinion. It was like all talented. It was a school for talented kids . . . the teacher's there, they teach. And like give you more attention cause there's not a lot of people in the class. I like that too. Sandra.

I used to like school when I was younger. . . . I used to like it because we always have friends in school and we used to always play around. The school was just friendly. We get our work done. Natasha.

When I was in elementary . . . it was fun cause people did like me they said I had great potential, the teachers loved me. Tanesha.

I usually went to predominantly White schools. That's by my mother's choice. They were clean, small . . . one-on-one teaching. Laura.

In contrast to their elementary schools, females described their junior high schools and high schools as being too large, crowded and unpleasant places.

[Junior high school] just got crazy. It was like no one knew if you were there or not . . . there were fights everyday. It was just crazy. Natasha.

I was doing good there but the staff, the teachers, and the principal, I didn't like them. . . . The school was real dirty. Sandra.

[High school] that's the drastic change. I never been in a school so big in my life. I started messing up, there's too much things going on. There's not enough attention on me. I need a lot of attention. Laura.

Even two girls who affirmed never enjoying school (Nancy and Kimberly), both reported that their junior high school experience was daunting. Nancy, who in elementary and junior high school slept in classes she considered boring, described having to be alert

in high school, not because she paid attention to classes, but because a fight could break any second and she would need to get involved. Some days she would take a knife and/or a gun to school.

Then I took a knife to school, and I took a gun . . . It wasn't to defend myself nor to attack anyone, but . . . for anything that might arise. Everything happened there. Nancy.

Male participants talked a lot less about their school characteristics than female participants. Only three of the eight participants mentioned the physical aspects of the school, and the three talked specifically about junior high school or high schools. Two of these three participants described their schools they attended as being dirty, overcrowded, and had teachers who did not care.

[High school was] so dirty. It stank. I don't belong there, I like everything clean . . . Teachers just didn't care you can do what you want. Larry.

It was really big, but there were too many students. It was crazy. Sometimes there was no where to sit. William.

Male participants also reported violence and fights as a characteristic of their junior/high schools, but not of their elementary schools.

It was a place for fights. Always there were fights in there.

Nico.

Another characteristic of junior high schools and high schools that both male and female participants talked about was the lack of continuity that existed. As many teachers as students stopped attending the school even during the academic year:

Teacher's would stop going there. Like if they got a job at a different school, they would always leave. Can't blame them to move [to something] better. William.

You just never saw the same people. It was like jail. One day you are then you are gone. . . . teachers, administrators, students, they would all go when they got a chance. Kimberly.

It was always changing, like every day was different, there were still the fights and all that but people would just leave the school it made you not want to be there. Damon.

All of these characteristics that participants described of their high schools have been associated with the development of disciplinary problems and violence (Aness, 2000, Fine, 1994). These results also show how participants' have been shaped by their

schools as well as by their neighborhoods. While describing the physical characteristics of their schools they talked about who they were and how they reacted to these characteristics- they enjoyed their elementary schools and felt lost in their high schools. I analyze this relationship in the next section, of participants' experiences in schools.

ATI Program

The ATI is located in a City building which houses court rooms on the first floor and many City and NGO agencies in the upper floors. Like many City buildings in New York City, security features have been added after the September 11, 2001 attack. In order to go in the building one has to show a valid ID and go through metal detectors. Apart from the detectors there are several guards, policemen and cameras at the entry of the building.

These security features were a constant reminder to the participants about their "criminal" identity, and were perceived as a site of intrusive surveillance. The following comments show the extent to which participants noticed and were bothered by these features:

There are cameras everywhere. It's like they are waiting to see when you slip. Nico.

Coming into the building already reminds you of the being a criminal. That is how they treat you Sometimes [they] are real disrespectful. Larry.

Guards sometimes make fun that the bra beeps and that is just not right. Kimberly.

For one participant, Francine, even the location of the ATI was a reminder of being a criminal. The ATI is located next to the Family court, a place she had been several times and did not have fond memories:

I just don't like it here. You know I spent a lot of time in that building [family court], and I would like to forget about it. Francine.

The ATI is located on several floors of the building. Participants have to sign in with the guards at the front desk of each of these floors. The guards here are employees of the ATI and tend to be very friendly, both with the staff and the clients. However they also enforce the rules of the ATI. One of the rules is that clients cannot wear red. This color has been ruled out for security reasons. Gangs have long had "uniforms" to identify themselves. Red has been one of the colors that distinguishes one of the major gangs in New York City, the "Bloods."

Many participants, particularly male participants, said that these rules were insulting. They felt that they were not trusted and that the ATI was too quick to assume that they belonged to a gang. Below are how participants talked about the ATI guards being sympathetic and caring about people and at the same time being enforcers:

I really like [ATI's guard] it's like they are there to help you, take away that image that you are a criminal. . . . They do report you like for anything. That's not cool. . . . [but] it is part of their job. They have to. Kimberly.

It isn't always like that. It was times when you just feel like man, why do they do all this [the clothes rules] who do they think I am? Mark.

However five participants, two male and three female, reported that many fights were avoided because of this rule:

They are in here [gang members], but there's no way you can see because they've got strict rules [the ATI] no red, so you can't know who is who. But if you could wear red in here there would be a lot of violence I guarantee that. Shakim.

For female participants' clothing was also an issue. One of the rules of the girls' program was that its participants could not wear short mini skirts or shorts. This was particularly a problem in the summer, which was the time I was conducting my interviews.

Chapter 7- Personal Histories: Personal Experiences and Turning Points (Level 3)

This section presents some of the more local, or personal conditions that helped shape the psychological formation of participants. Whereas the previous section described the societal dimension of participants' lives, this section focuses on the individual dimension. Specifically participants' personal histories including some of the major turning points in their lives are presented here. For the purpose of this study, turning points are shifts in the meaning, purpose or direction of a life. Turning points must include awareness of the significance of the change. Many of the points I describe in this section are not turning points, but just important life experiences. This section is divided into five parts: 1) participants experiences with their families; 2) participants experiences with peers; 3) participants experiences in the neighborhood; 4) participants experiences in school and 5) participants' experiences in the ATI.

Participants Experiences with Their Families

Divorced families.

For the most part, participants' parents were divorced or separated. While this is not an uncommon experience, around 35% of the households in the neighborhoods that participants lived have a single parent with a child under 18 years old living with them (Daniels & Schill, 2001), it had a significant effect on them. Four participants (three females and one male) mentioned that one of the turning points in their lives was when they stopped living with a family member (usually father). These participants mentioned that they considered their parents leaving them as the cause for being insecure and unable to trust people. Although females reported this event as a turning point much more often than males, three male participants also mentioned that they had found it hard to adapt

being far from a parent. The quotes below also show how male participants seemed to be mostly embarrassed from the divorce, while female participants suffered from lack of trust, being insecure, and distant:

I don't really have a bad childhood. It was complications during it, just without a father, didn't die or anything, just was in and out of jail, drug using and stuff like that. Once he left it was just hard to trust people . . . when he was home he would steal from me, just like my stepfather. Laura.

That was the cause of all my problems, why I just went let me say mentally insane . . . I just turned my back on everybody . . . didn't care about nothing, cause I felt like nobody cared about me, why would my mother give me up, so, I thought I wasn't worth nothing cause if your parents could give you up then you ain't nothing. Tanesha.

My father was never around so, it's always something to think about . . . Once he left I just always thought about it. . . The hard part was when I got raped when I was 13, no I was 14 turning 15 when I got raped. It was by my father's sister's husband which is my uncle. He raped me and stuff. And I sort of feel my father has something to do with it, but I don't know . . . It is just hard to believe him or any man. I just don't know him. Natasha.

He just left us. That was hard. After that it was hard to get close to people. It's like you don't want to tell that you ain't got a dad. Larry.

My dad was deported . . . he worked but he was also with drugs. But that was how he helped me and my mom. I was really sad that he was deported. Before I asked him that he left it [drugs] and that he stayed with me. He preferred the drugs and that is hard. I can't trust anyone with what they say . . . I can't believe anymore. Nancy.

Relocating.

Many studies have found that after divorce parents are more likely to relocate. Ford (1997) showed that within four years of separation and divorce, about one fourth of mothers with custody move to a new location. In Braver and O'Connell's (1998) data set, three percent of the custodial parents who could be located moved out of the area within 12 weeks of the divorce filing, 10% moved away within a year, and 17% moved within two years. Given that many of the participants of this study came from divorced families, it was not surprising to find that so many had lived in several neighborhoods. However, many of the participants—five male participants (Shakim, Mark, Larry and Nico) and five female participants (Tanesha, Natasha, Kimberly, Nancy and Laura) — had not only relocated neighborhoods but also households while growing up. This relocation included having different parental figures at different times in their lives. Participants usually lived between their mother's and grandmother's houses, but, in some cases, between the mother, the grandmother, the father, uncles, and/or foster care system. Two of the

participants, Laura and Nancy, also had moved around from one State to the next and Nancy had also lived in two countries (US and Dominican Republic).

Relocating was a turning point in participants' lives. Consistent with findings from other studies (Benson, Haycraft, Steyaert, & Weigel, 1979; Braver, 2003; Murnane, 1975), several participants who moved around reported that their school performance suffered because of it. They had to adjust to new classmates, teachers, and school environment. Other thoughts about moving around, were feelings of abandonment and difficulties adapting to their new milieu, the new rules of the neighborhood, a new school, and loss of a social support that they had developed in their neighborhoods. However, not all participants that had moved around experienced it as detrimental. Three participants, Nancy, Laura and Forest, felt that it was an opportunity to expand horizons, to get to know other people and understand new customs. For Nancy and Laura moving also meant going to see family members who they liked very much. Below is Tanesha's talk on how she felt abandoned, Larry's on how it was hard to adapt to a new neighborhood and school, Frank's, on how leaving his family behind was hard, Forest's on how much he enjoyed moving around and its benefits, and Nancy's comments on the joy of visiting her father.

I just knew no one. We [him and his family] were there alone, and that is just not cool. You got a start all over, and that is hard. School I just didn't know anyone. You have to fight, get yourself respected. Larry.

It's just hard [moving around and losing contact with the family], I took care of many of them [his siblings] and now I hardly know where they're at. Frank.

I lived all over New York [Queens, Bronx, Staten Island, Harlem]. That's why I know so much. And everyone knows me. Forest.

I was just so happy. My dad went to the airport to pick me up and we just partied and had a good time. It was the best. Nancy.

All participants who found relocation a distressful experience, except Frank, were able to adapt to their new environment after an adjustment time.

It is not surprising that mobility was a distressful event for some participants and not for others since mobility is not simply an event with specific outcomes, but a set of social and psychological experiences that together result in successful or unsuccessful adjustment to a new environment. However, the results show that for most participants divorce and place of residency are connected and undermine the stability and consistency of the development of the participants in many social and psychological ways- they negatively affected academic well-being, were stressful events, caused feelings of abandonment, and a loss of social support that participants had relied on prior to the event. Understanding participants' experiences in these two events are important in later understanding the identities that develop at the ATI.

The Grandmother Figure.

Most participants that moved around settled with their grandmother for at least part of the time that they did not live with their parents. Four of the male participants (Shakim, Mark, Larry and Nico) and five of the female participants (Tanesha, Natasha, Kimberly, Nancy and Laura) had lived with their grandmother while growing up for at least four months; two participants (Tanesha and Kimberly) had resided almost all their childhood with their grandmother. Several studies have found that grandparents most often take on this responsibility when a parent has a severe emotional, mental health, alcohol, or drug problem, or when abuse or neglect has occurred and the grandparent does not want the grandchild placed in a foster home (Jendrek, 1994). In 1999 approximately 1.3 million children living in the US, or 1.8 % of the child population, were cared for by their grandparents without a parent present, according to the National Survey of America's Families (NSAF). Historically, the number of children in the care of their grandparents has fluctuated between 1.3 and 2.1 % of all children between 1940 and 1995 (Hernandez, 1993; Pebley & Rudkin, 1999.).

Living with their grandmothers had a huge impact in all of the participants' lives, and accounted for a turning point in their lives. Except for one participant, Tanesha- who was raised by her grandmother with whom she had a very negative relationship, participants reported having an outstanding relationship with their grandmother.

Four participants, two male and two female, reported that their grandmother was their role model; she had educated them, raised them and nourished them. Below are some quotes that give voice to this point:

When I was growing up, my father, he was off and on. He wasn't really there a lot. . . . My mom was still into partying, hanging out, and having fun. So she wasn't there that much. So my role model in the house was my aunt and my grandmother really. That's who the kids in the house had to look up to really . . . My grandmother was just a nice lady. She gave it all to me, but was also harsh when needed. Mark.

My grandmother is like the only one in my family that understands me. She's not an old grandmother. She's about 50 now, 49 maybe. Laura.

And she [her grandmother] gave me a lot of money . . . we went to the best restaurants . . . and we went to the restaurants to eat like that. . . . I like my grandmother a lot. Nancy.

Five participants also talked about receiving extra privileges when they lived at their grandmothers' house; four said that they were their grandmother's favorites and that they received emotional and financial support from them.

I was his grandson so she gave it all to me. You know how that is. Shakim.

Every time I saw her [her grandmother] she took me to eat, I was her favorite one. We went to expensive places . . . and she took me to the

hair dresser and to get a manicure. My dad was her favorite and I was too.
Nancy.

Participants who reported their privileged status also reported developing a self of being “unique, extraordinary,” and “special.” While this was a characteristic they enjoyed and were proud of, it also brought responsibilities. They had to live to these expectations. For some of these participants, part of the responsibilities included being a good student, behaving well, and staying out of trouble.

I would always show her my best. I would offer to take care of the
cousins . . . I wouldn't hang out as much. Kimberly.

I would be nicer, always good in front of my grandma When I
moved with my father, I felt comfortable with the me that was outside to do
that in the house too . . . And then I started acting up, getting suspended
from school, fighting, joined a gang. Mark.

Mark's narrative shows the complexity of his identity, he has a identity for when he is with his grandmother (nice and good) and a different identity for when he is outside and with his father (acts up, suspended, fights). These identities in part come to surface depending on who Mark is with. Further, he shows how his position of privilege in the grandmother's household supports this responsible identity. This relationship between privileged status and responsibilities are similar to that found by Richie (1996) in her

study of incarcerated women. The participants in this study stopped acting responsibly once their grandmother passed away and thus the grandmother's death was a turning point for these participants.

When my grandmother died. Then I stopped caring. I didn't want to do anything, I would just smoke weed. I dropped out of school. I was getting lazy, didn't want to do anything. Shakim.

That's when my grandmother died. And then that's when I really started not caring and stuff. . . . And once she died I didn't care no more, because she was the lady who took care of me most of my life and stuff. She always gave me stuff and went shopping for us or whatever, so I was upset then. I wasn't going to school. Frank.

For three participants the death of their grandmother was the onset for delinquent identity. Although all three participants had been involved in delinquent activities before the death of their grandmother, they had not incorporated an identity of "delinquent." This is more than a theoretical difference, since it is easier to change a behavior than an identity.

Participants Experiences with Friends and Peers

Contradicting much of the literature on adolescence, that characterizes this period as a culture of peers (Laursen, 1993; Newcomb, Bukowski, & Bagwell, 1999; Regnerus,

2002; Selman, 1980; Shulman, 1993; Vandell, 2000) participants reported not having close friends at the time of the interview. As we can see below, when they talked about close friends it was usually someone who had been killed or someone who was imprisoned.

Female participants losing their friends.

The developmental trajectory of friendship, and the trust that goes with it was very different for male participants than for females. Six female participants had a close friend when they were younger; however, by the time this interview took place, they all had lost this close companion or they could not see their friend frequently due to their friend being incarcerated. Other female participants reported that they had grown apart from their childhood friends:

You know [I] had a good time. I enjoyed being with them but now we can't do things like that anymore [going dancing], that's because [her friend], her whole life has changed since her daughter. . . . I still go see them every once in awhile. They still call me when something comes up, but I don't see them as often as I did before. Francine.

I don't see her no more . . . She' still locked up. . . . So I just don't have the friend I used to. And I don't trust other people. Sandra.

However five female participants reported that they had learned not to trust who they believed were their friends:

These girls . . . they used to lie to me and deceive but still say they love you and still talk a good game but turn around and do something totally different. So that made me open my eyes to people that just be lying in my face. Two faced people. Now I just don't trust anyone. Laura.

They were just two-faced. I don't even call them my friends anymore . . . I was mad cause I was set up [by people she thought were her friends]. To be arrested. Sandra.

I went with my friend to downtown he was selling, I went with him because I was going to get a tattoo with my father's name and he told me he would come with me and pay for it and that way you also come with me, and I said "OK." But I was not selling I was only with him, next to him, he was selling a lot of crack. . . . He sold him [an undercover policeman] some crack and I was next to him. . . . He [the friend] then left me in the tattoo place and said "wait I'll be back." and he went running. I stayed to get the tattoo done. And I was ready to get the tattoo done when they arrested me for selling to an under-cop. But I didn't sell . . . and they told me to say where my friend was but I was not going to talk and I didn't tell them and I was one month and two weeks [in jail] . . .

And when I came out he told me "I didn't care that you were in jail". . .
that taught me about trust. I am now careful with who is my friend.
Nancy.

Francine's narrative below goes further than other participants, as she explains how her lack in trust in friends has translated to who she is, someone who doesn't expect much from people and thus has a "nasty attitude:"

[Now] I don't expect much from people at all. Because, they're
destined to fuck up in some way or another so I'm just prepared for it and
I'm just used to it so . . . I just have like a nasty attitude. Francine.

Three female participants' explained that their mothers or grandmothers
had warned them against having close friends:

You know it is funny, my mom always told me that you could only
trust your family. . . . friends come and go. Laura.

My mom didn't like me hanging out. She said that family
members were ones only friends. I am now careful with who becomes my
friend. Nancy.

My mother didn't want me in nobody else's house My mom didn't like us hanging out with strangers. She [her mom] always said that we [family members] should stick together. Natasha.

This type of message might reflect families struggle to keep their family protected and safe in neighborhoods that are not. Two of the three female participants who mentioned that they were warned not to trust people outside their family circle also mentioned that they were extremely close to a family member (usually their sisters, but for one it was a cousin).

My sister, I tell her everything and she tell me everything, that's like my little priest right there, the one I could like sit down, how that church thing go , the confession, that's my little confession person right there. Tanesha.

All these participants lost their desire to have friends and trust people their age once they became involved in the criminal justice system. This was seen as a means of preventing further trouble.

Male participants: associates not friends.

In contrast to female participants who had lost friends, most male participants had never had a close friend or someone they could really trust. Nico's and Damon's comments echo the feelings of six male participants:

I wasn't socializing with nobody. I don't like talking about nothing like that [personal things] . . . I just don't like getting too attached to nobody. You can't really trust nobody. So I just stick to myself. Nico.

Since I am young I didn't play with everybody - I always played by myself and I always be thinking by myself. Damon.

However, four participants always had a group of people to hang out with and three had a mentor who would teach them the "rules of the game."

I have all type of associates, from all over. From Puerto Rico, Mexican, from New York, Dominicans, from all over. They also live all over, in Queens, Brooklyn, Bronx. . . . We play basketball, watch DVDs, go downtown to look for girls, go to 42nd street to play games, go to the movies, we just have fun. We also go to clubs. Shakim.

He showed me the bad things. How to do everything in a bad way. But he also showed me how to get over in the good way. Cause T got, he went to college and all of that. So T, he's smart, but he choose to do what he do. So T be putting me on. He be tutoring me in school and all that.

And plus the streets. So it's like whatever thing he decides to do, he going to be there to hold me down on it. Forest.

Male participants differentiated quite clearly between friends and a type of relationship they termed “associates”:

Friends you really have to trust. I have more associates. They are the ones you hang out with. . . .[but] not necessarily trust with your stuff. Larry.

I have a friend [at the ATI] but I wouldn't even say a friend - no, just associate. William.

None of the male participants had someone to go to when they felt weak and believed that they should not show their vulnerabilities to anyone; they thought that only girls would act in such a manner. Below is Larry's answer to my question “When you feel sad, do you talk to someone? Is there anyone that can help you feel better?”

No, that is girls stuff. I can handle it on my own. . . . It's no one's business how I'm doing. Larry.

When the interviews took place neither male nor female participants had any close friends living near them and they spoke of their desire not to have such friends. Given

their experiences, they believed that having friends could only lead to further disappointments and trouble with the law:

Cause basically I started smoking and doing all that when I started hanging really hanging out with them. I was never with any friends like I said before so, when I did hang around with them, I wanted to be apart of what they was doing so that caused me to get here and get into trouble and see no basic way out of calling them bad influences. . . . Now I am alone, just to avoid problems. Tanesha.

Well, I had some friends but as I was growing up I didn't really like a lot of friends because I was getting into a lot of trouble so as I was getting into trouble I was learning friends is not always the key. Natasha.

No I just don't hang out anymore. That would take me back to my old problems. Kevin.

Well, once I got here [the ATI] it kind of opened my eyes, this is just chance. So you gotta get rid of all those friends that . . . wasn't doing no good for you. So now it's like I really don't have none. It's my Mom and my girl. Those are my two best friends. And my grandmother, of course, but she's all the way in Virginia. Laura.

Even though neither male nor female participants had close friends, female participants were more likely to have someone with whom they felt close and at ease than male participants. Three of the female participants reported that they had someone with whom they felt comfortable and could trust. Although this number might seem surprisingly low, it was even lower for male participants, where only one had someone in whom he could confide.

Death of friends.

All eight male participants and four female participants experienced the death of a friend. The death of their peers forced participants to reevaluate their life goals and values. Below I show how participants talked about the death of their friends and the effects that had in their lives:

My closest friend also died. He was shot in the building he lived at. Just next to mine. These guys didn't like him and they just shot him. He was having problems with them. . . . that also made me change. I could no longer keep on hanging on the streets. I just had to think what I wanted. Where I could be safe. . . . I just can't run away from problems so I have to think what I can do before [hand]. Shakim.

My best friend died. He got shot . . . He died . . . [It made] me think about like everybody could die. Everybody could die. There's nobody in this world that could live. Everybody could die. It depends on how you die . . . So I just started chillin. I didn't fight that much. Damon.

He [a cousin] was killed, and that was harsh. I just never thought that would happen to him, he had so much respect. But they shot him . . . I just stopped chilling. Stopped the drugs and all. Kimberly.

Romantic relations.

One of the most striking features about participants' romantic relationships was that they considered them a problem. Participants' partners seemed to stress them, depress them, and cause them problems. One of the first indicators about the extent to which the romantic relationships were considered a problem can be seen by how interviewees divided their lives. The first question I asked the interviewees was to think of their lives as a story and divide the story into chapters. Five participants divided their lives thematically (the other ones chronologically) and, of these five participants, three dedicated one chapter to problems in their romantic relations; no one dedicated a chapter to advantages of romantic relations.

Half of the male participants talked of their problems with "girls." These problems were usually about girls being pregnant, being unfaithful to them, or disrespecting them in some other way, usually in public. Two male participants were told by their girlfriends that they were pregnant. Neither one believed that he was the father. Hear Shakim's recount on this matter:

Well just the other day this girl told me that she was pregnant and that the baby was mine. As all guys, my first reaction was that it was not

mine, she must have been cheating and messing around with other guys.

So I asked her to take a test to see if it was real mine. And it wasn't. She was really mad. Then this girl and a friend went to my house to talk to my mom. It was his big thing, a big problem, but I think she is out of my life now. I'm hurt too, she was supposed to be my girl and she was messing around like that! Shakim.

Four male participants, talked about how their girlfriends lied and shouted at them in public. This was not only seen as a lack of respect to them but also to the relationship. As Larry explained, part of being faithful is not exposing the problems of the relationship in public:

I told her [girlfriend] she can't just go and shout like that. Those are our problems, it's no one's business That is sharing too much info. I just don't like that. Larry.

There were several striking features of female participants' significant others. One female participant, Laura, was a lesbian but faced the same problems and issues as the other participants. For the most part, females went out with people much older than themselves; the smallest age difference was three years older (from Laura) and the biggest difference was of twenty years (from Nancy). This age difference placed the female participants in a disempowered position, which was reflected in many aspects of their relationships including decision-making, emotional involvement, and equity. Even when

participants agreed that the men had more power than them, most females stressed the fact that they were independent and wanted to stay that way:

I am not going back to you. I'm not one of those females that let you do what you want and then crawl back, no I am an independent person. Although I'm not working and still asks you for money, I am independent. I don't need you. I don't need you. Tanesha.

He said when I turn 18 he wanna get married but I don't know. I think I'm gonna wait for a little bit longer, maybe until like 22, 24. Maybe when he's 25. I'll see . . . I'm living with my mother. But he has his own apartment. He wants me to come live with him. My mother say I gotta wait until I have the baby . . . I'm gonna wait. Natasha.

I'm just not going to be there cooking for him. I'm just not like that. Francine.

Infidelity was one of the most recurrent problems that female participants reported about their romantic relationships.

He cheated on me and we were together for two years. . . . And we have a baby together. "Now you want to do it?" . . . "Why you want to mess up things now that we've got a baby involved?" I can't see myself

saying “I love you” although I do still love him, but I'm not going to say it no more. That's why I refuse to say “I love you” because every time I say “I love you” to somebody I love, they hurt me. Tanesha.

There's love and kindness but it's also a little, I can't say hate, it's a little bit dishonest in there relationship because I don't like when he lies to me. And sometimes he likes to lie. . . . But it's alright though. I know he goes and cheats on me. Natasha.

It's always the same thing, I turn around and he is with someone else . . . I just get really mad, can't trust him. Kimberly.

I went to the mental hospital I had got admitted because I went crazy because of her [her girlfriend]. She cheated on me and I just went bugged out. I just thought again, depressed. I stopped eating, stopped talking. I just was dead to the world. I stayed in the house all day, didn't do nothing. I think I wouldn't take a shower in a week. Laura.

Apart from infidelity participants reported that their significant other was trying to control them in directions that were not in the participants' best interest. While some seemed to be extremely possessive, like Francine's and Kimberly's boyfriends, others were abusive and criminal, like Nancy's ex-boyfriend:

He'll stop me from coming here. He'll try to restrain me and like keep me from leaving so he can make his point but yet not know how important this is to me that I can come here [to the ATI] or I will be in jail and I don't think "you're gonna be with me when I'm in jail" so more or less I'm trying to take care of my business and he's just like out to. We have a great time together but I don't think he has me at his best interest. He's selfish and he's concerned with himself. Francine.

I was just talking to my cousin on the phone and he went crazy. He just doesn't like it when I am with other people. Kimberly.

He was thirty six when I was sixteen . . . I loved him because he was my first boyfriend I went to bed with. I didn't know what that was, you understand? But because he was "jodedor." Jodedor is someone that has a lot of money because of drugs . . . and he brought friends to sleep with me. They gave me money but I didn't want that. Nancy.

Nancy was not the only participant who was involved in the sex industry. Saundra had actually been charged for prostitution and Forest reported being a pimp. Saundra was so embarrassed that she did not want to talk about it, but she did tell me that it was her ex-boyfriend who had put her in the business and how strange it had been for her to have sex for money. Twenty percent of the participants, eighteen or younger, were involved in prostitution. The implications for their psychological and health development

are massive, and unfortunately it seems to be a growing problem. No one knows exactly how many girls in New York City are pressed into sex work, but Lloyd (Loinaz, 2002), the director of a program called "GEMS- Girls Educational and Mentoring Services," estimates there are at least 1,000 minors—and possibly twice that many—trapped in prostitution. "The amount of new girls that are coming in is just mind-blowing," she says. "We're getting a good four to six new referrals a week of girls with some type of sexual exploitation history. It's made me start to question my figures." (Loinaz, 2002).

Another distressing aspect of females' romantic relationships was the violence associated with them. Even though there was a range in the intensity and frequency that participants experienced violence in their relationships, all female participants had been part of a violent relationship:

Like just the other day he broke my cell phone so I don't have a cell phone now. He threw it on the floor. He broke it. He paid for my tattoo and he constantly, he's like an Indian giver. Like people give you something, they want it back. And then he gives that conditional gifts like if you with me you can have this or that. But if you're not, I want it back. That's how he is. Francine.

I was dealing and she got upset at what happened between us . . . so she stabbed me in the back. It punctured my lungs. Stabbed me twice, punctured the lung. The doctor said, if I didn't make it like 20 minutes later, if I would have got there, I wouldn't have made it. But I got there in

time by the grace of God. They sucked the air out of the lungs or whatever and I was alright. Laura.

I messed with older guys, when I was fourteen I was messing with nineteen year old people and it was violent. All my life I was getting hit so that's what I thought was the basic thing, get hit and don't say nothing about it. So, I took it and went along with the ride and didn't see nothing wrong with getting hit. Tanesha.

As Tanesha's excerpt illustrates, participants experienced violence not only in their romantic relationships. The next section examines further participants experiences with violence.

Participants Experiences in the Neighborhood

Violence.

Participants' experiences with violence were multi-faceted; they had all been witnesses, victims, and perpetrators of violence. This finding contradicts most of the popular media, as well as the criminology literature, where victims and perpetrators often have clearly distinguished roles. Participants of this study did not perceive such a clear boundary. Freudenberg et al. (1999) found the same result.

While violence was part of all participants growing up experiences, there was a clear division of how males and females experienced it. For male participants, engaging in fights and carrying weapons avoided more serious eruptions of violence. Five male

participants explicitly talked about this. Once again, understanding the participants' environment, especially their neighborhoods, helps us understand how violence can prevent future violent acts:

Since they know I have a gun and that I'll use it if I need to, they leave me alone. Larry.

We just got into this fight. I had to beat him down, if not I would lose all respect. But, after that, they knew I could fight and that was that, no more fights. William.

In order to stay safe you have to fight. Damon.

They [other residents] went around with boxing gloves, whoever's on the streets gets knocked out. . . . And these kids don't do it to me. They know better than that. Cause I shoot one of them. But they do doing it to a lot of people. Forest.

Thus, it was not surprising that most male participants held a façade of being tough, of people being scared of them. While most of them believed that this appearance avoided fights (see part on being tough under the Identity section), Nico explained that this could have a double edge and could actually work against him:

They gave me more than my respect. . . . I was afraid more,
because people were scared, they could do anything just to get away.
They're scared, . . . they might hurt me. Nico.

None of the female participants commented on the need to have fights in order to avoid bigger clashes. However, they did talk about having to fight to be respected.

She just dissed me so I started a fight. Can't [let] people just diss
you and act like it's noting. Kimberly.

[Tanesha was] jumped by seven people, but I looked at it as, "you was a bad girl if you need seven people to fuck you up." [Laughs] That's how I looked at it I said "you're a bad bitch ." . . I got them all back I had to just so that they would respect me. . . . After that they wanted to be my friends. Tanesha.

Tanesha's quote above shows to the extent that engaging in fights was a positive identity, and how the seriousness of the fight was directly related to the respect one had, she is proud to report that seven people were needed to fight her, since she is a "tough" girl.

There was no consensus among the participants of the cause of fights; some believed it was due to the fact that there was nothing else to do in the neighborhood, others believed that the motive was that there were too many gangs in the neighborhood, others believed that fights were usually drug related, while others thought there was no

real cause, it was just how it was. While there was no consensus on the determinant of violence, all the participants mentioned that the neighborhood had a lot to do with the fights and violence. The study of youth violence and how it relates to the neighborhood context has been a topic of renewed interest in recent years (Mateu-Gelabert, 2002; Samson & Earls, 1999).

All of the participants knew someone close to them that had been beaten up, stabbed or shot. Five of them – Tanesha, Kimberly, Shakim, Damon, and Forest– had a friend shot to death. As mentioned in the section of losses, having a friend shot to death seemed to be a turning point in the lives of many participants.

Several participants talked about how their parents had taught them to be respectful and avoid fights, but to defend themselves if needed. Three participants talked about how their parents, or mother, had not only instructed them to look after themselves but also their siblings and cousins.

That's how my parents taught me and they told me, "don't start trouble but don't let anybody punk you either", more or less, so they showed us to defend ourselves then. That's how it'll be with my brother and sister, that's one thing I love. And it still to that day that it's like that. Francine.

While violence for male participants seemed to be restricted to fights and to public spaces (the streets, blocks or outside the high school), female participants talked

about many other types of violence that happened in private spaces. Natasha was raped in her house, Tanesha was hit in her house, and Nancy was prostituted in her boyfriend's house, all private spaces.

Arrests as a normalized experience.

Participants talked about the “normalized” experience of being arrested and going to jail. Six male participants talked about growing up thinking about the criminal justice system- four predicted that they would end up “locked up” while two told me that they thought they would never end up having problems with the law. On the other hand only two grew up thinking about the criminal justice system. As we will see, the criminal justice system had been very present in most of these youth's lives and had a direct impact on their expectations and the meaning of being arrested.

While the criminal justice system was very present in many forms for most of the participants' lives since a young age, there were three forms that seemed to have a large impact: 1) having a parent and/or close relative incarcerated 2) witnessing arrests and 3) being questioned and arrested by policemen in their neighborhoods. Most participants had had a close relative, usually a parent, imprisoned during their childhood years. Table two shows the number of participants who had a mother, father sibling and/or aunt/uncle incarcerated.

Table 3- Number of participants who had a relative incarcerated

	Participant's relationship to incarcerated relative			
	Mother	Father	Sibling	Aunt/Uncle
Female	0	3	4	3
Male	1	4	2	2

The emotions that surrounded the imprisonment of a parent or a sibling constituted a turning point in the interviewees' lives, initiating a pattern of unfavorable life choices. This finding is similar to those of other researchers (Hagan & Palloni, 1990). Below is a quote from Kimberly, illustrating the impact that having an incarcerated parent had on her:

That was like bad. It's hard to know that your dad is in jail. But it's OK. It's like he wasn't the only one. After that, I started acting out. . . I started stealing, being rude. Kimberly.

For the three participants whose parents or siblings were incarcerated when they were children, 11 years old or younger, the impact was not so much noted at the time the imprisonment took place, but a few years later. Below is Laura's narrative when she talked about how the incarceration of her father affected her:

I always was respected in the streets, anyway, cause being who my father is, I got a lot of street credit for that. . . He was a famous drug dealer. He ran with the best of them. . . He did Fed time. At the time I thought it was nothing. I didn't have a good relationship with him. But then I realized it did have a toll. I wanted to be like him, and jail stopped meaning something bad. Laura.

Most participants also talked about how several of their friends had been incarcerated. While the incarceration of their friends was not a turning point in their lives, it normalized the experience of incarceration for them.

They've been incarcerated before [his friends] so you know the feeling already and they know how I felt, so when I came home it was just like I was always there. I never left. Shakim.

Incarceration was just one of the ways that the criminal justice system was present in the interviewees' lives. Surveillance by the police was another way, especially for the male participants. Seven of the eight male participants reported racial discrimination and police harassment. Only two females did. Other studies found that the police harass minority men in disproportionate numbers. Fine and Weis' (1998) reported that all African American men in their study described incidents in which police had stopped and questioned them. Participants' discussed the arbitrariness involved in the criminal justice system. The following scripts illustrate their notion of how having problems with law enforcement, being arrested, and going to jail has little to do with who you are and what you do but are more related to your social and ethnic background:

Cops don't like it when you are out there, even if you are just chillin. If you are Black they arrest you for nothing. And we, we like being in the streets, it's a place for us to be. Cops think you are trouble all the time. Shakim.

Police always pulling people over, searching them. Basically I just don't feel that's right, invading privacy. I don't think that's right for a police to just pull you over and just search you. Specially if you are not White, they do it all the time. A couple of laws should change. William.

The cops and all that. They always be listening. I don't even be doing nothing sometimes, just be walking. And plus all they got to say is "There's a Black male with braids." And the first one they see, they stop him. . . . they be stressing me for no reason. Forest.

In this way, the experience of being arrested or having any other involvement with the courts has become an event that already has a written script. It is no longer an individual and unique experience, but a communal one.

Support.

While participants talked about their neighborhoods as dangerous places, where they had experienced violence, they also talked about them as places where they had received emotional and financial support. These positive aspects of their neighborhoods usually came about when they were talking about specific people with whom they hang out or a specific locations in the neighborhood, such as their block. Below is how some participants talked about this subject:

If I need money I know that they'll [young men from his block] give it . . . there is trust. They know me that I'll pay back. It's like the old times. It just happens. Larry.

Oh as soon as I got in [back from jail] the block everybody, give me a hug, you home, all that other stuff. They bought me some food. I was outside. People on my block. It was fun. I was happy. Saundra.

Schooling

Participants' experiences in school corresponded with the physical description of the school. In an earlier section, I showed how participants talked very differently about their elementary schools, usually as clean, small, and friendly, from their junior high schools and their high schools, which were large, dirty, and violent. Below I illustrate how participants talked about their experiences in elementary school, junior high school, and high school.

For the most part, male and female participants talked about having enjoyed elementary school, and having been good students. The following quotes exemplify this:

I was a good student and I had fun there, it was all good. Nico.

I was doing good in school . . . I always thought I would do good. It was just later that it all changed,. . . [In elementary school] I had fun I liked it. I was doing good in school, averaging 80s and better, doing real good in school until about fourth grade. Mark.

I was in honors roll . . . I was really intelligent. . . . And I graduated second out of my class in fifth grade. . . . I just always like math. I don't know why. I liked to draw. I liked art. And social studies was interesting. I learned about history. . . . My graduation was nice. And they kept calling me, all these awards. Every time I had to keep getting up.

Saundra.

For all of the participants in the study entering junior high school and/or high school was a turning point in their lives. Most participants started questioning the importance of school, even though they saw it as a necessary step to find jobs, they all interrupted or dropped out of school. The following quotes exemplify this:

I started being bad when I went to high school so that's when everything started. Tanesha.

Then I started smoking pot and started hanging out a lot in the street. You know I thought that was the life. I was with chillin. I would wake up late, miss school or, when I went, I would fall asleep. I was also real disrespectful. I was rude to the teachers. . . . They were rude so I felt I could be disrespectful. Shakim.

That's when I started cutting school. It was just bad to be there.
Too much violence. Mark.

Like high school, that was a waste of time . . . I was cutting
school. Sandra.

Male and female participants described how they started acting violent when they enrolled in junior high school or high school. Below is a passage from Nancy's narrative where she described her feelings about junior high school; feeling disrespected and humiliated, and how these feelings led to violence:

I was sleeping and [the teacher] told me, "Oh you are ignorant."
She doesn't know why I came to this school and she is insulting me so I
got insulted and I threw a chair. They suspended me for two weeks. . . . I
had just had a hard day, worked all night. I think she could understand
that I was tired but wanted to learn. Nancy.

Even though all participants had stopped attending school by the time they were arrested for the felony that brought them to the ATI, most of them returned to school or started attending a GED program. Participants saw this as an important change that the

ATI encouraged. I expand on this issue on the section of the effects of the ATI on participants.

Experiences in ATI

Even though participants' experiences in the ATI were extremely varied, for the most part, they had a clear course; before attending participants had very low hopes of what the ATI would be like. Their first impressions were for the most part positive, and once they had been attending it a few months, started feeling scrutinized.

Expectations.

Before attending the ATI, most participants, 13, had never heard of the ATI, and they all had extremely low expectations of what the program would be like.

I thought it was gonna be boring . . . I thought it was gonna be a bunch of bullshit; I was gonna put up with another something similar to jail . . . so I was prepared for the worse. When I came here I was as soon as I got in here I thought the girls was gonna be on some snotty shit.

Tanesha.

When I first came here, I said "I don't want to be here." I felt like it was like another after school program and I felt like, "I don't want to be here. It's a waste of my time." . . . Because I'm the type that when I was young, I used to wait until I was 18. I used to be like "wait until I'm 18 and

I'm gonna do all this and all that." Then I find myself at 18 in this kind of program doing these things and I got into a little run-in with the law. I didn't see myself doing these things. Francine.

Well, it's a year long program to be here every day. So I thought I'm not going to make it. I wasn't coming here to like nobody or to make friends. I was coming here to get out of here. Nico.

I really didn't think this would be for me. Come here every day . . .
 . Just one more things to do where they pretend to help. Larry.

While participants did not imagine the ATI to be an interesting or appealing program, none of them hesitated to choose the ATI to a jail or prison sentence:

To get out of jail. Yeah. Like Monopoly, go to jail, get out of jail. Get out of jail free. Get a pass, you know. That's how I thought. Like, you know, I'll tell you anything. I'll sell ice cubes to [an Eskimo], I'll tell you anything you want to hear to get out of jail, you know. That's how it is, like you're in a desperate state that, you know, it's like, I don't care what I gotta do, I just want to go home. Francine.

Anything is better than jail. I would have been anywhere. Laura.

[It was the] second time I got arrested. So they [the judge] told me two years [of prison time] and I said “no.” They gave me an interview with the court rep [from the ATI program], is a person who speaks about programming. He spoke to me and told me “it’s a year long program, they help you out with your school. And they find you a job. If you’re not in school, they put you in GED. You be there from after school to seven o’clock till they close.” I spoke to them, said “It was better than being locked up.” Nico.

I wished I didn’t have to be in this program. I didn’t like it, but it’s good because they are keeping me out of jail and stuff. Frank.

First impressions.

Many participants said that their expectations were proven wrong after attending the ATI for a few weeks. They realized that the ATI offered them many appealing activities and that other participants were welcoming.

When I got here I thought that I didn’t want to be there at first, because I thought “it was just some ordinary program I would have to come sit down and talk.” But I didn’t know it was like this, so when I first got here I didn’t want to come, but then I came upstairs and I seen how everything was moving. We had a computer lab. We could do programs and everything and heard about career exploration when I was in the

orientation class. I said it would probably be a good thing for me. Then I started coming more and more and then I started knowing everybody. I started getting comfortable in here, so now I feel good. Shakim.

I was prepared for the worse when I came here. I was, as soon as I got in here, I thought the girls was gonna be on some snotty shit but they wasn't, they talk, "hi" and you know. They was real friendly and I was like something I don't even see mostly and I was like damn and ya'll criminals [laughs]. Ya'll nicer than people that aren't, so I was like this, this could do good. This will be a good experience for me. Tanesha.

I see this like an after school recreational program. It's an alternative for incarceration and, they have good activities that we can be doing here. They have things that keep us interested and busy, so there's this thing like, you have to be here but let's just make it as boring as you can and just make you, aggravated just by sitting here and not doing anything. We do a lot of things that I like. I like the whole beading thing. I used to play pool. I like to play pool all the time. We have computer classes. We have our girl talk, now we have the law education class. Talking about things you did and did not know about the law. We have a sex ed classes, photography class. We have a few activities here that definitely keep us going. Francine.

There's a lot of activities I like to do here.... Some of the activities, they got dance class, they got photography class that they about to do in a few minutes. They got beading class that you've just seen that they were about to make their own beads. Sometimes we make beads and we sell them. They have a lot of things to do here. They be going on trips every Monday, every Monday they go on a trip. Natasha.

Support.

Thirteen participants talked about the social and emotional support they received at the ATI. Some participants had sought this help, and said that they had received it. Others had unexpectedly received support, but they all welcomed it.

[I] thought I would get tired of it very quickly, "it aint for me really" I thought. That's how it was for the first month, but then I joined all these programs that they have and that helped me I started even liking it. I am in computer training, in career exploration they also helped me join Bronx Community College, I'm trying to get my GED. Then this week I'll start with an internship in a law firm. Shakim.

I feel like all of them [ATI staff] reach out to you,. . . And I feel like they really reach out to help you because I mean there's some things that they just don't have to do. It's not in their job description and they go out of their way to help you, anyway. . . . like my essay, I asked [her case

manager] for help with my essay, just to help me prepare it. . . . and give me like more or less a structured outline of what should be in there and what should not. Or like say for instance, when we used to have computer class, I told him [the computer teacher] I was taking a bank teller job testing and I need your help with my math skills so he kind of helped me out, too. . . . I think the staff here is great. . . . They don't have to do the things they do for you but they do it anyway. Francine.

Every time I gotta go to pre-natal they give me car fare, make sure I go. I gotta bring them letters saying that I went but they do give me car fare, make sure I go. They care about me and being well. They help. They also call me. My case worker. . . . they're gonna give me a baby shower also here. It's real, I just like it. They help me a lot. They really do. I like the ATI. Natasha.

For some participants, especially the female participants who had a painful relationship with their families, the support they received from the ATI was essential for their well being, and it helped them avoid further trouble. In this way the ATI can be seen as becoming the family structure of these participants:

[At the ATI] they really sit here listen. They cheer you on for good things. I ain't think it was gonna be like that, thought they was gonna be hard on me and stuff, but they not and they give a lot of opportunities to do

good and I did mess up a couple times and they still like “yeah, she’s gonna make it.” Something my family would never say they would always say “You ain’t gonna amount to nothing and you’s this and that.” I always got bad negative vibe from them not like here, so I try and make here more than I stay over there with my family cause I feel this is home, this is like basically my shelter right now to keep from trouble. Tanesha.

It's helping me as if I, if I need someone to talk to I can go to someone and talk to them. Every day, instead of me standing outside or whatever, being in the backyard with them smoking. . . . I just can't get in trouble if I'm here. . . . I'm on probation, plus I'm pregnant. . . . the ATI is kind of, I like it. I really like it. It's helping get my life back together. It's helping get back in school so that they're making sure I go to every appointment. They're making sure I attend here every day. It's fun. Natasha.

Another way that female participants received social support and encouragement at the ATI was by receiving diplomas. The girls program at the ATI has a ceremony several times a year where they distribute awards to clients. These awards were important for encouraging female participants to maintain their good work and try to improve in the areas that they were lacking.

[At the ATI I receive] moral support and the support . . . I never had. I got awards, something I ain't get since I was [in] sixth grade . . . cheering me on to succeed. . . . I'm a do my best for them cause they really wanna se me prosper and see me not in no more trouble. So I said "I will work with ya'll. I will do my best for ya'll." Tanesha.

They had a ceremony here for the girls. It was actually in this room, too. Like they gave me an achievement award, an encouragement award. Now the ceremony, caterers, food and everything. It was nice. It was big . . . me especially I got that encouragement award . . . because they said I was so motivated and I was so committed to like try to find a job. Cause that's all I used to say when I first got: "I want a job." I used to go to tons and tons of places. And now, I feel like I'm just getting offers. Francine.

At the ATI female participants also received help with their relationships. One day out of the week the girls program would organize a support group where female participants would talk about their romantic relationships. As I described earlier, many female participants had very troubled relationships with their significant others, and, for the most part, receiving help was something they appreciated.

We have our girl talk. Now we have the law education class. . . talking about things you did and did not know about the law. We have a

sex ed. classe. . . . We talk about women problems, problem we have with men. Francine.

It was a criminal justice class, . . . explaining to kids about the law and stuff. Some of that stuff I know but like, I learn more every time . . . [I] also learnt about my rights with men. And where to go for help. . . . [We] also have a day we get together and talk about all. It helps you get your problems out. Sandra.

Six male participants also found their case managers to be supportive and resourceful.

I usually don't like to talk. I am quiet. But like sometimes here they help me think things through. . . . School, they made me realize that I needed it, now I want it. He [the case manager] is real patient and he just said "it has to make sense in dollars and cents." and that just clicked. . . . [He] didn't rush me to go back. Larry.

They like help you. Like they have contacts [with] other programs and you can like take classes there. Like I took computers and that was real good. . . . they [the case manager] help you with the contact and to get there. Damon.

Most participants who had relocated several times earlier on in their lives, and who had found this experience a hard one, talked more, and more powerfully, about the support the ATI provided them than those who did not relocate several times or who had not found it hard to relocate.

Trips.

All participants mentioned that one of the benefits of participating in the ATI was the trips the ATI organized for them. Some of these excursions were short and involved going out half a day, others were weekend outings. Not all participants had been able to attend the longer trips, but all of them had gone out for lunch or dinner with the ATI and enjoyed the experience.

And I like the fact that we got out and eat here, too. That's nice. Like girls night out. We just go to a nice restaurant and eat. Order what you want to order. . . . I mean, it's fun and they spend a lot of money. Francine.

They go out to eat and we went to Junior's. We went to this Buddhist restaurant. They spent \$300 on and then we went to BBQ's. We be going a lot of places. We really do. We went bowling. Natasha.

Oh we went skiing. I never went skiing before. We went skiing. We go to the movies a lot. We went somewhere else. We went hiking up in Pennsylvania to some mountains. I don't know where we was at. I think

it was Pennsylvania. ... It's fun. I thought I wasn't going to be able to do it.
But [ATI staff] - showed me. It was a riot. Forest.

For two participants, Francine and Kimberly, the trips were not only entertaining but also a time when they learned how to work in groups and behave according to social norms. For Francine this was particularly important since she described herself as someone who was impatient with others and who had a hard time controlling her emotions. Below is how Francine spoke about this:

We went to Pine Bush, New York. It's next to the Catskills and we're out there from Monday to Wednesday ... I try to have as much patience as I could, like when we're doing group tasks and stuff and group activities and everything I was just like, some people weren't as good as my stronger skills. Then again, there were other people that were doing better than me, so I just like try to have patience with everybody because, it's a group effort, let's not get mad because they're not as well as me or I'm not as well as the next person. I just like try to be as patient as I could with them and nice and sharing. I didn't want to bring everything from New York up there and then, not to have a good time and spoil somebody's fun so. That is something I learnt in that trip. I think it will help me with work and school projects. Francine.

Surveillance.

As with most programs, the ATI was far from being perfect and participants had as many negative experiences there as positive. One of the major complaints participants had about the ATI program was the surveillance that was added to their lives. Ten participants mentioned that this surveillance was something they found hard to accept since it stopped them from being who they were. Below are some examples of how participants gave voice to this feeling:

And then they really get into your business. They need to know everything. . . . I don't want to blame the people there that work here because they're just doing their jobs. So it's really the system that needs to know everything. Like I never understood "why you need my pay stubs. You know that I work. I showed you my first pay stubs. Like why can't I just show you my pay stub for the week? You have to copy it and keep my business with you." . . . They copy every pay stub, every dentist appointment and it's not even conflicting with the ATI. Laura.

They just want to know too much. And you have to tell them all about your life, that's not right. Not even my mother knows it all. . . . It ain't have to be something bad, but just I don't like to feel like I have to tell them all. And then they want proof. Larry.

So I want to come here, sign me and I want to go home. If I'm doing fine, I'm doing fine. If I don't get arrested, I don't smoke, leave me

alone. Ask me no questions. Just let me go home. But here they just want you to be here and tell them everything. Nico.

Before [attending the ATI], my life had structure to it but then again I'm the type that I do what I wanna do. I come and go. Like, if I don't want to stay home one day, if I don't want to stay home a week, two weeks, I do what I want to do . . . don't have to prove and show documentation that I'm working. . . . I guess I kind of needed it because I was kind of out of control. Like my first taste of freedom. Francine.

For some participants, the surveillance started at the ATI. As I described earlier, to go into the building where the ATI is located, one has to go through metal detectors. This was a problem for men who wore extremely baggy pants; removing the belt meant that they had to hold tight their pants so that they wouldn't fall off.

Going through those machines, it's a problem It's just embarrassing, they [his pants] fall [off when he removes the belt], I have to hold them, and it's just a waste of time. Larry.

Even though Larry was the only participant that spoke about this, I could tell this was a problem for many male clients; I would see them going into the building, having to remove their belts, hold their pants so that they would not fall off.

For the most part participants felt that the surveillance the ATI added to their lives was unnecessary and intrusive. However two female participants believed that it was the ATI's concern for their well being and that lead to this scrutiny and thus they welcomed it.

They just care about you. They always want to know where you are going, if you have a safe place to be and all that. ... They help me with all that. Natasha.

Interruption.

Another complaint that participants had about their experiences at the ATI was that it interrupted the "liberty" that they used to enjoy. The surveillance that was added to their lives, in addition to the rules and daily routine that the ATI imposed on them, embodied an interruption to their familiar schedules, as well as the plans they had. Seven participants, three males and four females, mentioned that their lives had been interrupted because of the ATI. When talking about these interruptions some participants had very specific aims in mind, others' were more elusive, and others just felt that the ATI interrupted what might happen if they were not there. Below are some examples of how participants talked about how the ATI interrupted their lives:

I wanted to go visit my father I was even thinking of being there for a year. But now I can't. They don't even let me leave New York. And that is hard. All my plans are just gone. I have to rethink. Nancy.

And I can't go to my family reunion. It's down South. . . . My case worker, my lawyer, ask them, . . . [but] they probably think that I'm trying to leave or something . . . I always go to it. All my family goes. Sandra.

When I was young I used to wait until I was 18. I used to be like, wait until I'm 18 and I'm gonna do all this and all that. I am going to be independent. I am going to have fun. Then I find myself at 18 in this kind of program doing these things and I got into a little run-in with the law. I didn't see myself doing these things. Francine.

I'm lucky that I'm here, that I'm not in jail, but being here is just a waste of all the 100 million things I could be doing or experiencing for my first time, nothing negative. I could walk into somebody with a job opportunity. There'll be stuff that I be missing. They'll be very positive towards me. I hate being here. It's good when I come here to see people though. I like to see some of the people. Mark.

For the three male participants this interruption was even worse since they felt that they had to spend a lot of their time just waiting, with nothing to do:

When I first got here I wasn't in school yet . . . So I used to have to report here early in the morning. I'll be the only person here sometimes. . . And I was just sitting around . . . bored. . . . I was mad because I was so

bored just being here . . . People that I knew from when I was incarcerated started to come, so I felt more comfortable. We all were brand new; we all had just come from the same place, so we all could relate to each other . . . It's all right though. The only thing I don't like about this place is just the wait for everything. You got a wait to be socked out, wait for a class. It's like you wasting a couple of hours of your life that anything could be going on right now. Negative or positive things. Mark.

The rules that the ATI imposes on its clients also interrupts participants from something participants really enjoyed, smoking marijuana. At the ATI clients are frequently tested for drug use, thus deterring them from using them. All participants said that, before attending the ATI, they smoked marijuana and, even though they were all trying to quit, most of them viewed these cessations as temporary due to the ATI tests. Five participants commented that they considered these tests as an unjustified invasion on their privacy.

Why do they have to test you. It's like, even if that had nothing to do with why you are here, they test you. It's wrong. They shouldn't be allowed to get in all your business. Laura.

Most participants claimed that interrupting their drug use was only a temporary, as soon as they graduated from the ATI they planned to smoke marijuana again. Some participants even acknowledged that they still smoked marijuana occasionally.

Like right now I ain't even gonna lie to you. I'm just waiting, like after I leave here I know I'm just gonna go home and smoke a blunt. I can't wait for that day. Laura.

[After] I graduate [from the ATI] I know I will start smoking again, because you aren't allowed to smoke in here because they drug-test me. . . . I will definitely smoke again. Frank.

Cause I have a big problem here cause I still smoke. So, I don't wanna go to jail, . . . I haven't smoked in like 2 weeks now. . . . Yeah, and I'm pretty scared when the next one [drug test] coming up, cause he said, "one more negative, I'm going to jail." I wanna be there for my daughter so, I quit. I stopped all that, stayed away from all my friends that smoked which is basically all of them. So, I stay in the house and stay with my baby, that's all. . . . It really stops me from doing things I like. Tanesha.

The dress code at the ATI – participants are not allowed to wear red and girls can't wear short miniskirts or shorts, was another rule that interrupted participants' lives. When talking about their experiences at the ATI four participants brought up that they used to wear red on a regular basis. For some of these participants not being able to wear red was extremely hard, since most of their clothes were red; for others it was just irritating.

I love red! All my clothes have at least some red on it. It is just hard to dress to come here. Kimberly.

Makes no sense. What's wrong with red? Pisses me off. They [ATI staff] don't know how to dress and they tell me. Larry.

Three female participants also talked about having to change their way of dressing since they could not wear short skirts or shorts. However, even when participants acknowledged that the ATI was interrupting their lives, they realized that it was better than jail and that it interrupted their lives a lot less than a jail or prison sentence:

Sometimes . . . I say to myself, "Shit, damn why do I gotta go to the ATI? I hate it. It's so boring, every single day." But you know what? You know, it's better than sitting in a cell. It's better. I'm outside, I'm walking around, I'm moving around, taking care of my business. It's better than sitting in jail and you're just another number and that's it. You're just another person they're making their money off of the system you being there. Francine.

Once again a division between those who found relocation hard earlier on in their lives, and those who didn't could be found in terms of the feelings about the ATI interrupting their lives. Those who had a hard time relocating when they were younger

seemed to adapt better at the ATI, and did not feel that it interrupted their lives as much as those who had never relocated or who found relocating easier when they were younger. This could be mean that participants' who had "harder" times adapting actually learned ways to cope in new situations, while those who felt protected when they relocated, or who never relocate, lacked this

Ethnic Composition of the ATI.

Participants also talked about the ethnic composition of the people who work at the ATI- which they found to be predominantly Caucasian. They found that most staff was Caucasians had a patronizing effect of having "White people" deliver services to minorities, as Francine comments:

Some of them [staff at the ATI] are snobby. Sometimes I feel like it's a charity case more or less. Like okay, you have these White, snobby people. I'm not racist or anything but you have like these White, snobby people and . . . they look down on you kind of because they're supposed to be helping you and they do but . . . probably in the back of their minds they're like, "hey, we got these, minority kids here." Francine.

She also said that this did not only happen at the ATI, but at other agencies. Six participants – four males and two females- also talked about how the ATI would work better if minority people, who had had similar experiences as the clients, were delivering

the services. Three of these participants also mentioned how they wanted to do this work in the future:

Many of them [case managers] just can't relate. They want to do it [their jobs] well but without the experience they can't that's why I want to be a counselor I would be a good one. Nico.

I just think like I would be a better case manager. Just cause I know what it is you know. They were always protected. Many don't know about jail and stuff like that.

Chapter 8- History of Personal Identities (Level 4)

I begin this section by exploring how the participants presented themselves during the interview, and then continue to explore some of the identities that participants have and how these have evolved.

The Presentation of the Self during the Interview

While there were enormous variations of how participants introduced themselves in this study, they all shared several characteristics. They all presented themselves as assertive and caring individuals with an extraordinary sense of humor. These participants had a joke ready for all circumstances, and, at the same time, they wanted to make sure that they were respected and not laughed at. These traits were probably polished in the streets, jails, schools, and group homes where each had to survive on their own charm and respected presence.

Another striking characteristic that participants shared was their psychological strength and positive attitude towards distressing situations. Many participants would start and/or finish sentences with a phrase that, by the end of the study, seemed, to me, to be more of a mantra than a response: "It's all good." This expression was usually used after describing a harsh experience, thus creating a dialectic dance in their narratives around their lives being "good" and "difficult" at the same time. Throughout all the narratives, there were 261 times when a negative characteristic of a place or a person was immediately followed by a positive attribute or with the saying "It's all good." Below are a few examples of this:

I lived with him [Mark had just moved in with his father]. He had his own set family so it was hard for me to fit in with his girlfriend, and his kid. . . . So it was hard for me to fit in. I found it was a lot of conflict, favoritism. A lot of stuff like that that I had to go through. . . . Because I felt like what I said really didn't matter a lot. I felt like whatever she [father's wife] said go, and then whatever she said to him to say to me he would say to me, that's not even coming from him. . . . [One day] they just left me sleeping in the park. But it's all good. At times...it wasn't always like that. It was times that we had a lot of fun together, as a family, me with them. Mark.

That's when we moved to Mt. Vernon. . . . It was all right. It was bad, but it was like good and all right. I was going to school and stuff.

Frank

My sister just through me off the car. I went to the hospital and all. But it's all cool. We get along. Francine.

The inconsistency between their stories and the phrase "It's all good" can be understood as participants having learned about the unpredictability of life and the importance of controlling their emotions. As Canada (1995) reports, "You don't dwell on issues that cause fear or anger. Things happened, you acted, you moved on. If you didn't learn how to do this you might never make it out of the Bronx alive. Or if you lived you

would become a slave to your emotions ping-ponging from one to the next. The fear the doubt, the anger, would crowd your mind until there would be no room for any of the good things- love, friendship, laughter.” (p.42).

Ethnic Identity

In the US, most people are extremely aware of the “ethnic” group that they belong to (Fine, 1999; Hacker, 1992; Harris, 1995; Omi & Winant, 1994). This was no exception to the participants in this study. Thirteen of the fifteen participants described themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority group, African American and Latino/a. They believed that their ethnic group had shaped them considerably to be the people they were- not only how people reacted to them in a particular manner but also how they consciously chose to act certain ways to belong to and be part of their ethnic group.

It’s like all I do and who I am. I am different but I belong to them.

Traditions that tell you what is good and all that. And how to be. I am different but I am also Black. Larry.

I am Latina. Of course I have strong family values. They all know that Latinos have these values so it’s like a circle. Nancy.

During the interviews eleven participants said that they had suffered discrimination because of their ethnic background. This finding is not surprising; racial discrimination is a pervasive phenomenon in the lives of many racial minorities living in

the US. Participants reported both blatant (e.g., being called a derogatory name) and subtle (e.g., being stared at by security guards while shopping) discriminatory behaviors that permeated their daily lives. Below are the voices of two participants talking about this:

The cops and all that. They always be listening. I don't even be doing nothing sometimes. Just be walking. And plus – all they got to say is “There’s a Black male with braids.” And the first one they see, they stop him. They don’t even, they be stressing me for no reason. I’m stressed now, all paranoid. Forest.

Police always pulling people over, searching them. . . . Basically I just don't feel that's right. Invading privacy --I don't think that's right for a police to just pull you over and just search you. Specially if you are not White, they do it all the time. A couple of laws should change. William.

In this store as soon as I go in the guard starts following me. Word. I go there to buy but they think that I’m there to steal. Larry.

Other researchers have reported similar findings of discrimination (Essed, 1991; Feagin, 1991; Swim, Cohen, & Hyers, 1998). In a large-scale national survey, Kessler et al. (Kessler, Mickelson, & Williams, 1999) found a lifetime prevalence rate of 61% for African Americans experiencing day-to-day racial discrimination.

When identifying themselves as African American or Latino, participants also talked about their status in comparison to “other” ethnic groups, in particular Caucasians. Caucasians were referred to as being privileged, having good jobs, and avoiding jail and prison terms. This dichotomy between the ethnic groups provided participants a frame of reference which helped shape their identities. Just like the neighborhoods they lived at, their ethnic background provided them with an environment that allowed them to view arrests as a normal experience. Over two thirds of the participants (11) talked about how one’s ethnicity was an important characteristic when seeing who ends up involved in the criminal justice system.

All my friends had been in jail, also my father and his brothers.
 Sometimes because they want to work, other times because of drugs. It
 was my turn. If I was White I wouldn’t be here. White people don’t go to
 jail and don’t have problems with the police. Nancy.

If you’re Black there is nothing to do, you’ll just end up in jail . . .
 Whites avoid all sentences but not us. Damon.

These comments, while maybe not completely accurate, hold some truth to the participants. Over-representation of African American and Latino juveniles occurs at all stages of the juvenile justice system. In 1996-97, while 26% of juveniles arrested were African American, they made up 45% of cases involving detention. Thirty-two percent of adjudicated cases involved Black youth, yet 40% of juveniles in residential placement are

Black. Even recognizing the over-representation of African Americans juveniles involved in violent crimes reported by victims (39%), they still accounted for a disproportionate share of juvenile arrests for violent crime (44%) and confinement (45%) (US Department of Justice- Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1999). A report issued in 1999 by New York State Attorney General Elliot Spitzer found that the New York City Police Department stopped Blacks six times more frequently and Latinos four times more frequently than Whites (Spitzer, 1999). Similarly, a study conducted by Building Blocks showed that when White youth and minority youth were charged with the same offenses, African American youth with no prior admissions were six times more likely to be incarcerated in public facilities than White youth with the same background (no prior admissions). Latino youth were three times more likely than White youth to be incarcerated (Poe-Yamagata, 2000). Given these figures, we can understand participants' feelings; that ethnicity plays unfavorably against them, and how arrests and jail sentences have become a common experience.

While the racial disparities that individuals reported gave them a cultural narrative where to place their experiences and diminish their personal responsibilities, it did not mean that all personal blame was abolished. Below we can see Francine's hesitation towards abolishing all individual responsibility and, at the same time, realizing that there are many structural and institutional facilitators for minorities to end up involved with the criminal justice system:

And in fact there's so many people, you don't see no White people in jail, unless they're like crack heads or strung out or something. You see

mostly Blacks, Hispanics, minorities there so I have to see people like this suffering but, “don't blame the White man for your problems when you were out doing the foolishness.” That's the way I see it. But I think the system is corrupt and it ain't right. There ain't no justice here. If you are White you have to fuck up big time for the system to lock you down. With us, they lock us for nothing. Francine.

Participants not only identified negative characteristics to their ethnicity; they also saw many advantages to belonging to the ethnic minority they did and were extremely proud of. Six participants commented that they believed African Americans and Latinos were able to throw better parties, dance, and enjoy life more than other ethnicities.

[African American] know how to have fun. That's me. . . . when we hang out [we] have fun. When we celebrate we have fun. . . . White people don't know how to dance and bug off. Larry.

Another aspect that was important for participants was identifying with the sense of style that they attached to their ethnic group. Three participants, two female and one male, expressed their idea that African American's and Latino's had a much better sense of style than Caucasians:

They [Caucasians] just don't know what to wear. They have all this money and they still don't look nice. . . . Only Blacks know what goes with what. . . . [Dressing style is] important to who you are. Kimberly.

These findings suggest that race is a catalyst for how participants are classified and classify themselves.

Being Tough

Toughness has been a central component on how society defines masculinity in American life. Beginning in early adolescence issues of respect, honor, and pride are repeatedly described as central features of male identity. Further physical prowess, emotional detachment, and the willingness to engage in violence to resolve interpersonal conflicts are seen as hallmarks of adolescent (Anderson, 1994, Canada 1995; Messerschmidt, 1993).

The participants in this study were no exception; six of the male participants reported being "tough," a characteristic that was perceived as being positive since it can earn them respect in the street and, in turn, this could help them avoid fights. Four participants talked about how after winning a vicious fight, they noticed changes in the way others treated them. This status brings with it a level of power and personal fulfillment that may be reinforced by projecting this identity. For example:

Once they saw [what] I did to him [a leader from a gang] they just left me alone . . . there were no more fights with them. Larry.

I cursed a lot. I was quick to start fighting. I would fight anybody when I was small. Learnt from my brother I wasn't afraid of nobody. So I like, I was like, come on, you want to fight? Let's go. And I just started swinging . . . I knew how to get my respect . . . the streets and at school. Once you showed you knew how to fight, they would respect you . . . Leave you alone . . . They were scared of me . . . They gave me more than my respect. Nico.

The identity of being tough was one that participants developed at a young age. However, the meaning and behaviors of being tough changed during the course of their lives. It starts as a desire and is quickly transformed into violent behaviors and poses that try to reflect this tough identity. Later it becomes an identity that describes who they are at all times, without the need to act violent. Larry clearly explained this transformation:

When I was five I was learning to fight. I thought it was fun then. What older people did. . . . [When I was] thirteen I was scared of fights, [but] I couldn't show that. I would be [a] dead man. So I just fought with everyone. . . . [Now] I needn't do all that fights. One good and that's it. Only when needed I fight now. They know me. Larry.

Larry's speech shows a developmental trajectory of being tough that many other male participants talked about. While they considered themselves tough at a young age, the meaning of toughness and the actions required changed.

Female participants also described themselves as being "tough," but, unlike the male participants, this was only in very contextual situations. Five female participants, of the seven that participated in the study, talked about having been tough, when the situation called for it. With the exception of one female participant who talked about being tough as a way to oppose the "feminine" values of society, other female participants did not describe themselves as being tough as a person, but being tough in a situation. Tanesha voices this position:

Seven kids, two boys and five girls. Five girls I hung around since I was in third grade and in fifth grade they jump me. . . . I beat them back cause I got each and everyone of them back cause my thing was, somebody jump you, you get each and everyone of them the next day. If you don't get them at the same time, get them the next day after that, after that, till you get all of them and that's what I did. I got all them back not the same day . . . and did it by myself 'cause I don't roll with nobody. . . . I was trying to murder them 'cause I felt like "ya'll really violated me" [laughs]. I ain't try to murder them but I tried to hurt them seriously, to make them remember "who the fuck did that to you cause you just did me dirty so I'm a show you who's gonna do you dirty and this little old me" and I was little when it happened, I was the smallest thing in school . . .

So to see me get all them back after that nobody fucking with me, “yeah, yeah that bitch is crazy don’t fuck with her, even though she’s little and quiet, them quiet ones kill so don’t fuck with her” . . . after that I was safe. I am really not that crazy but had to do it for me. Tanesha.

As much as female participants believed that they were tough only when the situation called for it, they believed that many strangers viewed them as being tough at all times. Two female participants said that they had acted tough even when there was no danger, only because they had felt judged by others and used it as a way to release their anger:

What’s her [a stranger] business looking at me like that. It’s like she wanted a fight and I just ain’t having that. . . . ‘what are you looking at me like that?’ and I pushed her. She just thought she was all that, like those blond women. She believed that she was all that and it pissed me off. Kimberly.

Three female participants and one male participant also talked about being tough in order to defend their siblings. Once again the female participants described themselves as tough because of the situation. Below is Natasha’s talk on this topic:

She was messing with my sister and my sister’s 19 but she real skinny and real small so everybody, feel like they can pick on her so . . . I

beat the girl up and the cops came and I thought I was gonna get locked up but the cops were like, well “She’s a minor and you’re 25 years old, what are you doing fighting her? If you’re gonna get technical, we could arrest you because she’s a minor and you fighting her.” I had a belt mark on my back because she hit me with her belt and it was real deep and it was swollen so they wanted to arrest her but I was like “No.” . . . I beat her up, what am I press charges for? It’s enough then. It’s gonna hold. And it held up. And nobody mess with me or my sister no more. I was just tough then for my sister. I had to but I am not always like that. Natasha.

Both male and female participants were influenced by the status and reputations earned through “tough” means. As Nico and Kimberly asserted:

My temper . . . it’s useful from where I live. You have a short fuse, everybody thinks twice about trying to do anything. Nico.

When I need to, I can be violent. That just tells everyone that they have to stay away. They all respect me. Kimberly

Being tough seemed to be equated with positive feelings of self worth and protection; this is not surprising when one remembers the ways that they described their neighborhoods and schools. In many cases having a tough identity served as a way to prevent violence. Since they were respected, people would not want to fight with them.

Along with their identity of being tough, came isolation, and a feeling of “shutting themselves down.” Given their experiences, and their desire to portray a tough façade, participants found it hard to trust people, and they believed that this was an important survival tool. Seven participants said that one of the things they liked about themselves the most was that others did not know how to hurt them:

How I don't care about things and what people say and stuff. I wouldn't change that. That's what I like about me, that I don't think about what people say and what they do. Frank.

My attitude . . . it's like an on and off switch. I'm the most pleasant, kindest person to be around, I'm very generous. . . . but just don't get on my bad side because I mean, it's not something terrible like a hurricane or some shit but, I really hurt people with my, with the way I speak to them. I know I can hurt somebody's feelings. . . . [I like this since] it allows me to do what I want in life and it allows people not to know. . . . I want [people] to never know how I will be, that way they respect me and they know that I am no push over. Francine.

As we can see from the above quotes, being tough lead many participants to distant themselves from other people and while it might have protected them from fights, it might have also prevented them from developing close relationships.

Respect

Similar to the identity participants developed around being tough was that of being respected. In many ways, these two identities overlap, those who developed an identity of being tough did so to gain respect from others. Similar to the identity of being tough, being respected was an essential aspect of both the male and female participants, even though the areas where they searched for respect were drastically different. For male participants it was very important to be honored by everyone at all times. All male participants spoke more adamantly about being respected by strangers and acquaintances than by people with whom they were close. Being disrespected, or “dissed”, as it was frequently stated, was a central reason for male participants to start a fight. This is similar to the findings of other studies which show that respect is an essential characteristic for many people who are involved in the criminal justice system (Bourgois, 1995; Gilligan, 1996; Gilligan, 2001).

Being valued was important for the male participants when they were young. As they grew older, it became an essential characteristic of who they were and the basis for interactions with other people. Two male participants talked about how their idea of respect changed with time. They both agreed that when they were younger they wanted to be honored by their family, while later in life, as teenagers, they needed to be respected by both strangers and people with whom they were close. Below is Larry’s narrative which shows this transformation of respect:

When I was a kid I didn’t care that much about [what] others think.

... I just wanted my brother’s respect. [That was] important. ... My

[brother] always told me to not take shit from others. No matter who they are. That was how I learnt. No one wants to be dissed. . . . It is who you are and they all have to respect that. . . . Now that I am older, I know that's important. Respect comes first you show it to others and others [show it] to you. Larry.

Unlike male participants, female participants' view of respect had less to do with fights and being tough and more with being heard and valued. When they talked about respect it was usually about being valued by someone close to them, such as their boyfriends or their family.

I just can't go like that. I need the respect and he [her boyfriend] ain't giving it to me. So I just left him. Kimberly.

I would be talking and she [case manager at another program] just didn't hear me. Word. And we were there with all. That is like dissing me. So I just shouted and told her what I thought. I just spoke my mind. Laura.

Females Voice vs. Males Silence

Female participants were much more willing to "speak one's mind," express their opinions, and disagree with authority figures than were male participants. Female participants valued their characteristic of being outspoken in all situations as a

demonstration that they were real and willing to challenge the norm. Four female participants also talked about speaking out against authority figures such as teachers, COs (Correction Officers), bosses, and ATI staff. They believed that this was essential to who they were. They were willing to speak out even though they could risk some of their benefits:

I didn't respect authority and I still don't. Well, I mean, now I'm grown and all, but I know that some things I just cannot and can do but I didn't respect authority then and sometimes I can be a wiseass and I think I know pretty much everything, but I know it's not true. There's still plenty for me to learn . . . I just didn't like, I mean, I'm the type, right now, I still am, if I don't like it, I'll let you know about it. I'm very stand up. I'm very straight forward and blunt with everything. So even if it's gonna hurt me. I'm the type that if I tell a lie I'm gonna burst inside. Francine.

Not allowing other people to silence their opinions was also linked to feeling respected, and thus had an extra significance:

When I say something, I'll fight to the point of what I'm saying. I just won't let it go. And I always have an opinion about something. I won't just walk into a room and be like, "Uh, huh, yeah, yeah." No. I speak about it give it some insight. . . . Something just happened in [the ATI] about three days ago where I had an argument with one of the staff

members, . . . And we was going back and forth cause I felt that he wasn't listening to me. He was hearing what I was saying, but he wasn't really listening to me. So we went back and I argued. I just said all I needed till he listened. I needed that respect. Laura.

Three participants believed that in the long run they benefited from standing up for their rights and been outspoken:

The CO [Correction Officer] told her [another inmate] to smack me because I was being disrespectful to her [to the CO]. And I'm thinking, "You know what, I'm not gonna be here long anyway so I'm gonna." I'm the type that I have a nasty mouth at times and I can talk to people like shit and I say sometimes they deserve it because, you want to respect their bit and she's telling me. I mean I understand I'm in the system, so why don't treat me like a dog because I'm an inmate and I made a mistake, you know. And eventually the CO's realized that and then I was . . . one of their favorites. That they show me extra attention or they let me, gave me extra privileges. Francine.

Here, we can see how Francine's idea that standing up and speaking out for herself resulted in a positive outcome; Francine being respected in jail. However this was not always the case. Two participants talked about how they had spoken out even when they knew that it would harm them. This was important since they believed that this is

who they were and that it was their right as “grown-ups.” Below we can see how for Tanesha speaking out was more important than having a roof over her head:

Me and my grandmother had a little argument and she hit me. That was the last straw. I’m like “I’m 18 now and you still laying your hands on me like [I am] seven.” Now I speak up. I speak for myself, so you can’t just hit me like that and think I’m just gonna stand there and duck from you now. So I told her off, I pushed her off me and I walked out and I said “I’m not coming back.” I had no place to go so the only place I had was my mother. . . . But I had to tell her be real, that was important.

Tanesha.

All female participants framed their identity as outspoken women, as having “an attitude.” Having an attitude meant forcefully expressing themselves in situations where people preferred they did not do so. This also meant that they would hurt other people’s feelings, and be aggressive just for the sake of “being real.” Similar to having an attitude, female participants spoke out just to get out their anger. In more than half of the cases the anger talk was not directed to the person that they were angry. Participants recognized that this was not always a positive identity but it was not until they got to the ATI that they chose to change. I expand more on this on this topic in the section that discusses the effects of the ATI. Below are some of the ways participants talked about equating being out spoken with having an attitude:

I usually have a nasty attitude. Usually, I'm in a bad mood [at the ATI] cause a lot of drama and stress with my boyfriend and I see him, sometimes before I come over here, so it's like okay, if he does something to piss me off, my whole mood is thrown off for the day. And it's like I take it out on other people. Which I shouldn't cause it has nothing to do with them but, it's fine. . . . I'll just be telling people nasty stuff, all truths. I just tell them what I think. I have a real attitude. Francine.

I just have this attitude you know. For real, I just say things and they can hurt. . . . I'll just come right at you at your face, and be like, "What's your problem?" I'll just say it nasty, for real. Kimberly.

When I tell things it comes out like if I have an attitude. People just think I'm mean. My boyfriend, he just thinks that. He told me. Nancy.

Speaking their thoughts was something that female participants learned with time and they believed that with age they had acquired the right to be honest and be heard. Kimberly clearly talked about this transmission and how the importance of not being silenced is acquired with time:

When you are young you have to be quiet. . . . now I have the maturity to say what's on my mind. I just can't be the quiet one. It just changes. Kimberly.

In contrast to female participants, male participants never identified themselves as being outspoken. On the contrary, they described themselves as being quiet, preferring to observe and hear what others had to say before they revealed what they thought.

[I am] quiet and shy. I don't talk a lot around people. I don't know. If I don't know a person I don't say nothing, I just sit there. If they talk, I listen to what they have to say. Frank.

I am quiet, that's it. I say nothing to nobody, just mind my business. . . . I always stayed to myself. Shakim.

I've always been quiet. . . . Never been around people. I don't like crowds. I always took things in my own. Nico.

I just stay out of trouble. I am quiet. Larry.

Many of these narratives indicate that males equate their own silence with avoiding trouble. This is almost an expected result given that schools and other

institutions, such as jails, reward this trait. Male silence can also be traced back to their fear of trusting other people and wanting to be alone.

This finding contradicts most of the literature, which finds women to be quiet, while men to be outspoken. I can only wonder if this is a “new” tendency reflecting cultural changes. Male participants knew from an early age that they were at high risk of ending up in the criminal justice system, and had learnt that silence was usually equated with avoiding trouble. On the other hand, the feminist movement has encouraged females to voice their opinion, to have their “voices” heard, and thus the finding that females were outspoken, could be a reflection of this “new” cultural norm.

Acting Out and Being Crazy

Five participants said that something that was essential to their personalities was that they would act “crazy” at times and that they were prone to acting out.

I act out . . . I wouldn't want to change it, because it's good to have a temper sometimes. But, I take it out on the wrong people sometimes. I get angry quick for no reason. Like if I'm mad at you, I'll take it out on the next person just cause I'm mad at you and I can't do nothing to you. The case, the case managers, I can't get mad at them. so when I go outside, somebody look at me, and I go like, I'm quick to get angry at them, cause I can't do it here because I'm going to be arrested. Stuff like that. Nico.

I act out and my mom just gets mad. That was why I stopped living with her, she ain't dealing with the acting out. For real. Larry.

I don't know how to describe my personality. I'm just wacky and, sometimes, I just go through extremes and just like to have fun. . . . My craziness gets me in trouble. I was suspended from school once just because I was being crazy. Kimberly.

When my mother put me in the hospital . . . Because they said I had emotional breakdown. That I had a breakdown but it wasn't breaking down. I just got out of control and I started screaming at my mother. I didn't get physical with her. I never get physical. But she just didn't like it and she thought I was on drugs, or something, so they take me to the hospital, right. And they take me to [the hospital]. So I'm in [the hospital] and I still mad. I'm still mad as shit and I'm like "Why am I here?" So then my mom she tells them to keep her. "Keep her." So she says, so they put me in a room by myself and I'm throwing shit. I'm throwing my boots and I just see my mother leave me. She just walked out the room and she just left me there. So and then she just left me there and I'm in the hospital . . . They just put me in a room and they were saying they were gonna restrain me. So I wake up. I wake up and I'm in another hospital. They doped me up and they restrained [me] and I went in the ambulance and then I wake up and I'm in the hospital. And then there they put me with

the kids, the teenagers, the kids my age. I was 14 when this happened. . . .

So they gave me something to calm me down so in the same night. . . .

Some of the girls were jealous of me or whatnot, so one of them tried to smother me. Tried to kill me in my sleep. So I got up and I got into a fight and they moved me. But they tried to kill me in my sleep so had I, had I, I mean I was really knocked out off of what they gave me to calm me down. So had I not woke up my mother would have been responsible for my death more or less. And I hate her to this day for that. That's the only thing I hate about my mother is that she just left me and God forbid I would have died at that moment there. At 14 years old. [Starts crying] It would have been her fault. I mean also because I act out you know? I do act crazy at times and it can be fun. But not this time. Francine.

Acting out was also present in more subtle ways than being belligerent toward other people.

[People think] I had no manners and stuff . . . I did have manners, but I didn't show them . . . Not on purpose, I just didn't want to show them to nobody. I don't know them, so I didn't need to show them to people I don't know. . . . I was suspended I think cause that. Frank

I din't let them [the case managers from another program] know that I was doing well or that I could do that. That was their job to find out. I was quiet. Larry.

As we can see from the above narratives, participants were proud of their acting out and being crazy, even though it caused them problems in several spheres of their lives. They seemed to equate acting out and acting crazy with having fun or standing up for themselves and thus a positive trait, even though, in most cases, the final outcome was a negative one.

Consumerism

Like most teenagers in the United States, the participants in this study wanted a materialistic life of consumption. They enjoyed buying and wearing designer clothes and jewelry. They also enjoyed having the latest technology for audio and play stations.

I like materialistic things. I like clothes a lot and I seen some boy he had on a kuji and it was red, white, and blue and I had never seen one of those before. I had seen a kuji, but not a red, white, and blue one. Then I got a couple of them myself so that's how I started being friendly and I seen people a different way. I'm like okay, so they are probably in the same predicament as me. Shakim.

Five participants (two male participants and three female) talked about how important it was for them to dress well; with designer clothes:

I like to look good Baggy jeans, just baggy clothes, name brand clothes, name brand sneakers . . . Guess, Nikes, Jordans. Larry.

I like [to] buy good clothes, Guess, Gap, Banana . . . it's not even about the labels and everything but I like to buy good quality clothing. I mean, if it's cheap and it looks nice I'll wear it but I like to spend a little bit more and get something that I'll have for quite a few years. That's why labels are good. It depends how much money I have. 'Cause sometimes I just like to buy basic and learn stuff because, as I'm growing, it's not like all about labels and have a big ass logo of whatever brand of clothing you're wearing and stuff. It's not even all about that but I just . . . dress for the occasion. Dress to impress when you have to. Francine.

It is important to dress appropriately . . . No short short skirts all that, that show all yourself, like that. And I don't wear high heel shoes. . . . I don't like it. Now on some occasion like graduation I'll wear 'em but . . . clothes is important, don't need no name brand on it, but better if it is. Like it it's, if I look nice, only if you look nice and neat and clean, I wear it. Sandra.

For Natasha, acquiring designer clothing was one of her most important memories from childhood. Following is Natasha's response to the question: "Can you tell me

something important that happened to you when you were a teenager? It can be something really good or really bad”:

When I was a teen-ager what was really good that happened to me when I first got my first pair of Jordan's. I was so happy, I got my first pair of Jordan's because I used to always wear 10's and Nike Air. Then I just got my first pair of Jordan's. I was so happy. My sister had 'em. My mother got her income taxes. Me, my sister, and even my mother had them. And my little brother. She got her income tax [so] she bought all of us the Jordans. We all had the same outfits. She bought my friend, one of my friends, a pair and one of my sisters' friends a pair and we went all went out to the movies and stuff. And she also bought us a little bath and body stuff. I'll never forget. It was cucumber melon. Natasha.

In some cases the importance of dressing well had encouraged participants to work, and act responsibly, so that they would have money to buy the clothes they liked:

They [her parents] used to like get my sneakers from the thrift shop or something or I would like, get something handed down from my brother or sister. . . . So when I got older I said I'm gonna be able to buy whatever I want and can't nobody tell me how to manage my money and that's that. I can just buy whatever I want. So that's what really got me responsible enough to try to get a job and do things like that. Francine.

In many ways these narrative embody Cushman's (1990) notion of the empty self. Cushman argued that the contemporary Western individuals seek "The experience of being continually filled up by consumption goods" (p.600). By placing the participants' aspirations in context, we realize that their dreams match those of the society we live in. As Matza and Sykes (1961). pointed out: "The delinquents' attachment to conspicuous consumption hardly makes him a stranger to dominant society" (p. 717). Hyper-consumption is celebrated by the mass media, popular culture, and in advertising of all sorts, particularly in New York City, where hyper-consumption is a way of life. So then, we are left with a question of whether offenders need to be reintegrated into mainstream society. The problem might be that they are too well integrated.

Developing a Delinquent Identity

All participants except Frank developed a delinquent identity when they were teenagers- they started stealing, robbing, as well as using and/or selling drugs. Three participants also became involved in the sex industry. These behaviors became part of participants' identities. Frank, the one participant who said he had not developed such an identity in his teenage years, said that he had always been delinquent:

I ran around outside alone since I was young. I learnt a lot, like to steal and not get caught. . . . I just was doing stuff I wasn't supposed to, but we [Frank and his brother] had nothing else to do. That was just me. . . . I needed money and my brother too. Frank.

In Frank's comment above it is clear how he always described himself as someone who at a young age learned how to break the rules and reduces who he is to having nothing else to do but to break rules when he states: "That was just me." All other participants believed that it was during their teenage years that they had started behaving deviant. While it was hard for most participants to identify when they started viewing themselves as deviant, three participants linked it to the death of their grandmother:

I did bad stuff before but it wasn't the same, it wasn't. . . . After she died I just didn't care about nothing. I just became lazy and a pot head. . . . I just didn't care. That was me. [I was] just there doing bad. Shakim.

Even for Frank, who had always identified himself with breaking the law, the death of his grandmother solidified his identity as deviant:

And once she died I didn't care no more, . . . I was upset then. I wasn't going to school . . . I just became all mean, and did not care. Frank

Other reasons why participants developed a delinquent identity were starting high school, and peer pressure. They started using drugs, dropping out from school, stealing, and acting promiscuously, for no apparent reason:

I used to be good. Like good student, good daughter. Just good. Then I started like with drugs and bored in school, and then it all started. I started to like do wrong. . . . I thought it was cool. Sandra.

Once I started smoking [at age 14] I just thought that was all there was. All I saw myself was that. So I would steal to have money to smoke [marijuana]. Kimberly.

It just was when I started high school. Then it all changed like for the worse. I started to steal, smoke, sell drugs, the whole nine. I just did it all. Damon.

Participants soon started identifying with these delinquent behaviors. In the above statement Kimberly bases her self-concept as limited and negative when she states "*All I saw myself was that.*"

The need for independence or survival was the motivation behind three participants' illegal behavior, as Frank describes:

The foster lady in Queens she was a little odd, she just gave us a place to stay but . . . She aint give us no money really. We was out most of the time, so that's why we were just stealing, because we didn't have money and we were hungry. Then we just told the caseworker because we got tired of not having no money, so we told the caseworker and first they didn't do anything. Frank

Not everyone was motivated by such dire circumstances, but at a relatively young age many felt tremendous pressure many felt tremendous pressure to earn enough money to support themselves or family members. Laura started selling drugs when she felt a need to leave her mother's house, since her step father was stealing money from her. Damon's mother lost her job and Damon felt a need to help his family economically, it was at this point that he decided to steal.

For other participants their motivation lied on the excitement of breaking the law as well as an expression of their frustration and anger with a system that oppressed them:

I used to just be for the ride, go for the ride and see if I could get some money out of the deal. But mostly just for fun. So my friends used to steal cars . . . they used to steal mini-vans from rich people and then like pop the steering brake on the motorcycle and steal the motorcycle too and we used to like ride . . . with stolen shit and that's like grand theft auto. You can really get some serious time for that. And I didn't realize it. I was just like, I'm down for the ride so I didn't realize guilty by association even though I didn't actually do something. I could have got arrested. Damon.

I'm not racist or anything and I'm not biased either. I just saw this White lady and, sometimes people they have this mannerism and their attitude and things about them that just fucking aggravate me. And it's like she had this, this walk and this way about her like she was like the best

shit on earth. . . . So I'm like, okay, and after my brother and I did what we did [robbed her], I got arrested. Francine

These participants express a sense of what psychologists call “relative deprivation” which is a discrepancy between what they believe they deserve and what they have (Crosby, Muehrer, Loewenstein, 1986; Runciman, 1966). Several psychologists have reported relative deprivation as the cause for deviant behavior (Agnew, 1985; Agnew, 1992 ; Cohen, 1955; Kaplan, 1980; Merton, 1938)

The motivation behind participants’ involvement in unlawful behavior played a major role in their identity. Two out of the three participants who committed unlawful behavior because of need experienced conflict between who they believed they were and how they were behaving:

It just made me feel strange, 'cause I always knew that was not me. . . . It was nice to see the money. That just seem to make it worth it at the time. Kimberly.

When you are selling you make mad money, and that makes it hard to stop. Like “why stop?” But there was always in me that made me feel bad, I wasn’t doing what I was supposed to. Larry.

The above narratives illustrate a process through which participants exchanged their identity of “responsible” for money, and how they used financial reward as both comfort and justification for their actions.

On the other hand, participants who were motivated by a search for excitement did not find it difficult to incorporate their illicit behavior with other identities they had. Further, their illicit behavior seemed to make them develop an all encompassing delinquent identity which supplanted all other identities:

I always was adventurous. I like excitement and stealing cars was just part of that. . . . It was just natural for me to do shit like that. It was who I was meant to be. Francine.

I like trouble. But not being caught. That is the whole point, cause it allows you to have fun with no consequences. William.

Saundra and Nancy believed that their hardest decision was when they got involved in prostitution. Neither one of them had ever imagined this as part of their future, and tried to forget it was part of their past. Saundra, who had always been a good student and had a family that supported her economically, could not explain why she had decided to have sex for money:

It's just stress to think about it, so I don't. I just forget about it. I don't know why I started. It just goes against who I am. It's really weird. Terrible. Sandra.

Sandra was reluctant to probe into the “weird” or “terrible” aspects of how her behavior was contradictory to her self-concept, but articulated the distressing aspects of this negotiation. For Nancy the process was very different. She describes how at first she didn't even realize what she was getting into:

I just loved him [her boyfriend] and thought that was what I was supposed to do. . . . I didn't like it, but I wanted to be a good girlfriend. And they did pay. Nancy.

Nancy's quote shows the extent to which female identity has been associated with the body, especially in terms of sexual and reproductive spheres , and how the sexual objectification of women becomes a large component of female identity as well as a tool of women oppression (Bartkly, 1990; Bordo 1993; Martin 1992).

Forest found himself on the other side of the story- he had been a “pimp.” For him this represented a fun job that provided him with all the material wealth he wanted. However he also acknowledged that the pimp game was a “lonely game”:

I had a lot of girls, so I could make it happen right there. Cause the girls want money. And I go to the girls. And T was getting the money. And

I was getting clients. And we was just working like that. He needed me. I needed him. So we was like a little team. A little pimp team. . . . We be having fun while we're doing it too. We be drinking. We used to smoke. We used to have fun making money. That's what it used to be about. With me. I used to have fun with the girls and make money all day. It wasn't nothing else better than that back then. . . . The pimp game is a lonely game. They're lonely games. Cause when everything is said and done, you ain't going to have it like you want it. Cause when the girls get all old and all used out, you ain't going to have no money. You have to something to fall back on. Forest.

Juggling Identities

While both male and female participants had several identities that they used at different times in their lives and at different places, female participants seemed to have a harder time “juggling” these different identities, than males. Females said that they found themselves being a tough woman in the streets, a hard working person at work, and a rebel at home. In addition, some participants also juggled being a good mother and a role model for younger siblings:

It's like I am a different person. I dress differently now, [that she is at the ATI] I talk differently, and I just act different. [Laughs] I just think that you have to but I get tired you know too much to change. Kimberly.

But I got there [an Alternative to Detention-ATD- program he attended before the ATI], I started like everybody else. Their first impression is the one that lasts, so you give them a good first impression, and then once you start getting comfortable, that's when your road starts to show, and that's what happened when I got in ATD. I made it appear to them that I was a nice kid, I didn't belong there. And then after I started getting comfortable, I started to act up, and that's when I started getting in trouble, and I got violated from ATD, sent back to incarceration. Mark.

Dress for the occasion. Dress to impress. . . . When you're dealing with professionals, with business people, there's a certain attire you wear. There's a certain jargon that you speak to communicate with them. But as far as like streeting in the hood, you would see me in like, in a pair of timberland, a pair of sneakers, sweat pants, probably like pajama pants and a white beader, a tank top. You wouldn't see me in nothing special. It depends on what I'm doing at the time. Francine.

Participants in the present study are especially skilled at what Goffman called the “presentation of the self in everyday life” (Goffman, 1959). According to Goffman, the modern man or woman is like a performer enacting roles in order to manipulate the impressions of others. Scripted performances are used for specific situations. As we can see, Mark shows his best behavior when he starts a program, to manipulate others opinions about him. Kimberly and Francine also change their looks and behaviors in

accordance to the audience they have. Nine participants talked about juggling different identities at different times.

Goffman (1959) believed that even social situations that seem to be “natural” and “spontaneous” are typically ritualized performances designed to create a desired effect on “audiences.” For Goffman, we are the roles we juggle. While, at first sight, it might be true that participants were the roles they juggled, I soon found this to be an insufficient explanation since it left participants with no integrative sense of self. Participants did offer an underlying thread that joined all of these identities together; they “kept it real”:

I keep it real at all times. It's like I act different and look different but it is me. . . . I am ghetto. . . It's like I might not dress ghetto or like act it but I am. Kimberly.

Participants' associated the juggling of identities primarily with clothes. The clothes they wore made them adopt a different identity, and thus were essential to both the juggling and the maintaining a coherent identity.

I didn't want to look like a young girl pushing around a baby carriage, so I changed the way I dressed too because of that. If you look like a lady you can take care of your daughter. You are not young in your head. I might look young in my face, but in my head I'm trying to think big like an adult. Like I experienced before, I never did. That's why I am trying to dress and carry myself now. Tanesha

Tanesha's narrative shows how dressing not only conveys an identity and affects how others view her but also influences how she thinks of herself and thus her identity.

Summary

Described in this section are the main identities participants developed over their lives. Participants had a strong "ethnic" identity (Latino or African American), which they described as both a blessing and a curse since they believed that they had "more style" and knew how to have fun than other ethnic groups but also felt discriminated (in stores, by the police, etc) because of it. Partially as a response to this feeling of discrimination, partially due to the society that participants live in and partially due to the neighborhoods they lived in, participants developed a tough identity. This identity started by them acting violently and engaging in fights and was later transformed to an identity that actually avoided fights. Along with being tough came "respect." Males searched for respect from strangers while females from people they were close. As part of this respect, females believed that they should be heard, and being able to voice their opinion was essential. On the other hand, males were quiet, and associated not talking with avoiding trouble. However male participants did not avoid trouble at all cost, acting out was as important to who they were as being shy. Female participants also described the importance of their acting out on their identity, and many times their acting out was associated with speaking out. Another identity that many participants talked about was that of "consumers." They enjoyed buying electronic products and designer clothes. Unfortunately, they were not always able to have access to what they wanted due to their

financial situation. The combinations of some of these identities, together with some of participants' experiences lead them to develop a delinquent identity as well as a feeling that they were juggling too many identities.

Chapter 9-Identity Transformations at the ATI

By now I have presented a picture of: 1) the overall environment where participants live, 2) a description of the neighborhoods and some of the institutions they have attended (schools and the ATI), 3) the major turning points in their lives, and 4) the identities they have developed. With this information on hand I now examine how participants adapted to the ATI, and how they changed their identities by being there. In this section, I look at the effects that the ATI had on participants' identities.

Trying to find the effects that the ATI program had was a particular challenge. When I asked the participants how the ATI had changed them, most of them responded that they had not changed in any way, they remained "real"; no program would ever change them.

It's like no program can't change you. We are real and if we don't want we stay doing the same old. Kimberly.

It didn't affect [me] in no way. . . . I'm still the same person. I just keep it real at all times. Shakim.

I guess I'm still the same person I was. I'm not going to change. I don't want to change. I can't see no turning point, nothing will change me. I am me and that's it. Nico.

These comments speak out loudly as to how participants did not want to feel that an institution or another person can change their “real selves.” This is consistent with how Turner (1976) described the real self as a person’s understanding of his or her true nature. Turner suggests that in contemporary Western society, the individual increasingly looks for clues to the nature of the real self in what are experienced as “deep, un-socialized, inner feelings and impulses and not in institutionalized roles.” (p. 1001). However, throughout the narratives participants mentioned many ways that they had changed or fought against changing in the ATI. Below, I illustrate the effects the ATI had on the participants:

Time to Think and Try Out New Things

One of the first things mentioned in participants’ narratives, as they talked about their time at that ATI, was how it offered them a place to stay out of the streets and think about their future. This is a great success for the ATI, given the number of studies that state that self reflection is the first step needed for any behavioral change to occur (Finnell, 2003; Ma, 2003; Mendel, 2002; Prochaska, 1984; Vallis, 2003)

I feel like what made me think, really sit back and think, all the things I was doing and what I'm going to have to do to change, is seeing not how much I hurt myself, how much I hurt other people and how much, how I only felt that I was going through the pain when I was sitting at Horizons writing letters that I was feeling all the pain but everybody else was feeling the same, and maybe even worse than me. That I wasn't there,

I couldn't go with them on our family picnic. I was the only person missing. We would go to Great Adventures every summer. I'm the only person missing now. My little brother ain't got nobody to look up to. My little sister, she was growing up, she always . . . every time I called to speak to her from lock up she always wanted to speak to me. She asked me where I'm at. I couldn't even tell her. I never told my sister I was locked up. Even she wouldn't understand at a young age because I couldn't tell her because I don't want her to know that. . . . but there [Horizon] I had no time to think this 'cause I had to be ready for fights. Horizon's the real house. . . . [The ATI] just gives me time to think and realize stuff like this. Mark.

Because it's like a program to get you off the streets, keep you off the streets. Once you are there you think like what's wrong. It's not like jail where you are worried and fighting. This is a safe place. William.

I gotta change my life. I changed my lifestyle around. I changed who I'm being with, why I'm being with them. I really have to sit down and think and ask myself, "Why am I with this person? Why am I here? Why am I sitting around and why they smoking if I'm not smoking. Why am I doing this, why am I doing that?" I really had to change myself and I really think I did. I don't smoke no more. I barely be with my friends if I'm not with my baby brother I'm with my mother. If I'm not with my mother

I'm with my sisters and that's it. I don't really be with my friends like that. . . . [The ATI] had a lot with me thinking like this. My case manager just helps me sort it out. Natasha.

There's not much more to do here, so you just think about what you want to do. Plus [the case manager] always is like "Yo, what you want out of life? Where will you go?" and that just makes me think. . . . because there are things I gotta change in my life. I don't want to be locked again. Larry.

The therapy that I'm in is helping me. . . . The art therapy. . . . I made it so I can see her on a regular basis and my regular therapist. I trust that I can talk to her, whatever. So that's really making me see a lot of things. She's helping me come to terms with myself and what I really want to do in life and helping me understand why I am the way that I am cause I tend to shut people out and stuff like that and she's helping me be more open so that's the flip side. That's the good part about the ATI. Seeing her. She's cool. . . . She just makes me think and then I chose what I want to change. She makes me see problems. Laura.

By providing participants with a safe space, the ATI not only encourages participants to think about their future, but also allows them to try different identities, in a safe space. Marcia (1980) called this process of questioning a "developmental

moratorium” which is characterized by two things: 1) the leaving aside of responsibilities and commitments and 2) engaging in a process of wondering and questioning. The ATI provides a place where participants are free to try new activities and consider new identities.

[The ATI] made my life more structured because I have to come to a program. If I don't come to a program, I'm getting discharged, I'm going back to jail, . . . So I have to come here. There's some things that I have to, I wouldn't sit around and do beading or go on retreats and stuff or like even have an art class. I wouldn't do these kinds of things. That was something I did when I was growing up and that was pretty much all I wanted to do. Now I see myself being more creative, like doing a lot of things that I was close-minded to before. Like no, it's not me, I'm not doing it. But now I have another choice. Francine.

I wasn't thinking about jobs. Like I just was chillin. But now it is like they [the ATI] opened the door. I got this intern[ship] in a lawyers office. . . . [the case manager] just helps you with that. He kicked some truth to me. I've matured, gone from boy to a man. Larry

Trying out these new identities is a unique opportunity for the participants to reflect and interrupt their cycles of unhealthy development. According to Erikson's model, if adolescents can experience a “developmental moratorium” in which they have

an opportunity to reflect on and experiment with who they are, they are likely to move toward adulthood with enhanced possibilities for long term health and success. Such moratoriums provide adolescents with a “break in the developmental action” and allow them to ask what they want from life.

Calming Down -- Undoing their Delinquent Identity

Six participants, including four out of the five participants who talked about being crazy and acting out, mentioned that since they joined the ATI they had calmed down, and had less of a tendency to act out:

I changed for the better because I used to be a little knucklehead and run around late at night, not coming in the house [until] late. But now I come in the house early and chill. I do stuff constructive and positive now. I don't run around and beat up people or rob people, none of that. Shakim.

Now I've calmed down. I calmed down. I'm older. I used to be old. Now I'm older than old now. So I just calm down now. I just sit back teaching to people my age. Forest.

I changed for myself, too cause I didn't want to believe you're still doing the same bad things, not getting no where in life. I wanted to do

something or be something so I wanted to go back to school and do that for myself. Sandra.

I think it has an effect on me. Not only because I want to get, [be] someone, I want to have someone there from the ATI advocating for me and have something good to say to the court but as far as, I apply it to my personal life too, to teach me to have more patience with people, to have more understanding, it's just so many things that, I mean, it's helped me along the way. I don't know what I would have been doing if I wasn't in the ATI. Francine.

I'm more calm. . . . [before] if somebody try to pull me aside and talk to me, I'm like "Yo, why you picking on me?" . . . Now I be like all right, . . . I take the time and hear what you gotta say, and I'm gonna tell you what I got to say; but I won't be so jumpy. Larry.

These narratives not only show that participants changed their attitudes and identities but also how, in order to accept this change, they had to see it as change that came from them and not a transformation that the ATI had imposed on them. When talking about most changes, participants usually used phrases like Sandra's comment "I changed for myself" or Francine's, "I want to have someone there from the ATI advocating for me and have something good to say to the court." Once they can see that

they wanted the change or that it is to their benefit they were willing to accept the change as part of who they were.

Being patient and not acting crazy was not always an easy or a wise decision. As participants had explained being quick to react and showing their crazy side earned them a certain kind of respect in the streets and this, in turn, avoided violent encounters for them. Participants were well aware of this conflict and believed that they knew when to be patient and when to be quick to react:

Sometimes it's good [even] in the streets, like if you ain't quick to jump on then when they know you can, they respect you more. Like "Man, he could have just done it but he is over it." . . . [Other times] you really have to fight and defend, fuck being calm, that can cost you your life. . . . you just have to know how to act when. Like here [at the ATI] I am calm now, I wait and that's cool. I just chill. Larry.

None of the participants felt that reacting differently, depending on where they were, was a hard change, nor something that prevent them from being "real." On the contrary, as we can see from the above narratives, participants welcomed this new identity, even though they had to be careful when to use it, and thus gave them one more identity to "juggle."

Role Models

Nine participants said that, at the ATI, they developed or fortified an identity of themselves as role models. The ATI encourages participants to suggest activities that they would like the ATI to implement. Many of these suggestions are implemented. This gives the clients a sense that they are, at least somewhat and, at times, in control of what happens, and thus that they are leaders or role models for others. The ATI also gives its clients diplomas, once again creating a sense of accomplishment for its clients.

All the females like the beading. They didn't think it was going to be fun because I suggested beading and sewing, but they didn't think it would be fun, but now everybody in here is getting a kick out of the bead-making. Tanesha.

They gave me a diploma for my photos. Like I'm good at it and I help others. It's like I aint need to show them I know more they know that. They just try to copy what I do. Larry.

Older participants felt that they were respected at the ATI and that they set an example for younger participants. They took on this responsibility with great care to help them avoid some of the mistakes they had done:

I think some of the younger participants here look up to me, 'cause . . . I'm kind of like the oldest, so I try to influence them to do the right

thing, we talk about our relationships and dramas with our boyfriend and what's going on and everything. . . . I just try to give them good advice, because I was their age once and I was kind of wild when I was young. . . . I try to listen. "This is wrong and you're doing it anyway, but just be careful." . . . I think they hear me. Like I'm a role model for them. I think so. They respect me. Francine.

I just tell them to be careful with men. I had that bad experience and I like want to stop people from doing the same mistake I did. . . . They [ATI clients] are young like me and I know more. The ATI helped me so I want to [help] them. Nancy.

Now [at the ATI] I'm older than old now. So I just calm down now. I just sit back teaching to people my age. And they can't believe what I be telling them. . . . Like, when they talking about things, they not even thinking about what happened, they're just looking at it from one point of view. I can tell them, I be telling them from all points of view. And the one that they should look at it as, not just one way. . . . Say like, they want to shoot somebody. I say "You shoot somebody, you got to worry about the cops finding you. You got to worry about somebody snitching on you. You got to worry about the shells from the floor that got your fingerprints on it. You got to worry about everything -- this family, the people that you think are your friends who snitch on you, the cops come to them first. You

got to think about everything. It's better just not to do it. It's not even worth it. There are too many bad things that can happen. There's no good things that can happen. None. The only good thing is that you might get away with it. And you going to lead your life with a 'might get away with it.' That's not even right.” So I'll be talking to them and they be like, "That's true." I counsel them. Forest.

Participants who had been at the ATI for at least four months, had transferred this identity, of a role model, to several realms of their lives and thus had developed an identity as leaders that went beyond the ATI context. When I asked participants to mention some of the labels that they used to describe themselves, four participants, who had been there four months or longer, said “role model” as one of the first five characteristics of who they thought they were. When I asked them to elaborate in their identity as role models they mentioned being leaders with their siblings, their peers, and at the ATI:

It's like now they all see me as someone to follow. The other day I saw my friends from back then [childhood friends] and they just wait for me to do it all . . . when to hang out and where. It's crazy. Francine.

The people I hang out with now tried to do the same thing. I noticed that a week ago. I don't hang out with them like that no more, but they seen me come out and they are like, "Oh yes, you changed the way you

dress. You look cute" So they tried it and now I see them wearing more dresses and more shoes. I was like, "Yes, we can do this. We are older now. We are 18 and it's time for a change. We can't be that little girl no more wearing them little sneakers and all that." It was like, "I agree" and everybody that I hang out with wears dresses and shoes now. I ain't looking at it as they were copying off me I looked at it as a positive. They are looking at me as something positive and something to follow behind, so I look at it like that. I changed somebody's way of thinking and way of dressing. Tanesha.

Another reason why I decided to change [was] because my little brother is starting to get older. He's starting to change now and I could see him. He's taking my first steps but in a lighter way because he. . . I feel I have more heart than him. . . . And I don't want him to grow up being like me and getting locked up and stuff. And so I try to show him that you can do better. You don't have to go to jail for people to know your name and for you to be known, you'll be big and bad. You could be big and bad by going to school and doing your work, having a nice job, a nice girlfriend in the house. Mark.

Role Models as Their Future Career

Almost as an extension of their identity as role models, came participants' desire to become case managers or lawyers. Three participants said that they wanted to become

case managers in programs such as the ATI and two said they wanted to be lawyers. They thought they would be perfect in their professional roles since they could be “role models” given their experiences in the criminal justice system. The desire of former “deviants” taking active part in the reformation of others is a well-documented phenomenon; Alcoholics Anonymous is based on this premise. Further, Brown (1991) reported that an estimated of 72% of the professionals counselors working in over 10,000 substance abuse treatment centers in the United States are former substance abusers.

I want to be a counselor. I wanted to stay in [the ATI] so I can get this job that I'm at right now I would like to stay and help people that got in trouble like I did. They helped me I will help. . . . I'd be good cause I know what you feel when you are here, like I've been there I can tell them and I know they'll hear me. Larry.

I already work in it. It's like a growing [ATI]. It's like an alternative program for like older men that came out of jail, so they are trying to get jobs and everything and we help with that - placements and jobs and everything like that. I've got my own desk and I will be filing and typing, doing usual things that everybody do at work. They all like me just cause I know what they going [through]. Shakim.

[The ATI] helped me with the way I act and show people who I am like with my speech, the tone I use, and my posture. That all makes me

feel good too, to know I can find a job, and this law firm accepted me for an internship. That will make me help. They taught me to do what you got to do. That will take me far. Make me big.

I want to be a lawyer because . . . everybody used to come to me and tell me about their cases and stuff and I used to tell them the way to strove around there or whatever and the way, you know, what I mean, don't get yourself in no more trouble and if you get out don't come back in here and stuff like that. So I know what I'm going to do. I know I'm not going in back in jail. I already know that so that's basically what I'm doing. . . . I've learnt a lot about the system when I went through this so I'll use it to help others. Natasha.

The desire of participants to help others is quite common. It might be a way for participants to simultaneously acknowledge their wrong doing and their harsh lives, as well as making a contribution to youth who are in a similar position as they were.

Voice- A New Perspective

While attending the ATI females learned to communicate differently. Four participants said that the ATI had taught them how to express their anger and frustration in more acceptable ways.

[Strangers] used to be looking at me like, “What is you looking at? Why is you looking at my face? What's the matter with me? Like me or something? What's the matter?” I used to do stupid stuff. But now, it [the ATI] did change my life a lot. I stopped doing the stupid stuff. I stopped playing around. . . . Now I can be like “Can I help you?” And it's like the same people stop looking at you, but they respect you like that. . . . [The case manager] helped me like she was “Why be aggressive? You are so nice.” and that's what made it. Natasha.

The only thing that I think the ATI made me change is how to communicate with people. I think that's it. . . . Now I can be real open and talking about like, express my feelings or whatever I've got to say. I think that's the main thing. That's it. Saundra.

When I first came to the ATI, I used to curse a lot. I mean, like in every sentence a curse would come out of my mouth... Now it's like ... I'm so used to they telling me stop cursing or this and that, and now it's like I can just talk without cursing and they help me out a lot, open a lot of opportunities for me like work and that. I think I know how to present myself better. Kimberly.

Now I can talk in a professional way. Like with all the jargon that they use. I can also talk ghetto, don't get me wrong, but talking

professional gets me places, makes me look different and I also feel like I can do it. I am professional. Francine.

When I first heard these narratives I thought this could be an instance where participants felt that they were being forced to “act White” and, thus, not being true to their real selves. However none of the participants mentioned feeling that they were “acting White”, and when I asked them, the response was a clear and profound. Participants did not define being “professional” or being able to express themselves without anger a Caucasian trait:

I don’t think that has nothing to do with acting White. It’s like there is people who talk aggressive in all races and those who curse in all races. . . . Acting White would be more like if I am snobby and think I am all that. Kimberly.

When I say talking Ghetto it does not mean like aggressive it’s just the slang that is use. I am not sure what would be talking White. Maybe like soft and not shouting. Because we do shout a lot. Francine.

Female participants were still outspoken and felt comfortable doing so in all spaces. Their communication style change, it did not limit their up-front and honest communications in any way. On the contrary, they felt they had more tools to communicate more effectively.

Now I don't have to get mad and tell them [people that stare at her] all that. I can just say it in a way that doesn't make me mad. And it doesn't make them [mad]. Natasha.

Now I am real professional. I always was but this just helped that notch. Now I can tell them [people from work] the truth in a professional way. Francine.

This change is important and positive. According to various theorists (e.g. Bakhtin, 1981; Vygotsky, 1978) the verbal communication changes participants in many ways since communication styles allow participants' to make and represent meanings, to change and construct identities, and to gain and maintain social positions. By learning to talk "professionally" participants were able to make sense of why people had reacted to them in aggressive ways, were able to view themselves as "real professionals," express themselves in socially appropriate ways, and thus increase their changes of finding and maintaining a legal job.

Going Back to the Old Self

Seven participants said that at the ATI they had re-adopted previous identities that they had before they were court-involved, and that they had abandoned when they started junior high school, or high school. This is consistent with other research findings (Biernacki, 1986; Maruna, 2000; Rotenberg, 1987) and it is similar to Goffman's (1961)

concept of “reverting to an unspoiled identity.” After all, many of the roles played by participants have not been delinquent; they have been good students, good grandsons/daughters, and, overall, good people. By falling back into previous identities, participants are able to fall back into a routine that they are familiar with and gives their life a sense of continuity and “keeping it real.”

When I first got here, like every other person, I gave them the impression that I was good. I started to get comfortable for a while and I fell back into negative behaviors. Smoking, coming here late, not coming here at all. And I got a warrant. My case manager talked me. I want to change now. . . . It's like now I decided to be like I [was with] my grandmother. It was like I always showed her the good side and that was me. . . . I feel I'm back on track now. I'm doing what I gotta do . . . I'm doing excellent in school. I just got a test back, I got an 83 in math I'm home now, back with my mom, I live with my mom, my little sister, my brother, my uncle and my grandmother. Just like before. Mark.

Cause that's not me; I don't know. I was like, I don't do those kind of things. I go to school. I do what I'm supposed to do. I gotta start being myself and [stop] like following the wrong people. Like to fit in with people. It's not worth it. . . . I'm not the type of person that do those things. I just hang with the wrong people and be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

That just wasn't me. . . . I was always a good student, [I] liked it.
So now I am back to just me. Sandra.

Graduating elementary was a nice experience for me. . . . I don't know, I guess I felt that I finally completed something, one part of something that's still got to go on in my life, school. So I felt I completed the first half of it, and I could do the next half of the junior high school, and now I got so far in high school, I only got one more year. I feel I can complete that too. Larry.

Yeah, and [the ATI] made me change my entire life. I feel like when I was younger and did real well in school and now I can do well again. Shakim.

I want do better, finish school, because school is the most important thing right now. You know that diploma does get you stuff, that's what I didn't do. I am struggling now to get my diploma because I kept doing bad things... here now [at the ATI], I see that I can do it, go back to the real me, who I used to be before all this stuff started. Tanesha.

Only participants who had been good students during elementary school developed an interest in school while at the ATI. Those who considered themselves as

“bad students” throughout their lives, did not become interested in schooling at the ATI.

Table 4 represents this.

Table 4- Who develops interest in school while at the ATI

Name	Good Student-Childhood	Bad Student – teenager	Interest in school-ATI
Tanesha	√	√	√
Saundra	√	√	√
Francine	√	√	√
Natasha	No	√	No
Kimberly	No	√	No
Nancy	No	√	No
Laura	√	√	√
Shakim	√	√	√
Mark	√	√	√
Frank	No	√	No
Nico	√	√	No
William	No	√	No
Forest	√	√	√
Damon	√	√	√

Schooling was an essential tool that participants, who had been good students earlier on in their lives, used to revert to their “unspoiled identities.” This shows that issues surrounding school, such as attending school, doing well in school, leaving school,

are more than a provision for finding a job in the future, they provide an identity for the youth.

Participants not only talked about going back to their old self, that was good but they also described their “deviant” identity as a temporary conversion due to their youth and peer influences. These temporary conversions featured negations of their good self, but a self that was always there:

I was a good person that just had a hard life, you know. . . . I did do bad stuff, but that was not really me, it was my anger acting out.
Kimberly.

It all happened that year. It was just fucked year with bad decisions. I am happy it is over. . . . I am back to normal. Larry.

Well playing basketball has always been important for me. I'm good and it also helps me focus. I've won trophies. I have played in many teams. Shows me I am good at stuff. I had stopped playing, but now I am back, you know. I also liked when I volunteered at my little brother's school. That showed me that I could give back. That's real important. I'm doing good now. I back to my old way of being. Shakim.

Going back to their old selves, and claiming that their delinquent period was “not really them” is a powerful psychological tool to deal not only with change, but with what

Lofland (1969) called the “horrors of identity nakedness” (p.288). Faced with disorientation of a radical change in behavior, ex-offenders may seek to maintain a consistent sense of who they are (Maruna, 2001, Sutherland and Cressy, 1978) The new identities that participants developed at the ATI (e.g. becoming role models, acting professional) were, for the most part, congruent with their old identities.

More Than the Old Self- the Super Achiever

When talking about their future participants not only wanted to go back to their previous identities (as described above) they also wanted to accomplish all of their dreams. With this came a sense that they were in charge of their destiny and if they “put their minds to it” they could achieve anything.

I also work to help my moms. She always helps me. Anything my child needs I have to get. I'm gonna have a job so I can make sure that I get it. My baby's father, he's gonna, stick by me 100%. He got a job right now. He makes \$10 an hour. That's pretty good. And I'm working to get a job. I'll finish school, that's important. So that's basically my future right there. And I'm just gonna be sure I strive to get to it. Natasha.

In a few years I [will be] a basketball player, AKA singer, AKA actor, making movies. . . . Get my car, get my girl, have my own house. . . . They all go together so I can be all. William.

In two years I'll just graduate [from the ATI] and be done with school. I'll start my own shop you know. I'll be going and helping all over the Dominican Republic and here NY. I'll improve my English and be able to do it. I'll also marry. I told you we are thinking of getting married? . . . and we want family, yes. Nancy.

When I asked Nancy if she thought it was possible for her to graduate school and the ATI, open a shop, help people in the Dominican Republic, get married and become a mother, all in the next two years she answered:

Yes, I have plenty of energy it is just organization, and I'll do it.

Nancy.

While some participants had ambitious, yet reachable goals, most of them wanted to have multiple careers, achieve many dreams in a short period of time. They all believed that as long as they attempted, they would achieve these aims. This strong belief in self-determination seems to contradict the first part of the interviews where the same participants, believed that they were involved with the criminal justice system because of external reasons (their race). While surprising at first, this is a common finding. Several psychologists who study locus of control have found that making excuses for failures yet attributing responsibility for successes is a well-established characteristic of healthy adults (Alloy & Abramson, 1979; Bandura, 1989).

The poststructuralist framework of “supplementation” (Crowley, 1989; Marshall, 1992) offers a different way of understanding “super-achiever” phenomena. Based on writings by Derrida, Marshall (1992) defines a supplement as “a replacement that is always excessive” (p.131) and Kumashiro (1999) defines it as “an inexact replacement, unable to replicate that what it replaces since it always brings with it some excess” (p. 493). I believe that the “super achiever” identity can be understood as a “supplement.” In their recent past, participants had dropped out of school, committed delinquent behaviors and become “unproductive citizens” in the eyes of the mainstream society. In their view of the future they were still “othered” but this time because of their hyper-productivity. This new identity, this hyper-productivity, can be seen as the “excess” of this supplementation.

Cheerful Future; Fearful Present

Although participants talked about their future in extremely positive ways, they also acknowledged feelings of uncertainty and/or anxiety. This fear was usually caused by structures that were out of their control. For example, Francine stated how her life was in the hands of arbitrary hands:

And it's like, now I got to report to a judge that has my destiny, my fate in her hand that if she wants to get an attitude and just have a bad day I can be remanded and locked up. It's like, I don't like living like this. Francine.

This was an identity that they tried to reject as much as possible but that still surfaced:

It's like when I'm feeling fear I just have another thought. It's like, "Can't be me, I 'm strong." and I just think of something else. . . . I worry about the next court hearing. Larry.

It's reality that if I do mess up from here I do go back to jail. So I'm not trying to see Horizons, the Alley, I'm not trying to see none of that no more. And it just makes me like wanna run away. I always was like "what's up men." Mark.

And I'm pretty scared when the next one coming up [court visit], cause he [the judge] said one more negative [drug test] I'm going to jail. I wanna be there for my daughter so, I quit I stopped all that stayed away from all my friends that smoked which is basically all of them so, I stay in the house and stay with my baby that's all. . . . I try ain't think about it cause not much I [can] do. Tanesha.

It's just like not who I am. I'm never scared. But now like this judge is real mean. I just don't wan end again [in jail]. I'm scared he'll just send me. Kimberly.

Participants also talked about their “fear of messing up.” The constant surveillance that the ATI added to their lives, particularly the drug testing, as well as mandatory court visits made them behave and adopt a different identity than they would otherwise want:

The things that I did not so much smoking cause that’s like a bad habit right now. When I get out this program am I gonna start again. [Laugh] I’m not gonna even lie but everything else that bad that I did change a lot, completely stopped let’s say that not changed it stopped the bad things that I did I’m a smoker and that’s ok. Tanesha.

I’m just rowdy. It’s fun. Here [at the ATI] I just can’t be, they don’t take that. . . . they’ll [ATI staff] just think the worst and send me to jail. Not worth it. I always worry. What if it comes out and they see my rowdy. Kimberly

I know I won’t have to worry about coming here no more and taking these drug programs at night. . . . What will I do? I know I will start smoking again, because you aren’t allowed to smoke in here because they drug-test me. Frank.

Here I am always scared of messing. I just never know if I mess. You know what I am saying? Like they watch you all the time, and bad

habits do kick in once in a while. . . . here they are always testing you and that stresses. Larry.

Participants at the ATI develop a “fearful” identity, their worries are related with them being so closely supervised, and expected to behave in a different way than what they would like to or are used to. This fearful identity is not one that participants embraced; it is completely new and contradictory to their “tough” identity. As we can see from the above quotes, fear acts as an agent of social control, carrying the pressure to act and behave in ways participants wouldn’t otherwise choose. Further, this “fearful” identity also elevates participants’ loneliness. Thus, participants resolve the clash of their tough identity and their fearful one, by avoiding places, such as the streets, that might make them confront this identity.

Fluid identities- Hybrid Identities

At the ATI participants’ identities became more fluid, they were able to not only think about how to survive in their neighborhoods, but also how to survive in the larger world, and to imagine what they wanted for their future. While it is true that the identities that are need to survive in the neighborhoods they live in are incongruent with those needed to survive in the larger world, participants seemed to find a comfortable medium where they could be themselves and survive in these different settings.

I just always acted like I was in the 'hood but know I realize that there are different ways to act, different ways to dress, different ways to talk, and they can all be me. Natasha.

It just was all me. Like I was the one selling. I was the one they knew. . . . It was just easy money. I had it all. . . Career explo helped me see the only future I have here is what I do, and selling just has no future. It is just the present. . . . I won't lie to you, I still will smoke [marijuana] Shakim.

Before I just saw myself like I had to steal, like lazy. That was what I had been. Or like men would provide for me. You know, just like my boyfriend would give me stuff and that would be cool. . . . [At the ATI] I just realized it ain't like that. Talking to [the case manager] made me see that ain't cool. I have to think about tomorrow. He can leave me any time, and what will I do? An I aint lazy, I used to be a good student.

It is this fluidity and ability to have different contradictory identities at the same time that I am categorizing as "hybrid identities."

Chapter 10- Developmental Trajectories

In this chapter I present the developmental trajectories of two participants, Tanesha and Frank. By presenting these two cases I want to remind the reader that the patterns that I found above are embedded in complex lives, and only partially represent who the participants are. These two stories show a glimpse of the complexity of two ATI clients that, in turn, allow us to consider these circumstances dynamically in relation to larger social, cultural and political contexts.

The analysis of these two case histories is based on the assumption that narratives order events and identities in space and time, and thus connect past events to present states and desired or feared future events. Furthermore, not only do we map our lives retrospectively when we narrate our lives, but we also construct our memories in narrative form (see Brockmeier, 2002).

Thus the analyses of the narratives that follow are built on an analogy between stories, biographies and lives that allows for the investigation into the fabric of lives, experiences and identities. And although lives are lived, and stories are told, 'narrative coherence' is seen as "providing the guiding post for the living of lives" (Ricoeur, 1992). In other words, narratives reveal the speaker's identity.

For part of the analysis of these two stories I draw on the concept of 'positioning.' Positioning analysis looks at how participants' represent themselves (or position themselves) in the story at a certain setting at a certain time, in comparison to other people. Thus, positioning analysis, allows for the exploration on how humans make sense of themselves and construct their identities. This concept has gained significance in

theorizing identity and subjectivity, where 'positions' are typically conceptualized being grounded in discourses (Bamberg, 2004). These discourses are taken to provide the meanings and values within which subjects are 'positioned' (Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré & van Langenhove, 1999; Hollaway, 1984). Thus positioning has two main values, as Bamberg (2005) explains:

On the one hand, it orients how characters are situated in space and time in the story world, positioning the characters vis-à-vis one another as relational story-agents. On the other hand, it simultaneously affects how the teller designs the story in order to define a social location for himself or herself in the act of telling a narrative to an audience. (Bamberg, 2005)

I chose these two participants for several reasons. Tanesha represented an ATI client who benefited from attending the ATI. At the time I interviewed her she was developing a hybrid identity, she retained many identities that she had, and had developed new ones that integrated with these pre-existing identities. With these changes she transformed her life, her goals, and her identities in multiple ways. Tanesha's story was very similar to those of other female participants in this study; she lived in a poor and violent neighborhood, her parents were separated, entering high school was a turning point in her life, she developed a role model identity while at the ATI, she regained interest in school. However there were two things in Tanesha's narrative that separated her from all other participants. The first was her devastating relationship with her grandmother which contrasted sharply with the friendly relationship that other participants had with their grandmothers. The second characteristic that separated Tanesha from other participants was that she was the only participant that was raising a

daughter. Another female participant, Natasha, was pregnant at the time of the interview, but she did not have the child to raise. While one might think that Tanesha's responsibilities and day to day life were very different from other participants who did not have children, this was not necessarily the case, as most participants had the responsibility of taking care of younger siblings, and/or cousins. However having a child gave Tanesha a new perspective on life, and accounted for one of her major turning points.

In contrast, Frank was one of the few participants in this study who did not develop a hybrid identity. He was the participant least transformed by the ATI, developing minimal bonds. He was virtually untouched by this experience. As an "outlier" I believed that his story is an important one as it provides a way of understanding someone who has a harder time connecting at the ATI, someone who has learnt how to survive by himself, and finds it hard to trust or receive help from any institution.

Tanesha

Tanesha is a petite woman with light brown skin. Her hair is usually neatly tied back, and she dresses in tight clothes and wears high heels. My first impression of Tanesha was an extremely positive one; when I described the study to the first group of female clients at the ATI, she was the first one to let me know that she wanted to participate: *“Miss if this is to help you finish school, I’ll do it. It’s important to finish school.”* As we talked she was very attentive and offered very detailed responses. Later, she told me that she enjoys talking about her life. She describes herself as *“Spontaneous. I like to take drastic measures in life. I like to be courageous and curious about anything. I take everything as a new stepping-stone for me, so everything I see I want to get into. I like to experiment on a lot of things.”*

Tanesha was born in 1984. She is the oldest child of both her mother, who has two other children, and her father who *“had twenty-two kids. Yeah little hoe (laughed) I never really I met him but I never, he never was in my life.”* Tanesha’s life soon got complicated. When she was six months old, Tanesha’s mom separated from her father and started going out with another man who did not want Tanesha around. Tanesha’s mom gave her up to her mother, Tanesha’s grandmother, who raised her. *“My mother’s excuse for giving us up was she loved a man more than she loved her kids so I had more resentment for that statement when she told me that. You can’t, no man is worth anything especially when it come to your kids.”* While growing up, Tanesha did not see her mother very often: *“It’s silly to say but my mother and my grandmother only lived a building away, but I really never seen her when I was young, that’s ironic right? (laughs)”* This situation was extremely hard for Tanesha, not only because of the security issues it caused

her: *"That was the cause of all my problems, why I just went let me say mentally insane, I ain't gonna mess with ya (laughed) I just turned my back on everybody you know didn't care about nothing, cause I felt like nobody cared about me, why would my mother give me up, so, I thought I wasn't worth nothing cause if your parents could give you up then you ain't, nothing . . . I just don't trust no one."* but because she had an extremely poor relationship with her grandmother: *"I would get hit with extension cords, pots, brooms and the reasons was outrages cause sometimes I'll get beat cause I had a fight for some person that would come and start with me and I wasn't just gonna let, sit there and let somebody bully me but never did my grandmother see it that way, she always thought I was the bully. So I always get whipped for it, says you wanna be a bully outside on the street I gonna be a bully to you. That's what she told me one day, she told me that. I never ooh, the thought of her she is so mean."*

When Tanesha was five years old, her mom had another daughter, whom she had *"no time to take care of . . . she wanted to give her away to adoption."* Tanesha's grandmother was already too busy taking care of her other grandchildren: *"My grandmother took care of her two daughter's kids, her oldest son and my mother's two kids me and my sister and then her sister's son."* However Tanesha, then six years old, could not bear the idea that her sister would be given away: *"my mother gave her up, gave her up for adoption she didn't give her to my grandmother and I told my grandmother I will take care of her if you go get my sister. She told me that when I, she told me that story when I was like 15 and she said I was 6 years old asking to take of my sister I don't wanna see her going nowhere but she said that's why she basically went and got my sister cause of me."*

They all lived in Brownsville, Brooklyn, which Tanesha describes as “*the baddest projects in the world. . . . Just the other day somebody got shot and killed in broad daylight. Cops all around still didn’t do nothing about it. That’s why I say it’s bad. All my life that’s all I been around shooting, drugs you know all that, all the above things so nothing scares me on the street, I would say cause like I seent it all, I been through it all. It don’t fear me, I don’t see no fear in that. I just try to turn from it, do something better with it. You know not make the streets become, I don’t become the streets. You know besides cause they always say the streets make you for a point of time it did but now I see a whole new life, being in the ATI you know. I see something better for me that’s why I went and got a job at Telemarketing, something I never did, I never had a job cause I always was nurtured by boys. They always gave me what I a want.*”

Before being a teenager Tanesha spent most of her time at home or school. Elementary school “*was fun cause people did like me they said I had a great potential, the teachers love me.*” She was a very good student but spent little time with her friends, and got no support from her grandmother: “*In school I was, real good until the 7th grade, I could say that, yeah. I was perfect student, honor roll, E’s bringing all in but she (her grandmother) would never appreciate it, so I just stopped, I quit, I’m like why would I try so hard for somebody that don’t appreciate nothing I do. Always put me down always call me out my name. So I said hey fuck it, I’m stop now, let’s see another route, let’s do bad, just be that way, let’s see where that takes you.*” This changed occurred as soon as Tanesha started high school: “*That was the beginning of this whole bad situation. I started being bad I went to high school so that’s when everything started. What can I say, I was like curious of the world outside cause I never been able to go any place cause*

I was trapped in my grandmother's world. My grandmother was a strict person so she never let me do anything never let me go anywhere so when I turned 14 got into school, I was a free women and I felt like that"

Once Tenesha decided to change her behavior, and with that her identity of "good girl" she: "started smoking and doing all that when I started hanging really hanging out with them [high school friends]. You know I was never with any friends like I said before so when I did hang around with them I wanted to be a part of what they was doing so that caused me to get here and get into trouble and . . . They would be fighting starting trouble with people in the street that they didn't know and I thought it was cool so I would do it too. They would rob people [laughed] they would steal from stores, they did a lot and I would just join right in thinking it was cool but now that but I'm the oldest out of the whole group so, I shoulda known better but didn't cause I wanted to be a part of somebody I ain't never had no friends so, when I did get friends that wasn't two-faced I thought that was cool what they was doing so I did it too, . . . I just smoked weed . . . nothing more spectacular than that but under the influence of that I did crazy things, stuff I regret . . . (like) having sex with people I didn't wanna have sex with for starters but I was always protective about it though glad I was about that. I wasn't that naïve . . . I was more violent when I was under the influence, cause I just took out my anger on anybody and everybody, cause it made just feel relaxed and like I don't care about nobody, so, I just did violent things to everybody that walk past me that look like they wanted trouble." During this time Tanesha joined a gang: "The Bloods. It was fun for a point until I seen my friend get killed in front of my face. Close, close friend, that was my, like my brother. He told me not to get involved this but I wanted to follow behind him

so bad cause he just was a big influence to me that I never seen. Something big , I was like I wanna be like you, you know he couldn't stop me because he had a brother like that too, he was following behind his brother you know, he disobey his brother so he couldn't tell me what to do so he said do what you feel so I joined it was fun. I never really sliced or shot at no, well I never really sliced nobody, shot at people yeah, a couple people, for my brother cause you know I was a little gangster. Gangster cuty, he'd call me (laugh). It was shy gangster cuty cause everybody thought I was cute and shy didn't want see nothing but they seen the evil side when they really got to know me. When I was blood so many things happened that I thought I wasn't gonna make it to even see sixteen. Such as I got a gun pointed to me at one time. Taking like what, they only took 2 dollars from me though, cause I only had 2 dollars on me but jewelry, I had a lot of jewelry, no my mother tried to water me down with jewelry and money so. So they took 2 dollars and jewelry, It wasn't nothing but that's when I really wanted to start robbing cause how can somebody rob me, take my freedom away from me, so I'm a doing to other people. Fuck ya'll, ya'll wanna do that to me I could do that to ya'll too. So I started robbing."

Needless to say her grades suffered greatly during this time: *"then (I) started noticing boys and noticing my body (laughs). I thought I was pretty so school didn't matter to me no more, it mattered in such I did finish to get into high school but no so much mattered like it was in 6th, 5th and 4th grade bringing home the E's and the A's and all that it was just basically passing and that will be it I passed, I passed nothing higher."* Once in high school Tanesha starting skipping a lot of classes: *"I didn't never go, as soon as my grandmother left the house I would go back chill and smoke a blunt with the friends that didn't wanna go to school neither."*

Tanesha also spoke about the violence she encountered at school: *Always had a fight, every day I had a fight. . . . the most surprising fight I had was with my principal when he held me down for the people to fight me. . . . cause he didn't like me, I don't know why but he didn't, he held me down and let them kids beat me up. 7, kids, 2 boys . . . jumped by seven people, but I looked at it as, you was a bad girl if you need seven people to fuck you up. [Laughs] That's how I looked at it I said you's a bad bitch . . . I got them all back I had to just so that they would respect me. You know . . . After that they wanted to be my friends.*

During this time boys, and men, became a big problem for Tanesha: *"when I was young, I messed with older guys, when I was 14, I was messing with 18, 19 year old people and it was violent. All my life I was getting hit so that's what I thought was the basic thing, you know get hit and don't say nothing about it, so, I took it and went along with the ride and didn't see nothing wrong with getting hit. I just took it as a stronger will out in the street, when I see somebody say hey you wanna fight me it won't bother me because I been getting fought at by family and people I thought I loved."* At 17 Tanesha experienced another turning point in her life: *"I was pregnant at 17, yeah 17 but it was hard I thought my life was over cause I didn't really get to do nothing when I was 14 through 16 so when I got pregnant I really like thought life was over for me, so, that was the end of that. Didn't get to outside places and stuff soon as I got pregnant but Celestial [Tanesha's daughter] is the joy of my life though, she brings me so much joy, hope that tomorrow is gonna be better . . . before I was pregnant I didn't care about nothing, nobody. And when I got pregnant I realized there was about somebody that I gave birth to coming into this world and she's gonna need me and I looked at it as I don't wanna*

be my mother and I don't wanna be my grandmother so I'm gonna change right now and that's exactly what I did. (I changed) The people I hung around with, the things that I did: not so much smoking cause that's like a bad habit right now uh when I get out this program am I gonna start again. (Laugh) I'm not gonna even lie but everything else that bad that I did change a lot, completely stopped let's say that not changed it stopped the bad things that I did . . . I want to get a degree and tell my daughter that I have it."

She soon broke up with the father of her child, and stated dating other men. That was when Tanesha started juggling several identities-that of being a good mother, and that of being a rebel. It also caused her a lot of problems with the men she was dating:

"Wow, we got a lot of problems with boys, baby father, ex-boyfriends all that, only got 1 baby father though, no problems with who's the father of my child none of that but the ex-boyfriends I was involved with he want to claim her . . . You know that's a big problem with the boy I'm involved now cause he don't like that so you see, he'll be aggressive to me now, so, yeah, to talk (huh) and really look at your problem . . . That's her [babies] father, the boy I'm with now is her father. But the boy I was messing with before him wanna claim her, wanna be with me and I don't why, you know my love, I didn't even love them but they love me you know they don't wanna see me with him, they wanna see me with them, whatever, that's crazy."

During the time that Tanesha was dealing with this situation, she and a few friends robbed a woman. This became a major turning point in Tanesha's life:

"You know that I felt really wrong about. I started maturing at that point. I didn't really wanna rob her but I was with a couple of people and yeah I would say I am gullible but not anymore. I think for myself now. But I was gullible, say come on let's do it, I'm broke

anyway let's go take somebody stuff. We did get away with it till a block later we stopped running cause that fucking block was long. I said I'm tired, then as soon as we stopped the cops rolled up on us. We ain't even get much neither, so the whole robbery was worth nothing. We only got a cell phone and 2 tokens, and some jewelry. Something that wouldn't even bought us, it would bought us like 3 bags of weed you know, smoke that but it was nothing to carry in our pockets and go buy something nice. So the whole damn robbery was worth nothing. And the Shity part about it is I was with a minor, 14 years old, didn't even know the girl was 14 cause she look much older. You know girls these days, the bodies don't look like their age. So I got hit with all the charges cause I influenced the minor after that big ordeal it woke me up it really made me see all that is not necessary for you. You don't need to go that way. You stopped and then you started and look what happened. You should've continued doing your best, but you didn't, you wanna be stupid again and go do stupid things so now you pay for it. This time I really paid for it big . . . I spent two days at the bookies , stank, dirty, all that, it was miss, ooh. I will never ooh, when I mean never, I never wanna go through that again. I never been so stinkin dirty in my life like that and I was really stank and I could not take that. I was like you are dirty, look this is what you wanna go through and me people tell you, telling me about what happens in jail, so that's even, that's nothing, so I was like yeah, I'm never going through this again. This game right here stops right now. So now, I see nothing but positive things for the sake of me and my daughter. Fortunately I . . . got bailed out the next day. My grandmother . . . and a couple of my aunt's \$5,000 bail . . . They bailed me out, they said they was gonna leave me, cause they was like they fucking tired of me but . . . I won't get into no trouble like that ever again cause after that lady

face when I robbed her I was like I'll remember that. I really remember that face and that's what made me hurt inside when I did that. I was like oh god, you seen what you just did to that lady, then you know you been through that. See when I was robbing other people it was never like that it was like I don't care Fuck you, but when I came to her No it wasn't that (I hurt her) it was I seen her face and I know I seen that fear all in her face. I seen it all in her face and that's how I was but she didn't have no weapons to her though but did you know if she ain't have no weapons to her and the face she had was similar to mine she must have had that before. Somebody must of robbed her before and she was scared out her mind, I was like oh gosh, I just wanted to turn back around and give to her but you know at the time I had to keep running cause the cops so I said damn, I said if I ever run into her, I don't, I don't care about what they told me to stay away from her, I would go up to her and apologize and ask for her deepest, deepest, I would get on my knees to her and say sorry cause I really did not mean to put no fear in her heart. I was so mad at myself I cried that night, I cried in the cell. People in the cell thought I was a punk crying cause I was in jail, I was like no I'm crying for that lady cause I really hurt her."

A few days after Tanesha was bailed out: *"me and my grandmother had a little argument and she hit me, you know that was the last straw, I'm like I'm 18 now and you still laying your hands on me, like I'm seven, now I speak up. I speak for myself so you can't just hit me like that and think I'm just gonna stand there and duck from you now. So I told her off, I pushed her off of me and I walked out and I said I'm not coming back. You know I had no place to go so the only place I had was my mother. I really didn't wanna go there but that was the only place I could go right at that point, well not really*

to my baby father but I don't wanna live with him, I don't wanna live with no man depend on no man so I went with my mother. That's less, so let's see what she is about you know she never really took care of you let's see. Let's see how her living conditions is." Later on in the interview Tanesha expressed concerns of where she would live in the near future: *"I just don't know how long I can stay there, and then there is Celestial (her baby) I can't just go anywhere . . ."*

When Tanesha went to court, she was offered to go to an ATI instead of jail: *"I thought I was going straight to jail but they said program for six months, my fucking thing that they gave me was a split six months here, six months in jail then five years probation but they said if I succeed in this program I won't have to do six months in jail . . . I thought it was gonna be a bunch of bullshit; I was gonna put up with another something similar to jail . . . so I was prepared for the worse. When I came here I was as soon as I got in here I thought the girls was gonna the girls was gonna be on some snotty shit but they wasn't, they talk, hi and you know. They was real friendly and I was like something I don't even see mostly and I was like damn and ya'll criminals [laughs]. Ya'll nicer than people that aren't, so I was like this, this could do good. This will be a good experience for me. I should get out of here with a breeze except the little drug problem I have but other than that I should be finished in a breeze with the help of these people it should go easy . . . (at the ATI program she receives) moral support and the support everything I never had. I got awards, something I ain't get since I was 6th grade, you know cheering me on to succeed. And you know I ain't seen that in awhile, so I was like yeah I'm a do my best for them cause they really wanna see me prosper and see me not in no more trouble so I said I will work with ya'll. I will do my best for ya'll"*

Tanesha also developed a close relationship with “Laura” her case manager at the ATI program: *“my problem was I kept everything bottled inside, that’s where my anger come from cause you never speak and talk and that’s why I like here in the ATI program cause they listen to me. I thought it was gonna be boring and whatever but they really sit here listen. They cheer you on for good things. I ain’t think it was gonna be like that thought they was gonna be hard on me and stuff but they not and they give a lot of opportunities to do good and I did mess up a couple times and they still like yeah she’s gonna make it something my family would never say they would always say you ain’t gonna amount to nothing and you’s this and that. I always got bad negative vibe from them not like here, so I try and make here more than I stay over there with my family cause I feel this is home, this is like basically my shelter right now to keep from trouble.”*

Tanesha participated in several activities of the ATI: *“Every new thing they come out with I will try to participate in because I want to be as helpful as I can, so they can try I am trying to do something good, so I will do everything. I will do the beading, I will do the photography classes, and see I came and helped you. Anything I can help anybody on I jump at it, because if you are trying to help me I will help you.”* She even suggested activities that could be included at the women’s ATI program: *“I suggested beading and sewing, but they didn’t think it would be fun, but now everybody in here is getting a kick out of the bead-making.”* This shows how at the ATI Tanesha came to see herself as a role model. She applied this identity, as a role model, to her relationship with her siblings: *“I’m the oldest out of all the kids that my mother and father have so, now that I got in this trouble, I try to keep it to myself, I don’t tell them I’m in this trouble. You know cause I don’t want to see them go this way. I already have 1 brother that’s on my father’s*

that's in jail and he's only 15 . . . I try to be and step and good influence for them cause I don't want them to head down the road I am."

At the ATI Tanesha also changed the way she dressed. She started acting and dressing to: *"be a young lady, because before I was just in old baggy clothes acting like a boy. Now I see myself growing up and 18. You have got to do something different with yourself, so just like a lady, - wear shoes and nice casual things you know, but nobody sees it like that. They always see me in some baggy pants and baggy t-shirt always going to fight somebody, and now they see a different side of me so they are saying, "Oh you want attention and this and that," and I don't see it that way. I just want to look nice, real nice, not like White people that sometimes have no style. I want to keep the style and dress nice like a lady . . . The first time when I first put on shoes and a dress I was like you feel strange. I felt really strange like people are going to laugh at me because I am wearing a dress. They had never seen me in this, so I am like oh this is crazy! Why am I doing this! But they say, "You look nice. That's a nice change to do." I am like, "Yes, thank you." Then they changed too, started dressing nicely."*

There was more that inspired Tanesha to change: *"My daughter. I didn't want to look like a young girl pushing around a baby carriage, so I changed the way I dressed too because of that. If you look like a lady you can take care of your daughter. You are not young in your head. I might look young in my face, but in my head I'm trying to think big like an adult. Like I experienced before, I never did. That's why I am trying to dress and carry myself now"*.

This change in dressing also helped Tanesha speak *"properly"* as the ATI encouraged her: *"When I first put on a dress I was still jumping around acting like a little*

crazy little girl, but when I got used to it the whole walk changed too, the walk -- everything, the way I talked to people. I talked more casual like "yes sir" and "no sir". It's like a whole different thing; a whole different thing. And here (at the ATI) they like that . . . But it's what I used to make fun of. . . ."

Tanesha also decided to go back to school and graduate. She decided to do this not only to look good for the judge's report, but also for herself. *"I want do better - finish school, because school is the most important thing right now. You know that diploma does get you stuff, that's what I didn't do. I am struggling now to get my diploma because I kept doing bad things . . . here now (at the ATI), I see that I can do it, go back to the real me, who I used to be before all this stuff started."*

Even though Tanesha found the ATI to be a relief for many of her problems, her problems did not disappear and there were aspects of the ATI that were hard for her. Her biggest problem at the ATI was her uncertainty of what would happen next. Would she be able to: *"get out of this program successfully with out going to jail. 'Cause I have a big problem here cause I still smoke . . . So, I don't wanna go to jail, they say my judge is mean, I haven't smoked in like 2 weeks now . . . Yeah, and I'm pretty scared when the next one comin up, cause he said one more negative I'm going to jail I wanna be there for my daughter so, I quit I stopped all that stayed away from all my friends that smoked which is basically all of them so, I stay in the house and stay with my baby that's all."*

The ATI also *"reminds me of what I did, and who I am, was . . . a criminal"* and *"just walking in here, the building, it's such [pause] they treat you like you are guilty hiding stuff, and sometimes they make fun of you, like the guard the other day, I had to*

take off the belt everything 'cause of the metal detector . . . what do they think I'm hiding?"

While at the ATI Tanesha was having "boy problems": *"the boy I'm with now is her father, but the boy I was messing with before him wanna claim her (her daughter) . . . I know that's a big problem with the boy I'm involved now (the baby's father) cause he don't like that so you see, he'll be aggressive to me now, so, yeah"*

During all this time there was one characteristic that Tanesha kept, that of being strong in front of other people: *"I don't want nobody to see how I can get hurt, because they will use that to their advantage, so that's how I keep all my feelings inside. Nobody has ever seen me cry but my sister. She's the only person that has ever seen me cry. And my grandmother is like, "Why you never cry?" Even when she slaps me or hits me, hit me with the hardest things I still won't cry in front of her. I won't cry."*

Comments and Reflections

I was unable to capture some important characteristics of Tanesha in this developmental trajectory. As with all interviews, I began the interview by asking Tanesha to think about her life as a story, and to tell me the different chapters that this story has. Tanesha had a quick response, and it was about the time she "stated being bad."

That was the beginning of this whole bad situation. I started being bad I went to high school so that's when everything started. What can I say, I was like curious of the world outside cause I never been able to go any place cause I was trapped in my grandmother's world. My grandmother was a strict person so she never let

me do anything never let me go anywhere so when I turned 14 got into school, I was a free women and I felt like that.

This is extremely telling of 1) how she portrays herself, 2) what she believes I am there to hear, and 3) what the ATI, where this interview took place, reminds her of who she is. Later on in the interview Tanesha actually states that the ATI makes her feel like a criminal. Tanesha's opening paragraph also makes a clear connection between how her childhood, both what happened to her and how she viewed herself, had an impact on her early teenage years. *"I was like curious of the world outside cause I never been able to go any place cause I was trapped in my grandmother's world."* Throughout her interview she made this connection, she acted in many ways, she was who she was, given that her mother had "given her up" and her grandmother had been so harsh on her. This position of being passive and things happening due to her past, sharply contrast to the way she talks, where she usually positions herself as being in control of her life. Except for when she talks about her childhood, Tanesha has an agentive role, things do not happen to her, she "makes them happen." This is even fitting when she talks about negative experiences. For example, when she states: *"I did crazy things, stuff I regret . . . (like) having sex with people I didn't wanna have sex with"* She clearly positions her self as the active agent; it is not that "people" had sex with her when she was high; she had sex with them. In other instances Tanesha also takes full responsibility for her actions. She decided to stop being a good student, and a "good girl" in general: *So I said hey fuck it, I'm stop now, let's see another route, let's do bad, just be that way, let's see where that takes you."* In many ways, her talk seems to indicate that she was in full control over her

actions, even when she “was high” and did things she didn’t want to, or when she was reacting to her past experiences. In using these two contradictory positions Tanesha positions herself as both as responsible for her actions, and as a victim due to her past.

In some cases Tanesha does exactly the opposite, what she says indicates that she takes full responsibility of her actions, yet how she says removes her from the equation: *“They would rob people, they would steal from stores, they did a lot and I would just join right in thinking it was cool. . . . I shoulda known better.”* I believe that here Tanesha is positioning herself in a way that clearly differentiates her from “them.” “them” are presented as people “who rob people and steal” while she just did these activities for a moment in time, that is not who she is.

Similarly to Tanesha’s presenting herself as a passive and an active agent in her life, she describes herself as a caring person, and as someone who only looks out for her own interest. One of the first characteristics she attributes to herself is that of a person who does not care about anyone else but herself: *“I just turned my back on everybody you know didn’t care about nothing, cause I felt like nobody cared about me.”* Soon after saying this Tanesha mentioned how much she cares and cared about her younger sister: *“my mother gave her up, gave her up for adoption she didn’t give her to my grandmother and I told my grandmother I will take care of her if you go get my sister. She told me that when I, she told me that story when I was like 15 and she said I was 6 years old asking to take of my sister I don’t wanna see her going nowhere but she said that’s why she basically went and got my sister cause of me.”* Tanesha also presents herself as a caring person when she talks about the robbery she wants to do: *“I would go up to her and apologize and ask her for her deepest, deepest, I would get on my knees to her and say*

'sorry' cause I really didn't mean to put no fear in her heart." By seeing Tanesha's narrative and life history as a whole, this contradiction is easy to understand, she is a tough girl, that wants to be independent, a caring sister, who is willing to give up a lot of her freedoms to help her sister, and a caring human being, that even when she robs, she does not mean to *"put fear in people's heart."*

Tanesha represents herself as a moral person when she talks about robbing a woman. In the narrative, she talks to herself, and in this way, tells me how she views the event: *"You should've continued doing your best, but you didn't, you wanna be stupid again and go do stupid things so now you pay for it."* Here we see how Tanesha positions herself as someone who now knows what is best for her, and how someone should act. She knows that she is blameworthy for her previous acts and is willing to "pay" for her morally wrong decisions. Tanesha shows me she is responsible and a morally correct young lady who makes her decisions on the basis of "commonly shared, adult like standards." In this way, Tanesha talking about robbing someone, and her reflections later, are a basis for her to represent herself as mature and responsible.

Tanesha's narrative also represents the harsh transition to high school. While she states that she lost all interest in school when she joined high-school, due to gaining interest "in boys" and "becoming lazy" we can see that there was more to the story. Her high school was a violent place, and she had to fight every day. By not including this violence as part of the reasons that she avoids schools, and her grades suffer, she is placing blame only in herself and thus adopting the achievement ideology [i.e. anyone can achieve with hard work and determination].

While talking about the fight she had in school, Tanesha positions herself as “bad” and “tough.” According to Tanesha, these are all positive identities that gain her respect and avoid her future fights. This shows how much Tanesha’s neighborhood and school (violent environments) and her experiences there (the fight) are shaping her identity (creating a tough and “bad” identity). Further, it shows how her identity of being tough changes her future experiences as it avoids her fights.

Tanesha’s story challenges the “scientific” story of what it means to be a teenage mother. Researchers have suggested that teenage mothers are at heightened risk of losing interest in school, being unemployed, and losing hope (Blechman, 1993; Klaw, 2003). However Tanesha develops a sense of responsibility and hope with the birth of her baby, she wants to act like a “lady” and get her diploma. She is committed to be a better mother for her daughter than her mother was to her.

Tanesha’s life contains many of the elements that could be seen across several participants, such as being raised by her grandmother; experiencing a decisive moment in her life when entering high school, losing a close friend, seeing herself as a role model for her younger siblings, being hindered at the ATI because of marijuana smoking, facing another turning point in her life while being at the ATI; and developing a hybrid identity between a “*professional*” (talking “properly”, wanting to finish school, etc) and “a *street smart*” (not dressing like White people; knowing how to survive the streets). By following the developmental course of her life we understand how these themes emerged.

An analysis of the developmental trajectory of Tanesha’s life also explains how the different levels of history in Vygotsky’s and Scribner’s framework are interconnected in a concrete case. Throughout the narrative, Tanesha builds, reproduces and constructs

culture. Further, she makes very clear connections between how her past experiences (level 3) create her identities (level 4):

My mother, I really never talked to her cause she gave me up, so I didn't wanna be nothing to do, I didn't have, I didn't want nothing to do with her cause I regretted her for that . . . That was the cause of all my problems, why I just went let me say mentally insane, I ain't gonna mess with ya (laughed) I just turned my back on everybody you know didn't care about nothing, cause I felt like nobody cared about me, why would my mother give me up, so, I thought I wasn't worth nothing cause if your parents could give you up then you ain't, nothing. That's why I try be the best mom I could for my daughter so she won't grow up to say why you did this and why you did that? So I try to be a good mom even though, I got the help of her father but I try to be there for her more then he do. That would be.

Tanesha also connected her childhood as someone “being trapped in [her] grandmother’s world” with her later rebellious stage and developing a “curious” identity, and linked her lack of friends when she was young with a temporary identity as a follower.

This narrative also shows the connection between level 2 (the history of her neighborhood) and level 4 (her identity). At one point during the interview she mentioned: “they always say the streets make you.” Tanesha makes a clear statement on how identities are made out of responses to the predominant environment that the streets, or more globally the communities, have. She continues by personalizing this statement:

"I don't become the streets." With this statement she is letting me know that she does not want to become violent as she describes the streets to be. The former is a great example of how intertwined the societal level is to the psychological one, and how the history of the streets as being violent have given something that Tanesha could identify with in her life, incorporate into her identity, and later reject, thus becoming part of her history.

Identities (level 4) also have some weight in shaping the streets (level 2). At one point, Tanesha decided she wanted to adopt a new identity- that of a responsible mother. She then changed the way in which she behaved and dressed. This, in turn, changed how Tanesha's friends dressed, and probably how they behaved as well. It could very well be that this changed the block culture, and maybe even the project culture.

Moreover, on the one hand the ATI was an important place where Tanesha's identity was developed, while on the other, the ATI itself changed some of its activities because of Tanesha. Further connections can be seen in Tanesha's understanding of behavior and societal rules. At the ATI Tanesha seemed to feel secure, and cheered on to good things thus she decided to participate in as many activities as she could. She also developed an identity as a role model, which was extended beyond the ATI to her siblings. Some of the identities she adopts at the ATI, such as being "good" and "a good student", were part of who she was when she was young. Here we can see the importance of having had the identity of being "good" when she was younger serving as a spring board to return to it after several years. It is important to note that these "new" identities co-exist with some of Tanesha's old identities such a "pot smoker" a person who is "street smart" and "avoids dressing like a White people" thus forming a hybrid identity between her recent past identity and her new identity.

It is also at the ATI that Tanesha has to relive her identity as a criminal, as it: *“reminds me of what I did, and who I am, was . . . a criminal.”* Tanesha does not talk about the effects of this reminder, except for the fact that she does not like it, but it is interesting to note that it is only when talking about the ATI that Tanesha identifies with being a “criminal.”

Tanesha’s life history helps us understand what it means to be an adolescent in an ATI program and thus how some of the concepts that were highlighted in the content analysis section came to play an important role in a particular life, as well as how the contradictions that were mentioned in the content analysis make sense when one sees the individual as a whole. After all, aren’t we all full of contradictions?

Frank

Frank is a 19 year old African American man. He is very skinny and has long braided hair. He wears baggy jeans. During the entire conversation he fidgeted and scratched his arms and head. He has six siblings from his mother's side: *"there's seven of us. I am going to tell you how old – it's 23, that's my oldest sister, then me, I'm 19, then my little brother, he is 16, and then my other sister, she's 12, then my other sister who is 11, and then 10, my other sister and then a younger one."* Frank describes himself as:

"I'm a hard worker. Lazy too . . . I'm a hard worker. When I'm doing something I make sure I do it right and I do it good. I'm lazy. Sometimes I just don't feel like doing nothing, if somebody asks me to do something and I don't be in the mood to . . . I am also quiet and shy. I don't talk a lot around people I don't know. If I don't know a person I don't say nothing, I just sit there. If they talk I listen to what they have to say. Sometimes I will be funny. That's only around certain people, like if I know them and stuff. . . like when I'm with associates and stuff I can be funny sometimes or I will be talkative and I will talk a lot if I'm with people, but other than that I don't be talking around a lot of people."

At a young age he started thinking that he would get in trouble with the law:

"When I was like 10 'cause I was stealing and I know you can get arrested for stealing, so I knew I was going to get arrested sometime soon." By this time, Frank's grandfather, mother, father, aunts, and many peers had been arrested and spent time in jail or prison. *"When everyone around you has been locked, you ain't surprised when you are there. . . It ain't always [our] fault. It's just that they jail Blacks."* The following is

Frank's life story, as he told it to me in two interviews.

Frank was born in 1983 in the Bronx. He had an older sister, who was four at the time Frank was born.

"For a little bit I lived with my father like in the beginning, but then he moved and my mother, him and my mom didn't get along too well, so it was just me, my mom, and my sister. And my sister we had different fathers, so it was just me and her and my mom. Then she had my brother and stuff. She had my little brother and my little sister, and by the time I learned how to walk and I was going outside by myself. I spent most of my time outside. I didn't be in the house . . . I started to say I usually just would be outside by myself, it's like I was a real man since I was young, I knew about life. . . . once my brother got of age I used to take him with me. It used to be me and him. We used to just be outside running around or running and doing nothing – traveling around by ourselves My moms she was using drugs, so at first we went to go live with my brother's father. My brother's father, but then I told him I didn't want to stay there because my sister, they were at my grandmother's house and I wanted to move over there with them, so me and my brother moved over there and we started living with our grandmother. And then after that, after living with her for a while we stayed there for like two, three years and then my aunt came, one of my aunts came and she stayed with her and she moved there and she was using drugs too, so we had to leave there. That's when we went to a foster home. That was the only thing that really happened in childhood that made a big impact. They put us in the same foster home and that's when we moved to Queens That's when we moved to Queens and I just started getting into trouble. At first I started stealing and stuff, but I never did get caught or nothing. When I came to the ATI that's the first time I

ever got caught doing something . . . The foster lady in Queens she was a little odd, she just gave us a place to stay but the money that the state was giving us I felt she wasn't giving it to us. She was just spending it on whatever she wanted to. She aint give us no money really. We was out most of the time, so that's why we were just stealing, because we didn't have money and we were hungry. Then we just told the caseworker because we got tired of not having no money, so we told the caseworker and first they didn't do anything, then they moved us. My sister she didn't want to move, my older sister, so she stayed. She went to move out because they said she was of age. She was only like 17, so she didn't go with us. That's when we moved to Mt. Vernon . . . Mt. Vernon was bad, but it was like good and all right. I was going to school and stuff. I wasn't doing nothing in school, just walking the halls and stuff, but I would go to school every day. I didn't do much. I was just running around. I cut school sometimes to hang out at my associates' houses. I knew a lot of people in school, associates, but still I stayed out of school and just hang out with them or whatever, or chill with the older kids that I knew, they wouldn't let me hustle, but I could just chill out there with them. I knew a lot about drugs, tell you where to get guns from, whatever . . . The lady there [his foster mother at Mt. Vernon] she was going to adopt us, but she said no, because her husband died . . . And then while I was living there in Mt. Vernon that's when my grandmother died. And then that's when I really started not caring and stuff. I really didn't care no more because she died. After she died I didn't care no more or nothing. I was about 16. And once she died I didn't care no more, because she was the lady who took care of me most of my life and stuff. She always gave me stuff and went shopping for us or whatever, so I was upset then. I wasn't going to school . . . I just became all mean, and did not care."

Soon after his grandmother's death Frank's father came back into his life.

"When I was young and stuff after my father left I didn't never see him again until I was like 16, since I was in foster care and I just met him because I really never knew how he looked because I only saw him when I was young, so I forgot how he looked and stuff. So once he found out I was getting adopted and stuff that's when he came in and stuff and after that for a while I didn't get adopted, I just moved over to live with him. I left the foster care. And then I moved over to live with him, in Brooklyn.

Unfortunately, this arrangement didn't work out either, as Frank explains: *"It didn't work out because we didn't live with each other, we didn't know each other, so we didn't see eye-to-eye on nothing, because I don't talk a lot, I don't talk to him that much. I don't got nothing to talk to him about, so he was always getting mad and just like my uncle, his brother, then I moved to live with him and they lived on the same block. He lived up the block, because that was his house we were living in and he had another house up the block. And then I moved to live with him and my father he moved in another part of Brooklyn in Flatbush with this girl. I was living with my uncle and then we wasn't getting along. I was going to school with him, I was doing good. I was doing better than I was doing when I was living in other places. I was only failing like two classes and in other places I failed all of them. I only passed like three, but I only failed two classes and he got mad with me because I failed those two classes and I told him that's good for me. I haven't been passing all these classes and he was getting mad. I failed one with an F and got a D and he was mad. He got mad and I knew I couldn't do no better so I was like forget it."*

While living in between his father's and uncle's house, and after having given up

on school, Frank started selling drugs; it was “easy money.” He was also smoking marijuana on a daily basis, which by his account “*relaxed*” him and helped him “*do the job right.*” “*It was easy money, and I was good at it. I thought there was no harm . . . most people were there hanging out . . . you could tell what they were doing . . . I was alone. But now I am here [at the ATI]. I wish I didn’t come. I wished I didn’t have to be in this program. I didn’t like it, but it’s good because they are keeping me out of jail and stuff . . . When they did sentence me they were like I’ve got to the ATI for six months and after the ATI I’ve got to do the probation, so I’ve got to do probation anyway for five years. I wish I didn’t have to do my probation. They are trying to say don’t get into trouble for five years. That’s impossible.*”

While growing up Frank believes that people viewed him as: “*Bad. Like I had no manners and stuff . . . I did have manners, but I didn’t show them . . . Not on purpose, I just didn’t want to show them to nobody. I don’t know them, so I didn’t need to show them to people I don’t know.*” He also described how he thought particular individuals viewed him, beginning with his first foster mother: “*She would say I had respect and stuff, but she will say – she told me I’m irresponsible. But I wasn’t. Because she would have to tell me to do something, but she had me doing stuff I didn’t want to do. Cleaning the backyard. I ain’t going to clean the backyard. Her son had dogs back there and she wanted me to clean it up and it wasn’t my dogs. My brother sees me as somebody cool. He will be thinking I’ll be funny and stuff. Sometimes he will probably say I am quiet sometimes. Or I am mean and stuff . . . Because I do be mean to people I don’t know and stuff. Many times I would be hanging out, or in school and I will be talking smart to people tell them to shut-up and stuff when they be talking. I just do it*

just to do it. It was funny . . . When I was younger they (his classmates) teased me a lot. I just never cared. I don't know why people care so much when I talk smart to them . . . ”

Frank described all the neighborhoods he lived in as being very similar: *“The one in the Bronx, it was the same thing I saw in every neighborhood— drugs. People would be selling drugs and stuff in the Bronx. It wasn't on the corners or nothing in the Bronx, it was just in the store or in front of would be out there or inside stores. Some stores they would be selling it inside there. And in Queens they was around the corner at my friend's house and they used to sell it out of there and would sell it from the back. I used to hang out in the house too though. I only hung out there because my friends lived in there. That's the only reason why I hung out in there. And in Mt. Vernon the lady I lived with she had a store and they used to sell it in front of the store and stuff. And then all the people who were selling them they used to hang out in her store, because she had games and stuff so they would be in there playing, playing games while I'm in there, so that's I met them and stuff, from being in the store. In Mt. Vernon that's a small little town and stuff, so you know everybody in Mt. Vernon or you won't see them again. Out there ain't nothing really for you to do in Mt. Vernon but get in trouble. We had our own little YMCA, the boys and girls club or something, but going there you would still get in trouble because all kids do out there is just fight. Every day they are fighting, so that's the only thing you had to do was just fight and be in gangs.”* buildings, in front of the big buildings they did that. Like the older kids

I asked Frank about his experiences at the ATI: *“At first I didn't like it at all 'cause they want you to come in every day. After six months I'll be getting tired of coming in. Sometimes I don't really feel like coming. I have been in here for four*

months. I've only got two more months and then I'm out. After a while I thought I would just do it in a hurry and get it over with and get it over with and I won't have to worry about it no more. Now, everyday at 9 o'clock I've got to be at that program, the computer program. After that I come here to the ATI. I stay here a half an hour. Sometimes they will be letting me leave early because after this I will be going to my aunt's house because I will be watching her son, he's 18, but he is autistic, so I've just got to go and let him in the house and after that I just stay there until she comes home and when she comes home I go to the Bronx where I live at, or I will be at my aunt's house on 66th Street where I see my little sister. I don't be outside like that no more ever since I got arrested. Only Saturdays I go outside. I don't see my associates no more."

After his arrest, Frank had moved to live with his older sister in the Bronx. By then, his sister had finished a technical degree and was working as a nurse aid. One of his little sisters was also living with them. His other brothers and sisters lived in Manhattan and in other parts of the Bronx. This was a stressful situation for Frank, who wanted to remain close to his siblings: *"It's just hard, I took care of many of them and now I hardly know where they're at."* He also had some problems with people on the block he was living on: *"I only hang out with people that hang out on the block that will be chilling on the block and stuff around my building. I don't chill on my block; I chill on like two blocks away from my block . . . Because too much people will be outside on my block and they will be telling things. They run their mouth too much, the old people and stuff, so I don't chill on my block, I chill on the next two blocks away. That's where my friends live at and we just chill out, chill in the apartment, chill in front of peoples' houses, chill on their stoops . . . My block can be bad, they kill people and stuff. But it is*

all right."

As with many other institutions Frank has been in, he has not developed any close relationships at the ATI: "*When I here I do nothing. Sit in there and talk to the case manager.*" Frank says he presents himself to the world differently than how he believes he is, as with the manners he "had" but didn't show. Similarly, when describing his relationship to his case manger he said: "*Before she probably thought I wasn't responsible, but now she probably changed her mind about that. Because now I've been doing what I had to do, going to my programs and stuff. [Before] I was doing stuff, but I wasn't showing them that I was doing stuff.*"

Even though he is not convinced that what the ATI wants him to do is in his best interest, or that it is an attainable goal, he still tries: "*They want you to get a job and stop smoking. Getting a job, finding a job out there is too hard, especially since the World Trade Center blew up it made it even harder. Getting a job is bad, that's where the lazy part falls in. I've got to get a job and I've got to work hard and then I am being underpaid for my services. It's not like I can get a good job, I'm Black I don't like that. That's why I didn't have a job before . . . I tried to sign up for GED but they said it's too late because the summertime is coming, so I've got to wait until September. So now I'm taking a computer program. That's all right. It's only for three weeks. It's a little good. They are teaching me a little bit, a little bit of stuff I didn't know, I make stuff on the computer, how to make pages and drawings and stuff. I've got like one associate I talk to, because we go to the same computer program.*"

Frank doesn't have any concrete plans of what he will do once he leaves the ATI: "*I'll be happy. If I want to do something I don't know. I know I won't have to worry*

about coming here no more and taking these drug programs at night. I know I will start smoking again, because you aren't allowed to smoke in here because they drug-test me. I will have a job. I will have a job when I leave, so I don't have to worry about nothing. And then I will be able to go and hang out with my friends . . . Right now I'm just looking for any job because I need some money, but I want my own business . . . a barbershop, Laundromat or something. It will be good to have a Black business man. . . . I'll have one."

I asked Frank what he liked most about himself: *"How I don't care about things and what people say and stuff. I wouldn't change that. That's what I like about me, that I don't think about what people say and what they do."*

I also asked Frank to think about a positive experience or event in his life. His reply haunted me for days: *"Experiences that were good? I ain't got none. If you're in foster care you ain't got no good experiences. When people find out you're in the system, that's it. After that I didn't really get to know nobody in my family but my brothers and my sisters and my aunts. My aunt from my mom's side, after I left the foster home I just now am learning to meet my cousins and stuff on my father's side. I am just now learning to meet them. I just met some other cousins from my mother's side that lived in Brooklyn and I ain't never known that."*

Comments and Reflections

Frank's interview is filled with surprising as well as expected responses. He speaks about being responsible and irresponsible at the same time; dependent and independent; not caring about anyone and being a caring person. This constant

juxtaposition of “positive” and “negative” adjectives shows how complicated his view of the world and of himself is, as well as his desire to present himself in a positive light. He does so not only when he describes himself: “I’m a hard worker. Lazy too” but also when he describes his environment: “*Mt. Vernon was bad, but it was like good and all right.*” Frank implies that his laziness is a fluid quality rather than a static personality trait and this belief seemed to prevent feelings of hopelessness: “*I’m a hard worker. Lazy too . . . I’m a hard worker. When I’m doing something I make sure I do it right and I do it good. I’m lazy. Sometimes I just don’t feel like doing nothing, if somebody asks me to do something and I don’t be in the mood to.*” Like many other participants, Frank believed that he could change his “lazy attitude” and achieve success if he desired, as he says: “*Ill have one [barbershop or laundry mat].*” However, earlier on, when he talks about his efforts in school, he mentions how hard it was to change not only the “lazy attitude” but also the results from it.

During most of the interview, Frank positions himself as independent, emotionless, fearless, and tough, characteristics he identifies as masculine. At the beginning of the interview we see Frank’s presentation of who he is: “*I started to say I usually just would be outside by myself, it’s like I was a real man since I was young, I knew about life.*” Another example of how Frank presents himself as distant, emotionless and tough is when he describes how he thinks his brother perceives him: “*I do mean to people I don’t know and stuff. . . .I will be talking smart to people tell them to shut up and stuff when they be talking.*” Frank views his “acting out” as funny and positive, although he states that he “acts out” for the fun of it, he links this to his own experience of being teased. His acting out could very well be a measure to protect himself: “*Many times I*

would be hanging out, or in school and I will be talking smart to people tell them to shut-up and stuff when they be talking. I just do it just to do it. It was funny . . . When I was younger they (classmates) teased me a lot. I just never cared. I don't know why people care so much when I talk smart to them." Many researchers have found that many boys in foster care act out (Finkelstein, Wamsley, & Miranda, 2002; Toth, 2002), and other researchers have pointed out the "survival value of being cool" for African American men: "being cool shows both the dominant culture and the black male himself that he is strong and proud. He is somebody." (Majors & Billson 1992 p. 5).

Frank does not always represent himself as this emotionless and distant person. As soon as Frank's brother is born, he changes his position of "independence" and of being alone, to one of being inseparable with his brother. After Frank positions himself as still in charge "*I used to take him with me*" he changes his way of talking from "I" to "we" connecting his own existence with that of his brother: "*we used to be outside running . . . we started living with our grandmother . . . we went to a foster home . . . we moved to Queens . . . she just gave us a place to stay.*" Frank continues talking about "we" until he describes his "irresponsible" behavior: "*I wasn't doing nothing in school.*"

Another instance when Frank does not present himself as detached and untouched by others or by his surroundings is when he talks about his grandmother, especially when he talks about the impact her death had on him. It is in talking about this event, where Frank expresses his depth of feeling toward his grandmother that he also describes the solidification of his delinquent identity. "*Once she died I didn't care no more, because she was the lady that took care of me most of my life and stuff. She always gave me stuff and went shopping for us or whatever, so I was upset then. I wasn't going to school . . . I*

just became all mean. And didn't care." Frank's account of the death of his grandmother echoes the fears and pain of many participants.

Frank was by far the participant who had the most unstable life in the sample; however I would like to note that several of the participants of the pilot study had equally erratic lives. While growing up Frank was constantly moving from one family to another, without ever feeling part of any; he had great difficulty finding a support network. Frank recalls that since he was able to walk he spent most of his time outside his house, and that he stopped living with his mother at an early age. Going to foster care was one of the major turning points on Frank's life. He clearly states that he started getting into trouble when this happened:

That's when we went to a foster home. That was the only thing that really happened in childhood that made a big impact. They put us in the same foster home and that's when we moved to Queens That's when we moved to Queens and I just started getting into trouble.

During the interviews, Frank also reported the shame and stigma he felt about his foster care status. He tried to hide it as much as possible, and classmates teased him; maybe that is why he appreciates so much not caring what other people think about him. Kool's study of foster care children shows that a child's embarrassment about foster care status can complicate peer relations, create anxiety and even cut them off from peers at school. This pushes them into social isolation as they attempt to protect themselves from future trauma (Kools, 1999). For Frank, this experience pushed him towards isolation and the development of a delinquent identity, that of not caring and "being mean." Another aspect of Frank's struggle in foster care was his yearning for better interactions

with his biological family:

After that I didn't really get to know nobody in my family but my brothers and my sisters and my aunts. My aunt from my mom's side, after I left the foster home I just now am learning to meet my cousins and stuff on my father's side. I am just now learning to meet them. I just met some other cousins from my mother's side that lived in Brooklyn and I ain't never known that.

Frank is wary of any close relationship he may develop with his peers or with adults, and avoids most institutions and the help they might offer him. He does not have friends, but associates, he talks to his case manager, but really he “just sits there.” Given this context, it is not surprising to find that Frank does not mention any type of romantic relations. He is the only participant who stayed away from this topic. Frank does not develop close relationships with anyone, except his biological family, especially his siblings and grandmother. Frank believes that he is only seen positively in his siblings' eyes: other people see him as bad, with no manners, or irresponsible while his brother sees him as cool and fun. He also looks for approval in his father's and uncle's eyes, and when he does not get this he is willing to give it all up: *“I was going to school with him, I was doing good. I was doing better than I was doing when I was living in other places. I was only failing like two classes and in other places I failed all of them. I only passed like three, but I only failed two classes and he got mad with me because I failed those two classes and I told him that's good for me. I haven't been passing all these classes and he was getting mad. I failed one with an F and got a D and he was mad. He got mad and I knew I couldn't do no better so I was like forget it.”*

Frank does not negotiate or change his identity in any way while being at the ATI. He is the only participant who does not develop a hybrid identity. However, he might be picking up some skills in the computer program he attends, which might help him in the future. If this were the case it would definitely have an impact on his identity.

As in Tanesha's narrative, we can see many of the different levels of history interacting with one another to form Frank's identity. As I began to learn more about Frank, I came to recognize the complexity of the interconnections of place, past history, present situation, and structural categories such as race, class, gender. These categories are not simply groups representing different and separate spheres of life. For example, Frank not only saw the connection between his family and neighbors being incarcerated and the fact that they belong to an ethnic minority, but to his own behaviors and their consequences: *"When everyone around you has been locked, you aint surprised when you are there. . . . It ain't always [our] fault. It's just that they jail Blacks."* Further, we can see how Frank's ethnicity, being African American, has influenced Frank's decision to become a business man: *"I want my own business . . . a barbershop, Laundromat or something. It will be good to have a Black business man."* We can also see how the place where he lives affects his behavior and in turn his identity: *"Out there ain't nothing really for you to do in Mt. Vernon but get in trouble. We had our own little YMCA, the boys and girls club or something, but going there you would still get in trouble because all kids do out there is just fight. Every day they are fighting, so that's the only thing you had to do was just fight and be in gangs."* Needless to say his past life and identities are a huge influence on who Frank is today.

Frank's story shows how someone with such an unstable past, who has stopped caring, reacts to the ATI. As with many participants, Frank views the ATI as an interruption to his daily life, and to the things he enjoys doing. He has to go there every day and cannot smoke pot. While other participants reported the same interruption, they seemed to be more engaged in the program than Frank. He attends classes and sees his case manager every day; however he stays as distant as possible from them. Attending the ATI represents an attempt to retain his freedom and was an alternative to going to jail, which would strip him of his freedom. The ATI became almost a ritual he had to endure.

By analyzing Frank's life as a whole, we see how he is placed at risk in society not only by structural factors such as poverty, racism and lack of family structure, but by cultural factors such as "cool pose." Thus Frank's story contributes to an understanding of what it means to be African American male involved with the criminal justice system and with the foster care system in the US today.

Chapter 11- Conclusions

Summary: Answering the Questions

The aim of the present study was to understand how identities are formed at an ATI program in New York City. This period of transition was not conceptualized by focusing on a single aspect of living, as many investigations are, but rather through examining the overall life structure, which requires the consideration of both the self and the world. Thus, the present study can be seen as an application of the Vygotsky/Scribner framework which posits that, in order to understand a psychological system such as identity, one has to also understand the general history of humanity, the history of individual societies, and the life history of the individual in society. In order to analyze these different levels, this dissertation examined seven research questions.

The first research question looked at the history of the juvenile justice system in the US, and how it influences individual lives. This was conceptualized as the first level of the Vygotsky/Scribner framework. A literature review showed that the criminal justice system in the US has the potential to influence neighborhoods, and individual lives in more than one way. This becomes apparent when one sees how changes in the administration, either at a city level or at a federal level, bring about changes in the definition of what is considered a crime, the punishment that goes with the crime, and the conditions that are present at the time of conviction. For example, in the late 1980's New York City had plans to construct two new juvenile detention centers to replace the only existing one at the time, Spofford. The new facilities were designed to be smaller and look less like jails and more like community centers. In addition New York City took other important steps in the early 1990s to improve juvenile detention services and reduce

the number of young people entering secure detention. In addition the Annie E. Casey Foundation selected New York City as one of five national sites for its Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI). The main goal of the initiative was to reduce the unnecessary or inappropriate use of secure detention for juveniles. However, the political situation in the city changed when in 1993 a new administration came to power and with it a “tough on crime” philosophy. The new administration’s policies were no longer compatible with JDAI, and thus the Casey Foundation dropped New York City from its group of detention reform sites in 1998. Furthermore, the administration decided to keep in use Spofford and to expand the capacity of the two new facilities, thus making them less like community centers and more like jails.

The fate of a “delinquent” youth in New York City, was very different in the late 1980s and early 1990s than after 1993. While it might appear that these changes affected all youth in New York City equally, this was not the case. Most of the youth detained in New York City come from the city’s poorest neighborhoods. Furthermore, researchers have shown that youth of color experience more punitive treatment than their White peers in every stage of the justice process, this includes more likely to be stopped, more likely to be searched, more likely to be sent to jail, etc. (Jones & Eileen Poe-Yamagata, 2000; Mauer, 1997; Mauer & Huling, 1995; Younge, 2003) Thus, in reviewing the history of the juvenile justice system in the New York City, we can see how its policies have a direct impact on who society labels as a “criminal,” the sentence that goes with the crime, and the conditions that are present in jails, prisons, and ATIs.

Specific evidence of how the history of the criminal justice system affects individual lives could be seen in participants’ narratives, since they spoke about how the

“system” makes them feel insecure about their lives and they feel that their lives depend on arbitrary decisions. At times, they believed that their neighborhoods and their racial identity had more to do with them being involved in the criminal justice system than their behavior. Further, the strong presence of the criminal justice system in their neighborhoods and on their families, had “normalized” the experience of being arrested and going to jail. Thus, if we are to really help youth with their daily problems, a point of intervention has to include the broad problems that dominate our society and to continue the fight against racial bias at all levels, and, particularly, within the criminal justice system. If constant surveillance, racial profiling, and discriminatory treatment in the criminal justice system ends, minority youth will be less likely to grow up with a normalized experience of jail.

The second research question focused on how participants viewed their neighborhoods, schools and the ATI; this provided data for understanding participants’ society which is the second level of history of the Vygotsky/Scribner framework. Findings indicated that participants had lived in numerous neighborhoods; many of them the poorest in New York City. Participants described their neighborhoods as poor, violent and drug infested places. This is consistent with census data, which shows these neighborhoods have a long history of poverty and crime. Several researchers have shown the effects that poor urban neighborhoods have on their residents. In their comprehensive review of the literature on neighborhood effects, Jencks and Mayer (1990) emphasize an “epidemic perspective” of neighborhood influences on individuals. The basic assumption of this perspective is that social problems are “contagious” (Coulton, 1992, Crane, 1991). Other researchers have found that exposure to violence in a neighborhood is linked to the

development of violent behavior among its residents (Lorion, 1993; Schubiner, 1993). Further, behaviors that might seem deviant are functional. Thus, understanding the neighborhoods where participants resided is indispensable to understand participants' identities, especially delinquent identities, as well as violent behavior and involvement with drugs.

Participants in the present study attended several schools. They described their elementary schools as friendly places and their junior high and high schools as large, chaotic and dangerous. Participants reported high staff turnover in their high schools and their classrooms as dirty and unsafe places. Psychological and educational research reports correlations between school characteristics and students' psychological well-being and educational achievement (Connell, 1991; Fine, 1994; Flanagan, 1998; Phillips, 1997; Ryan, 2000). In schools with frequent staff turn over, youth are less likely to attend and remain in school, (Anness, 2000) and they are more likely to be involved in disciplinary problems and violence (Fine, 1994).

The participants found the ATI to be a contradictory place; one that offered them a second chance while simultaneously reminding them of their criminal status. The location of the ATI, a court building in New York City, was problematic, as the setting was regarded as hostile. Participants saw the guards and the metal detectors at the entrance to the building as invasive. This finding should not be taken lightly, as Becker (1963) reminds us; deviance is created by social structures and social groups labeling a particular group as deviant. In this case the location of the ATI is labeling the participant as deviant.

In contrast, the ATI staff was usually perceived as friendly and supportive. This is vital for the success of the program. From what we know from previous research, committed and consistent educators and case managers are more likely to encourage youth to develop positive attitudes towards the institution they attend, as well as enduring bonds of trust and a desire to be contributing members of the society they live (Haney, 1973; Miller, 2001).

Understanding these settings is very important since it has been shown that they shape the development that happens in them. Further, they are settings where youth develop and modify identities, build a sense of self, understand how society views them, and how they have to behave in society. According to Dannefer (1984):

The organism is constituted as a human being in interaction with the environment, and continually sustained and reconstituted in an ongoing way across the life course (p.107).

This outlook is not only consistent with the theoretical framework used in the present study but also with what participants said. Several participants made comments such as: “I don’t [want to] become the streets” or described themselves as: “A young man from Harlem.” These statements demonstrate the interconnection between social structures and individuals, and point to the importance of understanding the participants’ social structures in order to understand them.

The third research question looked at participants lives, which represents the third level of history in the Vygotsky/Scribner framework. As part of participants’ lives, I looked at the major turning points in participants’ lives and how they affected their identities. However, other events, apart from turning points, that influenced participants

to be who they were, were also included. Thus, this question focused on participants' personal histories: their experiences with their families and friends as well as in their neighborhoods, schools, and at the ATI.

Many participants' families were disrupted by their parents' separation. This caused a chain of effects, beginning with many participants relocating several times to different households. For most of these participants, relocation was difficult as it meant adapting to a new neighborhood and to a new school. Among participants who found this transition difficult, feelings of abandonment were common. Several studies have shown that residential mobility negatively affects psychological well-being (Coleman, 1988; Scanlon, 2001; Stocols, 1982). These effects worsen with cumulative moves and other risk factors such as poverty, life cycle changes, and single parent family structure (Scanlon, 2001). This finding, on how hard relocation was on participants, and its negative impact on education and social relations, provide a strong rationale for supporting the implementation of place based development policies in order to reduce mobility of low-income families. Further, homeownership programs targeted to low-income families could help reduce mobility among such families, provide them with financial equity, and help stabilize and improve transitional neighborhoods (Johnson and Sherraden, 1992). Alternately, rent stabilized and rent control legislations can help stabilize poor families by protecting them from abrupt rent increases (Downs, 1988). Further, school social workers and counselors can also assist at-risk, recently relocated children by identifying whether special services are needed. Frequent relocation means that many children fall through the cracks and do not receive the appropriate screening and diagnosis need to start special services. School social workers should attempt to

learn about such history as soon as possible, and help the youth in the areas that they need help with.

Most participants who relocated lived for long periods of time with their grandmother. Most of these participants developed a tight bond with their grandmothers and acted more responsibly around them. They were keen to show their best behavior in front of her and felt that she deserved all the help they could give her. One of the most drastic turning points in these participants' lives was the death of their grandmother. It was then that they stopped caring about their future and started acting-out; stealing, dropping out from school, and being disrespectful. This result points out the importance of having a more fluid concept of what immediate family means. By allowing grandparents and aunts to be considered part of the immediate family would embrace the reality of many of the youth and facilitate policies that now limit grandparents or other kin from receiving the benefits they should be entitled to. While state policies indicate that kin are generally eligible to receive the same services as non-kin foster parents, past research has clearly shown that in practice, kin foster parents and the children in their care receive fewer services. Kin are offered and request fewer services (Barth et al. 1994; Berrick et al. 1994; Chipungu and Everett 1994; Chipungu et al. 1998; Cook and Ciarico 1998). Kin also fail to receive the assistance they are eligible for from non-child welfare agencies. While all kin who do not receive foster care payments from the child welfare agency should be eligible to receive TANF assistance from an income assistance agency, many fail to receive either TANF or foster care payments. Similarly, many kin taking care of youth fail to receive Medicaid health insurance coverage for the children in their care, food stamps, child care subsidies, or housing assistance (Ehrle and Geen 2002). Given

the fundamental role that grandmothers played in the healthy development of participants, it is essential that federal and state agencies do all that is possible to help youth who are being relocated to stay within their families.

Another common difficult experience, among participants, was having their parents or other close relatives, siblings, or uncles sent to jail. The emotions that surrounded the imprisonment of a parent constituted a turning point in the participants' lives, initiating a pattern of unfavorable life choices, a perspective that jail was just one more road they could end up taking, and a attitude that it was unconceivable to trust people, since you never knew if they were "snitches" or not. It was because of this new identity of insecurity, and fear, that participants mentioned becoming increasingly isolated, especially from their peers, and began to view spending time indoors and alone as a safer alternative than being out with acquaintances. Given this finding I believe that an important point of intervention in youth with incarcerated parents' lives is at the time of parental incarceration and, at this time, children should receive extra support and guidance. This would help them form a secure identity, and be able to trust people and institutions. The experiences that many participants had with their families are what Loeber and Stouthamer-Lober (1986) describe as "risk- factors" for the development of deviance. In their meta-analysis Loeber and Stouthamer-Lober found the following relations to be conducive to deviance: 1) neglect, which involves lack of parental supervision and involvement, 2) deviant behaviors, which focuses on parental criminal involvement, and 3) disruption, which involves marital problems and parental absence. It was common for participants in this study to describe experiences that match these three risk factors.

In contradiction to most of the adolescent literature, the present study found that none of the participants had close friends at the time the interview took place. Further, participants did not want friends since they thought such relationships could only cause them problems - especially problems with the criminal justice system. Many participants said that they were involved in the criminal justice system because of their friends or, more accurately, with whom they thought were their friends. The theory that having delinquent friends leads to delinquent behavior is one that the criminology literature has long pointed out (Agnew, 1991; Akers, 1979; Aseltine, 1995).

Most female participants had friends when they were younger; however, these relationships had ended in disappointment and left them feeling that they could not trust anyone. For the most part, male participants had never trusted their peers and they had "associates," people they hung out with, instead of friends. Consistent with the literature, most participants started using drugs, stealing, and cutting classes while being with their friends or associates. Many participants also lived through the death of a friend or peer. For the most part, the friend/peer had been killed in the participants' neighborhood. This event was a turning point in participants' lives as it made them reconsider their actions as well as with whom they spent time. The death of their friends made participants reconsider their lives and think about their future. This reaction was the opposite of that of the death of their grandmother, which was when many participants started acting out and stopped caring about their present or their future.

While participants did not have friends, many were involved in romantic relationships which were destructive, abusive, or simply not to their satisfaction. Both male and female participants felt controlled by their significant others, yet the strategies

that were used by males and females were very different. Male participants usually complained about their girlfriends being disrespectful to them (e.g., shouting at them in public spaces) and lying about being pregnant. They commented how they were stressed and unsatisfied with these relations. On the other hand, female participants stated that their partners cheated on them and tried to control them. The fights they described were heinous; one participant was hospitalized due to a fight with her girlfriend and others reported broken objects (e.g., cell phones, windows) due to fights with their boyfriends. Two participants had been prostituted by their boyfriends, and one male participant had prostituted his girlfriends. The significance of these violent relationships is underscored by other researchers who have found that exposure to psychological, physical, or sexual abuse is a predictor of emotional and behavioral problems (DuBois, 1992; Windle, 1992).

As can be seen, the participants of the present study were lonely and did not have people their age that they could relate to or trust. Many considered their younger sibling their best friend; however, this was usually a protective relationship where the participant felt responsible for taking care of the siblings. This might seem contradictory, given that the “normative” viewpoint of adolescence is that during adolescence the ties of the family typically become less important, and the ones with peers take on increasing significance. However this “normative” viewpoint has emerged from research done with middle class Caucasian youth. Cultural and economic factors played an important a role in participants losing friends. Their experiences with friends were usually disappointing ones, and lead many participants to their criminal activity. Participants’ parents had long advised them that friends would lead to trouble, and their social situation had lead them to take care of their siblings. Participants’ self imposed isolation has been observed by

researchers who study working class girls. Taylor et al. (1995) point out that the overriding move is to “stay to myself,” “not talk to anybody,” “keep my feelings bottled up,” and “not tell anybody about anything.” (p. 46-50). While this move might be an appropriate response, given the circumstances, it has a psychological cost. Psychological development is rooted in one’s relationship with the self and others, here the “other” is being excluded.

Consistent with the way participants described their neighborhoods (violent and drug infested) many of their experiences there were hostile. Several participants had been involved in fights while “chillin’” in their neighborhoods. Participants commented that using and selling drugs and engaging in fights were normal experiences in their communities. This is consistent with the findings of other researchers who have found the negative effects that poor urban neighborhoods have on their residents (Coulton, 1992; Crane, 1991; Jencks and Mayer, 1990; Lorion, 1993; Schubiner, 1993). Male participants also commented that many times they would engage in fights to gain respect and to avoid future fights. Female participants also talked about how the policemen in their neighborhoods, who were supposed to protect the residents from crime, did not do so and male participants mentioned that policemen harassed and stressed them for being African American or Latinos. These experiences with the police officers are consistent with the results of several studies (Fine, Freudenberg, Payne et al. 2003; Fine & Weis, 1998; Patton, 1998) which found minorities’ interactions with police as oppressive and/or disrespectful. Given the importance of neighborhoods in shaping youth’s lives it is important to note several places where policy interventions could improve their lives. First, participants’ neighborhoods are in need of improvement in several aspects: the

streets need to be safer, the buildings and apartments need to be in better condition. An intervention to help improve neighborhoods by creating new leaders, connecting families with jobs, and getting residents working toward solutions to their neighborhoods' problems is an essential step for improving residents' lives, and with this interrupt the "epidemic of violence" and thus change residents' need to develop a tough identity.

However, participants' experiences in their neighborhoods were not all hostile. They found that the blocks in their neighborhoods acted as an extended family and that, at times of trouble, they would get together and help each other. At times of joy, they would all celebrate. When participants talked about their block, they usually referred to it as a supportive environment where people were friendly. Thus, a clear difference could be seen between participants' descriptions of their block and of their neighborhood, the first being a supportive and friendly place while the latter being a hostile one. Being able to hold these two positions at the same time might seem contradictory, but I believe that it shows the complex and multiple realities that participants face every day. These places, as most places, are not one dimensional and static. Thus, participants' stories about their friendly blocks and hostile neighborhoods are not contradictory, but a complex view of reality. Understanding the dynamics of the block might also serve as a step towards improving the neighborhoods as a whole.

Participants' experiences with schools followed a developmental trajectory that deteriorated with time. Although they enjoyed attending their elementary schools, their experiences in junior high school and high school were fraught with violence, fights, and feelings of boredom. There is a large body of research that shows that as "school attachment" increases, the likelihood of delinquency declines (Hirschi, 1969;

Kornhauser, 1978; Wiatrowski, 1981). Wiatrowski et al. (1981) identified four major dimensions of the concept “school attachment:” 1) school performance, 2) educational aspirations and expectations, 3) involvement in school activities, and 4) school related satisfaction. When participants left elementary school their grades declined, they lost interest in school, and they were dissatisfied with their schools. As much as participants recognized that these changes in their school performance were due to the school’s structure and, as much as they longed to attend better schools, most maintained that their academic difficulties in school were primarily due to their lack of effort. This finding is not surprising given the strong emphasis mainstream culture has on individual effort and responsibility. MacLeod (1987/1995), detected similar self blame tendency among the urban working class he interviewed and pointed out that the achievement ideology (i.e. anyone can achieve with hard work and determination) does little to change the conditions that make it almost impossible for poor or working class students to succeed in school. While this finding points to the difficulties in reducing the problem of school drop-out, since it is grounded on mainstream culture of individual effort, there is room for change and policy interventions. These results suggest that the participants’ reasoning for doing poorly in school and dropping out are thoughtful, they described a complex view that locates responsibility in both individual behavior and its wider institutional context. The results suggest that rather than getting tough and investing money in punitive interventions, schools can engage students for their input on what they want, after all participants were clear on what they wanted for school and what they thought they deserved and keep them in school (considerate and knowledgeable teachers, and a safe and clean learning environment).

With respect to the ATI, participants mentioned that, before joining the ATI they expected it to be an institution that would be similar to jail. However, they soon realized that it was a supportive environment whose staff was, for the most part, friendly and helpful. They also felt that their opinions counted at the ATI, since they were able to suggest activities that would be implemented in the program. This environment was extremely important for participants and engaged them in ATI activities that they would have otherwise avoided, such as photography classes and beading. These experiences were incredibly positive, especially given the other encounters participants had in other institutions, such as schools, in their neighborhoods, with their friends and families. Finding a support system that respected them and that they could trust was something participants welcomed. Respect played an essential role in participants' lives; they had fought and risked their lives, in order to be respected. Thus, feeling respected and supported by the ATI was an important achievement. Gilligan (1996, 2001) has pointed out at the importance that respect has on people who are involved in the criminal justice system.

Participants also mentioned how uncertain they felt about their present situation at the ATI. They felt their future was in the hands of arbitrary judges who could send them to jail or prison at any time, for no apparent reason. While this feeling might seem like a symptom of paranoia, when seen within the context of the history of the US criminal justice system, it makes sense because there are no given laws or standards for who ends in an ATI program and who in jail. This points out to the importance of making the process as transparent as possible, where youth know their options once they are involved in the criminal justice system, and what is expected of them at the ATI.

Participants viewed the ATI as a place where their actions were scrutinized and as an interruption to their daily lives and, thus they had mixed feelings towards it. They felt that, in order to succeed at the ATI, they had to avoid peer relations. In this way, the ATI was viewed as a force that contributes to social isolation. This is a dangerous position for an institution that works with youth; social isolation is inversely related to measures of self esteem (Jones, 1981) and is associated with depression, and anxiety (Hasson, 1986) as well as with substance abuse, suicide, and vulnerability to health problems (Jones, 1990). Even though many activities at the ATI encourage client interactions, such as going on weekend camps, going out for dinner, and participating in group activities, participants believed that the key for graduating from the ATI was to interact as little as possible with their peers. This is not surprising given that the message they get from all other institutions, their parents, and maybe from their individual case managers at the ATI is to stay to themselves. However, given the importance of friends in adolescence, it might be necessary for the ATI to make an extra effort, beyond what they already do, to encourage its clients to develop healthy and trusting relationships with their peers.

These two opposite experiences that participants had at the ATI might be due to the ATI's need to both help its clients and make sure that they comply with their sentence requirements. By having this dual position, the ATI has the difficult role of being both an institution that helps participants and one that adds surveillance to their lives, not only to help them, but also to make sure that they comply with a sentence that was imposed on them. This duality might also correspond to the duality of punishment vs. rehabilitation that plagues the juvenile justice system.

Participants' experiences in their neighborhoods, schools and the ATI, as well as their experiences with their families and peers, were complex. In many ways these relationships offer them support and protection while, in many other ways, they present threats, abuse, and violence. In ideal situations, social institutions and families provide a consistent supportive system for the teenagers and specific guidelines concerning the expectations and behaviors that are expected of them. This is far from the reality of the participants of the present study. They are faced with the challenge to decipher for themselves what behaviors are adequate, when and where they are adequate, and when they can expect an institution or their family to be a support for them and when they can't. It is through these experiences that they have come to accept the proverb "sink or swim" and, with it, a detached attitude towards the world and the feeling that they cannot trust anyone.

Female participants faced all the threats of negligence and violence that men did, but also confront the persistent risk of exploitation by men in relationships and on the streets. Further, their stories suggest that the public social services, including the ATI, could intervene constructively in the lives of many of these young people. This result shows how the ATI's gender specific program were needed. Programs frequently neglect gender-specific issues, such as physical and social power imbalances, and overlook girls' strengths (Kelly, Bobo, Avery, McLachan, 2003). Such omissions miss important opportunities for empowerment and development and ultimately shortchange girls. However the ATIs successfully avoided this problem by designing a girls program, where activities and discussions were gender specific.

Understanding participants' life experiences is an essential step in analyzing participants' identities, since personal life experiences continually shape individuals choices, future experiences, understanding of the world, and of themselves.

Environments create certain resources which shape development and they do so by the personal experiences that happened in these environments. In the present study, participants' experiences were not only shaped by the social structures, such as social class, race, gender, their past histories, and identities but were also dynamically shaped through the connection of these systems (Collins, 1990). Thus, participants' experiences were both shaped by and shaped their identities.

The fourth research question examined the identity of participants prior to attending the ATI, this constitutes part of the fourth level of the Vygotsky/Scribner framework. Participants strongly identified with their ethnic identity, believing that it had influenced them to be who they were. This involved both positive attributes, such as knowing how to enjoy life and dress nicely, and negative ones, such as suffering from racism. Partially as a response to this feeling of discrimination, partially due to the society participants belong to, and partially due to the neighborhoods they live in, participants developed a tough identity.

Participants also believed that they were respected individuals, and in the cases where they were not, such as when they felt discriminated against or in danger, participants' contested it and were willing to fight to gain this respect. Thus, in many cases, portraying a tough identity was a means of gaining respect. While both male and female participants adopted identities of being tough and respected, the meanings of these identities were gendered. Male participants portrayed these two identities (tough and

respected) at all times, and it was especially important to reveal them around strangers. On the other hand, female participants portrayed them when they were with someone with whom they were close. This tough and respected identity might have been the root for their developing a sense that they could not trust anyone- they had to portray a tough façade at all times. Participants also talked about being unique; they viewed themselves as being different than most youth their age.

While many of these identities, being tough, respected, unique and not trusting others, might have helped participants survive in the harsh environments that they lived in, they did not come without a cost. These identities, together with the environments that they lived in and their previous experiences, explain why participants were so lonely and had not found a support system to rely on. Participants usually did not identify themselves as lonely but, in talking about their lives, they described themselves as such. They did not have friends (and did not desire to), their romantic relationships were not satisfying, they usually did not have a close relationship with their parents and, while they were close to their siblings, they usually felt responsible for their well being, more than someone that they could depend on. Thus, participants' identities of being tough, respected, unique and not trusting others, are all identities that contributed to their self imposed isolation.

Another identity that many participants talked about was that of consumers. They enjoyed buying electronic products and designer clothes. Unfortunately, they were not always able to have access to what they wanted due to their financial situation. The combination of participants' identities, participants' experiences, and the history of their neighborhoods, schools, and the criminal justice system, lead them to develop a

delinquent identity which was expressed and caused by anger. When we look at how they talk about their lives participants express a sense of what psychologists have called “relative deprivation” (Fine, 2002) which is a discrepancy between what they believe they deserve and what they have. For example, participants enumerated the ways that they had been disappointed by the systems that were supposed to be there to protect them; schools failed to provide them with a safe and academic environment; the police officers in their neighborhoods failed to protect them and harassed them due to racial profiling; participants felt abandoned by one or both of their parents. Participants also talked about other bleak experiences, such as the death of a friend (usually killed); the death of their grandmother; and the harsh conditions they lived due to poverty. The accumulation of these experiences caused participants to be angry, feel betrayed, and develop a delinquent identity. In a way, this delinquent identity was a reaction to the disappointing experiences in their lives and a way to try to get part of what they feel has been denied to them. Once again, this finding points out that we cannot continue with the dichotomy between individual and social causation of crime. By showing the connections between local-level structures, and youth developing delinquent identities, this study shows that policies to deal with the crime problem cannot be separated from policies to improve economic conditions. The creation of a just society and the call for stricter standards of justice for individuals must be seen as part of the same endeavor.

It is with this knowledge that we can look at the last three questions; how the identity of participants changed while they were at the ATI; whether the ATI was a turning point in participants’ lives; and how the program is reshaping participants’ identities. Evidence of personal change was evident in many participants’ narratives.

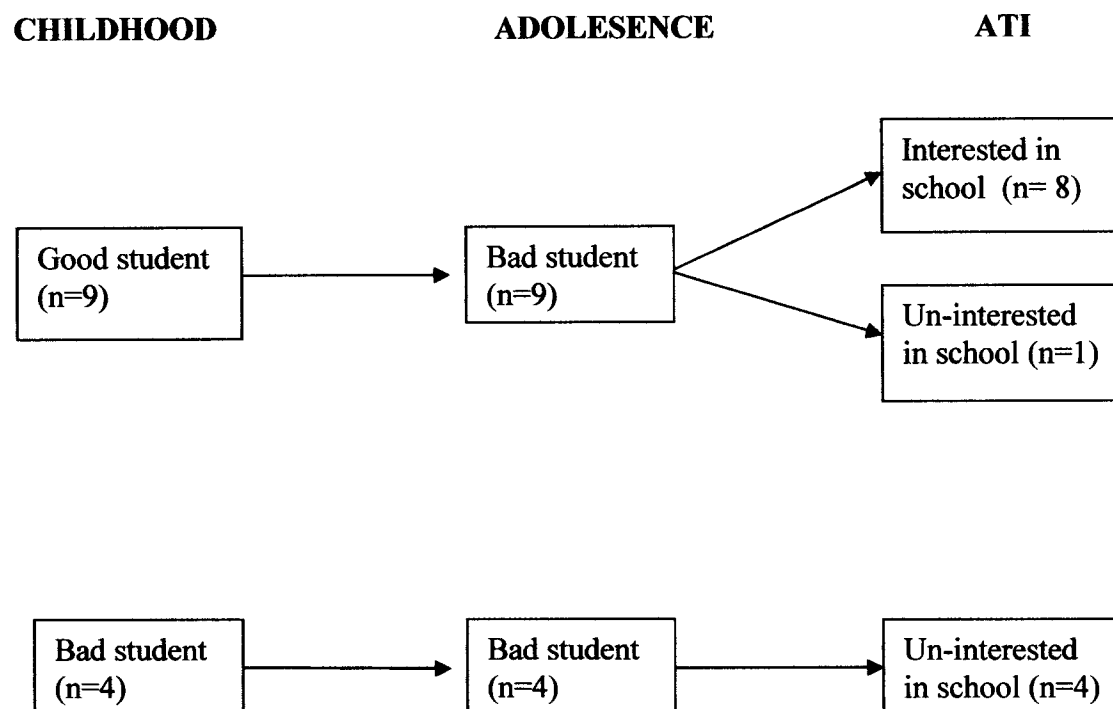
After three months at the ATI, there were identifiable changes in participants' feelings, behaviors, and identities. At the ATI, participants calmed down and had less of a tendency to act out than before attending the ATI. This was not always easy or to their benefit, as participants stated that acting out had gained them respect in the streets and avoided them fights.

After attending the ATI for three months, participants developed an identity as a role model to others. The ATI has a flexible program that allows participants to decide some of the activities that are scheduled. This provides participants with a sense that they are respected as well as of being a role model since their suggestions are followed by an institution. The ATI also has ceremonies where they hand out achievement awards to clients, once again providing them with a sense of accomplishment and of being role models for others who did not win an award in the area they did. Further, participants who had been at the ATI for four months or longer transferred their identity of a role model to other realms of their life; they saw themselves as role models not only at the ATI but in their neighborhoods and with their families. This was an important change given that social scientists (Zirkel, 2002) have noted that developing an identity as a role model brings elements of personal well-being, such as a higher self-esteem. Further, several participants said that they wanted to extend this role model identity to their future career and become case managers or lawyers, to help people who were in the situation they were in now. This desire might be a way for participants to simultaneously acknowledge their wrong doing and the conditions that lead them to it. The aspiration of "deviants" taking part in the reformation of others is a well documented phenomenon; Alcoholic Anonymous is based on this premise.

As a response to the uncertainty of the ATI (the vague criteria for being selected to go to the ATI instead of jail; clients having meetings with court officers that can re-send them to jail at any time) and to the surveillance that the ATI added to their lives, participants developed a fearful identity. They disliked this identity, not only for lack of control over their future, but particularly because it clashed with their identity of being tough and respected. Fear acted as an agent of social control, carrying the pressure to act and behave in ways participants wouldn't otherwise choose. Further, this fearful identity also elevated participants' loneliness, and encouraged them to stay indoors, alone.

Consistent with the theoretical framework, it was found that the participants' experiences and previous identities were an important defining factor in the identities that they developed at the ATI. For example, participants who had been good students when they were younger talked about the desire to go back to "the old self" which usually meant going back to school and being a "good student," following rules, and avoiding trouble. These were all identities that participants had when they were younger and had forsaken when they started junior high school or high school. Participants who never identified as "good students" did not develop a "good student" identity when they were at the ATI. This speaks to the importance that early experiences and early identities have on later stages of life, and on the effects that a program, such as the ATI, can have on participants. Figure 4 shows the impact of early experiences had on the effects of the ATI.

Figure 4. The impact of early experiences and identities



This finding points out the importance of schooling. By never engaging students in the schooling process there is not only an educational loss but also the development of a deviant identity. Thus, this finding calls our attention to the need to have good urban public schools, with engaging teachers.

Another transformation that female participants experienced at the ATI was a change in their way of communicating. Female participants were still outspoken, however, they felt they had more tools to communicate more effectively and to be heard by more people. This change was important and positive. In the present study, the impact of the changes in communicating could be seen in many parts of females' lives. By learning to talk in a "professional" way participants of the present study were able to

make sense of why people had reacted to them in aggressive ways, were able to view themselves as “real professionals,” express themselves in socially appropriate ways, and, thus, increase their chances of finding and maintaining a legal job. Several theorists (Bamberg, 2004; Harre, 1999; Hollaway, 1984) argue that it is through discourse that identity is formed, and thus, the communication style has a direct impact on the identity that is formed and transformed. In addition, changes in verbal communication affect individuals in many ways since communication styles allow individuals’ to make and represent meanings, to change and construct identities, and to gain and maintain social positions (e.g. Bakhtin, 1981; Vygotsky, 1978). Again, this finding demonstrates the essential role institutions such as the ATI and schools can have in forming youths’ identities and social positions.

These new identities did not supplant participants’ preexisting identities but co-existed with them, so that participants developed hybrid identities that allowed them to move between different worlds (street, school, ATI, jobs), without overtly experiencing conflict. This does not mean that they never experience conflict in these worlds, or with their hybrid identity, after all they are at the age where they are learning who they are, as well as what is expected from them in these different worlds. However, it did mean that they learned the scripts that go with each world, they know how to act, what to say and how to avoid problems in these two worlds.

The results of the present study show participants producing hybrid identities that simultaneously express their identification with being street smart and book smart; ghetto and professional; victims of society and in control of their destiny, fearful and tough. Although they see themselves as being street smart, they distance themselves from street

life. Although they identify as responsible individuals who are role models for desisting deviance, they knowingly break the law by smoking marijuana. Although they identify themselves as victims of society, they believe that they can have complete control over their future. Thus, the dichotomous categories of 'either/or' do not offer an accurate conceptualization of the participants' transformed identities at ATI, where there are multiple positions and aspirations continually at play in their lives. In this view, the impact of the ATI on its participants can be understood as the creation of a layer which overlays pre-existing identities but does not necessarily obliterate them.

The ATI was a turning point for participants; evidence of their psychological transformation was in their ability to plan and think about personal change from a broader perspective. For example, most participants were able to imagine a different self for themselves, one that could navigate in two almost contradictory worlds, one where school, legitimate jobs and avoiding the criminal justice system were important and one where being tough and respected were essential for surviving. In order to achieve this hybrid sense of self, participants wove their past selves with their transformed selves into a story, that allowed them to imagine their future selves. They created a hybrid identity that allowed them to navigate through several worlds and give them a broader perspective of who they are. This result shows the importance of embracing and encouraging the development of hybrid identities. While one might first think that for a transformation in identity at an ATI program to be successful clients would have to eliminate their old identities, and develop new ones which are deemed positive by society, this is not only an un-reachable goal, but an undesired one. Given the circumstances that the youth are living in (tough neighborhoods, harsh schools) they need to maintain some of their

previous identities, such as being tough, and they also need to develop new identities that will keep them from being re-arrested. Further, the new identities participants developed allowed them to gain interest in school, and find a job. Thus, the hybrid identities they developed were extremely useful and needed. Whether they will remain after they leave the ATI is out of the scope of the present study, but could be fruitfully researched by further studies.

Was it important to study gender differences?

At the beginning of the present study I decided that it was important to compare how male and females transformed their identities at the ATI. Thus, throughout the study I searched for gender differences. Did males and females talk about their experiences the same way? Were there any differences in the ways they were affected by the society they lived in? Did they develop different identities? How were their experiences in the ATI different?

There were important gender differences in three out of the four levels of the Vygotsky/Scribner framework (all except the second level- the history of societies). In the first level, the history of the criminal justice system, the literature review indicated that males were more prone to be involved in the criminal justice system than females. Further, there was a vast literature that showed that the reasons why male and females end up arrested are gendered. Even in the small sample of this study we can see this difference, most female participants had been arrested because of robbery, while most male participants were arrested because of weapon possession.

No gender differences were observed when participants talked about their neighborhoods, schools or the ATI, which were conceptualized as the second level of

history in the Vygotsky/Scribner framework. However there were gender differences in their experiences in these places and this is what constitutes the third level of the Vygotsky/Scribner framework. While both male and female participants felt that their neighborhoods were dangerous, and that fights were common, females reported fighting only as a reaction, others started the fights- they defended themselves. Males, on the other hand, stated that they would start fights to show their “tough” identity and this would gain them respect and avoid further fights. Further, male participants reported having and using guns, while no females did. Male and female participants also differed in the way they viewed policemen. Females saw them as not doing their job, as they did not protect the community, while males commented that they were “stressed” and harassed by policemen.

Male and female participants had similar experiences in schools; however their friendship history was very different. Males reported they never had friends, while female participants said they had lost their friends, thus both male and female participants were lonely. Further differences were seen in participants’ romantic relationships. Even though neither male nor female participants were satisfied with their relationships, female participants were in a weaker position since males possessed more power.

With respect to their identities, male and female participants were very similar with the exception of being outspoken, males described themselves as quiet while females as outspoken. While some identities of male and female participants were very similar, they both considered themselves tough and respected, the meaning of these identities were quite gendered. Males were more concerned with being respected by strangers while female participants were concerned with being respected by people they were close to.

Even though the activities that were planned for males and females at the ATI were very different, their experiences there were very similar. Male participants had less structured activities, and were referred to outside programs (e.g. computer training programs) more often than female participants who had many scheduled activities at the ATI (e.g. beading, dance classes). However both male and female participants felt they had gained a support system at the ATI and at the same time they felt the ATI added an un-welcomed amount of surveillance to their lives. By creating gender specific programs the ATI was able to impact the lives of both male and female participants in a beneficial way, and both were able to create hybrid identities.

Was it necessary to conduct content and biographical analysis?

This study involved content as well as biographical analysis. These two analyses guided the representation and theorizing of participants' experiences and identities in different directions. Content analysis was extremely useful in representing the general story of all participants, offering a detailed overview of all of the data. This is particularly important when the goal is to understand the global picture, such as what happens when youth are sentenced to an ATI. However, it did not offer much depth in understanding the details of participants' lives, nor the ways that participants presented themselves. Content analysis does not represent participants in the ways they talked about their lives. It represents categories derived from the interviews that summarize and systematize the data in all the interviews. As such, content analysis did not allow for a clear differentiation of participants. At most, it allowed us to see how many of the participants who had X experience (e.g. death of grandmother) developed Y (e.g. a

delinquent identity). Thus, with content analysis the representation and theorizing of participants was as a group.

Biographical analysis, on the other hand, offered a richer understanding of participants' lives. By presenting the developmental trajectories of two participants, the numerous codes of the content analysis acquired life. Further, since the interviews were not divided into fragments, it represents participants as they characterized themselves. However, biographical analysis lacks the breath that was achieved with content analysis. With biographical analysis the representation and theorizing of participants was at the individual level. Theorizing using biographical analysis lead to an understanding that changes in participants' identities are woven into their entire lives. By conducting both analyses in the present study I presented general characteristics of the group as well as idiosyncrasies of two participants.

Examining the hypotheses

Before starting this study I had several hypotheses about the results of the present study. While I confirmed a few, I learned that the stories participants told were more complicated than I had anticipated. The first question asked how participants describe the places they in which they grew up. I hypothesized that they would describe these places as dangerous and unfriendly and this was partially true. However, participants did not describe their neighborhoods and schools in such bleak and flat terms. Some of the neighborhoods in which they lived in were dangerous and drug infested but, within those neighborhoods, participants not only found an aggressive environment but also a supportive one. When participants talked about their schools they made clear distinctions between their elementary schools, which were friendly places, and their junior high

schools and high schools that were unwelcoming. Thus, the results show a complex picture. I had also hypothesized that these hostile environments would shape male participants identities as “tough” and female as “isolated.” This hypothesis was only partially confirmed. Participants’ schools and neighborhoods shaped participants to become tough and isolated. However, male participants were more likely than female participants to be isolated.

The second hypothesis was about participants’ lives and how they affected their identities, I hypothesized that the death of close family members, relocation, and incarceration of friends would be turning points in participants’ lives. All these experiences were turning points in participants’ lives, as well as the death of a friend. Although I hypothesized that these events would influence participants towards a delinquent identity, this was not always the case. I found that it was important to distinguish the specific effects each turning point had on them. For example, the death of their grandmother had usually caused participants to act out, and to stop caring about their future, confirming the hypothesis. On the other hand, the death of a friend, usually had the opposite effect, they calmed down and started to think about their future.

The third hypothesis concerned the identity of participants before attending the ATI. I had hypothesized that they would identify themselves as being “tough.” I also hypothesized that participants’ who identified more with being “tough” would find it harder to adapt at the ATI. Findings showed that being tough was an important identity for participants. While being tough was gendered- male participants associated it with respect, and female participants with survival- all participants identified with it.

The fifth hypothesis was about how identities of participants change while they are at the ATI. I hypothesized that participants would feel a loss of personal autonomy while, at the same time, gain a greater sense that they could change their lives by finding a legitimate job. I also hypothesized that this would lead them to negotiate their identity between being “real” and “acting White.” These hypotheses were only partially confirmed. Participants felt a loss of personal autonomy from the ATI and they gained an interest in going back to school, to college and finding a legitimate job. However this did not cause them any conflict between “acting White” and remaining “real” since the participants in this study did not associate success in school with a Caucasian trait, nor did the men in this study define academic success as feminine; almost all participants, male and female, sought to do well in school and were proud when they did. The participants defined “acting White” as acting snobbish, and/or speaking quietly, but not with academic success. This result is similar to other studies. Schultz (1996) found that the notion of “acting White” was non-existent for African American high school adolescents. Tyson’s (1998) study of African American children also found that academically successful children were not ostracized by their peers.

The fourth hypothesis was that female participants would be less likely to benefit from the ATI experience than males. This was not confirmed. The ATI recognized the behavioral and social differences between female and male offenders and had tailored a program for each. This program made women’s issues a priority, allocated human and financial resources to create women-centered services, and had dedicated staff. Male participants had many services tailored to their needs and many counselors with whom they could talk and share their problems, and who helped them find internships and jobs.

The fifth hypothesis was whether the experience at the ATI was a turning point in participants' lives. This hypothesis was confirmed for most participants.

The last hypothesis was about how the program reshaped participants' identities. I hypothesized that the ATI would transform participants' identities by making them feel valuable, by helping them find a job, as well as offering them a support system. This hypothesis was partially confirmed. Participants had always felt valuable but it was seen differently once they were at the ATI. Initially participants wanted to be valued and respected on the streets, however once they joined the ATI they expanded this to other realms of their life and they conceptualized respect in different terms. The ATI helped participants find a legal job. Several features of the ATI appear to facilitate the participants' personal changes. Case managers worked with clients to pursue their goals and uphold their commitment to stay out of trouble. They also coordinated activities to engage participants. Participants found case managers to have a genuine interest in helping them. Having the case manager interested in them reinforced positive change such as participants feeling comfortable to explore their lives and think about their future. The flexibility that the ATI has was a huge success, as it allowed participants to have a voice on the activities that are planned at the ATI and this facilitated participants developing a role model identity.

Were the hypotheses useful?

Examining my hypotheses made me think about the value of hypotheses in qualitative research. In the present study, most hypotheses were neither confirmed nor disconfirmed, they were partially confirmed, showing only part of the story and thus missing the richness, complexities and contradictions of the lived experiences. It is this

richness that qualitative research looks for. Thus, hypothesis in qualitative research might seem useless. However, by stating my hypothesis I informed the reader of my assumptions and predispositions about the study, participants, and the stories I was expecting to hear. Predispositions are usually viewed as inhibiting truth rather than enhancing it. However predispositions are necessary for understanding, and when they are not acknowledged in the research, one is likely to end up with findings that do not adequately represent the participants' views (Gibbs, 1985). While stating my hypothesis was only one more way that I stated my basis and pre-conceptions, it showed what my thoughts were. Thus, hypotheses in qualitative research serve a very different purpose than in quantitative, but are equally valuable.

Significance of the Findings

The present study's findings contribute to both theoretical and practical concerns. Theoretically, the study shows that the Vygotsky/Scribner framework is a useful way of examining how identities are created and recreated by individuals embedded in cultural worlds. However some modifications were made to the original framework. The first level of analysis, the general history of humanity, was too broad to give it an operational definition in a study like this one. Thus, I reduced it to the history of the criminal justice system. Similarly, the second level, the history of society, also was too broad to be encompassed in a study like this one. Thus I looked at the history of a few institutions and locations (schools, ATI, and neighborhoods). By using these modifications, the Vygotsky/Scribner framework allowed for an examination of the person in history and history in person (Holland and Lave, 2001).

The importance of the framework can be seen in many ways. First, even though the chapters on the history of the criminal justice system, the history of institutions, life histories, and the history of identities stand on their own, we only understand the participants' lives by knowing the information contained in each section and understanding the interrelationships between them. For example, participants' descriptions of themselves as acting out and engaging in fights could easily be interpreted as antisocial behavior; however, it was because they are so well adapted to their social environment, including their tough neighborhoods and schools, which required them to act out, and engage in fights in order to survive, that they developed this tough identity. Similarly, participants' fears, about their future being in unpredictable hands, could be viewed as paranoid, if we did not understand the arbitrariness of the criminal justice system. So what might appear as anomalous, inexplicable or incomprehensible about participants' behavior, is not anomalous, but what we might expect, given a certain set of conditions. Thus, participants' encounters at schools, in their neighborhoods, and at the ATI, entwined with the history of the criminal justice system, explained how they developed differing identities and how they negotiated their identities at the ATI.

The results of the present study also highlight the importance of early experiences and identities emphasizing the importance of understanding personal histories, the third level of the Vygotsky/Scribner framework, to the understanding of personal identities, as well as to the overall importance of a developmental perspective on delinquency. Goffman's concept of returning to the "unspoiled self" helped me to conceptualize some of the transformations that occurred at the ATI. For example, participants who had had non-delinquent identities in their childhood, but had developed a delinquent identity when

they were teenagers, were more likely to develop a non-delinquent identity while at the ATI than those who never had the non-delinquent identity.

This study shows how the Vygotsky/Scriber framework provides a theoretical framework to study identity in a comprehensive way. It enriches the complex, yet often overlooked and over simplified connections between societal and individual histories as they affect the individual construction of the self. Understanding the history of the criminal justice system in the US, the history and situation of the neighborhoods, schools, and the ATI, as well as the life experiences and turning points of the participants, helped us better understand how some identities were formed at the ATI. The Vygotsky/Scribner framework reminds us that behavior, meaning, and all of social life, including delinquent behavior, do not only develop from an individual's interactions with others in a social world, but also reflect the macro background or social structures in which interactions take place.

Implications for the study of identities

The findings of the present study illustrate the argument that identities are not simply "givens" but are constructed from multiple resources. Further, it shows how understanding the development of identities demands more than developing a list of general descriptions, it requires a deep understanding of the process and forces that shape these identities, including how earlier identities become incorporated and integrated into the present self-organization. My argument is that external structures, such as legal status, ethnicity, school achievement, are adopted by individuals to identify themselves in certain ways. In other words, identity is a developmental process, continuous and

malleable according to the surrounding context and social conditions (Deaux, 1993, 2000; Moscovi, 2001).

Identity can be conceived as a narrative, which seeks integration, but also has many plots and sub-plots. The self is an interweaving of many stories, some of which are pre-existing cultural stories. As people interact and start belonging to more culturally diverse institutions, it becomes more likely that hybrid identities will be created. The concept of hybridity contributes to an approach that avoids the perpetuation of antagonistic binarism and develops inclusionary and multi-faceted patterns of cultural exchange and maturation. Thus, the findings of the present study call for a more critical perspective that allows for opposing identities to coexist.

Implications for the study of adolescents

By listening to urban youth involved in the criminal justice system speak about their worlds and lives, the usual narrative of who “criminal” adolescents are, is challenged. The story of hopelessness, mean, and selfish is not accurate. The youth in the present study offer a much more complicated story. They spoke about being hopeful of their future, while fearful of their present situation; they told stories about being involved in risky behavior and yet being role models to not get involved in risky behaviors. They also told stories about acting crazy and not caring, yet they were responsible enough to take care of their younger siblings; they talked about becoming parents and wanting to go to college and be responsible, as a consequence of becoming pregnant. Participants also spoke about being able to attain whatever they wanted, being invincible, but, unlike the “typical adolescent” who perceives him or herself as invincible,

participants communicated their sense of pain, and fear. Thus, in several decisive areas, these adolescents challenge both the concepts of adolescence and of being delinquents.

Implications for the Juvenile Justice System

The findings of the present study showed that the concepts of adolescents and delinquency are developmental and linked to ideas about life course and social affordances. In this sense delinquency can be seen as one phase in a broader social context and a longer chain of life events and experiences. Thus, a developmental perspective is needed in the design and implementation of any program that is designed for delinquent youth.

The present study showed that criminal behavior and its consequences need to be understood as a dialectical process that is constantly unfolding between social structures and individuals. Thus, criminality has to be understood in its social origins, personal origins, and consequent social effects for both the individual and society (Mead, 1934; Wertsch, 1985). Without access to tools that allow delinquent minority youth to address directly and effectively the violence and discrimination that they are confronted, more children and youth will be positioned to become violent and delinquent.

Regarding the ATI, participants stated that this program is beneficial for them and their families; identities are being (trans) formed, marking a point where clients depart from most of their criminal behaviors (with the exception of marijuana use) and adopt a positive attitude towards school. Furthermore, by keeping participants out of jails, the ATI avoided the disruption that incarceration causes to families and communities. However, there are many questions that remain unanswered. Specifically, the present study does not provide answers about the impact of the ATI on recidivism of its

participants. Furthermore, while participants in the present study all seemed to be transformed by their experience at the ATI and to have acquired some skills that would allow them to find a job, the long-term effects of this experience were not assessed. Participants might find themselves with no job at the end of the ATI or with no external support system like the one offered there, and thus go back to their delinquent identities after having left the program. In addition, many of the circumstances of their lives are a product of political conditions (racism, economic injustice, class division) and, thus, an inclusive personal transformation is difficult in a society that manifests such conditions.

Implicitly, participants' narratives also indicated several ways that ATIs could be enhanced. Firstly, the location of the ATI, a court building, had a detrimental effect, as it labeled participants delinquent. This counteracts the ATIs efforts that try to encourage its clients to become contributing members of their society. Secondly, it would be important for the ATI to have activities planned at all times that clients are there. Several participants' talked about the ATI as being an interruption of their days and spending a lot of time doing "nothing." This time could be spent having more courses that help clients acquire skills that will help them get jobs, graduate school and go to college, or spend time with their case manager, an activity that participants found had a therapeutic value. Given that the ATI is renewing clients' interest in school, it could also be useful if the ATI had close ties with the school system. This would allow for a smooth transition when ATI clients return to school. Finally having activities that encourage clients to develop healthy friendships would probably be beneficial. I say this with some hesitation, since participants clearly stated that they did not want to make friends, and less so at the ATI. However, I am concerned by how lonely, both emotionally and socially,

participants were. Lack of friends during adolescence has been associated with health problems, as well as educational problems. A recent study found that sixth graders, who have friends, are more social, helpful and cooperative than students who do not have friends (Wentzel, Barry, & Caldwell, 2004). Further, having friends has been related positively to grades and test scores in middle school (Berndt & Keefe, 1995; Wentzel & Caldwell, 1997) as well as involvement in school-related activities (Berndt & Keefe, 1995; Berndt, Laychal & Park, 1990). The ATI could be a site where these relationships develop, after all, it is here that participants are opening up, sharing their feelings, gaining support, and spending a considerable amount of time. This could in turn bring other benefits, such as helping clients with school adjustment.

The present study also showed how participants had shut out the world; they found it hard to trust and to talk about their problems. This position coincides with participants' tough identity. This is an important position for staff working directly with clients to understand. Participants' initial tough and distant reaction is a "normal" one given their harsh experiences, however this does not mean that they don't want or need help from case managers. Thus case managers might have to work harder, than in other institutions, to gain the trust of their clients and provide them with quality services.

By recognizing the paramount importance of ATI, clients' perspectives in understanding and addressing the complexities of their lives, and including their voice in the discourse on violence, criminal justice, and education, it is hoped that the present study will help us come to terms with the personal and cultural forces that hinder the creation of viable alternatives for these young people.

Future Studies

The present study showed how the identities of participants of an ATI program are transformed while they attend an ATI in New York City. However, it does not tell us whether these transformations are temporary ones, only useful while clients are at the ATI, or if they sustained after participants' leave it. Thus, future studies need to look at the long-term effects of the ATI on its clients. If the hybrid identities participants develop at the ATI transcend time, one could examine the function these identities play in the daily lives of participants and how these identities enable other positions to emerge (Rutherford 1990).

Further research, with direct policy implications, could compare the identities formed in ATIs to those formed in jails. This study could compare recidivism rates, school performance, and job opportunities among the two groups. The findings will enhance our understanding of the impact different institutions of the criminal justice system have on its clients.

Given that clients' renewed their interest in school while at the ATI, future studies should look at the impact the ATI has on clients' school performance. Given that academic performance is a predictor of later life chances, knowing how many participants graduate high school and how many enter college, can help us understand an important long-term effect of the ATI. This contributes to understanding how the formation of an identity at the ATI is further transformed by educational institutions, and thus help us better understand how the identity they develop at the ATI serves to further develop new identities. Clearly, many questions remain as to the extent to which identities in one setting affect participants' relationships, beliefs and identities in other settings.

A result of the present study was that, at the ATI, participants' gained interest in keeping their younger siblings out of the criminal justice system. However, we do not know how successful they are on doing this. Thus, future studies need to look at the broader effects of the ATI, particularly the effects it has on clients' younger siblings.

We need to continue to explore strategies that provide opportunities for youth involved in the criminal justice system. However, we need to recognize that criminal justice problems cannot be addressed through programs such as the ATI alone. If we are to make a difference in the effects of criminal behavior, we must address the causes of delinquent behaviors. This means we must widen the scope of our analysis and recognize that we need to work for social and economic change and address the problems of racism. As Hannah Arendt (1977) reminds us, it is not intentional acts of evil but unintentional acts socialized by institutions that must be combated.

APPENDIX I- DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

My name is Nadia Minian and I am a student at the Graduate Center, CUNY. I am currently working on a research project to describe how young people who attend alternative to incarceration (ATI) programs view themselves and their lives. In order to do this I am asking ATI clients if they would like to participate in this study. The study consists of two audio-taped interviews. Everyone that decides to participate will be asked the same questions. The questions in the first interview ask about some of your experiences with the ATI as well as about your life in general. The questions of the second interview ask about how you view yourself and how you think others view you. At the beginning of each interview I will give you two movie tickets for your participation.

I want to assure you that everything you say will be treated confidentially and there will be no way for other people to identify your comments. In order to keep your identity confidential I will make up a name for you. I will also change the name of streets, neighborhoods and of the ATI in any reports. All this is done to keep things confidential.

APPENDIX II- INFORMED CONSENTS

**Life History Interviews
Consent Form**

My name is Nadia Minian and I am a student in the Developmental Psychology Ph.D. program at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), and the Principal Investigator of this project entitled "Negotiating an Identity in an Alternative to Incarceration Program." David Bearison is my advisor and will supervise me in this project. For this project I am trying to understand the different identities that are formed in an Alternative to Incarceration (ATI) program. I am inviting you to participate in this study because you attend _____ NAME OF ATI, an ATI and your opinion is important for this project. I am inviting fourteen ATI clients who are 15 years or older to participate in this study.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to sign this consent form, and take part in two interviews scheduled at your convenience. Each interview will last approximately one and one-half hours. I, Nadia Minian, will be the interviewer in these two interviews and will ask you some questions about your life and your experiences with _____ NAME OF ATI. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and you may end the interview at any time. The interview will be audio taped and I will take notes and will write down many comments the way you state them but will not include information that might identify you. All participants of this study will be asked the same questions and will have the same rights. After the interview I will let you hear the tape, and you will be allowed to delete anything you said during the interview. After that, I will have the audiotape transcribed but all information that could identify you will be removed. You will not be identified personally in any reports, publications or presentations based on the study. All data and consent forms will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at The Graduate Center, CUNY. Only Nadia Minian and her professors at the Graduate Center will have access to this information. Three years after the study has been completed, Nadia Minian will destroy the consent forms, data and tapes.

The risk involved in this type of interview is that sensitive or disturbing issues may be brought up as you talk about your life. If you become upset about anything in the interview, please let me know and I will make sure that I get an appointment with your counselor. If at the time you feel more comfortable talking to someone outside of the _____ NAME OF ATI, I will have a list phone numbers that you may find helpful.

There may be no direct benefit to you from participating in this interview. However, you may find it gratifying to share your concerns and experiences with me. You will receive two movie tickets at the beginning of each interview.

Within legal and ethical boundaries I will maintain confidentiality of all information obtained. However I want you to be aware that there is a small risk that a court or law enforcement agency could subpoena information collected for this study and a smaller chance that I will be required to turn over the information. However I must and will report to authorities if you tell me of plans to hurt yourself or others.

The decision to participate in this interview is entirely up to you. There will be no negative consequences if you decide not to participate. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect any of the services you are eligible for and/or would routinely receive from ____ NAME OF ATI. Nor will it affect the quality, type or quantity of services that you will receive as a _____ NAME OF ATI participant.

If you have any questions about the discussion, this research project or your rights as a participant in research, you may contact me, Nadia Minian at 646-733-2875 or nminian@gc.cuny.edu, or my advisor, David Bearison at 212 817 8716 or dbearison@gc.cuny.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Hilry Fisher, Sponsored Research, The Graduate Center (CUNY) at 212-817-7523 or hfisher@gc.cuny.edu.

Thank you for your participation in the study, I will give you a signed copy of this form to take with you. If you agree to be interviewed please sign below.

Participation in this study is voluntary. By signing this form you agree to a two-time interview. You can refuse to participate or withdraw your consent and end participation at any time during the study without affecting any services that you receive now or expect to receive in the future. You will receive an incentive of two movie tickets at the end of each interview to compensate you for my participation.

I agree to have this interview audio taped. Circle one: Yes No

Participant name (PRINT)

Date of birth

Participant signature

Date of interview

Investigator's signature

Date of interview

Life History Interviews Parental consent Form

My name is Nadia Minian and I am a student in the Developmental Psychology Ph.D. program at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), and the Principal Investigator of this project entitled "Negotiating an Identity in an Alternative to Incarceration Program." David Bearison is my advisor and will supervise me in this project. For this project I am trying to understand the different identities that are formed in an Alternative to Incarceration (ATI) program. I am inviting your son/daughter to participate in this study because he/she attends _____ (name of ATI), an ATI and his/her opinion is important for this project. He/she requested to ask for your permission to participate in this study. I am inviting fourteen _____ NAME OF ATI clients who are 15 years or older to participate in this study.

If you agree for your son/daughter to participate, you will be asked to sign this consent form, your son/daughter will be asked if he/she wants to participate and if so, to sign an informed consent, which is very similar to this one, and take part in two interviews scheduled at his/her convenience. Each interview will last approximately one and one-half hours. I, Nadia Minian, will be the interviewer in these two interviews and will ask him/her some questions about his/her life and his/her experiences with _____ NAME OF ATI. Your son/daughter will not have to answer any questions that he/she does not want to answer and he/she may end the interview at any time. The interview will be audio taped and I will take notes and will write down many comments the way you state them but will not include information that might identify him/her. All participants of this study will be asked the same questions and will have the same rights. After the interview I will let your son/daughter hear the tape, and he/she will be allowed to delete anything he/she said during the interview. After that, I will have the audiotape transcribed but all information that could identify your son/daughter will be removed. Your son/daughter will not be identified personally in any reports, publications or presentations based on the study. All data and consent forms will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at The Graduate Center, CUNY. Only Nadia Minian and her professors at the Graduate Center will have access to this information. Three years after the study has been completed, Nadia Minian will destroy the consent forms, data and tapes.

The risk involved in this type of interview is that sensitive or disturbing issues may be brought up as your son/daughter talks about his/her life. If he/she become upset about anything in the interview, they will be asked to let me know and I will make sure that I get an appointment with their counselor. If at the time your son/daughter feels more comfortable talking to someone outside of _____ NAME OF ATI, I will have a list phone numbers that he/she may find helpful.

There may be no direct benefit to your son/daughter from participating in this interview. However, he/she may find it gratifying to share his/her concerns and experiences with me. Your son/daughter will receive two movie tickets at the beginning of each interview.

Within legal and ethical boundaries I will maintain confidentiality of all information obtained. However I want you and your son/daughter to be aware that there is a small risk that a court or law enforcement agency could subpoena information collected for this study and a smaller chance that I will be required to turn over the information. However I must and will report to authorities if your son/daughter tell me of plans to hurt him/herself or others.

The decision to participate in this interview is entirely up to your son/daughter and to you. There will be no negative consequences for your son/daughter if you decide they should not to participate. Your decision to allow him/her to participate or not to participate in this study will not affect any of the services he/she is eligible for and/or would routinely receive from _____ NAME OF ATI. Nor will it affect the quality, type or quantity of services that he/she will receive as a _____ NAME OF ATI participant.

If you have any questions about the discussion, this research project or your rights as a participant in research, you may contact me, Nadia Minian at 646-733-2875 or nminian@gc.cuny.edu, or my advisor, David Bearison at 212 817 8716 or dbearison@gc.cuny.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Hilry Fisher, Sponsored Research, The Graduate Center (CUNY) at 212-817-7523 or hfisher@gc.cuny.edu.

Thank you for your participation in the study, I will give you a signed copy of this form to take with you. If you agree to be interviewed please sign below.

Participation in this study is voluntary. By signing this form you agree to a two-time interview. You can refuse to participate or withdraw your consent and end participation at any time during the study without affecting any services that you receive now or expect to receive in the future. You will receive an incentive of two movie tickets at the end of each interview to compensate you for my participation.

Participant name (PRINT)

Participant signature

Investigator's signature

Date of interview

APPENDIX III- INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Life History Guideline I**INTERVIEW 1**

Thank you for meeting with me today. My name is Nadia Minian and I am working on a research project to describe how ATI participants view themselves and their lives. I am interviewing participants at this ATI. If you agree to participate in this study, I will ask you about some of your experiences with ATI as well as about your life in general. This is an interview about the story of your life.

I want to assure you that everything you say here will be treated confidentially and there will be no way for other people to identify your comments this interview will also be audio taped so that I can listen to what you are telling me instead of having to take notes. The tape will be transcribed and all identity information will be destroyed. Do you have any questions?

Before the interview, I will review the informed consent form with you, which explains your rights as a participant in this study. If you decide to consent, we will begin the interview, which will take roughly one hour and a half

- How would you like to be called for the purpose of this study? For confidentiality purposes it is better if you give me a fake name, not your real name.

- When you talk about others also try to make up names for them. Again this is to protect your confidentiality. We can go over this tape at the end and record over any names of people or places that you might mention during the interview.

1- Life Chapters

- I would like you to begin by thinking about your life as a story All stories have characters, scenes, plots, and so on. There are high points and low points, good and bad times, turning points, and so on I would like you to think about your life as having several chapters. If you can give each chapter a name and describe briefly the overall contents in each chapter You can have as many or as few chapters as you want (suggestion between 3-7).

2- Critical Events

Now that you have given mean outline of your story I would like you to concentrate on a few key events that may stand out in your story. I will ask you about S specific life events. For each event I want you to describe in detail what happened, where you were, who was involved, what you did and what you were thinking and feeling at the time. Also try to convey the impact this key event had in your life story and what this event says about who you are or were as a person. Please be very specific here Do you have any questions?

Event #1: Peak Experiences

A peak experience is a high point in your life. It is a moment in your story when you experienced extremely positive emotions. Today this time would stand out in your memory as one of the best moment in your life story. Tell me exactly what happened, where it happened, who was involved, what you did, what you were thinking a feeling, what impact this experience might have had upon you, and what this experience says about who you are or were.

Are there any other peak experiences that you think I should know about? Event #2:

Nadir Experience

A “nadir” is a low point. A nadir experience therefore is the opposite of a peak experience. Try to remember a specific experience in which you felt extremely negative emotions (despair, disillusionment, terror, guilt, etc.) Even though this memory is unpleasant, I would appreciate an attempt on your part to be as honest and detailed as you can. Please remember to be specific. What happened, where it happened, who was involved, what you did, what you were thinking a feeling, what impact this experience might have had upon you, and what this experience says about who you are Or were. Are there any other low experiences that you think I should know about?

Event #3- Turning Point

In looking back on one’s life it is often possible to identify certain key “turning points” — episodes through which a person undergoes change. Could you tell me of a point in your life that you now see as a turning point? Please remember to be specific. What happened, where it happened, who was involved, what you did, what you were thinking a feeling, what impact this experience might have had upon you, and what this experience says about who you are or were.

Are there any other turning points that you think I should know about?

Event # 4- Important Childhood scene

Could you describe a specific event from your childhood that stands out in your mind as specifically important. It might be a positive or negative memory. What happened? Who

was involved? What you were thinking a feeling, what impact this experience might have had upon you, and what this experience says about who you are or were.

Event #5- Typical childhood scene

Could you describe a typical day in your childhood. Include the people that you would see, places you would go, a description of the places, and how that helped you become who you are.

Event #6- Important Adolescent Scene

Could you describe a specific event from your adolescence that stands out in your mind as specifically important. It might be a positive or negative memory. What happened? Who was involved? What you were thinking a feeling, what impact this experience might have had upon you, and what this experience says about who you are or were.

Event #7- Typical Adolescent scene

Could you describe a typical day in your adolescence. Include the people that you would see, places you would go, a description of the places, and how that helped you become who you are.

- BACKGROUND

- Where were you born?
- Where did you grow up? Describe you neighborhood: people, places, a story or event that really reminds you of the neighborhood.
- Describe you family.

Probe: Who did you live with when you were growing up? Who do you live with now?

- How did you fit into your neighborhood/family/peer group when you were growing up?
- Where are you living now?
- How long have you lived there? Describe the neighborhood? A story or event?
- Do you belong to any other communities? Religious groups?
- Describe these communities? Do you feel that you fit into these?
- Could you tell me about your school experiences?

II HISTORY OF INVOLVEMENT WITH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

EARLY EXPERIENCES

- How old were you when you first knew someone that was involved with the law (criminal justice)? Who was this person? What was the situation? How did you feel?
- How old were you the first times that you found yourself thinking that you might be involved with the criminal system? Why did you start thinking about these issues? Was it because of a personal experience?
- How old were you the first time that you had involvement with the criminal justice system? Tell me how it happened. How did you feel? What else was happening in your life at that time?
- Did this experience affect other parts of your life? How?

KNOWLEDGE OF 'ATI' BEFORE BEING A ATI CLIENT

- Had you heard about this ATI before you were part of it? Where had you heard about it? Did you know anyone that was a client at this ATI? Who? What did you think about it?

- When did you become a client at the ATI?
- Do you remember what were your first thoughts when you first heard that you were going to become a client of the ATI? What were your worries?

EXPERIENCES WITH ATI

- Do you remember your first experiences at the ATI (first 3 months)? How were you feeling? Could you tell me a story or event that represents your experience then?
- Did your experiences at the ATI change with time? If so how?
- How was your relationship with your case manager? How many did you have? Did this relationship change with time? If so how? How often would you see her/him?
- What did you find to be some of the positive activity/things about the ATI?
- What did you find to be some of the least helpful activities/things about the ATI?
- Did you change any of your behaviors and/or feelings because of your involvement in the ATI? If so, how? Why?
- Overall how would you compare your experience at the ATI with other programs you have been involved in the past?

Is there anything else that you would like to say about your involvement with Peer Education Program and your experiences?

Life History Guideline II

INTERVIEW 2

Hi my name is Nadia, and as you might remember I am conducting a study to describe how the ATI participants view themselves and their lives. I am interviewing participants at this ATI. If you agree to participate in this study, I will ask you about some of your experiences with the ATI as well as about your life in general.

I want to assure you that everything you say here will be treated confidentially and there will be no way for other people to identify your comments. I'll be taking a few notes as we speak but this interview will also be audio taped so that I don't have to take very detailed notes. This tape will be transcribed and all identifying information will be destroyed. Do you have any questions?

SELF CONCEPTS AND IDENTITIES

- People have labels they use to describe themselves. I'd like you to tell me the different ways that you think of yourself.
- PROBE: Are there any groups or categories you belong to? (e.g. Christian, Muslim, basketball player, etc)
- How have these groups/labels changed over time? Why did they change? What did it mean to you?
- What are some ways others might see you?
 - PROBE: Would you agree with that?
- How did people see you before this? When did it change? What caused the change?
- You described yourself as _____(TERM). Tell me a bit about why you describe yourself that way.

- INTERVIEWER: REPEAT THIS QUESTION FOR EVERY TERM THEY MENTIONED.
- I am interested to hear whether the terms we have been talking about are primarily positive or primarily negative for you. (REVIEW MAJOR IDENTITIES/TERMS AND DISCUSS)
- How have these identity have an effect on your life?
 - How does it guide your behavior?
 - Does it affect your social network?
 - Is it good to have a label? Why?
- How did these identities come about?
- What has been the impact of becoming court involved on the way you view yourself?
- How about how others view you?
 - Your parents?, Your friends?, People from _____(Community)?
- How has it affected your identity as _____ (LABEL S/HE HAS MENTIONED)?
- Have your experiences in the ATI changed how you view yourself?
 - How about how others view you?
 - Your parents?, Your friends?, People from _____(Community)?
- What exactly about the ATI has made you develop that identity/label?
 - The staff?
 - Other clients?
 - Your pre-existent notions about the ATI?
- How has this label affected your behavior?

-What are the advantages and disadvantages of having these labels?

-Do you think that you will be different once you are out of the ATI?

-How? Why?

-How would you describe the friends/acquaintances you have in the ATI?

-How would they describe you?

-How do you think other people at ATI view you?

-Why? Could you tell me a story that describes that

-How do you view other people that attend ATI?

-Why do you think they are like that?

-How would you describe the people from _____ ATI

STIGMA

-Have you ever experienced negative events because someone knew you were _____(IDENTITY/ies)? Tell me about that.

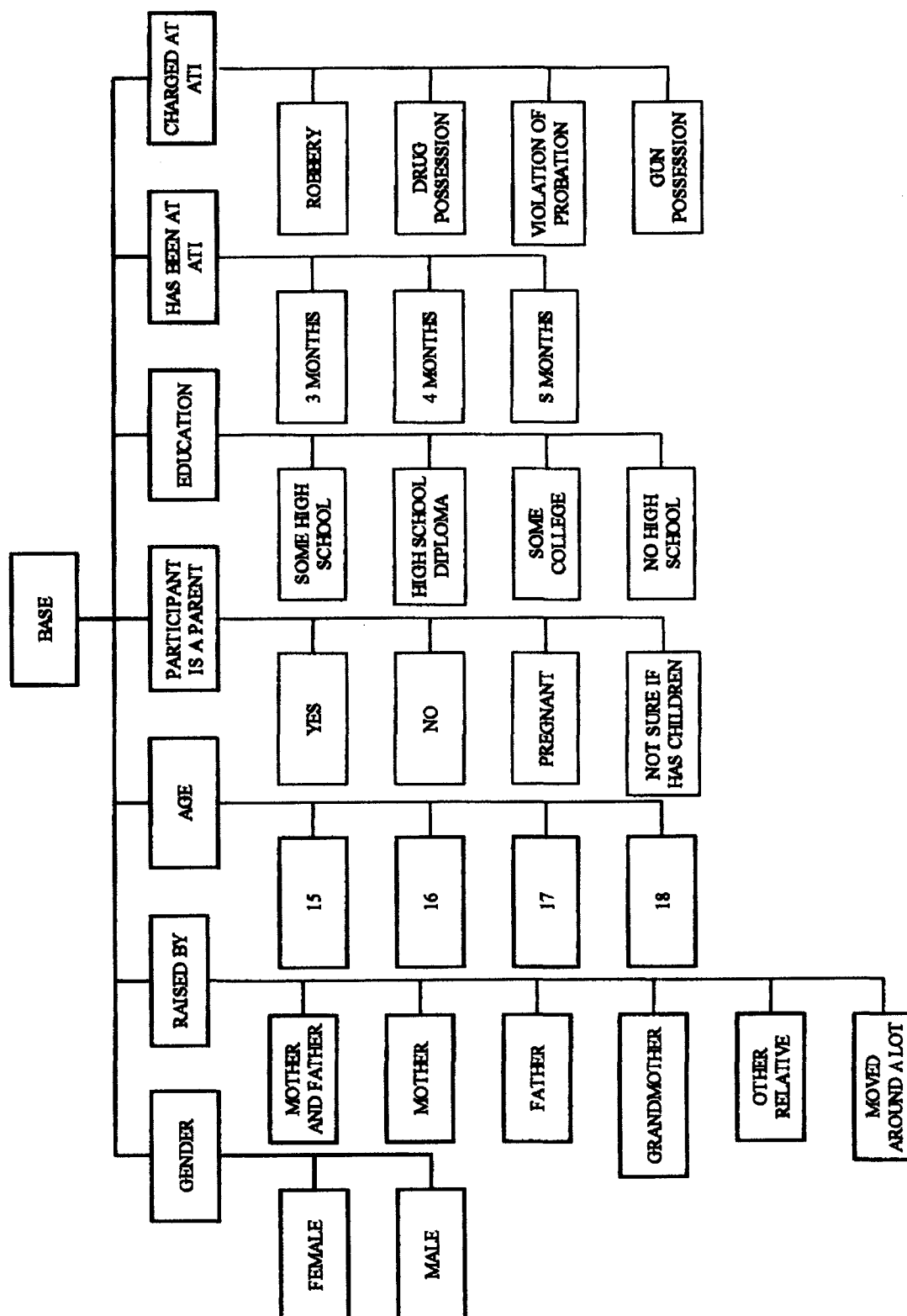
CORE IDENTITY

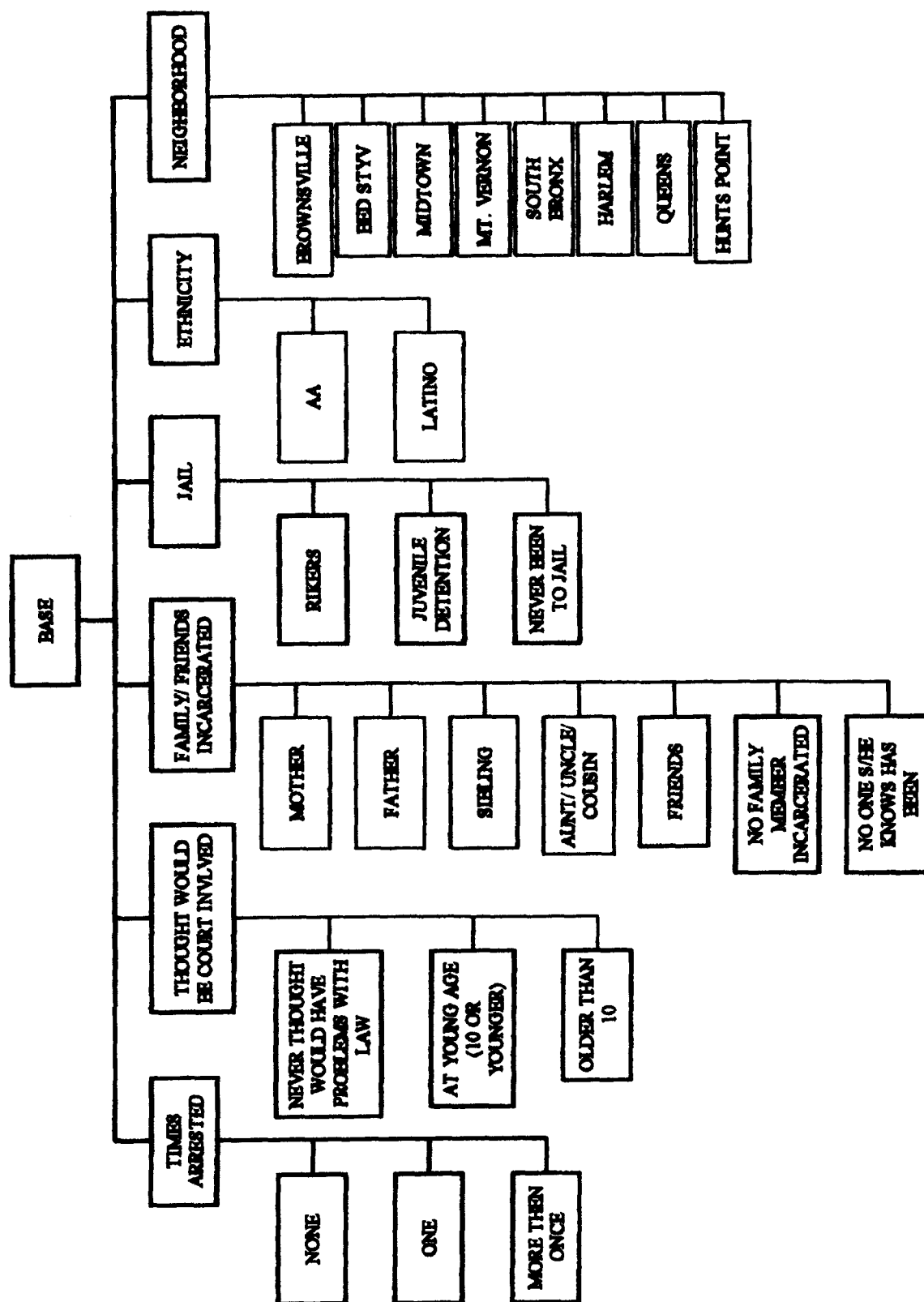
-If somebody was trying to brainwash you in order to change you as much as possible from what you are now, what about yourself would you fight hardest to keep the same?

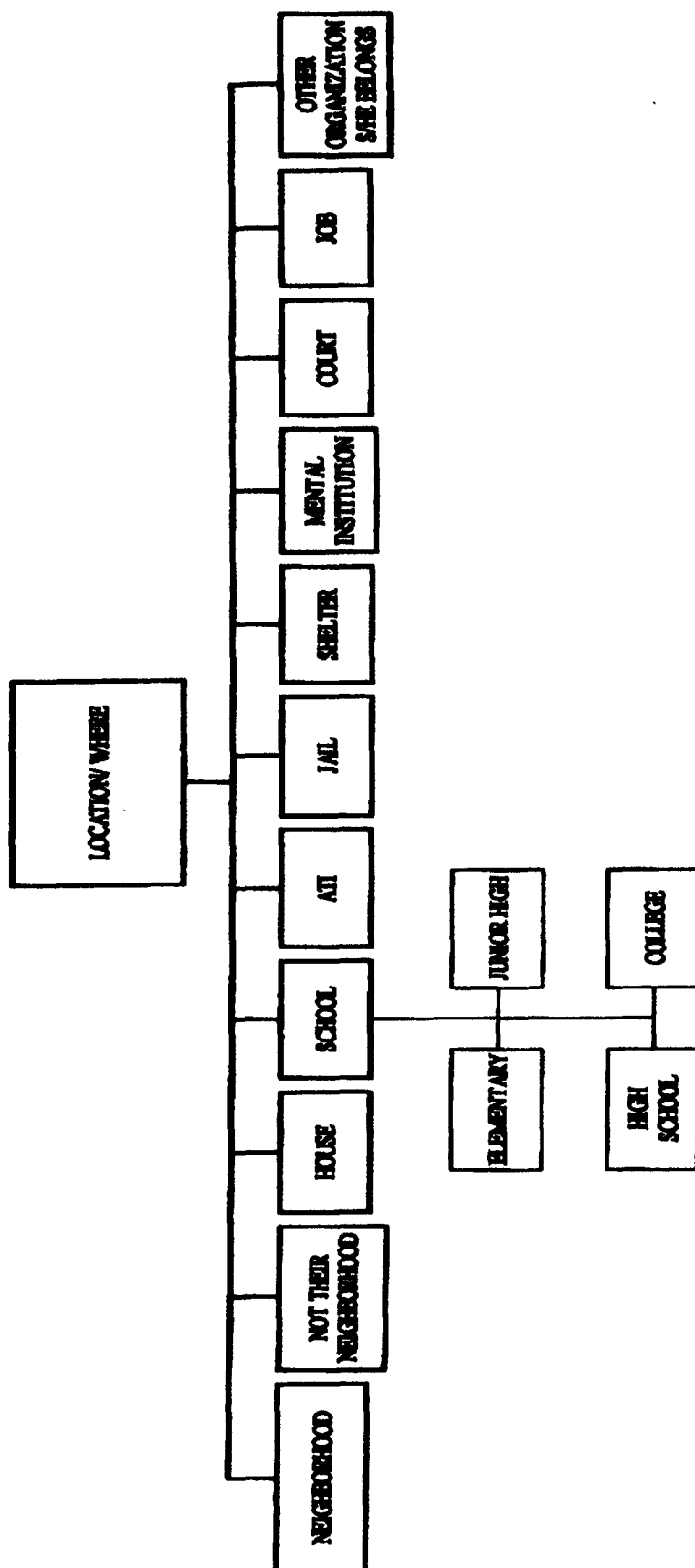
-Let's pretend that you wanted to disappear from the scene from a while, but you had to get someone to take your place so that no one would know you were gone. You have to teach him/her how to act like you so that no one would know the difference, what would you tell them?

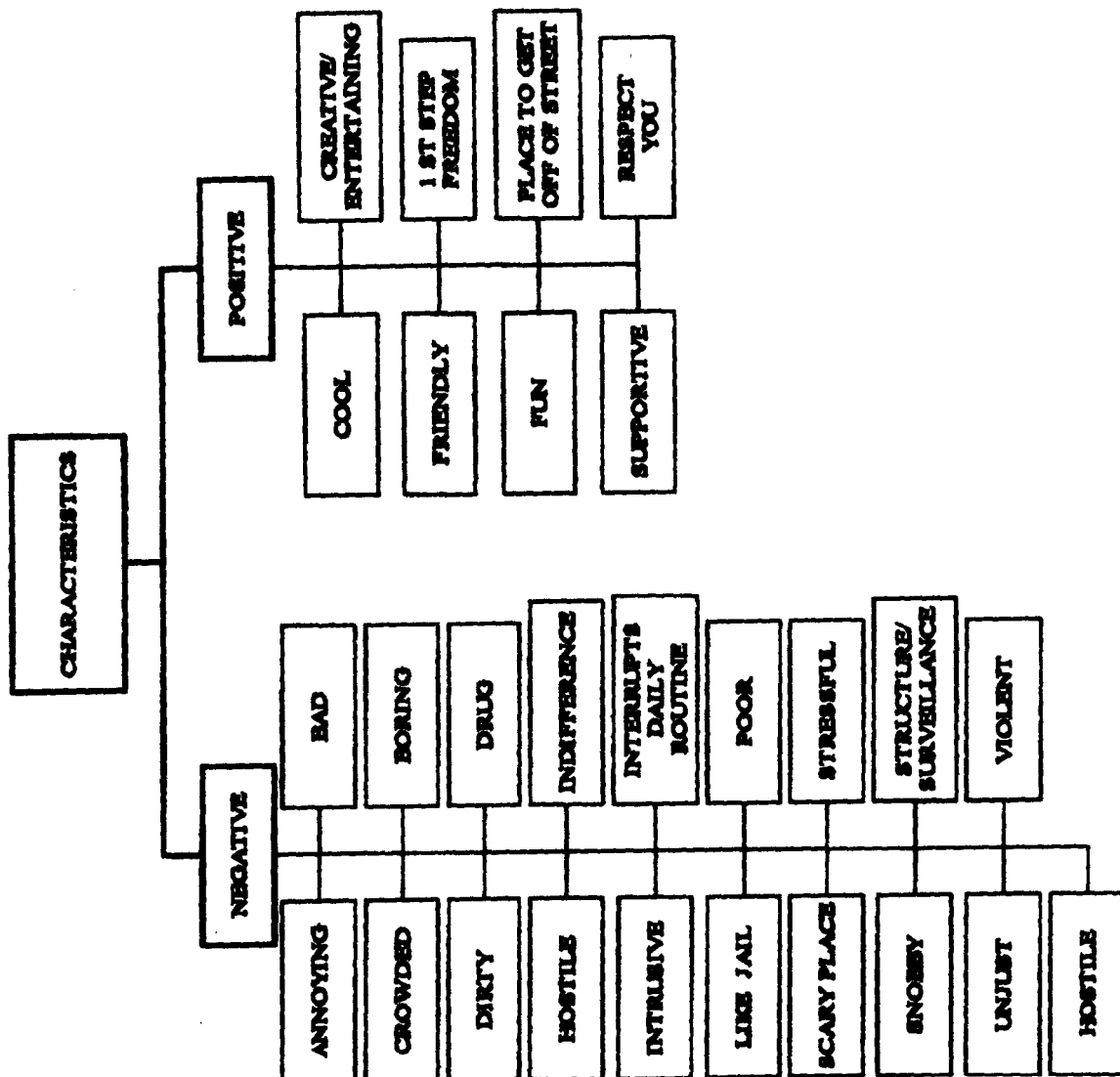
Thank you for your time and for telling me about your experiences growing up

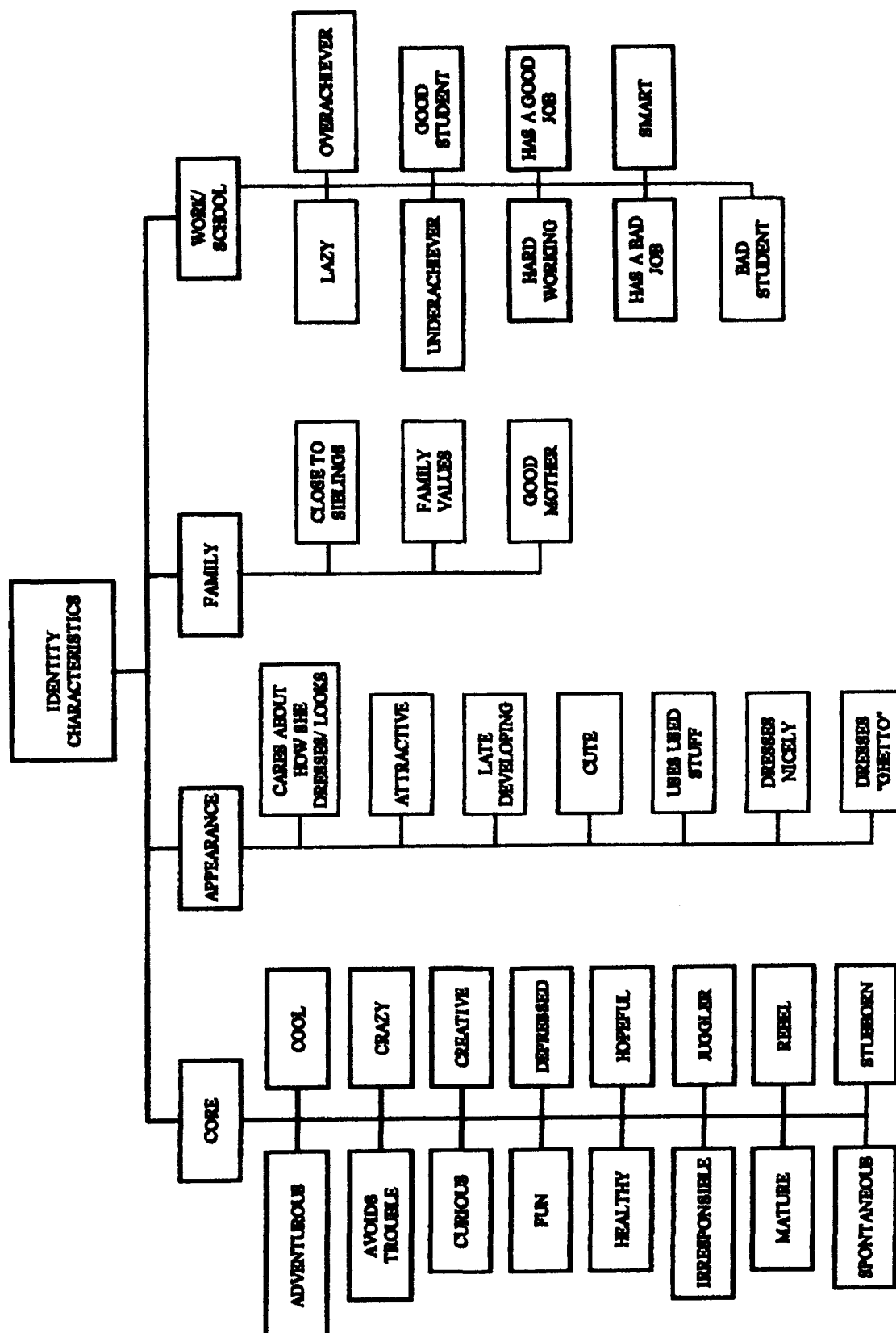
APPENDIX IV – CODING SCHEME

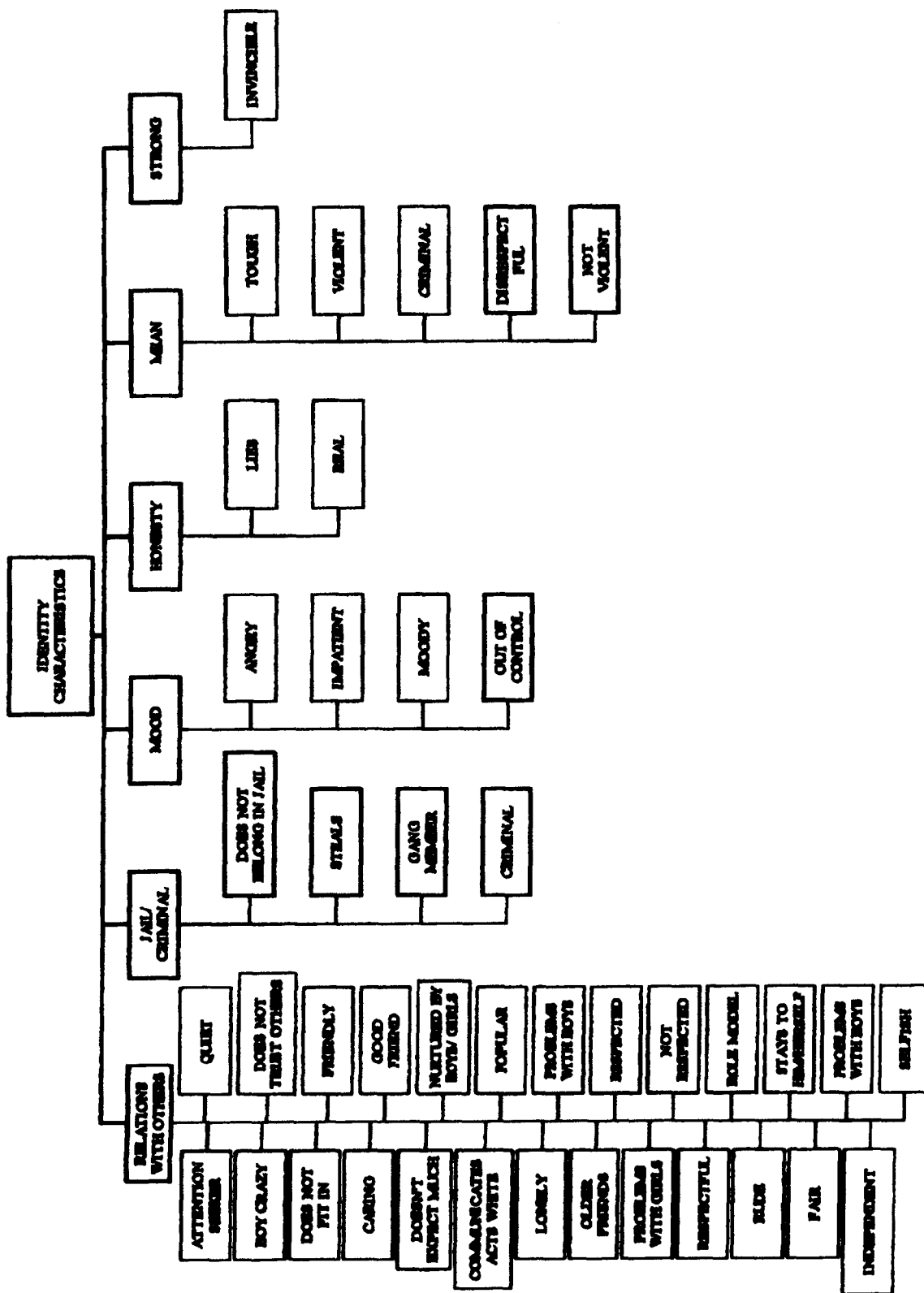


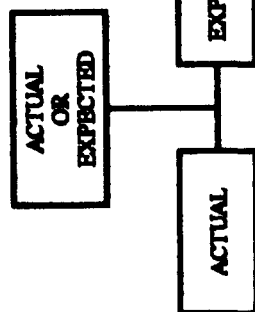
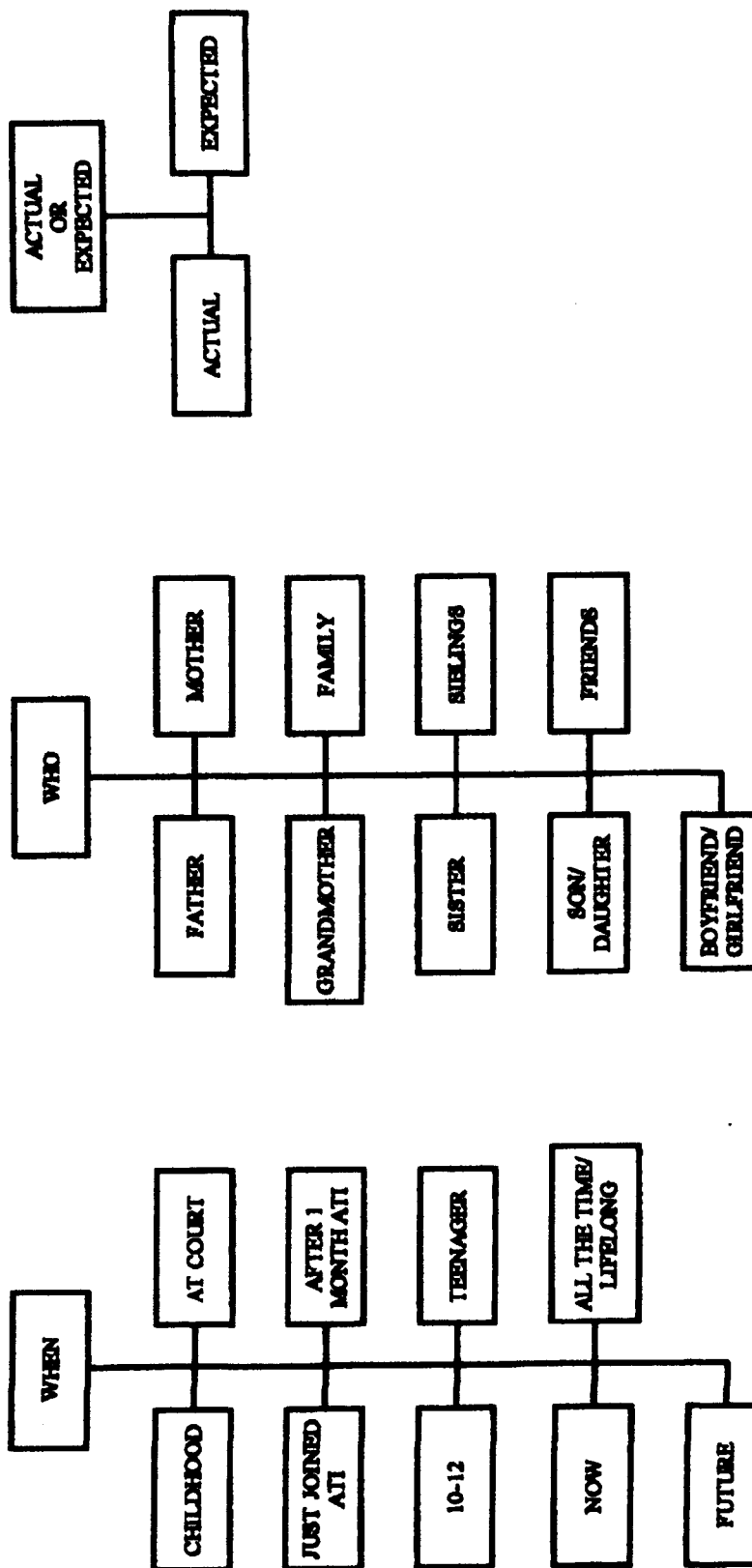


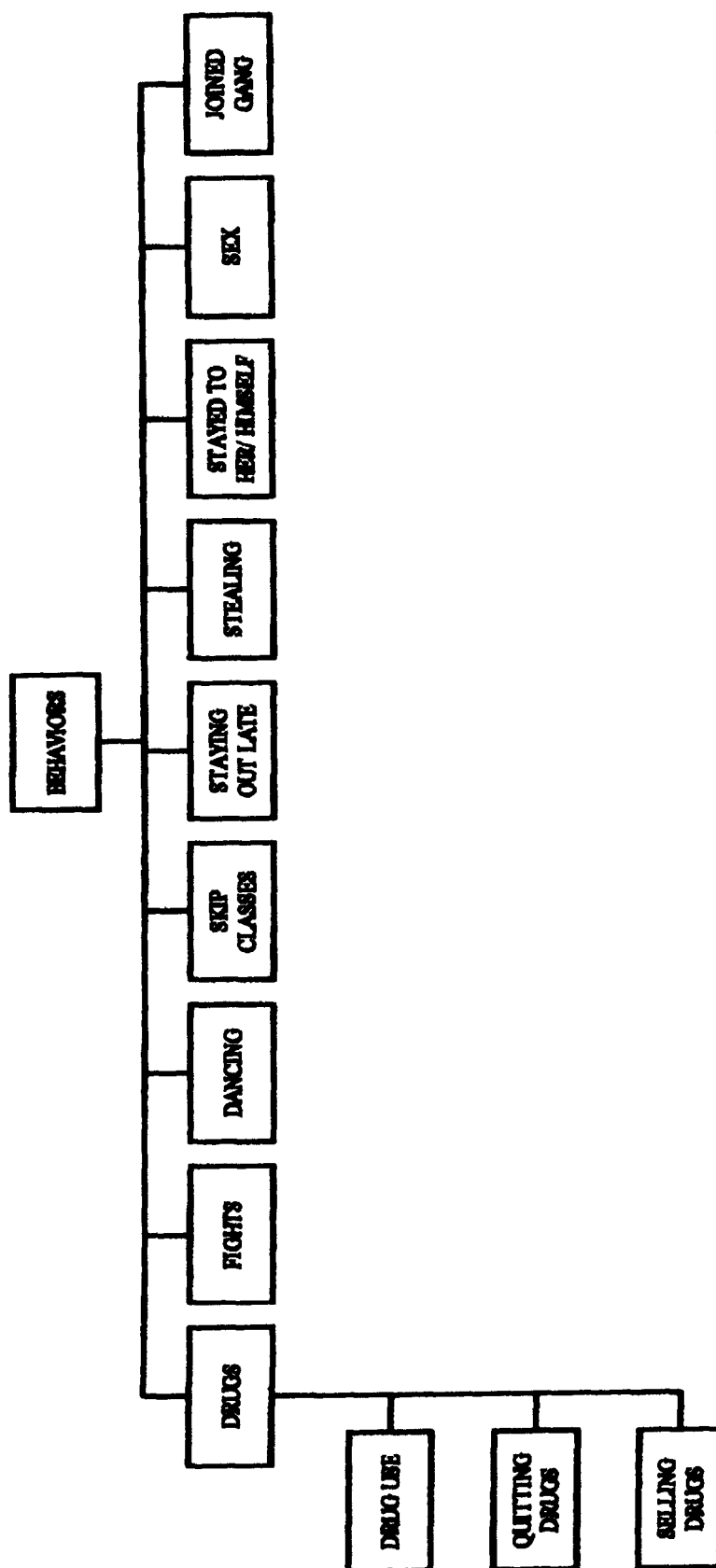


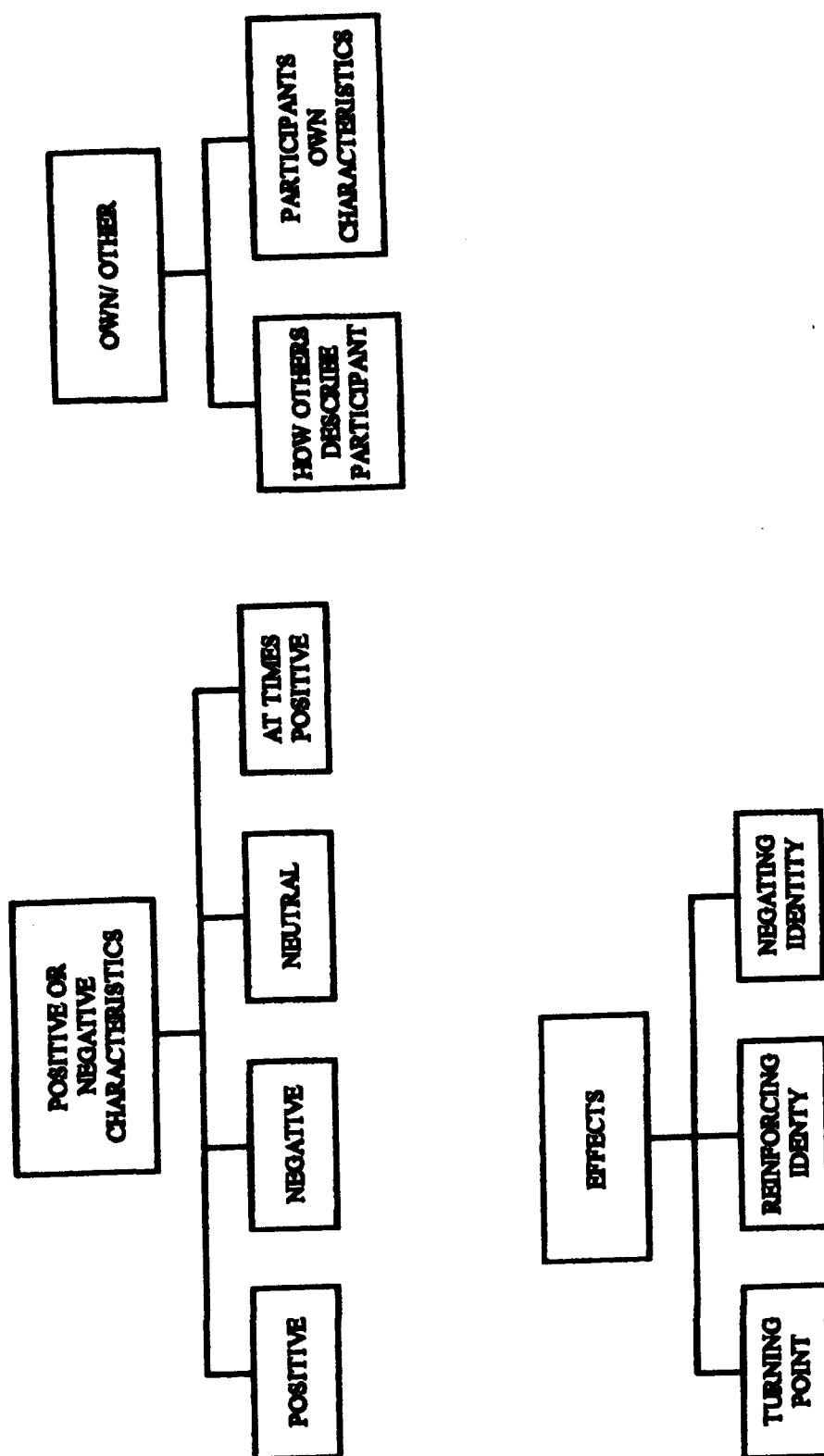












APPENDIX V- TRANSCRIPT

Here I present part of a transcript on one of the most articulate male participants of this study, Forest. The transcript has been modified in order to protect the participants' identity- all names have been changed, as well as other identifying characteristics (such as places they have been). In order to make the reading more pleasant, I have also deleted some of my "Uh hum." I borrow this idea of presenting the participants' talk in its entirety from Bearison's book *They never want to tell you* (Bearison, 1991) and in a more interactive way, by showing the entire transcript, from Lather and Smithies' book *Troubling the Angels* (Lather & Smithies, 1997)." This way of doing research embodies the researcher and at the same time shows the participants as being the experts of what happens in *their* lives. By viewing a transcript the reader will be able to see the dynamic of the interview, the questions I pose and see how this affected the participants answers and vice versa. This chapter allows the reader to draw his/her own conclusions of what the participant(s) is saying, what is going on, what is the effect that the ATI is having on his/their identity. This chapter positions the reader as a thinker, willing to challenge the easily understood and taken for granted, that the researcher is the sole interpreter of the data. My voice is not completely absent from this section. Once again borrowing from Lather and Smithies many pages contain my interpretations, my thoughts on how the data reflect my theoretical framework, how it is similar or dissimilar to other interviews or characteristics of the interview itself that I believe are important for the understanding of the narrative. These reflections are boxed- allowing the reader to distinguish easily that this is not part of the transcript.

Forest is an African American young man who has a basketball player frame, and big wide black eyes. His hair is long and braided. He has tattoos all the way down one arm. Some tattoos seemed to be part of his jail experience, while others seemed to be done professionally. He is seventeen years old. Throughout the interview he looked thoughtful, and spoke softly. He hardly ever hesitated or paused, given an aura of self-confidence. Below is the first part of his first interview with some of my interpretations.

INTERVIEW

NADIA: I would like you to start by thinking about your life as a story.

FOREST: As a story?

NADIA: As a story, yes. Like if you were writing your biography or someone was writing about you. What would be the chapters of this story?

FOREST: The first chapter would be, it would be just basically like the introduction of me in person. The second chapter would be me and the problems on the streets. The third chapter is me as opposed to the game.

NADIA: to the game?

FOREST: Umm. Mm. Just the game. It's all one game. And the fourth chapter, trouble with females. They be on the other side. Fifth one would be problems in the family. Sixth one would be – mistakes and jail. Mistakes in jail. And the seventh chapter, the last one, would be what I'm doing now and how I'm living now.

NADIA: okay, can you tell me a bit about what you would put in the first chapter. You said it would be the introduction of who you are.

FOREST: Just basically me and how I think and how I go about things and just the type of person I am.

NADIA: so can you tell me about how you think?

FOREST: Like I say, I think like myself. I don't think like everybody else thinks. I don't know. I just -- I handle things differently than everybody else.

NADIA: in what way?

FOREST: Always – but like I handle situations totally different than a normal person would.

NADIA: can you give me an example?

FOREST: What type of situation you talking about?

NADIA: what type of situation are you talking about?

FOREST: I'm not like everybody else. I'm different.

Nadia: but could you tell me how you're different.

FOREST: I'm just different. I'm like – I don't know. I don't think I'm like everybody else, cause everybody else don't think like I think. I think like an older mind in a young body. That's how I think.

NADIA: can you give me an example – a story that would show me how you're an older mind in a younger body?

FOREST: Cause I do older things. All my friends is older. They're like my mother's age. Basically I live a grown life. I don't have no young friends. They're grown. But I'm young. So nobody else is like that. I don't know nobody else that's like that. Everybody be hanging out with their age group. I don't be hanging out with my age group. I hang out with older people.

FOREST: I was running through the streets, selling drugs and all that. Carrying guns. Stealing cars. All types of stuff. That people my age wasn't normally doing, but I was.

NADIA: how old were you?

FOREST: This was recently. It was like last year.

NADIA: so since you were sixteen you were running in the streets?

FOREST: Now I've calmed down. I calmed down. I'm like older. I used to be old. Now I'm older than old now. So I just calm down now. I just sit back teaching to people my age. And they can't believe what I be telling them. And they ask me, 'is this true?'

NADIA: what?

FOREST: Like when they talking about things, they not even thinking about what happened, they're just looking at it from one point of view. I can tell them, I be telling them from all points of view. And the one that they should look at it as, not just one way.

NADIA: Can you give me an example of that?

FOREST: Say like, they want to shoot somebody. I say, you shoot somebody, you got to worry about the cops finding you, you got to worry about somebody snitching on you. You got to worry about the shells from the floor that got your fingerprints on it. You got to worry about everything -- this family, the people that you think are your friends who snitch on you, the cops come to them first. You got to think about everything. It's better just not to do it. It's not even worth it. There are too many bad things that can happen. There's no good things that can happen. None. The only good thing is that you might get away with it. And you going to lead your life with a 'might get away with it.'

FOREST: My problems.

NADIA: Can you tell me a bit about those?

FOREST: Problems with gangs. Or that's where most of the problems came in. With the Perps and the Bloods and all that.

NADIA: were you part of one of the gangs?

FOREST: Both.

NADIA: Both. So was that what caused you problems?

FOREST: No. It was like I let one of them to go to the other one. But I was always real so none of them wanted to touch me. But none of them would like me, so they would try to get together and think they could touch me. But they still couldn't touch me. I joined like 1999.

NADIA: The Bloods, this was?

FOREST: The Perps.

NADIA: And then you changed to the Bloods?

FOREST: The Perps was getting whacked. They was falling off.

NADIA: What were they doing?

FOREST: They wasn't doing nothing. They was just – it wasn't my style. So I just turned to something else.

NADIA: And why did you decide to join them first?

FOREST: My, my power. It's not even that no more. That's what I used to think it was. It was, before used to be the respect and all that. But now it's just like I look back – oh, that's stupid. I'll be telling them –no good things come out of a gang, besides jail and you die or something like that. You ain't going to get no job from being in a gang. It's not

As in many other parts of the interview, Forest is trying to show that he has matured, he now avoids trouble. It is also here that we see how Forest has decided to adopt an identity that he did not have before, that of being responsible. Later on, he talks about the role the ATI had on this change.

[illegible]

FOREST: The cops and all that. They always be listening. I don't even be doing nothing sometimes, just be walking. And plus – all they got to say is “There's a Black male with braids.” And the first one they see, they stop him. They don't even, they be stressing me for no reason. I'm stressed now, all paranoid. This niggers in the streets that owe you money. You don't even want to press them because you got cold and all that. But you

just a big game. And there ain't nobody going to win. That's what it is. A game that nobody going to win.

NADIA: If someone didn't know anything about it, how would you explain it?

FOREST: Basically there's rules to the game. You don't violate the rules. Cause if you violate the rules, then somebody's going to violate you. Got to go by all the rules. Don't go by the rules, then something's going to happen. Might not happen soon if you bend the rules, but sooner or later it's going to come back up with you. So you got to respect the game. And basically the game is to be sold not told.

NADIA: To be what?

FOREST: To be sold not told. So basically it's a whole lot of things. A whole lot of things. The game, the game ain't no good though. You have money in your pocket for a little while, but money ain't everything. I thought when you have no money, you're going to be broke. All the pimps, I was coming out of my building one night, I had this little Spanish girl with me, 'cause I used to have a lot of girls and they used to watch me, but they never really told me nothing. So one night I took her home and I came back. My father was like, "Yo." His name was T, his pimp name was T. His was like, "T said to come upstairs. He want to talk to you about something." So I went up to T's house. There was pimps sitting up there. He was like, "Yo, I see with these girls. You could get money with them if you want to." He told me how to do everything. He put me onto the game and all that. He's letting me drive his cars. Ride motorcycles with him. And he was selling drugs. So he just put me onto the game all the way. So when I got there with him, I had everything. Money, whatever we needed was there. So, and I had a lot of girls, so I could make it happen right there. Cause the girls want money. And I go to the girls. And

T was getting the money. And I was getting clients. And we was just working like that. He needed me. I needed him. So we was like a little team. A little pimp team.

NADIA: How did you have the girls from before?

FOREST: I'm saying, first, I had girls like that had messed with a lot of people. But it was like, when I told them, when they ain't having no money, I would tell them, I be doing this, and I be doing that. I let them know everything that I do. And they was like, "Where am I?" So I said, "Well, if you're interested, if you know somebody that's interested, just holler at me." So they be telling me they be coming to me sometime. I be like, you do this. You don't be doing that. So you keep doing it. It's all for the money. We be having fun while we're doing it too. We be drinking. We used to smoke. We used to have fun making money. That's what it used to be about. With me. I used to have fun with the girls and make money all day. It wasn't nothing else better than that back then.

NADIA: For how many years did you do it?

FOREST: About two. Started at around fourteen, fifteen. Yeah. Fifteen.

NADIA: And what else would you say about the game?

FOREST: The pimp game is a lonely game. They're lonely games. Cause when everything is said and done, you ain't going to have it like you want it. Cause when the girls get all old and all used out, you ain't going to have no money. You have to something to fall back on. The drug game — you're just taking a risk your whole life. Cause you can get locked up at any time. Any time somebody can set you up. Somebody don't like you or something. So anything. You're taking a risk with your life, and that's not cool. The game is like a big circle of criminals that does — That is finding an easy way out. It's not even, I don't know — just stay away from the game. The streets. The

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