

**CONSTRUCTING A PRISON TO SCHOOL PIPELINE: AN  
EXAMINATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF  
INCARCERATED YOUTH**

**BY**

**KECIA HAYES**

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Urban Education in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New  
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## Abstract

CONSTRUCTING A PRISON TO SCHOOL PIPELINE: AN EXAMINATION OF THE  
EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF INCARCERATED YOUTH

by

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Adviser: Professor Joe L. Kincheloe

Many court-involved youth do not develop the necessary skills to successfully re-enter and productively participate in all sectors of our civil society. Unfortunately, many youth caught in the juvenile justice system were students in the public school systems, and based upon the poor academic performance of many of the youth prior to their court-involvement; it is generally true that the public school systems were ineffective in educating them. Because there is a strong link between low levels of education and high rates of criminal activity, the likelihood of recidivism amongst court-involved youth is significantly high if changes are not made in our efforts to (*re*)habilitate them. In New York State, there is a constitutional obligation to effectively educate our court-involved youth because incarceration doesn't forfeit a youth's right to a '*sound and basic*' public education.

With the convergence of the juvenile justice and education systems in their lives, we have a unique opportunity to utilize the promising research on teaching and learning to create educational programs that more appropriately meet the needs of incarcerated youth. The goal of this research is twofold. First, it attempts to document the educational experiences and attitudes toward learning of incarcerated youth so that we can better understand the population that we must better serve. Second, it seeks to explore the viability of integrating the Sternberg Triarchic Model of Successful

Intelligence into a literacy program for incarcerated youth as a means to enhance their academic skills and attitudes toward learning.

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

### *PROBLEM STATEMENT*

While the intent of America's child welfare policies and practices might be social care, concern, and uplift, the impact has been altogether different, especially for poor urban youth of color. Even in this age of *No Child Left Behind* rhetoric, our engagements with urban youth from racialized and impoverished communities is far more reflective of Bush's demonization of youth with his "get tough with this generation of juvenile criminals" campaign during his 1994 Texas gubernatorial run against Ann Richards. Poor urban Black and Latino children, poorly served by many of our child welfare structures, are perpetually left behind in juvenile justice systems that fail to (*re*)habilitate them. Bearing the scars and stigma of incarceration, they are eventually returned to the same pernicious social conditions that facilitated their initial involvement with the criminal justice system, but significantly less prepared to realize their potential to effectively engage in all domains of our civil society. Ultimately, the social impact has been the structuring of their lives for cyclical contact with the criminal justice system thereby strengthening the prison industrial complex and the pipeline from poor racialized communities. Although many individuals have benefited from this arrangement, it is devastating to the youth, their families and communities, as well as to the entire society.

As a society, we need to critically examine the social milieu that not only facilitates their engagement with the courts, but also the ways in which the policies and practices of our juvenile justice systems bring about a particular civic death of our urban youth of color and thereby weakens any potential to realize the democratic ideal of our civil society. This is especially relevant to urban educators, who must always grapple

with two fundamental points of inquiry: *how education is experienced by those who participate in our urban schools*, and *how urban youth are engaged in education*. Within our contemporary discourse on the policies and practices of urban education, we too often have privileged the former and obscured the latter. Consequently, the role that schools play in the lives of youth who have contact with the juvenile and criminal justice systems is easily ignored. This routine neglect of the educational needs and experiences of cohorts of urban youth who are court-involved is devastating, especially as they become increasingly disengaged and alienated from education and schooling by virtue of unmet needs and negative experiences within our systems of schooling. The education of court-involved youth must be centralized on the urban education policy agenda because of the size and character of youth who are overwhelmingly impacted by contact with the courts, and because education, imbued with an appropriate purpose, must be the foundation of any effective efforts towards rehabilitation. Our failure to develop and enact the necessary policies to facilitate the practices and processes that can transformatively empower court-involved youth to become effective participants in our civil society will be costly to them and us.

#### *CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL CONTEXT*

To begin to unpack this critical urban education policy issue, it is prudent to consider the size and characteristics of the cohort of youth who are most impacted by court-involvement. Typically, the discussion on court-involved youth begins with a specific focus on the school to prison pipeline. However, some would correctly argue that the pipeline is really one of poverty to prison with the school, specifically as it is configured within impoverished urban communities of color, operating as a type of hatch

valve rather than a trigger. Consequently, in order to properly contextualize the problem, it is essential to begin with some discussion of childhood poverty in this country. According to the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), there were 13 million children living in poverty in America in 2004, reflecting an increase of 1.5 million children since 2000. The federal government has defined child poverty as children living in a home with a household income of \$16,090 for a family of three and \$19,350 for a family of four<sup>1</sup>. There has also been an increase; from 12.8 percent in 2000 to 20 percent in 2004, in the number of children living in extreme poverty, represented as household income levels that are half the federal poverty line. At these income levels, it is virtually impossible for any family to meet their basic needs. The National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) suggests that families need an income that is at least twice the poverty level to meet their basic needs; and those whose incomes exceed the federal poverty line but fail to rise above the rate of twice the poverty line are considered low-income.

Whether the focus is the poverty or low-income tracts, Black and Latino children are disproportionately represented. The CDF reports that one in three Black children and almost three out of ten non-White Latino children lived in poverty compared with one in ten Asian children and more than one in ten White non-Latino children. Meanwhile, the NCCP reports that 62 percent or 8.2 million Latino children as well as 60 percent or 6 million Black children are low-income. Furthermore, 51 percent of children in urban areas, a total of 8.9 million youth, are considered low-income and this represents an increase from 48 percent in 2000. Despite the fact that, as a nation, our wealth per person

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<sup>1</sup> National Center for Juvenile Justice. New York State Justice Profiles. Pittsburgh, PA: NCJJ. Retrieved November 2003, from [www.ncjj.org/stateprofiles/](http://www.ncjj.org/stateprofiles/)

is more than twice what it was 38 years ago, significantly more children are living in conditions of various levels of poverty than during the 1960s.

The social consequences of a childhood lived in poverty are drastic and debilitating. Children growing up in poverty are far more likely to be exposed to inadequate education, substandard healthcare – especially in terms of preventative care, hazardous housing, and poor nutrition. The compounded effect of these forces robs children of the opportunity to realize their full potential to become effective participants in all domains of our civil society. To fully understand the social significance of the poverty phenomenon in the lives of children, it is essential to not only think about poverty as the absence of the financial resources to secure the goods and services to meet one's basic needs; but to think about poverty as the concentrated presence of particular risk conditions – such as the proliferation of low-wage employment, increased numbers of adults without education levels beyond high school, greater exposure to crime and violence, as well as an abundance of poorly resourced and highly punitive public schools – that facilitate a reproductive social inequality and marginalization; and that mitigate against effective civic participation. It is a life framed by the lack of access to opportunities and networks that will develop one's potential, and the simultaneous presence of opportunities and networks that will effectively derail one's progress out of poverty.

As we have failed to enact the necessary policies and practices to meet the complex social needs of the disproportionate number of poor urban youth of color living in this postmodern society, we have simultaneously fortified our punitive criminal justice systems. It is into these structures that we traffic poor urban youth of color. They

become the precious cargo of a new socially structured type of middle passage, the *cradle to prison pipeline*. The CDF reports that within our contemporary social milieu, a Black boy has a 1 in 6 chance of receiving a bachelor's degree, a 1 in 9,900 chance of obtaining a PhD in math or computer science, but a 1 in 13 chance of going to prison by the age of 20. "Major social institutions for youth have constricted eligibility and eased methods for expulsion. Schools, child welfare systems, probation, health services have all made it easier to violate, terminate, exclude, and expel youngsters. Where these youth go for survival, help, socialization development, care, and attention is unclear. One door that always remains open is the gateway to juvenile and criminal justice."<sup>2</sup> With their incarceration, our most vulnerable youth, already rendered invisible by their social marginalization, are physically removed from our gaze and we consequently are able to more substantively ignore their plight.

Based upon data compiled by the National Center for Juvenile Justice,<sup>3</sup> nearly 1,633,300 juvenile delinquency cases were handled by the U.S. courts in 2000 with a daily rate of 4,500 cases, which compared to only 1,100 delinquency cases handled daily in 1960. In 2000, there were more than 30 million youth under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court and 80 percent were between the ages of 10 and 15 years, 12 percent were 16 years, and 8 percent were 17 years. The low percentage of 17 year-olds under juvenile jurisdiction is, in part, a function of the fact that in 13 states, these youth would be remanded to the jurisdiction of the criminal court. The number of delinquency cases

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<sup>2</sup> Dohrn in Polakow, Valerie. (Ed.). (2000). *The Public Assault on America's Children*. New York: Teachers College Press, p. 161

<sup>3</sup> National Center for Juvenile Justice. New York State Justice Profiles. Pittsburgh, PA: NCJJ. Retrieved November 2003, from [www.ncjj.org/stateprofiles/](http://www.ncjj.org/stateprofiles/)

spiked by 43 percent during the period of 1985 through 1996 and then fell by 14 percent through 2000. The offense categories in which there were the greatest increases included drug law violations – 126 percent, person offenses – 78 percent, and public order offenses – 76 percent. There was a decline of 17 percent in the number of property offenses during the period of 1985 – 2000.

In terms of the demographics of the youth represented by the juvenile delinquency cases, 58 percent of the juveniles processed through the courts in 2000 were 15 years-old or younger at the time of their referral. Their cases tended to involve person and/or property offenses whereas youth, 16 years-old or older, were more represented in cases involving drug and public order offenses. While boys represented approximately 1,200,000 juvenile cases and girls accounted for only about 400,000, the percentage increase in the number of cases involving girls outpaced that for boys overall and in three of the four general offense categories including person, property, and public order offenses. Boys represented a higher percentage of the increase in drug offense cases. From 1985 to the mid-1990s, the juvenile delinquency rate for boys increased 38 percent and then fell 17 percent by 2000; for girls, there was an increase of 72 percent between 1985 and 1997 and a mere decrease of 9 percent through 2000. When the cases are viewed in terms of age and gender, boys had more pronounced increases with age. Seventeen-year-old boys and girls experienced the highest rates of drug offense categories.

Although not the primary focus of this study, it is important to stress that the increased arrest rates for girls in violent categories such as assault can be misleading. As noted by the CDF and other agencies focused on the issues of court-involved girls, “girls

are not necessarily acting out more frequently, but rather, institutional responses to girls' behavior are changing. Girls are disproportionately charged with status offenses, primarily for running away. Changes in police practices regarding this behavior and incidents of domestic violence, which often involve girls, may be resulting in a relabeling of girls' family conflicts as violent offenses."<sup>4</sup> With respect to the weapons and drug violations, it is possible that the increase rates reflect the likelihood that girls are carrying and/or trafficking guns and drugs for boyfriends who believe that the police are less likely to stop and search girls. This phenomenon pervades the story of Elaine Bartlett who, at 26 years old, was convicted for a single sale of cocaine as a consequence of New York State's Rockefeller drug laws.<sup>5</sup>

Historically, youth of color have been disproportionately represented in our juvenile justice systems. During the period of 1985 through 2000, the cases of juvenile delinquency for white and black youth respectively increased 36 percent and 61 percent. There was a peak in the delinquency rate for all races, except for blacks, in 1996 and then a subsequent decline of 26 percent by 2000. The rate of delinquency cases amongst black youth peaked in 1995 and then fell by 23 percent by 2000. For both races, the drug offense cases reflected the greatest increase – 231 percent for blacks and 149 percent for whites. The drug offense case rate for black youth increased sharply between 1985 and 1988, leveled off, and then peaked again in 1996 to 291 percent above the 1985 rate. Between the period of 1996 and 2000, the rate returned to levels comparable to the early

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<sup>4</sup> Children's Defense Fund. (2004). *The state of America's children 2004*, p. 150

<sup>5</sup> Gonnerman, J. (2004). *Life on the Outside: The Prison Odyssey of Elaine Bartlett*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux Books

1990s. The delinquency case rate for blacks across the age range of 10 – 17 years-old was consistently higher than that of whites and other races for the same age range. For each age group, blacks were twice as likely as whites and three times as likely as other races to have delinquency cases.

Within the time frame of 1985 through 2000, the mid-1990s reflected a period of peaks amongst the different cohorts of youth in terms of their delinquency rates. According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)<sup>6</sup>, racial minorities comprised only one-third of the 1997 juvenile population nationwide but accounted for nearly two-thirds of the detained and committed population in secure juvenile facilities. Nationally, the custody rate for African-American youth was five times greater than that for White youth. African-American youth under the age of 17 represented approximately 15 percent of the juvenile population, but reflected 26 percent of juveniles arrested, 45 percent of detained delinquency cases, and 40 percent of juveniles in secure residential placements. Of those juveniles, under the age of 18, who were new commitments to State prison, 60 percent were African-American and 15 percent were Latino. African-American and Latino youth are more likely to be confined to public rather than private institutions. Females and males respectively represented 14 and 86 percent of the custody population in 1997 as noted by the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) Arrest Statistics<sup>7</sup>. African-American youth were overwhelmingly represented as a proportion of arrests in 26 of 29 offense categories documented by the

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<sup>6</sup> Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. (1999). *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1999 National Report*. Department of Justice: OJJDP

<sup>7</sup> Snyder, H. et. al. (2002). Easy Access to FBI Arrest Statistics 1994-2000. Retrieved November 2003 from [www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org/ojstatbb/ezaucr/](http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org/ojstatbb/ezaucr/)

FBI in 1998. While racial minorities continued to post high rates of arrest, detention, and incarceration; the overall number of serious violent victimizations by juveniles under the age of 18 decreased by 33 percent from 1,230,000 to 830,000 during the period of 1993 and 1997.

By 2001, the proportion of juveniles represented in criminal arrests decreased to 16.5 percent. According to the CDF,<sup>8</sup> the overall rate of juvenile arrest had declined by more than 27 percent since 1996 when reported juvenile criminal activity peaked. The majority of crimes for which juveniles are arrested and tracked into the justice system are nonviolent crimes including activities such as property offenses like arson, burglary, car theft, and larceny. They note that fewer than 10 percent of the juveniles who enter the justice system can be considered serious, habitual, violent offenders. While 78 percent of the nation's incarcerated juveniles are boys and 22 percent are girls, there has been an increase (or rather a slower rate of decrease) in the rate at which girls are entering the system. Of the incarcerated boys, minorities reflect 58 percent of that population. For 2002, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention<sup>9</sup> reported that girls represented 29 percent of the 654,000 arrests made by law enforcement agencies. Like their male counterparts, urban girls and girls of color shoulder a disproportionate burden of the increased arrest rate. Half of the 22 percent of incarcerated girls are minorities. Between the periods of 1980 – 2002, the arrest rate of girls outpaced that of boys in the offense categories of aggravated assault, simple assault, and weapons law violations;

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<sup>8</sup> Children's Defense Fund. (2004). *The state of America's children 2004*, p. 147

<sup>9</sup> Snyder, H. (2004). Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Bulletin: Juvenile Arrests 2002. Retrieved December 2005, from [www.ncjrs.gov/html/ojjdp/204608/page7.html](http://www.ncjrs.gov/html/ojjdp/204608/page7.html)

however the girls' arrest rate in the category of drug violations was comparable to the boys for the same period.

During 2000, the rate of juvenile arrests in New York State had increased by 7 percent over the prior year, but this spike was still 17 percent lower than the arrest rate in 1994, which represented a peak. Of all of the case categories for New York's juvenile arrests, 9 percent were for violent offenses, 21 percent for property offenses, 3 percent for weapons, and 7 percent for drug offenses. The arrest rate for violent offenses for New York City was 9 percent lower than its previous two-decade low in 1985. However, for suburban New York City, it was 46 percent higher than its previous two-decade low in 1986, and for upstate New York, it was 69 percent higher than its previous two-decade low in 1981. Demographically, New York State's juvenile offender population resembles the national profile in that 62% were African-American, and 82% of all admissions in 2001 were male. The average age of New York State's juvenile offender in custody for 2001 was 15.5 years, and 63% of all entrants were residents of New York City. Fifty percent of the offenders came from single parent households and 15% came from households without a parent. According to the Correctional Association of New York, Black and Latino youth comprise 95 percent of the youth in detention while they represent less than 66 percent of the youth population in New York City. Although White youth comprise 25 percent of all children in New York City, only 5 percent are represented in the detainee population. The Education Committee of The Council of the City of New York reports, "Each year, roughly 10,000 New York City children come into contact with the courts. More than 2,000 students are in juvenile detention in the city every day, and each year some 1,200 students return to the city from upstate jails. More than two-thirds of

children released from custody never go back to school, where they might learn skills that could help them build a positive future.”<sup>10</sup>

In New York State, youth under the age of 21 years-old who commit an offense and who the courts determine should be removed from the community are remanded to the custody of either the New York State Department of Correctional Services (DOCS), New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), Rikers Island, or one of several county jails. The police are the primary gatekeepers as they make the initial decision as to whether to arrest or divert the young person from the juvenile justice system. The articulated principles and objectives for the State’s juvenile justice system include: reduction of violent and serious crime, prevention of delinquency through positive youth development, promotion of individual accountability, and the provision of effective treatment and aftercare services. One profound example of the ways in which the State policymakers are fulfilling this mission is the fact that the State’s 2002 fiscal budget included a \$73 million allocation to support the construction of a new OCFS secure facility for youth convicted of serious crimes to replace the Harlem Valley Secure Center despite a 30 percent decrease in crimes committed by youth under the ages of 16 years-old.<sup>11</sup> In 2004, the average annual cost for one youth in detention was \$141,000.

One of the most poignant qualitative representations of the nation’s juvenile justice quantitative or statistical picture is that of Willie Bosket. For many, Willie Bosket

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<sup>10</sup> Moskowitz, Eva (Chair). Council of the City of New York Education Committee, “Correcting Juvenile Injustice: A Bill of Rights For Children Released From Custody” Retrieved December 2005, from [http://www.nycouncil.info/pdf\\_files/reports/04\\_27\\_05\\_childbor.pdf](http://www.nycouncil.info/pdf_files/reports/04_27_05_childbor.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> New York State Executive Budget (2002-2003). Retrieved December 2005, from [www.budget.state.ny.us/archive/fy0203archive/fy0203littlebook/overview0203/pdf](http://www.budget.state.ny.us/archive/fy0203archive/fy0203littlebook/overview0203/pdf)

represented the emergence of a predatory criminal element from amongst the youth of our racially and impoverished urban communities. However, the significance of the Willie Bosket experience lies in the many ways in which the child welfare structures, policies, and practices of our society converged and failed to support the effective development of one young person into adulthood. Willie was born in December 1962, resided in Harlem with his mother, and never met his father who was incarcerated for a double homicide by the time he was born. His childhood was characterized by poverty, parental neglect, and physical abuse including sexual abuse by his grandfather. From a very young age, Willie simultaneously typified a child with the intellectual capacity of a genius as well as an anti-social psychotic criminal according to his teachers, social workers, psychiatrists, family court personnel, and mother. At age nine, Willie was expelled from his elementary school where he had been moved from a regular education class to a special education class. He was institutionalized for the first time at a reform school where it was determined that he could not read nor write despite his high intellectual potential. Throughout the ensuing years, Willie was shuttled between various penal institutions and psychiatric hospitals.

Despite the use of antipsychotic drugs, Willie's behavior became increasingly violent and at the age of fifteen, he murdered two men in a Manhattan subway. There was a consequent outcry by members of the New York State legislature who were appalled that the maximum sentence available for Willie was five years in a state training school. Reactively, the legislature passed the first law in the nation that allowed for juveniles to be waived into adult court for trial for particular offences. It became known as the Willie Bosket law and inspired other states to adopt similar legislation. In 1988,

Willie stabbed a prison guard and when asked about his reason for doing so, he reminded the reporters that he had been incarcerated since the age of nine and concluded his comments by implicating the *parens patriae* of our child welfare systems with the statement, “I am only a monster created by the system.”<sup>12</sup>

Unfortunately, America’s systems of social policies and practices have locked it into “a penal economy which is both self-replicating and subject to a multiplier effect due to progressively steepening mandatory sentences.”<sup>13</sup> We ostensibly are creating generations of monsters out of the Willie Bosket’s of our society considering that “the rate of incarceration for African Americans has soared to astronomical levels unknown in any other society, not even the Soviet Union at the zenith of the Gulag or South Africa during the acme of the violent struggles over apartheid;”<sup>14</sup> and that “imprisonment damages employment prospects after release and heightens risks of recidivism.”<sup>15</sup> Although the burgeoning penal economy has financially well-served many people, the impact has been exceedingly destructive to individuals and communities who occupy the sociopolitical and economic margins of society, and who consequently are the targets of the penal economy. As the penal economy is contextualized within a broader social framework, it is clear that there are negative impacts, short- and long-term, to the entire society.

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<sup>12</sup> Butterfield, Fox. (1995). *All God’s Children*. New York: Avon Books, p. xv

<sup>13</sup> Downes in Garland, David (Ed.). (2001). *Mass Imprisonment: Social Causes and Consequences*. California: Sage Publications, p. 63

<sup>14</sup> Wacquant in Garland, David (Ed.). (2001). *Mass Imprisonment: Social Causes and Consequences*. California: Sage Publications, p. 82

<sup>15</sup> Downes in Garland, David (Ed.). (2001). *Mass Imprisonment: Social Causes and Consequences*. California: Sage Publications, p. 63

*CONSEQUENCES: INDIVIDUAL & SOCIETAL*

The extent to which the plight of court-involved youth must be addressed as one of the most critical contemporary social policy dilemmas is best reflected in the negative consequences of the status quo. There is a price to be paid, by the society and the individual, for our continued failure to (*re*)habilitate our court-involved citizens. The cost occurs across the economic, political, and social domains as well as within multiple levels including the individual, community, and society. One's economic capital is a function of the individual's ability to accumulate and manage wealth as well as an understanding of the local and global political economies. Due to their low levels of educational attainment and lack of access to effective social networks that can facilitate employment, the labor market participation and economic capital of the formerly incarcerated are significantly constricted, which results in collateral damage to the nation's tax base. Anne Piehl reports that while 48 percent of the public has some postsecondary education, only 13 percent of the formerly incarcerated have any such training. Furthermore, 41 percent of those incarcerated have less than a high school education compared to only 18 percent of the public with less than a high school education.<sup>16</sup> Their limited skills, experience, and educational credentialing restrict their employability and earnings potential.

For the Blacks and Latinos who are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system, their labor market participation and development of economic capital is

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<sup>16</sup> Piehl, Anne. (2003). Employment Dimensions of Reentry: Understanding the Nexus between Prisoner Reentry and Work - Crime, Work, and Reentry. *A Report of the Reentry Roundtable, The Urban Institute* (May). Retrieved December 2005, from <http://www.urban.org/publications/410856.html>

further hindered by the racial discrimination that is typically experienced by communities of color. In her research, Pager documents the extent to which contact with the criminal justice system, itself, negatively impacts an individual's success in the labor market. She found that ex-offenders are only one-half to one-third as likely as non-offenders to be considered by employers, and that there is a persistent effect of race such that Blacks are less than half as likely to be considered for employment.<sup>17</sup> According to the Center for Employment Opportunities, "the unemployment rate of former inmates one year after release may be as high as 60 percent."<sup>18</sup> Of this harsh reality, one researcher notes, "Children who are incarcerated have virtually no chance of getting a good job when they grow up."<sup>19</sup>

As the economy of our society shifts, so too do the requisite skills and knowledge to be successful within the labor market. Youth must be engaged in developmental activities that will not only increase their competence to participate in civil society but to also be economically competitive within the new labor market. According to Jeremy Rifkin, "In the high-tech automated world of the 1990s, the new elite of knowledge workers are emerging with critical skills that elevate them to center stage in the global economy...As their fortunes wax, the economic circumstances of the vast numbers of low-level service workers wanes, creating a new and dangerous division between the

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<sup>17</sup> Pager, Devah. (2003). The Mark of a Criminal Record. *AJS*, 108(5), (March): pps. 937-975

<sup>18</sup> Bernstein, J. and Houston, E. Issue Overview: Crime and Work. Retrieved December 2005, from [www.ceoworks.org](http://www.ceoworks.org)

<sup>19</sup> Drucker, Ernest. (2002). Population Impact of Mass Incarceration under New York's Rockefeller Drug Laws: an Analysis of Years of Life Lost. *Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, 79(3), (September). Retrieved December 2005, from <http://www.prisonworks.com/scans/rockefeller.pdf>, p. 13

haves and have-nots in every industrial nation.”<sup>20</sup> The collateral impact of a formerly incarcerated person’s diminished capacity for the full development of economic capital extends to their and the community’s ability to acquire wealth. Not only does the economic mobility elude the individual but also the community as it is unable to effectively incubate a network of individuals from amongst its members that has substantial economic capital to help undergird comprehensive communal uplift.

There is also a lost of economic capital, direct and indirect, for the society. “Allowing one youth to leave high school for a life of crime and drug abuse costs society \$1.7-\$2.3 million.”<sup>21</sup> In a research report prepared for an Urban Institute Reentry Roundtable, Amy L. Solomon and her colleagues reported that the removal of more than 1.1 million men from the labor market during their incarceration in 1997 amounted to an estimated annual net loss in gross domestic product between \$100 and \$200 billion.<sup>22</sup> At the most fundamental level, these losses respectively reflect an additional tax burden as well as the disappearance of a viable tax base. Ernest Drucker, utilized a quantitative public health methodology, commonly used to measure the population impact of large-scale adverse events, to assess “years of life lost” of mass incarceration on communities. Examining the period of 1973 to 2002, he found that “thirty years of forced removal to prison of 150,000 young males from particular communities of New York represents collective losses similar in scale to the losses due to epidemics, wars, and terrorist attacks

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<sup>20</sup> Rifkin, J. (1995). *The End of Work*. New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, p. 175

<sup>21</sup> Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. (1999). *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1999 National Report*. Department of Justice: OJJDP

<sup>22</sup> Solomon, A. L. et. al. (2004). From Prison to Work: The Employment Dimensions of Prisoner Reentry. *A Report of the Reentry Roundtable, The Urban Institute* (October). Retrieved December 2005, from <http://www.urban.org/publications/411097.html>

– with the potential for comparable effects on the survivors and the social structure of their families and communities.”<sup>23</sup> The nation’s mass incarceration of African Americans has had a systemic negative impact on the families and communities from which the inmates come in terms of the development and utilization of their economic capital.

In terms of political capital, I am referring to individuals’ power and ability to influence the public policies that structure their lives and the lives of those within their communities. Within this context, the individual and social consequences are equally profound. There are only two states, Maine and Vermont, which allow prisoners to vote. In 35 states, people in prison, or on probation or parole are not eligible to vote; and in 13 states, a felony conviction results in a lifetime loss of voting rights. There is also the issue of defacto disenfranchisement of the large cohort of detainees, those awaiting trial, who, due to a lack of access to polling sites on Election Day, are excluded from the democratic process. Mauer estimates that if current trends persist, 30-40 percent of the next generation of Black males will be disenfranchised in states with the most restrictive voting laws.<sup>24</sup> This estimation undoubtedly takes into account the fact that some court-involved youth losing their voting rights before actually securing them. “The increasing tendency to charge juveniles with adult crimes is causing greater numbers of 16- and 17-

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<sup>23</sup> Drucker, Ernest. (2002). Population Impact of Mass Incarceration under New York’s Rockefeller Drug Laws: an Analysis of Years of Life Lost. *Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, 79(3), (September). Retrieved December 2005, from <http://www.prisonsucks.com/scans/rockefeller.pdf>, p. 7

<sup>24</sup> Mauer, M. (2004). Political Report: Disenfranchising Felons Hurts Entire Communities. *Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies*, (May/June)

year-olds to lose the right to vote, in some cases permanently, even before they are old enough to cast their first ballot.”<sup>25</sup>

Due to these felon disenfranchisement policies and practices that significantly dilute the political capital of impoverished and racialized communities which are the primary feeders of the prison industrial complex, approximately 13 percent of African-American men were unable to vote in the 2004 presidential election. Some researchers suggest that disenfranchisement laws tend to favor Republican candidates,<sup>26</sup> which bodes well for the implementation of a neoconservative agenda. For example, while the formerly incarcerated experience a loss of access to federally-funded health and welfare benefits, food stamps, public housing – in some cases, because the family lives in public housing, the inmate can’t return home upon release, federal education assistance, eligibility for military enlistment, they are disempowered to affect changes in these public policies. This is coupled with the fact that the U.S. Census Bureau, as a general rule, counts prisoners as members of the communities in which they are incarcerated as opposed to their home communities. A situation that artificially amplifies the political voice of many rural areas that embrace things like new prison construction and more punitive criminal justice policies and practices because it strengthens their economic infrastructure through the provision of greater employment opportunities for their community members; and it simultaneously mutes urban voices that cry out for social

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<sup>25</sup> Mauer, M. (2004). Political Report: Disenfranchising Felons Hurts Entire Communities. *Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies*, (May/June), p. 6

<sup>26</sup> Uggen, Christopher. (2002). Prisoner Reentry and the Institutions of Civil Society: Bridges and Barriers to Successful Reintegration - BARRIERS TO DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION. *A Report of the Reentry Roundtable, The Urban Institute* (March). Retrieved December 2005, from <http://www.urban.org/publications/410801.html>

justice for the individuals and families of their racialized and impoverished communities that have been disproportionately and devastatingly impacted by our approach to criminal justice. The aggregate result is that the political clout, which begins from a marginal position, of racialized and impoverished communities is further diminished as the voices of their members are effectively silenced.

Since voting is communal, the loss of voting eligibility for a lifetime or periods during one's lifetime makes it difficult for the community to effectively model engagement in the political domain of civil society for future generations. Youth in these communities do not see an enacted valuation of the right, privilege, and responsibility to vote by older members of the community, which facilitates their further alienation from the process. In their longitudinal survey of 1,000 young adults, Manza and Uggen found that those who had contact with the criminal justice system demonstrated significantly lower levels of political efficacy than those who had not been arrested or incarcerated. Responding to the statement "people like me have no say in what the government does," 57 percent of the former inmates agreed whereas only 39 percent of those who had not been incarcerated were in agreement with the statement.<sup>27</sup> A lack of political efficacy or ability to impact civic life through participation in the democratic process is constricted, and weakens an individual's willingness to engage in the discourses and debates of public policy. Undoubtedly, this adds another layer to the scaffold of alienation from civil society, and the net result is that the ability of the community to leverage fully

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<sup>27</sup> Uggen, Christopher. (2002). Prisoner Reentry and the Institutions of Civil Society: Bridges and Barriers to Successful Reintegration - BARRIERS TO DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION. *A Report of the Reentry Roundtable, The Urban Institute* (March). Retrieved December 2005, from <http://www.urban.org/publications/410801.html>

empowered representation in the political discourses that construct the policies and practices that fundamentally shape our lives within America's democratic civil society is decimated.

Within the framework of social capital, I am most concerned with the extent to which an individual is immersed in and/or contributes to an efficacious social network that allows for support, access to resources, and the transmission of the cultural competencies around language, customs, traditions, and beliefs of the community and society. Researchers who have examined the social impact of mass incarceration on communities theorize that it strains kinship and friendship networks as well as contributes to the social disorganization of communities. In terms of the effect on communal or social networks, the damage results from the fact that a link in the network has been removed and there is a residual loss of support and resources coupled with an overlay of new pressures that come with attempting to maintain contact with the imprisoned individual. The family is now expected to do more with less, which causes considerable strain on the familial dynamics, particularly in terms of finances and relational bonds. The most profound impact is on the children of such communities, and in 1999, approximately 2 percent of American children had a parent who was incarcerated.<sup>28</sup> Jeremy Travis and his colleagues advise that the range of effects include feelings of shame and social stigma, poor school performance, increased risk of abuse or neglect, challenging of parental authority, negative perceptions of law enforcement, and

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<sup>28</sup> Drucker, Ernest. (2002). Population Impact of Mass Incarceration under New York's Rockefeller Drug Laws: an Analysis of Years of Life Lost. *Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, 79(3), (September). Retrieved December 2005, from <http://www.prisonworks.com/scans/rockefeller.pdf>

intergenerational patterns of criminal behavior. According to the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), "the likelihood that children of incarcerated parents will someday become incarcerated themselves is five to six times higher than for their peers."<sup>29</sup> This means that in 1999, approximately 1.5 million children were five to six times more likely than their peers to become court-involved.

As one begins to fully comprehend the extent to which the social disorganization of communities, resulting from a loss of adults who are moved from the churches and other community-based organizations and into the prisons, impacts its ability to enforce informal social control with the youth, it is not unusual or surprising that the youth would be so disproportionately and adversely affected. It is exceedingly difficult for a weakened social network to effectively structure the social behavior and engagements of its youth. Todd Clear concludes, "Well-established theory and a solid body of evidence indicate that high levels of incarceration concentrated in impoverished communities has a destabilizing effect on community life, so that the most basic underpinnings of informal social control are damaged...This, in turn, reproduces the very dynamics that sustain crime."<sup>30</sup> The effect of this is that as individuals are removed from their communities and situated within the prison system, the prison pipeline is strengthened by the community's social disorganization, which facilitates a generational recycling of bodies from that community into the prison industrial complex. In this way, the social capital of

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<sup>29</sup> Children's Defense Fund. (2005). *The State of America's Children 2005*. Retrieved December 2005, from <http://www.childrensdefense.org/publications/greenbook/default.aspx>, p. 149

<sup>30</sup> Drucker, Ernest. (2002). Population Impact of Mass Incarceration under New York's Rockefeller Drug Laws: an Analysis of Years of Life Lost. *Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, 79(3), (September). Retrieved December 2005, from <http://www.prisonsucks.com/scans/rockefeller.pdf>, p. 8

the individual and the community is significantly diminished because communal bonds and cultural transmissions are irretrievably lost by the absence or sporadic presence of large numbers of individuals who play a role in the network. Within the current social context, court-involved individuals, and to some extent, the communities from which they come, are rendered economically, politically, and socially politically irrelevant.

It is the significant diminishment of these critical forms of capital, the essential assets for a civically efficacious adult within any society, that warrant a prominent inclusion of the social dynamics impacting court-involved youth on the nation's policy agenda. In terms of the urban education policy agenda, it is even more important particularly when one considers the purpose of education. W.E.B. DuBois offered one of the most powerful articulations of the purpose of education. He conceptualized a framework of education that was specifically focused on the achievement of individual and collective uplift for racialized and impoverished communities, those social groups from which court-involved youth overwhelming come. For DuBois, education, in order to be relevant and useful for marginalized peoples, had to deliver to students the content and skills necessary for them to develop their economic, political, and social capital. To do any less would make educators, policymakers and practitioners, complicit in the type of hegemonic social reproduction that sustains crime and facilitates perpetual recidivism across generations. As we continue to engage in policy frameworks undergirded by the rhetoric of *No Child Left Behind* and *a sound basic education*, it becomes essential that we embrace DuBois's conceptualization of education as we seek to transform or (re)habilitate the educational experiences of court-involved youth so that they can achieve levels of economic, political, and social capital that will empower them, their

communities, and the society. Consequently, the social conditions impacting court-involved youth must be understood as one of the most important policy issues confront our contemporary society. In the realm of urban education, its importance in our policy and pedagogical discourses is tenfold because of the degree to which our students are coming into contact with the justice systems, the responsibility we have to provide youth with the requisite schooling to facilitate their successful development of the economic, political, and social capital to become effective and engaged adults in civil society, and the fact that education historically has been a cornerstone of rehabilitative efforts.

#### *CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK*

From a conceptual framework, this research recognizes how the power of schools and prisons have been mobilized within our society to unequivocally legitimate and reproduce particular social hierarchies and relationships that oppress some and privilege others. And so, the approach to the research is grounded in critical social theory, which is “concerned in particular with issues of power and justice and the ways that the economy, matters of race, class, and gender, ideologies, discourses, education, religion and other social institutions, and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system.”<sup>31</sup> As the primary means by which a society socializes its members, schooling plays a fundamental role in the mobilization of hegemonic power.<sup>32</sup> Our criminal justice systems, constructed with the intent to control and the promise to rehabilitate, in terms of

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<sup>31</sup> Kincheloe, J. L., and McLaren, P. (2000). Rethinking Critical Theory and Qualitative Research. In Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. California: Sage Publications, Inc., p. 281

<sup>32</sup> Tyack, David B. (1974). *The One Best System*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

educating to bring about conformity to the prevailing social structures, also occupy a critical role in the mobilization of power.<sup>33</sup> In this respect, schools and prisons occupy parallel and, at times, convergent positions in how they work to situate individuals within the power dynamic of society. To achieve different outcomes for court-involved youth, we must use the prison pipeline discourse to decolonize and destabilize the inherent assumptions, knowledges, and methodologies that are imbued in our current policies and practices, which have facilitated the further disempowerment of poor people of color who exist within pipeline. Education must be imagined and engaged as a subversive endeavor that disrupts the efforts of our criminal justice systems to civically neuter individuals from our racialized and impoverished communities.

This research is also guided by the perspective of Shaul (1996) who notes, “There is no such thing as a *neutral* educational process. Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, *or* it becomes “the practice of freedom,” the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.” For me, the reality of this statement is best manifested in the ways in which we educate, or fail to educate, incarcerated youth who are overwhelmingly poor Black and Latino children from urban communities. Ultimately, we make them complicit in the reproduction of their presence in the prison pipeline. We need to provide incarcerated youth with an education that empowers them to know how to operate within the hegemony while simultaneously working to dismantle it rather than with that which further links them to the penal system.

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<sup>33</sup> Platt, Anthony M. (1969). *The Child Savers*. Illinois: University of Chicago Press

The consequences of our failure to achieve success with this basic task is quantitatively noted in the nation's recidivism rates, but more poignantly evidenced in the life stories of the incarcerated – including the individuals, families, and communities.

*RATIONALE FOR RESEARCH*

I think there is a fundamental prima-facie case for examining the convergence of the criminal justice and education systems in the lives of the more than 150,000 incarcerated American youth, particularly when that population is overrepresented by Black and Latino children. Contrary to the popular rhetoric, within the African-American community, education historically has been the means by which members of the community sought to successfully achieve social mobility and empowerment against various forms of oppression including imprisonment. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, not only has America's systems of education failed to deliver on their meritocratic promises to racialized and impoverished communities, but these systems now operate as gateways into the more oppressive penal systems.

Education represents a potential to stem the tide of the pipeline whether we are focused on initial or recidivist contacts. Until we critically examine the full scope of this nexus of education and incarceration, we will remain ignorant of the possible ways in which we must innovatively retool our educative efforts for this particular population so that they can be effectively empowered to participate in all domains of our civil society. As noted by Judge Constance Baker Motley when, in her ruling in the *Handberry v. Thompson* lawsuit, she concluded “Depriving [the plaintiff] class members of adequate educational services for the duration of their incarceration not only deprives those individuals of their rights but also poorly serves the larger society to which class

members will return, and hopefully remain, after their release.”<sup>34</sup> Judge Motley’s comments are particularly relevant when one considers the extent to which the Black community, from which an overwhelming number of court-involved youth come, is failing to make any appreciable annual gains in the areas of health, education, economics, social justice, and civic engagement as documented by the National Urban League (NUL).<sup>35</sup> All members of the community must be effectively empowered with the skills and knowledges to create a *crisis of democracy*<sup>36</sup> in which they reposition themselves as active, rather than passive, participants within the political, economic, and social domains of civil society so that the community can make substantive progress towards social equality and equity.

In addition to the moral stance, there is a clear legal obligation that society must acknowledge and to which it must be held accountable. Despite their poor experiences with our public schools and their legal status as court-involved youth, they are still legally entitled to receive a public education. According to New York State’s compulsory education laws, “The right to a public education in New York does not end upon incarceration. All people in New York – including inmates – between the ages of 6 and 21 have the right to a free, public education, until they receive a high school diploma or its equivalent. In New York City, all 16- and 17-year olds are required to attend

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<sup>34</sup> Werlwas, M. L. and Lewis, D. A. (2000). New York City Must Provide Education To Incarcerated Youth. *Fortune News* (Winter). Retrieved November 2003, from [www.fortunesociety.org](http://www.fortunesociety.org)

<sup>35</sup> Daniels, Lee (Ed.). (2005). *The State of Black America 2005: Prescriptions for Change*. National Urban League.

<sup>36</sup> Chomsky, N. (2000). *Chomsky on miseducation*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publisher

school; for youths aged 18 through 21, enrollment is voluntary.”<sup>37</sup> If we are serious about the idea of leaving no child behind as we yet again engage in urban education reform efforts, then we must begin with the educational structures that are increasingly serving and failing a significant number of urban youth – unfortunately, those structures include the schools that operate within our correctional systems.

The true measure of whether we have successfully met the educational needs of all our children will rest, in large part, in how we reform the educational services provided to court-involved youth, the most vulnerable and left behind students. Despite the fact that they are the ones most desperate for better educational opportunities, their needs, concerns, and circumstances are often ignored in the urban education reform discourse. The definition of *a sound basic education* emanating from the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuits, “... a sound basic education mandated by the Education Article consists of the foundational skills that students need to become productive citizens capable of civic engagement and sustaining competitive employment,” must also be applied to the educational services targeted to court-involved youth.<sup>38</sup> I believe that there is substantial educational research about different promising approaches to teaching and learning that can be leveraged to create more effective educational programming for incarcerated youth who did not succeed in our public schools so that they are afforded a truly sound basic education.

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<sup>37</sup> Werlwas, M. L. and Lewis, D. A. (2000). New York City Must Provide Education To Incarcerated Youth. *Fortune News* (Winter). Retrieved November 2003, from [www.fortunesociety.org](http://www.fortunesociety.org)

<sup>38</sup> Campaign for Fiscal Equity v. State of New York. Retrieved November 2003, from [www.cfequity.org](http://www.cfequity.org)

*METHODOLOGY*

There were two fundamental goals of this study. One component sought to integrate the Sternberg Triarchic Theory of Intelligence into a literacy program for incarcerated youth. Sternberg, Grigorenko, and Jarvin studied how the use of the Triarchic Model might improve reading instruction amongst populations whose reading levels were below particular state prescribed standards. In a 2001 study of the model, they assembled a sample consisting of 1200 middle and high school research participants from socioeconomically lower to lower-middle class backgrounds, racially and ethnically diverse with a majority of the students being African American or Hispanic, and with average reading scores toward the bottom range of the state's tests. In developing the materials for this study, it was helpful to me that Sternberg and his colleagues had conducted a study of the Triarchic model with a sample that demographically and, to a certain extent, academically reflected the general population of adjudicated youth. This study, coupled with the consistent results of previous similar research on the Triarchic Model by Sternberg (1997) and Sternberg, Torff, and Grigorenko (1998), helped to further establish links between a triarchic pedagogy and improved academic performance, which made me think that it might be a viable option for rethinking how we educate incarcerated youth.

In their 2001 study, they collected and assessed cognitive (homework assignments, vocabulary and reading comprehension assessments, and pre-test/post-test measures) and affective (7-point scale) data. It is not explicit whether the assessments (tests and homework) were evaluated by the researchers or the teachers and whether there was interrater and intrarater reliability for those (teachers and/or researchers) who

actually did the evaluations. With respect to the cognitive data, they note that the pre-test indicated no significant difference between the control and experimental groups but the post-test demonstrated that the experimental group outperformed the control group on all three levels (analytical, creative, and practical). For the affective data, approximately eighty percent of the students liked or very much liked the program as indicated by the teachers' responses on the 7-point scale. Since students were not directly surveyed about their attitudes regarding the program, it is difficult to accept this finding with complete certainty.

For the purposes of this study, my goal was to incorporate a random assignment, two group (experimental and control), pretest – posttest format, an approach that may or may not be consistent with Sternberg's 2001 study as the report on that research didn't specify whether participant selection or assignment to create the experimental and control groups was used. Just as Sternberg and his colleagues worked with the schools' existing reading program to incorporate the triarchic approach into the instruction of the curriculum, my intent was to integrate the triarchic methods into the current reading program used with the students of the correctional facility. Teachers in Sternberg's Triarchic experimental group received two days of in-service training on how to use triarchic methods with the material of the reading program whereas the control group teachers received no new training. My intent was to recruit and, with the assistance of Sternberg's researchers, train the recruited teachers within the facility to deliver the intervention.

With respect to the pretest-posttest measures, I planned to focus on three key questions: *what changes occur in measures of academic performance of incarcerated*

*juveniles who participate in the educational program utilizing Sternberg's Triarchic model, how do those changes compare with measures of academic performance of those incarcerated juveniles who do not participate in the educational program utilizing the Triarchic model, and to what extent do boys and girls who participate in the educational program utilizing Sternberg's Triarchic model differ in the measured changes of their academic performance.* The data collection instruments were to include pretests and posttests of academic performance. For academic performance, I planned to incorporate the assessment tool associated with the specific reading program as well as the Sternberg Triarchic Abilities Test (STAT) which is used to measure the practical, analytical, and creative thinking abilities as articulated in the Sternberg Triarchic Model. With respect to the STAT, the abilities are measured in three subcategories: verbal, quantitative, and figural. The test consists of multiple-choice items organized into nine sections of four test items each. The essay section contains three questions, each focused on one of the three different abilities.

The second component of the research sought to document students' educational histories and experiences including their attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions towards education, learning, and school within and outside of the correctional facility. To develop robust cases of their educational histories and experiences over the course of the study period, I intended to administer a Likert-scale survey, conduct semi-structured interviews with students, and utilize participant observations, either by me or two raters who would be trained along with the teachers, to observe implementation of the instructional intervention, witness student engagement in the teaching and learning

process of the classroom as well as other classroom dynamics that might impact their educational experiences.

I sought to conduct the study at New York City's Rikers Island Education Facility (RIEF). It is an alternative high school under the auspices of the New York City Department of Education and is located within the prison complex on Rikers Island. During the year, the school serves an average of 6,000 male and female inmates, primarily Black and Latino youth of low socioeconomic backgrounds from the five boroughs of New York City, between the ages of 16-21 years. Depending upon a student's age, gender, and offense, he or she is assigned to particular housing areas as well as specific school areas. For the purposes of this study, my goal was to establish two cohorts of participants, experimental and control, that included eight boys and eight girls of Black and Latino descent who were 18 years old or younger, and whose length of stay at the facility would be at least the full course of the study.

#### *LIMITATIONS*

The limitations and challenges that I encountered as I attempted to coordinate and implement this study provided some insights into the overall obstacles to the teaching and learning process in a juvenile correctional facility. Throughout the process, I was reminded of the cautions of another researcher who noted "Conducting research in a juvenile correctional facility is a challenge. Inconsistent cooperation by administration and youth correctional officers (YCO), court dates and other events present challenges to researchers."<sup>39</sup> In a negotiated response to the challenges that I encountered, my plan

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<sup>39</sup> Drakeford, W. (2002). The Impact of an Intensive Program to Increase the Literacy Skills Of Youth Confined to Juvenile Corrections. *Journal of Correctional Education*, 53(4), 139-144

design had been altered. Most significantly, I was not able to establish a viable control group because while one was initially created with the New York City Department of Education certified summer school teacher who ordinarily would have taught the entire group but, because of the study, the cohort of students who had release dates beyond the length of the approved study period were randomly assigned to the two classes. There was significant attrition within the control group such that by the end of the study period, only two of seven students remained. While a pretest was administered to all of the students, I did not administer a posttest due to the significant attrition. The study was approved to only run concurrent with the mandatory summer school session, which is scheduled three hours per day, five days per week for the period of July 1<sup>st</sup> through August 12<sup>th</sup>.

Additionally, as I was unable to obtain access to the reading program used with the students throughout the year and there didn't seem to be a standard reading program for the summer session, I worked with the Sternberg researchers to modify and implement their *Raisin in the Sun* curriculum that incorporates the Triarchic model. Since the curriculum incorporates homework and the students in the study are generally not assigned homework (this is a year-round phenomenon), all written assignments had to be modified so that they could be completed and collected at the end of each daily session. With the permission of the students and the teacher, who was a criminal justice doctoral student, the class sessions were audio-taped and reviewed only by me as I was unable to obtain permission for other individuals to assist with participant observations and unable to always do so myself as I had to conduct the semi-structured interviews.

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The survey instrument was folded into the semi-structured interviews in accordance with the recommendations of the IRB, and the interviews also were audiotaped and reviewed only by me.

Since the only attendees of the summer school sessions at the school at Rikers are the students for whom it is mandated, as per the administrator, the cohort of research participants was small and consisted of fourteen English-speaking males between the ages of 16 – 18 years. No females could be included in the study because, while there are girls who are mandated to attend summer school, I was not given access to the facility where they are housed and schooled. The males involved in the study have been sentenced to one year or less which, in the opinion of one administrator, means that they have been convicted of low level offenses. The students had been enrolled at the school for either a portion of or the entire past six months of the regular academic year. According to the administrator, the students were academically performing at a fifth grade level. As with all incarcerated youth, the expectation is that upon their release, the students will return to their home communities and either transition into a New York City public school, obtain gainful employment, or enter a re-entry program where they can pursue the GED.

The students were designated to receive summer school as a result of their special education status per their Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Their special education classifications were either LD (learning disabled) based on a discrepancy of 50% or more between expected achievement and actual achievement; or ED (emotionally disturbed) in terms of demonstrating one of the following characteristics: an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; an inability to build or

maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; a generally pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. The administrator believed that the students did not present behavioral problems or that their special education classifications precluded them from being able to participate in the study.

#### *CHAPTER PLAN*

In Chapter 2, I will focus on the social problematization of the behavior of American youth, which, over the past few decades, has escalated into the criminalization of youth, particularly poor urban youth of color. This chapter will examine the theoretical frameworks that shape the ways in which we criminalize youth; and explore the manifestations of such criminalization in our social discourses, policies, and practices as well as in our social imagination. Hopefully, this examination will provide an understanding of not only how the research participants are situated within the mediated social imagination of our society but also of the social dynamic against which the youth must struggle as they consider alternative lifestyles including those that include schooling. Chapter 3 will focus on the historical evolutions of the American systems of education and incarceration that emerged as two parallel bureaucracies fundamentally concerned with the social control and socialization of individuals. An inextricable link between these two social institutions developed. With their bureaucratic evolution, they began to interact in ways that complemented and reinforced each system's efforts to structure particular forms of social conformity amongst the most marginalized and disempowered youth within American society. In Chapter 4, the focus shifts to an

examination of the contemporary landscape of education for court-involved youth in New York. The discussion will address the educational experiences of the research participants prior to and after their incarcerated status. Chapter 5 will explore the theoretical frameworks of multiple intelligences as a potentially viable pedagogical option for rethinking the education of court-involved youth. It will include a critical assessment of the ways in which the intervention of the *Raisin in the Sun* curriculum that incorporated the Triarchic Theory of Successful Intelligence can be revamped to better serve the needs of the students based upon the feedback of the research participants. The focus of Chapter 6 is to think about the next steps for expanding the discourse on court-involved youth so that we are engaging in the type of research, policymaking, and practices that will remove the target population out of the prison pipeline altogether and begin to empower them with the skills and knowledges to effectively engage in all domains of our civil society.

## CHAPTER II: CRIMINALIZATION OF YOUTH

### *YOUTH OF COLOR AS PROBLEMATIC – HISTORICAL OVERVIEW*

Just as living in and around conditions of poverty has structured the ways in which young people from particular racialized communities are swallowed up by the prison pipeline, so too have the ways in which the images of young people are framed and mediated within our social discourses and within the public sphere. Over the past century, society has effectively constructed a range of discourses that not only has legitimized the deployment of youth, especially young males of color, as problematic but also justified an increasingly punitive approach to our social policies and practices engaging young people. Some researchers suggest that the initial trigger or the accelerant for this dynamic of youthful assault resulted from the large-scale participation of young people in the social movements and protests of the 1960s and 1970s that challenged the American hegemony around class, race, and gender, as well as the ways in which the youth's participation provided significant momentum for wide-ranging social change. Of significant note for this perspective is James Q. Wilson, whose protégé was John J. DiIulio, Jr., who blamed the 1960s for the rise of a criminal element and deflected attention away from the role of social structures in crime, "...sixties-style moral relativism replaced "the belief in personal responsibility with the notion of social causation and by supplying to those marginal persons at risk for crime a justification for doing what they might have done anyway."<sup>40</sup>

However, within a racialized context, the demonization and criminalization of young people of color, particularly males, is a much older phenomenon. In 1854, George

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<sup>40</sup> Hayden, Tom. (2004). *Street Wars*. New York: The New Press, p. 117

Fitzhugh, a Virginia newspaperman who was a vocal advocate of slavery, wrote in *Sociology for the South* that “slavery rescued blacks from idolatry and cannibalism, and every brutal vice and crime that can disgrace humanity.”<sup>41</sup> As early as the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, efforts were made to structure the image of the black man as deviant and criminal within the public domain. These efforts did not solely emanate from individuals who were seeking to justify slavery but also from members of the supposed learned communities. Most notably, Dr. G. Stanley Hall in the late 1800s, then-president of the American Psychological Association and founder of the *American Journal of Psychology*, noted that “the black man’s disthesis, both psychic and physical is erethic, volatile, changeable, prone to transcoidal, intensely emotional and even epileptoid states.”<sup>42</sup> The legitimacy of science was now leveraged to further institutionalize the social imagining of the black man as inherently criminal and beyond redemption because of his own genetic dispositions. As new technologies emerged, they were co-opted for the purpose of furthering the attack on the image of black men. In the early 1900s, the promulgation of a demonic and criminalized image of black men was expanded through the mediated form of films with movies like *Birth of a Nation*, *Rastus in Zululand*, *Rastus and Chicken*, *Pickaninnies and Watermelon*, and *The Chicken Thief*. Although white actors in “black face” portrayed the characters, the impact of the films strengthened the demonization of black men as crazed, immoral, and violent threats to society that had begun in the 1800s.

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<sup>41</sup> Hutchinson, Earl Ofari. (1997). *The Assassination of the Black Male Image*. New York: Touchstone, p. 21

<sup>42</sup> Hutchinson, Earl Ofari. (1997). *The Assassination of the Black Male Image*. New York: Touchstone, p. 24

Within this social milieu, it is not surprising, then, that President Teddy Roosevelt, in a 1906 address to Congress, said “the greatest existing cause of lynching is the perpetration, especially by black men, of the hideous crime of rape.”<sup>43</sup> With this single statement, the commander and chief of the United States of America not only branded black men as rapists but condoned the use of a mob-enforced and legally arbitrary form of the death penalty to exact revenge. He undoubtedly fueled the fire of black criminality within the social imagination such that it is understandable that the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill was not passed until 1922 and during the period of 1882 through 1968, 3,445 black men were executed.<sup>44</sup> One would think that inextricably linking the black man to violent criminal activity, such as rape, in the social imagination was sufficient. However, this was not the case and in 1910, Hamilton Wright, the State Department’s then-foremost expert on drug abuse escalated the assassination of the image of the black male with accounts of drug-crazed black males. Under authority of his governmental position, he testified, “cocaine is often the direct incentive to the crime of rape by the negroes of the South and other sections of the country.”<sup>45</sup> Interestingly, three years later, it was documented, at least in Georgia, that there were many more drug addicts who were white than black.

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<sup>43</sup> Hutchinson, Earl Ofari. (1997). *The Assassination of the Black Male Image*. New York: Touchstone, p. 27

<sup>44</sup> Gibson, R. *The Negro Holocaust: Lynching and Race Riots in the United States, 1880-1950*; Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute. Retrieved December 2005, from <http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/shipp/lynchingyear.html>

<sup>45</sup> Hutchinson, Earl Ofari. (1997). *The Assassination of the Black Male Image*. New York: Touchstone, p. 126

The period of the 1960s onward represented a pernicious exacerbation of the foundation of negative imagery of black males that had been solidly established by individuals from all domains of civil society throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Wilson aggressively began to advance his belief that a crime wave perpetrated by the youth was inevitable and that American society had to prepare itself for a 30,000 increase of young criminals.<sup>46</sup> The notion of youth culture, particularly within racialized communities, as inherently oppositional and specifically menacing to the larger society seemed to be escalating with the rhetoric of people like Wilson. From this perspective, the public came to understand youth crime as the pathological result of their moral depravity. This discourse occurred within a social context where deindustrialization, economic restructuring, and a resurgence of racism dominated within American society.<sup>47</sup> The era was one in which Americans had to contend with the aftermath of the civil rights and anti-Vietnam War movements of the 1960s, the impeachment of President Richard Nixon, the crisis of the oil embargo by OPEC members, an expanding national debt that ultimately reached \$382 billion, and economic conditions that lead to a deep recession that would continue into the early 1980s.

By the 1970s, there was a convergence of several social phenomena including the socioeconomic conditions, sociopolitical shifts in terms of the enactment of youth agency to challenge the hegemony of the nation, a new sociocultural milieu that was framed by integration and the victories of the Civil Rights movement, as well as the emergence of

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<sup>46</sup> Hayden, Tom. (2004). *Street Wars*. New York: The New Press

<sup>47</sup> Lipsitz, George (1994). We Know What Time It Is. In Ross, A. and Rose, T. (Eds.), *Microphone Fiends: Youth Music & Youth Culture* (pp. 17-28). New York: Routledge

new code of racist language such as “law and order,” “welfare cheats,” “subculture of violence/poverty,” “crime-prone,” “gang-infested,” “crack-plagued,” “ghetto outcasts,” and “ghetto-poverty syndrome” that was used by politicians like Nixon and Reagan,<sup>48</sup> that facilitated the public’s embrace of punitive actions against what it perceived as dangerous social threats to be contained so that the safety of society could be maintained. The 1970s represented a definitive shift in American penal paradigms, particularly with respect to sentencing policies and practices that abandoned the more indeterminate sentencing models that were characteristic of the 1960s and earlier periods in favor of more determinate frameworks. Albeit for different reasons, the political left and right eagerly embraced this shift in the nation’s criminal justice policies and practices. The liberals believed that the more indeterminate frameworks were fertile ground for discriminatory sentencing practices while the conservatives argued that such frameworks were lenient and did not appropriately punish criminals. New York State’s 1973 Rockefeller Drug Laws, which mandated highly punitive and lengthy prison terms for the possession or sale of relatively small amounts of drugs, epitomized the nation’s new embrace of determinate sentencing frameworks. Unfortunately, these laws also yielded particularly pernicious and far-reaching collateral damage to poor racialized communities by facilitating the acceleration of the mass incarceration of people, especially males, of color. It is a consequence from which we have not recovered, even thirty-three years later.

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<sup>48</sup> Hutchinson, Earl Ofari. (1997). *The Assassination of the Black Male Image*. New York: Touchstone, p. 30

Marc Mauer suggests that the shift in American penal policies and practices that were witnessed by the 1970s was incubated by a climate where there was a politicization of crime, a cultural focus on individualism, and a galvanizing conservative movement. With respect to the politicization of crime, Mauer notes that with Barry Goldwater's 1965 proclamation of crime in the streets as a problem, the issue of crime takes center stage in a national discourse whereas it formerly had been addressed as a local matter. The positioning of crime as a national issue was reinforced and expanded in the years to follow and through the contemporary period as politicians from both dominant political parties began to use it as a point of leverage to galvanize support for themselves, especially during phases of low approval ratings, or to obliterate their opponents. "Polling data from the 1960s and the 1980s show that crime surfaced as a major focus of public concern only after politicians emphasized it...Polling data show little interest in crime after 1973. The issue was revived with Ronald Reagan's successful campaign for President in 1980. Reagan invoked an image of crime that linked violent street crime to welfare, to liberal social policies, and to declining respect for traditional moral values...Reagan's Vice President George Bush looked to be in trouble when the major campaign issue was seen as economic decline. Turning the issue to crime salvaged his campaign. Democratic candidate Michael Dukakis suffered an irreversible wound when Bush's campaign linked him to African-American murderer Willie Horton."<sup>49</sup> Pervasive in this new social discourse constructed by a neoconservative political movement was the use of a contemporary semiotic code that was less explicit, but nonetheless devastating and destructive, in its racism.

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<sup>49</sup> Simon in Garland, David (Ed.). (2001). *Mass Imprisonment: Social Causes and Consequences*. California: Sage Publications, p. 23

During this time, the sociopolitical manipulation of crime also manifested in terms of American notions of individualism. With a privileged focus on the individual, it was much easier for politicians and policymakers to frame the criminal justice discourse in ways that problematized the individual who committed a particular offense rather than force the public to engage in any type of an examination of the underlying social conditions that contributed to the commission of a criminal act by an individual. To be clear, this focus yielded an unnatural decontextualization of the individual. Within the penal system that now adheres to determinate sentencing frameworks, the extenuating circumstances of one's social context can no longer be relevant. The individual is essentialized as the criminal act, which seems to mitigate against the rationality of rehabilitation. The essentializing of individuals within the penal paradigms also enabled a simultaneous essentialization within the sociopolitical discourses of the public domain. In this respect, certain individuals, primarily black males, were inextricably linked to notions of crime, which had the impact of legitimizing the racism of irrational and racialized fears. Black males could now be publicly feared not because they were black but because they represented the criminal element. A new semiotic coding of the same type of racism that framed the social imaging of the Black man during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century emerged and took root within the society.

According to Lipsitz, "Since the 1970s, a series of moral panics about gangs, drug use, teenage pregnancy and "wilding" assaults have demonized inner-city minority youths, making them scapegoats for the chaos created in national life..."<sup>50</sup> The extent to

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<sup>50</sup> Lipsitz, George (1994). We Know What Time It Is. In Ross, A. and Rose, T. (Eds.), *Microphone Fiends: Youth Music & Youth Culture* (pp. 17-28). New York: Routledge, p. 19

which the public uncritically accepted the demonization and criminalization of black males (or perhaps the enormity of the success in mediating a demonic and criminal image of black males) is well-observed in the cases of Charles Stuart, and more recently Susan Smith. Both of whom were unchallenged when they reported to law enforcement and media outlets that a black man perpetrated the crime that led to the deaths of their family members. Additionally, there is the infamous case of the black youth who were initially charged and convicted, a conviction that was later discarded due to DNA evidence, in the case of the Central Park Jogger. Prior to any type of legal hearing in a court of law, the youth were characterized in the media and public discourse as mutts, wolf pack, wilding gang, and good candidates for execution.<sup>51</sup>

Accompanying the 1990s was the rhetoric of John J. DiIulio, Jr. who mightily continued the onslaught on the image of the young black male and further entrenched notions of black criminality within the public sphere. “In November 1995, Princeton’s DiIulio coined the most racially explosive word in the field to sum up his theories on urban crime...This was a new breed of feral child, described by DiIulio as almost mythical in his savagery. The superpredator suffers from “moral poverty,” and commits his “homicidal violence in ‘wolf packs.’” He is raised in “chaotic, dysfunctional, fatherless, Godless and jobless settings where...self-respecting young men literally aspire to get away with murder.” By the year 2010, the conservative moralist foresaw, 270,000 more such remorseless thugs – most of them Black, male, and urban – would be pouring

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<sup>51</sup> Central Park Jogger Case Is Reopened After New DNA Evidence Shows Five African-American and Latino Youths Who Were Imprisoned for Years Did Not Commit the Rape (September 2002). Retrieved December 2005, from <http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=03/04/07/036221>

into helpless communities.”<sup>52</sup> DiIulio’s theoretical representations of youth delinquency and deviance solidified this new and more explicit hypercriminalization of poor African-American youth in urban communities.<sup>53</sup> Its consequent impact was much more destructive and far-reaching, despite his later repentance and regrets about conceptualizing a racialized superpredator, because the rhetoric provided the emergent neoconservative movement with the fodder it needed to advance its campaign against young people by deploying the idea of a racialized superpredator as the reason for society’s ills. As they took hold of political power, the neoconservatives continued to deny that the corporate downsizing of the 1980s and 1990s, resulting in a significant loss of working class jobs from the inner cities coupled with a simultaneous economic opportunity in the crack cocaine epidemic, had an impact on rates of crime.<sup>54</sup> Youth of color became society’s ultimate scapegoat and the pathology was localized in the child rather than the social system responsible for the child’s development.

In *The Scapegoat Generation*, Mike Males uses California as a case study to provide a quantitatively detailed account about the paradox of America’s social war on youth during the 1990s despite periods of national economic growth and resilience. “The relentless defunding and dismantling of public and private support for the young by the richest generations of middle-aged and elders in American history is extreme and dangerous. It is peculiar for an older generation to display such punishing dislike for the

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<sup>52</sup> Hancock in Polakow, Valerie. (Ed.). (2000). *The Public Assault on America’s Children*. New York: Teachers College Press, p. 90

<sup>53</sup> Mauer, M. (1999). *Race to Incarcerate*. New York: The New Press; and Parenti, Christian (1999). *Lockdown America*. New York: Verso

<sup>54</sup> Hayden, Tom. (2004). *Street Wars*. New York: The New Press

youth we bred and raised and who, as will be show, closely reflect our values and behaviors. Our divesture of the coming generation is reflected in, and justified by, political and special interests who engage in blaming every social ill, from crime and violence and poverty and drug abuse to personal immorality, upon our most victimized adolescents.”<sup>55</sup> With statistical data on deviant activities such as crime, sexual promiscuity, and drug usage, he challenges notions that young people are, in fact, engaging in more deviant activity. According to Males, more adults, comparatively speaking, engaged in deviant behaviors than youth. He suggests that there is a need to focus on the fact that the phenomenon of the superpredator youth is the result of the profound fear of the intense social, racial, and cultural changes that have taken place over the past few decades.

*CONTEMPORARY LANDSCAPE – MEDIATED MASS CULTURE*

Unfortunately, within the contemporary context of our social imagination, discourses, and public spheres, “Youth is present only when its presence is a problem, or is regarded as a problem. More precisely, the category “youth” gets mobilized in official documentary discourse, in concerned or outraged editorials and features, or in the supposedly disinterested tracts emanating from the social sciences at those times when young people make their presence felt by going “out of bounds”, by resisting through rituals, dressing strangely, striking bizarre attitudes, breaking rules, breaking bottles, windows, heads, issuing rhetorical challenges to the law.”<sup>56</sup> To be sure, the construction

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<sup>55</sup> Males, M. A. (1996). *The Scapegoat Generation*. Maine: Common Courage Press, p. 5

<sup>56</sup> Dick Hebdige as cited in Giroux, Henry. (1996). *Fugitive Cultures*. New York: Routledge, p. 27

of this image, particularly with respect to members of racialized and impoverished communities, has been vigorously and continuously fed by all forms of media. “The media, for whatever reasons, have chosen to cultivate an image that emphasizes the problematic nature of youth, stressing incidents that play up excessive violence, sexuality, and risktaking. Repetition of this frame has made “difficulty” an almost automatic paired-associate of the term “youth”<sup>57</sup> Research by Dorman and Schiraldi demonstrates that 76% of the public depend upon the media to formulate their opinions about youth crime; and that African-American youth are more likely to be shown as perpetrators of criminal activity in the media.<sup>58</sup>

What is most ironic, distressing, and insidious about the ways in which African Americans, particularly young males, have been criminalized in the public domain, is the recent co-optation of their cultural forms by capitalists who subsequently have commodified a distorted product that mightily reinforces the criminalized black male image. The cultural tools constructed by the youth of this racialized community to destabilize the hegemony of the master’s house have been stolen from them and are now being extensively used against them through a structured proliferation of negative imagery of the community within the social imagination of the world. The hip hop musical genre of gangsta rap fortifies images of young black males as thugs, niggers, criminal, gangsters, and demonic; and these are the musical forms, through highly

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<sup>57</sup> Youniss, J. and Ruth, A. in Mortimer, J. T. and Larson, R. W. (Eds.). (2002). *The Changing Adolescent Experience*. Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, p. 261

<sup>58</sup> Dorfman, L. and Schiraldi, V. (2001). *Off Balance: Youth, Race, & Crime in the News. Building Blocks for Youth – Executive Summary*. Retrieved March 2005, from [www.buildingblocksforyouth/media](http://www.buildingblocksforyouth/media)

effective and strategic marketing campaigns, that dominate the mainstream cultural landscape locally and globally. In her discussion of the commercialization of the hip-hop/rap subcultural form, Blair references the comments of Tony Van Der Meer who believes that commercialization is the thing that threatens rap because “The expression of Black people is transformed when it is repackaged without any evidence remaining of the Black historical experience.”<sup>59</sup> Hip-hop music has been transformed into a commodity produced, disseminated, and controlled by capitalists who have found enormous profit in further institutionalizing negative images of black people in the public sphere. According to Blair, “transfunctionalized objects produced by the subculture become the raw material for cultural production by the mass culture industries. During this process, subcultural meanings are changed by mass producers (such as advertisers) into more marketable, less radical meanings.”<sup>60</sup>

In his discussion of popular culture, George Lipsitz makes the point that *culture comes to us as a commodity*; and we often do not question the extent to which the commodified product is performative rather than truly representative, or the extent to which the artists are uncritically aiding their own racialized demise as the performative becomes understood as the reality in the minds of the consumers. Rose documents how record companies, through their A&R departments, mold artists to fit the best selling genres so that as gangster rap gained market share, artists were steered to include that type of musical form in their overall repertoire. “To hustle mega record deals and concert

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<sup>59</sup> Blair in Forman, M. and Neal, M. A. (Eds.). (2004). *That's the Joint!: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, p. 497

<sup>60</sup> Blair in Forman, M. and Neal, M. A. (Eds.). (2004). *That's the Joint!: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, p. 501

bookings, some rappers and comedians say black men are “niggers” and, more incredibly, “bitches.”<sup>61</sup> Of the gangsta rap genre, Hutchinson notes that many of the rappers who make small fortunes by producing that type of music do not, and have not lived the lives depicted in their music. “Rappers Snoop Doggy Dog and Tupac (“I am not a ganster”) Shakur would testify to that. In a confessional moment they told interviewers that the lyrics of their gangsta rap didn’t depict their life or reality. So why do they do it? M O N E Y = STEREOTYPE = MO’ M O N E Y.”<sup>62</sup> Ultimately, the commodification of the music substantively shapes, through constrictive frameworks, how its members are perceived and subsequently positioned within society as well as within social discourses. In this case, the historical and contemporary contexts of our mediated mass culture have rendered the young black male as inherently deviant and this representation, through the use of particular forms of hip hop, has been endorsed and sanctioned by the community that produces and consumes the music and its images. Young Black men have become complicit, as they produce and consume this media, in the further social institutionalization of their image as criminal, deviant, and pathological that began in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

*CONTEMPORARY LANDSCAPE – LEGALISTIC POLICIES & PRACTICES*

With the continuous propagation of the various forms of criminalized images of black males within the public sphere, politicians of various leanings have embraced and successfully advocated for the imposition of more punitive sanctions against what we

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<sup>61</sup> Hutchinson, Earl Ofari. (1997). *The Assassination of the Black Male Image*. New York: Touchstone, p. 15

<sup>62</sup> Hutchinson, Earl Ofari. (1997). *The Assassination of the Black Male Image*. New York: Touchstone, p. 143

have come to perceive as the deviant. Kitwana explains how criminal justice spending and legislation during the 1990s specifically targeted inner-city youth. Reagan's 1980s "War on Drugs" efforts, which privileged punishment over rehabilitation and endorsed criminal sentencing disparities for crack cocaine – more prevalent in urban communities – than for powder cocaine – more widespread in white suburban communities, was a significant catalyst for the movement towards the mass incarceration of men of color and an offensive prelude to the more destructive 1990s. Most notably, there was George H.W. Bush's Violence Initiative that funded research focused on identifying the behavioral and biological markers for predicting violence in inner-city children. According to the Bush administration, this Initiative was a means to treat violence as a public health issue – identify the problem, its cohort, and deliver therapeutic treatment to those affected. The fundamental problem was that the Initiative epistemologically presumed that urban youth (read as Black and Latino youth) had a tendency towards violence. This policy directive clearly reflected a response to the socially constructed criminalization of young black males as opposed to statistical data indicating an increase in criminal activity amongst the targeted cohort.

The Clinton presidency was not to be outdone by Bush and followed suit with the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994. This is the same administration that ended welfare as we knew it through its legislative dictum that held people living in poverty accountable for their own impoverishment. The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act not only increased funding for prison construction but also sanctioned the use of the death penalty for federal crimes generally linked to urban youth of color; established the "three strikes" penalty for violent felonies and drug

crimes; and endorsed the adult prosecution of thirteen and fourteen year olds charged with particular crimes.<sup>63</sup> State and local officials as well as policymakers followed federal trends with similar laws, policies, and practices to punish the unduly hypercriminalized urban youth of color.

Of particular contention was the move to lower the age at which a child could be held criminally accountable as an adult. By 1995, at least 17 states had revised their legal mandates so that a greater number of children could be waived or transferred to adult criminal court. As if this trend wasn't sufficient, the Congress, in 1997, approved an appropriation of \$250 million to be distributed to states that could certify that they had adopted or was considering adopting laws to expand their criminal court jurisdictions in terms of lowered ages, and had enhanced penalties for children. With their transfer into the adult criminal courts, children would no longer be afforded any special considerations due to age, developmental capacity, or experience in terms of the assessment of culpability. As such, the consequent sentencing of children became increasingly harsh as well. The prevailing wisdom that children possessed great potential for rehabilitation was no longer intact, and a posture towards more severe punishment ensued. Legislatures and courts, through the expansion of adult criminal court jurisdiction over juveniles, subjected youth to longer and more punitive sentences. All of this occurred despite the fact that while there was an increase in the youth population from 1994 to 2002, there was a simultaneous 70% fall in youth homicide rates during the same

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<sup>63</sup> Kitwana, Bakari (2002). *The Hip Hop Generation: Young Blacks and The Crisis in African-American Culture*. New York: BasicCivitas Books

period.<sup>64</sup> Even as the political and legislative domains worked to push youth into the nexus of the criminal courts, there was a more insidious movement to push the criminal justice system into the spaces that were socially prescribed as belonging to youth. The efforts of this movement are bounded in the phenomenon known as the school to prison pipeline and will be more fully discussed in a subsequent chapter.

Unfortunately, the public assault on America's children has been relentless and consistent. Despite the legislative and social rhetoric, the contemporary period reflects a stark intensification of our socially destructive response to childhood and adolescence (Ayers, 1997; Males, 1996; Platt, 1977; Polakow, 2000), especially with respect to youth of color. Increasingly, we are eroding the abilities of our child welfare systems to nurture the effective development of our children.

#### *THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS*

While the construction of notions of deviance and the attribution of such constructs to members of particular racialized communities have been prominently centered within the public domain, it has also occupied a space within academia as researchers have proffered a range of socio-theoretical models, spanning the disciplines of biology, psychology, and sociology to explain youth delinquency and deviance. In *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang*, Albert Cohen explains that the central tenet of psychogenic theories is “the idea that delinquency is a result of some attribute of the personality of the child, an attribute which the non-delinquent child does not possess or

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<sup>64</sup> Shah, Palak. *Defending Justice*. Massachusetts: Political Research Associates. Retrieved December 2005, from <http://www.publiceye.org/defendingjustice/pdfs/chapters/youth.pdf>, p. 177

does not possess in the same degree.”<sup>65</sup> He makes a distinction between those theories that suggest an inborn trait of delinquency within an individual and those that seem to embrace the notion that delinquency is a manifested symptom of an underlying adjustment problem. In either case, the social pathology is localized within the individual who is fundamentally problematized within the deviance framework offered by psychogenic theorists.

The major categories within the psychological framework of delinquency include psychoanalytic, behaviorist, personality-disorder, and developmental. “The basic assumption of behaviorist/social learning theories is that criminal and delinquent behaviors are learned...*Personality disorder theory* links criminal and delinquent behaviors to defective personalities... According to Yochelson and Samenow (1976), criminals and delinquents feel a sense of superiority and have inflated self-images. They also propose that criminals are not the victims of society, but rather the victimizers. Some researchers have suggested that early childhood development can lead to delinquency. Such experiences include poor parent-child relationships, parental rejection, irrational discipline, and child abuse (Fareta, 1981; Feldman, 1977; Pemberton & Benady, 1973; Rutter & Quinton, 1988). Children raised in dysfunctional families are at risk of developing some type of personality disorder. Other researchers believe that juveniles are suffering from childhood conduct disorders which produce revengeful,

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<sup>65</sup> Cohen, Albert. (1971). *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang*. New York: The Free Press, p. 14

destructive, quarrelsome behaviors. These juveniles are usually hostile, disobedient, aggressive, and impulsive (Stewart et al., 1980).”<sup>66</sup>

Travis Hirschi, in Causes of Delinquency, outlines the three predominate sociological paradigms on delinquency and deviance including strain, stress, or motivational theories, control or bond theories, and cultural deviance theories. According to Hirschi, the central assumption of strain theory is the idea that individuals are moral but there are situations of stress or strain that prevent them from obtaining legitimate success so they resort to deviance to achieve particular goals. A concise definition of strain theories was articulated by Parsons who argued “that the overriding cause of the “motivation to deviance” was the strain produced when a disequilibrated system does not permit its members to satisfactorily fulfill role expectations.”<sup>67</sup> Cloward and Ohlin, two contemporary strain theorists, distinguish between three primary types of adaptation to stressful conditions, including a criminal, conflict, and retreatist orientation by the individual. Furthermore, they believe that “the milieu in which actors find themselves has a crucial impact upon the types of adaptation which develop in response to pressures toward deviance.”<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, they incorporate a notion of norm rejection in their framework. “It is our view that members of delinquent subcultures have withdrawn their attribution of legitimacy to certain of the norms maintained by law-abiding groups of the

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<sup>66</sup> Joseph, J. (1995). *Black Youths, Delinquency and Juvenile Justice*. Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, p. 58

<sup>67</sup> Cullen, F. T. (1983). *Rethinking crime and deviance theory: The emergence of a structuring Tradition*. New Jersey: Rowman & Allanheld, p. 94

<sup>68</sup> Cloward, R. A., and Ohlin, L. E. (1966). *Delinquency and Opportunity: A Theory of Delinquent Gangs*. New York: Free Press, p. x

larger society and have given it, instead, to new patterns of conduct which are defined as illegitimate by representatives of official agencies.”<sup>69</sup>

Cloward and Ohlin identify several conditions; integration of age levels, integration of values, structural integration and social control, social disorganization and opportunity, and double failure, which facilitate the emergence of delinquent subcultures. In terms of the ways in which they implicate social structures in the formation of delinquent subcultures, the conditions of structural integration and social control, social disorganization and opportunity, and double failure are particularly important. Structural integration and social control refer to the socialization and control of the individual who is attempting to integrate into the subculture. Behavior has to be instrumental, as opposed to non-utilitarian and impulsive, to the fulfillment of the subculture’s norms and values. According to Cloward and Ohlin, “Communities that are unable to develop conventional forms of social organization are also unable to provide legitimate modes of access to culturally valued success-goals.... The adult community, being disorganized, cannot provide the resources and opportunities that are required if the young are to move upward in the social order.”<sup>70</sup> Cloward and Ohlin embrace Merton’s concept of double failure, referring to a pervasive failure to attain culturally sanctioned goals by legitimate means and the internalization of prohibitions toward illegitimate behavior which ultimately results in retreatist behavior, but make one significant change. They believe that an individual’s inability to use an illegitimate route is as likely to result from socially

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<sup>69</sup> Cloward, R. A., and Ohlin, L. E. (1966). *Delinquency and Opportunity: A Theory of Delinquent Gangs*. New York: Free Press, p. 19

<sup>70</sup> Cloward, R. A., and Ohlin, L. E. (1966). *Delinquency and Opportunity: A Theory of Delinquent Gangs*. New York: Free Press, p. 173

structured barriers as from the internalization of prohibitions. Cloward and Ohlin's discussion is important because it provides a theoretical landscape with a more comprehensive perspective by shifting attention from a sole focus on the individual, as tends to be the case with most biological and psychological theories of deviance, to the role of social structures in the creation of deviance and delinquency.

On the other hand, there are control or bond theories that begin with the idea that people are amoral or that there are variations of one's sense of morality. Within this framework, individuals are more likely to participate in deviance when their bonds to society and social attachments are weak or broken as these circumstances facilitate movement to the lower end of the scale of the range of sense of morality.<sup>71</sup> It seems that the early members of the Chicago School built the tradition of this theoretical framework as they examined the consequences of American urbanization and witnessed the social disorganization prevalent in impoverished neighborhoods.<sup>72</sup> Through a juxtaposition against strain theory, Cullen defines the perspective of the Chicago School control theorists, "Instead, criminal involvement, in a context of a breakdown of controls due to conditions of social disorganization, is a natural, nonstressful expression of values encouraging such behavior, just as church-going or playing baseball is an expression of values encouraging these activities."<sup>73</sup> The works of Thrasher, Shaw and McKay, and Sutherland dominated this school of thought. For Thrasher, it is the absence of controls

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<sup>71</sup> Hirschi, Travis. (2002). *Causes of Delinquency*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers

<sup>72</sup> Cullen, F. T. (1983). *Rethinking crime and deviance theory: The emergence of a structuring tradition*. New Jersey: Rowman & Allanheld

<sup>73</sup> Cullen, F. T. (1983). *Rethinking crime and deviance theory: The emergence of a structuring tradition*. New Jersey: Rowman & Allanheld, p. 103

or the incapacity of conventional institutions within disorganized communities to regulate the behavior of its members that allow for people to conform to deviancy or not.

Without substantively differing from Thrasher, Shaw and McKay advocated a form of control theory that incorporates the idea of cultural transmission.<sup>74</sup> According to Shaw and McKay, the criminal behavior that emerges from disorganized communities evolves into an inherited cultural tradition like any other culture. “Shaw and McKay did not contend that juveniles would become delinquent simply because they experienced a dearth of control over their behavior. Delinquent involvement would occur only if a second factor was also present: exposure to a “delinquent tradition” – “a coherent system of values supporting delinquent acts.”<sup>75</sup> In Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang, Albert Cohen provides an explanatory account of the cultural transmission theoretical framework. Within this model, “the only important difference between the delinquent and the non-delinquent is the degree of exposure to this delinquent culture pattern...Delinquency, according to this view, is not an expression or contrivance of a particular kind of personality; it may be imposed upon any kind of personality if circumstances favor intimate association with delinquent models. The process of becoming a delinquent is the same as the process of becoming, let us say, a Boy Scout.”<sup>76</sup> Although the cultural transmission theory suggests that the pathology is not intrinsic, as

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<sup>74</sup> Cullen, F. T. (1983). *Rethinking crime and deviance theory: The emergence of a structuring tradition*. New Jersey: Rowman & Allanheld

<sup>75</sup> Cullen, F. T. (1983). *Rethinking crime and deviance theory: The emergence of a structuring tradition*. New Jersey: Rowman & Allanheld, p. 111

<sup>76</sup> Cohen, Albert. (1971). *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang*. New York: The Free Press, p. 13

in the psychogenic model, it is still localized within the individual who acquires the pathology through learned behavior patterns. Too often, the cultural transmission framework has been used to implicate and demonize racialized cultural groups. DiIulio's conceptualization of the superpredator is one such example and the ways in which immigrant groups of the 1800s were targeted and labeled as depraved and immoral is another.

The range of cultural deviance theories describes deviant behavior as conformity to standards that are deemed unacceptable by the larger society. According to Gottfredson and Hirschi, "The foundation for cultural deviance theory came with the conclusion of Thorsten Sellin (1938) that crime is always relative to the norms of the group defining it as crime – therefore, it is a product of social definitions."<sup>77</sup> The broad landscape of the cultural deviance theoretical collection, including differential association, labeling, conflict, subcultural, and social learning, provides more focus on the social structuring of crime and deviance than the psychogenic and biological theories that localize particular pathologies within the individual. However, within some of the cultural deviance theoretical models, there still seems to be a tendency to more microscopically locate the problem.

Within the control theory paradigm, Sutherland offered another variation through his conceptualization of the principle differential association. As an epistemological foundation, Sutherland assumed that a culture of conflict exists within society. From that perspective, he asserted that individuals are more likely to commit crimes when they are

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<sup>77</sup> Gottfredson, M. R., and Hirschi, T. (1990). *A General Theory of Crime*. California: Stanford University Press, p. 76

more heavily immersed in a culture that prescribes behaviors precluded by law rather than a culture that prescribes behaviors protected by law, and that criminal behavior is learned just like any other behavior. Sutherland, in essence, does not significantly differ from Shaw and McKay because there is still the underlying idea that deviance emerges from disorganized impoverished neighborhoods. In both contexts, there is a focus on the idea that deviance and delinquency emerge from a socialization process whereby an individual is habituated or develops a 'habitus' of subcultural norms that violate those sanctioned by the culture of the larger society.

With respect to the theorizing of Sutherland, considered a cultural deviance theorist by Gottfredson and Hirschi while Cullen categorizes him as a control theorist, the idea that individuals learn deviance because of their proximal positionality within a culture that prescribes behaviors precluded by law suggest that the person's culture is pathological in so far as it socializes towards deviance. Sutherland's subculture of deviance would still be logistically and socially situated within a larger cultural context and in his framework, that immediate larger cultural context would be the impoverished and disorganized community, which also tends to be racialized within American society. Furthermore, Sutherland, nor Shaw and McKay, nor Thrasher implicates the societal structures in terms of delineating the norms of behavior as suggested by the cultural deviance framework. This is an essential component when one considers that a hegemonic society is likely to norm behavior that will fundamentally support the maintenance of the hegemony. A review of the social control mechanisms of schools and the reformatories confirm this perspective.

Another important theoretical paradigm is the labeling or societal reaction theory which rejects the idea that people engage in acts of deviance because they are incapable of negotiating the stresses of everyday, and shifts analytical focus to those who construct and assign labels of deviance to others. These theorists contend that "...the deviant status of a behavior should not be taken for granted, as had traditionally been the case. Instead, it is essential to explain why a particular behavior is "deviant" at one time but perhaps not at another...Second, once deviant labels are established, it is likely that they will be applied when social control procedures are enacted."<sup>78</sup> This framework begins the very important work of moving the discourse to a level of critically where the society is problematized. Following this tradition of shifting the focus, are the conflict, radical, or critical theoretical models which, according to Cullen, assert that "criminality" is ultimately bound up in "economic conditions"...because the "ruling class" has "made certain rules and regulations to keep possession of the treasures of the world, and when the disinherited have reached out to obtain the means of life, they have been met with these arbitrary rules and lodged in jail."<sup>79</sup> The zero tolerance movement can be appropriately and critically situated within the paradigms of labeling and societal reaction theories.

In his article entitled *Toward a Marxian Theory of Deviance*, Steven Spitzer suggests most theoretical frameworks on crime and delinquency still fall short of what is needed to fully understand deviance. "Theories that locate the source of deviance in

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<sup>78</sup> Cullen, F. T. (1983). *Rethinking crime and deviance theory: The emergence of a structuring tradition*. New Jersey: Rowman & Allanheld, p. 125

<sup>79</sup> Cullen, F. T. (1983). *Rethinking crime and deviance theory: The emergence of a structuring tradition*. New Jersey: Rowman & Allanheld, pps. 147 – 148

factors as diverse as personality structure, family systems, cultural transmission, social disorganization, and differential opportunity share a common flaw – they attempt to understand deviance apart from historically specific forms of political and economic organization.”<sup>80</sup> In his discussion, Spitzer specifically calls attention to the ways in which capitalism, through political and economic arrangements, continuously structures and restructures society to achieve its particular goals of growth. He stresses the need for theorists to think about how deviance is *subjectively constructed* and how deviants are *objectively handled*.

From Spitzer’s perspective, *problem populations*, which are generated from other cultural groups within the society, are increasingly made deviant based upon the extent to which they become disruptive to social relations of production. There are various gatekeepers, schools and prisons for example, that seek to control potential problems or legitimize the assignment of the label of deviance to such individuals. Within his model, deviance is not a static notion, and the superstructure of capitalism and the subcultures that emerge (and are labeled as deviant by the superstructure) are necessarily dialogic. Through the Marxist paradigm, Spitzer embraces a critical framework in that it more effectively situates the individual within the sociopolitical and economic contexts of a hegemonic society that inform the subcultural formation which emerges in a necessarily dialectical relationship with other cultural formations and impacts the social milieu. He provides an important framework for understanding the specificity of the structuring and restructuring mechanisms of the society through the deployment of the idea of deviance

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<sup>80</sup> Spitzer, Steven. (1975). Toward a Marxian Theory of Deviance. *Social Problems*, 22(5), (Jun). Retrieved December 2005, from <http://www.jstor.org/>, p. 639

and crime to create superfluous deviant populations, which are overwhelmingly represented by members of racialized communities.

The social construction of deviance and the creation of a superfluous deviant population from particular racialized communities represent the realization of hegemonic power in American society and this notion is captured in Spitzer's conceptualization. As noted by Hutchinson, "to maintain power and control, the plantation masters said that black men were savage and hypersexual. To strengthen racial control, late nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century scientists and academics concocted pseudo-theories that said black men were criminal and mentally defective. To justify lynching and political domination, the politicians and business leaders of the era said that black men were rapists and brutes. To roll back civil rights and slash social programs, Reagan-Rush Limbaugh-Pat Buchanan-type conservatives say black men are derelict and lazy."<sup>81</sup> Loic Wacquant's research and theorizing further support this perspective as he has reasoned that our criminal justice structures, including prisons, are tools to maintain the social marginality of particular racialized communities. He suggests that the mass incarceration of African Americans is a contemporary manifestation of the peculiar institutions – slavery, Jim Crow, and the urban ghetto – to define, confine, and control African Americans.

"Wacquant explains the unprecedented expansion of prisons as a result of the obsolescences of the ghetto as a device for caste control and the correlative need for a substitute apparatus for keeping (unskilled) African Americans, in their place, for

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<sup>81</sup> Hutchinson, Earl Ofari. (1997). *The Assassination of the Black Male Image*. New York: Touchstone, p. 15

example, in a subordinate and confined position in physical, social, and symbolic space.”<sup>82</sup> He suggests that there is a symbiosis between the socially constructed structures of the urban ghetto and prisons, which effectively functions to not only constrict the ability of African Americans to wholly participate in the economic, social, and political domains of civil society but also to redefine the community via “the production of a racialized public culture of vilification of criminals.”<sup>83</sup> In this way, the public is socially programmed to be a state apparatus to maintain the social marginality of the community as it unwittingly embraces policies and practices to manage, punish, or rehabilitate the superfluous criminal element.

As society, through its designated gatekeepers, constructs definitions of delinquency, and subsequently labels particular individuals who are then to be punitively managed, we are fundamentally responsible for the exponential growth of the prison pipeline and those who are caught in its nexus. By implicating the individual, we unwittingly think we can absolve ourselves of the responsibility to reform the social systems that victimized and criminalize those who live on the margins and eventually become swept up into the prison pipeline. However, we must critically examine not only the scientific and legalistic perspectives about deviance but also the mediated discourses that all ultimately implicate society as constructing the mechanisms that control the

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<sup>82</sup> Roberts, Dorothy E. (2004). “The Social and Moral Cost of Mass Incarceration in African-American Communities,” *2004 Stanford Law Review Symposium: Punishment and Its Purposes: Symposium Article*, (April). Retrieved October 2005, from <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/printdoc>, p. 15

<sup>83</sup> Roberts, Dorothy E. (2004). “The Social and Moral Cost of Mass Incarceration in African-American Communities,” *2004 Stanford Law Review Symposium: Punishment and Its Purposes: Symposium Article*, (April). Retrieved October 2005, from <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/printdoc>, p. 15

valves of the prison pipeline. This is not to say that individuals don't have agency to direct their choices and lives but that their decisions are significantly impacted by the social milieu in which they must exist. As Marable reminds us, "you become a social actor in the real world not on the basis of any objective criteria, but by the stereotypes imposed on you externally by others."<sup>84</sup> Socially constructed or sanctioned images, environments, and conditions do retard options as well as people's ability to critically act on their behalf. Consequently, society must be held accountable for its fundamental role in the construction and sanction of particular social elements that constrict people's ability to effectively function in all domains of civil society and that facilitate their entrance into the prison pipeline.

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<sup>84</sup> Marable, M. (2002). *The Great Wells of Democracy: The Meaning of Race In American Life*. New York: BasicCivitas Books, p. 3

### CHAPTER III: SCHOOL TO PRISON PIPELINE

#### *HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF A PARALLEL DEVELOPMENT – THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM*

In American society, there historically has been a remarkable relationship between education and incarceration. With the emergence of bureaucratized systems of schools and prisons in the 1800s, both institutions were imbued with missions centered on the socialization of individuals for particular forms of participation in society, and utilized various measures of social control to achieve their missions. The socialization rhetoric of American schools has been characterized as the means by which individuals were prepared to participate in civil society. Ravitch notes “The aim of the common school was clear: to promote sufficient learning and self-discipline so that people in a democratic society could be good citizens, read the newspapers, get a job, make their way in an individualistic and competitive society, and contribute to their community’s well-being.”<sup>85</sup>

However, such characterizations have been appropriately problematized through an examination of the experiences of the most socially marginalized populations. According to Nasaw, “The common schools were designed to control and contain this poor, white, Protestant, male population...Once the common schools had been defined as institutions of social control, as agencies through which the prosperous and propertied would socialize the poor and working people, it mattered not what color, ethnicity, religion, or geographical area the latter came from.”<sup>86</sup> Nasaw’s perspective is especially

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<sup>85</sup> Ravitch, Diane. (2000). *Left Back*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, p. 25

<sup>86</sup> Nasaw, David. (1979). *Schooled to Order*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, p. 82

poignant when one considers the ways in which people of color, particularly African Americans, were schooled and not schooled. The schooling of African Americans reflected an oppressive imposition of inextricably linked economic, political, and social ideologies that reproduced the racially hegemonic economic arrangements of an antebellum United States within the country's post-bellum sociopolitical context.<sup>87</sup> Through particular modes of schooling or a complete denial of access to school, African Americans were socialized to be economically and socially subordinate to whites, who controlled the educational bureaucracies. "While missionary education prior to the Civil War often aimed at Christianizing and civilizing, corporate philanthropic education had political objectives. The Black population had to be prepared ideologically and practically for their role in a new America."<sup>88</sup>

In his seminal work on the bureaucratization of America's school system, Tyack documents the tension that existed between the common school ideal and the injustices that were perpetrated by the emergent educational systems. He aptly illustrates the ways in which mechanisms of social control were integrated into the culture of the common school. "Through an elaborate system of gradation, programmed curriculum, examinations, and rules for "deportment," then, the pupil learned the meaning of obedience, regularity, and precision."<sup>89</sup> Success in school was not solely measured in

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<sup>87</sup> For fuller discussion, see Anderson, J. (1988). *The education of blacks in the south, 1860–1935*. North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press; and Watkins, W. (2001). *The white architects of black education: Ideology and power in America, 1865–1954*. New York: Teachers College Press

<sup>88</sup> Watkins, W. (2001). *The white architects of black education: Ideology and power in America, 1865–1954*. New York: Teachers College Press, p. 23

terms of acquisition of a particular content of knowledge but it was simultaneously a function of the degree to which the student demonstrated conformity to the rigid rules of discipline imposed by the teacher. This sentiment was probably best articulated by William T. Harris, who once served as a U.S. Commissioner of Education, when he commented that “The first requisite of the school is *Order*: each pupil must be taught first and foremost to conform his behavior to a general standard.”<sup>90</sup>

Schools were the site where the misbehavior, which was seen as a direct function of some inherent depravity of the child, especially with respect to immigrants and people of color, could be corrected and/or contained. I think Nasaw most explicitly makes the point when he notes, “The guiding force behind the common school crusade was not so much the education of the children as the maintenance of social peace and prosperity. Because the republic and its private property were endangered more by “immoral” than by illiterate adults, the common schools’ responsibility for character training and moral instruction overrode all others.”<sup>91</sup> However, as schooling became increasingly more bureaucratized during the late 1800s and early 1900s, particularly within urban centers, conflicts related to the realization of this ideal of social control and socializing the depraved youth began to emerge.

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<sup>89</sup> Tyack, David B. (1974). *The One Best System*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 55

<sup>90</sup> Tyack, David B. (1974). *The One Best System*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 43

<sup>91</sup> Nasaw, David. (1979). *Schooled to Order*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, p. 240

As students failed to conform to the social control mechanisms of the school, they were excluded either from the regular classes through assignments to special education classes where the academic program was sub par, or from the school altogether through voluntary (drop-out) or involuntary (push-out) practices. “Urban school administrators had learned that exclusion of unwanted pupils was an effective organizational practice.”<sup>92</sup> Students victimized by the exclusionary practices of schools often found themselves at the mercy of the negative influences that accompanied urbanization. “The concentration of the population in the cities, combined with economic instability, was a certain portent of criminal behavior...A child entering such a social world is impelled by circumstance, by temptation, by parental neglect, and by a sense of adventure into a life of crime.”<sup>93</sup>

Determined to be disruptive to the order of schooling because of their non-conformity to the particular order of discipline and pedagogical processes, children were systematically locked out of schools without the benefit of any alternative social institution that would meet their developmental needs. Children were left to fend for themselves to meet their basic needs and survive within the new and highly competitive economy of an urbanized industrial America. According to Ayers, “Delinquent children and youngsters, including those picked up for truancy and pauperism, were routinely tossed into jails with adults who preyed upon and further corrupted them.”<sup>94</sup> Many of the

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<sup>92</sup> Tropea, Joseph L. (1987). Bureaucratic Order and Special Children: Urban Schools, 1890s-1940s. *History of Education Quarterly*, 27(1), (Spring): 29-53, p. 31

<sup>93</sup> Platt, Anthony M. (1969). *The Child Savers*. Illinois: University of Chicago Press, pps. 38-39

<sup>94</sup> Ayers, William. (1997). *A Kind and Just Parent: The Children of Juvenile Court*. Massachusetts: Beacon Press, p. 25

youth ensnarled by the system were immigrants and the poor, those who occupied the margins of society. Ostensibly, the foundation for a school to prison pipeline was laid as early as in the 1800s.

*HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF A PARALLEL DEVELOPMENT – THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM*

As schools increasingly were viewed as unable or unwilling to effectively control and socialize urban youth, a new discourse and social movement emerged around the issue of delinquency amongst youth. Young people excised from the schools were now congregating on the streets, a condition that was deemed problematic by the men who owned business establishments on those same streets. Formalized penal systems would not only remove and contain the unwanted youth from the streets of urban business districts but also fulfill the socialization function that schools failed to accomplish. “Contemporary programs of delinquency control can be traced to the enterprising reforms of the child savers who, at the end of the nineteenth century, helped to create special judicial and correctional institutions for the labeling, processing, and management of “troublesome” youth.”<sup>95</sup>

The child savers focused their initial efforts on the removal of adolescents from the adult court system through the creation of juvenile courts, which could be understood as a benign measure to protect the young people. However, I think we need to be critical of the notions of ‘labeling, processing, and management’ because it is through these frameworks that society began to create the social constructs of delinquency and deviance that have been used to categorize or stigmatize particular people as well as dictate how

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<sup>95</sup> Platt, Anthony M. (1969). *The Child Savers*. Illinois: University of Chicago Press, p. 3

they are ‘managed’. Platt provides a thorough discussion of how “...the juvenile court system brought attention to and thus “invented” new categories of youthful deviance, particularly behavior in which the actor was seen as his own “victim”...reformation was more likely if they [the delinquents] were removed from “immoral” parents and a “vicious” environment.”<sup>96</sup> In this way, hegemonic power is leveraged against those, children and their parents, who hold the least amount of social capital by those who arbitrarily control the processes of definition, classification, and management.

By 1932, there were over 600 independent juvenile courts in the U.S. “Massachusetts and New York passed laws, in 1874 and 1892 respectively, providing for the trials of minors apart from adults charged with crimes. Ben Lindsey, a renowned judge and reformer, also claimed this distinction for Colorado where a juvenile court was, in effect, established through an educational law of 1899.”<sup>97</sup> It is interesting that Colorado legislators would use their educational laws to affect the establishment of a juvenile court that had the expressed purpose of labeling, processing, and managing youth as opposed to addressing the social conditions, poverty for instance, that negatively impacted a child’s ability to attend school or the rigidity of the schools that were increasingly removed from the control of the community. With the success of their initial efforts to establish separate and distinct courts for youthful offenders, the child savers shifted their focus to the elements of controlling the delinquent. “It was through the

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<sup>96</sup> Platt, Anthony M. (1969). *The Child Savers*. Illinois: University of Chicago Press, p. 145

<sup>97</sup> Platt, Anthony M. (1969). *The Child Savers*. Illinois: University of Chicago Press, p. 10

reformatory system that the child savers hoped to demonstrate that delinquents were capable of being converted into law-abiding citizens.”<sup>98</sup>

The goal of the reformatories was the rehabilitation of the individual such that he could re-enter society as a productive and civic-minded member. According to Peter Caldwell, a reform school superintendent, “...reformatories were expected to “remedy the neglect and vice of parents, the failure of public schools, of mission and Sunday schools, and other moral agencies in the outside world.”<sup>99</sup> Caldwell’s characterization of the mission of the reformatories was not unlike the aims of the common school to socialize the children to be good citizens within the democracy. But it is striking that while Caldwell, like most of society, acknowledged the failure of other social institutions; he did not articulate a need to reform the practices of these same institutions. There is no focus on the rehabilitation of the country’s social policies and practices, just the children most victimized by them.

Many penologists and social reformers believed that children who engaged in criminal activity were more apt to be rehabilitated.<sup>100</sup> “Adult criminals, particularly recidivists, were often characterized as nonhuman. Children, however, were less likely to be thought of as nonhuman since universalistic ethics, especially the ethic of Christianity, made it almost impossible to think of children as being entirely devoid of moral

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<sup>98</sup> Platt, Anthony M. (1969). *The Child Savers*. Illinois: University of Chicago Press, p. 46

<sup>99</sup> Platt, Anthony M. (1969). *The Child Savers*. Illinois: University of Chicago Press, p. 52

<sup>100</sup> Fagan, J. and Zimring, F. (2000). *The Changing Borders of Juvenile Justice*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

significance.”<sup>101</sup> The idea of a rehabilitative ideal for young people was a guiding principle for the pioneers of children’s law is also documented by Ayers who suggests that the original conceptualizations focused on recognizing the child as separate from the offense and worthy of a second chance. However, the ideal did not necessarily manifest in practice.

Like the rehabilitation programs of adult prisons during the 1800s, the initial focus for programs within the reformatories was religion and industrial training. “Reformatories should educate children by moral training, religion, and labor – similar to the upbringing they would receive in an “honest family.” Children should be segregated in reformatories according to religious preference, and “the number of pupils in one institution should be sufficiently small to enable the director at all times to take a personal interest in each pupil.” The training program should “correspond to the mode of life of working people; it should include primary instruction, and should be characterized by the greatest simplicity in diet, dress, and surroundings, and above all by labor.”<sup>102</sup>

In the early reformatories, there was a prevailing sense that rehabilitation was about the science of modifying or correcting the individual and the goal was to demand their conformity and cooperation.<sup>103</sup> Brockway was of the opinion that criminals, including the young offenders, had to either be cured or continuously restrained for the

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<sup>101</sup> Platt, Anthony M. (1969). *The Child Savers*. Illinois: University of Chicago Press, p. 45

<sup>102</sup> Platt, Anthony M. (1969). *The Child Savers*. Illinois: University of Chicago Press, p. 50

<sup>103</sup> Brockway, Zebulon. (1969). *Fifty Years of Prison Service: An Autobiography (Criminology, Law Enforcement, and Social Problems, No 61)*. Patterson Smith

benefit as security of society.<sup>104</sup> Like the public schools, the processes of the juvenile prisons or reformatories were aimed at inculcating youth with the particular sensibilities of the dominant culture. Delinquent youth were to be corrected of their moral transgressions and outfitted to productively assume the role of worker within the American emergent industrial system. Of the juvenile delinquent, Caldwell states “To make a good boy out of this bundle of perversities, his entire being must be revolutionized. He must be taught self-control, industry, respect for himself and the rights of others.”<sup>105</sup>

Enoch Wines, Secretary of the New York Prison Association, and Theodore Dwight, Dean of Columbia Law School, proposed to the 1867 New York legislature that the fundamental goal of their penal policy should be the reformation of the criminal. This framework subsequently served as the foundation for the formation of one of the nation’s first reformatories. “In 1869 a very progressive program outlining the need for and the development of the reformatory was present to the New York State Legislature.”<sup>106</sup> With this, a 250-acre farm near Elmira, New York, was selected for the establishment of the Elmira Reformatory and Zebulon Brockway, an advocate of the reformatory movement, was named as the first Superintendent. Brockway represents an extraordinary personification of the ideological tension, punitive efforts vs. social uplift, of the system.

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<sup>104</sup> Platt, Anthony M. (1969). *The Child Savers*. Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1977

<sup>105</sup> Platt, Anthony M. (1969). *The Child Savers*. Illinois: University of Chicago Press, p. 52

<sup>106</sup> Gaither, Carl C. (1982). Education Behind Bars: An Overview. *Journal of Correctional Education*, 33, (June): 19-22

Initially, he espoused a commitment to the idea that reformation should not focus on punishment and incapacitation but rather on rehabilitation through education. “The very outward appearance of the reformatory--so little like the ordinary prison and so much like a college or a hospital--helps to change the common sentiment about offenders from the vindictiveness of punishment to the amenities of rational educational correction.”<sup>107</sup>

Brockway’s tenure as Superintendent of the Elmira Reformatory continued through August 1900 and during that time, he was quite aggressive in developing and incorporating educational programming into the operations of the Reformatory. While Brockway supported the notion of rehabilitation through education, it was probably the involvement of Dr. D.R. Ford that significantly influenced the type of education. “In 1878 selected offenders were enrolled in academic education classes at the reformatory. These classes, which were under the direction of Dr. D. R. Ford, consisted of courses in geography, and the natural sciences.”<sup>108</sup> In same year, the U.S. participated in the International Penitentiary Congress which resolved that delinquent children should be educated. Dr. Ford, responsible for the reformatory’s educational efforts, was also a professor at the nearby Elmira Women's College. The program reflected the ten-month academic year of public schools and included courses in rudimentary reading, spelling, and arithmetic during the first year, and in the second year, courses in history, geography,

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<sup>107</sup> Brockway, Zebulon. (1969). *Fifty Years of Prison Service: An Autobiography (Criminology, Law Enforcement, and Social Problems, No 61)*. Patterson Smith, p. 163

<sup>108</sup> Gaither, Carl C. (1982). Education Behind Bars: An Overview. *Journal of Correctional Education*, 33, (June): 19-22, p. 20

civil government and moral philosophy were offered.<sup>109</sup> During this same period, the staffing of the education program was expanded to include six public-school principals and three lawyers as instructors.

During the late 1800s, there were rumblings against the educational ideas and practices promulgated by the Elmira reformatory model. According to Platt, “Industrial education, as it was euphemistically called, was derived from new developments in educational theory. The training of “delinquents” in manual and low-skilled jobs was justified as an educational enterprise because it was consistent with the rhetoric and aims of the child savers. The principles of the “new education” were misinterpreted and restyled to support the thesis that knowledge is subordinate to action and inferior to practice.”<sup>110</sup> This misinterpretation of the “new education” most likely emanated from the ways in which the child savers misunderstood the educational philosophy of John Dewey. In 1899, Dewey addressed a Chicago audience and noted that education must keep pace and adjust to the great social transformations of the American industrial society. The child savers understood this sentiment, coupled with Dewey’s thinking about experiential learning, to be an endorsement of industrial education that prepared juvenile delinquents for menial labor. Regrettably, the child savers ignored what was probably the most essential feature of Dewey’s 1899 lecture, “it was the task of teachers

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<sup>109</sup> Jones, Ray. A Coincidence of Interests: Prison Higher Education in Massachusetts. Retrieved November 2003, from <http://www.jpp.org/fulltext-v4/v4n1-a.html>

<sup>110</sup> Platt, Anthony M. (1969). *The Child Savers*. Illinois: University of Chicago Press, p. 60

to dispose of the myth that education is reserved for an intellectual aristocracy.”<sup>111</sup> Within this new rehabilitation framework of the child savers, youth in the reformatories would be trained rather than educated.

By 1890, Brockway’s philosophical tone and practices were starkly different. “The anti-intellectualism of proponents of the reformatory plan was obvious: Brockway encouraged Hamilton Wey [Elmira’s resident physician] at Elmira to make inmates muscular rather than educated.”<sup>112</sup> Just like the public schools, the reformatories, including Elmira which became the model for the nation, struggled with ideas of what constituted an effective educational program. Education, whether received in school or prison, was not meant to empower particular children to transgress boundaries of social mobility. In his historical overview of the juvenile justice system, Krisberg reminds us that there was an economic functionality of the reformatories that likely had an impact on this paradigmatic shift. “Some charged that harnessing the labor of inmates, rather than the reformation of youthful delinquents, had become the *raison d’être* of these institutions. There were growing rumors of cruel and vicious exploitation of youth by work supervisors.”<sup>113</sup>

This is especially powerful when one considers that the Civil War, concluding in 1865, not only destroyed the labor system provided by slavery but also by the prison

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<sup>111</sup> Platt, Anthony M. (1969). *The Child Savers*. Illinois: University of Chicago Press, p. 55

<sup>112</sup> Platt, Anthony M. (1969). *The Child Savers*. Illinois: University of Chicago Press, p. 59

<sup>113</sup> Krisberg, B. and Austin, J. (1993). *Reinventing Juvenile Justice*. California: Sage Publications, p. 25

system of the South. With the adoption of the use of the Black Codes, the South was able to establish a new labor market, through convict lease systems, road gangs, and prison farms, which essentially operated within the same hegemonic context as slavery. Ultimately, the reformatories were unable to escape the socially hegemonic tendencies toward reproductive socialization and social control over the lives of its most disenfranchised youth. Of the child savers, Platt writes “They promoted correctional programs requiring longer terms of imprisonment, long hours of labor and militaristic discipline, and the inculcation of middle-class values and lower-class skills.”<sup>114</sup>

Over time, the linkages and parallels between schools and prisons became more embedded, and the incongruities between rhetoric and practice lessened. While the 1800s is the backdrop for the important emergent period of the education and juvenile justice systems, the decade of the 1970s is another critical benchmark because it represents the beginning of a far more punitive trend against youth as the national perspective transitions from rehabilitation to punishment. Unfortunately, researchers who began to suggest that educational programs for the imprisoned did not reduce subsequent recidivism, and those who advocated the idea that crime emanated from an individual’s failure to take personal responsibility bolstered the trend.

The discourse on juvenile delinquency that dominated the 1970s empowered the public’s embrace of the punishment paradigm, which “argues that the legal system should be used to punish youthful lawbreakers either to do justice and/or to control crime through deterrence...or through incapacitation.”<sup>115</sup> In 1974, Robert Martinson concluded that

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<sup>114</sup> Platt, Anthony M. (1969). *The Child Savers*. Illinois: University of Chicago Press, p. 176

recidivism was not impacted by educational attainment based upon his survey of six academic and vocational programs for adult male offenders between 1948 and 1965.<sup>116</sup> His findings significantly influence the field of corrections by legitimizing the public's quest to shift from models of treatment/rehabilitation to incarceration/warehousing.<sup>117</sup> He revised his position in 1979 noting that some treatment programs can positively affect recidivism.<sup>118</sup> Despite this slight reversal, the damage had been done as public inclinations towards greater punishment of juvenile offenders intensified, and increasingly were reflected in public policies related to juvenile offenders.

#### *EMERGENCE & GROWTH OF A PIPELINE*

Not only did American society recast the focus of the juvenile justice system from rehabilitation to punishment, it also instituted more punitive approaches in the education systems. These tactics ultimately helped to structure and strengthen the seamless and pernicious nature of the school to prison pipeline. There is a significant body of research delineating the various complex ways in which children, particularly poor children of color from urban communities, are tracked through a school to prison pipeline. In documenting the pipeline, researchers have implicated the numerous injurious social conditions under which we raise and educate children as well as the ways in which we

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<sup>115</sup> Cullen and Wright in Mortimer, J. T. and Larson, R. W. (Eds.). (2002). *The Changing Adolescent Experience*. Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, p. 91

<sup>116</sup> As cited in Jancic, M. (1998). Does Correctional Education Have an Effect on Recidivism? *Journal of Correctional Education*, 49(4), 152-161.

<sup>117</sup> Stevens, D. J., and Ward, C. S. (1997). College Education and Recidivism: Educating Criminals Is Meritorious. *Journal of Correctional Education*, 48(3), 106-111.

<sup>118</sup> As cited in Jancic, M. (1998). Does Correctional Education Have an Effect on Recidivism? *Journal of Correctional Education*, 49(4), 152-161.

respond to their reactions to such oppressive circumstances (Ayers, Dohrn, Ayers, 2001; Devine, 1996; Giroux, 1996; Gottfredson, 2001; Joseph, 1995; Males, 1996; Muncie, Hughes, McLaughlin, 2002; Nightingale, 1993; Polakow, 2000; Schostak, 1991). Like their counterparts of the 1800s, today's educators have been equipped with the necessary procedural frameworks to push students out of school and into the juvenile justice system. However, current school policies and practices have further empowered the school to prison pipeline by opening its doors to policing by law enforcement personnel.

In Zero Tolerance: Resisting the Drive for Punishment in Our Schools, the authors analyze the dangers that plague America's schoolchildren as they are increasingly subjected to zero tolerance discipline policies constructed and implemented by the adults who control the order and pedagogic processes of the schools. The move towards such policies was accelerated by federal legislation that began in the 1990s, allegedly in response to the incidents in Columbine. The result was a significant increase in suspensions/expulsions, and the trafficking of youth into the criminal justice systems with African-American students bearing the lions' share of the burden. "Schools have become a major feeder of children into juvenile and adult courts; simultaneously, schools themselves are becoming more prisonlike...Two policies contribute to this dramatic new role for schools: first, the increased policing of schools and the simultaneous abdication of educators leads to a significant increase in school-based arrests; and second, school exclusions increase, including substantial suspension/expulsions of students, propelled by

the legislative green light which mandated “zero tolerance” policies as a condition of federal funding.”<sup>119</sup>

In her discussion, Dohrn delineates how schoolchildren were caught in a nexus where, through zero tolerance policies that were written in compliance with various legislation such as the Gun Free Schools Act and the Safe Schools Act, misbehavior was reclassified as delinquency offenses. For instance, she documents how Paul Robeson High School in Chicago had 158 students arrested in 1996-1997 and of that total, 61 students were arrested for pager possession, 21 for disorderly conduct, 14 for mob action (notation does not indicate whether the action was violent or simply a large gathering of students), and 16 for non-firearm weapon possession. Despite the rhetoric that the zero tolerance movement was about ensuring that guns were not brought into schools, the reality is that the policies are arbitrary and empower the adults in the school system with wide ranging discretion to escalate the categorization of misbehavior to a criminal offense resulting in arrests. It is difficult to understand how pager possession, the majority of the arrests at Paul Robeson High School, could be viewed as a “dangerous weapon” with the possibility of causing death or great bodily harm as outlined in the Safe School Act. Another case cited by Dohrn that emphasizes the extent to which administrators have been empowered to remove students is Massachusetts’ Felony Conviction Law or Principal’s Bill which allows principals, at their discretion, to suspend any student charged with a felony and to expel any student with a felony conviction if the principal determines that the student’s presence in the school would have a detrimental impact on the general welfare of the school.

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<sup>119</sup> Dohrn in Ayers, W., Dohrn, B., and Ayers, R. (Eds.). (2001). *Zero Tolerance: Resisting the Drive for Punishment in Our Schools*. New York: The New Press, p. 95

*STRENGTHENING OF THE CONTEMPORARY PIPELINE: CO-OPTATION OF SCHOOL SPACES*

The zero tolerance movement needs to be problematized in two significant ways. First, the legislation and policies do not attempt to remedy the inherent underlying conditions that prompt students to engage in particular forms of misbehavior whether or not it involves carrying a firearm. For instance, in some cases, students have to pass by empty lots and crack houses at early morning or late evening hours in order to get to school and carrying a weapon may be their response to these conditions, with which society has not appropriately dealt. Second, there is no recognition that the zero tolerance movement has accompanied the standards movement, which has increased the regimentation of children's school lives in an effort to achieve new academic benchmarks and that some of the misbehavior is a reaction to the heightened academic rigidity. Additionally, the discretionary nature of the zero tolerance policies facilitates the ability of administrators to excise students who present obstacles for the school's attainment of particular standards for which there are greater stakes for the school and its educators. This new social construct of misbehavior, equated with delinquency and criminality, doesn't make schools safer but endangers poor urban youth of color with greater risk of being tracked out of schools and into the juvenile justice system.

John Devine, in Maximum Security, provides a detailed discussion about how there has been an increase in the policing of schools, particularly schools in impoverished urban neighborhoods, and this circumstance also has helped to fortify the school to prison pipeline. He describes how the first day of classes at a New York City high school initiates students into a culture of constant surveillance and police-power. "...the wizardry of identity card machines, metal detectors, X-ray machines (for inspecting

knapsacks), walkie-talkies, magnetic door locks, and a host of other forms of “security” technology. Students sometimes arrive at their first class half an hour late because they are waiting to be scanned.<sup>10</sup> Less obvious are the verbal exchanges and demeanors that introduce students to police culture and introduce the language of the street into the school environment. No one adverts to this subtle daily introduction of the criminal justice system lexicon onto the educational scene...<sup>120</sup> With the inclusion of law enforcement mentalities and procedures in the schools, the poor students of color who are overwhelmingly represented in these schools are just as likely to be captured by the criminal justice system whether or not they have been pushed out of the school. Essentially, the prison has been brought to the school rather than the school delivering the student to the prison.

In 2004, WBAI radio station reported how Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Joel Klein of New York City further escalated the policing of schools by teaming up with the New York Police Department in January 2004 to implement “Operation Impact Schools” in what they labeled the “Dirty Dozen,” the most violent high and junior high schools in the city. The objective of this initiative, as well as the other strategies simultaneously implemented by the Department of Education’s Office of School Safety, is to “establish a climate of order and safety by intensifying enforcement against low-level crime and disorder, rigorously enforcing the Discipline code, and correction school conditions that

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<sup>120</sup> Devine, J. (1996). *Maximum Security: The Culture of Violence in Inner-City Schools*. Illinois: University of Chicago Press, pps. 26-27

are conducive to disorder.”<sup>121</sup> To achieve this goal, School Safety Teams, which include police officers, conduct comprehensive assessments of schools with specific attention focused on entry/exit procedures, hallway conditions, Discipline Code enforcement, and instructional environment. Based on the Teams’ recommendations, principals are accountable for successfully developing and implementing action plans.

The program, endorsed by the United Federation of Teachers, placed about 150 on-duty New York Police Officers, in addition to the existing School Safety Officers, inside several schools including Adlai E. Stevenson, Canarsie, Christopher Columbus, Evander Childs, Far Rockaway, Franklin K. Lane, Sheepshead Bay, South Shore, Thomas Jefferson, and Washington Irving high schools as well as two junior high schools including Jordan L. Mott, and Mario Salvador. Within these schools, students who repeatedly violated school discipline codes were targeted with a more punitive “zero tolerance policy” that would automatically initiate their expulsion after three disciplinary strikes – eerily reminiscent of Clinton’s three strikes penalty in his Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994. Those students, known as “spotlight students,” would be removed from the school with the fourth incident – regardless of its severity – and placed in off-site detention centers and subsequently reassigned to special second opportunity schools. “This adaptation of the NYPD’s “Operation Spotlight” initiative

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<sup>121</sup> New York City Office of the Mayor Press Release. (2004). Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, Schools Chancellor Joel I. Klein, and Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly Present End of School Year Progress Report on Impact Schools. Retrieved March 2005, from [http://www.nyc.gov/portal/index.jsp?epi\\_menuItemID=c0935b9a57bb4ef3daf2f1c701c789a0&epi\\_menuID=13ecbf46556241d3daf2f1c701c789a0&epi\\_baseMenuID=27579af732d48f86a62fa24601c789a0&pageID=mayor\\_press\\_release&catID=1194&doc\\_name=htmlp%3A%2F%2Fwww.nyc.gov%2Fhtml%2Fom%2Fhtml%2F2004a%2Fpr170-04.html&cc=unused1978&rc=1194&ndi=1](http://www.nyc.gov/portal/index.jsp?epi_menuItemID=c0935b9a57bb4ef3daf2f1c701c789a0&epi_menuID=13ecbf46556241d3daf2f1c701c789a0&epi_baseMenuID=27579af732d48f86a62fa24601c789a0&pageID=mayor_press_release&catID=1194&doc_name=htmlp%3A%2F%2Fwww.nyc.gov%2Fhtml%2Fom%2Fhtml%2F2004a%2Fpr170-04.html&cc=unused1978&rc=1194&ndi=1)

streamlines the suspension process and lengthens suspensions, increasing the numbers of Off-Site Suspension Centers, After-School Instruction Centers for detentions, and Second Opportunity Schools for students who have been suspended for an entire year.”<sup>122</sup> This is not unlike the practices of educators of the 1800s.

Since its inception, the program, netting 364,000 summonses and almost 31,000 arrests, has been cited as a success by Mayor Bloomberg. Police Commissioner Ray Kelly, also describing the program as a success, reported a 10 percent decrease in crime and a 48 percent decline in felonies in the targeted schools. It is anticipated that the number of target schools will eventually increase to 200. In FY 2004, the U.S. Department of Justice (USDOJ) allocated \$60 million, through its Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), to school districts and police departments to hire police officers. Of the USDOJ funds, the New York City Department of Education was awarded \$6.25 million (10.42 percent) to increase the number of police officers in the Operation Impact Schools initiative from 150 to 200. During this same fiscal year, Erasmus Campus, Samuel J. Tilden, Theodore Roosevelt, and Walton high schools were added to the list while none of the original schools were removed. By January 2005, several more high schools had been added, including Abraham Lincoln, Harry S. Truman, John Bowne, Lafayette, Norman Thomas, and Springfield Gardens. Only five schools – one junior high school and four high schools – have been removed from the list.

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<sup>122</sup> Drum Major Institute. (2005). A look at the impact schools. *A Drum Major Institute For Public Policy Data Brief* (June). Retrieved December 2005, from <http://204.200.199.40/library/report.php?ID=18>, p. 3

Raybblin Vargas of the Prison Moratorium Project and Teach Us Don't Cuff Us appropriately problematizes "Operation Impact Schools" in noting "By approaching solutions to the problems in public schools through a criminal lens instead of a social and economic lens, young people are being denied their basic rights. The real problems in these schools are poverty and underfunding. Discipline problems are a symptom of that." As a society, we are aggressively funding the lock-down of the school space but cannot find the money to appropriately and strategically resource these schools with the hiring of additional guidance counselors, the reduction of class sizes, and the provision of additional academic support for all students through school and extended day programs, not to mention the need to fund programs to alleviate social conditions outside of the school that directly disrupt a student's ability to focus on learning while in school. This is not to suggest that school safety is not important because that would be naïve and non-responsive to the legitimate concerns of all of the school constituents. Devine notes how students, even those who carry weapons to school, are just as hopeful as school personnel that their schools can be made safe. The dilemma is that our focus on using a criminal paradigm to deal with school-based student misbehavior, which spans a wide range and is generally symptomatic of other complex social problems, unnecessarily sacrifices and alienates students on multiple levels thereby facilitating their further marginalization within the society. This scenario has implications for the student and society.

Poor youth of color from our most underserved urban communities have been disproportionately impacted by zero tolerance practices and policies, including Operation Impact Schools. Based on data compiled by the Citizens' Committee for Children of

New York<sup>123</sup>, in the 2002-2003 academic year, the rate of police department incidents per 1,000 students for New York City elementary and middle schools was only 4.6. However, high-need community school districts such as Mott Haven, Bedford-Stuyvesant, East New York, and Bushwick respectively recorded police department incident rates of 18.7, 10.4, 10.4, and 13.3. Meanwhile these same communities, overwhelmingly poor and of color, did not record exceedingly high rates of suspension when compared to all other community districts. These data are problematic on several levels. Of significant concern is the implication of the higher than average police department incident rates for the communities of Mott Haven, Bedford-Stuyvesant, East New York, and Bushwick, especially when viewed against their suspension rates.

It seems that student misbehaviors in the schools of Mott Haven, Bedford-Stuyvesant, East New York, and Bushwick, some of which are sites of Operation Impact, more readily trigger police department incidents, as opposed to suspensions or expulsions. The concern is whether students in these communities are subjected to an immediate escalation to police involvement rather than progressive school-based disciplinary actions. If the disciplinary code was implemented in a progressively punitive manner, these communities should have suspension rates that are proportionately as high as their police department incidents when compared across all community districts. This situation becomes increasingly disturbing in light of the fact that these communities, in comparison to all others, had the highest rates of youth under the age of 20 years arrested for a felony, misdemeanor, or violation charge during 2001.

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<sup>123</sup> Citizens Committee for Children. (2005). *Keeping Track of New York City's Children 2005*

The well-documented aggressive policing of New York City communities of color<sup>124</sup>, and their schools through zero tolerance policies and Operation Impact implies that the high rates of court-involved youth from these neighborhoods are not simply a function of students engaging in offending behavior as is often suggested, but also result from the reclassification of misbehaviors as criminal offenses as well as the lowered threshold of particular behaviors triggering specific escalated criminal consequences. The hyperpolicing of all spaces, including the schools, in which urban youth exists coupled with the hypercriminalization of youth behavior play a significant role in youth involvement with the criminal and juvenile justice systems.

*STRENGTHENING OF THE CONTEMPORARY PIPELINE: DEVOLUTION OF A MISSION TO EDUCATE*

While the Mayor and Police Commissioner are touting the Program as a success because of the reported 10 percent decrease in crime, Chancellor Joel Klein should be lamenting the facts that the cohort of schools in the Operation Impact Program had to *educate* students who are older than their peers at a rate of 39.5 percent compared with the City high school average of 27.5 percent; who are disproportionately poor (60.7 percent of those eligible for free lunch populate Operation Impact schools compared with 53.9 percent for other high schools citywide) and either Black or Latino (91.3 percent in the Impact schools versus 70.7 percent in the other high schools of New York City); with

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<sup>124</sup> See Police Practices and Civil Rights in New York City. Retrieved March 2005, from [www.usccr.gov/pubs/nypolice/exsum.htm](http://www.usccr.gov/pubs/nypolice/exsum.htm); The Economics of the New Brutality by Daniel HoSang in ColorLines. Retrieved March 2005, from [www.arc.org/C\\_Lines/CLArchive/story2\\_4\\_03.html](http://www.arc.org/C_Lines/CLArchive/story2_4_03.html); Testimony of Robert Perry on Behalf of the New York Civil Liberties Union regarding the New York City Council Bill Prohibiting Racial or Ethnic Profiling. Retrieved March 2005, from [www.nyclu.org/profiling\\_testimony\\_022304.html](http://www.nyclu.org/profiling_testimony_022304.html); and Every Mother's Son, a film by Tami Gold and Kelly Anderson (Interview with Tami Gold and Kelly Anderson available at [www.pbs.org/pov/pov2004/everymothersson/behind\\_interview.html](http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2004/everymothersson/behind_interview.html))

less dollars (the average spending per student on direct services was \$9,037 vs. the citywide high school rate of \$10,519); and in large schools with significant overcrowding (Impact Schools averaged 111 percent capacity which was 4.8 percent more overcrowded than the average school citywide.<sup>125</sup>

When you juxtapose these educational statistics of the schools in the Operation Impact Program against the Program's law and order successes, it is clear that Raybblin Vargas makes a valid point that we are categorically and systematically depriving Black and Latino youth of their basic right to a sound basic education. There has been an effective devolution of the educational mission through the creation of conditions of poverty within the very educational institutions that we have erected to serve our youth. The educational needs of our students are woefully underfunded but we have empowered ourselves to lavishly fund the criminalization of students through zero tolerance policies and practices that sanction and expedite students' untimely expulsion out of potential *learning environments* and into the prison pipeline.

Not only have the school-based measures to conform student behavior to constrictive standards had a negative impact on the educational experiences of students in our urban schools but so too have the pedagogical policies and practices related to teaching and assessment. In *Schools and Delinquency*, Denise Gottfredson engages in a review of the personality research and criminological literature to address how schools encourage or discourage the development of student engagement in problem behavior. She begins her discussion by illustrating the extent to which people who engage in one

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<sup>125</sup> Drum Major Institute. (2005). A look at the impact schools. *A Drum Major Institute For Public Policy Data Brief* (June). Retrieved December 2005, from <http://204.200.199.40/library/report.php?ID=18>

form of problem behavior are likely to participate in other problem behaviors and noting that school dropouts, theoretically a problem behavior, have four times as many police contacts as high school graduates. Gottfredson continues her analysis by addressing the risk factors for problem behaviors with a focus on the attitudes and behaviors related to school.

She identifies two key areas: *attachment and commitment to school*, and *interactions with peers*. “Attachment and commitment to school are also central to Hirschi’s (1969) social control theory of delinquency. According to social control theory, individuals with strong bonds to conventional institutions are less likely to engage in delinquent activities than those with weak bonds. Attachment to school refers to emotional attachment and is usually measured with items tapping the extent to which an individual likes schools or finds work satisfying. Commitment refers to psychological investment in the pursuit of an education or occupational goal.”<sup>126</sup> The prison-like environment created within schools as a result of the zero tolerance policies and increased policing of the space, not to mention the problematics of the curricula, undoubtedly help to discourage students’ attachment and commitment to school.

More importantly, the alienation is not solely a matter of the students’ relationship to the school but to the very idea of learning and education as school is often conflated with the act of learning. Consequently, school becomes a place where, like in prison, students are “doing time” as opposed to engaging in an educative experience, which should be the point of school in the first place. The practical result is that students cannot

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<sup>126</sup> Gottfredson, D. C. (2001). *Schools and Delinquency*. New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 31

achieve the academic performance benchmarks, and no one attempts to tease out the extent to which poor or non-performance results from the lack of attachment and commitment, or from a lack of ability in order to appropriately address the problem. The student's risk factor of lack of attachment and commitment is now compounded by their sense of a lack of accomplishment. All of this works to effectively push students to either quit learning while staying in the school, or quit learning and leave the school space altogether.

The failure of schools to effectively engage students in the educational process functions to push some students into arenas that ripen them for court-involvement. A study by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services documented that poor academic performance and poor attitudes toward school contribute to the likelihood of youth offending.<sup>127</sup> There is a clear relationship between school engagement and problem behaviors, like dropping out, that may eventually lead to court-involvement. Chambliss found that 46 percent of New York State's prison inmates come from communities served by the city's 16 worst public schools; and noted that 90 percent of New York's imprisoned men are former dropouts of the New York City public schools.<sup>128</sup> According to data compiled on dropouts by the National Education

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<sup>127</sup> As cited in Chambliss, Candace. *The Relationship Between Mass Incarceration and Unequal Education in the United States*. Retrieved March 2005, from <http://www.fedcrimlaw.com/visitors/PrisonLore/PrisonEducation2.htm>, p. 5

<sup>128</sup> Chambliss, Candace. *The Relationship Between Mass Incarceration and Unequal Education in the United States*. Retrieved March 2005, from <http://www.fedcrimlaw.com/visitors/PrisonLore/PrisonEducation2.htm>

Longitudinal Study<sup>129</sup>, 77 percent of the respondents reported school-related reasons for leaving school. The most prevalent reasons were “did not like school”, “failing school”, “could not keep up with schoolwork”, and “could not get along with teachers”. These reasons are consistent with responses from a group of New York City court-involved boys of color with whom I spoke. When asked about the things that were happening at school during the time that they became involved with the juvenile justice system, they noted that they were “cutting classes and not going to school.” They all felt school was a boring place and because of the boredom, they were not motivated to participate. This sentiment is not uncommon. “A characteristic of juveniles incarcerated in correctional and detention facilities is their poor experience with elementary and secondary education.”<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Rumberger, Russell in Orfield, Gary (Ed.). *Droupouts in America*. MA: Harvard Education Press. (pps. 131 – 155)

<sup>130</sup> Hodges, J., Giuliotti, N., and Porpotage II, F.M. (1994). Improving Literacy Skills of Juvenile Detainees. *Department of Justice: OJJDP*.

**CHAPTER IV: EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE OF NEW YORK'S COURT-INVOLVED YOUTH***CONDITIONS OF NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS*

In 1993, the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) initiated a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of New York State's education funding system that, as decided by several courts, significantly shortchanged the public schools of New York City. As part of their ongoing litigation against the State of New York, CFE documented some of the conditions of New York City's schools that negatively impact students, particularly those in high-need communities.<sup>131</sup> For instance, they noted that New York City schools with the highest number of poor and minority students tend to have the greatest number of uncertified or least experienced teachers despite the fact that an essential element of effective pedagogy is skilled teachers. They also recorded the extent to which school facilities are neither well-maintained, thereby posing some environmental risks to children; nor appropriately equipped with the necessary science labs or electrical wiring for contemporary curricular innovations. However, the most problematic issue for many New York City public schools, especially those in high-need community districts of color, is the extensive overcrowding of schools that structurally mitigates against addressing the immediate need for class size reductions, which is another critical component of effective pedagogical practice; and that forces students to compete for scarce essential educational resources, including the human resources of qualified teachers.

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<sup>131</sup> Campaign for Fiscal Equity v. State of New York. Retrieved November 2003, from [www.cfequity.org](http://www.cfequity.org)

CFE also noted that in many New York City schools, there often has been inadequate or a complete lack of the necessary up-to-date tools to appropriately implement the prescribed curriculum, which results in a gap between the tested standards and the learning that actually occurs. They also detail how the disconnect between vocational education programs and the labor market results in students being ill-prepared to effectively compete in the labor force. Unfortunately, students are not academically or vocationally prepared for options other than minimum wage jobs or prison. Despite these pedagogical deficiencies, the current milieu of the standards movement and high stakes testing has imposed higher expectations on children.

The gap between the assessments and the preparation further contributes to the poor educational experiences of urban youth, particularly those in high-need communities of color such as Mott Haven, Bedford-Stuyvesant, East New York, and Bushwick where students recorded lower than average results on the City's English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics examinations as illustrated in Figure 1.<sup>132</sup> Students in the four high-need areas of Mott Haven, Bedford-Stuyvesant, East New York, and Bushwick are outpaced by students citywide in terms of meeting and exceeding the standards. Considering that these assessments determine grade promotion, below average performance or failure to meet the standards takes on new meaning. This intensified consequence of poor academic performance negatively impacts students' attitudes and attachments to school, especially since students are likely frustrated by the fact that they

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<sup>132</sup> New York City Department of Education Report Cards. Retrieved March 2005, from [www.nycboe.net](http://www.nycboe.net)

cannot control all of the essential factors that cause their poor performance. In this way, they are prevented from developing any degree of self-efficacy in the educational arena.

**FIGURE 1**

<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Citywide</b>	<b>Mott Haven</b>	<b>Bedford-Stuyvesant</b>	<b>East New York</b>	<b>Bushwick</b>
2002 ELA (Meet or Exceed Standards)	39.3	21.6	30.6	26.8	34.2
2003 ELA (Meet or Exceed Standards)	24.2	24.1	31.5	30.2	36.3
2004 ELA (Meet or Exceed Standards)	43.1	20.9	32.4	30.1	37.7
2002 Math (Meet or Exceed Standards)	37.3	18.8	26.0	22.9	31.6
2003 Math (Meet or Exceed Standards)	41.9	22.5	32.6	29.6	36.4
2004 Math (Meet or Exceed Standards)	47.0	27.1	34.6	36.2	41.9

Black and Latino students in New York City recorded the greatest growth of dropouts from 1992 when the rates respectively were 16.4 percent and 21.3 percent to 2002 when the rates respectively escalated to 22.1 percent and 26 percent.<sup>133</sup> In 2001 research that specifically examined the relationship between higher standards and dropout rates, the New York City Department of Education noted “While at this time it is too soon to conclusively attribute the observed increase in drop out rates over the last three years to higher grade promotion standards imposed by New York City and the higher graduation standards being phased in by New York State, this trend is consistent with previous research showing a relationship between higher standards and lower school

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<sup>133</sup> Citizens Committee for Children. (2005). *Keeping Track of New York City’s Children 2005*

completion rates.”<sup>134</sup> As noted by CFE, if New York expects students to meet its increasingly higher standards, then it must ensure that all students have well-trained teachers, textbooks, classroom space, and the other necessary resources to attain the standard to progress through the educational system unfettered.<sup>135</sup> Considering the conditions in which urban youth of color are schooled – the law and order environment of the school space, and the pedagogically deficient classroom – it is not surprising that many of them have poor educational attitudes and attachments; and eventually drop-out.

Unfortunately, the problematic nature of this situation continues to elude those who are empowered to deliver educational justice to the children of New York City’s most underserved communities. Within the context of this educational inequity for high-need districts of color, New York State continues to evade court orders stemming from the CFE lawsuit to appropriately determine the actual cost to provide New York City students with a sound basic education, defined as consisting of the foundational skills that students need to become productive citizens capable of civic engagement and sustaining competitive employment; to reform the funding system to ensure that every school in New York City has the resources necessary for providing the opportunity for a sound

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<sup>134</sup> New York City Department Of Education Division of Assessment & Accountability. (2001). *An Examination of the Relationship Between Higher Standards and Students Dropping Out*. Retrieved November 2003, from [http://www.nycenet.edu/daa/reports/flash\\_report\\_5.pdf](http://www.nycenet.edu/daa/reports/flash_report_5.pdf)

<sup>135</sup> Campaign for Fiscal Equity v. State of New York. Retrieved November 2003, from [www.cfequity.org](http://www.cfequity.org)

basic education; and to establish a comprehensive accountability system that will ensure that the reforms implemented actually provide this opportunity.<sup>136</sup>

The State's malfeasance has been exacerbated by George W. Bush and the U.S. Department of Education, which presented New York City students with \$1.169 billion less than promised under Title I, which provides additional funding to high-poverty school districts; \$1.319 billion less for students with disabilities; \$31 million less to improve teacher quality through recruitment and professional development efforts; \$21 million less for better educational technology that can be integrated into the curriculum to support student learning and achievement; and \$18 million less for innovative learning programs which include the acquisition of supplementary educational materials, equipment, and training during fiscal years 2003 through 2005.<sup>137</sup> This shortfall has coincided with the \$6.25 million windfall from the U.S. Department of Justice to the New York City Department of Education's Operation Impact Schools program that was discussed in the preceding chapter.

*HOW COURT-INVOLVED YOUTH EXPERIENCE NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS*

While the poor allocation of resources to achieve the ever-increasing standards has an impact on student disengagement and their potential dropping-out, so too does the utilization of curricula and instructional strategies that prioritize particular knowledges and ways of knowing that do not incorporate the cultured epistemologies of urban students. Urban students of color do not see themselves represented in the knowledges

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<sup>136</sup> Campaign for Fiscal Equity v. State of New York. Retrieved November 2003, from [www.cfequity.org](http://www.cfequity.org)

<sup>137</sup> GOP Convention Primer: Education – No Child Left Behind Underfunded by Bush. Retrieved March 2005, from [www.house.gov/weiner/report26.htm](http://www.house.gov/weiner/report26.htm)

that are disseminated in their schools, and they are not encouraged to engage in the learning process and production of knowledge as active participants. When I asked a group of court-involved boys about changes they would make to their classroom experiences prior to their court-involvement, they responded as follows: “less pressure from teachers; teachers would have to come down to earth and relate to the kids as people; teachers wouldn’t use words that the kids didn’t understand to teach topics that they didn’t know anything about and when asked questions about the words or topics, the teacher wouldn’t tell the kids to ask their peers to explain it; classes [subject matter] and teachers would be more interesting; there wouldn’t be testing for the sake of testing...that’s silliness; and people would acknowledge that we’re doing our best.”

When asked about the value of the knowledge that they got from school versus other types of knowledge that they had, one boy explained that “school is about graduating and getting a good job; it’s gettin’ your brain [meaning getting book knowledge]; and the streets offer a different kind of education...common sense.” In reference to these different types of knowledge (i.e. school and street), one boy noted “Both are important but school folk don’t believe it except those teachers who can relate to the community experience. Teachers don’t let kids share their knowledge – if I’m letting you give me knowledge but you don’t let me give you knowledge then that’s disrespectful.” They all agreed that displays of knowledges, other than those taught by their schools, would result in some type of disciplinary action. The invalidation of and disregard for the knowledges and skills that students bring to the classroom to potentially leverage in the learning process further spurs their disengagement from school. Students’ poor academic performance coupled with their experiences of intellectual disrespect

make the school a space of frustration and one where they do not feel any sense of accomplishment. These sentiments resonated in the stories of the young men at Rikers as we discussed their school experiences prior to their incarceration.

Most of the students in the group reported aggravation with their school experiences at some point, usually during the years of junior high school, and the causes of their irritations related to either classroom dynamics or the impact of administrative dictates on them. In terms of frustrations with the dynamics in the classrooms, one student says it bothered him when he did not understand things because he felt dumb and was too embarrassed to raise hand. He felt as though he could not talk with the teachers because they weren't interested in helping him. Another student says that he was irritated when students would be playing around in the class and the teachers couldn't or wouldn't control the students – he says, at times, the teachers would even joke with the disruptive students. He thinks the teachers should have spent less time trying to quiet down the others, and more time helping those who wanted to learn by teaching. He says that he was once one of the quiet ones who would do his work and when he needed help, he would call out to the teacher “Ms., Ms., Ms.,” but the teacher would not attend to him so he got tired and started to tune out. “If the teacher wasn't willing to help me then I'd get angry and shut down.” He says that he found this disrespectful especially when teachers would joke with the kids who were being disruptive. Of his initial experiences in high school, one student tells me that teachers would put the “Do Now” on board and if you didn't understand it, you were stuck. He says that the teachers' attitudes were – if you want to do the work then do it. If you weren't aware of what was going on, then you had to ask a classmate because the teacher wouldn't explain it or go over it with you. As

other students talk about their aggravation with the classroom dynamics of their school experiences, which they generally characterize as not very challenging and behaviorally disruptive, it becomes clear that some of them are more vexed by the administrative decisions, particularly those that placed them in those classrooms vis a vis special education classifications.

Most of the students received their special education label in junior high school around the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade. However, one student reports that he was classified special education in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. When the school advised him of the change, he felt it was wrong because he wasn't stupid. At the time, he says that his grades were excellent and in the range of the 90s. The school explained to him that the classification was made because of his behavior, which included fighting, roaming the hallways and defacing the bulletin boards, and being disruptive in his classes. He says that while he was in regular education, he had heard stories that special education was crazier than regular education. "When I got there, it wasn't what I had expected – it was better because the work was mad easy – you get baby work – you don't have to do anything to pass – they would give us a worksheet for homework. If they had given me harder work, I would have been more eager to learn but I wasn't." He tells me that he would quickly do the assigned worksheet, and then would be given another worksheet that he would also quickly complete. He says that this bothered and bored him so he would leave the class to roam the halls or talk during the class. He doesn't think that his teachers realized that he was bored with the slow pace of the work. "They weren't listening or paying attention because they had a whole bunch of other kids to deal with besides me." He believes that being sent to special education caused him to lose control over school – "my grades

dropped and education wasn't about freedom because I had no choices in the matter. I was cheated. I was swindled out of my education.”

Two other students who received special education classifications during their junior high school careers talk about how they felt violated by it. One says that he was assigned to special education in 7<sup>th</sup> grade but wasn't with it. The reason for the classification was behavioral because he was cutting classes, roaming the hallways, being a class clown, and demonstrating problems with his temper. He believes that had he received counseling when his dad died, things might have been different. With his special education classification, he says that he was transferred to a school for “bad kids,” and it was like jail. He says that it had metal detectors and if you misbehaved, you would receive a write-up and as part of the punishment, you would have to eat a block of cheese (cheese sandwich) for lunch.

Another student tells me that he could never stay out of trouble – was always into something – instead of being in his assigned classroom, he would run through the hallways and go into other classes. He also says that he was always fighting because people would say stuff to him that he didn't like – he thought that that was how you solved problems. He says that the students in special education did whatever they wanted to do because the school personnel didn't pay as much attention to them as they did the regular education students so it was much easier to misbehave. All of the special education kids were together and instead of focusing on work, they focused on whom they were going to fight. Because his behavior became progressively worse, his special education classification escalated. He says it was because he had to adapt his behavior to a more intense level of fighting and things became more violent.

He says that special education students who misbehaved were sent to a classroom where you would have to sit or stand all day with no schoolwork and no lunch. He says that he spent most days in this room. “Kids would walk pass, look into the room, and I would think why am I always here?” This student’s experience in special education, perhaps more than the others, had uncanny parallels to particular rhythms of incarceration; especially the circumstance of increased fighting amongst a group of similarly situated individuals. Just as one has to fight to get his weight up in prison, it seems that the special education students in this situation were fighting to gain respect within their cohort so adaptations to this unspoken rule had to be made. Also the pull-out for misbehaving resembles the students’ tales of going to the Bing (solitary) or playing the wall (standing against a wall for a period of time as determined by the correction officer).

Of all of the students, one had a particularly profound experience of disappointment that is not centered on his special education classification but with other administrative failures. He says that at first, school was great because he would learn and do everything on the board and would stay after class to learn more about the topics so he could be the best. During his high school career, he was given a one-year suspension for a scuffle with a security guard who questioned whether he belonged in a particular class. As part of the suspension, he was transferred to another school, which told him that he was only supposed to be with them for one week and that they had not yet received his academic records from his home school. After the week, he returned to his home school and was told that he could not be on school grounds because of the one-year suspension. He repeatedly went back to the school to try to resolve the matter because the temporary

school told him that he couldn't remain with them. The home school told him that if he continued to return, they would call the police so he stopped going.

He spent 1.5 months at the temporary school awaiting the administrative paperwork that would confirm that he had a one-year suspension and therefore was entitled to remain at the temporary school for that period of time. It never came so the school discharged him. Meanwhile, his home school continued to mark him absent on their attendance register. Eventually, his mother received letters stating that school authorities were going to call New York City's Administration of Child Services because of his excessive absences. He then transferred from the home school to another school but encountered problems with the transfer paperwork. He ended up at a neighborhood high school where he says the teachers didn't teach and would quiz kids on topics that were never introduced in class, where there would be a lot of substitute teachers in the classes, and where kids would hang out in the halls. Feeling as though the environment of this school was too problematic, he returned to the temporary high school to attempt to permanently transfer there.

When the school received the transfer paperwork, they assigned him to special education based upon an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that was done during his 5<sup>th</sup> grade year. His explanation that he was returned to regular education in 7<sup>th</sup> grade fell on deaf ears and the school would not change the special education assignment or request an updated IEP. He says that the special education classes were like being in kindergarten – they were doing phonics. He asked for his class assignment to be changed but the school officials refused. Discouraged and exhausted by all of these difficulties in just a two-year period, he stopped going to school. He said that if the frustrations weren't there, he

would have remained in school because he was doing well. “I loved school, wouldn’t miss a day. Loved my teachers, classmates, and completing my work before the other students. In elementary and junior high school, I had a lot of good teachers. They treated me like I was their child and not like a regular student. They would work with me one-to-one if I needed it.” He said that this made him feel special and confident that he could do well. He felt motivated to try harder to do well on all of his assignments. His teachers would call his mom and tell her that he was doing well. At this point in his educational career, he had hoped to get his diploma and go to college. His mom had told him about college – campus life, being independent, classes, being away from home, and dorm life – and he was excited about the possibilities. College was another step towards his goal of owning a business. I asked him if he still has this hope and he said yes, but he is not sure that it’ll happen because it’s not him anymore.

Unfortunately, the frustrations that the guys experienced in their pre-incarceration school careers were not mitigated against with a breadth of educational accomplishments. Most of them were able to talk of some educational accomplishments, but even in those cases, there weren’t many although they were nevertheless impactful. Again, their accomplishments were mostly experienced at the elementary and junior high school levels. One student remembered getting a \$50 savings bond for doing well in math in elementary school. He said that he loved math and did well in it. He was so proud of the savings bond, especially when he was able to show it to his grandmother. While his family (parents and grandmother) acknowledged the achievement, there wasn’t necessarily a celebration of it. Another student said that he thinks his greatest accomplishment was the improvement he made in math over the years. In his case, there

wasn't any external recognition but he said that he knew he had improved because he better understood mathematical concepts and had an easier time solving mathematical problems. A third student said that he loved bringing home his report card to his parents because he was proud of it.

Two other students talked about how they would get certificates in elementary school. One of the two couldn't remember for what he got the certificates but the second student told me "I liked getting certificates at end of week. My goal was always to get more than three. I would get mad if I didn't reach my goal. I got certificates for Math, Reading, Social Studies, and perfect attendance. I loved my mom's reaction – we would celebrate by going to McDonalds." This student also reported feeling a sense of educational accomplishment after dropping out of school. He said that this happened when he was hanging out with his friends who were still in school; they sometimes would say that they weren't going to do their homework. To which he would say "you ain't gonna do your homework? Let me look at it. I want to see if I can get it." If he recognized the assignment, he would tell his friend to watch him do it, he would do it, and explain what he did to his friend. The friend would say, "oh, I didn't know that."

While there are a few students in the group who cannot recall ever feeling a sense of accomplishment at any point in their educational careers, there is one student in the group who specifically talked about how his sense of not having accomplished anything in school was confirmed and reinforced by school officials. He says that he never received any certificates or awards during his elementary and junior high school years. However, he did get a certificate for his 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduation. Upon receiving the certificate of graduation from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, he says that the principal approached him and

told him he was graduating only because they (the teachers and administrators of the school) didn't want to see his face anymore. With that, he went to Applebee's restaurant with his mom and brother to celebrate his graduation. Unconvincingly, he told me that the comment didn't bother him because he still graduated.

The lockdown of the minds and bodies of many poor urban youth of color begins with law enforcement's co-optation of their educational spaces; the disconnects between curricula, instructional resources, standards, and assessments; insufficient resource allocations to their schools; and the imposition of a pedagogical program that fails to embrace the knowledges and skills of students' cultured epistemologies. This lockdown is exacerbated by the extent to which particular students suffer frustrations with the pedagogical dynamics of schooling and fail to develop any breadth or depth of educational accomplishments as it impacts whether or not they achieve a sufficient sense of self-efficacy within the realm of schooling. All of the young men in the research group believed that they were better skilled and more respected within the street arena than in school. While they must be held accountable for their own agency in the circumstances that generated this conclusion, it can't be ignored that the school plays a pivotal role as well. Unfortunately, for students who are excised from schools through push-out or drop-out activities and enter a correctional setting, the experience of being on lockdown becomes more relentless with the failure of correctional programs to appropriately address the students' educational deficits. Court-involved youth, predominantly poor Black and Latino youth, experience a sort of double jeopardy with respect to their immersion in an inadequate and ineffective educational environment.

*INPUTS & OUTCOMES: HOW COURT-INVOLVED YOUTH EMERGE FROM PUBLIC SCHOOLS*

Their public school experiences, prior to court-involvement, have left them with poor educational skills resulting in high rates of special education needs. According to a seminal study by Project READ, “More than one-third of all juvenile offenders of this age group [15.5 years] read below the fourth-grade level. Ninety percent of teachers providing reading instruction in juvenile correctional facilities reported that they had “students who [could not] read material composed of words from their own oral vocabularies.”<sup>138</sup> This is consistent with the New York Correctional Association’s assertion that in 2000, 49 percent of youth confined in the detention facilities of New York’s Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) were in need of special education.<sup>139</sup> More specifically, 9 of the 10 youth entering OCFS facilities in 2000 presented with at least one special service need at time of intake; and 68 percent had two to seven such needs. The rates for specific special service needs were substance abuse – 72 percent; mental health – 51 percent; special education – 25 percent; health – 39 percent; sex offender – 10 percent; mental retardation – 9 percent.

“A substantial number of youth held in juvenile detention and correctional facilities are experiencing reading problems. A significant number – those reading below the fourth-grade level – are deemed functionally illiterate. Upon release from confinement, these youth will experience great difficulty in achieving and competing in

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<sup>138</sup> Hodges, J., Giuliotti, N., and Porpotage II, F.M. (1994). Improving Literacy Skills of Juvenile Detainees. *Department of Justice: OJJDP*.

<sup>139</sup> Correctional Association Juvenile Justice Fact Sheet Retrieved November 2003, from [http://www.correctionalassociation.org/juvenile\\_fact.html](http://www.correctionalassociation.org/juvenile_fact.html)

today's increasingly technological world."<sup>140</sup> Unfortunately, during their incarceration, youth, who have documented high rates of poor educational skills, particularly in the area of literacy, are not likely to receive the education to which they have a right and which they desperately need. A review of the research on the pedagogical practices utilized in the educational settings for incarcerated youth demonstrates our failure to effectively meet their needs. If their community schools adversely impacted their educational experiences, then this circumstance reflects the second element of the educational double jeopardy that victimizes youth who are engulfed by the prison pipeline.

Regina Foley (2001) compiled a meta-analysis of the literature on the academic characteristics of incarcerated youth. In her findings, she reported that incarcerated youth appear to function within a below-average to average range of intelligence based upon IQ measures. Their academic achievement tends to be one to several years below expected grade levels and for many, academic functioning is measured between fifth and ninth grade levels. With respect to reading, significant deficits were found although New York State advised that approximately 50 percent of the juveniles reporting completion of the eighth grade were reading at the eighth grade level or higher in 1994. Measures of spelling revealed that juveniles were functioning between the fifth and sixth grade levels. A discourse analysis of juveniles' oral language skills demonstrated that they had significantly poor oral language skills with higher percentages of utterances with one or more discourse errors (e.g. Redundancy and nonspecific vocabulary) than their counterparts who were not court-involved. Foley also found that juveniles reported

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<sup>140</sup> Hodges, J., Giuliotti, N., and Porpotage II, F.M. (1994). Improving Literacy Skills of Juvenile Detainees. *Department of Justice: OJJDP*.

receiving an F in at least one of the academic classes and had demonstrated significant deficits in their math skills. Interestingly, several studies reviewed by Foley noted that a majority of the juveniles reported favorable attitudes toward school and teachers. However, one of the studies indicates that court-involved youth had a significantly less favorable attitude toward school and lower educational aspirations and expectations than their counterparts.

*MEETING THEM WHERE THEY ARE – CLOSING THE EDUCATIONAL GAP DURING  
INCARCERATION*

The primary response to the poor academic achievement of juvenile offenders has been literacy programs, which have demonstrated some success according to Hodges et. al. (1994) and Drakeford (2002). Hodges et. al. (1994) reported on their single-case research studies conducted Columbus, Mississippi and Monterey, California. The focus of their studies was to assess whether direct instruction would improve the literacy of incarcerated juveniles. They simply defined direct instruction as “high levels of student engagement, and teacher-directed classrooms using sequenced structured materials appropriate for the student’s ability.”<sup>141</sup> However, in their analysis, they noted that a large part of the curriculum included phonics instruction. From their research, they concluded that direct instruction does improve literacy for the sample because the post-test means were statistically significantly greater than the pre-test means in various areas of literacy.

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<sup>141</sup> Hodges, J., Giuliotti, N., and Porpotage II, F.M. (1994). Improving Literacy Skills of Juvenile Detainees. *Department of Justice: OJJDP*.

Drakeford (2002) conducted a single-case multiple baseline design study to examine the effectiveness of an intensive literacy program aimed at increasing the literacy skills of incarcerated youth. His study consisted of six residents (from a population of 188 boys and girls) of a detention facility. Each student in the study had a history of educational disabilities but Drakeford does not provide any information about the demographic data or the nature of the educational disabilities of the students, which is problematic. Furthermore, it was unclear whether they had been receiving, in the recent past of the study, any type of special education services. If they were receiving such services, the results recorded by Drakeford may be somewhat attributable to a maturation of the intervention of those services.

The intervention was the Science Research Associates Corrective Reading Program which is a strategy that focuses on decoding and comprehension for students who experience difficulty reading in grades 3 through 12. Results on the Corrective Reading Placement pre- and post-tests demonstrated literacy improvement from half a grade to a full grade for all participants. Using the Rhody-Secondary Reading Attitude Assessment, Drakeford found that the participants had noticeable positive changes in their attitudes towards reading. There is no discussion of the reliability or validity of the Corrective Reading Placement tests although he notes that the Rhody-Secondary Reading Attitude Assessment has a .84 test re-test reliability and has been normed across populations. Drakeford indicates that the trainers/interns participated in three training sessions, were observed daily to ensure proper implementation of the intervention, and that there were reliability checks performed on the data collection during baseline observations and the intervention.

Although Drakeford (2002) provides strong quantitative evidence for his findings regarding an intensive literacy program, the research of Hodges and her colleagues does not. What seems consistent across the literacy models that are being used as interventions to address the poor educational levels of incarcerated youth is their connection to our traditional frames of teaching and assessment which are not necessary effective for the target population as suggested by their pre-incarceration academic achievement. For instance, Hodges and her colleagues rely on assessment instruments that are common to schools. Assuming that there is validity of the assessment instrument, one would have to wonder how similar the literacy program for incarcerated juveniles is to the reading and literacy programs that they probably received in school prior to incarceration. If this is the case, there is an issue of the maturation effects, as well as the more pressing problem of a potential mismatch between the intervention and the target subjects.

In *Reduced Recidivism and Increased Employment Opportunity through Research-Based Reading Instruction*, Brunner states, “Statistics on incarcerated juvenile offenders strongly suggest that reading has not been, and is not being, taught properly. An examination of selected programs at correctional institutions indicated methods were used for teaching word recognition that cannot be supported by experimental research. Students were classified learning disabled without evidence from testing that specified the nature of the disabilities.”<sup>142</sup> He found that reading teachers receive the same type of pre-service training as public school teachers. “Classrooms in correctional settings often

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<sup>142</sup> Brunner, Michael S. (1993). National Survey of Reading Programs for Incarcerated Juvenile Offenders. *Department of Justice: OJJDP ED #369047*, p. 31

reflect the old model, which emphasizes workbook exercises, remediation, drill, and practice in the basics.”<sup>143</sup>

Brunner further notes that most teachers in correctional settings would not employ an intensive systematic phonics program but rather an eclectic approach in which phonics played a minor role in reading instruction in spite of the empirical data, which indicates otherwise. “Unfortunately intensive, systematic phonics instruction is not what disabled readers are getting. These readers include many incarcerated juvenile offenders, ages 13 to 17, who read like beginning primary grade students ...”<sup>144</sup> Additionally, the assessment measures do not provide the instructors with an accurate indication of the specific reading deficits that must be addressed. “The diagnostic tests being used at present, do not appear to provide information about the phonemic awareness students need in order to learn to decode. For example, achievement tests and intelligence tests provide raw scores, grade levels, percentile scores about important information relating to achievement and acquired knowledge, but they do not indicate, if students cannot decode words within their own oral vocabularies, what prevents them from doing so.”<sup>145</sup>

Coupled with this disconnect between the academic programming offered by facilities and the academic needs of the population, there is a discrepancy in how the population is prepared to enter the workforce upon their release. Although 84 percent and 85 percent of the facilities conduct a vocational and personal needs assessment

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<sup>143</sup> Gemignani, Robert. (1994). Juvenile Correctional Education: A Time for Change. *Department of Justice: OJJDP* (October)

<sup>144</sup> Brunner, Michael S. (1993). National Survey of Reading Programs for Incarcerated Juvenile Offenders. *Department of Justice: OJJDP ED #369047*, p. 34

<sup>145</sup> Brunner, Michael S. (1993). National Survey of Reading Programs for Incarcerated Juvenile Offenders. *Department of Justice: OJJDP ED #369047*, p. 35

respectively; only 28 percent and 58 percent of the detention centers (the place where the adjudicated juvenile awaits placement) conduct a vocational and personal needs assessment respectively as reported by OJJDP in *Conditions of Confinement: Juvenile Detention and Corrections Facilities*. This procedural difference can create a significant time lag in the placement of youth into appropriate programs. Most frequently, vocational education includes carpentry or the building trades, food services, and auto shop that are among the declining industries in the American economy.

Only 38 percent of the facilities offer computer training in spite of the fact that research demonstrates that the growing industries of the economy include carbon fiber technology, super conductivity, computers, robotics, optical technology, and ceramic engineering. According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), “Today’s labor market demands a more comprehensive and advanced academic and vocational training curriculum. Incarcerated youth should be afforded the opportunity to develop their competitive skills and move beyond drill to tackle increasingly complicated tasks.”<sup>146</sup> They further conclude that education programs must provide students with the opportunity to “develop competencies” in basic academic and cognitive skills, social qualities (responsibility, honesty, etc.), and workplace skills such as using resources, productively working with teams, information acquisition and usage, and using systems and technology. “Research and practice show that long-term success in helping youth involved in the juvenile justice system prepare for economic self-sufficiency and productive citizenship requires strategies that address the developmental

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<sup>146</sup> Gemignani, Robert. (1994). *Juvenile Correctional Education: A Time for Change*. Department of Justice: OJJDP (October)

needs of these youth: a solid academic foundation, life skills, and good workplace attitudes and attributes.”<sup>147</sup> Essential to a solid academic foundation is the acquisition of literacy skills to undergird other types of learning. Such an academic foundation requires educational programming that exceeds the framework of GED preparation or job-readiness.

According to White (2002), research clearly illustrates that the practices of the public schools have been ineffective in educating the target population, which makes it incredulous that we would continue to utilize the same instructional paradigm during incarceration. Shira Birnbaum, in her study of a private alternative school program for court-involved youth in a midsize Southern city, found that even legally mandated reform efforts failed to deliver the type of educational program that the students required. “Concerned about matters of quality assurance, school district officials supervising the Academy contract had required that students be enrolled in courses officially matched to those on district roll. Yet diverse student skill levels and high mobility rates [due to evolving legal status] militated against the traditional classroom arrangement of instruction...There was virtually no classroom instruction, and evaluation of student academic work was minimal or gratuitous....Critical or intellectual engagement was not required from students.”<sup>148</sup>

In her assessment, the educational experience within the facility tended to reinforce in students a sense of alienation, which manifested in their behavior. “They

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<sup>147</sup> O’Sullivan, K., Rose, N., and Murphy, T. (2001). Pepnet: Connecting Juvenile Offenders to Education and Employment. *Department of Justice: OJJDP* (July)

<sup>148</sup> Birnbaum, Shira. (2001). *Law and Order and School: Daily Life in an Educational Program for Juvenile Delinquents*. Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, p. 167

dragged their feet, pretended not to hear certain directives, faked their classwork, pushed behavioral rules to the limit, and poked fun at their teachers and themselves.”<sup>149</sup> While we may intuitively understand the consequences of maladaptive educational experiences, we have not effectively translated this knowledge into our approaches to the design and delivery of youth services, in part, due to a rigid adherence to obsolete conceptualizations of youth that have formed the basis of our education and juvenile justice policies and practices. We must construct new models to support the creation and delivery of effective development of incarcerated juveniles.

#### *SCHOOL ON AN ISLAND*

The New York City Department of Education oversees the Austin H. MacCormack – Island Academy that provides educational services to school-aged youth in four correctional facilities located at Rikers Island. Based upon the *Instructional Programs for Students Incarcerated in Correctional Facilities Maintained by Counties or the City of New York* section of the Commissioner’s Regulations of the New York State Department of Education, youth who are incarcerated at Rikers Island and who should be enrolled as students of Austin H. MacCormack – Island Academy are entitled to 5.5 hours of daily instruction if they are between the ages of 16 – 17 years; and total instructional time of no less than three hours per school day if they are between the ages of 18 – 20 years. All inmates whose reading and math levels are below the 9<sup>th</sup> grade level are required to participate in an educational program. Within this framework, the facility should offer Adult Basic Education, Pre-GED, GED Instruction, Bilingual, ESOL,

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<sup>149</sup> Birnbaum, Shira. (2001). *Law and Order and School: Daily Life in an Educational Program for Juvenile Delinquents*. Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, p. 168

Special Education as well as Career and Technical Education. Island Academy has articulated a mission *to provide all students with the academic, social, and technological skills, which they will need to become productive citizens upon reentry into society.* According to the school's vision statement, *students can achieve their academic, personal, and social goals by making certain that we as educators provide them with the necessary training and preparation so that they can successfully continue with their education and enter the work force.* Unfortunately, students do not earn credits from their education at Rikers Island that can be transferred and counted towards high school graduation requirements.

In 2005, Island Academy received accreditation from the Correctional Education Association. On a daily basis, the school serves nearly 650 detained adolescents between the ages of 16 – 21 years old, and approximately 5,000 students annually. Based upon Island Academy's reports, the average reading level of its students, upon admission, is 5<sup>th</sup> grade and nearly 35 percent of the students enter with existing Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) that indicate a special education designation. The average length of stay is 30 days with the range between one day and over one year. Two of the four Rikers Island correctional facilities that houses school units serves adolescent males between the ages of 16 and 21 years. The two sites are the Adolescent Reception Center (ARDC) and the Eric M. Taylor Center (EMTC).

Within ARDC, there are three school areas including the Main, the Sprungs, and the Annex; and EMTC only contains one school area. The ARDC Main schools young men who are detained and awaiting disposition of their court cases, most of which include felonious charges. A student's stay at ARDC may be as short as two months or

as long as two years, but the average length of stay is six to twelve months. In the Sprungs, the students are young men who also are detained and awaiting disposition of their court cases, but their cases are usually misdemeanors and so their average lengths of stay tend to be much shorter, ranging from two to twenty – six weeks. The young men who attend school in the ARDC Annex also have pending court cases but they have been deemed, by correctional authorities, in need of mental observation or of protective custody. Their lengths of stay range between two months and two years. At EMTC, the students' cases have been adjudicated by the courts and they were sentenced to serve short terms of no more than two years. The typical sentence of a young man at EMTC is approximately one year. According to the staff, EMTC students are the most stable cohort because they have been sentenced and everyone knows their release dates. In ARDC, the populations are more transient because there are court dates that must be kept by the students, and no one knows when a student will be sentenced and consequently moved to another facility, either on Rikers Island or somewhere in the northern part of New York State.

Despite the stipulations of the State's educational policies for incarcerated youth, as well as the mission and vision of Island Academy, many youth who had attended the school were not receiving appropriate educational services. The dire circumstances surrounding the violation of their right to receive a public education were clarified in the 1996 *Handberry v. Thompson* lawsuit. The lawsuit was a class action filed against City of New York, the Board of Education, and the New York City Department of Corrections by New York school-aged plaintiffs held at 16 New York Department of Corrections' facilities, the plaintiffs alleged that they received no or extremely limited educational

instruction for significant periods of time in violation of general education laws; and that IDEA [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act] was violated by the defendants' failure to provide special education services to those who were so entitled to such services.<sup>150</sup> "At the time the Handberry lawsuit was filed, schooling was non-existent for hundreds of youth incarcerated on Rikers Island and elsewhere...While the Board of Education operated school programs in most of the jails housing 16 and 17 years olds – for whom school is mandatory – hundreds of these inmates were never enrolled in the schools, and still more received only a few hours of education per week."<sup>151</sup> Even when students were afforded classroom time, there was a question about the quality of the instruction and curricula. Furthermore, there was no readily available information about the students' academic performance while at the facilities.

The court found that the defendants failed to provide schooling for hundreds of inmates for many semesters, to identify those inmates in need of special education, to obtain existing Individual Education Plans for students who had one prior to their incarceration, to allocate space for special classroom facilities and resource rooms, and to tailor students' educational programs to meet their special educational needs. In her ruling, Judge Constance Motley noted "This court cannot overstate the importance of

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<sup>150</sup> Handberry v. Thompson, 96 Civ. 6161(CBM), UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK, 92 F. Supp. 2d 244; 2000 U.S. Dist.; and 219 F. Supp. 2d 525; 2002 U.S. Dist.. Retrieved December 2004, from [http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/doclist?\\_m=883dc9cf3f32ab91c7b71c33a067ae64&wchp=dGLbVzb-zSkVb&\\_md5=6f4aeddfa69572d88b6ba7221919bba7](http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/doclist?_m=883dc9cf3f32ab91c7b71c33a067ae64&wchp=dGLbVzb-zSkVb&_md5=6f4aeddfa69572d88b6ba7221919bba7)

<sup>151</sup> Werlwas, M. L. and Lewis, D. A. (2000). New York City Must Provide Education To Incarcerated Youth. *Fortune News* (Winter). Retrieved November 2003, from [www.fortunesociety.org](http://www.fortunesociety.org)

education for youngsters in general but especially for youth whose encounters with the legal system have gained them membership in the plaintiff class. Depriving class members of adequate educational services for the duration of their incarceration not only deprives those individuals of their rights but also poorly serves the larger society to which class members will return, and hopefully remain, upon their release.”<sup>152</sup>

As part of the educational plan that defendants had to submit to the court for review, Judge Motley mandated the inclusion of compulsory education for inmates under the age of 18 years; minimum of three hours of educational services daily for five days per week; verification of inmate assertions of GED achievement by the Board of Education; certification of all teachers by September 2003; two full-day staff development sessions for teachers; provision of library materials and services to inmates; implementation and administration of diagnostic academic placement tests for each inmate; implementation of screening procedures to identify and evaluate all eligible inmates with disabilities; identification of special education needs of new inmates within three school days; obtain existing Individual Education Plans or appropriately develop Temporary Education Plans; provision of a range of special education and related services (i.e. skills support classes, resource rooms, counseling, speech therapy, etc.); and modification of space to accommodate small class sizes and an area for counseling. Despite the overwhelming educational needs of the target population, the stipulations of

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<sup>152</sup> Handberry . Handberry v. Thompson, 96 Civ. 6161(CBM), UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK, 92 F. Supp. 2d 244; 2000 U.S. Dist.; and 219 F. Supp. 2d 525; 2002 U.S. Dist.. Retrieved December 2004, from [http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/doclist?\\_m=883dc9cf3f32ab91c7b71c33a067ae64&wchp=dGLbVzb-zSkVb&\\_md5=6f4aeddfa69572d88b6ba7221919bba7](http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/doclist?_m=883dc9cf3f32ab91c7b71c33a067ae64&wchp=dGLbVzb-zSkVb&_md5=6f4aeddfa69572d88b6ba7221919bba7)

Judge Motley's mandate clearly indicate the severe extent to which students' needs went unmet.

According to the current guidelines and procedures of Island Academy, upon a young man's arrival, several events are triggered for the school officials. There is a need to provide the student with a comprehensive orientation to Island Academy, to ascertain whether or not the student has a GED, and to administer the STAR computer-based tests for reading and mathematics so that appropriate academic placements can be made. During the orientation, students are told that "this is your opportunity to move ahead and achieve your goals. You will be able to acquire skills and knowledge that can lead to a High School Diploma or a G.E.D." They also are advised of class expectations, which include: remain in assigned classroom, use respectful language, show respect for self and others, look alert and attentive, try to understand each other, work to achieve an open line of communication with others, and get involved in classroom work activities. As part of the orientation, students are asked to list five goals they would like to achieve, and to complete a School Assessment of Youth In Transition (S.A.Y. I.T.) form that is a poor to excellent Likert scale to survey perspectives of their past school experiences (high school) in the areas of academic training, vocational training, support services (counseling), attendance, attitude, and overall experience. There also is a S.A.Y. I.T. form (Form B) to collect the same type information on students' experiences at Island Academy. Considering the transient nature of the cohorts, it is unclear when Form B is administered and whether a majority of the students get an opportunity to complete the survey. There is also a Form C version of the S.A.Y. I.T. survey. Its focus is more affective in that the categories include: opinion of self, attitude toward future learning,

coping with stress, working with others, employability, teachers' expectations of students, and school as a safe & healthy place. The scale for the first five categories of Form C contains a range of Got Worse, Stayed the Same, Improved, and Improved Greatly; and for the final two categories, the scale is strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree. Students are also given a Parent/Guardian Home Language Identification Survey that must be completed, a contract with stipulations about behavior that must be signed by the student, and information about transitional services for re-entry. Students are also advised of their right to return to a New York public school upon their release from Rikers Island. Because many of the students were not attending school prior to their incarceration, they are advised of the Department of Education Regional Enrollment Centers that can facilitate their re-enrollment in a public school or enrollment in a GED program upon release.

During a school year that is identical to that of the New York City public schools, students are scheduled to attend eight periods of school spanning from 8:00a.m. when they arrive from their housing units chaperoned by correction officers to 2:20p.m. when they are escorted back to their housing areas. They have lunch in the facility's mess hall from 11:09a.m. – 11:59a.m. Island Academy utilizes a literacy-based curriculum anchored by the Ramp-Up and Wilson Literacy programs. The Ramp-Up Literacy program targets students who are reading two to four years below their grade level and is aligned with the City's performance standards for English Language Arts. An important component of the program is to help students establish routines and rituals with respect to becoming effective readers. The key strategies include independent reading, read-aloud/think aloud, classroom conversation, and group work. In accordance with the

*Children First* initiative, and in an effort to best address the low levels of reading proficiency, the curriculum stresses literacy activities for all lessons.

Based upon the results of the STAR tests and their special education classifications, if any, students are assigned to one of several class categories including Pre-GED I, Pre-GED II, Pre-GED III, Pre-GED IV, GED, GED I, GED II, and GED III. Students in all of the Pre-GED classes (except Pre-GED IV) receive two periods of the Ramp-Up literacy program. Class classification and course offerings slightly differ between ARDC and EMTC. In addition to Ramp-Up, the other courses include Math, Science, Social Studies, English, Law French, Health, English as a Second Language (ESL), Gym, Art, Barber Shop, Computer, Career Development, College Prep, and Driver's Education. There are several *Friday Clubs*, which meet on Fridays, including Art, Health & Fitness, Street Law, Construction, Computer Graphics, Parenting, Music, and Multicultural/History. The breakdown of Island Academy's grading policy is 50 percent of grade based upon tests, reports, presentations, and projects; 25 percent on class participation; and 25 percent on class work. Students receive four progress reports throughout the school year beginning in mid-November.

Despite the outcome of the lawsuit and the current standard operating procedures of Island Academy, based upon the feedback from the guys who participated in the study, it seems that some students are still having an Island Academy school experience that is reflective of the conditions outlined in the Handberry lawsuit. Of his time at school in ARDC, one student said that it was like Adlai E. Stevenson High School, which he described as having uncaring teachers and intense security. This perspective is profoundly elucidated by a description of a visit to the school by *Inside Schools*, "During

our two-hour visit to Adlai Stevenson High School, we were not allowed to visit classes, but we did see one young person led out of the school in handcuffs and three students, accompanied by their parents, request “safety transfers” to enroll at other schools. As we waited to speak to the administrator who gave us our tour, we overheard one child tell a counselor “I don't want to be here.” The counselor replied “I don't want to be here either.”<sup>153</sup>

Some students said that they only had three subjects including math, reading, and science whereas others said that they also had music and social studies. They all noted that there was no gym, computer room, or barber shop; and that during a typical day, in at least one of their classes, they would get the newspaper to read and subsequently be asked to write a paragraph; and watch movies – when asked what type of movies, one student said they saw the Matrix. Of the art class, in which a few were enrolled, one student said he enjoyed it and another said that they worked out of coloring books. They say that at ARDC, no one does work. In describing the classroom atmosphere, they told me that during the class, teachers would come in, sit on desk, and look at them. They would write stuff on the board and say you can do it if you want or they might be eating and drinking coffee. The guys said that the students might walk in and out of class, or put their heads down and sleep while a whole bunch of kids would be talking, throwing paper, and fighting. One student said “teachers wouldn't do anything and the kids didn't care because they didn't know when they'd be going home so they would just chit chat with people who were in their houses. I'd only do art and music. I only had two good teachers – math and art.” Most of them said that they didn't remember anything that they

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<sup>153</sup> School profile data on Adlai Stevenson High School. Retrieved December 2005, from [http://www.insideschools.org/fs/school\\_profile.php?id=1002](http://www.insideschools.org/fs/school_profile.php?id=1002)

learned in their classes at ARDC, and didn't feel as though the teachers were really interested in whether or not they learned.

“School in the four building (ARDC) wasn't school because you don't get taught nothing but here (EMTC), they teach you.” All of the guys reiterated this sentiment – the idea that school at EMTC is *real* school as opposed to what happens at ARDC. In delineating the differences, they focused on the role of the correction officers, the assistant principal and teachers, the classes, as well as the rhythm of the school day. According to one student, the officers are not as lenient at EMTC as they are at ARDC. They are much more likely to make sure that you are not being disruptive and will enforce the rules if necessary. One of the guys, comparing the volatility of ARDC to EMTC, said that there are a lot of fights that happen in ARDC classrooms but not so much at EMTC, and this is because the officers are doing their jobs. One student talked about how the assistant principal at EMTC is on their backs – “as soon as you walk to the bathroom, she asks “where are you going?” While he doesn't like the constant questioning, he said that it helps to keep things in order and prevent disruptions. They all seem to appreciate the teachers who they believe care whether or not they learn anything. One student says that the teachers give you work and will even give you extra work (homework) if you ask. Another student said that he most enjoys talking with teachers who give him ideas by asking him what is he going to do with his life; and what is he going to do differently to change his outcomes. He said that these things are his focus and not the work (i.e. school work). He likes his history teacher because she brings them food and is not strict – she has them do some work, tells a joke/let them have a laugh, and let them listen to the radio for a short while.

The course offerings at EMTC are fewer than those at ARDC but the students feel as though they are learning more. One student said that his classes include Computer, Social Studies, Art, English, and Math. Another said that he has the core subjects of Social Studies, English, and Math as well as Barber Shop and Art. He said that he most likes the Barber Shop and Art classes because in the former, you are learning a trade and in the latter, you get to create things. Unlike his Art class in ARDC, he was able to do four pieces (paintings of two flowers, one vegetable, and a collage of Big Pun – the rapper). As he talked about his work in these two classes, it was clear that he was proud of what he had accomplished. He said that most often, you can find him in Gym, Computer, Barber Shop, or Social Studies because he liked the teachers of these classes. Despite this fact, he didn't talk about completing any work in Computer or Social Studies. When asked what he remembers learning in Social Studies, he said that he doesn't know. Another student said that liked his History, English, Art, and Math classes. When asked why, he said because he likes the teachers. Of the work, however, he felt that it was "mad easy." Other students echoed the point that they didn't necessarily feel challenged by the work with which they are presented. One student specifically noted that he didn't feel challenged in his English or Math class. There is a consensus amongst the guys that at EMTC, the teachers teach more even if they are unable to recall what they have been taught. What seems to have most impacted them, in terms of the pedagogical process, is their relationship with the teachers rather than the content knowledge and skills being delivered within the classroom setting.

Despite their embrace of EMTC as a *legitimate* and *good* school, like out in the town, they were not necessarily more engaged. While one student told me that students

at EMTC are in their seats and doing their work, another said that only the guys in the GED classes are doing their work. He said that students in the pre-GED classes don't do anything. One student suggested that guys at EMTC are a little more serious than those at ARDC because they have set acquisition of the GED as a goal for themselves and want to reach it before their release date. He said that many of them believe that if they don't get the GED while at Rikers, they won't get it at all because it is much harder to attempt reaching this goal when you are out in the town. The students at ARDC don't know how long they will be there so they don't feel the same sense of urgency and believe that they have the time. One student said he agrees because when he first arrived, he'd sleep in class a lot and not do anything but now it's crunch time so he is more attentive and focused on learning so he can pass the GED. Even as some of the students begin to focus on learning, which is understood simply as a means to obtain the end goal of the GED, the guys told me that most of the students are cutting classes. One student said that his progress reports would have 55s and the reason would be absenteeism because of his excessive cutting. For some, it seems that the goal of acquiring the GED isn't sufficient enough to structure a new orientation towards schooling and learning.

One of the things that is fundamentally problematic with the way in which incarcerated youth are educated within our correctional institutions is the overwhelming reliance on and institutionalization of the idea that the GED is the goal of educational programming. At all levels of the system, the message to students is that they should strive to achieve their GEDs. New York State's perspective on court-involved youth is clarified by its explicit educational goals for juvenile inmates, which are preparation to pass the GED or return to a community public school upon release. In the student

orientation handbook, there is a page entitled, *What Can The GED Do For You?*, and lists six responses including: develop and improve your academic skills (Reading, Writing, and Math), increases your chances of getting a job, provides a stepping stone to higher education (College, University, and Vocational Training), increases your chances for becoming a productive citizen, gives you a sense of accomplishment, and will give your family a reason to be proud of you. Furthermore, students are grouped into classroom categories with labels (Pre-GED and GED levels) that specifically situate them in relation to GED acquisition. While it is difficult to obtain documented information akin to that available for other public schools regarding the educational outcomes of students within the facility, the statistic that is repeatedly emphasized in communication materials is that the GED award rates have been steadily increasing; and for the 2004 – 2005 academic year, 256 GEDs were granted with a 75% pass rate.

Students who have had extremely poor experiences with school and who are fatigued by the disappointment and failure that they have experienced within the realm of school are bombarded with these messages. Consequently, they have come to internalize the idea that the GED is the end rather than a means to achieve something else. For them, the GED becomes the terminal degree. Literacy (verbal and numerate) is understood as requisite for GED acquisition rather than as an essential life skill to facilitate one's ability to engage the world in which we live. However, the reality is that the GED does not provide poor urban youth of color, particularly those who have been involved with the courts, with an educational credential, foundation of knowledges, or skill sets that will allow them to substantively transform their lives within the current sociopolitical and economic milieu of our civil society. "They [adolescents living in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century] will

need to acquire advanced literacy skills to perform successfully at work, at home, and in their personal lives.”<sup>154</sup> To effectively participate in all domains of civil society, individuals need much more than the functional literacy that is necessary to secure a GED. This holds true even if we choose to essentialize the idea civic participation in purely economic or labor participation terms. Much of the research on the GED credential demonstrates that it does not compare to a high school diploma in terms of earnings and postsecondary education.<sup>155</sup>

The most ironically distressing element of the entire phenomenon, especially when situated within the larger context of the contemporary urban education discourse, is that in the midst of everyone’s quest for elevated standards to transform the pedagogical processes of our public schools, as articulated by the high-stakes testing movement and the assessment regulations of NCLB, we are sanctioning a devolution of standards for court-involved youth by stressing the GED to the extent that we do in spite of knowing that it is a limiting rather than empowering educational credential. It provides everyone with an exit strategy – young people who are tired of school can get a credential that officially releases them from any obligation to further engage education while simultaneously releasing the system from developing and implementing a program of schooling to provide our most underserved students with a sound basic education so that they can effectively participate in all arenas of our civil society. In terms of educating

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<sup>154</sup> Drakeford, W. (2002). The Impact of an Intensive Program to Increase the Literacy Skills Of Youth Confined to Juvenile Corrections. *Journal of Correctional Education*, 53(4), 139-144

<sup>155</sup> Andrews, Heather (2002). “Focus on the GED: Who Takes It and Why?” Retrieved April 2005, from [www.sreb.org](http://www.sreb.org); and Greene, Jay (2002). “The GED Myth” Retrieved April 2005, from [www.educationreview.homestead.com/2002GreeneGEDMyth~ns4.html](http://www.educationreview.homestead.com/2002GreeneGEDMyth~ns4.html)

our incarcerated youth, the vision and mission are realized through teaching to a test with the least stakes in terms of that for which it can prepare and/or credential an individual, and no one seems to be outraged. Consequently, we are structuring another social division as we engage in behaviors that will exacerbate the economic gap between people from particular communities and leave residual problems along the social and political domains for those same communities.

The other explicit goal of New York State Department of Education policies relating to the education of court-involved youth is their return to community public schools. Unfortunately, preparation for the return to school is an unrealistic and equally ineffective goal for the target population. Based upon the research of Gemignani (1994), the likelihood of a formerly court-involved student successfully returning to a community public school is negligible considering that schools do not want the behavioral and academic challenges that may accompany the student. Additionally, students are likely to suffer the same pedagogical practices that initially were ineffective, alienating, and disempowering. This circumstance is exacerbated by the fact that these are the same community schools in which students performed poorly and from which they often dropped out.

With a greater emphasis on schools to achieve particular performance standards and annual yearly progress, as complicatedly defined by NCLB, it is unlikely that they will embrace the return of this population as these students represent challenges to efforts to meet the new required levels of standards. Evidence of the problematic nature of the return to a community public school is best documented in the 2004 class action lawsuit filed by The Legal Aid Society, Advocates for Children of New York, and Dewey

Ballantine LLP against the NYS Department of Education and the NYC Department of Education. In the lawsuit, the plaintiffs, formerly court-involved students between the ages of 7-21, allege that upon their release from a court-ordered setting, they have been denied educational access at community schools. They contend that they “are regularly denied the opportunity to return to school or warehoused in alternative setting where court-involved youth are segregated in settings and that do not afford them minimally adequate educational services.”<sup>156</sup>

Ultimately, without having their developmental needs appropriately met, incarcerated youth are bound to enter adulthood as economically irrelevant (Rifkin, 1995) individuals with severely limited options for survival, which ultimately facilitates their social and political disengagement. Such disengagement further alienates an already marginalized community of individuals and increases the likelihood of recidivism resulting in higher financial and social costs to all members of the society. If we consider how youth are experiencing these activities, called “education,” it is reasonable that most of them elect to not return to school upon their release which is often a condition of their probation, and that they do not even imagine the possibility of higher education. Not only are we depriving them of their right to “a sound and basic education” but we are demotivating them from learning altogether.

For many of our nation’s juvenile offenders, incarceration presents us with a unique opportunity to begin addressing their learning deficits. “Research and practice show that long-term success in helping youth involved in the juvenile justice system

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<sup>156</sup> Legal Aid Society. (2004). Class Action Filed on Behalf of Court-Involved Students Not Being Allowed to Transition Back to Community School, CV-04-5414 (2004) Retrieved March 2005, from <https://www.legal-aid.org/Uploads/JGcomp.pdf>

prepare for economic self-sufficiency and productive citizenship requires strategies that address the developmental needs of these youth: a solid academic foundation, life skills, and good workplace attitudes and attributes.”<sup>157</sup> The greater the quantity and quality of the education provided to incarcerated youth, the better the possibilities that fewer youth will experience recidivism upon their inevitable release from a correctional facility. “According to the Federal Bureau of Prisons, there is an inverse relationship between recidivism rates and education. The more education received, the less likely an individual is to be re-arrested or re-imprisoned. A report issued by the Congressional Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency estimates that the national recidivism rate for juvenile offenders is between 60% and 84%. For juveniles involved in quality reading-instruction programs, the recidivism rate can be reduced by 20% or more.”<sup>158</sup>

“Quite clearly, educating imprisoned youth is a demanding task...Many have not been in school for a period of months or years, and they present a complex combination of capabilities and needs. These include language barriers, illiteracy, a variety of learning disabilities and special education needs, patterns of below-grade-level functioning, behavioral disorders, and mental and emotional health concerns.”<sup>159</sup> If we are focused on utilizing education to empower imprisoned youth to deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their worlds, then we are

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<sup>157</sup> O’Sullivan, K., Rose, N., and Murphy, T. (2001). *Pepnet: Connecting Juvenile Offenders to Education and Employment*. *Department of Justice: OJJDP* (July)

<sup>158</sup> Open Society Institute’s Criminal Justice Initiative (1997, September). *Research Brief: Education as Crime Prevention*. Providing education to prisoners. Retrieved November 2003, from [www.soros.org/crime/research\\_brief\\_2.html](http://www.soros.org/crime/research_brief_2.html)

<sup>159</sup> Bortner, M.A., and Williams, Linda M. (1997). *Youth In Prison*. New York: Routledge, p. 95

embarking on a journey of monumental difficulty and importance especially considering how court-involved youngsters are socially positioned within the current sociopolitical and economic hierarchy.

We must employ an assets-oriented youth development approach that authentically and actively acknowledges the idea that youth have indigenous knowledges and skills about how they experience and navigate through their environments, are capable of a critical consciousness of their conditions, and have constructed rituals to exercise a degree of agency within their socially marginalized spaces to meet their needs and ensure their survival. Such indigenous skills and knowledge, critical consciousness, and acts of agency of youth must be viewed as assets to be refined and further development rather than deficiencies to be excised and reformed. Through the development and implementation of educational programs that exploit these assets, students can enhance their literacy (verbal, numerate, and technological) skills that are currently deficient.

It is essential that educational programs within the correctional facilities effectively address students' overall educational needs because it tends to be a last opportunity as most juvenile offenders are unlikely to successfully re-engage the educational system to acquire a sound basic education, despite the fact that school re-entry is usually a condition of probation. "A characteristic of juveniles incarcerated in correctional and detention facilities is their poor experience with elementary and secondary education."<sup>160</sup> According to Gemignani (1994), most juvenile offenders aged

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<sup>160</sup> Hodges, J., Giuliotti, N., and Porpotage II, F.M. (1994). Improving Literacy Skills of Juvenile Detainees. *Department of Justice: OJJDP*.

16 and older do not return to school upon release or graduate from high school. There is a strong link between low levels of education and high rates of criminal activity, and one of the best predictors of adult criminal behavior is involvement with the criminal justice system as a juvenile. With so few resources devoted to the education of juvenile offenders, it is not surprising that so many remain involved in the criminal justice system well into their adult lives.<sup>161</sup> Without the necessary skills and credentials to productively participate in legal labor markets, the recidivism of juvenile offenders into adulthood is inevitable.

Educational programming for incarcerated youth should focus on their assets as a point of entry to teach the knowledges and skills that will enable them to effectively transform themselves and their environments as they work to become economically, socially, and politically relevant citizens within the legitimate spaces of our communities. “It is generally acknowledged that alternative education practices for juvenile offenders should be conducted in unconventional ways, with a variety of challenging materials, an emphasis on goal-setting and problem-solving skills, as well as frequent feedback and rewards.”<sup>162</sup> Citing the work of Leblanc and Pfannenstiel (1991), White also acknowledges the need to teach to students’ strengths rather than to their deficits, and that we also must help juvenile offenders develop a sense of accomplishment so that they gain confidence and feel better about their abilities as they develop new skill sets. These

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<sup>161</sup> Open Society Institute’s Criminal Justice Initiative (1997, September). Research Brief: Education as Crime Prevention. Providing education to prisoners. Retrieved November 2003, from [www.soros.org/crime/research\\_brief\\_2.html](http://www.soros.org/crime/research_brief_2.html)

<sup>162</sup> White, Carter. (2002). Reclaiming Incarcerated Youths Through Education. *Corrections Today*, 64(2), (April), p. 177

considerations must be privileged in the development of educational programs for the target population.

## CHAPTER V: REPRESENTATIVE ANECDOTES OF THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF SEVEN YOUTH FROM RIKERS ISLAND

Within the juvenile justice discourse, court-involved youth are monolithically imagined based upon statistical representations that facilitate the process of essentializing them as impoverished, uneducated, alienated, young urban males of color. While such a characterization is not necessarily inaccurate, in a broad general sense, it fails to appropriately capture the complex nature of the lived experiences of the young people who find themselves in the juvenile justice system and the prison pipeline. The statistical data related to court-involved youth is essential, but it doesn't impart the comprehensive insights necessary to critically think about the ways in which the system can be reformed to better serve the target population. If we want to educate this population so that they too are not left behind, then we must work to understand how these students imagine themselves as complete and multilayered ontological beings.

Of equal importance to the perspective offered by the statistics, are the youth's own educational narratives about how they have experienced schooling in its various iterations, and how they have come to construct their own notions of the value of education. During the interviews and class sessions, the seven young men who participated in this study revealed dimensions of themselves that challenged and reinforced the rhetoric of representation that dominates our discourse on court-involved youth. They also provided critical insights about how they have come to understand their educational experiences as well as the purpose of education in our contemporary society. In the aggregate, their contemplations reflect important '*representative anecdotes*' about the recurrent themes that significantly impact their educational engagements and struggles to make changes in their lives, and that, if well-understood, can effectively

inform our efforts to better meet their educational needs. In the blue devils of nada, Albert Murray effectively explains the idea of a ‘*representative anecdote*’ as “...that little tale or tidbit of gossip, that little incident that is in effect definitive in that it reflects, suggests, or embodies a basic attitude toward experience.”<sup>163</sup>

From my interactions with the seven young men over the five-week period, I have compiled five representative anecdotes of the main themes they expressed regarding their interactions with schooling. I believe these anecdotes provide essential insights into the ways in which they think about and engage education. In the first anecdote, WHAT DO I NEED SCHOOL FOR?, the focus is on how they define education and how they have come to imbue the idea of education with certain meanings; the second anecdote, PLACE MATTERS, addresses the extent to which the rhythms of life in prison structure their engagements with school; the third anecdote, I AIN’T WITH NOTHING, examines the multiple forms of resistance in which the guys partake as they engage in schooling in prison; in EVERYONE HAS TO MAN UP, the fourth anecdote, the focus is on how their conceptualizations of manhood not only impacted their decisions about school engagement prior to coming to Rikers but their thinking about school after Rikers; and the fifth anecdote, DO YOUR TIME – DON’T LET YOUR TIME DO YOU, represents their reflections about what comes next in terms of their engagements with education. My intent is to allow each of the anecdotes to be a full articulation or embodiment of the voices of the seven guys who participated in this study. What precedes the five anecdotes

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<sup>163</sup> Murray, A. (1997). *The Blue Devils of Nada: A Contemporary American Approach to Aesthetic Statement*. New York: Vintage, p. 13

is a synopsis of who the seven guys are and how they came to be at the prison complex known as Rikers.

*INTRODUCTIONS TO THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS*

RG is a tall, thin, seventeen year old African-American male who has lived his entire life in the West Brighton housing development of Staten Island. At Rikers, he is often teased about being from Staten Island and he places such comments in their proper perspective by quickly reminding people that “just because your hood is hood doesn’t mean that you are hood and vice versa.” Within days of meeting him, it is clear that he has a proclivity for writing rap lyrics. His lyrics are neither gangsta, politically progressive, nor misogynistic. In terms of his musical creativity, he is probably best characterized as a ballad lyricist. He has a sense of humor that is playful and infectious, reminiscent of a mischievous young child. While his temperament is not aggressive or confrontational, he can be defiant. The complexities of how he sees himself are best revealed in his monikers: “Violation” and “The Wise Man”.

He has three brothers and two sisters, one of which is his twin. He and his twin sister are the youngest children in the family and they were named after their grandparents. His grandmother also lives in Staten Island although not in the same home where he grew up with his mom, dad, and siblings. At one point, the family was evicted from their home and had to stay with an aunt. RG says that his dad, who suffered from AIDS, died from a drug overdose when he was 8 years old. After his dad died, he says that things at home got crazier and he began to get involved in the street life. In 5<sup>th</sup> grade, he tried to runaway from home with his twin sister and brother. One night, they packed a suitcase and placed it next to the door. The next morning when they left for school, they

said goodbye to their mom as usual, took the suitcase, left the apartment, and started walking towards their grandmother's house. Laughing at the irony of it all, he says that as they were walking to their grandmother's house, she was driving to their house to see their mom and noticed them walking on the street. She picked them up and took them to school. There was never any discussion about the incident and they never tried to runaway again.

While RG never talks about the specifics of his charges, he says that he did a 1.5 year bid up North when he was 13 years old. Upon his return home, he had 6 months of aftercare and had to live with an aunt because he couldn't live with his mom. He said that his mom was using drugs at the time and he couldn't be in that environment in accordance with the conditions of his aftercare. He revealed that he tried selling crack but was caught two weeks later and feels that he should have stuck with what he knew – selling marijuana – instead of getting greedy, which led him to sell crack. He believes that the real, big time hustlers know their game very well and as such are either in the town (home), at a prison facility upstate, or dead. He said that real, big time hustlers do not do petty time at Rikers because they have workers, like him, who end up in that predicament.

RG thinks that a critical component of his relatively short sentence at Rikers (approximately six months) is the result of the fact that he got a paid lawyer as opposed to a legal aide attorney. In his opinion, this allowed him to dodge the possibility of a 3-6 year sentence. Of his time at Rikers, he says that his family has told him to make something of the time – “do your time and don't let your time do you” – do the time wisely so he doesn't return. His mom and his girlfriend had been visiting him at Rikers

but his mom moved to Alabama in March 2005. Upon turning 18 years old in May 2005, his girlfriend, who had been living in a group home where she was poorly treated, moved to Alabama to live with his mom. He said that it has been hard for him without really having any family that visits him on a regular basis.

When asked about what he plans to do upon his release from Rikers, RG initially said that he'll have a "home release party" much like the one he had after completing his 1.5 year bid up North. At that time, they also celebrated his birthday and he was given a piece of the cake that had the names of him and his twin sister, which she saved for him. Subsequent to his "home release party," he plans to move to Alabama to live with his mom and girlfriend. Once in Alabama, he wants to get his GED and a job. In terms of any plans to attend college (2 or 4 year), he says that he has a felony charge (robbery) and no one is going to see him as a "big student" – "how can I put this without racism. They will see a young black man, they'll want to know his background – they'll see my history – like 5 robberies – really hustling." He believes that getting an education will help people to see the other parts of him – he says that he was popular in the hood and can be equally popular in an educational setting – but doesn't think it'll mitigate against people seeing him as someone who committed multiple robberies. He said that while he is willing to try to make a change, it will not be easy because people won't let him forget the negative elements of his past and he fears the rejection that this might bring. He told me that "in the hood, being a criminal is good & exciting but it's not to the white man when you try to get a job." While he thinks he deserves an opportunity for something better because he doesn't want or plan to return to a correctional setting, he ultimately believes that his only options are the GED and a job.

TH is an 18 year-old African-American male who grew up in a New York City housing development in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. He lived with his mom who, according to him, tried to keep him on the right path. With regret for not believing this sooner, he says that he “now knows that mom is always right.” She would tell him that she wouldn’t buy him clothes that he wanted if he misbehaved. In response to his mom’s position on the subject, he decided that he needed to make his own money so he could buy the clothes that he wanted and his mom wouldn’t. The only way he knew how to accomplish his goal was to sell drugs because as young as 12 years old, he had been watching his brother sell drugs to accumulate clothes, money, and jewelry. He said that he learned the street life from watching his brother and cousin. TH is quick to point out that they did not *teach* him in the traditional sense but that he would observe them and ask questions to learn as much as possible.

By the time that TH became heavily involved in drug dealing, his brother was serving time in prison. During a phone conversation, his brother confronted him about the dealing and he denied it. Eventually, he admitted to his brother that he was dealing and his brother discouraged him by telling him that he didn’t want TH to end up in jail – that it wasn’t the place for him – things are serious in prison with people telling you what to do all the time. Despite the warnings, TH said that he was hardheaded and full of himself because he was earning what he thought was a lot of money and buying all that he wanted so he refused to listen to his brother or anyone else. The impact of his brother’s warnings was also lessened by the fact that his brother had been doing the same thing. TH found it difficult to heed what he believed was hypocritical advice from his

brother who dropped out of school, was 13 years old when he first went to jail, and was locked up for most of his teen years.

When I suggested that he is directly following in the footsteps of his brother, TH, who is now at Rikers for the third time, said that he knows but didn't think it would happen because he thought he was more cautious than his brother who he describes as flamboyant and multitasking – dealing drugs and robbing. He said that he was only dealing drugs so he didn't think he would end up in jail like his brother. At the age of 16, TH found himself at Rikers for the first time for three weeks for a robbery charge. He returned for a second time because of a fight at his high school – he says that he was arrested on the spot because he was attending a high school that was one of the Impact Schools where police officers are deployed. He eventually got one year probation for the fight. Currently, he is at Rikers for a gun possession charge which violated his one year probation.

Although his mom is preparing to move to Pennsylvania, he plans to stay in the family's apartment with his girlfriend. TH said that his goal while he is at Rikers is to get his GED and when asked why, he said that he promised his mom that he would get his GED and he doesn't think that he would be focused enough in the town to get the GED so it is best to do it while at Rikers. In terms of his plans beyond the GED, he said that his goal is to make a lot of money so that he can live large. I ask him to tell me what living large means to him and he explained to me how he made \$4,000 per day dealing crack, weed, and heroin – according to him heroin is the only drug where you can make that kind of money but the consequences are greater if you are caught by the police. He said that he doesn't think he can make that amount of money doing anything legal so he

believes that he will probably return to dealing drugs, and he has planned for this eventuality. TH told me “it is hard to do legal stuff especially because I know the illegal better.” He said why work hard and get a little money.

Despite this apparent resignation to become further established in the underground economy of drug dealing, TH has not completely abandoned aspirations of entering the legal job market or leaving the prison track. While he believes that school is of no consequence to him, regardless of the life he chooses to lead, he thinks that a trade school might be critical to his attempt to turn his life around. Although he doubts his ability to be sufficiently focused to get his GED on the outside, he believes that he would be able to concentrate on being successful in a trade school because it is something in which he is interested. At first, he wanted to learn a trade related to computers but now says that he wants electrical because he believes that with expertise in the electrical field, he’ll get paid a lot of money. It is unclear how he came to this conclusion but it is nevertheless an idea to which he is strongly attached. As he maps out his future for me, he said that ten years from now, society will be shocked because he would have flipped the script and become something when people thought he’d amount to nothing. Unfortunately, he also sees his future as short and says he doubts he’ll live beyond the age of 40 years because of the streets (death or jail).

While not immediately obvious, TH is a leader amongst the young men with whom he lives at Rikers. He said that even before he came to Rikers, he was known to be a leader and that when he attended school; teachers would often turn to him to help quiet down unruly students in the class. TH’s authority most likely results from his physical stature which is larger than the others but not generally menacing, from the fact

that he controls the phones in the dormitory as well as works “hang up duty” or suicide watch, and from his academic abilities which visibly exceed those of the other students. TH commands a degree of respect that seems to exempt him from some of the mocking and confrontational behavior that occurs amongst the guys, at least on the school floor. He is not aggressive but does enjoy the challenge of any debate, even if it means that he has to argue that the sky is not blue. To say that he is stubborn is an understatement as he is rarely coaxed into doing anything that he doesn’t want to do no matter the strength of the argument or eventual benefit to him.

JC is an 18-year-old African American who lives in the Bronx with his younger sister, mom, and dad. His gang affiliation with the Crips began during his junior high school years. Before his arrest, he said that he was working in the construction field and was responsible for cleaning bricks and working flag duty. It was a job that he got with the help of a neighbor who lived in the same apartment building as his family. He said that he was making “good money” in the job such that he was able to buy himself some nice jewelry. At one point, he was robbed of his cash on hand and jewelry so he bought a gun. He believes that his mom was aware that he had a gun but isn’t sure whether his dad knew about it. Because he was making more money than his parents, he said that there was tension between him and his parents over money and one day, the conflict escalated. According to JC, his dad confronted him asking “where’s the money (\$40) that you owe me?” JC said that he owed his dad nothing and resented the question because he would give money to his parents to assist with the household finances. He and his dad began to argue and then fight while his mom looked on and sister watched from under a table. His dad threw a knife at him and he went to get his gun, which he pulled on his dad. When

JC left the apartment to cool off, his dad called the police. JC returned to the apartment a short while later to get his jacket and heard his dad on the phone but didn't realize, at the time, that his dad was talking with the police. By the time he rode the elevator to the first floor, the police were in the lobby and so was his dad who pointed him out to the police

JC said that he did 2 months at Rikers before being sentenced to five years probation for the gun possession charge. As a condition of his probation, he had to attend the Wildcat program. He said that he was attending the Program, and a few times his mom had accompanied him. JC failed to show up to Wildcat when he was hurt and had to go to the emergency room. After receiving medical care, he said that he called the Program to advise them and subsequently obtained a note from the hospital that he submitted to Wildcat. Despite his efforts, Wildcat reported him to the court as not showing up for the Program, which led to him being remanded for violation of his probation. He is now serving eight months at Rikers. He feels that the counselor from Wildcat undermined him by not advocating for him at the hearing as well as by failing to help him work towards his GED and learning computer skills while he attended the Program. He said that he tried selling drugs but wasn't good at it and didn't make any money so he stopped. He thinks kids who sell drugs can do a lot, "I be listening to them and they really know their math."

All at once, JC described himself as a pretty boy who became a man early because he had to take care of mom and sister since his dad wasn't doing it. He also believes himself to be a good communicator who is trying to enlighten and educate his fellow inmates around race matters. His instructional approach is much more do as I say rather than do as I do. He talked of a strong Black Nationalist perspective that he attributes to

his parents, particularly his mom, because there were always books about the history and experiences of African Americans in his home. Upon his release, he plans to live with a friend who is now renting an apartment for them and works in the construction industry. He plans to return to construction work, and go to school. He said that he intends to go to school as opposed to getting his GED but doesn't have any particular plans for either endeavor. He wants to go to college although he doesn't have a clear sense of what that would entail and eventually he wants to become a minister.

CV is a soon to be 18 year old Dominican from the Bronx. He is generally quiet and reserved in his interactions and demeanor but there are moments when he is a burst of talkative energy. He has an 8-year-old younger sister and a 14-year-old younger brother. He lives with his mom and dad in a private house owned by the family. For the past five years, his dad has owned an auto mechanic shop where his mom has worked as the secretary. CV had worked at the shop when he was 16 years old while he was attempting to leave the business of dealing drugs. Although he enjoyed working with his dad, he got pulled back into drug dealing because of the money. According to CV, he made \$1,000 per day and worked nearly 24 hours each day. His first visit to Rikers occurred last year for a marijuana charge for which he got ten days but only served seven days. He is now serving time for gun and cocaine possession charges.

Despite the fact that his mom would drive him to school everyday, he began getting involved in the street life during his junior high school years when he would go to hooky parties with the high school students who were hanging out around his junior high school. His parents eventually learned that he was leaving school after being dropped off and they began to more closely monitor him including unannounced visits to the school

or home to see if he was where he should have been. At 14 years old, his older girlfriend became pregnant and he told his mom about the pregnancy. He then told her about the drug dealing because his mom was concerned with how he would financially support a child. With her focus on the unborn child, she helped him to open a bank account for all of his money to ensure some financial security for the child. During his absence, he said that his mom and his baby's mother have been able to build a relationship although it was a rocky start as his mom thought his girlfriend had led him astray.

CV is very family-oriented and that is his primary focus for life after Rikers. He wants to rent an apartment so that he can live as a family with his baby's mom and baby when he gets out of Rikers. His baby's mom is working towards her high school diploma and he believes that she'll be able to get a good job with it regardless of whether she decides to continue her education, which he doesn't know whether she wants to do. In terms of his own employment, he plans to open an auto mechanic shop with his dad who is planning to sell his current shop. He told his dad that he wants to be a partner so that he can learn how to be a businessman and eventually own a business. CV said that he expects to receive payment of a settlement from a lawsuit that he had against New York City when he was younger and that that money will help to finance the new auto mechanic shop. He said that he thinks he'll make more money with the business and even if he doesn't, it'll be better than dealing drugs because it's a legitimate job. He said that he is motivated to succeed because he wants to prove all those who think he can't do it wrong and he believes that working with his dad, his family, and his focus on the future will be enough to help him stay on track.

While WB lives with his mom in Brooklyn, he says that he stays all over. His grandmother, with whom he is close, lives in Queens. He will be 18 years old on December 29<sup>th</sup>. He says that he has a younger sister who likes to dress him up like a girl and go outside. He's the only male in his household and is committed to fulfilling that role for his grandmother, mother, and sister. WB never revealed his charge but the other guys say that his street name is Pimp and that he is serving time for prostituting girls. He said that he never sold drugs and that a typical day for him included going to IHOP (International House of Pancakes) with his "girls" and then taking them shopping because they worked hard for him. He said that everything he does is a hustle and learned how to hustle from his mother who would tell him "the day you wake up with no money in your pants, you have on the wrong pants." He said that he feels the pressure of managing all of his hustles and gets tired but he has to make money. Because his mom spent some time in jail for a drug charge, he said that she helped to prepare him to do his time at Rikers; although he didn't explain what it means to help him prepare to do his time.

During all of my interactions with WB, I am always aware of his statement that everything he does is a hustle. When he initially tells me that he cannot read and seems genuinely concerned about changing that situation, I wonder if this is part of the hustle but the problem, from my perspective, is not knowing exactly what tangible thing he is attempting to get from hustling me. He is extremely observant of everything around him and his memory is like a steel trap – skills that undoubtedly benefited him in his hustles. Throughout the entire length of the study, he remained suspicious of me because he believes that even the school people are extensions of the prison system and that they will

set him up if given an opportunity. He did not hesitate to communicate his feelings and thoughts but he did so cautiously and respectfully.

I felt most swindled or hustled by WB when he talked about his plans for life after Rikers. He said that he needs his girlfriend to help him avoid a return to Rikers. His girlfriend is a white Eastern European woman and he said that he doesn't date Black women because they don't take care of themselves. His disgust of Black women is striking when contrasted against his genuine care, love, and concern for the three generations of women in his family. In addition to returning to his girlfriend, he said that he would attempt to return to school because he eventually would like to get a graduate degree (Masters). He continued by noting that getting a GED nowadays is just like being student of the month – a GED is good enough, the HS diploma is better. However, in this same conversation, he said that he will work towards getting his GED while at Rikers so when he gets out, he can go to college, then graduate school, and become an advocate for prisoners. It is difficult to believe that he will commit to the work involved in attaining this goal because he refuses to do any work despite claiming to not being able to read. To help him finance his life after Rikers, he said that he would like to get a job at Toys R Us because he wants to be able to help people.

This year, RH turned 18 years old. He is from the Bronx and has one older brother who is incarcerated in upstate New York. His parents are no longer together so he primarily lives with his mom but had spent time with his dad until he turned 14 years old and their relationship began to sour. This is his second time at Rikers – he had previously served two weeks at the facility. His mom completed some college; his dad and three of his maternal aunts are college graduates. One of his aunts is a teacher and

she would often talk with him about the importance of staying in school and working hard. He said that his mom would take him to the library in the neighborhood. His mom and brother would tell him to go to school, follow instructions, listen in school, and take what you learn day by day but he says that he had a difficult time listening to his brother's advice. His brother didn't complete school, although his grades were better than RH's grades, and was hanging out with "wrong" crowd. He said that his brother eventually did get his GED.

RH is quiet but by no means shy. Of all of the guys, he is probably the one who most enjoys learning. He excitedly talked about how well he did in elementary school while he lived in South Carolina and even when he first moved back to New York City. After dropping out, he would hang out with guys who were still in school and sometimes they would say that they weren't going to do their homework. RH would say "you ain't gonna do your homework. Well let me look at it. I want to know if I recognize it and remember how to do it." Most often, he would say to his friends that he understood the work and would tell them to watch him do it. He'd do the assignment for his friend and explain it to him. His friends would say "Oh, I didn't know that." RH said that not going to school made him mad and sad because he enjoyed the challenge of schoolwork and when he left school, that challenge was gone. He had nowhere to go in the morning when he would see others going to school. His mom would ask him what was going on and why he didn't like school anymore and why he wasn't attending classes. He wanted to tell her that he was hanging out but thought she wouldn't understand. He felt that she was ashamed of him because when he would come home, she wouldn't greet him

especially if she got a phone call from the school. Eventually he started feeling depressed about the situation, which made him hang out on the street even more.

When he leaves Rikers, he plans to go to the Door program to get his GED if he doesn't get it at Rikers. He thinks he is too old to try to do high school again because he would have to return to the 10<sup>th</sup> grade due to a significant lack of credits. Once he obtains his GED, he would like to own a business and be successful in life, which would entail being more than what people currently expect of him – he believes that people think he is a kid who won't do anything with his life.

DB turned 18 years old in September 2005 and is the eldest amongst his 4 brothers and 2 sisters. One of his younger brothers is now serving time at a juvenile facility in Pennsylvania for a drug charge. DB said that his relationship with his dad wasn't great but felt that his mom's family really wasn't there for him. He has alternately lived with his mom, dad, and aunts, but primarily grew up in the Kingsborough projects (living with his dad) where there was drug dealing. He said that he always heard shooting, saw guns, violence and became immune to it. He said that he was always fascinated with guns and owned his first gun at 16 years old. Before becoming involved with drug dealing, he worked with his dad who is a plumber, which allowed him to buy clothes, jewelry, and the latest technology (i.e. he had a sidekick). He said that he didn't turn to the streets for money but found support & "love" in the street culture and family. When they were young adolescents, he and his brother, separated in age by only one month (they have different mothers), would talk about whether they would ever sell drugs and they both would say no. Now when they talk, DB says to his brother, "Look at me now."

His venture into drug dealing solidified when he had an argument with his mom's family and left the house. He started selling drugs on consignment but eventually started buying the merchandise outright to sell. The percentage fee with consignment varied across suppliers but once he switched from consignment, he cleared about \$700-\$800 per week. In addition to the drug dealing, he says that he was always putting in work with respect to his gang affiliation. While at Rikers, he was visited by the police regarding a gun used in a murder and learned that one of his closest friends was killed in a gang related incident. The news hit him hard. During the time when he was running the streets, he says that 50 Cents, the rapper, was his role model and that he believed in the motto – *get rich or die trying* – in his mind, dying today or tomorrow didn't really matter.

This is his second time at Rikers and it is the result of a probation violation. He initially spent one month at Rikers for a drug charge and was eventually sentenced to probation, which included attendance at a drug treatment program although he does not use drugs. He did not attend the program so a warrant was issued for him. DB went to the courthouse to turn himself in but saw someone remanded into custody so he left in fear that the same would happen to him. While hanging outside of his aunt's apartment building, she came outside and told him that the cops were looking for him. He went home to his father's house and then decided to go south. He packed his bags, got some money, said goodbye to people, and headed to the bus station. Initially, he thought he'd be gone for a week or so but was gone for three months.

While south, he felt as if he had some type of fame because "everybody got love for you if you are from New York. People were incredibly helpful." He was selling methadone, crack, cocaine, and heroin, which allowed him to purchase a 2005 Durango

and a 2005 Pacifica. Eventually, he returned to New York because of his family's concern and tears shed for him. They repeatedly told him that he didn't have to live a life on the run and that they wanted him to come home. As he reflects on all of this, it is clear that he feels the weight of it all. He said it's like all the men in his family have already done this, "my father got locked up and when he got home, he started doing right; my uncle was selling drugs in Coney Island and now has a good job; when I was on the streets, I'd hear how my dad was a big time drug dealer; and I've seen my aunt's boyfriend here at Rikers." He said that he is exhausted by all of it and regrets the loss of his childhood, especially when he remembers how some of his friends would go roller-skating but he couldn't join them because he had to stay home and work the block.

He said that his girlfriend keeps asking him about his plans for his life. She has told him that if he returns home to the same lifestyle that he previously had, then their relationship won't work. In response, he has told her that he wants to work with his dad in plumbing so he can learn the trade and eventually become an architectural contractor. If he cannot work with his dad, then he plans to get a legitimate job. He wants to get his GED while at Rikers because it will move him one step closer to success and "right now, I'm working towards success and not failure. I want to move forward and not backward. I have been successful the illegal way and now I want to be successful the legal way where I ain't gotta worry about the police questioning me about why I got all of this money in my pocket, and asking whether I have proof for it; and about my family looking at me like where are you getting this or that from. Everything will be accounted for. I'm young but I'm tired. Get rich or die tryin – isn't worth it." He said that his change in attitude has a lot to do with his girlfriend and family who kept telling him that they didn't

want to see him dead and in a position of having to bury their young. “I want to be a success and not another statistic of a young Black man.”

CR is an 18-year-old charismatic Puerto Rican from the South Bronx who has 5 brothers and 2 sisters. His father, a retired NYC police officer, now lives in Puerto Rico. He says that his dad left the family when he was younger than 8 years old so he never really spent time with his dad. Up to age 13 years, he exclusively lived with his mom but then started bouncing around between friends. His mom tried to get him to come home but he didn't want to be around the lifestyle in his home so he left. The lifestyle was bad – his mom would smoke crack in front of him and his two younger sisters who also lived in the house, and some days his mom would cook but mostly he'd be hungry. He said that his mom was using crack before he was born based on what his brothers tell him – he thinks that he might have been a crack baby. He said that when he was younger, he was stressed about his mom's crack usage and that affected whether he'd do school or not; but now, he said it doesn't stress him.

Despite all of this, he blames himself for connecting with the street life at 13 years old. He said that at that time, he didn't have nice clothes and sneakers but when he started dealing at 13 years old, he was making \$300 dollars per day by working from midnight to noon, and this allowed him to buy all that he needed and wanted. He believes that it is worth the risk and he felt very proud of the way that the kids on his block looked up to him as they called him Papi. Of the risks, he also says that when it's time to die, it's time to die so he doesn't think about how his lifestyle, flash of money, and popularity make him a target. He said that a few years ago, his dad tried to re-enter his life and attempted to get him to leave the street life but CR's response was “I'm not

having it. You can't come back into my life now after leaving me all those years ago and think you can tell me what to do.”

His four older brothers are out of the house – three of them were dealing drugs and the oldest one who is 29 years old and resides outside of New York has a construction job, wife, kids, nice house, and new car. While he hasn't seen him, he thinks that one of his older brothers is at Rikers for a probation violation (failure to attend a drug program) according to information that he got from his family. He said that the brother was sentenced to 31 days but will only serve 21 days. Although this brother dropped out of school in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, CR speculates that it was because the money in street was good, he got his GED while at Rikers sometime between the years 1998 and 2000. One of his other older brothers was able to buy a 2003 Maxima and a 2-story house from dealing. He said that this brother never did any jail time although he has been arrested, and now has people dealing for him. His girlfriend is a lawyer and he has a newborn son. His younger brother is selling weed, not doing school, and making more money than he did which has allowed him to move out of their mom's house and rent a room. CR said that he is not trying to get his little brother to stop because he thinks his little brother is hard headed. At 15 years old, he was living with one of their older brothers and shot another kid with a bee bee gun for which he was sentenced to time in jail (10 months at a bootcamp in the mountains of Pennsylvania). CR said that his brother did the time “strong” (without any contact from anyone) and came out a “monster,” referring to his physical size. He said that his little sisters (13 and 7 years old) live with an aunt during the week and see their mom on the weekend.

This is his first time at Rikers and he says it is the result of gun and crack possession charges. He was initially charged with gun possession and for that, he got probation. He violated probation when he was caught with about \$420 worth of crack. For this, he was sent to Rikers. He said that he didn't use legal aid representation but used his drug money to get a paid lawyer and post bail because these things make a difference in how you are perceived by the courts. It has the impact of making the court think that there is someone who cares about you. He said that most guys don't do this. He believes that he would have gone up North if he didn't get a paid lawyer.

Although they are not officially a couple, he has a baby's mom who also is his best friend. He said that he is about money and not girls – there are too many girls in town to get stuck on one – “I only love my baby's mom”. She completed high school and is going to college. He talked about how he would stay up with her while she did her college work. He expects to get back with his baby's mom at some point in the near future. The parents of his baby's mom are professionals: the father is a medical doctor and the mother is a kindergarten teacher. He said that he loves the mother of his baby's mom because she has done more for him than his own mom. She would cook for him and make sure he had a place to shower and sleep when he needed it. Initially, they didn't know he was dealing drugs but he feels that they were in denial because he was buying their daughter a lot of nice things. When the mother found crack in the daughter's room and confronted CR, he confessed. She told him that he couldn't continue seeing her daughter as long as he was dealing. She tried to convince him to leave the lifestyle but he said he couldn't. She believes he'll return to drug dealing. He seems resigned to that possibility and says that he is putting away money because he doesn't think it'll last

forever. As an example, he talked about his mother's boyfriend who he describes as a wheelchair-bound rich old time drug dealer. The boyfriend was shot in 1981 but is living off of drug money that he made in the 1980s.

With respect to life after Rikers, he first talked about a \$40,000 legal settlement that is scheduled to be paid upon his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, and his release outfit: white shirt with "Chris is free" written in black letters, white/black Jordans, blue jeans, white/black hat, big chain, earring, and watch. On that first day, he plans to hang out on the block posing with little brother and another kid who he says owns the block – they'll have shirts that say "Chris is back" to let people know that he is back. He also plans to drive around in his Alero with the sound system on and smoking a cigarette. He said that he hopes to get a security job but if that doesn't work out, then he'll use some of the settlement money to buy drugs that he can then sell. With respect to school, he said that he won't go back because while it's really not too late, it seems too late. He said that he might go to Friends of Island Academy, a re-entry program, to get his GED. He believes that even if he does the education thing, the cops will still harass him and people will continue to see him as he is now. He said that he thought about joining the job corps program, but people told him it was not for him – he doesn't like idea that you can't leave the campus. With regret, he says he might end up at Rikers again although he is not trying to come back. He agrees with the statistic that 8 of 10 of the adolescents released from Rikers return within a year of their release.

Another critical focal point for CR is his son who was due September 2005. He said that his son won't be anything like him. He wants to do what he has to do so that his son can have it all. To explain what he means by this, he said, "We'll go to Toys R Us

and I'll tell him to get anything he wants and then I'll buy it." He wants to give his son all the things that he didn't have, including discipline – "you gotta discipline your kids if you don't want them getting into the streets; my moms and pops didn't do this with me." He doesn't think his parents did what they were supposed to do when he was a little kid and said that he was hanging out on the streets as early as 8 years old. He believes that he'll be able to discipline his kid so that he won't turn to the streets. He wants his son to be smart and hopes that he'll go to college although he is not certain that this will happen. He thinks that his son will listen to him about staying away from streets and in school because of the child's mom who was able to do those things.

*WHAT DO I NEED SCHOOL FOR?*

"Education means freedom because there are a lot of things you can do in the world if you get an education. It frees your mind. Not a lot of kids understand this because they are focused on girls, money, and other materialistic things," said the student who is my first interview. The other guys echoed this broad sentiment. They told me that knowledge is power because if you want to work but have no knowledge then you have no power to make it happen. You can't be successful without knowledge and not just basic knowledge – everyone needs self knowledge – you need to know where you've come from – need to know what's out there before you go out there. Education is described as success but a few students qualify that idea with the stipulation that the success depends on what you do with your education and schooling. They spoke of the ways in which young people involved with the street life use school knowledge to do what they do on the street but that's not necessarily success because it won't last. One student said "a lot of people do it just to make their family happy but if you don't do anything with it, what's the point because you are just passing through the system."

Their ideas about education reflect the weight, which they too feel, of family expectations with respect to the importance of engaging school. A few of the guys mentioned that doing school is a way for them to make their families (particularly the matriarchs – i.e. grandmother or mother) happy and proud. They talked about the messages about school that they received from the adults in their lives. One of the students said that his mom would always tell him to go to school. If he didn't go to school, she wouldn't let him go outside. He said that his mom would wake him up early, push him out of the house, and tell him that if he didn't go to school, she would beat him up. He said there were times when she would call his school just to make sure he was there. His mom was able to do all of this despite the fact that she openly struggled with a crack cocaine addiction.

One guy talked about how his grandmother sometimes would make him go to school when he didn't want to go – “she would wake me up early to make sure that I was ready to get the cheese bus at 7:30 in the morning.” Another student said that his mom would tell him to get an education so that he can do well in life – “go to school and get a good job – that's what I was taught and always thought.” He said that his mom would stress the idea that he had to go to school and do well so that he wouldn't end up like the alcoholics, junkies, and bums on the streets. A third student said that his mom would tell him that she got her high school diploma and he had to do the same. While most of the guys talked of their mothers articulating messages about schools, one told me that his dad would tell him that he was doing nothing but hurting himself when he screwed up in school or failed to go to school altogether. Another student said that his parents (mother

and father) always told him that he had to go to school so he could get a job and make money. He said they are now telling him that it's not too late.

In multiple and different ways, these messages about the importance of school were reinforced by some of their parents who would work with them to complete homework assignments as well as attend parent-teacher conferences. A majority of the students reported that their mothers and/or grandmothers would attend such conferences. They said that their parents would hear the good and the bad. One student said that when his mom got positive reports during the conferences, it motivated him to try harder. "Some teachers would say that he's trying, doing work, participating – this made me feel good because I didn't always get a good report so when I got one, I thought if I can do this, let me see what else I can do." While most of the students said that at least one adult in their households attend the conferences, they also noted that there usually weren't any follow-up discussions in the home about the conferences or their academic performance.

The students also talked about messages about going to school from other members of their families. Several students reported that their older brothers would tell them to go to school and leave the streets. The problem they encountered with the messages from their older brothers was that the brothers usually were involved in the street life and had dropped out of school while articulating these messages about the value of school. "My brother would tell me to go to school, follow instructions, listen in school, and take what you learn day by day. But he was a hypocrite because he didn't complete school. He did better than me because he now has his GED but he was doing the street thing, hanging out with the wrong crowd, and not going to school. How can he tell me to do school when he didn't?" At this point, the young men said that they are still

getting these messages although they are getting them primarily from their mothers and their girlfriends or mothers of their babies.

When one examines their academic performance and achievements over time, it is clear that a disconnect exists in the ways in which they have been able to manifest the messages but, the extent to which they have internalized these messages about the value of school is readily illustrated in the rhetoric they articulate to others. Two of the students have young sons (one has a newborn and the other has a toddler) and they told me that they are going to tell their children that they have to go to school because it is important and you can't survive in this country without it. They said that they won't let their children drop out, although they are not sure how to make sure this doesn't happen, and will encourage them to go to college. While he doesn't have any children, one student also passes along the positive messages about school. He said that he constantly tells his girlfriend to go to school and that he won't call her if he learns that she was cutting school or her classes. Another student takes a similar approach. He told me that he encourages his girlfriend to go to school because he doesn't want to date someone who's not doing school. He said, "one of us has to get the knowledge unless we're going to be a dumb couple. I know the street life and I want her to know the other hustle and that is school. It is important to know both because they are similar, like cousins." In this way, acquiring education, street and school, becomes a communal endeavor that is viewed as having a particular utility or functionalism that does not have to be completely fulfilled by the individual.

As the students talked more about their ideas of doing something with one's education or schooling (they don't really distinguish between the two concepts), their

broad ideas were operationally transformed into a more concentrated focus on the economic value of education in terms of eventual employability. I asked the students what are their personal goals in terms of getting an education. There is a clear consensus amongst them that the end goal is getting a good job, which they described as including things like being a law enforcement officer, business owner, or fast food worker. They said that these occupations are good jobs because they are steady. By getting an education, they said they can get a good job, and be able to buy a house, pay for stuff, support family, and not struggle from week to week. One student said “education will give me a chance in the working area,” and another said “it’ll help me to get my hustle on the right way.” Despite their focus on the idea that getting an education has an economic potential with respect to enhancing someone’s employability, they didn’t seem to have any real sense of the gradations of economic or earning potential associated with various types of employment. When asked about the type of lifestyle they want and the type of employment that can support such a lifestyle, they couldn’t articulate a response. One student simply said he wants to “live large and will need a lot of money to do it.”

As students conceptualize schooling with an overwhelming emphasis on its economic functionality, they unwittingly become complicit in the social reproduction that constricts their mobility in the various domains of our civil society. Most of the students have embraced the idea that they need only secure their GEDs to fulfill the goal of obtaining a level of education that will enable them to find the type of employment that will allow them to buy a house, pay for stuff, support family, and not struggle from week to week. Unfortunately, their social status is reproduced and further entrenched because the low level employment that is aligned with the GED precludes the necessary

simultaneous acquisition of substantive and sustainable social capital, including cultural, political as well as economic, to affect change within the hegemony so that they can achieve mobility out of or otherwise transform their oppressive social positions.

Only three of the seven students mentioned college as part of their goals for education. For one of the three, he felt that the college was necessary because a GED was useless in terms of real earnings potential. However, of the three, only one talked seriously about attending college to prepare for an architectural contracting career. While they talk of the purpose of education in terms of freedom, and increasing their options in life, the reality of the lived experiences for most of them is that the purpose of education or school is really about obtaining the GED, despite its limitations. During one of the classes, one of the students said, “reading *A Raisin in the Sun* ain’t gonna help me with nothing. It’s not teaching us nothing but new vocabulary words – just having us read a story. This shit won’t help me on the GED – I know it won’t.” In many ways, school, in terms of a means to acquire education or knowledge, is no longer functionally necessary as the acquisition of a GED comes to represent the absence of an obligation to do school, rather than the presence of a means or vehicle to further one’s education. Most of them understand and believe it to be the educational end goal.

#### *PLACE MATTERS*

The idea that *place matters* has never seemed as powerfully relevant on so many levels as it does to this context. Rikers Island falls under the auspices of The New York City Department of Correction (DOC), which was established in 1895. At that time, it had jurisdiction over the City’s penal institutions including the Penitentiary and Workhouse on Blackwell’s Island (now called Roosevelt Island); City Prison, Manhattan (Tombs); and five District Prisons and the City cemetery (Potter’s Field) on Hart Island,

off City Island in the Bronx. Blackwell's Island was DOC's headquarters until the mid-1930s when Blackwell's inmates were transferred to the newly constructed Penitentiary on Rikers Island, which is located in the East River adjacent to LaGuardia Airport. In 1884, New York City purchased Rikers Island, originally consisting of 87.5 acres, for \$180,000. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> through the mid-20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Island was expanded by landfill to its current 415 acres. It now represents DOC's headquarters, with ten separate jails capable of housing up to 17,000 inmates.<sup>164</sup>

In 2004, the average daily inmate population was 13,752, the total number of admissions was 107,571, the revenue totaled \$16.2 million while the expenditures topped \$841.9 million, and the average cost per inmate was \$60,070. Approximately two-thirds of the total inmate population represent detained males and females who are 16 years and older and who — after arraignment on criminal charges — have been unable to post bail or were remanded without bail, pending adjudication of their criminal charges. The other inmates represent those who have been sentenced in the city to terms of up to one year, parole violators awaiting parole revocation hearings, and persons charged with civil crimes. Persons sentenced to prison terms of more than a year are held pending transfer to the State Department of Correctional Services. Within the Rikers Island prison complex, males between the ages of 16 and 18 are housed at the Adolescent Reception and Detention Center (ARDC) or the Eric M. Taylor Center (EMTC). ARDC opened in 1972 and contains 2,500 modular dormitories as well as Sprung structures and cells. The

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<sup>164</sup> Historical Overview of the New York City Department of Correction. Retrieved December 2005, from <http://www.ci.nyc.ny.us/html/doc/html/history.html>

EMTC site, built in 1964 and expanded in 1973, contains dormitory-style housing for up to 2,300 adolescent and adult male inmates who have sentences of less than one year.

Despite its close proximity to a well-known location, LaGuardia airport, most people are unaware of how to actually get to the Island via New York City Mass Transit, which is the best travel option to the Island. The Queensborough Plaza subway station stop is the critical point as it is the place where you get the Q101 bus to Rikers Island. On visiting days (Wednesday through Sunday), you might find a number of people waiting for the bus across from the Municipal Parking lot where there are large numbers of law enforcement personnel. Otherwise, you are likely only to see those who work on the Island. There is a Limited bus that runs express (after one other nearby local stop, it goes straight to the Island) and a local bus. The goal is to always get the express bus as the ride will only take approximately 30 minutes compared to 45 -50 minutes for the local which goes through several communities in Queens. Another important element to unfettered travel to the Island is to arrive at the bus stop early because the bus leaves promptly once all of the passengers board. The schedule, not at all a precise science, is every half hour on non-visiting days and every 15 minutes of visiting days.

While every bus ride to Rikers is a minefield of observations to be made, visiting days are especially informative. Most often, at least in the early hours of the day, there are many women usually in tow with young children. On one particular day, there are two young (elementary school aged) kids – a boy and a girl. It is amazing how unaffected the children appear to be considering that they are headed to a prison for a visitation. They don't seem to be apprehensive or agitated but resigned to the idea of this trip as a normal event. Although I don't, at the moment, recognize the importance of the

reading materials that the women are carrying, I do note that they have a lot of magazines and newspapers including the Daily News, the Post, and Felon magazine. One of the women, who has a child with her, is reading a book about the street life. I would later come to understand the representative meanings of these reading materials. Another woman on the bus is quietly writing a name and what appears to be a booking number on money. While not all of the visitors, whom you can distinguish from the workers just by virtue of frequency (who rides the bus everyday versus visiting days), seating patterns (most workers sit towards the front and visitors in the middle or back), and dress (most workers have their identification cards hanging around their necks), are young or middle-aged Blacks and Latinos, I notice a woman who is writing on the money because she is older and white – not the image of someone one would expect to see on public transportation to Rikers Island. I assume that she is going to put that money in the commissary of an inmate whom she is going to visit. I have no point of personal reference for this and can only think about those phone calls to my parents from college asking for money. I'm struck by the fact that the simple act of giving someone money requires such different precautions – I'd get a check in the mail but this inmate would get cash with markings/ identifying information on it placed into an account.

We finally arrive to the point that I believe is the worst part of each day that I have to travel to the Island. It is going across the bridge that spans a body of water, the East River, which I had never noticed on any of my trips to LaGuardia Airport. On approach to the bridge, there are signs that read *Rikers Island – A Prison Complex*, but you don't feel the heaviness of the fact that you are entering a prison system until you are on the bridge. Once across it, I go to the Perry Control Center, the main gate staffed by

correction officers. At this point, it is clear whose house you have just entered and you cannot get pass this control point without the appropriate clearance. Despite my sense of urgency, the correction officers are not fazed and so I must wait. Eventually they find my clearance, check my driver's license, write my name, affiliation, and address in a large book, ink-stamp my hand, and tell me to get on bus number one. I take the pass and proceed to the bus but first; I have to go through an x-ray machine, which is actually not working. In lieu of the machine, they look through my bag. I have to point out that there is an outside pouch to the bag and they then search that compartment. The main concern is that I am not carrying a camera cellphone, which I am not. I get on bus number one, which resembles a yellow school bus except that the colors and insignia are DOC rather than DOE, and go to the EMTC building. Rikers Island is a very large campus and so it requires its own transportation system to move workers as well as inmates. The odd thing is that despite the proximity of some buildings, walking is not allowed – at least by those who are not correction officers.

When I get to EMTC, there's yet another security checkpoint and the guard, although not regularly assigned to this post, tries to figure out where I should go. He tells me I have to see the guard behind a wall. There is a little cut out on the wall through which I must speak to the guard. I tell him that I want to go to the school. He asks for my pass from the Perry Control Center and identification. I give him my school identification card but that's not sufficient – he wants my driver's license, so I give it to him along with the pass. He takes both items and gives me another identification pass, and tells me to sign the book which looks identical to the book in which the guard at the Perry Control Center wrote all of my information. The identification card that I've just

received is non-descript except in bold lettering it says **ESCORT ONLY**. The first guard with whom I spoke now tells me I must wait for him to find an escort to take me to the school because I can't be in this space by myself. I wait, and wait, and wait for an officer to escort me. During my wait, I notice that there are inmates in orange jumpsuits with the white-lettered words "DOC PRISONER" all over them. They are cleaning the space. It's interesting how one of them is cleaning the windows of the front door but he never crosses that imaginary line that would allow him to take a breath of fresh air. He doesn't seem to even think about it, much less actually does it. In very methodical movements, the men mop, dust, and clean the entire area.

After about an hour, they find an officer to serve as my escort. I go through a metal detector and my bag goes through an x-ray machine. We are buzzed through the first secured metal door, which immediately locks behind us, and walk through the hallway to the end where there is another gate that opens by virtue of someone in a booth pushing a button. After standing in a small space sealed by two metal gates, one not opening until the other is closed, we go through the second gate and then enter the main hallway. Prior to entering that small space, I saw men in orange jumpsuits working but now, I see men in green. My escort tells me that we have to first stop at the store, which is a place where the correction officers can buy all kinds of food and beverages. According to the officer, it's well-stocked because you never know when the place might go on lockdown. The store is adjacent to the cafeteria for the staff, which has a huge big-screen TV and videogames. After about 20 – 30 minutes at the store, we continue on our journey to the school. We walk down several corridors and go through several hallways and stairwells. At one point, there is a bottleneck – pedestrian traffic of adult male

inmates dressed in green – on the stairwell. The officer remarks to me that this is the reason why I need an escort. We pass the stairwell congestion. It seems that there were several groups of officer-chaperoned inmates moving within the hallways so, like planes waiting to take off or land, there was some congestion – and this is not an aberration on the Island. We continue walking and then head down a hallway that is best described as a dimly lit subway tunnel. It's dark except for some fluorescent lighting on the walls. It's narrow and it's short. We go through a few more hallways and finally arrive at the school where there's another security checkpoint. I'm not asked to show any identification or to walk through the metal detector. With every step on this very circuitous route to the school, I know that place matters and that this place is prison, even if it bears a banner labeled school.

The concept that place matters is repeatedly crystallized for me when I talk with the young men who form my research group, especially when, in response to my comments that we are in school, they would say, “Miss, this is jail!” While initially I had not incorporated questions regarding the role of the institutional space in structuring students experiences and attitudes into the interview protocol, I immediately revised it primarily because it was an essential discussion point for the guys as evidenced by their repeated, even if short, comments about. One student even told another, while I was conducting the interview, to tell me about life in the dormitories. This, coupled with my own visceral reactions to crossing the bridge and walking through the prison to the school space, was a point of inquiry that could not be ignored if I was intent on comprehensively understanding their educational narratives.

Thomas (1995) makes the point that prisons are not conducive to adequate, high-quality educational programs because there are too many, overt and covert obstacles, to subvert the learning process. The accuracy of this observation cannot be overstated. One of the greatest challenges to the learning process is the way in which the structure of life in the dorm regulates the space of the school. Life in the dorm has an immediate and significant impact on the schedule, composition, and overall dynamic of the classroom. Dormitory life, described by the guys as physically and mentally violent with the offender just as likely to be a fellow inmate or a correction officer, creates a rhythm that does not necessarily privilege or facilitate learning in the class space. The students recount incidents that they say are indicative of the types of violations that occur in their dorms. One student talks about the comments that an officer makes to them. “We don’t care about you motherfuckers. Fuck y’all. We don’t come here because we care about you motherfuckers – it’s a job.” Another student talks about an incident when he was sitting on his bed and smiling while reading a letter from his girl. The officer smacked him on the head because he didn’t like the fact that the student was smiling. The student said he felt that he had been violated by the officer for no reason at all. The fighting between guys in the dorms seems to be an on-going and well-orchestrated series of events that are caused by a range of factors from the taking of sneakers so that the offending person doesn’t have to wear the Patakis (orange colored lace-less sneakers that are issued by the prison) to gang conflicts. In ARDC, fights might also be the result of the Team (a group of five guys “ordained” by the correction officer of the dorm to “regulate” the house as necessary; or a designated weight day when the new guys who are relegated to sitting on the metal benches can fight for a plastic chair and to get their weight up in the

house. The students acknowledge that they are making the officers' jobs easier because they don't have to do anything because the inmates control everything but it is the nature of this place. While the fights between students are problematic on several levels, one level that is often overlooked, particularly among the students, is the extent to which the fights trigger searches, which they perceive as another physical (the searches of dorm space can sometimes include body searches) and mental violation perpetrated against them by the officers.

School and classroom schedules are impacted by searches of the dorm space. The prison is the house of the Department of Correction and as such, their activities take precedent thereby delaying others including the task of getting students to class on time. On several occasions, the guys arrived to the school space late because there was a search of their dorms. The school staff has to wait out the time it takes for the officers to conduct the search, which may be extensive or cursory, of the dorm and to then escort the guys to school. Most often, you are unaware of the delay until it happens so there is little to no time to make any adjustments to lesson plans as you are never sure how much time you will have lost to the search. In one instance, not only did the guys arrive 45 – 60 minutes late but their arrival was staggered because the search of one house was concluded sooner than the search of the other. Just as the students may arrive late to class, they may be instructed by the officers assigned to the school space to leave early. There were at least three occasions during the five weeks when I heard the officer say "Walking Out," which meant the guys had to line up in the hallway by the metal detector at the entrance of the school space so they could be escorted back to their dorms, although there was at least 15 – 30 minutes left for the school day. Again, the educators

are not advised of the timing or rationale for such acts. The cumulative effect, however, is that students who are in desperate need of academic remediation in several areas are robbed of time on the task of learning so that the routine of the place that is prison progresses unfettered.

The classroom composition is also affected by the prerogatives of those who own the place. When students are involved in fights in their dorms, depending upon the severity of the physical violence and ensuing injuries, the perpetrator(s) are likely to be written up with the stipulation that they attend “Bing Court.” Bing Court is a disciplinary hearing where it is determined whether the perpetrator(s) will be sentenced to time in the Bing (solitary confinement with only one hour out of your cell) and if so, how long. According to the students, Bing Court occurs during the daytime, which means that students can be pulled out of their classrooms to attend the disciplinary hearing. Furthermore, if a student is sentenced to time in the Bing, he can be removed from class, without prior notice to the educators, and sent to the Bing. The timing of such activities seems exceedingly arbitrary and spontaneous, especially when there are spikes in the number of fights and disturbances in the dorms that consequently create a backlog in Bing Court as well as actually going to the Bing to do one’s solitary time.

With the arbitrary as well as spontaneous removal and return (upon completion of Bing time) of students, changes in the composition of the class occurs, which can negatively impact the dynamics of the learning community that might have been established as well as limit the extent to which a teacher can successfully scaffold learning for the various students. During our five week period, two of the seven students were removed and returned for Bing sentences that they received several months earlier;

and within the first three weeks, two of students received write-ups to attend Bing Court but had not been called as of the end of the research period. With the removal of students, character-reading assignments had to be rearranged and there was a change in the participation/class discussion levels. When the students returned, time had to be taken to, at the least, provide them with an overview of the material that they had missed. Fluctuations in the classroom composition affected the dynamic and momentum of teaching and learning.

With respect to the impact on the classroom dynamic, by which I mean the ways in which students and teachers engage with each other and the material during the class session, there are consequences at the individual and collective levels. One of the guys comments to me that the bad days of this place – like getting a bad phone call; problems in the house; someone messing with you; getting a write up – are really bad and messes you up in the head. They make you do and not do different things whether you want to do them or not. This “*messing with your head*” circumstance is one that comes into all spaces that they occupy, especially the school. Within the group of participants, one student was constantly anxious and stressed out about the disrespect he felt from the officers who would chastise them in maliciously degrading ways; and by the increasing number of searches, especially those that required the guys to carry their mattresses to an x-ray machine and to submit to body searches.

Although the other guys expressed their disgust and anger with the situation, this one student had a much deeper emotional reaction. He felt completely powerless and enraged by these acts as well as what he perceived as an inability to stop the assault on his mental well-being, which negatively impact his willingness and ability to concentrate

on learning. And so, his response to questions about why he was not doing any work was that he can't learn in jail because it's too stressful. To be clear, it isn't that he makes the attempt and then decides that he can't engage in the learning process but that he feels too overwhelmed by the persistent stress to even make the attempt to learn while in school. At one point during the five weeks, an officer assigned to the school space for vacation relief of the regularly assigned officer comes into the class and tells the guys that they need to do some work (first time that this has happened). The student responds that they can't because they're stressed out.

There is also the disruption to the learning dynamic that occurs by virtue of students' co-optation of the class to focus on discussions about life in the houses, and this impacts all of the students whether or not they choose to engage in the discussion. I was initially concerned that at the beginning of each class, there was a need for the students to spend at least 20 minutes talking about a range of things related to life in the dorms. During one morning the conversation focused on getting mail; not being allowed to have certain products; how money that comes in the mail sometimes goes into their commissary accounts (they are supposed to get receipts) and how it sometimes doesn't make it; anticipated trips to the commissary and their "shopping lists" – cookies are definitely high on most lists; and the black market for tobacco or cigarettes (\$2.69 in the town vs. \$20.00 at Rikers).

However, the discussions most often centered on the physical violations they experienced or witnessed in their dorms. On one occasion, they entered the classroom quietly but visibly annoyed about something. As had become the custom, I asked how are they doing and one student says he isn't going to do any work today. Another student

says that the first student is just mad about what happened last night. This sets off a discussion of no less than 45 minutes. There seems to have been a conflict over control of the phone by the different groups of the house. The big point of contention is whether the conflict is gang related (i.e. Bloods vs. Crips) or racial (i.e. Blacks vs. Latinos). One of the Latino students believes that “the Bloods and Crips are going to war and everyone in the dorm is acting like it’s over the phone when it’s not. That’s why people who aren’t gang-related are not getting involved. They know it’s Bloods and Crips and not the phone.” When he talks of not getting involved, he is specifically referring to the other Latinos in the dorm. The other student, who initially commented that he wasn’t going to do any schoolwork and is Black, believes that it is not a gang-related matter and that the Latinos “are too scared to pop off and will pay when we leave.” Then other students began to join in the discussion, which evolves into a conversation about the genesis of the two gangs. Some said that the Bloods and Crips are direct descendents of the Black Panthers. They began to debate how the Black Panther organization was turned into gangs, and whether gangs should be considered organizations.

While this diversion provided a teachable moment regarding street organizations, it nevertheless detracted significant amounts of time from the lesson, and not all of the students were interested in engaging in the dialogue. Furthermore, it changed the mindset of the students. Their focus was more on reliving the events than on creating knowledge and developing skills around this topic about which they were eager to construct a discourse. The former they understood to reflect the excitement of the streets and latter is viewed as boredom. The problem is that not every morning discussion of life in the dorm concludes in a sustainable teachable moment. Most times, the discussions

are opportunities for the students to vent their frustrations or to provide commentary on a fight that happened in the dorm. Since the classroom is a place that is under the least amount of surveillance by the officers, it is a relatively safe place to have these discussions. Finding the right balance to manage this dynamic is difficult but essential. To be effective in these situations require an ability to locate the teachable moments and use them as points of re-entry into particular lessons; or when no teachable moment can be found, to move the students back into the framework of the lesson. The least effective approach would be an authoritarian one that stifles the discussion, as it would generate even greater challenges to the class dynamic.

*I AIN'T WITH NOTHING!*

The students are very aware of the place in which they must now exist. To the outsider, the rules, explicit and implicit, may seem quite arbitrary and complicated but for the young men, they represent a particular logic about the use and abuse of power that is not too difficult to understand. They explained that as soon as you enter ARDC, a team of approximately five adolescent inmates approach you to advise you of the rules: If you want to lock out, you have to ask; If you want to get your weight up, you have to ask; When you get Frosted Flakes, you have to give them to the team (can't have Frosted Flakes); You have to sit on the iron until you get enough weight to have a plastic chair (the team designates certain days to get your weight up – you get to call people out, fight in the day room, and to the victor goes the spoils – a plastic chair); If you want to use the phone, you have to ask and usually you have to give up your 15 minute call (on Sundays, you get two free calls: a 6 minute and a 15 minute) to make a 6 minute call. They said that when the team approaches you and explains the rules, they'll ask if you're with it. If you say "I ain't with nothing" or "I ain't with it" then you'll get smoked (repeatedly

assaulted) by the team and/or other guys in the house. In some instances, guys have had to be moved to new housing units but the process starts all over again in the reassigned house. I asked them whether many guys say “I ain’t with nothing,” and they said no. I asked why anyone would say it considering the repercussions. They said that some do it because they don’t want someone else telling them what to do. One of the seven guys specifically told me that when he was approached by the team, he said, “I ain’t with nothing.” He was subsequently jumped twice, and during one of the assaults, his eyes were beat shut. After the second beating, he said that the team and officer in the house said that he had heart. He was proud of the fact that his courage and ability to stand up for himself were acknowledged.

Over the five weeks, I come to know and understand that “I ain’t with nothing,” verbalized and enacted, is symbolic of their efforts to oppose and resist anything that they perceive as oppressive within this place. They are constantly seizing moments to negate the efforts of others to make them conform to particular standards. In this place of prison, the school space is fertile ground as it represents a relatively safe site to behave oppositionally and so, they engage in such acts. The most often witnessed act of opposition is students asserting the right to not do any schoolwork. At the beginning of the class on the second day of the study, one of the students in the class said that he wasn’t going to do any work and can’t be made to do any schoolwork. He said that he knows this because it is in the prisoner’s rights book of which he has a copy. After making these comments, he puts his head on his desk and remains quiet for the entire session. There are times when he writes, graffiti style, on the section of the black board that is adjacent to his chair. When the class goes to the computer room, he accompanies

the class but doesn't participate in the assignment. At the end of the day, I related this story to the DOE teacher and she confirmed the student's position. She told me that during the school year she encounters the same commentary and behavior. The teacher said that she once tried to force the issue and the officer told her that the students are right that they can't be forced to do schoolwork.

Towards the end of the first week, there was another incident of refusal to do schoolwork as an act of defiance. One of the students asked me to give him a pen. When he asked, I told him that I would have to check with DOE to make sure that it was okay. In response, he told me to not ask DOE staff but to just get him the pen. The conversation ends and was not revisited until the following day when he asked if I got the pen for him. I told him that I think he told me not to ask the DOE staff about the pen because he knows that he is not supposed to have it and so, I can't give him something that he admitted is prohibited. He told me that if I won't give him a pen, then he won't do the work. Then he put his head on the desk and was quiet. The confrontation was precise, understated, and respectful, but nonetheless a definitive struggle for power. Before he left for the day, he told me that he wanted the pen so he could write a letter to his girlfriend and he hates having to use a pencil to write his letters. This statement ended the conflict as he never mentioned the matter again and neither did I. For another student, the resistance to doing schoolwork was not a circumstance of quid pro quo, but a rejection of the idea that he should attempt to learn in prison. During most of the class sessions throughout the entire five-week, he repeatedly refused to read the text saying "I don't want to learn nothing – not in here; can't learn nothing in jail."

Because their assertions of a right not to do schoolwork were so commonplace, I asked the students about it during the interviews. One student told me “the only control they have is over doing school – it is where they get some power and freedom so they take advantage of it for the couple of hours that they have. He said that they are so used to people telling them you can’t do this or that and they get tired of it and then say, “I’m not with it.” While we were talking, he heard a member of the school staff say “call the captain,” and he said “see, she’s calling the captain who can do anything to us.” Another student told me “folks do it because they don’t know any better. They think they know what’s best for them but they don’t understand.” He said that they are helping the system when they do it and that you resist the system by not doing what you were doing. This sentiment is echoed by a third student who said “it helps the system because the more you refuse, that makes it better for the system because you don’t have the intelligence to challenge the system or you are not mentally aware of what the system can do or how it can hurt you or how you can use the system.” They all seemed to agree that the refusal to do schoolwork helps the system, proves it right in terms of the negative rhetoric about Black and Latino youth, and that it feeds the economy of the prison industrial complex. Despite this understanding, they said many do it because they don’t care and don’t know anything else – they have no idea about how they are being oppressed or, more importantly, how to challenge it. It is as though the school becomes a stable space in which to resist because the consequences are not as profound as they might be in the dorms. It offers a routine and rhythm that they can control and disrupt unlike in the dorms where they don’t have any say in whether there is a search and if there is a search,

the extensiveness of it, or the type of punishment that might arbitrarily be imposed by an officer for misbehavior, whether serious or minor.

During the course of the study, there were other incidents of opposition but two were particularly intense. The first occurred after one of the students in the other class was fighting with one of the officers who pushed him into the bathroom door. When the fight between the student and the officer began, the students from both classes spilled out into the hallway to see what was happening. When the second officer ended the fight, she and the school administrator told all of the students to return to their classrooms, which they did. The administrator entered the class of the research participants and saw that a few of the guys are milling about the classroom. For the most part, they sat in their seats when she entered. However, one student remained standing by his desk. The administrator told him to sit down but he didn't. He stood there quietly with his arms extended downward and hands crossed in front of him. In a louder and sterner tone of voice, she told him to sit down again. He didn't do it and maintained his stance. The officer came into the classroom after hearing the administrator repeatedly tell the student to sit down. The officer told him to sit down or she would pull him out of the class. Still he refused so the officer pulled him out of the class and made him play the wall (stand along the wall near the booth for the officer). After the teacher for the research class explained to the administrator that the student was about to get his journal and that he was one of the students who regularly participates in class, the administrator had the student returned to the class. When I asked the student about the incident, he told me how he felt disrespected by the administrator and there was no reason for him to be

violated in that way. He said that he wasn't doing anything wrong and wasn't going to allow the administrator to disrespect him.

The second incident occurred closer towards the end of the research period when the administrator entered the class of the research participants to inquire how the class was going. The administrator noticed that one of the guys had his hands in his pants. In response to witnessing this situation, the administrator told the student to get his hands out of his pants. The student said that they were his hands and his pants, and that he wasn't bothering anyone so he should be left alone. The administrator persisted but the student didn't budge. Then, one of the other students put his hands in his pants, walked to the front of the class where he began pacing back and forth while telling all of the guys to put their hands in their pants. This moment of protest and demonstration continued for at least five minutes. The administrator eventually walked away and not too long thereafter, the officer came to the door of the classroom. When the officer arrived, the students took their hands out of their pants and the almost non-violent social uprising was effectively quelled.

In his discussion of black resistance to schooling, Solomon makes the point that not all oppositional behavior is resistant. He cites Giroux (1983) who suggests "oppositional behaviors must have sociopolitical significance to be seen as resistance."<sup>165</sup> Within this definitional framework, the students' behavior is resistant in terms of its oppositionality. However, there are two essential distinctions that must be made within this context. First, while their oppositional behavior may be read as resistant insofar as

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<sup>165</sup> Solomon, A. L. et. al. (2004). From Prison to Work: The Employment Dimensions of Prisoner Reentry. *A Report of the Reentry Roundtable, The Urban Institute* (October). Retrieved December 2005, from <http://www.urban.org/publications/411097.html>, p. 11

its sociopolitical significance lies in the way they, as the disempowered, assert power and demand to be respected as the one who is in control of what they do or do not do – something that they cannot do in other spaces of this place; their resistance is not strategic. That is to say that their acts of resistance moreover represent single moments of confrontation as opposed to a sustained series of acts to challenge a particular policy or practice that they perceive as oppressive.

While I believe that their efforts exist within a sociopolitical context, it is difficult to accept them as politicized acts of agency. Furthermore, the ways in which they choose to be oppositional and resistant causes them greater harm as their education is derailed, and as such, the acts lack a strategic context. In Elijah Anderson's discussion of the social and cultural dynamics impacting urban life for Black youth, he contends that their use of violence and a language of racial hatred reinforce their hegemonic oppression rather than challenge. Within this conceptual framework, the ways in which the students attempt to resist particular acts that they correctly perceive as violations against them also further entrenches their oppression. Their resistance is combative rather than a strategic challenge to the oppression. Although the guys understand that power is being used with this place of prison to oppress in a variety of ways and that there are times when they will assert that those in authority within the facility are not the boss of them, they fail to demonstrate an understanding of how those assertions at particular times reinforce their further oppression by depriving them of the opportunity to obtain learning.

Having said that, I recognize that the place undermines the extent to which the young people can be strategically resistant but I would also contend that another component of the phenomenon is that they are not educationally (not necessarily meaning

formal knowledge) empowered to know how to be strategically resistant. As long as they are further disempowered through the lack of a critical pedagogy that would engage them in thinking about the use of power within different hegemonic configurations and the ways to challenge that power in order to achieve substantive change in their lives, their resistance will remain at this dwarfed or stagnated level of being oppositional but not strategic.

The other important nuance of their resistance is that it is not necessarily opposition to what can be understood, in a Bourdieuan sense, as the *pedagogic action* – “the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power.”<sup>166</sup> During the interviews, one student told me that he trusts no one in this place. I asked him whether his distrust of people at Rikers included the school staff and he said yes. He reasoned that the school staff is an extension of the correction officers and the prison complex generally. In this sense, the students, when they rebel or resist the acts of the school staff, are fighting against the prison complex that oppresses them. The school doesn’t necessarily represent education or teaching and learning but becomes a proxy for the Department of Correction. Since they cannot safely resist the power and oppression imposed on them by the Department of Correction, they do it with that which is perceived as an extension of the primary perpetrator of symbolic and real violence. This is not to say that there is no symbolic violence exerted by the school staff but that the students are existing in a place of continuous symbolic violence and their only outlet is the school space so they resist school exponentially for a variety of reasons – some of which result from the

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<sup>166</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre and Passeron, Jean-Claude. (1977). *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. London: Sage Publications, p. 5

pedagogic action but some of which emanate from the oppression they suffer by virtue of being in prison. There is still minimal resistance to the curricular frameworks and pedagogical practices that subjugate their cultured knowledges. This type of resistance, where it does exist, does not readily manifest itself, although one Latino student would routinely ask for information about Puerto Rican history.

*EVERYONE HAS TO MAN UP*

All of the students said that when you get to Rikers, you have to man up or the officers and the other inmates will violate you. When they speak of manning up, it is about the physical assertion of themselves as men in a place that seeks to strip them of any sense of manhood through daily episodes of humiliation. As noted by Anderson, within the code of the streets, manhood is about displaying a level of physical fierceness that keeps others from violating you and that helps you to build a solid reputation. However, what becomes increasingly clear as the days passed was that the students have particular notions of manhood that transcend a singular focus of the physical. Their frameworks of what it means to be a man have played a significant role in the reasons why they immersed themselves in the street life, and for some of them, manning up at Rikers is also about taking responsibility for changing their lives.

Mortimer and Larson discuss the emergence of a new category of adolescence “as young people go to school and postpone entry to adult roles for longer periods, up to and sometimes beyond the third decade of life, their experiences may become inconsistent, their age status blurred. They may be considered to be adults in some respects and may bear some responsibilities of adulthood (for example, being a parent) while they are still “adolescent” in other respects (e.g., living at home and still economically dependent, at

least partially, on their parents).”<sup>167</sup> While the notion of a new and blurred configuration of adolescence is relevant to the young guys who participated in this study, the defining characteristic is that they are working to accelerate rather than delay their entry into adult roles. One of the ways in which they are empowered to achieve this goal is through their construction of a manhood that is predicated not only on ability to physically defend oneself but to also take financial responsibility for their lives.

When the guys talked about the reasons why they dropped out of school and began to more fully immerse themselves in the street culture, almost all of them said that it was about being a man, making money, and “doing me.” They told me that they saw much money from the street thing and realized that it was an opportunity to get whatever they wanted without having to ask anyone for it. For some of them, it wasn’t that the family couldn’t afford it. In at least two of the cases, the parents of the guys told them that they would purchase whatever they wanted to keep them from selling drugs but the guys chose not to leave the streets. It was the sense of financial independence and the conspicuous consumption that it allows, which was paramount for them as it was the defining elements of how they constructed their own notions of manhood.

One student said that he was too interested in making money, and driving around in his Honda at 14 years old. Another student talked about how his involvement in the street life allowed him to buy clothes, jewelry, and used cars for himself and his girlfriend. Both students talked about how they liked that people, including the parents of one guy’s girlfriend, looked up to them because it was readily evident that they could

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<sup>167</sup> Mortimer, J. T. and Larson, R. W. (Eds.). (2002). *The Changing Adolescent Experience*. Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, p. 11

afford nice things for themselves and their families (the 14 year old had a pregnant girlfriend and he was able to buy everything to prepare for the baby's arrival). It made both of the guys feel successful, important, and respected as men. They say school didn't make sense because they were handling things as a man should. For one student, being a man means not asking anyone to help you, being able to pay your rent, reaching your goals, and being something unlike the guy on the corner who is living day-to-day with no family or job.

The conflation of earning money and manhood is a very powerful identity construction for the guys. In thinking about how their framework of manhood is socially rooted, I turned to the work of Carl Nightingale who has examined the circumstance of poor black children and their immersion in the extreme consumerism of American society. "Inner-city kids' *inclusion* in mainstream America's mass market has been important in determining those kids' responses to the economic and racial *exclusion* they face in other parts of their lives. And, indeed, kids' experience of exclusion and of the associated painful memories has made their participation in mass culture particularly urgent and enthusiastic, for the culture of consumption has given them a seductive means to compensate for their feelings of failure."<sup>168</sup> Young people, especially urban youth of color living in poverty zones like the neighborhoods from which the guys who participated in the study come, have few spaces where they can achieve success.

While school is perhaps the primary place for realizing recognizable success, the street life offers another potential for success. For the research participants, school success seemed unattainable but success in the street life was readily available. One

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<sup>168</sup> Nightingale, C. H. (1993). *On the Edge*. New York: Basic Books, p. 135

student told me that in his mind, he couldn't do it and so he didn't. He said on the street, there's only one option – if you give up then you have nothing; it's not like the consequences in school which aren't so dire. Success or failure is immediate. Their conspicuous consumption allowed them to immediately display their success – to make it recognizable without explicitly revealing their illicit activities. They believed that the more they consumed prestige merchandise (particularly with respect to clothing and jewelry), the more they had achieved adult independence or manhood. As the guys have come to see themselves as men, it is difficult to ask them to occupy the same space as those who they see as young people or adolescents, or a space where they will be wholly treated as such.

One student told me that he has been successful the illegal way and now he wants to man up and do whatever is necessary for him to be successful the legal way. He said that being a man shouldn't be about getting trinkets but about being able to take care of yourself and your family, which you can do only in a limited sense when you are living the street life. The student talked about how your purchasing power is limited to the materialism that the other guys keep talking about – the sneakers, the clothes, the chains, and the cars. It seemed that he didn't want to be a man solely in the sense of having money but in terms of accumulating real wealth and doing it in a way that doesn't have everyone questioning or doubting how he was able to obtain particular items or have particular sums of money in his pocket. Despite his desire to *man up* and do that which is necessary to obtain the skills and knowledges that will help him to be successful in a legal way, he is aware of some of the problems. With respect to the notion of manhood, one of the biggest issues, for all of them, seems to be the idea of returning to an

educational setting if they do not obtain their GEDs while at Rikers, or going to college if they do get their GEDs.

Most of the guys said that they will attempt to get their GEDs but they are not likely to return to school because they have been out of school for so long and are too old to return. In some cases, they felt that since they only have a few credits, they would have to essentially start from the beginning, which means that they would be older students and not likely to finish until they are at least 21 years old. In contemplation of this potential reality, one student commented that he is not trying to be in school for that long. One of the guys said “it is too late for a HS diploma – I don’t have any HS credits – I’d have to start over so if I decide to do school, I’d get a GED.” Another student said that he knows it’s not too late but it seems too late. Others said that they are tired of school and unwilling to do it anymore. One student said that he doesn’t know that it is worth the work because they have all done things to man up in the illegal world and no matter what they do; he doesn’t think people will look at them differently. He said that getting an education will help people see the other parts of him but it doesn’t stop them from seeing the robbery and the hustling. He said that even if you make changes, it is not easy to get others to see you as a new man.

One of the students seemed to understand that their failure to enact the messages that they received about school and to man up within that realm have an impact on those youth behind him. He said “young [adolescent] Black people look at the older [around 18 and 19 years old] blacks who have dropped out and not doing school and begin to believe that education is not valued and that it doesn’t have value.” He told me that this fact coupled with the fact that society is more willing to spend money to build a jail or

football stadium rather than on schools makes it difficult to convince young people that school is important. Despite our rhetoric, our actions are giving youth a completely different perspective and they end up thinking that it makes more sense to man up in the streets than in school. He said that he wants to change this. Another student told me that he will get his GED because he promised his mom that he would graduate from high school – he feels that the GED is an easy way around the high school diploma – and he doesn't break promises. For him, keeping the promise is about being a man.

*DO YOUR TIME – DON'T LET YOUR TIME DO YOU*

A student told me that when his family heard he was sentenced to do a short bid at Rikers, they told him *to do the time and not let the time do him*. In his words, “to make something of the time and to do it wisely so I don't end up back here.” Interestingly, the students understood this idea to not only apply to their current experiences at Rikers but also to their experiences with school prior to their court-involvement. One student told me that school is sitting in a classroom, being taught something that you don't want to hear, and being bored. Another guy equated going to school with being locked up for eight hours but felt that if you “do” the eight hours, then you will have better and greater options in life. Most of them readily recognized that one of the problems that they experienced prior to coming to Rikers was their inability to do their time in the school system and that they were ultimately “done” by their time spent out of school. One student told me that had he spent time focused on getting an education (i.e. doing school and homework, etc.), there would have been fewer opportunities for him to get caught up in the things happening around his neighborhood that will land you at Rikers or otherwise involved with the courts.

According to one student, he allowed school time to do him because he used school as a place to get information about what was happening in other neighborhoods and to see the shorties (girls). Another said that school represents a larger audience whether it is to sell more products or to show off because when people know you are living the street life, you get “louder, more visible respect” than if you are doing the school thing – “school respect takes longer than street respect.” The idea that school becomes a space for something other than teaching and learning or more specifically a space to enact the street culture in performative and capitalistic ways is consistent with the research of Anderson who suggests that school becomes a staging area for those young people who ultimately opt for the street life. “...the school becomes transformed in the most profound sense into a staging area for the streets, a place where people come to present themselves, to represent where they come from, and to stay even with or to dominate their peers...the trophies to be won are not of an academic kind, rather they are those of the street, particularly respect.”<sup>169</sup> During his interview, one student made the point that while students engaged in the street life might bring it into the school, the school facilitates this situation especially for those students who are in special education populations. He said that nothing happens in special education and nothing (in terms of academic performance) is expected of you so you do what you want and if you are immersed in the street life, then you do things to live that lifestyle and get respect from those around you in the school space.

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<sup>169</sup> Anderson, Elijah. (1999). *Code of the Street*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, p. 94

Recognizing that school was an opportunity that they lost to do their time rather than have the time do them, many said that they have grown in their thinking about doing school and want to use this time to get some learning. One student said that since school is mandatory (none of them realize that school in their home communities was mandatory also but at Rikers they have lost control over the decision of whether or not to comply with the attendance mandate) and you have to be here, you might as well do the work instead of wasting time. It is a chance to do something you wouldn't do in the world. He said that when he was 13 years old, he did time upstate and got mad awards for schoolwork, and liked the feeling of accomplishment that it gave him. He said that now he wants to do his time and get his GED to have that feeling again because he thinks it'll help balance out his record. Despite the recognitions of opportunities squandered and the will to do things differently, there is a sense amongst the guys that it is difficult to not let the time do you at Rikers. According to one student, "if you can stop thinking about your time, then it can really work for you. If you are stressed about being here, then it's not going to work for you and most of the guys are stressed. People don't take advantage of the time because of the environment and the correction officers. Ain't no way in hell you can do the time without the time doing you." Another student further substantiated this idea, "it is whack because you can't really concentrate – this is jail. Teachers teach and then five minutes later, it's gone because you are thinking about the correction officers, strip searches, fights, people taking the phone and not being able to call your family."

One student said that people who are loners might be able to do their time wisely but for the most part, it is difficult to not let what happens during your time at Rikers impact your focus to do school. Another said, "people come to jail and don't realize that

it can help or hurt you – it is fundamental. Too many guys are focused on getting their weight up instead of reinventing themselves.” He said that one of the problems with the guys doing their time wisely is that some don’t realize the future consequences of their current situation, and that they don’t have anything but the street life to which to return. Furthermore, he believes that some of the guys are too concerned with what people think – they don’t want to be seen as teachers’ pets or police babies – so they disengage. Applying the notion of doing your time versus letting your time do you to his own experiences and decisions while at Rikers, one student said that he realizes that school is a better choice because there are too many problems and complications that come with the street but after living a street lifestyle for so long, you can’t easily leave or get out of it. He didn’t think he’s at a point yet where that is feasible so his time ends up doing him.

Throughout our conversations about the notion of doing your time rather than having your time do you, it is clear that the guys embrace the value of the idea but one of the fundamental obstacles is their ripeness to enact the idea of doing one’s time wisely. One student said that since he has been at Rikers, he has been wiser about his decisions; realizes that the way he was carrying himself was wrong. He said that he was told that Rikers is like a high school and he has been doing work at the school. The young man is learning how to do school and now feels he can do it – it seems like he is working towards or developing a sense of accomplishment around his efforts. I asked him whether the guys take responsibility for their learning. He said they try to throw it all on the teachers but that’s not right. Kids don’t take responsibility for feeding into the negativity of the class. He said that people were doing work but not him – he didn’t know why. He would be tired – would stay up late listening to radio – and just didn’t

care. He said that students are supposed to go to school in the 4 bldg. but that he didn't go by going to the law library instead – if you say you're working on your case, you can get out of going to school.

In his discussion of education in the reform of street organizations, Brotherton reminds us that the conventional wisdom dominating the current discourse on street organizations, is that individuals within this population, including incarcerated juveniles, either reject school outright or are uneducable. What becomes clear from an understanding of the insights offered by the students is that the conventional wisdom is catastrophically erroneous. If anything, it seems that the hegemonic social conditions that converge upon the population of incarcerated youth structure a Bourdieuan habitus – the values and beliefs that guide behavior. “The habitus acquired in the family underlies the structuring of school experiences, and the habitus transformed by schooling, itself diversified, in turn underlies the structuring of all subsequent experiences (e.g., the reception and assimilation of the messages of the culture industry or work experiences), and so on, from restructuring to restructuring.”<sup>170</sup> Students were inculcated with varying degrees of the valuation of education and schooling as an effective means to an economic end by their families but their experiences within the space of school began to mitigate against such valuation as they were variously marginalized by the school and began to internalize the idea that school represented a space where they would not be able to achieve success or respect.

Consequently, they moved into the space of the street life where school wasn't rejected outright but its importance as an effective means to an economic end

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<sup>170</sup> MacLeod, Jay. (1995). *Ain't No Makin' It*. Colorado: Westview Press, p. 138

increasingly waned. Even now, they continue to embrace the idea of school as valuable and fail to reject it outright but the problem seems to lie, in part, in the fact that the value of school or education is one-dimensional – simply a means to achieve economic mobility, and as such, it is difficult to get the students to look beyond this notion to see the full expanse of the potential of obtaining an education. There needs to be a fundamental shift in how we help them to conceptualize the value of education and this will require us to provide an education that critically develops their political, social, and economic capital. Thus far, they have adopted that which we have articulated as the purpose of education but it is insufficient so we need to help them expand their conceptualizations of the function of education.

**CHAPTER VI: SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS IN *A RAISIN IN THE SUN****MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES THEORIES: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW*

The historical evolution of the discourse on intelligence can be traced to the first part of the twentieth century when intelligence was theorized within two competing frameworks. The initial model that dominated the discourse was a geographic theory, articulated by Franz Gall. In this paradigm, Gall imagined intelligence to be a map of the mind, and suggested that intelligence could be measured by examining the pattern of cranial bumps found on a person's head (Sternberg, 1988). The central premise was that particular faculties or cognitive functioning (high and low) could be localized in specific cerebral convolutions of the brain. The pattern of cranial bumps was understood to be indicative of the measure of a person's cognitive abilities or intelligence. Alongside those researchers who worked to explore and build the mental map framework of intelligence, another cohort of researchers who were studying intelligence began to focus on the development of tools to better chart intelligence. To develop their paradigm, they constructed statistical methods, specifically factor analysis, to separate intelligence into hypothetical factors or abilities that they believed were representative of the differentiated performance between individuals. The theorists leading the debate included Charles Spearman, Louis Thurstone, J.P. Guilford, Raymond Cattell, and Phillip Vernon. For Spearman, "intelligence could be understood in terms of a single general factor that pervaded performance on all tests of mental ability."<sup>171</sup> Spearman is most often credited with developing the factor analysis model that has undergirded much of the research on intelligence.

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<sup>171</sup> Sternberg, R. J. (1988). *The Triarchic Mind*. New York: Penguin Books, p. 39

On the other hand, Thurstone refuted the idea that intelligence resided in a single factor. Instead, he postulated that there were seven factors of intelligence, which he labeled the primary mental abilities. Such abilities, as delineated by Thurstone, included verbal comprehension, verbal fluency, inductive reasoning, spatial visualization, number, memory, and perceptual speed. Like Thurstone, Guilford rejected the idea of one factor of intelligence but he expanded Thurstone's conceptualization of seven factors to as many as 120 factors in his model of structure-of-intellect. "According to him, intelligence could be understood in terms of a cube that represented the crossing of various operations, contents, and products."<sup>172</sup> Cattell and Vernon theorized along similar lines of thought and advocated the idea that general intelligence could be understood as two major sub-factors including fluid (abstract and novel relations characteristic of inductive reasoning) and crystallized (declarative and procedural knowledges) abilities.

While these conceptual models were perceived as significant advancements in the field of psychology, they began to lose favor by the middle of the twentieth century. At that time, the prevailing critiques of the mental map and factor analysis models focused on their inability to address matters of specific mental processes – the new emphasis was on how information was processed by the mind and not just the localization or identification of cognitive ability. Researchers began to understand that mental processing might differ across individuals even if their performance was equal in terms of the degree of ability demonstrated on an assessment. The prevailing measures of intelligence would not identify these differences. Another important critical assessment

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<sup>172</sup> Sternberg, R. J. (1988). *The Triarchic Mind*. New York: Penguin Books, p. 39

proffered against the two models was the fact that it was difficult to test the various factor analytic models against each other and obtain meaningfully comparable results. Quite simply and problematically, factor analysis precluded the possibility of researchers engaging in a comparison of the merits of each model incorporating a factor analysis approach.

In terms of a challenge to the absence of a focus on information processing, the work of Jean Piaget is probably most relevant. Piaget was fundamentally concerned with how children reasoned as opposed to privileging an accurate response, which was the focus of early IQ tests. “In his view, all study of human thought must begin by positing an individual who is attempting to make sense of the world. The individual is continually constructing hypotheses and thereby attempting to generate knowledge: he is trying to figure out the nature of material objects in the world, how they interact with one another, as well as the nature of persons in the world, their motivations and their behavior. Ultimately, he must piece them all together into a sensible story, a coherent account of the nature of the physical and social worlds.”<sup>173</sup> From this epistemological perspective, Piaget articulated a theory of intelligence in which cognitive functioning represented a balance between an individual’s ability to assimilate and accommodate. More specifically, an individual would have to assimilate or fit new inputs from the external world into their cognitive structures as well as accommodate or transform their cognitive structures to house the new external inputs. Additionally, Piaget understood intelligence to be a scaffolded phenomenon such that an individual had incremental periods of intellectual development that would build one upon the other. In his paradigm, Piaget

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<sup>173</sup> Gardner, Howard. (2004). *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. New York: Basic Books, p. 18

named several stages of age-based chronological development including sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete-operational, and formal-operational. The fundamental critique of Piaget's work was the way in which he linked particular age categories to the named developmental stages that he identified and defined. Many researchers believe that Piaget erred in this respect.

Despite the shortcomings of Piaget's theory, it did provide more fodder for subsequent researchers particularly in the way in which it forced psychologists and other students of intelligence to think about how intelligence is evolutionary and organic in its maturation, as well as is interdependent on the social world around the individual vis a vis different experiences. In the 1970s, theoretical models of multiple intelligences began to emerge and initially seemed quite similar to the works of Thurstone, Guilford, Cattell, and Vernon because those models, in a broad sense, also recognized the idea that there was a multiplicity to intelligence. Despite this similarity, theories of multiple intelligences were in fact different from the preceding theories of intelligence. The leading theorist of the multiple intelligences movement was Howard Gardner and the two essential areas of departure were the move away from factor analysis as a means to identify the intelligences as well as the broad conceptualizations of the identified intelligences. Gardner differed from his factor analysis predecessors in that he "...used multiple criteria, such as potential isolation by brain damage, evidence from exceptional individuals (at both ends of the spectrum), and evolutionary history, to identify his intelligences. Second, the range of mental abilities designated as intelligences is considerably broader than that in conventional factorial theories."<sup>174</sup> In his model,

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<sup>174</sup> Sternberg, R. J. (1988). *The Triarchic Mind*. New York: Penguin Books, p. 41

Gardner defined intelligence as “a set of skills of problem solving -- enabling the individual *to resolve genuine problems or difficulties* that he or she encounters and, when appropriate, to create an effective product -- and must also entail the potential for *finding or creating problems* -- thereby laying the groundwork for the acquisition of new knowledge.”<sup>175</sup>

Gardner initially identified seven different intelligences including *linguistic*, *musical*, *logical-mathematical*, *visual-spatial*, *bodily-kinesthetic*, and *personal* (*interpersonal* and *intrapersonal*); but later adds *naturalistic* as the eighth intelligence. *Linguistic* intelligence is defined as the ability to use language to make convincing arguments or offer explanations, to reflect on language use in a metalinguistic analysis, and to use language as a mnemonic tool. *Musical* intelligence is conceptualized in terms of pitch and rhythm, and centers on a person’s auditory sphere. *Logical-mathematical* intelligence refers to one’s mathematical, logical, and scientific abilities. *Visual-spatial* intelligence emphasizes an individual’s ability to understand and maneuver the spatial world. *Bodily-kinesthetic* intelligence focuses on a person’s ability to use the body or portions thereof to problem-solve or otherwise engage the external world. *Personal* (*interpersonal* and *intrapersonal*) intelligence is about one’s ability to understand others (*interpersonal*) and to understand oneself (*intrapersonal*). *Naturalistic* intelligence makes reference to a person’s ability to expertly recognize, identify, and classify ecological elements such as flora and fauna. He further postulates that these different intelligences are independent and from a pedagogical perspective, it is not easy to cross

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<sup>175</sup> Gardner, Howard. (2004). *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. New York: Basic Books, p. 60

the domains such that using linguistic skills to develop the content knowledge of one's logical-mathematical intelligence is at best metaphoric or a translation that cannot be as powerful as the utilization of logical-mathematical skills to strengthen one's logical-mathematical intelligence. For Gardner, individuals, through a combination of factors of nature (biological elements) and nurture (socialization), have different intelligence profiles comprised of varying levels of the seven, now eight, intelligences. Ultimately, people employ their various intelligences to solve the problems that they encounter.

Despite Gardner's attempt to move beyond the constrictive paradigms of intelligence theorized by the advocates of mental maps and factor analysis, the critique against him is not all that dissimilar from the challenges leveled at of his predecessors. Most notably, Gardner does not attempt to identify the underlying mental processes of the intelligences that he has named. Again, there is a significant failure to address the field's quintessential question about how individuals mentally process information to demonstrate intelligence. There is also the question as to whether the particular abilities identified by Gardner can appropriately be deemed intelligences rather than talents – what is it about these abilities that specifically make them universal human intelligences. Gardner's recent addition of the eighth intelligence suggests that his list is not an exhaustive one, which makes one wonder what is the criteria by which other abilities might come to be redefined as another intelligence. In terms of the critique, there is also the matter of Gardner's suggestion that his intelligences are independent. It is difficult to understand how he can conceive of intelligence as neatly compartmentalized because it belies any notion of mental efficiency. In order for individuals to maximize their potential for intelligent behavior, it would seem essential that the various domains of

intelligence are engaged and perform interdependently so that there is a fuller deployment of skills and knowledges. This shortcoming may result from the fact that Gardner is not examining the mental processes that underlie the specific abilities of the intelligences.

During the 1980s, researchers remained dissatisfied with the dearth of theoretical models that competently addressed the issue of mental processing and so, they turned much of their attention to the mental processing that undergirded individuals' abilities and intelligence. The theoretical models within this area of the field came to be known as computational models employing the analogical premise of intelligence as a computer program. The main theorists advocating this approach included Arthur Jensen, Earl Hunt, Herbert Simon, and Robert Sternberg. Jensen's theory of intelligence focused on the speed of neural conduction. He believed that the smart person was someone whose neural circuits rapidly transmitted information. Within this model, he would use choice reaction time as the measure of the speed of neural conduction but there is no data suggesting a causal relationship between the two. Like Jensen, Hunt also emphasized speed but he was concerned with the speed it took an individual to access lexical information that was stored in long-term memory. He deviated from using choice reaction time as a measure of speed as this approach had been problematic for Jensen. Simon studied intelligence as a function of the information processing in which individuals engage when solving complex problems. From his experiments, he found that experts and novices differed more in the amount and organization of knowledge that they applied to the problem-solving scenario than in the mental processes used to perform the tasks.

*MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES THEORIES: STERNBERG'S TRIARCHIC THEORY OF SUCCESSFUL  
INTELLIGENCE*

Another prominent theorist in the computational field of multiple intelligences is Robert Sternberg who posits a Triarchic Theory of Intelligence, which states “the information-processing components of intelligence are applied to experience so as to serve various kinds of functions in real-world contexts.”<sup>176</sup> Sternberg’s conceptualization of intelligence is framed by the idea that successful intelligence is “the ability to achieve success in life, given one’s personal standards, within one’s sociocultural context. Ability to achieve success depends on capitalizing on one’s strengths and correcting or compensating for one’s weaknesses through a balance of analytical, creative, and practical abilities in order to adapt to, shape, and select environments.”<sup>177</sup> Unlike some theories of intelligence, Sternberg acknowledges that there is an interaction between people’s social environment and their development of intelligence, “...intelligence is in part a production of socialization – the way a person is brought up.”<sup>178</sup>

Within his Triarchic Theory of Intelligence, Sternberg doesn’t identify particular intelligences, in terms of named skill sets, but rather problem solving styles including “Analytical abilities, the abilities used to analyze, judge, evaluate, compare, or contrast; Creative abilities, the abilities used to create, invent, discover, imagine, or suppose; and

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<sup>176</sup> Sternberg, R. J. (1997). Educating intelligence: Infusing the triarchic theory into school instruction. In R. J. Sternberg & E. L. Grigorenko (Eds.) *Intelligence, heredity and Environment*. New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 349

<sup>177</sup> Sternberg, R., et. al. (2000). *Practical Intelligence in Everyday Life*. New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 93

<sup>178</sup> Sternberg, R. J. (1988). *The Triarchic Mind*. New York: Penguin Books, p. 250

Practical abilities, the abilities used to apply, put into practice, implement, or use.”<sup>179</sup> According to Sternberg, individuals need to be taught in ways that allow for the development of skills within the three ability categories of analytical, creative, and practical. “In other words, students can improve their performance if taught in a way that is appropriate for them. Much of the teaching done in classrooms reaches only students whose strength is in learning by memory. Students with other kinds of strengths--analytical, creative, or practical, for example--may be taught in a way that almost never matches their pattern of abilities.”<sup>180</sup>

In addition to identifying these three problem-solving ability components of intelligence, Sternberg attempts to link cognition to context through his conceptualization of three sub-theories that help to situate mental processing. The sub-theories include the componential which is focused on the relation of intelligence to the internal world, the experiential which addresses the varying levels of experience in task performance, and the contextual which suggests that information processing is applied to experience in order to achieve one of three broad goals including environmental adaptation, change, or selection. The key elements of the componential subtheory include the metacomponents, performance components, and knowledge acquisition components.

Sternberg defines the metacomponents as “recognizing the existence of a problem; deciding on the nature of the problem; selecting a set of lower-order processes to solve the problem; selecting a strategy into which to combine these components;

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<sup>179</sup> Sternberg, R., and Williams, W. (Eds.). (1998). *Intelligence, Instruction, and Assessment: Theory into Practice*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, p. 3

<sup>180</sup> Sternberg, R., and Williams, W. (Eds.). (1998). *Intelligence, Instruction, and Assessment: Theory into Practice*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, p. 3

selecting a mental representation on which the components and strategy can act; allocating one's mental resources; monitoring one's problem solving as it is happening; and evaluating one's problem solving after it is done."<sup>181</sup> The performance components refer to the lower-order mental processes that are activated to fulfill the instructions of the metacomponents. The knowledge acquisition components "are used to learn how to do what the metacomponents and performance components eventually do"<sup>182</sup> through the mental processes of selective encoding, selective combination, and selective comparison. The experiential subtheory states that "intelligence is best measured at those regions of the experiential continuum that involve tasks or situations that are either relatively novel, on the one hand, or in the process of becoming automatized, on the other."<sup>183</sup> The third subtheory is contextual which suggests that "intelligent thought is directed toward one or more of three behavioral goals: adaptation to an environment, shaping of an environment, or selection of an environment."<sup>184</sup>

Unlike Gardner's theoretical model of multiple intelligences, Sternberg provides a framework that not only recognizes the pluralistic configuration of intelligence but also attempts to delineate how abilities are deployed by individuals in a variety of ways to

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<sup>181</sup> Sternberg, R., et. al. (2000). *Practical Intelligence in Everyday Life*. New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 93

<sup>182</sup> Sternberg, R., et. al. (2000). *Practical Intelligence in Everyday Life*. New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 94

<sup>183</sup> Sternberg, R., et. al. (2000). *Practical Intelligence in Everyday Life*. New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 95

<sup>184</sup> Sternberg, R., et. al. (2000). *Practical Intelligence in Everyday Life*. New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 96

navigate through their worlds. In addition to defining successful intelligence (ability to adapt to, shape, and select environments) as opposed to a general idea of intelligence, Sternberg's model of intelligence embraces the various interdependent ways in which people attempt to engage the world around them as well as addresses the issue of how information is processed at multiple stages to enact intelligence. Within this context, a Triarchic method of pedagogy most importantly should equip students with the ability to mentally encode and retrieve material through multiple cognitive processes including the analytical, creative, and practical; and acknowledge the strengths of students while addressing their deficits.

Ideally, all of these cognitive elements should work together for the full deployment of one's intellectual potential. Unfortunately, schools, and the prison education programs that employ the instructional models of schools, tend to emphasize the mechanisms that support the development of analytical abilities. Within Gardner's framework of multiple intelligences, this translates into an exclusive reliance on the logical-mathematical intelligence. Students "...are being taught by methods that fit poorly with their pattern of abilities. As a result, they are not learning or they learn at minimal levels. At the same time, they and their teachers are concluding that they lack vital learning abilities. In fact, many of them have impressive learning abilities but not the kind that are used in the methods of teaching to which they are exposed. As a result, they never reach the high levels of learning that are possible for them."<sup>185</sup> Within Sternberg's framework of multiple intelligences, there is a greater opportunity for us to

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<sup>185</sup> Sternberg, R., and Williams, W. (Eds.). (1998). *Intelligence, Instruction, and Assessment: Theory into Practice*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, p. 2

move away from rehabilitative programs for incarcerated youth that mirror the process of schooling and have repeatedly proven ineffective for them. It opens the possibility for us to construct educational activities that embrace an acknowledgement of the youth's wide-range of intellectual assets. Youth who historically have not experienced a sense of academic accomplishment, by virtue of their encounters with schooling, can begin to have such an experience because there is a plurality of abilities that can be appreciated and developed, which ultimately helps the person to switch between modalities as necessary to successfully leverage the full range of their intellectual potential.

A Triarchic approach to literacy can force educators to incorporate a practical lens through which to examine literature, and can facilitate a better connection of the learning process to the lived experiences of incarcerated youth so that it is not such an alienating experience. The problem, as indicated by Sternberg, is that "Academic problems tend to be formulated by others; well-defined; complete in the information they provide; characterized by having only one correct answer; characterized by having only one method of obtaining the correct answer; outside of ordinary experience; and of little or no intrinsic interest."<sup>186</sup> A review of most school-based literacy programs, particularly the public schools serving children of color in poor communities, is likely to reveal that traditionally, literacy has meant little more than learning how to read and write. "Students read textbooks and answer questions at the ends of chapters; they write themed reports and fill out worksheets. Officially, reading and writing are viewed as either school subjects (e.g., developmental reading; remedial or corrective reading) or learning tools

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<sup>186</sup> Sternberg, R., et. al. (2000). *Practical Intelligence in Everyday Life*. New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 33

(e.g., comprehension strategies, study strategies) whose form and function are defined by teachers, curriculum directors, school boards, and administrators.”<sup>187</sup> This type of literacy, emphasized within our schooling structures, dictates the content, form, and function of particular cognitive endeavors.

According to researchers Robert Sternberg and Elena Grigorenko, successful intelligence is the integrated set of abilities needed to achieve what a person defines as success in his or her life within his or her sociocultural context. There is no single road to successful intelligence. People are successfully intelligent by virtue of recognizing their strengths and making the most of them at the same time that they recognize their weaknesses and find ways to compensate for them. They adapt to, shape, and select environments by using a balance of their analytical, creative, and practical abilities. As people adapt to environments in which they find themselves, they must modify their behavior to better fit into that particular environment. It may require a type of code-switching between analytical, creative, and practical abilities to achieve success in that specific environment. *Analytical abilities*, usually dominant in school settings, involve analyzing, evaluating, comparing, or contrasting. *Creative abilities* are used to create, invent, or discover. *Practical abilities* require individuals to put into practice, apply, or generally use what he or she has learned.

Creative and especially practical abilities tend to be privileged in real world scenarios. The goal is to approach teaching and learning from the perspective that all students have varying degrees of these three ability sets and that their abilities represent

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<sup>187</sup> Alvermann, D. et. al. (Eds.). (1998). *Reconceptualizing the Literacies in Adolescents' Lives*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, p. 28

assets that they bring to the classroom and that should be used to build on their strengths while correcting for their weaknesses in certain areas. For example, the streets may privilege practical abilities whereas the school emphasizes the analytical skills of an individual. The person must have skills sufficiently developed in each area and consequently understand how to effectively use them in the different environments. People must also be able to determine when it is appropriate to shape and/or select a new environment. This requires that individuals understand what is gained and/or sacrificed in an attempt to do either; and how to leverage support as they engage one course of action over the other.

In research regarding the use of the successful intelligence model, it has been shown, for example, that Brazilian street children who were able to do the mathematics needed to run their street businesses and consequently avoid “death squads,” were often minimally able or unable to do school mathematics. The more abstract and removed from real-world context the problems were in presentation, the worse the children did on the problems. Through a focus on developing creative and practical abilities, students can begin to formulate problems based on their experiences and begin to solve them in unique ways. Within the context of a school-preferred analytical approach, problems tend to be pre-packaged in contexts that are unfamiliar or unrealistic for students to imagine.

Sternberg, Grigorenko, and Jarvin (2001) studied how the use of the model might improve reading instruction of 1200 middle and high school research participants from socioeconomically lower to lower-middle class backgrounds, racially and ethnically diverse with a majority of the students being African American or Hispanic, and with

average reading scores toward the bottom range of the state's tests. They collected and assessed homework assignments, vocabulary and reading comprehension assessments, pre-test/post-test measures, and survey data about whether students liked the program. According to the researchers, the pre-test indicated no significant difference between the control and experimental groups but the post-test demonstrated that the experimental group outperformed the control group on all three levels (analytical, creative, and practical). Based on the survey data, approximately eighty percent of the students liked or very much liked the program.

*MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES THEORIES: RE-ENGINEERING THE MASTER'S TOOLS*

Audre Lorde once noted that *the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house*. It cannot be disputed that the field of psychometrics, particularly in terms of the theorizing and measurement of intelligence, historically has been an essential tool of the master to maintain and reinforce his hegemonic house of oppression against the world's racialized and impoverished communities. For instance, the work of Horace Mann Bond clearly documents how early forays into the realm of intelligence theorizing sought to provide scientific support for the entrenched racism of a nation. "Biblical arguments were early reinforced by pseudo-scientific arguments which purported to base slavery upon the findings of early experimentation. It was argued, accordingly, in the days when the multiplicity of cerebral convolutions was held to be indicative of the degree of intelligence, that Negro brains showed fewer of these striations than white brains."<sup>188</sup> Bond's critique of early intelligence testing is adept in that he correctly chastises theorists for their blatant failure to consider the extent to which the intellectual abilities of black

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<sup>188</sup> Bond, Horace M. (1970). *The Education of the Negro in the American Social Order*. New York: Octagon Books, p. 308

children might be dwarfed because of “the accumulation of several centuries of illiteracy, intellectual stagnation, family disorganization, and low occupational and economic status.”<sup>189</sup>

In many ways, Bond’s critique outlines the two fundamental problems with the psychometric field of intelligence definition and measurement. First, the field cannot ignore the social context of the racialized hegemony from which it specifically emerges. Second, the intelligence paradigms theorize and measure a culturally biased intellectual ability in which members from racialized or impoverished communities purposefully have not been inculcated. Even as the field moved toward models that embraced the idea of the importance of socialization and that emphasized the notion of the multiplicity of intellectual abilities, and as many contemporary educators optimistically sought to utilize these new paradigms of intelligence as a way to more effectively harness the cognitive potential of their students, the field remained mired in the constraints delineated by Bond. As such, educational researchers and practitioners have critically examined the more recent iterations of intelligence theories. Conservative analysts tend to argue that the theories have “shifted educational priorities away from development of logic, in the process producing a trivialized, touchy-feely mode of education.”<sup>190</sup> On the other hand, progressive scholars have noted that the theories, despite their democratic and egalitarian rhetoric, fail to grasp the social, cultural, and political forces of the hegemonic milieu in which the theories have been conceived and implemented. “...what is labeled

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<sup>189</sup> Bond, Horace M. (1970). *The Education of the Negro in the American Social Order*. New York: Octagon Books, p. 312

<sup>190</sup> Kincheloe, Joe. (Ed.). (2004). *Multiple Intelligences Reconsidered*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, p. 4

intelligence can never be separated from what dominant power groups designate it to be.”<sup>191</sup>

First, in naming specific abilities, particularly in the way that Gardner does, these abilities are exclusively elevated as representative of a universal intelligence. The problem with this approach is that abilities and skills sets are developed within specific cultural contexts and social conditions that are arbitrary in a Bourdieuan sense. Just as the theorists recognize the sociocultural embeddedness of abilities and skills when they concede to the idea that nurture plays a role in the development of intelligence, it must also be understood that their theoretical frameworks are also socioculturally embedded. As such, it would be difficult to sanction the socioculturally embedded and arbitrary criteria employed by the theorists to delineate their identified abilities as universally representative of intelligence. Specifically, Western systems of knowledge have been organized in ways that exclude the indigenous knowledges of subjugated peoples and this exclusion is evident not only in what comprises the canon of knowledge but also in how knowledge is assessed. “It worked also at the assessment level, with normative tests designed around the language and cultural capital of the white middle classes.”<sup>192</sup> With respect to models of multiple intelligences, as theorized by Gardner, Kincheloe makes this point crystal clear when he reminds us that Gardner concludes that “inculcating the best knowledge of the Western academic disciplines is the correct way to educate our

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<sup>191</sup> Kincheloe, Joe. (Ed.). (2004). *Multiple Intelligences Reconsidered*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, p. 6

<sup>192</sup> Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. (2001). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. New York: Zed Books, p. 68

world.”<sup>193</sup> In this context, the knowledges and abilities of those at the bottom of the racialized, classed, gendered, and otherwise oppressive hegemony will never gain prominence as representative of intelligence.

Another problem of the multiple intelligences framework, especially in terms of Gardner’s articulation, is the presumed purpose or use of intelligence. In one sense, Gardner argues that schools should be pedagogically designed or reformed to specifically develop the different intelligences of its students. Meanwhile, in another sense, his Practical Intelligence for School (PIFS) Project advocates that students need to adjust themselves to the culture and operations of schools – the development of students’ *school intelligences* (it is not clear whether this ability might constitute a ninth intelligence). The problem herein is that Gardner is further subjugating the knowledges and abilities of individuals whose strengths might not be well-represented in the epistemological perspectives, usually analytical in Sternberg’s configuration and logical-mathematical in Gardner’s model, of our schools. It is important to remember that the epistemological perspectives that inform curricula and assessments also structure the environment in which teaching and learning occurs. In this way, he is structuring a double jeopardy of disempowerment, in terms of curricula and assessments, as well as the potential for a democratic school culture that embraces an egalitarian recognition of those who have been historically subjugated. This is not surprising considering the fact that Gardner does not privilege, in any way, notions of power and oppression as he constructs his model.

The caution of progressive scholars is appropriate and particularly relevant to this study when one considers the target population and the multiple the ways in which the

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<sup>193</sup> Kincheloe, Joe. (Ed.). (2004). *Multiple Intelligences Reconsidered*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, p. 12

field of psychology and specifically the area of psychometric testing of intelligence historically has been deployed to oppress and subjugate people of color. Within the context of this study, the utilization of a multiple intelligences theoretical framework is necessarily tempered by the epistemological perspective that “although indigenous knowledge is generated in specific local contexts in response to specific local problems, it is often influenced by knowledge generated in other settings.”<sup>194</sup> In an expanded sense and for the purposes of this study, this also means that indigenous knowledges and abilities can effectively impact the engagement of teaching and learning within the school setting. Another essential aspect of the epistemological perspectives embraced herein is best discussed by Smith (2001) and focuses on the need to decolonize frameworks of intelligence in a way that facilitates an achievement of social justice for our most marginalized students as they bring their full range of knowledges and skills to bear in the classroom.

The goal is to incorporate those components of the multiple intelligences framework that encourage varied expressions of the multiple ways in which people come to know, understand, engage, and communicate with the social spaces in which they exist; while simultaneously inserting into the framework a perspective of critical pedagogy that acknowledges the dynamics of power that play a significant role in those same multiple ways in which people come to know themselves and the world around them. Within this context, the multiple intelligences model articulated by Gardner is far too inflexible and restrictive. However, the Sternberg Triarchic model offers the possibility of a point of entry for the infusion of criticality through its delineation of

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<sup>194</sup> George in Semali, Ladislaus M. and Kincheloe, Joe L. (1999). *What is Indigenous Knowledge?* New York: Falmer Press, p. 80

analytical, creative, and practical frames. To be clear, the model does not inherently call for the incorporation of a critical pedagogy that would engage students in a critical analysis of power dynamics as they seek to use their intellectualism to adapt to, shape, and select environments. It is ironically peculiar that Sternberg would define intelligence in terms of various forms of acclimation to an environment yet fail to specifically articulate the role of the power dynamics within the environments in which a person is engaged. It is untenable that a demonstration of successful intelligence would not include such considerations. However, in the hegemonically neutralized world of psychometrics and intelligence theorizing, it is quite possible to achieve successful intelligence absent any attention to issues of power within the sociocultural contexts of the world.

It should be understood that the utilization of Sternberg's Triarchic model is neither an uncritical embrace of any intelligence theory nor the turn of a blind eye to the ways in which the field of psychometrics has used intelligence theorizing and assessments to culturally entrench the subjugation of racialized and impoverished communities. Rather, it is the recognition that incarcerated youth are languishing in a precarious meantime and in order to uplift themselves out of the situation, they need to acquire the master's tools to navigate through the master's house and eventually to dismantle it. Specifically, they need to acquire the knowledges and skills that are privileged by the society so that they can effectively engage all social domains. However, it is equally important to understand that this study simultaneously seeks to infuse a critical pedagogy perspective into the Triarchic curriculum so that the students can begin to deconstruct an oppressive educational process as their indigenous knowledges and skills are elevated as intelligent ways in which to engage a particular text

and society. Pedagogically, the goal is to empower students through the incorporation of a critical read of the world into the teaching and learning process as well as to empower them with the ability to cognitively code switch so that they can navigate the master's house while also working to deconstruct it.

#### *ENGAGING THE RAISIN IN THE SUN CURRICULUM*

Initially, the fourteen students were randomly and equally assigned to either a control group that would participate in the regular NYC Department of Education summer school class; or an experimental group that would participate in a class that incorporated a Triarchic curriculum, developed by Sternberg and his colleagues and based upon Lorraine Hansberry's play, *A Raisin in the Sun*. Due to the significant attrition within the control group (a consequence of release dates within the five-week period), there were only three remaining students in that cohort by the conclusion of the study – there was attrition of one student from the experimental group – so a post-test was not administered. Challenges arose with respect to the assessment of students' strengths along the Triarchic components – analytical, practical, and creative – of problem-solving vis a vis the pre-test. Only ten of the fourteen students opted to take the pre-test; and only one student completed the entire pre-test. On average, students completing any portion of the pre-test attempted to answer 4.1 of the 12 analytical questions, 2.7 of the 12 creative questions, and 4 of the 12 practical questions.

In terms of those questions to which student responses conveyed clear and comprehensive thoughts, 2.8 were analytical, 1.2 were creative, and 3.3 were practical. The one student who completed the entire pre-test had clear and comprehensive responses to 9 of the 12 analytical, 2 of the 12 creative, and 10 of the 12 practical. While

in the aggregate, students marginally answered more analytical than practical questions, their responses to the practical questions tended to be qualitatively better in terms of clarity and comprehensiveness. Quality of responses was not assessed in terms of grammatical correctness, as this area was significantly problematic across all pre-tests. Surprisingly, the area of least attempts and quality responses was the creative. One possible mitigating factor might be the fact that those questions required short-answer responses rather than a combination of multiple choice and short-answer as with the analytical and practical categories. One student clarified the reality of this circumstance later in the five-week study period when he continuously lamented that the weekly assessments were not all multiple-choice, which was his preference. Furthermore, the aggregate of weekly assessments demonstrated that the students tended to opt out of short-answers, regardless of category type – analytical, creative, or practical. Another explanation might be the extent to which the students have not had access to experiences to structure or exercise their creative cognitive abilities. Development of these skills is not privileged in school and may have been secondary to the utilization of practical skills in terms of street life.

The experimental group read *A Raisin in the Sun*, which is a play set in 1950s Chicago and examines the life of an impoverished African-American family consisting of a recently widowed matriarch, her two adult children, a daughter-in-law, and a young grandson. The family lives in a crowded apartment and is about to receive a \$10,000 insurance check, which causes much debate and tension as they try to decide what to do with the money. As the story progresses, several sociocultural themes emerge, including concepts of race in America, African-American beauty & identity, class conflicts,

intergenerational conflicts, Christianity, value systems of the Black family, relationships between men & women as well as husbands and wives within the Black community, feminism, and integration. Students volunteered to read the different characters aloud during each class session and the lessons of the curriculum are structured in a way that encourages the students to engage the themes analytically, practically, and creatively. What follows are narrative examples of the ways in which the young men did and/or did not do just that as they worked through the text.

The students were not convinced that they want to read a play as opposed to a “real book” as one student notes. The teacher explained that a play is another way to creatively express a story. The teacher asked why it might be important to try to write expressions of your thoughts and ideas in different ways. One student left the classroom and returned with a copy of *Keeping It Real*, which is a journal of students’ writings, and they start to look through it and talk about it as an example of how some of the other students at Rikers are creatively expressing themselves. One of the guys said that he writes poems because it helps him to get the ladies. In acknowledgement of the student’s comment, the teacher said that expressing things in different ways can help you achieve different goals. The teacher then asked them how this idea might apply to the text whereby Hansberry is telling a story in the form of a play. One student said “it’s easier to follow, and to get to know the characters; you can get more people to listen to the story because it speaks to their lifestyle, which makes it more interesting to the person.” For the most part, the others nod in agreement but there was one student who said that stories should be told in a prose format. When asked whether they ever have read a play, the majority of the students said that they have not.

The discussions about the text were initially framed within an analytical context as the students worked to define the various characters. They described Lena Younger/Momma as “aggressive, backbone that keeps the family together, she ain’t soft but she’s not pushy – if she’s feeling something, she’ll let you know, she commands respect.” With respect to Beneatha Younger (Momma’s daughter), the guys explained that she is “stuck up and demanding, and smart.” They believed that she values her racial identity as well as her education and is always seeking to learn more about it. The guys were both critical and sympathetic to the plight of Walter Younger (Momma’s son). According to them, he “is a drunk – that’s the only reason he wants a liquor store so he can drink – he drinks when he gets upset, stressed out and wants a better job so he can do better for his family, dislikes his job because it doesn’t make him feel like a man, and likes to argue with Beneatha.” Of Ruth (Momma’s daughter-in-law), they said she is “caring and sensitive about her man, supportive of what Walter wants – not the liquor but his deeper needs, and like another Momma.” The students believed that Travis, Momma’s grandson, is just a little boy who doesn’t understand all that is happening within and around the family.

As the class progressed, they articulated descriptions of the characters, primarily Beneatha and Walter, which were more nuanced and reflective of the complexities of any identity development. One student suggested that Beneatha cut her hair for Asagai and another commented that that suggestion is crazy because Beneatha is her own person. They said that she is very independent and agrees with Momma’s characterization of her as experimental. Regarding cutting her hair, they believed that it is her way of reacting to or demonstrating her new understanding and embrace of African-American beauty as

suggested by Asagai. For the students, Walter is very conflicted. They understood him to be someone who believes that he is never wrong, and always right. The guys suggested that this strong conviction is what causes problems for Walter who is really interested in trying to show everyone that he can support the family as a man should. They all agreed that Walter has needs for respect, to be able to support family financially, and to be a man. While they accepted his quest to fulfill this responsibility, they were critical of what they perceived as his irresponsibility in attempting to reach his goal.

The teacher asked the class how Beneatha would describe a Black man. Their responses included: lazy, stupid, useless, supposed to support family, and rich (referring to George Murchison). When one student called Beneatha a gold digger, another disagreed noting that if she was a gold digger, she'd hook up with George Murchison rather than Asagai. In their descriptions, they did not take into account Beneatha's relationship with Asagai and how that affects her characterization of Black men. The teacher then asked the class how Walter would describe Black women, and they say "not paying attention to Black men, not strengthening their men, and not being respectful or there mentally." Within the context of this discussion, the students seemed to privilege those things in the text that are consistent with the descriptors that are most prevalent in the contemporary discourse on Black men and women. They did not challenge the descriptors but rather uncritically accept them. One of the students said that these two people in the book are stereotypes but he did not elaborate.

To encourage the students to more deeply consider their descriptions of the characters, stereotypes, and how the people engage the world, the teacher introduced a quote by Manning Marable that suggests that individuals become social actors in the

world by externally imposed stereotypes rather than any objective criteria. Students initially reacted through the lens of their personal experiences. Agreeing with the statement, one student said “you get blamed for the wrong that others do;” another said “you can’t judge a book by its cover because they don’t know me. I live the street life but I have another life. From 12 – 12, I’m dealing and then I go home and I’m another person. Sometimes I see me like they [the world] see me;” and a third student said “people stereotype you on how you roll but [they] don’t think that maybe you made a mistake if you are at Rikers Island. You can have different lifestyles but have to pick one because the hustle (and getting caught) may destroy the other.” While they seemed to have a good grasp of the constrictive function of stereotypes in their lives, they demonstrated some difficulties in applying it to the text. The teacher asked how the ideas of Marable might apply to the characters in the play – how do the characters stereotype and are stereotyped, and how does it affect the way they interact with others. They immediately focused on Walter who they say is stubborn and thinks only about himself. They repeated Momma’s admonishment of Walter, “Be your father’s son”. They don’t seem to acknowledge that Walter’s behavior is, in part, resultant from his own attempt to escape an externally imposed stereotype that Black men cannot support their families. This is interesting because within a practical framework, they were able to discuss their own lived experiences with stereotyping, which happens to mirror those of Walter, as they initially dissected the quote. Moving from a focus on Walter to one on Momma, one student said that “Momma is frontin’ with Asagai – pretending that she knows about Africa – because she doesn’t want him to see her as ignorant which is a stereotype of Blacks.”

The students were quite adept within an analytical framework as they use the text to define the characters and delineate what they like and dislike about the various characters. However, they were less confident in the use of the creative and practical paradigms to engage the characters of the text. For instance, when asked to draw a picture of what they imagine a character to be based upon how they have described the characters, many of them elected to not complete the assignment. One student commented that he was unable to do this because he has no imagination. In response, the teacher said to him that he has to have an imagination or some creativity to engage in hustling. Still resistant, he said “no, hustling is about adapting to situations.” To which, the teacher said imagination and creativity help you to adapt. Finally, he agreed that you have to imagine to create and to adapt to situations but he continues to refuse to create a picture of a character. With respect to the practical framework, the students were asked to think about how the different characters might begin to work to build bridges between each other so that their varied needs and concerns are well-understood, and they can work towards solutions that best meet the multiple needs. They were told to think about their personal experiences with trying to understand others and getting others to understand them but they had no ideas about how to accomplish this particular assignment.

The teacher read the introduction to the play and asks the students if they have dreams. One student said “no, I have nightmares – jail is a nightmare – can’t escape – if I was home, then I’d have dreams.” Initially, they all seemed to agree with the idea that they can’t have dreams or imagine a long-term future because they are in prison and unsure about what is going to happen despite the fact that they have finite sentences and know their release dates. The teacher further probed by asking, “What do you want in

life?” Their responses included nice house, playboy mansion, and getting more knowledge. One student said that to fulfill the dream of a nice house, you need to win a lottery, or sell drugs but later amends this idea to say that you can’t get rich selling drugs. Eventually, one of the guys said “everyone dreams of *money*, *power*, and *respect* – this is everything – everyone wants these – once you get the money and power, then you get the respect. If you ain’t got money, then you ain’t got nothing.” Another said he thinks respect comes first, “banging out does not mean you’re going to get money but if you get respect then you can get money and power.” They said that this is true now and it was true in the 1950s when the play takes place. Of the 1950s, one student commented that Blacks didn’t have much money, power, or respect because they had to do menial labor type jobs and people would call them niggers. He said that today isn’t very different because Blacks still don’t have money, power, or respect. As an example, he said that white people bring drugs into the country but young poor Black men like him end up in jail, not the white men who traffic the drugs into the country, for petty dealing. In this way, the students engaged the text in analytical and practical paradigms as they compared and contrasted notions of those things for which people dream within the temporal context of the play and the contemporary context of their lived experiences. From this point, the teacher moved the students to begin thinking about how the Hughes’s poem relates to the play and the conceptualization of dreams that they have articulated.

The teacher read the Hughes’s poem and asks for student reactions and thoughts. One young man said, “It’s hard like a heavy load – does it explode or am I going straight for the gold. It’s a dream that you want to come true but you never put your full intention in it for one reason or another.” Another student simply said “Does the dream come

true?” In relating the poem to their life experiences, and the play, the students suggested that it is about your dreams becoming old, and drying up. They said that it is about the struggle to make something happen and being worn down by it. “You don’t have the goal anymore and now you’re in a worsen place – that’s why people say do your time, don’t let time do you; just because you’re in jail doesn’t mean your dream has to end – it can just be put on hold.” With specific reference to the play, a student said that the situation of the Younger family is that they all have dreams but don’t see how to make them come true and they are struggling. He said that their struggles – against poverty, not having enough space, getting an education, and being respected as a man – are like his and that it affects whether or not all of them will be able to make the dreams happen. To achieve a more critical focus, it would have been helpful to further push students to think about the social dynamics that prevent and enable particular people within society to have particular dreams and to achieve those dreams.

From a discussion of the theme of deferred dreams and obstacles, the class moved to a conversation about how an individual’s environment affects what they think is possible in their lives, and what they actually achieve. The teacher asked them to describe the environment in which the Youngers live and how it affects them. One student said, “it is poor; and it makes them feel like being here makes us feel.” When asked to elaborate, the student explained that being at Rikers makes them feel more like an animal than a person, and that it is depressing. They said that most guys don’t realize this because they think that being at Rikers will help them get their weight up so that they have greater respect in the town but it really doesn’t because it is not like doing time in a facility in northern New York. The teacher asked them how does this relate to the play

and one of students says that Youngers realize that their environment isn't the best and want to leave it. "They [the Youngers] are annoyed with their environment." Some of the students believed that the Youngers fight with each other because they have to live in a cramped and poor environment.

With this point made, they talked about how their environments change how they interact with people and how the project themselves. "I have a different identity in jail than in the town. I clown around in jail but in the town, if I don't know you, then fuck you." The others agreed noting that you have to be different in jail, which becomes your new community or environment. "As soon as you go over the bridge, your mood changes and you need to create an identity to survive the system." They suggested that Walter might not be as stressed out if he was in an apartment where his son didn't have to sleep on the couch or where his mother and sister didn't have to share a bedroom. One student said that Momma understands this and that's why she really wants the house so that Travis can have something better. They said that everyone is happy with the idea of moving into a nice house because they know that they will feel better about things. While discussing the idea of the environment and its impact on people, the students easily moved between the text and their own lived experiences as they identify similarities and differences.

In an attempt to have them creatively represent their discussion about the role of one's environment, the teacher asked them to create (i.e. draw or verbally describe) ideal environments that they believe would allow them to feel positively about their lives. They had a lot of trouble with this task and they articulated creations that were more representative of their contemporary environmental milieu as opposed to an imagined

affirmative space. Within their ideal environment, there is “a high school on a corner, social/night club on another block, Popeyes, White Castle, Burger King, clothing stores, mainly Black and Hispanic people, strip club, barber shop, no dunkin donuts because cops hang out there, factories, gun shop, crack heads – [one student asked “why I got to have crack heads in my environment?”; but there is no answer] – banks, whores, check cashing place, money, no cops or detectives – if they come into the environment, it’s a crime and they would lose their jobs or get shot.” One student asked how you can have no cops or laws but there is no response. Of the environment, one student said that it would make you feel good, like a star. When asked to explain why he has this opinion, he said the environment would have everything they need to enjoy themselves – i.e. food, shopping, means to make money, entertainment, and the absence of law enforcement, which they feel is oppressive. The discussion on environment reflected significant pedagogical potential in terms of movement towards critical Triarchic instruction because while it allowed the students to move across the different cognitive domains, it simultaneously provided a point of entry to stimulate student thinking about the dynamics that undergird how people’s environments are shaped by particular social structures and what changes are necessary to facilitate the creation of environments that would empower and nurture people who occupy social spaces similar to themselves and the Youngers.

In an effort to have the students utilize their creative skills, they are asked to select a theme and to create an expression that describes how the theme relates to their lives. One student said that church and Christianity relate to his life but he can’t write a rap (his preferred means of creative expression) about that topic – “how can I rap about that.” He told the class that the theme plays a role in his life because everyone in his

family goes to church and that it brings them together every Sunday so they can talk and keep up with each other. Another student said that intergenerational conflicts, particularly between him and his mom over his lifestyle, play a big role in his life. He talked about how she keeps trying to get him to value “doing the right thing instead of the street thing,” but he doesn’t, which causes them to always argue with each other. Despite their abilities to articulate the connections between the themes and their lives, they didn’t demonstrate an ability to alternatively express those thoughts. Throughout the course of the five weeks, this phenomenon changed for only a few of the students. For the most part, they were most comfortable and consequently engaged in those assignments that are analytical or practical. This was especially true of their work on the weekly assessments.

Focusing on one of the major dilemmas of the story, the teacher asks them about the money that the Younger family is expecting. One student said “they are going to get \$10,000 and they want to use it to get a house with a garden so Travis can play in it.” Someone else says that Ruth wants Momma to take a trip with the money. Another chimed in that Walter wants to invest in a liquor store; and Beneatha wants to go to medical school. They all agreed that Momma wants Beneatha to go to medical school too. The teacher then asked them what they think Momma should do with the money. Almost as a chorus, the guys said “Give it to me or Flip it [they define flipping it as buying drugs and then selling them to make a profit].” The teacher asked what they would do after flipping it – and they say that they would give everyone a little bit. They talked about the money that can be earned in drug dealing. The teacher asked whether this plan would work for the family and a debate ensues.

They suggested that the family should invest it in the liquor store if they can't flip it vis a vis the drug market. They said investing in the liquor store is like flipping it but it is legal. One student commented that liquor is a drug. He didn't think they should invest in the liquor store because Walter drinks and will drink the profit. All of the guys agreed that individuals shouldn't sell their drug of choice because it is too much temptation and they think this is the fundamental problem with Walter and the liquor store. While one student said that he would tell Momma to come with him to buy the house, another said he would tell Momma to give Beneatha the money so she can become a doctor because she'd give it back when she gets established in her career. They said Momma should support the dream that will be successful. One of the guys said that the liquor store will be quick money for Walter and quick money is good money. The teacher asked if that's the case, then why Momma shouldn't support Walter since all of them believe that liquor stores are profitable. They said because Walter will drink the liquor. The discussion turned to whether the liquor store or education is the better investment.

One young man said education is the better investment because with education, you can be more successful than the liquor store. "Without education, where are you going? If you gonna have a liquor store and education, then you got it going on – if the liquor store goes down then you can do other stuff. With an education, you can be a better businessman at the liquor store. What's a liquor store without mathematics?" Another student disagreed because he didn't think a liquor store would ever go down. The teacher asked about what would happen if the liquor store was robbed. At first, the students said they don't believe that this could happen. Then, one student explained that it can happen and they started talking about how they would protect the store with

watchdogs or sleeping in the store. One of the young men said that if he was advising Walter, he would tell him to open a laundromat because everyone has to wash their clothes. The teacher asked whether this would help Walter get the money from Momma. All but one of the students said yes and the voice of dissention said, “you can’t do this because it changes the story.” The students were asked to complete a journal assignment in which they write a letter to Momma advising her of what to do with the money. Their letters focused on the three options that they identified in their class discussions – invest in the liquor store (or other establishment), Beneatha’s education, or the new home for the family. A few of the letters illustrated particular skill in not only outlining what a specific character wants but also noting how that desire is connected with Momma’s values. Within a framework of criticality, one of the areas that needed to be explored with the students was the notion of what types of businesses are dominated by people of color in terms of ownership. At no point, did the students question why the business that Walter wanted to establish had to be a liquor store or what this might mean to a community that has been negatively linked to liquor and other substances of addiction in the social imagination.

Another dilemma that the students tackled during their class discussions is that of the move of the Youngers to a new home in a predominantly white neighborhood. At this point, they were focused on whether Walter should take the money from the representative of the neighborhood association to not move into the white community. He is considering this option because he has lost Momma’s money in a bad investment with a friend whom he should not have trusted. In reaction to Momma’s comment to Walter that he is killing her, one student said that Momma is trying to explain to Walter

that money is not everything. Although recognizing the meaning of Momma's statement, the student disagreed with its accuracy noting "but now if you don't have money, then you're poor – Momma was right then but not now. Nowadays it's all about money." He, like some of the others, felt Walter should take the money from the neighborhood representative. Another student said, "Walter doesn't have a choice – the best option is to take it because he lost the money." After other students echoed their agreement with this statement, one student reminded the class of Momma's comment that accepting the money is like someone paying them to say they're not fit to walk the earth. In a eloquent display of the cognitive (analytical to the practical) and semantic code switching, he said that "it's like saying I'll give you a G [\$1,000] to not walk on my block, and you take it. Who would do that?"

Despite this consideration, most of the students remained steadfast in their thinking that it is best for Walter to take the money, replace what he lost, and make things right so he won't feel guilty. "No matter what they [the family] say, he'll feel guilty if he doesn't get the money back." When they finished the play and learned that Walter did not take the money, they seemed to understand and accept the decision as the right thing to do. Within this context, the teacher asked them what Momma meant when she said that Walter had finally come into his own today. One student said that "he [Walter] is finally not worried about little kid stuff. He decided not to take the money because he wanted to step up to the plate like his dad." Another student commented that "Ruth didn't want Travis to see Walter act like a slave because Travis wouldn't have liked it and Walter didn't want his son to see him like that." While none of the students made

this connection, their final assessments of Walter seemed to relate to some of their own notions about manning up.

#### *DISCUSSION OF STUDENT FEEDBACK*

After they completed the text, I asked the class what they thought about the past five weeks. One student said he feels smart now, and another student said *A Raisin in the Sun* was the second book he has ever read. When asked whether or not they enjoyed the class, there was a range of comments from the students: “I enjoyed it a lot – how you taught – out in the world, they’d go to different topics but you stuck to one subject. I never really focused in class like now.” He went on to say that he learned how to read a play, about the characters of a play, and journal writing. Another student said that his reading is better, and that he understood a lot of what we read. A third student commented that he enjoyed the book “because of the knowledge it gave especially around Walter wanting to be a man – it’s similar to real life.”

Another young man said that the text “is not something he would have read in the town but for school it’s a very nice book.” Of the journal writing, he said “the questions were interesting and made you think and wonder what’s going on – had to think about answers before putting them down.” According to another student, he enjoyed the class because it was “better than being in the dorm – doing the work, although I didn’t do it when I was bored, and getting a little knowledge while here.” One of the other guys said, “it wasn’t like other Rikers classes – it was cool, better than most. I liked that the journal assignments asked for my thoughts because you don’t really get much of that.” One of the students, who had previously read the play but didn’t reveal this information until the end of the five-week period, said that he learned new vocabulary, is more into completing

books (he would start books but not finish), and understands the book more because he read it in a group.

I also asked the students what they disliked about the class and one student said that he didn't like the play or reading aloud or the journal assignments, which he thought would have been interesting if he could have written what he wanted to write but he didn't say about what he wanted to write. Another student said that he too didn't like the book because the story didn't reflect their lives. He described the text as boring and said that he would have preferred a book about the street life. Aside from the book, I asked how they would change the class so that it could be better. All but one student said, "I don't know." One student said I should ask people what they like and build from there. Another student said, "it can't get no better. You broke it down so anything I didn't get was my fault."

The students constructed discussions of the text and its themes primarily within the analytical and practical frameworks. This pattern was repeated in their journal assignments as well as on their weekly assessments. With respect to the weekly assessments, the issue of their lack of preference for short-answer questions probably had an impact on their lack of an attempt to answer many of the creative questions. In their journals, there was some engagement with creative questions, particularly for two students. One did a drawing of his interpretation of the characteristics of Momma; and another student wrote a rap based upon his understanding of how Beneatha might feel upon learning that Walter squandered or lost the money for her to go to medical school. However, overwhelmingly the students connected the text within a blended paradigm of the analytical and the practical whether in class discussions, journal writing, or weekly

assessments. While this circumstance is, in part, likely a result of the structuring of these activities by the teacher and the curriculum, students were able to direct how they engaged the material. The teacher and curriculum actively encouraged students to engage with the text along all three categories of the analytical, creative, and practical.

As students worked through the text, it was increasingly clear that the curriculum, in its present configuration, didn't maximally push the students towards the development of a much-needed critical literacy. Donaldo Macedo conceptualizes the phenomenon of traditional literacy as an instrumentalist approach to literacy. He notes "The instrumental literacy for the poor, in the form of a competency-based skills-banking approach, and the highest form of instrumental literacy for the rich, acquired through the university in the form of professional specialization, share one common feature: They both prevent the development of the critical thinking that enables one to "read the world" critically and to understand the reasons and linkages behind the facts. Literacy for the poor is, by and large, characterized by mindless, meaningless drills and exercises given "in preparation for multiple choice exams and writing gobbledygook in imitation of the psycho-babble that surrounds them." This instrumental approach to literacy sets the stage for the anesthetization of the mind."<sup>195</sup> Within this context of literacy, conformity to the overall social system is guaranteed especially since there are no mechanisms that enable individuals to use their own experiences to critically question and challenge the content, form, and function of a pedagogy for literacy. The current approach has the impact of not only anesthetization of the mind but alienation from learning. Learning becomes an external condition that assaults the student rather than an organic dialogue between the

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<sup>195</sup> Macedo, Donaldo. (1994). *Literacies of Power*. Colorado: Westview Press, p. 16

external and the internal. “By the time students reach adolescence, their experiences with reading materials and practices in school have taught them to dislike schooled literacy activities. Bean cites studies that point to how adolescents dichotomize reading in school, which they often view as boring and irrelevant, and reading outside of school, which they often view as useful and enjoyable.”<sup>196</sup>

As the students worked through the text vis a vis the practical problem-solving framework, which Sternberg characterizes as tending to be “unformulated or in need of reformulation; of personal interest; lacking in information necessary for solution; related to everyday experience; poorly defined; characterized by multiple appropriate solutions, each with liabilities as well as assets; and characterized by multiple methods for picking a problem solution,”<sup>197</sup> the hope was that they simultaneously would embrace and move toward a critical literacy or read of the world by using their own experiences to challenge the content, form, and function of the social conditions within their lives or described in the text. By utilizing practical problem-solving frameworks to deconstruct literary materials, students should more easily move towards the development of a critical literacy than in traditional pedagogies of literacy. The expectation for the students engaging in all of the domains of the Triarchic curriculum was that they would “use talk and texts to construct and question meanings based on the recognition of power

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<sup>196</sup> Alvermann, D. et. al. (Eds.). (1998). *Reconceptualizing the Literacies in Adolescents' Lives*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, p. 29

<sup>197</sup> Sternberg, R., et. al. (2000). *Practical Intelligence in Everyday Life*. New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 33

differentials, contradictory perspectives, and the possibility of enacting change.”<sup>198</sup> In this respect, a curricular goal was the stimulation of critical thinking, which Shor suggests “starts from perceiving the root causes of one’s place in society – the socioeconomic, political, cultural, and historical context of our personal lives. But critical thinking continues beyond perception – toward the actions and decisions people make to shape and gain control over their lives.”<sup>199</sup> The hope was that the text utilized within the curriculum would provide a realistic (rather than contrived) point of entry for students to begin to interrogate essential social power dynamics within a critical framework.

The goal was to not only maximize the cognitive skills of students through a recognition of the plurality of their intelligence but to also give them new opportunities to think critically about the society in which they exist so that their education empowers them to transform the structures rather than conform to it. “Adolescents need spaces in school to explore multiple literacies, to experiment, to critique, and to receive feedback and guidance from peers and adults. Such spaces are not provided by schools and curricula that are designed to teach an idealized (technical) literacy to idealized (adept and compliant) adolescents via the medium of idealized (canonical) texts.”<sup>200</sup> The incorporation of practical and creative lenses, as articulated in Sternberg’s Triarchic Model, was to facilitate a forum in which to accomplish this because it would encourage

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<sup>198</sup> Alvermann, D. et. al. (Eds.). (1998). *Reconceptualizing the Literacies in Adolescents’ Lives*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, p. 307

<sup>199</sup> Shor, Ira. (1987). (Ed.). *Freire for the Classroom*. New Hampshire: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc., p. 34

<sup>200</sup> Alvermann, D. et. al. (Eds.). (1998). *Reconceptualizing the Literacies in Adolescents’ Lives*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, p. 2

students to bring the full scope of their experiences and knowledges to bear on the analysis of the text.

Unfortunately, the students, even while overwhelmingly engaging the text from analytical and practical frameworks, did not substantively incorporate a critical focus in their work. For instance, the students repeatedly discussed the character of Walter Younger, a middle-aged black man who is struggling to establish himself as the man of the family. In most of their commentary on Walter, they failed to think about or, at least, articulate how the classed, gendered, and racialized elements of America's social hegemony impacted Walter as a social actor within all the domains of his life – family man, friend, potential businessman, and employee. The guys often chided him for not taking responsibility for his life and for drinking too much, although there are only one or two incidents of drinking at a bar; but didn't question the social conditions under which Walter was trying to exist. They would acknowledge that he was stressed and frustrated and even when they likened themselves to him in this respect, a practical application, they still failed to read the impact of the world around them or Walter. As the students were asked to look at Walter, the composite of a Black man, from a variety of perspectives, they didn't challenge the characterizations made of Walter by Momma, Ruth, Beneatha, or themselves but accepted them and in so doing became complicit in the hegemony that is sustained by an instrumental literacy.

Another instance where critical literacy eluded the students involved the discussions about Ruth's pregnancy. This scenario seemed to be particularly poignant because some of them are fathers and within the scope of the text, there were several divergent and conflicting perspectives offered by Momma, Ruth, and Walter that

provided a substantial frame for a critical discussion. The students primarily focused on the idea that Ruth should not seek an abortion without Walter's approval because "it's his seed too." What was not readily discussed were the reasons why Ruth decided that an abortion makes sense within their family context and why Momma thinks that it is a significant moral and cultural affront to the family. Even after discussing the fact that Momma lived through the historical period of lynching (a collection of lynching photographs as compiled in the text *Without Sanctuary* was shown to students as supplementary material), the students still did not connect Momma's perspective of the sanctity of an unborn child – we give life and not take it away – with the social milieu in which she came of age. Furthermore, despite parallels to their own lives, there was no focus on what it might mean for Walter to have to support another child with limited economic means and social capital. They never questioned the social conditions that forced the Younger family, from different perspectives, to have to engage in a debate about an abortion. The lens through which they discussed the pregnancy remained one-dimensional and never developed to include a critical read of the social world of the characters or the students.

Unfortunately, the Triarchic approach did not sufficiently structure a space for students to move beyond what Macedo characterizes as 'literacy for stupidification', and towards a literacy of transformation that is holistic and critical. The purpose of education within a framework of rehabilitation for incarcerated youth must not only engage them as individuals with assets and skills for successful intelligence but also provide them with a critical literacy so they can appropriately assess the multiple hegemonic social dimensions of the milieu in which they live because these are the elements that impact

their decision making around how to interact with (adapt, transform, or escape) their environments. While not an explicit goal of the Triarchic model, its failure to achieve this circumstance minimizes its potential as a powerful pedagogical tool for students' educational empowerment. It is a model that is less constrictive than other multiple intelligences frameworks, particularly with respect to the population of interest herein, but not sufficiently liberatory.

The weakness of the Triarchic approach to educating incarcerated youth is best understood when contemplating the purpose or function of education for the cohort. In Brotherton's ethnographic research of the Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation (ALKQN), he spoke with members of the organization who strongly endorsed school and educational achievement. There was a clear understanding amongst the members that formal education (i.e. schooling) can provide the community with much needed role models as well as important resources (i.e. specialized skills and knowledges) that allow for "not just personal gain, but breaking down the doors of collective exclusion, which itself is an act of political defiance."<sup>201</sup> Education has to not only develop the technical abilities or skills to achieve a particular goal but the consciousness to conceive of and define the goal. This idea is perhaps not dissimilar to the articulations of W.E.B. DuBois and his counterparts who, in the 1900s, stressed the importance of African-Americans obtaining traditional academic schooling, despite the oppressive nature of the curricular content, because it would provide the community with the requisite intellectual resources to fight against American hegemony.

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<sup>201</sup> Kontos, L., Brotherton, D., and Barrios, L. (2003). *Gangs and Society: Alternative Perspectives*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 145

A Triarchic approach appropriately develops the technical skills but not necessarily the consciousness because its framework allows for the ‘banking’ of knowledge in a Deweyan sense and this circumstance specifically precludes the possibility of a transformative or liberatory education in the sense of Freire. Even as students were asked to examine and discuss the text through the analytical, practical, and creative lenses, they did not have to problematize issues of power and social positioning – issues that are essential to informing the development of a *conscientização* – if not prodded by the teacher or one another. Students were able to sufficiently operate within the model at a superficial level in terms of which knowledges and understandings on which they chose to focus. To be fair, part of this reality is a result of how the students have been structured as learners by virtue of their past educational experiences in our schools. They have been mentally and cognitively disciplined within a ‘banking’ model so it is difficult, but not impossible, for them to conceive of and engage in a learning process that deviates. Without the Triarchic model specifically and aggressively pushing them outside of their ‘banking’ comfort zone and into a transformative framework, they don’t move towards the development of their *conscientização*. While this may not seem problematic since the Triarchic model can facilitate the development of important skills, it remands the students to recidivist victimization as they are unable to maximize their full potential of knowledges and abilities to become effective sociopolitical agents to substantively change their lives and communities, which should be the purpose of education.

In an attempt to create a learning community within the space of the classroom, during the first week, the teacher introduced the idea of a learning community by using a

quote from bell hooks, “As a classroom, our capacity to generate excitement is deeply affected by our interests in one another, in hearing one another’s voices, in recognizing one another’s presence.”<sup>202</sup> When the teacher asked for their thoughts about the quote, one student repeatedly said “sounds good” and another said “it means that we got to talk to one another like a conversation.” The student who first said “sounds good” raised his hand and said that the quote means to “focus on what we’re doing and understanding what we’re reading; experience what we know and the knowledge that we got to share with one another.” While they demonstrate an understanding of what is meant by a learning community, they have difficulty with sustaining their enactment of it. From a pedagogical perspective, this was particularly problematic because the establishment of a learning community could significantly contribute to Triarchic and critical learning as students use their varied dominant approaches – analytical, practical, or creative – to work with their classmates to explore the themes within the text and problem-solve.

The ways in which they interacted as a learning community took many different forms. During one class session when characters were being assigned for reading aloud, one of the students said of another “he can’t read that well so he’ll be George,” because while there are lines for George, they were few. It was clear that this did not offend the student who had been volunteered to read the part of George and who was actually excited about that which he has to read. On another day, the students who had been regularly engaged in the reading, class discussions, and journal writing, confronted one of the students who didn’t participate. In another class session, the students who decided not to participate were quiet (i.e. no side conversations) while the others read the play

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<sup>202</sup> hooks, bell. (1994). *Teaching to Transgress*. New York: Routledge, p. 8

aloud and discussed the text. There were multiple moments of the guys helping each other out with the pronunciation of words and with the vocabulary. One of the students volunteered to look up words in the dictionary. When he complained that the dictionary didn't have a definition, only a sentence, for the word *irritable*, another student said that the word means cranky. When the vocabulary volunteer couldn't find *exasperated* in the dictionary, another student (using the word in a sentence) said "I'm exasperated by your bullshit." When one of the regularly disengaged students tried to derail the class by saying "this is the most boring book I've ever fucking read; it's whack; this play is corny," the others continued with their discussion of the text and then moved into their journal writing assignments. By the end of the five-week period, the students had developed a rhythm in their reading, keeping each other on track, and don't have to be prompted by the teacher. They even worked collaboratively to update a student who had recently returned from a few days in the bing on the plot.

By far, the most profound example of their interaction as an effective learning community occurred when one of the students wrote a poem about his reaction to one passage of the play. He read his first draft of the poem to the class and one of the students said he thought that one line in the poem didn't make sense. I asked the student to explain why he didn't think the line made sense. He asked the student who wrote the poem to read it once again, which the writer did. Once he was done reading, the student giving the critique explained why he thought one of the lines didn't make sense and the writer receptively listened to the comments of his classmate. The two students started to go over the passage together by discussing what the writer was trying to express and how it was coming across to the listener. By the end of the class session, they had made some

changes and concluded that it effectively communicated what the writer wanted to say. When the class worked as a learning community, their comments were insightful and the discussions were productive. As they moved from discussions to journal writing, it was clear that they were impacted by the commentary of their classmates in thoughtful ways.

The atmosphere of a learning community was most often hindered when one or two students engaged in side conversations while others attempted to do work. When the side conversations, which were usually about life in the dorms, became sensational, there was a breakdown in the cooperative learning process. This was not only with respect to moving off the topic of the text to the happenings in the dorm but also in terms of how they were sharing information. The conversations were much more volatile and argumentative as opposed to an effort to share understandings of things. However, the most problematic disruption of the learning community occurred when two of the students began calling one of the students retarded because while he was reading, he mispronounced the word *mistuh*. The reader was visibly hurt and offended, so much so that he tuned out by closing his book and just sitting there. When asked his opinion about one of the passages that had been read during the class session, he responded, “I don’t know – I’m retarded.” This was especially distressful because he was one of the students who had been regularly participating throughout the five-week period; and one of the two students who insulted him, while the best reader in the class based upon standardized test results, did not regularly participate.

The importance of an affirmative learning community was made clear by some of the students as they told me what type of classroom they would have liked to have had in school. One student said he would have loved a classroom where he could tell the

teachers and his classmates what he thought because he likes to express himself – “Give knowledge to get knowledge.” This point has been made by other court-involved youth who once told me that they feel as though teachers want to give knowledge but don’t want the knowledge that the kids can give. The students of this study said that teachers think they can’t be taught anything and don’t want to show that they don’t know everything but the reality is that they don’t know everything. They believe that teachers should let kids give them knowledge. I asked them if schools were more like this would they have been more interested and less bored. They said yes because it would have been better and more like everyone talking and learning by having a conversation.

**CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH, POLICY, AND  
PRACTICE**

During the interviews, one of the students made the comment that his school experiences, whether in the town or inside Rikers Island, have not helped him to positively develop into an effective Black man. He said “it’s like you have a table with four legs but you are only supporting three; they are only bringing you 25 percent of the way or maybe 50 percent if you cooperate with them.” He felt that schools needed to do much more to help young people develop the skills and knowledges that they will need to avoid the pitfalls of life and become efficacious adults who are empowered to critically engage in the political, economic, and social domains of our civil society. Even as he implicated the educational system, he was quick to point out that young people also have a responsibility to help support the four legs. He said that while young people, including those who immerse themselves in the street life, know that education is the key to life; they don’t really have an opportunity to think about its full impact and how best to exploit its potential because their school engagements are overwhelmingly focused on the routine of getting from one class to the next and passing the tests that gate keep progress through the system. He thinks that the young people need to have an educational or school experience that helps them to understand the purpose of education within the larger social context and to develop the skills to enact their education to set and achieve goals.

If we want to ensure that court-involved urban youth, overwhelmingly poor children of color, are not perpetually left behind, then we need to (re)habilitate the ways in which we engage them in the educational process regardless of the spaces that they

occupy. We must develop multiple transdisciplinary strategies that integrate litigation, research, innovative pedagogical practices and policies, as well as advocacy for comprehensive youth justice to change the social structures through which court-involved youth are educated. Thus far, litigation has been the most widely used tool; and while it has yielded essential improvements by holding governmental agencies accountable for the fulfillment of their legal obligations to court-involved youth, it does not necessarily force us to question whether the current legal obligations are appropriately sufficient to meet the increasingly complex needs of the young people for which we are responsible. Based upon the way that the youth who participated in this study have experienced schooling, as legally prescribed, it is clear that what we now are doing to educate them is woefully insufficient. Fundamentally, we need to rethink and redefine the educational policies that delineate our obligations, and the ways in which we fulfill those obligations to court-involved youth so that we can better serve them.

From the perspective of policymaking, the most important first step in the centralization of the issue within the urban education discourse. Far more attention must be paid to the educational experiences court-involved youth are having in their community schools prior to contact with the courts, the varied and arbitrary roles that schools play in tracking urban youth into the justice systems, the ways in which educators are developing and delivering school to youth in correctional settings, and the educational (vocational and/or academic) engagements of youth upon their discharge from correctional settings. As we come to better understand the dynamics of these different themes, we must have the political will power to create and enact the types of policies that will fundamentally improve the education of court-involved youth so that they do not

experience significant levels of alienation and lack of commitment not only to school but to learning and education more generally; that will lead to a devolution of the imposition of law enforcement into the educational space; that will empower teachers with the professional skills, knowledge, and freedom to alter how they engage youth in correctional settings in the pedagogical process; and that realistically reflect the educational (academic and vocational) trajectories of youth who exit the justice systems.

Within this broad scope, one of the most fundamental areas in need of immediate policy re-engineering is inter- and intra- agency cooperation and planning because while we need policy change at the front and back ends of this systemic prison pipeline, we need to address the negative situation of those currently bottlenecked within the pipeline. One of the most compelling observations from this study was the extent to which the students were overwhelmingly impacted by life in the dormitories of Rikers Island. There is a generally accepted belief that children who reside in significantly dysfunctional homes cannot be effective learners in the school space because the entire child enters the classroom and brings with him or her all of the trauma resulting from the dysfunction. This understanding equally applies to our court-involved youth who reside in correctional settings. One of the students said to me, “if the things that are happening to us were happening to a kid in the town, it would be called child abuse and the kid would be taken from the family.” Court-involved youth are educated within the substantially complicated and complex terrain of the juvenile justice landscape where multiple bureaucracies and service providers are leveraged to enact policies and practices that differentially impact their lives. The problem is that the bureaucracies and service providers are, in some instances, guided by systemic missions and objectives that are

neither complementary nor coordinated. We must systematically reconceptualize our policymaking and advocacy efforts to achieve and institutionalize comprehensive youth justice for our court-involved students. Effective education can only occur in a context that comprehensively and uniformly nurtures it.

The departments of corrections, education, and child welfare need to collectively work to determine how to better structure dorm life so that it does not impede educational engagements. Policies, privileged by all of the involved agencies, need to be developed that prescribe practices that are conducive to and supportive of student learning. There is a need for policies that help to structure a *habitus* toward learning for the students, and this might require the provision of tutorials, study sessions, or study groups during the times that would ordinarily be spent idling in the dorms. One of the students said that he felt that the officers needed to do their jobs rather than commandeering the inmates to regulate the dorms so that everyone is treated fairly and a young person wouldn't have to worry about *manning up*. In order for this to happen, there is a need for all agencies to adopt a philosophical stance of substantive rehabilitation that would support a policy framework that changes the rhythm of the prison space. For educators, this would require changes in how they thought about the school day for incarcerated youth – it is interesting how after-school programming has become an important component of many public schools but remains glaringly absent from the school space where it is most needed. An extended day policy for incarcerated youth can be extremely helpful for the students.

There is also a need for policies that allow for and encourage better cooperation within agencies, specifically the department of education. First, teachers need to be

afforded the opportunity to collaboratively work to develop curricula that is transdisciplinary and that is integrated. The students want to be able to see connections between what they are learning in their different classes. This can only happen if teachers are able to scaffold and integrate lessons across the different academic subjects. The possible outcome is learning that is better reinforced for and internalized by the students. Second, the transition of students back into the schools of the community needs to be more carefully managed. Within the context of New York City Department of Education's dual enrollment policy, students are admitted to the Island Academy register as a regular admit; and at the completion of their stay, the student is discharged under a special administrative function that transfers the student back to the attendance register of the last school of attendance. For students who were not actively attending school prior to attending Island Academy or who want to change schools, there are regional enrollment centers staffed with "special population liaisons" to assist with returning students to school. This policy has only recently been implemented so the extent of its success is not well-documented. The important issue herein is the extent to which the overlay of other school-based policies facilitate or inhibit the successful implementation of the dual enrollment policy. That is to suggest that we need to examine whether our other high-stakes testing and zero-tolerance discipline policies mitigate against the ability of students to easily and effectively transfer back into community schools and to achieve educational or academic success. Additionally, there is the issue of whether schools in the communities are being equipped with the resources – financial, human, and expertise – to facilitate students' reintegration into a space where they may not have been fully integrated in the first place.

The urban education policy discourse also needs to incorporate or create the forum in which educators (researchers and practitioners) can more easily and effectively conduct the types of research that can specifically inform how we can better achieve the fulfillment of the DuBoisian paradigm of education in terms of developing students' economic, political, and social capital. Currently, most of the research on educational programs in correctional settings emphasizes the development of literacy skills, which is appropriate as literacy is fundamentally about the production and dissemination of knowledge and meanings; and structures how we engage and are engaged by the world around us. However, there is a need for much more research into the full range of pedagogical practices that can most effectively educate court-involved youth. "It is generally acknowledged that alternative education practices for juvenile offenders should be conducted in unconventional ways, with a variety of challenging materials, an emphasis on goal-setting and problem-solving skills, as well as frequent feedback and rewards."<sup>203</sup> It is important that we begin to generate the type of educational research that will "shift the focus of education to the learning of "re-programmable skills." It is becoming less important for secondary and higher education to provide a curriculum of fixed knowledge. Given rapid social, occupational, and technological change, successful young people (and adults) must be taught how to learn and continually relearn as they adapt to changing institutional structures. They must be provided the general knowledge and skills that will enable them to exercise agency as they attempt to achieve their goals in the context of ever-changing social realities. What is critical is that young people

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<sup>203</sup> White, Carter. (2002). Reclaiming Incarcerated Youths Through Education. *Corrections Today*, 64(2), (April), p. 177

enjoy learning, know how to find information, and are able to think creatively in new situations.”<sup>204</sup> Only through research can we begin to fully understand how to develop the appropriate curricular paradigms to most effectively educate this population.

Another important consideration for the research agenda is that of readiness. While most of the young men talked of the importance of education and a desire to effectively engage it at different points in their lives, it was difficult to determine what was necessary to help them become ripe or ready to endeavor in the learning process. As we come to understand what it takes to help individuals to become ready to substantively participate in a particular activity, we can begin to think about how to structure a scaffold of learning for court-involved youth that might begin with lessons or tasks to increase their readiness and then move into a particular pedagogical framework to develop their critical literacy skills. Once we have a better grasp on students’ readiness to engage in a learning process, and the best curricular frameworks to educate them for the development of economic, political, and social capital within our contemporary society, we need to provide them with socially relevant and empowering credentialing.

Consequently, we need a policy landscape that encourages research around the credentialing process because the students, like most individuals, are very focused on tangible outcomes of their educational engagements. With such an intense focus on the GED as the benchmarked credential and the fact that students do not accumulate credits that can be utilized to fulfill high school requirements, there is a need for research involving a possible reconstitution of the GED. We need to examine what skills and

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<sup>204</sup> Mortimer, J. T. and Larson, R. W. (Eds.). (2002). *The Changing Adolescent Experience*. Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, p. 16

knowledges are most relevant for this population, in terms of helping them to be politically, socially, and economically efficacious, develop an appropriately reflective curriculum, and then to identify the best ways to assess the acquisition of such skills and knowledges so that it can inform a retooling of the GED as the credential for which they strive. The GED, in a reconstituted format, should be a means to an end rather than the end. Part of that end is the helping students to acquire that which is necessary to be competitive in the labor market and as such, it would be helpful to also engage in research to explore the possibility of coupling the GED with some type of vocational credential that is sanctioned by particular industries. The question is whether there can there be an educational module that includes a terminal assessment, which grants a certification that is honored and respected by the business community. One example is the MSE certification for computer technology. While the GED can assess a more generalized skill set, the vocational assessment can be specific to a workplace skill set. The students told me that “if the school had trades other than barbershop, we would focus more on the academics because it would get us to the next class.” They want core academics that are applied and not just theoretical – they want to know that a particular class has a practical purpose.

In addition to a policy environment that forces a redefinition of *a sound basic education* for court-involved youth, more effective inter- and intra-agency cooperation and planning, as well as more research into how and in what to pedagogically engage youth in correctional settings, we also need an environment that facilitates more affirmative practices within the teaching and learning process. Just as one of the students in the study told me that “school can and should be about helping young people to push

their limits,” practitioners must be pushed beyond their current focus on inculcating court-involved youth with an instrumental literacy through a pedagogical approach of banking competency-based skills. It prevents them from being able to “read the world” critically and to understand the reasons and linkages behind particular social realities that powerfully affect their lives.<sup>205</sup> Within the context of instrumental literacy, conformity to the overall hegemonic social system is guaranteed especially since there are no opportunities for students to use their own experiences to question the content, form, and function of such literacy. In order for court-involved youth to be empowered to transform their lives and society, they must have educational spaces that allow them to explore how the multiple literacies of their lives variously impact their social situatedness.

This means that pedagogical practices and educational spaces that embrace the subjugated literacies that court-involved youth bring to table as important pedagogical tools to help them critically produce knowledges and develop skills that are relevant to and reflective of their lives. According to Shor, critical literacy “...invites teachers and students to *problematize* all subjects of study, that is, to understand existing knowledge as a historical product deeply invested with the values of those who developed such knowledge. A critically literate person does not stay at the empirical level of memorizing data, or at the impressionistic level of opinion, or at the level of dominant myths in society, but goes beneath the surface to understand the origin, structure, and consequences of any body of knowledge, technical process, or object under study.”<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Macedo, Donaldo. (1994). *Literacies of Power*. Colorado: Westview Press

<sup>206</sup> Shor, Ira. (1992). *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change*.

The critical literacy approach actively appreciates that students are interested in their own education and will engage in learning when presented with a process that is transformative rather than oppressive, which is how our traditional educational process is often experienced by court-involved youth.

Infusing critical literacy into their academic program is a means to connect schooling to students' lived experiences in educationally meaningful ways. In his research of a literacy lab, David O'Brien identified several principles that are necessary for the facilitation of a critical literacy. "First, we have found that in order to engage students, we need to change the basic school technical values of content coverage and teacher control to more student choice and autonomy (Kohn, 1993). This approach is sensitive to a social constructivist philosophy emphasizing situated learning and joint construction of meaning...Second, we discovered that we had to design assignments that are challenging enough to be interesting, yet flexible enough to provide students considerable leverage in controlling the level of difficulty (Covington, 1992). Such flexible tasks are antithetical to typical schooled literacy tasks that are low-incentive, high-risk, competitive, ability-based tasks (Anderman & Maehr, 1994; Nicholls, 1989; Oakes, 1992)...<sup>207</sup>

Building off of this study, one focus of enhancing the pedagogical practice might be identifying the ways in which there can be a better infusion of a framework of criticality into a Triarchic curriculum. While the students reported that the curriculum

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Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 24

<sup>207</sup> Alvermann, D. et. al. (Eds.). (1998). *Reconceptualizing the Literacies in Adolescents' Lives*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, p. 46

pushed them to think, it didn't necessarily move far enough in the consideration of the social constructions of the power relationships within society and the residual impacts to how the text's characters or they themselves interact with their worlds. Students need to be able to understand how to adapt, abandon, or change their environments; and an essential component of this ability is the development of a critical read on the world in which they must interact to achieve particular goals. Regardless of the extent to which they students engaged the Triarchic curriculum, they did not attain this level of understanding.

White's conclusion that we need to teach to students' strengths rather than to their deficits is particularly relevant. There has to be a clear pedagogical recognition of the knowledges and skills that students bring to the learning process, and to use those intellectual assets as a point of entry to build additional knowledges and skill sets. White also advocates that we must help juvenile offenders develop a sense of accomplishment so that they gain confidence and feel better about their abilities as they develop new skill sets. Educators must acknowledge the intellectual assets (i.e. skills and knowledges) that youth bring to the classroom. Students have to be respected and encouraged to share their knowledges to the community of learners that exists within the space of the classroom. Students cannot be viewed and engaged as empty vessels into which an arbitrarily sanctioned canon of knowledge is to be banked. An asset-based pedagogical approach that uses students' cognitive assets as a point of entry to build other skills provides a better academic foundation because it positions students not only as learners but also as teachers and vice versa. It would capitalize on students' strengths while simultaneously developing their weaknesses. Everyone within the space of the urban

classroom is an active, rather than passive, participant in a learning community that produces knowledge reflective of a great diversity of cultured epistemologies.

It is important that students' strengths are not hegemonically viewed such that those abilities most closely aligned with the traditional pedagogical approaches are privileged while others are subjugated. Educators must help students understand how to differentially leverage their abilities and transfer their knowledges to a variety of contexts as a means to problem-solve and achieve particular goals. Students, who have been subjugated on multiple levels, can be immediately empowered through recognition and validation of their experiences and knowledges as valuable assets in the educational process. Such empowerment can help to create a sense of academic accomplishment that can further motivate them to engage in the learning process.

Educators also need to engage in pedagogical practices that help students to create their own statements of the vision and purpose of education. Students need to explore how other similarly situated people, in terms of race, class, ethnicity, and background, have constituted their own visions/versions of what education means so that they can begin to think about how they want or expect it to function in their own lives. It is possible that this type of engagement can move them along a continuum of readiness, and it can provide an impetus to help them better reconcile reasons for engaging in school when their prior experiences with school have provided reasons to abandon the pursuit of education altogether.

Additionally, the students need to receive immediate feedback on their progress as it provides a sense of accomplishment that motivates them to continue to put effort into the learning process. The practices of school have to demonstrate to students that it is not

an insurmountable endeavor because that discourages them. Students need to know that they can engage in the process and be successful. There is a need for practices that help students to realize their efficacy as learners. There is also the need for practices that align learning with the self. One of the students told me that “school should be connected to life and that it should teach them what it means to be a black man in society. I only heard about the negative things of being a black guy and if I heard other things, I might have turned out differently.” The pedagogical practices need to connect with students’ lived experiences but also affirm a valuation of their cultural heritage – not just in terms of tokenistic curricular add-ons but in terms of the practice and atmosphere of the educational space. At the root of this pedagogical shift is a tremendous need for a substantially different type of teacher training program for those who enter the field of schooling incarcerated youth. They need to not only be trained in the science and art of curriculum and teaching but also in the effective elements of an assets-oriented youth development approach that acknowledges and embraces the skills and knowledge that youth bring to the learning environment as well as in the framework of critical pedagogy. It is imperative that such training programs not only present the theoretical paradigms but help their student-educators to internalize such learnings so that they can effectively infuse them into their instruction.

Despite their absence from our daily view, court-involved youth are essential members of our society, and represent precious human resources to be developed and nurtured. Unfortunately, society has underserved them on multiple levels and has an obligation to correct this injustice in order to not be directly complicit in the devastating demise of these individuals and their communities. As we reconceptualize the education

that we offer court-involved youth, we should be guided by W.E.B. Dubois who once said of Black children that they have the right to think, to know, and to aspire.<sup>208</sup> Just as DuBois believed that education specifically should develop the economic, political, and social capital of individuals so that they are empowered for individual and collective uplift, we too need to understand that this framework must guide how we reconceptualize our policies and practices relating to the education of court-involved youth. Not only do court-involved youth had the right to a sound basic education but they also have the capacity and desire for intellectual excellence. Consequently, we must radically change the policies that structure the context and practices through which we educationally engage them. If we are serious, and we should be, about ending the perpetual victimization of poor urban youth of color, then we must construct policies and practices for court-involved youth that liberate them from the oppressive social positions in which they have been situated by society. Otherwise, we will continue to witness increases in their recidivism through adulthood, as well as their mounting inability to transform their lives and our society for the better. Court-involved youth deserve nothing less than educational experiences that empower them to efficaciously participate in the social, political, and economic domains of our civil society. In doing anything less would make us solely responsible for creating the monster that we perceive in the prisoner.

Ultimately, to move towards the climate in which court-involved youth can have constructive educational experiences, we need appropriately resourced and enacted social policies that specifically: 1) create a more egalitarian reform discourse that is inclusive of

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<sup>208</sup> DuBois, William Edward Burghardt. (2002). *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward An Autobiography of A Race Concept*. (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers), p. 92

all stakeholders – including court-involved youth; 2) expand the reform agenda to examine the efficacy of currently delineated educational obligations and to redefine those obligations to court-involved youth to better meet their comprehensive needs and to provide them with empowering experiences; 3) identify and articulate unified goals and objectives that are informed by a new research-based reform agenda and that privilege an assets-based youth development model; 4) work to align the unified goals and objectives with the practices of the bureaucracies and service organizations that engage court-involved youth throughout their transition into and out of the juvenile justice system; 5) develop and systematically support transparent internal and external partnerships between stakeholders so that policy, research, practice, and advocacy can more effectively and regularly coordinate their efforts to synergistically achieve goals; 6) link the prioritization of practices to fiscal policymaking and implementation so that services for court-involved youth are equitably resourced and service providers are appropriately skilled to meet their complex and comprehensive needs; and 7) design and implement research initiatives to routinely document the needs and experiences of court-involved youth so that policy, practice, and advocacy are continuously informed, enhanced, aligned, and shared as best practices.

These considerations are by no means exhaustive but provide guidelines to serve as a starting point for a much-needed urban education reform discourse for incarcerated youth. Court-involved youth will not receive an effective and equitable education unless we change the various policies and practices of the multiple systems of the juvenile justice arena to better plan and structure the different aspects of their educational experiences. This is a task in which all educators must vigilantly engage.

## APPENDIX: A RAISIN IN THE SUN CURRICULUM

### A RAISIN IN THE SUN (WEEK 1) LESSON 1 (INTRO)

#### BASIC INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAY

**Background on the author and story:** Give the students some background info about the play's author, setting (Chicago in the 1950's), subject matter (African-Americans' struggles to survive and achieve their dreams in the face of discrimination and economic difficulty), and its theatrical/film productions – past and present.

**Origin and Format of the play:** Make sure that the students understand that, although Lorraine Hansberry originally wrote “A Raisin in the Sun” as a play, there are screenplay versions that differ somewhat from the play. Explain that:

○ Dialogue for the actors is introduced with the speaking character's name.

○ Directions for the actors are in *italics*. You may want to enlist the help of students who have been involved in school or other plays. If you have any such students in your class, you could get them to explain the format.

**Format of the Class:** Explain that we (the class) are a community of learners attempting to enhance our understanding of Hansberry's writing by asking questions, making connections between the text and what we already know, and discussing the meanings of her ideas. Each student will be assigned a character to “watch over” – reading that character's part during class and focus on writing about and to that character during the journal exercises.

Instruct students that they will have to maintain a “Reading Journal” and that their journal assignments will consist of two parts. First, it must have a “Character Chart” of their character (Who is This? (e.g. “so-and-so's brother”); What is he/she Like? (quiet, selfish, talkative, angry, tired?); Phrases, Sentences, or Events that Reveal Character (things he/she says or does that show what he/she is really like); Character's “Problem” (what does he/she want, care for; what motivates or drives this person?); Points of Change (moments or events that show that this person is changing in some way.); and the Student's Reactions to the Character (how would you advise the character if s/he was your friend).

Second, in their journal, students will be asked to write about how specific passages speak to them or what they feel is the most important element of a particular passage. Students should be encouraged to write down their reactions to the play, as well as any problems or questions they may have, and take notes as appropriate on class discussions and activities.

Explain that during the class, we will be doing some individual and group work as we read the text.

#### BEGIN READING THE PLAY

**The Poem:** Spend some time reading and analyzing Hansberry's use of the superimposed Langston Hughes poem. Ask students whether they have ever heard/read this poem before and who Langston Hughes was? Get the students to predict what the story is about, in light of the poem. Why might Hansberry select this poem to include with her play? If she were writing this play today, what poem or lyric might she select? What/how does the poem make them feel? What is the effect of having the poem appear line-by-line? Why is the last line in italics? Etc.

**Begin Reading:** Ask for student volunteers to read the introduction. There is about a page and a half of description to get through before dialogue begins and this can be read by the teacher since

each student will be assigned a character to read. For the first week, the class should get through pps. 1 – 30 of in-class reading.

## A RAISIN IN THE SUN (WEEK 1) LESSON 2 (Analytical)

### DISCUSSING THE READING

**Discuss and analyze the reading.** Exact content will vary, depending on how far in the play the students have read at this point and what their particular interests and problems were. Explain to students that as we read and discuss the text, we will be making comparisons between the movie and the play. Some aspects to cover:

1) Elicit personal reactions. Ask the students: what their reactions to the beginning of play were: What did they like/dislike, what did the play make them feel? Could they relate personally to any of the characters in the play or to any of the events that transpired? Were there parts or moments of the play that confused them or that they just couldn't follow? Discuss all of these things.

2) Discuss characters. Get the students to tell you: What are the different characters like? How can you tell? What is this character's central problem in life/ what drives him or her? Etc. Make a master Character Chart on the board or hang a chart somewhere in the room where the students can see it.

3) Ask students: What themes do you see emerging in the play. Some themes, as noted on p. 6 of the introduction, include:

- Concepts of African-American beauty & identity
- Class conflicts
- Intergenerational conflicts
- Christianity
- Relationships between men & women as well as husbands and wives within the Black community
- Feminism
- Integration
- Global civil society

Discuss with students their understanding of the different themes and whether they are still relevant in a contemporary context.

4) Discuss the societal issues illustrated in the play. Get them to talk about what this screenplay reveals about African-American life in the middle of the twentieth century. Ask students: What do they know about job opportunities for African-Americans at this point of our nation's history? Teachers may need to provide this information. Are things different today or not? Construct a chart on the board to compare and contrast "then" and "now." Ask students: Why might things be the same and/or different? Hansberry used her play to talk about the conditions "then" and can they give examples of how people are talking about conditions "now"?

5) You may want to initiate a discussion about the author's intentions or craft. For example, ask the students why the author included a particular scene in the play, and see if you can get them to think about how that scene functions in the play—that is, what it specifically reveals or accomplishes. Ask students whether they think Hansberry dialogue is authentic – is she "keepin' it real?" In terms of how her characters are talking with each other. Ask students to explain how so and why or why not?

**JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT:** Chart your character. Write your reactions and/or questions regarding what we've read. Answer the following questions:

1. What is your hope for your character and why?
2. What advice would you give your character and why?

3. How does the poem speak to you? (What is most/least powerful about it? Have you ever experienced what Hughes is talking about? How would you respond to Hughes? What examples can you give to show that people of your generation feel or don't feel like Hughes?)

### **A RAISIN IN THE SUN (WEEK 1) LESSON 3 (Practical)**

#### RESIDUAL ANALYTICAL DISCUSSION

You will probably want to review the preceding analytical lesson--calling on students with the different roles, asking students what they added to their journal reactions and character charts, etc.

Remind students of the themes that were identified:

- Value systems of the Black family
- Concepts of African-American beauty & identity
- Class conflicts
- Intergenerational conflicts
- Christianity
- Relationships between men & women as well as husbands and wives within the Black community
- Feminism
- Integration
- Global civil society

In small groups, have students select one of the themes and describe contemporary expressions of the theme. Have each group present their work.

Discuss with the large group of students which theme they believe is the most challenging for young people of color.

Organize the class to debate whether the selected theme is a social problem or not. May need to explain to students the format of a debate.

**JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT:** Select a social theme (one from the text or one that you observe in society today) that you think has played a big role in your life. Create an expression (i.e. Poem, song, artwork, prose, etc.) Of how that theme has affected your life.

## A RAISIN IN THE SUN (WEEK 1) LESSON 3 (Creative)

### CREATING ENVIRONMENTS

- Remind students of the opening scene of the play, in which the Youngers' cramped quarters and cranky humor is in full display. Ask students to describe the Youngers' apartment and moods in the opening scene. Get them to understand the connection between the two. Try to get the students to connect this dynamic with their own personal experiences. Have they ever lived in a place with family that was just too small? Too old? Too loud? How does their home, or school make them feel? Ask the students to describe these places and the way they felt there.
- If you want, you can show students pictures of different "environments" (houses or buildings--interior or exterior--of different sorts, parks, cities, farms, suburbs, whatever) and ask them to describe the mood, or the way they would feel, there.
- Tell students that they are going to do an exercise (this can be either an individual or a small group exercise) in which they get to create an environment that has a particular effect. This can be a writing or a drawing exercise (or both). The general idea is to assign, or let the students choose, a particular emotional state (excitement, boredom, comfort, depression, fear, tranquility, anger, etc.) And then ask them to describe (in words or pictures, or both) either a place that makes them feel that way, or an entirely imaginary place that, in their opinion, would produce that effect on the humans who inhabited the space. Again, give the students time to work individually, or in groups, and then re-group the class as a whole and get people to share and talk about what they have written or drawn.

### CREATING SCENES

Some themes, as noted on p. 6 of the introduction, include value systems of the Black family, concepts of African-American beauty & identity, class conflicts, intergenerational conflicts, Christianity, relationships between men & women as well as husbands and wives within the Black community, feminism, integration, and ideas about a global civil society. Have students, individually or in small groups, select a theme and then create a scene, storyboard, song, etc. That explores the theme from their own perspective. Explain that this is not uncommon from what Hansberry did with the play or the screenplay version from which the movie was made. Ask them if they can think of contemporary examples of people using art (visual, theatrical, musical, etc.) To explore particular themes and what they think about those expressions.

**JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT:** Answer the following questions:

1. How does the environment of Riker's affect you? What about the school environments in which you've been? Create & describe the environment that would get you most excited about learning and education. Create & describe the environment where you want to be when you leave Rikers.

## A RAISIN IN THE SUN WORKSHEET I

**I. For each question, circle the best answer OR, if lines are provided, fill in your answer.**

1. Suppose that you and your family (like the Youngers) have to live in a tiny apartment while you save for a larger place. The cramped living conditions make everybody cranky. What are some things you and your family could do to get along better in such a small amount of space?
2. Suppose you want to learn more about the limited job opportunities that African-American families like the Youngers faced in the 1950s. Which of the following would most likely be the BEST source for you to look at?
  - A) liquor industry publications from the 1950s
  - B) a book about Chicago
  - C) a history of women in the U.S.
  - D) a history book about African-American labor in the twentieth century
3. Why do you think the author titled this work “A Raisin in the Sun” after the Langston Hughes poem?
4. Pretend that you are designing a new (but not extravagant or grand) house for the Youngers. Taking into account what you know about the different family members (their needs and interests), what features would the house have?
5. Explain how you think the themes of the play are relevant in today’s society.
6. If Hansberry was writing her play today, what themes would she now have to address if she wanted to effectively tell the story of a working class African-American family living in an urban area? Explain your answer.

**II. For each question, circle the option (a, b, c, or d) that best completes the blank. OR If the question asks you to write a sentence, do so on the line provided.**

1. Mr. Reno wanted to buy his niece, Carla, a pair of rollerblades for her birthday. But once he Was at the store Mr. Reno realized that he did not know Carla’s foot size. He decided that his Purchase would have to be until he could find out exactly what size Carla wore.
  - A) charged
  - B) stockpiled
  - C) deferred
  - D) minimized
2. Use the word “fester” in a sentence
- 3 Use the word “accommodate” in a sentence

## A RAISIN IN THE SUN (WEEK 2) LESSON 6 (ANALYTICAL)

### GENERAL DISCUSSION OF THE READING

• For the second week, the class should get through pps. 31 – 53 of in-class reading. Students should continue with the characters that they were assigned during week one. Discuss and analyze the reading. Again, exact content will vary, depending on how far the students have read at this point and what their particular interests and problems are. (You may have to “save” some of the issues and passages mentioned in this lesson for discussion the following day). Try to cover the ideas and issues that are addressed on the comprehension assessment.

1. Elicit personal reactions. Did anything that happened surprise them? Could they relate personally to any of the events that took place or any of the emotions that the characters experienced? Were there parts of the play that confused them or that they just couldn't follow?
2. Ask students: Other than the themes that were identified in the first lesson, are there new themes emerging in the play. Have any of the themes identified in the first lesson become more or less clear? How so?
3. You should add characteristics to the class Character Chart as you discuss the play. Get the students to tell you what more they have learned about the characters from the reading. Has their opinion of any of the characters changed? Do they feel like they have gained any new insights into the characters?
4. Select a few key “moments” in the play, and then dissect them for what they reveal about character or the setting. Or, alternatively, split the class into groups and give each group responsibility for explaining to the rest of the class what one of the key passages reveals about the characters involved. Here are some key passages (the general interpretations offered in parentheses are meant to be suggestive rather than definitive; students are, of course, entitled to interpret the material themselves):
  - a. Pages 32-35: Walter and Ruth's discussion. (Walter expresses his frustration with not being valued and supported by Ruth in his pursuit of his dreams; and describes what he sees as the role that a Black woman should fill in terms of supporting the Black man)
  - b. Pages 30-38: The conflict between Walter and Beneatha. (Juxtapose Walter's thinking about his pursuit of his dreams and his thinking about Beneatha's pursuit of her dreams)
  - c. Pages 43-44: Lena (Mama) and Ruth discuss what to do with the money. (Lena and Ruth have specific ideas about what a White woman would do with the money as opposed to what a Black woman would do with it. Explore these racialized differences).
  - d. Page 45: Lena quotes Walter Younger as once having said “Seem like God didn't see fit to give the black man nothing but dreams --- but He did give us children to make them dreams seem worth while” --- Lena then says “Yes, a fine man – just couldn't never catch up with his dreams, that's all” (Discuss Walter's perspective and what might have led him to develop this opinion)
  - e. Discuss how Hansberry uses her characters to offer different opinions about various topics that are affecting the family. Do the students find this an effective way of providing them with information about different perspectives? Does it seem like real life?
5. In small groups, have students select an image in the media that they believe correctly expresses one of the messages about their generation that they want people to understand and explain why they selected that image.

**JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT:** Chart your character. Write your reactions and/or questions regarding what we've read. Answer the following questions:

1. What about your character worries you and why?
2. On page 48, Beneatha says "I don't flit! – I experiment with different forms of expression ... People have to express themselves one way or another"
  - a. What do you think are the multiple messages that Beneatha is expressing so far?
  - b. What are the different ways in which she is expressing these messages?
  - c. Do her messages contradict each other?
  - d. What are the different messages about yourself (i.e. Who you are, what your thoughts, dreams, concerns, and feelings are) that you would like to express?
  - e. How might you effectively express those messages?
  - f. Are there pictures or other things in the media that express messages about you or your generation that you think are correct or incorrect?

## **A RAISIN IN THE SUN (WEEK 2) LESSON 7 (PRACTICAL)**

### **RESIDUAL ANALYTICAL DISCUSSION**

You will probably want to review the preceding analytical lesson--calling on students with the Different roles, asking students what they added to their journal reactions and character charts, etc. Discuss with students what they think is the biggest challenge/problem confronting the Younger family and how they think the Younger family should address it? Why?

### **PRACTICAL EXERCISE:**

Have students think about how the money or the gain of resources can be used at the individual and community levels to address the needs of those concerned.

• **Persuasive Statements to Lena (Mama):** Instead of an oral debate, you could have more of a small group persuasive writing exercise, where each group essentially constructs a separate "persuasive statement" to Lena Younger on behalf of their character about how the money should be used to help the family. These statements could be shared and discussed. Students should keep in mind that they are creating their statements from the perspective of their characters and it is addressed to Lena (Mama).

• **Inspiring the Public:** Divide the students into small groups and from a contemporary perspective of one of the characters, they have to plan a "public outreach plan" to educate the public about an issue of concern to them and inspire other people to take action. For example, the student(s) could be:

- Walter focusing on the difficulty of getting money to start a business as an African-American man
- Lena, describing the difficulty city residents face buying decent fruits and vegetables in their own neighborhoods
- Beneatha, criticizing the poor funding of education within urban communities of color
- Travis and Ruth detailing the need for appropriate and safe recreation opportunities for young children of color in urban neighborhoods.

Remind them that this is the 90s, so they should feel free to come up with ideas that involve technology and different kinds of media. Some questions to have them consider:

- What is their issue?
- What do they think should be done about it?
- What are the main arguments that would support their view?

- How can they get others to care about the issue?
- What kinds of slogans would they use?
- How would they get their message across?

Once again, to help the students form a consensus for their group, you could require them to write two pros and two cons for each suggestion.

As part of the task, students should draft a letter to the editor of a local paper or a politician that outlines their main arguments and details their recommendations for addressing the issue.

**JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT:** Answer the following question:

1. What has been the biggest challenge in your life so far?
2. How did you handle it?
3. What would have helped you to handle it in a better way?
4. What advice would you give to another young person from your community experiencing the same challenge?

## **A RAISIN IN THE SUN (WEEK 2) LESSON 8 (CREATIVE)**

Discuss with students what is meant by the generational divide that Mama feels (“No--there’s something come down between me and them that don’t let us understand each other and I don’t know what it is” p. 52). Ask them if they think such divides exist today between their generations and the older generations. Ask for examples of this divide.

**Expressing Identity--Portraits of Characters:** Either individually or in groups, draw portraits of some of the characters in the play. One interesting way to do this is to assign different individuals or groups to do portraits of the same character from the perspective of different characters. In other words, tell one group: “Pretend that you are Travis and create a portrait of Walter.” And tell another group: “Pretend that you are Walter and create a portrait of yourself.” Then, you can have a discussion about how Travis’s view of himself compares to George’s view of Walter. The same can be done for other characters in the play.

Once they have created the portraits of another character, allow the students work in pairs to construct “bridges” (dialogues) between the two characters so the characters can come together in a productive way.

**JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT:** Answer the following question:

1. Think of someone close to you and create a portrait of how that person sees you.
2. Create a new portrait of how you would like that person to see you.
3. What type of “bridge” or dialogue do you think is necessary to help that person see you as you want to be seen.

## A RAISIN IN THE SUN WORKSHEET II

**I. For each question, circle the best answer OR, if lines are provided, fill in your answer.**

1. Which of the following actions would be the MOST likely to help Walter convince his mother, Lena Younger, to invest some of her money in his business ventures?
  - A) Walter could come up with a business idea that does not involve liquor.
  - B) Walter could ask Herman, the owner of the liquor store nearby, to talk to Lena.
  - C) Walter could lose his job on purpose; then Lena would have to give him the money.
  - D) Walter could demand that Beneatha marry George Murchison.
  
2. Walter and Beneatha argue a lot with one another. If the two of them asked your advice about how to get along better, what would you tell them?
  
3. Which of the following is the MOST necessary if Beneatha is to become a doctor someday?
  - A) She must get married.
  - B) She must study hard and keep her grades up.
  - C) She must make sure that her mother does not give Walter any of the money.
  - D) She must stay on Ruth's good side.
  
4. The play is set around the middle of the 1900s. Do you think Walter Younger's business prospects would have been any different had he lived today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? Why or why not?
  
5. Which of the following accurately describes a problem that Beneatha faces?
  - A) Her grandmother does not look kindly on her desire to attend medical school.
  - B) She is not smart enough to become a doctor.
  - C) Men sometimes discourage her dreams or laugh at her ideas because she is a woman.
  - D) She depends on God too much instead of doing things for herself.
  
6. Explain why the little plant is included in the story from time to time. In other words, what would you say the plant "symbolizes" or "represents"?
  
7. Describe an instance in your life when you, like Walter, felt that something kept you from being able to reach a dream, or do something you really wanted to do.
  
8. Pretend that Beneatha is "expressing" herself in her journal. What might the journal entry say?
  
9. Describe a time when you felt embarrassed by another person's behavior.
  
10. Beneatha and Walter are of a different generation from Lena, and their concerns and ideas differ somewhat from those of their mother. How do you suppose that Travis will differ from his parents?

**II. For each question, circle the option (a, b, c, or d) that best completes the blank. OR If the question asks you to write a sentence, do so on the line provided.**

1. The Edwards had not disciplined their daughter very well. She interrupted every conversation, demanded food from everybody's plate, insisted that she determine which games were to be

played, and generally “ruled the roost.” At last, her exasperated grandmother cried, “You are a pint-sized

- A) joy
- B) bore
- C) sneak
- D) tyrant

2. Use the word “irritably” in a sentence

3. A 21 year old from New York City said “In high school I felt that I wasn't learning anything so I walked out and left. I went from program to program with the same attitude. I didn't complete anything. I realized that if the teachers aren't going to teach you, you got to teach yourself”. This person felt \_\_\_\_\_ with the education system.

- A) exasperated
- B) encouraged
- C) helpless
- D) satisfied

4. Before my court date, I was feeling so \_\_\_\_\_ because I didn't know what was going to happen and I didn't want to go to jail.

- A) anxious
- B) happy
- C) excited
- D) tired

5. Use the word “devilment” in a sentence

6. Between 1932 and 1972, the U.S. conducted a study to test the effect of syphilis in 399 black men. The \_\_\_\_\_ was unethical because the doctors never intended to treat the participants nor informed them of the truth of their condition.

- A) experiment
- B) data
- C) information
- D) situation

7. Folks, who act like they have a lot of money when they don't, are known as bougie or \_\_\_\_\_.

- A) kind
- B) friendly
- C) snobbish
- D) humble

8. Many conservative religious people believe that rap music causes young people to do \_\_\_\_\_ things like drink alcohol, have sex, and use drugs.

- A) healthy
- B) immoral
- C) productive
- D) industrious

9. Use the word “stubborn” in a sentence

10. The students were \_\_\_\_\_ by the constant noise in the hallway while they were taking their examination.

- A) disturbed
- B) calmed
- C) comforted
- D) encouraged

11. Use the word “triumphant” in a sentence

12. Members of the hip hop generation have had a \_\_\_\_\_ economic impact in the world because their music has built a \$2 billion global industry

- A) weak
- B) profound
- C) interesting
- D) small

## A Raisin in the Sun (Week 3): Lesson 9 (Analytical)

### GENERAL DISCUSSION OF THE READING

- For the third week, the class should get through pps. 54 – 75 of in-class reading. Students should continue with the characters that they were assigned during week one.
- Discuss and analyze the reading. Again, exact content will vary, depending on how far the students have read at this point and what their particular interests and problems are. (You may have to “save” some of the issues and passages mentioned in this lesson for discussion the following day). Try to cover the ideas and issues that are addressed on the comprehension assessment.

1. Elicit personal reactions. Did anything that happened surprise them? Could they relate personally to any of the events that took place or any of the emotions that the characters experienced? Were there parts of the play that confused them or that they just couldn't follow?
2. Ask students: Other than the themes that were identified in the first lesson, are there new themes emerging in the play. Have any of the themes identified in the first lesson become more or less clear? How so?
3. You should add characteristics to the class Character Chart as you discuss the play. Get the students to tell you what more they have learned about the characters from the reading. Has their opinion of any of the characters changed? Do they feel like they have gained any new insights into the characters?
4. Select a few key “moments” in the play, read these passages out loud as a class, and then dissect them for what they reveal about character or the setting. Or, alternatively, split the class into groups and give each group responsibility for explaining to the rest of the class what one of the key passages reveals about the characters involved. Here are some key passages (the general interpretations offered in parentheses are meant to be suggestive rather than definitive; students are, of course, entitled to interpret the material themselves):
  - a. Page 57: Lena (Mama) and Beneatha's discussion about Asagai (What of Mama's attitudes towards Africans?) Pages 61-62: Beneatha and Asagai's discussion about beauty and identity. (What is “authentic” beauty?; How is it appreciated or not?; How does one go about constructing their identity?)
  - b. Pages 64: Beneatha and Asagai's discussion in which she asserts feminist attitudes.
  - c. Pages 73-74: Walter & Lena's (Mama) conversation about his frustration with his job. How relevant might a conversation like this be today?
  - d. Discuss how Hansberry creates identities for her characters. Knowing what they do about the culture she is representing, do the identities seem real to them?
5. Discuss with students Manning Marable's idea that, “You become a social actor in the real world not on the basis of any objective criteria, but by the stereotypes imposed on you externally by others”. Discuss what this means and how it relates to the play.

**JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT:** Chart your character. Write your reactions and/or questions regarding what we've read. Answer the following question:

1. According to Manning Marable, “You become a social actor in the real world not on the basis of any objective criteria, but by the stereotypes imposed on you externally by others”.
2. Do you agree with this perspective? Why/Why not?

3. How might this relate to your character?
4. What does this mean for you in terms of how you create and recreate your identity?

## A RAISIN IN THE SUN (WEEK 3) LESSON 10 (PRACTICAL)

### PRACTICAL EXERCISE:

#### WHAT TO DO WITH THE MONEY: DEBATE AND PERSUASION

•**Staging a Debate:** By now, the students should grasp that one of the central dilemmas of the book is what Mrs. Younger should do with her newfound wealth. Tell the students that they are going to have a chance to exercise their powers of persuasion by participating in a debate on this subject. There are various ways a debate like this could be structured. Here is one idea:

•**Small-Group Meetings:** Put the students in three small groups (the same ones they are already in, or new ones, if you prefer). You could explain to them that each group is the representative--or agent, or lawyer, or spokesperson, or whichever term you think the students would identify with the most—for one of the following characters: Walter, Beneatha, and Ruth. Each group should prepare for the debate by discussing amongst themselves what their character wants done with the money and why. The group members should also come up with some arguments in favor of their own plan for the money--so that they can support their assertions. They also might want to try to anticipate how other teams will argue against them, and how they might want to undercut the other teams claims on the money.

•**Class Debate:** After the groups have had time to meet, act as a moderator (you can pretend you are Mrs. Lena Younger, if you want; you could of course also have one student be a moderator rather than a group member, but the debate might be more effective with the teacher in charge) and get the debate going. You probably want to give each group a chance to speak, and then call on different groups to counter other groups' arguments, etc. You may have to bring up particular issues or concerns to focus the debate. Try to encourage different group members to speak, so that one person alone is not speaking for a given group all the time.

#### View the 1961 film version of the play (through Act I)

Discuss with students the similarities and differences that you noticed between the play and movie versions of the story. Ask which format had a bigger impact on them and why?; and if they had to select either format through which to tell their life story, which would they select and why? Discuss specific film moments: for example, #3 I Got Me A Dream – Relationship between Black men and Black women; # 10 Joseph Asagai – The African perspective vs. That of the African-American; #13 & #14 I Ain't Got Nothing – The death of a child vs. An abortion; what is life – freedom vs. Money; be the man your dad was (gave up one baby to poverty, won't give up another)

#### JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT: Answer the following questions:

1. There are many young people of color who have newfound wealth and there are a lot of reports in the media about how they are using their wealth. Select and describe an example of how wealth is being used well and how wealth is being used poorly. What do you think the person is trying to accomplish by using wealth in that particular way? What would you do differently if it was your wealth? Are these examples any different than the ways in which people who always have had wealth use it? How so?

## A RAISIN IN THE SUN (WEEK 3) LESSON 11 (CREATIVE)

**Expressing Identity--Self-Portraits:** Remind the students of Beneatha's interest in expressing herself and in learning about her African heritage. Tell the students that today they will have an opportunity to think about their own multiple identities (i.e. As youth, cultured and gendered beings, students, youthful offenders, children, etc.) And express themselves.

Instruct the students to create a self-portrait. (Encourage them to draw more than just their face or body; they can draw other things in the picture that express who they are.). Give each student an opportunity to show and briefly interpret what they have created.

Discuss with students Markus & Nurius's idea that an individual is free to create any variety of possible selves, yet the pool of possible selves comes from an individual's particular sociocultural and historical contexts, from the models, images, and symbols provided by the media, and from the individual's immediate social experiences. Discuss what this means and how it relates to the play including what they think the possible self of their character is.

**JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT:** Chart your character. Write your reactions and/or questions regarding what we've read. Answer the following question:

1. According to Markus & Nurius, an individual is free to create any variety of possible selves, yet the pool of possible selves comes from an individual's particular sociocultural and historical contexts, from the models, images, and symbols provided by the media, and from the individual's immediate social experiences.
2. Do you agree with this perspective? Why/Why not?
3. Create an expression of your possible self.
4. What will help and/or hinder you from becoming your possible self?

## A RAISIN IN THE SUN WORKSHEET III

**I. For each question, circle the best answer OR, if lines are provided, fill in your answer.**

1. Suppose that you are adding a scene to the play. In this scene, Walter and Asagai meet in a bar and start talking. Describe their conversation.
2. Imagine that you are Walter and want to give advice to your son, Travis, about getting ahead in the world. What would you tell Travis?
3. What advice would you give Walter about how to cope with the frustration he feels when things do not go as he would like them to?
4. What plans should the Younger family make in order to be ready for the arrival of the new baby?
5. Why does Walter hate his job?
6. When Walter first learns about Ruth's pregnancy, Lena urges him to be "his father's son." What does Lena mean by this?
  - A) She wants Walter to move out on his own.
  - B) She wants Walter to go out and get a second job.
  - C) She wants Walter to tell Ruth that they should keep the baby.
  - D) She wants Walter to take charge of the family finances.
7. Walter says money is life. But Lena asserts that the world must have changed because freedom used to be life. What do you suppose Beneatha would say life is?
8. The entire Younger family eagerly anticipates the arrival of the \$10,000 check. Describe a time when YOU eagerly awaited some event.
9. Identify some of the similarities and differences between the movie and play versions of the text and explain why they exist.
10. Explain Asagai and Beneatha's perspectives on beauty. What do you think accounts for the similarities and differences in their thinking.

**II. For each question, circle the option (a, b, c, or d) that best completes the blank. OR If the question asks you to write a sentence, do so on the line provided**

1. Reid had promised Lorraine that he would stop by her apartment and water the plants while she was on vacation. However, as Reid was making his way up the stairs, the building security guard gave him a quizzical look. The best thing for Reid to do would be to
  - A) run up the stairs as quickly as possible.
  - B) quickly run back down the stairs and out the door.
  - C) briefly explain to the security guard Lorraine's request.
  - D) ask the security guard what he was looking at.
2. Use the word "forlornly" in a sentence

3. Samantha needed her father to sign her permission slip so that she could go on the next day's field trip. She gave the slip to her father, who agreed to sign it when he found a pen and then distractedly set it aside. The best thing for Samantha to do would be to
- A) talk to a friend on the phone about the field trip
  - B) go to bed and worry about the slip in the morning.
  - C) give up hope of going on this field trip.
  - D) promptly supply her father with a pen.
4. Use the word "radiance" in a sentence
5. During medieval times, people built large fortresses to create a \_\_\_\_\_ of strength to protect their villages and cities from attacks.
- A) bastion
  - B) pocket
  - C) receptacle
  - D) can
6. Use the word "indignantly" in a sentence
7. People have often thought that Africans are uncivilized \_\_\_\_\_ who did not believe in God.
- A) heathens
  - B) missionaries
  - C) farmers
  - D) snobs
8. When 2Pac said, "I'm tryin to make a dollar out of fifteen cents. It's hard to be legit and still pay tha rent. And in the end it seems I'm headin for tha pen. I try and find my friends, but they're blowin in the wind," his mood is best described as a feeling of \_\_\_\_\_
- A) dejection
  - B) excitement
  - C) fear
  - D) happiness
9. Use the word "commotion" in a sentence
10. Use the word "suppress" in a sentence
11. Someone who demonstrates grace, charm, and elegance is known as a \_\_\_\_\_.
- A) slob
  - B) sophisticate
  - C) boar
  - D) lazybones
12. Artists who conform to the expectations of the music industry rather than to their own cultural identity and experiences are not keepin' it real. They are \_\_\_\_\_ who want to integrate into the dominant culture.
- A) assimilationists
  - B) activists

- C) perfectionists
- D) agitators

13. When Edward dejesus hears people say that young people of the hip hop generation can't make it, he replies "Don't believe the hype! Each year thousands of members of the hip hop generation make it". Edward is in a state of \_\_\_\_\_ at the comments of others about the hip hop generation. A) joy

- B) incredulity
- C) confusion
- D) anxiety

14. Lisa wanted \_\_\_\_\_ and sought to inflict violence on the man who had harmed her mother in the robbery.

- A) peace
- B) vengeance
- C) harmony
- D) conflict

15. For large school assemblies, students are sometimes asked to perform \_\_\_\_\_ of the poems and other readings that they have memorized for the occasion

- A) dances
- B) exercises
- C) recitations
- D) maneuvers

16. Use the word "insinuatingly" in a sentence

17. In the Vote or Die campaign, organizers were desperate to have young people go to the polls so they created a lot of advertising that \_\_\_\_\_ asked the hip hop generation to vote.

- A) beseechingly
- B) politely
- C) quietly
- D) calmly

18. The advocates of the Books Not Bars campaign accused the government of spending \_\_\_\_\_ amounts of money on prison rather than education

- A) meager
- B) appropriate
- C) immense
- D) adequate

19. In 1884, Ida B. Wells began to investigate \_\_\_\_\_ and discovered that during a short period, white mobs executed 728 black men and women by hanging them

- A) lynchings
- B) housing
- C) migration
- D) segregation

## A Raisin in the Sun (Week 4): Lesson 12 (Analytical)

### GENERAL DISCUSSION OF THE READING

- For the second week, the class should get through pps. 76 – 109 of in-class reading. Students should continue with the characters that they were assigned during week one.
- Discuss and analyze the reading. Again, exact content will vary, depending on how far the students have read at this point and what their particular interests and problems are. (You may have to “save” some of the issues and passages mentioned in this lesson for discussion the following day). Try to cover the ideas and issues that are addressed on the comprehension assessment.

1. Elicit personal reactions. Did anything that happened surprise them? Could they relate personally to any of the events that took place or any of the emotions that the characters experienced? Were there parts of the play that confused them or that they just couldn't follow?

2. Ask students: Other than the themes that were identified in the first lesson, are there new themes emerging in the play. Have any of the themes identified in the first lesson become more or less clear? How so?

3. You should add characteristics to the class Character Chart as you discuss the play. Get the students to tell you what more they have learned about the characters from the reading. Has their opinion of any of the characters changed? Do they feel like they have gained any new insights into the characters?

4. Select a few key “moments” in the play, read these passages out loud as a class, and then dissect them for what they reveal about character or the setting. Or, alternatively, split the class into groups and give each group responsibility for explaining to the rest of the class what one of the key passages reveals about the characters involved. Here are some key passages (the general interpretations offered in parentheses are meant to be suggestive rather than definitive; students are, of course, entitled to interpret the material themselves):

- a. Page 84: To George, Walter says “I see you all all the time – with the books tucked under your arms – going to your (*British A – a mimic*) “clahsses.” And for what! What the hell you learning over there? Filling up your heads – (*Counting off on his fingers*) – with the sociology and the psychology – but they teaching you how to be a man? How to take over and run the world? They teaching you how to run a rubber plantation or a steel mill? Naw – just to talk proper and read books and wear them faggoty-looking white shoes...” In this statement, Walter poses a question that has been asked by many of today's youth for instance, you can review the lyrics of Dead Prez's “they schools”. What do you think about Walter's statement and does it really hold true today and why/why not?

Page 97: According to George, the purpose of school is simple, “You read books – to learn facts – to get grades – to pass the course – to get a degree. That's all – it has nothing to do with thoughts”. What do you think about George's perspective? How is it similar or dissimilar than people like W.E.B. dubois who once said “And when we call for education we mean real education. We believe in work. We ourselves are workers, but work is not necessarily education. Education is the development of power and ideal. We want our children trained as intelligent human beings should be, and we will fight for all time against any proposal to educate black boys and girls simply as servants and underlings, or simply for the use of other people. They have a right to know, to think, to aspire”, or Malcolm X who, during their times, had a lot to

- say about the education of people of color? (Teacher might have to explicate the educational philosophies of Dubois and Malcolm X)
- b. Page 106: What does Lena (Mama) mean when she says to Walter “I been doing to you what the rest of the world been doing to you”?
  - c. Page 108: What do you think about the way in which Walter characterizes success when he’s talking with Travis?

**JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT:** Chart your character. Write your reactions and/or questions regarding what we’ve read.

1. Create your own statements of the purpose of education and schools?
2. Are the purposes of education and school the same – why/why not?
3. How do your statements differ from what you see as the purpose of schooling based upon your experiences with schools and education? What do you think are the reasons for the differences?

### **A RAISIN IN THE SUN (WEEK 4) LESSON 13 (PRACTICAL)**

- Divide the students into groups (or, if you prefer, have them do this as an individual exercise) and tell the students that their task is to write an advice letter to Walter about coping with disappointment. What should he have done that he did not do? What were the drawbacks of his behavior? What should he keep in mind in the future when things go wrong? (You may want to give the students additional “prompting” questions.) Allow the students 3 minutes to brainstorm and then 8-10 minutes to write up a rough draft (remind the students to skip lines). Tell the class when to move from one phase to the next.

- In addition (or instead) you may want to assign each group (or let each group come up with) a particularly frustrating experience likely to befall young people (e.g., not getting a grade they want, not “making the cut” of a sports team, being “dropped” by somebody who seemed to be a friend). The group’s task is to offer “coping” advice to a person in that situation. Follow the same time frame as in the preceding exercise.

- Re-group the class after the students have had sufficient time to work. Let each group report its advice for Walter and/or the “young person with a problem.” Discuss the students’ ideas and see if there are common themes in the suggested coping strategies. Ask students what obstacles do they think a young person like themselves would face in trying to implement the coping strategies and how would they get around the obstacles.

- **Peace Across Cultural Boundaries:** This screenplay addresses tension between different cultural groups:

- Between children and parents
- Between people of different socioeconomic backgrounds
- Between men and women
- Between people of different ethnic groups
- Between people from different countries

All of them differ in their concerns and priorities but yet must struggle to get along and to achieve the right balance of independence and interdependence.

Instruct the students, in small groups, to select one of the cultural tensions and discuss how that tension exists today and what they think the impact of it is to the community and to individuals.

Have students, in their small groups, develop a plan to help people involved in that tension to get along with each other and deal with their differences. The plan should include the ways in which the students will educate people about the tension and its impact as well as how they will get people to do what they think is necessary to get along. The groups should present their plans to the class for discussion.

**JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT:** What are the cultural tensions and boundaries that separate you and your community from other in society? What do you think are the key factors that prevent people from dealing with cultural tensions and removing the boundaries that separate us in society? Who is responsible for eliminating cultural tensions? What do they think a community could accomplish if they were able to get along in spite of the cultural tensions and boundaries that separate us in society?

### **A RAISIN IN THE SUN (WEEK 4) LESSON 14 (CREATIVE)**

- **“Looking for Love”--Video Portraits:** Divide the students into small groups and assign each group one of these characters: Beneatha, Asagai, or George Murchision. Tell the students that they are to imagine that their character has decided to seek help finding a date by going to a dating service. Each character needs to make a videotaped self-portrait in which he or she appears and tries to effectively get across who he/she is and what he/she wants out of life and a romantic partner. What would their person’s video tape look like? What would the character say or do on it? What would the character wear? Etc. Allow time for class sharing and discussion.

- **Designing Montages:** Explain to students that an artist may create a montage, a production of a rapid succession of images in a piece of art to illustrate an association of ideas that may or may not be heterogeneous. Remind (may need to replay the video segment of the montage) them of the “montage” sequence that showed Walter in various sites and explain that it was partly about Walter’s particular struggle and partly about the history and struggle of African-Americans more generally.

Tell students that they are going to design a similar montage for themselves. Ask them to make a list of the things that they think are good expressions of who they think they are and how they fit into society.

Ask students to also think what images can accurately illustrate those things on their lists. Have students create the montage by drawing/sketching the images that represent their lists. Students should also include an explanation of how their montage reveals something about who they are, about their own life, and about how they fit into the larger world. Allow students to present and discuss.

**JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT:** Based upon the expression of your possible self that you created in a previous journal assignment, create a montage of your possible self and explain how it reveals something about who you hope to be, about the life that you want, and about how you fit into the larger world.

## A RAISIN IN THE SUN WORKSHEET IV

**I. For each question, circle the best answer OR, if lines are provided, fill in your answer.**

1. Suppose that you were giving Beneatha dating advice. What would you tell her?
2. Of the following statements, which one is TRUE
  - A) George Murchison dates Beneatha because she has so many interesting ideas.
  - B) Beneatha is trying to figure out who she is and what she wants her place in society to be.
  - C) Asagai considers Beneatha worldly and sophisticated.
  - D) Beneatha does not worry about her family embarrassing her.
3. Which of the following is NOT in part why Lena decides to buy the house?
  - A) She hopes a more spacious and nicer home will relieve some of the stress in the family.
  - B) She looks forward to being able to pass the home down to Travis someday.
  - C) She wants a home where she can grow some flowers.
  - D) She wants to make a political statement.
4. Why does Lena change her mind and allow Walter to use some of the money?
5. Choose a character and explain what you think would be their perspective about the purpose of education and school. Why do you agree or disagree with this character?
6. Explain what Lena (Mama) meant when she said to Walter "I been doing to you what the rest of the world been doing to you"?
7. Would most of the young people today agree with Walter or George regarding the purpose of school and education? Why or why not?
8. What could Walter say or do to change George's opinion of school or what could George say or do to change Walter's opinion of school? Would either strategy be effective to change the perspective of young people today?

**II. For each question, circle the option (a, b, c, or d) that best completes the blank. OR If the question asks you to write a sentence, do so on the line provided.**

1. On the way home from school, Mr. Jenkins told his son, Adam, that he was not allowed to go to the movies with his friends that evening since it was a school night. Adam gazed out the window and did not say anything. Mr. Jenkins could tell that Adam thought he was being unfair.
  - A) placidly
  - B) painfully
  - C) sullenly
  - D) dramatically
2. Use the word "mimic" in a sentence
3. John was led to believe that he was in some way more superior to everybody else which made him incredibly \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A) nice

- B) considerate
- C) arrogant
- D) helpful

4. "I am the king of the world!" James Cameron proclaimed with great "I've made lots of money with my movie 'Titanic' and I won a whole bunch of awards."

- A) jubilation
- B) humility
- C) kindness
- D) concern

5. Use the word "dumbfounded" in a sentence

6. My mother is strictly observant of rituals so we always \_\_\_\_\_ celebrated every event with a lot of fanfare

- A) casually
- B) carelessly
- C) ceremoniously
- D) sloppily

7. In the book Makin It, a 22 year old from the Bronx said "I don't want to stop trying to get where I'm going. I don't want to stop trying to do what I want to do. I want to get there." He is \_\_\_\_\_ pursuing his goals.

- A) intently
- B) carelessly
- C) happily
- D) sadly

8. Use the word "fraternal" in a sentence

9. Dennis Rodman is very \_\_\_\_\_ because he intentionally displays odd or unusual behavior.

- A) eccentric
- B) ordinary
- C) influential
- D) boring

10. Use the word "oppressive" in a sentence

11. When I have too much work to do and very little time, I feel like I've jumped into the ocean and am \_\_\_\_\_ under water.

- A) submerged
- B) playing
- C) swimming
- D) at rest

12. Use the word "culture" in a sentence

13. President Bush demonstrated that he is \_\_\_\_\_ in world events by exercising the most influence and control in the Iraqi war.

- A) quiet

- B) dominant
- C) weak
- D) peaceful

14. When someone gives a long speech that prevents others from talking, it is really a \_\_\_\_\_ rather than a dialogue

- A) monologue
- B) chat
- C) conversation
- D) debate

15. Use the word “heritage” in a sentence

16. Having to be stripped search by strangers is an act of \_\_\_\_\_.

- A) humiliation
- B) kindness
- C) consideration
- D) appreciation

17. When you buy something from a street vendor, it is wise to \_\_\_\_\_ the item before giving your money to the vendor to make sure that it is in perfect condition and won't need to be returned.

- A) ignore
- B) scrutinize
- C) overlook
- D) disregard

18. Use the word “cliché” in a sentence

19. To show their sympathy to the family, many people gathered at the funeral of Ossie Davis and \_\_\_\_\_ stood in silence to mourn his death

- A) plaintively
- B) happily
- C) excitedly
- D) loudly

20. Use the word “menacingly” in a sentence

21. I was \_\_\_\_\_ about using my ipod on the train because while I wanted to listen to my music, I didn't want it to get stolen.

- A) happy
- B) tentative
- C) confident
- D) excited

22. If necessary, I will protest and go to jail to \_\_\_\_\_ the government to help stop the killing of innocent people in the Sudan

- A) ask
- B) implore
- C) convince

D) argue

23. Use the word “abruptly” in a sentence

24. When Charles Jefferson of the Everyone Has A Song organization says that hip hop is a common thing for youth because it is how they express themselves. He \_\_\_\_\_ believes that hip hop is an effective way to communicate with the youth

- A) presumably
- B) unfortunately
- C) strangely
- D) unlikely

25. Use the word “implication” in a sentence

26. Gran Puba is \_\_\_\_\_ when he says “You ain’t gon’ lay around my house all day, doin’ nothin’ Playin’ Playstation, deuce deuce and hide ya bluntin’ Better get cha’ butt up, get a job or do something”

- A) scared
- B) joking
- C) emphatic
- D) happy

27. “If the game shakes me or breaks me. I hope it makes me a better man. Take a better stand...And live the phrase Sky’s The Limit.” In these lyrics, Notorious BIG seems \_\_\_\_\_ by the challenges of life.

- A) confused
- B) undaunted
- C) crazed
- D) elated

28. “I think a lot of young people don’t realize that when they go into the mainstream they have to start at the bottom. They get frustrated because they aren’t where they want to be. But that’s what it’s all about. You have to start at the bottom.” This person believes that youth are \_\_\_\_\_ about what to expect when they first enter the world of work.

- A) nonplussed
- B) excited
- C) sad
- D) knowledgeable

## A Raisin in the Sun (Week 5): Lesson 15 (Analytical)

### GENERAL DISCUSSION OF THE READING

- For the second week, the class should get through pps. 110 – 151 of in-class reading. Students should continue with the characters that they were assigned during week one.
- Discuss and analyze the reading. Again, exact content will vary, depending on how far the students have read at this point and what their particular interests and problems are. (You may have to “save” some of the issues and passages mentioned in this lesson for discussion the following day). Try to cover the ideas and issues that are addressed on the comprehension assessment.

1. Elicit personal reactions. Did anything that happened surprise them? Could they relate personally to any of the events that took place or any of the emotions that the characters experienced? Were there parts of the play that confused them or that they just couldn't follow?
2. Ask students: Other than the themes that were identified in the first lesson, are there new themes emerging in the play. Have any of the themes identified in the first lesson become more or less clear? How so?
3. You should add characteristics to the class Character Chart as you discuss the play. Get the students to tell you what more they have learned about the characters from the reading. Has their opinion of any of the characters changed? Do they feel like they have gained any new insights into the characters?
4. Select a few key “moments” in the play, read these passages out loud as a class, and then dissect them for what they reveal about character or the setting. Or, alternatively, split the class into groups and give each group responsibility for explaining to the rest of the class what one of the key passages reveals about the characters involved. Here are some key passages (the general interpretations offered in parentheses are meant to be suggestive rather than definitive; students are, of course, entitled to interpret the material themselves):
  - a. Pages 116-119: Mr. Lindner visits to persuade the family to not move to Clybourne Park by offering to buy the house from them. What are your reactions to this?
  - b. Page 133: In her discussion with Asagai, Beneatha says “...You still think you can patch up the world. Cure the Great Sore of Colonialism – (*Loftily, mocking it*) with the Penicillin of Independence–!” What does she mean by this? Based on their experiences and your own, what do you think causes Asagai and Beneatha to have such different views on this matter?
  - c. Page 134: Asagai seems to think Beneatha is copping out when she says “Asagai, while I was sleeping in that bed in there, people went out and took the future right out of my hands? And nobody asked me, nobody consulted me – they just went out and changed my life!” Why would Asagai see Beneatha's reaction as a cop out? Do you agree with what Beneatha is saying – why/why not?
  - d. Page 151: Lena (Mama) says “He finally come into his manhood today, didn't he? Kind of like a rainbow after the rain.” What does she mean by this statement? Would you agree with her – why/why not?

**JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT:** Chart your character. Write your reactions and/or questions regarding what we've read. Answer the following questions:

1. Beneatha suffers from a crisis of hope. She momentarily feels that nothing is really enough--no action of hers would really get to the heart of the troubles suffered by

humankind. Have you ever experienced set-backs in achieving your goals and felt that you could not go on?

- a. Describe the experience
  - b. What conditions contributed to the set-backs and your feelings of hopelessness?
  - c. What did you do in the situation?
  - d. What were the drawbacks of giving in to your hopelessness?
  - e. What are some things that would have helped you when you felt hopeless in the situation?
2. Describe a “hopeless” or nearly “hopeless” situation that you’ve recently experienced. Find one positive thing in that scenario and discuss how you can use it to turn things around for yourself.

### **A Raisin in the Sun (Week 5): Lesson 16 (Practical)**

#### **PRACTICAL EXERCISE: DEALING WITH CRISES OF TRUST AND HOPE**

• In this last section of the screenplay, the characters go through a number of different crises. This discussion exercise focuses on crises of trust and hope and encourages the students to relate their own personal experiences to those of the characters.

• **Discussing Trust:** Walter learns that his supposed friend, Willy, has deceived him and run off with the Younger family money. Encourage the students to discuss the following practical questions about trust: Whom do you trust in your own life and why? Have you ever betrayed anyone’s trust? Has anyone you trusted ever turned out to be untrustworthy? How can a person know whom to trust? How do you regain trust once it has been lost? Can this always be done? Should Walter have been able to tell that Willy was not trustworthy? How can Walter avoid trusting the wrong person in the future?

• **Changing people’s minds and hearts:**

During his first attempt to purchase the Younger home, Lindner says, “You just can’t force people to change their hearts.” Have the students debate whether this statement is true. You may have to bring up specific issues. Talk about how people experience fear or discomfort when they encounter unknown or unfamiliar people or ideas--whether this difference is due to age, sex, race, family structure, physical difference, or whatever. Have you ever known people who won’t accept someone because they are different in some way? Could you change this person’s mind? If so, how? If not, how do you deal with this if it happens to you or in your community?

• **Advice for Walter:** After Walter realizes that the money is gone, he spends time alone in his bedroom, mourning his loss and trying to figure out what to do next. Suppose that, instead of remaining alone, Walter gathered around him a circle of advisors: a minister, a private investigator, a teacher, and a lawyer. Have the students (either the class as a whole or in small groups) consider the following questions: What do you think the different advisors would have suggested that Walter do? Are there any strategies or solutions that Walter hasn’t considered that might be of help to him? If you do this as a group exercise, you could have each group represent one of the advisors (create more if necessary). Each group could then write up and present to the rest of the class their official recommendation for Walter during this time of trouble.

• **Pragmatism/Practicality vs. Principle:** In this last third of the screenplay, Walter also wrestles with whether to do what might be, practically speaking, the most useful thing--selling the house to recover the family money--or whether to stick to his principles and not give in to an offer that is motivated by racism. Ask the students what impact each decision would have on Walter’s

future, or on Travis' future. Suppose that Walter finds out that Willy Harris is living in a nearby state and considers paying him a visit. What would be the pragmatic/practical or principled thing for Walter to do? How would you advise him?

**JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT:** Answer the following questions: Describe a time when you wrestled with “a moral dilemma.”

1. What did you decide to do?
2. How did you feel after making your decision?
3. Was your decision a pragmatic/practical or principled choice?
4. What were the benefits and drawbacks of your decision?
5. Which strategy (Pragmatism/Practicality vs. Principle) do you think is best for dealing with these situations?

### **A Raisin in the Sun (Week 5): Lesson 17 (Creative)**

**CREATIVE EXERCISE:**

- **Talking Back:** Divide the class into groups, assign each group a character (Beneatha, Walter, Lena, or Asagai), and give the students the following instructions: Suppose that your character infiltrated a meeting of the Clybourne Park Home Improvement Association and gave a short speech. What would he/she say? After the groups have had time to compose their speeches, reassemble the class, present the speeches, and discuss. How might the Association respond to the speeches?

- **Life Stories Ten Years in the Future:** Divide the students into groups and assign each group a character (Walter, Beneatha, Lena, Asagai, Ruth, and Travis). Tell the groups that their task is to project into the future and create the character's life story during the intervening years. What happened to the character, and what did he/she do, during the ten years after the events in the screenplay take place? What would the character now think about everything that happened in the story? Again, share and discuss.

- **View remainder of the 1961 film version of the play** – Discuss with students the similarities and differences that you noticed between the play and movie versions of the story. Ask which format had a bigger impact on them and why?; and if they had to select either format through which to tell their life story, which would they select and why? Discuss specific film moments: for example, #15 & #16 Return Home From Store/My First Day Home & George – Opinions about the role of education. (Why was hair scene excluded from the film version); #19 Kitty Kat Club – Mamma turns over the reins to Walter; #25 & #26 Tell Them Not To Come & I Made A Call – The takers in society vs. Those who get taken; he who takes the most is the smartest; world handed to me as it; “my children suppose to be my beginning again, my harvest”; “measure them right//take into account the hills and valleys he has come through”. Is the only conflict in the scene the issue of “selling out”?

Ask students how a contemporary movie about the issues presented in the film would be different from this version.

**JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT:** Write your reactions and/or questions regarding what we've read. Chart your character by having your character write a letter to Hansberry that explains to the author whether she got the story (from your character's perspective) right. In a letter (from your own perspective) to Hansberry, answer the following questions:

1. Did the story of the Younger family help you to understand different themes that Hansberry wanted to address?
2. Explain whether the Younger family would face the same issues in today's society?
3. How does the story of the Younger family relate to your own story?
4. Which character is most like you? How so?
5. Is your story likely to end like the story of the Younger family? Why/Why not?
6. What would you do to change the end of the story? Why would you make this change?

## A RAISIN IN THE SUN WORKSHEET V

**I. For each question, circle the best answer OR, if lines are provided, fill in your answer.**

1. Which of the following is most likely NOT an option for the Youngers?
  - A) They could re-sell their house to the Association.
  - B) They could work hard to pay off their house and deal with the neighbors as best they can.
  - C) They could try to sell the house to someone not associated with the Clybourne Park Home Improvement Association.
  - D) They could get additional money from the insurance company.
  
2. At one point, Lena loses her temper at Walter and starts hitting him. What advice would you give Lena to help her avoid physically acting on her anger in the future?
  
3. Suppose you were a reporter doing an article on the Younger family's experience of home ownership and life in Clybourne Park. Which of the following would be the LEAST useful task to do before writing your story?
  - A) You could interview the Youngers.
  - B) You could visit Clybourne Park itself to learn what the neighborhood looks like.
  - C) You could interview New Yorkers about their political views.
  - D) You could interview people already living in Clybourne Park about the neighborhood.
  
4. What could Walter do to try to get his money back from Willy Harris?
  
5. Which of the following is NOT a problem that the Youngers are likely to face in the future?
  - A) Ruth will fail to contribute to the family effort.
  - B) The Youngers will have to work hard to make enough money to cover the payments on the house.
  - C) Some of their neighbors will be unfriendly.
  - D) Walter will continue to experience frustration as he tries to achieve his dreams.
  
6. How can you tell whether or not to trust somebody with your money?
  
7. The following "time line" describes the order of certain events in the last third of the play. The Youngers give Lena gifts.---> Karl Lindner visits the Youngers for the first time.---> \_\_\_\_\_ ---> Lena loses control and explodes in anger at Walter.---> Asagai visits the Younger apartment.---> Karl Lindner visits the Youngers for the second time. Which of the following events belongs in the blank above?
  - A) George Murchison gives Walter a ride to The Green Hat.
  - B) Bobo gives Walter the bad news about the money.
  - C) Lena decides to return to work at Mrs. Holiday's.
  - D) The neighbors stare hostilely at the Youngers.
  
8. Why did Mr. Lindner talk so much about the importance of understanding and communication when he first visited the Younger apartment?
  
9. Which of the following statements is FALSE?
  - A) Walter disobeyed Lena's instructions concerning the money.
  - B) Bobo did not invest as much of his own money in the liquor store as he was supposed to.

- C) Lena does not want young Travis to hear Walter Lee’s conversation with Mr. Lindner.  
 D) When the money is gone, Beneatha believes that Lena, not Walter, made the truly “crazy” decision.
10. Asagai tells Beneatha that Lena tried to do “a great thing” by giving Walter control over the money. Why, in Asagai’s opinion, was this a “great” deed?
11. Which of the following BEST describes why Beneatha has momentary doubts about wanting to be a doctor?  
 A) She thinks she might be able to contribute more to society by being a lawyer and bringing the likes of Willy Harris to justice.  
 B) She doubts her ability to do all the hard work necessary to become a doctor.  
 C) She is not sure that a woman should really be a doctor.  
 D) She questions whether fixing people’s bodies is enough when their souls and morals are still ailing.
12. Why doesn’t Lena want Walter to sell the house back to the Clybourne Park Improvement Association?
13. Think of a time when you, like Bobo, had to tell someone something you knew they were not going to want to hear. How did you feel inside when you delivered the “bad news”?
14. Suppose one of the neighbors in Clybourne Park tells Lena that she is not wanted there. How do you imagine that Lena would respond?
15. While Asagai spoke with Beneatha about the family’s financial loss and her response to it, Walter listened from the other room. But the two men never spoke directly. What do you suppose Asagai might have said to Walter if the two men had talked?
16. Imagine that Karl Linder is driving home after hearing the Youngers’ refusal to sell the house to the Association. What thoughts might be going through his head?
17. Beneatha wanted to be a doctor because she believed that she could help society by curing people. If you could do anything, what would you like your contribution to society to be and why?
18. At the end of the play, Ruth, Beneatha, and Walter give Lena a few moments alone in the apartment before she leaves the place forever. What thoughts might be going through Lena’s head as she gazes at her old home for the last time?
19. Compare and contrast the movie and play versions of the text. Which do you think did a more effective job of telling the story of the Younger family? Why?
20. What do you think it means to have someone else tell your story?

**II. For each question, circle the option (a, b, c, or d) that best completes the blank. OR If the question asks you to write a sentence, do so on the line provided.**

1. The doorbell rang and Inez went to answer it. A woman from the neighborhood stood at the door, smiled, and said “Welcome to the neighborhood.” The woman handed Inez a gift basket of fruit and flowers.  
 A) vaguely

- B) amiably
- C) fiercely
- D) ominously

2. Colin's \_\_\_\_\_ was unmistakable. He ran around the house yelling excitedly, with a grin on his face and his arms raised in triumph.

- A) exuberance
- B) disappointment
- C) reserve
- D) shyness

3. Use the word "raucous" in a sentence

4. Music, videos, and movies that are sexually explicit have been described as examples of the type of \_\_\_\_\_ that corrupts the morals of young people

- A) raunchiness
- B) decent lesson
- C) goodness
- D) righteousness

5. Some musicians engage in the type of \_\_\_\_\_ that causes social unrest because they call attention to the problems that communities experience and politicians ignore

- A) harmony
- B) agitation
- C) peacefulness
- D) silence

6. Some of the subway performers are excellent \_\_\_\_\_ because they can clearly communicate without speaking by using their gestures and facial expressions

- A) talkers
- B) debaters
- C) pantomimes
- D) painters

7. Use the word "oblivious" in a sentence

8. Linda was very \_\_\_\_\_ with her playful and humorous remarks. Sometimes I wasn't sure when she was serious and when she was joking

- A) facetiousness
- B) rude
- C) mournful
- D) insulting

9. Use the word "elaborate" in a sentence

10. Young people do not like to wear their clothes in a \_\_\_\_\_ manner. Often their pants and shirts are slack and baggy

- A) loose
- B) taut
- C) oversized

D) colorful

11. Use the word “absurdly” in a sentence

12. A group of young Black and Latino boys walking down the street at night can seem very \_\_\_\_\_ to some people who start to walk faster or quickly look to cross the street

- A) ominous
- B) safe
- C) playful
- D) normal

13. Use the word “colonialism” in a sentence

14. Martin Luther King Jr. Was a \_\_\_\_\_ because he made great sacrifices in order to further cause of the Civil Rights Movement.

- A) martyr
- B) teacher
- C) politician
- D) leader

15. Mark’s comments to me were very \_\_\_\_\_ and I didn’t appreciate the casualness of his disrespect.

- A) considerate
- B) flippant
- C) thoughtful
- D) respectful

16. Use the word “precariously” in a sentence

**Vocabulary List:** Maintain a vocabulary list in the classroom. Below is a list of words drawn from the reading. They constitute a sampling of words that the students may find challenging or unfamiliar. This vocabulary list is meant to be suggestive rather than definitive. Students should be encouraged to add words to the list (Ask: “What other words might a reader find difficult to understand”). As the words are encountered during the class readings, students, in small groups, should be assigned several words to define and then report back to the class. If some words that are part of actors’ instructions do come up, you might want to consider getting a student to volunteer to “act out” the direction, in a way that shows the meaning of the word. Students might enjoy this, and it seems like such an exercise might reinforce the meaning of these words.

deferred (poem)	vengeance (64)	mimic (83)
fester (poem)	recitation (64)	indifference (84)
syrupy (poem)	sympathy (64)	humiliation (84)
accommodate (23)	insinuatingly (66)	plaintively (86)
irritably (40)	commence (66)	retardation (87)
exasperated (41)	headdress (66)	menacingly (90)
anxious (44)	squinches (66)	revelation (91)
devilment (48)	radiant (68)	jubilance (92)
experiment (49)	distractedly (69)	tentatively (92)
snobbish (49)	impatiently (70)	imploring (92)
immoral (51)	defensively (70)	abruptly (92)
stubborn (51)	frustration (70)	hostility (92)
disturbed (51)	civil (71)	idiotically (93)
triumphant (51)	beseechingly (73)	sullen (94)
profound (52)	restless (73)	measuredly (94)
tyrant (52)	immense (74)	presumably (96)
inappropriately (54)	passion (74)	implication (100)
disappointed (54)	lynching (74)	emphatic (100)
bastion (55)	fascination (76)	undaunted (101)
bureau (55)	promenades (76)	nonplussed (103)
recognition (56)	arrogant (76)	decisive (107)
vigorously (56)	flourish (76)	hysterical (109)
ignorant (57)	phonograph (76)	exuberance (112)
indignantly (57)	ceremoniously (76)	raunchiness (112)
missionary (57)	dumbfounded (77)	agitation (113)
heathenism (57)	distaste (77)	pantomimes (113)
forlornly (57)	intently (78)	oblivious (113)
dejection (57)	descendant (78)	amiably (114)
dispiritedly (57)	chauffeur (79)	facetiousness (120)
wearily (58)	subtly (79)	elaborate (123)
commotion (58)	fraternal (79)	absurdly (124)
exaggerated (59)	eccentric (80)	taut (126)
suppress (59)	oppressive (81)	ominous (131)
profoundly (60)	submerge (81)	colonialism (133)
sophisticate (61)	culture (81)	martyr (135)
deliberately (61)	dominant (81)	flippancy (137)
exclamation (61)	monologue (81)	precariously (149)
admiration (61)	heritage (81)	exasperation (150)
imitates (62)	primly (82)	raucously (151)
quizzical (62)	cliché (82)	
assimilationism (63)	scrutinizing (83)	
incredulity (63)	irritable (83)	

**APPENDIX: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

1. What things in your life had the biggest affect on your school experiences? Explain how these things affected your school experiences
2. What things do you think had the biggest affect on you being here? Did school play a role? How?
3. What was school like for you?
4. Before you came here, what did you want to accomplish with school?
5. Were you able to accomplish any of the things that you wanted to accomplish with school? Why/Why not?
6. What do you think was your greatest accomplishment with school?
7. What are some of the messages that you got about school from your family, teachers, friends, community, society?
8. Do you know people who have gone all the way in school (i.e. college)? What have you learned from their experiences?
9. What do you think the point of going to school is?
10. What do you think it means to be educated?
11. Do you think school is the only place to be educated? If not, how else can someone be educated?
12. What makes you think that school is/is not the only place to be educated?
13. Is school the best place to be educated? If not, why?
14. Do you know people who did not do well in school but who you think are educated?
15. What makes you think these people are educated? How did they get educated without doing well in school?
16. What is the value of school to you?
17. How has school helped or not helped you to get an education?
18. What most motivates you to go to school, attend classes, and do the work?
19. What does not motivate you to go to school, attend classes, and do the work?
20. At this point, what do you want to accomplish with school?
21. What would this accomplishment mean in your life?
22. Do you think being locked up will mess up your life?
23. What do you want to accomplish while you are at Riker's Island?
24. Do you think you will accomplish this goal?

25. What help do you need to accomplish this goal?
26. What would you tell teachers and principals to do to improve school for students in your situation?
27. What do you hope for? What will keep you from getting it? What will help you get there?

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