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Racking Up Cultural Capital and Eliminating Labels: The Culture of Teaching and Learning in the Juvenile Justice System

Sarah Clarke Staples-Farmer

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, robxwmn@gmail.com

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RACKING UP CULTURAL CAPITAL AND ELIMINATING LABELS:
THE CULTURE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE
SYSTEM

by

Sarah Clarke Staples-Farmer

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Doctorate of Philosophy

Major: Educational Studies

Under the Supervision of Professor Loukia K. Sarroub

Lincoln, Nebraska

May, 2014

RACKING UP CULTURAL CAPITAL AND ELIMINATING LABELS:
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SYSTEM

Sarah C. Staples-Farmer, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 2014

Advisor: Loukia K. Sarroub

How do we educate the student who is “bad ass” or “delinquent”--the youth who finds himself locked up with every aspect of his daily life now controlled? By law, every child, no matter his/her status, must attend school and be provided an education. Thus, education typically makes a point of ensuring accommodations are provided for each student. Yet, what accommodations are made and what attention is given to youth who have broken the law, repeatedly run away, been truant, or removed from their homes due to adverse circumstances? Addressing the particular needs of these youth is both a mystery and challenge, especially given the often negative educational history they carry as baggage paired with the labels and tags assigned to them: “lazy,” “trouble-maker,” and “ungovernable.” Labeling theories suggest that within social settings and institutions, “deviant” labels construct youth identity thus impacting educational success. Low literacy rates among youth go hand-in-hand with stigmatization of youth, low academic performance, and subsequent delinquent behavior. Using the tactics of ethnography, this study explores the culture of teaching and learning in the detention setting as well as student (in)ability to negotiate the dual status as student/offender.

The paramount purpose of this ethnographic study is one of advocacy by 1) sharing the culture of learning and literacy development in a detention center/alternative school with the intent to contribute to existing research and create/improve curriculum, instruction and the literacy comprehensive education of adjudicated youth; and 2) correcting misperceptions about these youth and their educators and potentially explain how labeling (Rist, 2011/1997) impacts student behavior/academic performance in hopes of reassessing current policy and practice to incite positive reform. The long-term goal/purpose involves developing teacher education programs to include dialogue and/or training in detention education as well as creating pertinent professional development curriculum for educators already working with this population of students.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated first to my husband--my partner in education, my teammate-- whose passion for serving court-affiliated youth and the educators who teach them is unparalleled. His guidance and support has been an inspiration, fueling my own dedication to area of juvenile justice education research.

This dissertation is also dedicated to my father, Clarke Hawthorne Staples, who passed away February 28, 2010, during the infant stages of my doctoral program. A life-long learner, world traveler, and educator in his own right, he inspired his daughters to pursue their dreams.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout this journey, many individuals have made my research possible, informing my position, guiding my progress, and pushing me towards the uncomfortable work that must be done to complete this study. Often, roadblocks impeded this progress, but those around me provided the necessary advice, support, and opportunity for valuable discourse that renewed my brain and reinvigorated my desire to share the world of teaching and learning in a juvenile detention facility.

My doctoral advisor, Dr. Loukia K. Sarroub has been my constant guide, mentor, and colleague. Through multiple courses with her, more IRB revisions than I can count, one termination, and other mini-hurdles, Dr. Sarroub's advice helped me navigate the nuances of doctoral study and research. Given her background as an experienced ethnographer and researcher of literacy and immigrant youth, she has been a perfect mentor as I approached a similar focus within the walls of a detention center. Through five years of work, her brutal honesty, gentle nudging, as well as her compassion, have deeply influenced how I view the world, educational research, my own contribution to the advancement of educational instruction and practice.

In addition, a special thanks extends to my committee: Dr. Robert Brooke, Dr. Ted Hamann, and Dr. Karl Hostetler, who this past year agreed to replace Dr. Margaret Latta (also thank-you worthy) upon her leave. All have been gracious advisors and thought-provoking professors as I have been a student in their respective courses. I have on many occasions felt fortunate to have such helpful, flexible, and brilliant individuals to read and consider my comprehensive exams, my dissertation proposal, and now the final product.

The administrators, teachers, and security staff in each facility, Wayne, Clarke, and Erbine, of course have been more than instrumental in the gathering of data and weaving of this narrative. Their gracious acceptance of a stranger into their protected world filled with confidentiality and security only revealed a greater desire for someone to share their story, to shed light on their struggles and successes, and mostly, to *see* their students for who they are and what they can be. Special thanks go to Clarke's lead teacher and supervisor Rodney, English teacher Ms. Black, as well as Erbine's lead teacher/supervisor Wyatt. These individuals were my main informants and guides through the process; without their patience and assistance, much of this research would have been not been possible.

Lastly, the students themselves deserve a resounding thank you. Many shared stories of home, of gang involvement, of worries about the future and what it would bring, of abuse, neglect, poverty, and academic failure. Through their poetry, artwork, personal narratives, and classroom conversations, they provided a comprehensive view of their reality, teaching me that despite their predicament, they still have dreams, hope, and want to learn.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Reality and Dilemma of Juvenile Justice Education	1
---	---

Chapter 2:

Countering Labels With Increased Cultural Capital	55
---	----

Chapter 3:

Schools Behind Barbed Wire: Clarke, Erbine, and Wayne	83
---	----

Chapter 4:

Power Play: Security Versus Education	131
---	-----

Chapter 5:

Administrative and Teacher Ethos	151
--	-----

Chapter 6:

The Future of Juvenile Justice Education: Roadblocks, Research, & Conclusions	246
--	-----

Appendix A:

Data Collection and Methodology	282
---------------------------------------	-----

Appendix B:

Student Survey Questions	
Teacher and Administrator Interview Questions.....	303

Appendix C:

Detention and Staff Secure Vocabulary	309
---	-----

Appendix D:

The Cast	313
----------------	-----

References	314
------------------	-----

Figures

Figure 5.1: Student poetry using metaphors	191
--	-----

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

THE REALITY AND DILEMMA OF JUVENILE JUSTICE EDUCATION

Ms. Black, English Teacher:

6:49 a.m. I trudge into the building dreading the inevitable drama. Bumping through the herd of guards amassed at the door, I exchange mindless greetings with people I only know by face. I've been passing them at this time in the morning for nearly 8 years. I still don't know their names. This is not a socially proactive environment. Muscle memory directs my finger to hit the button for the elevator—there's no turning back now.

I work in a jail. It is a cesspool of incompetence and immorality—from the apex of administration to the baby raper in isolation. The tired beige walls of the long hallways swallow me as I descend, but they cannot neutralize the eerie glow of the outside lights that reflect off the razor wire and through the hall windows. It's like walking into the abyss.

7:05 a.m. The education department is lively—as lively as a department composed of public school cast outs and educational has-beens can be. I fit in both categories. Errant cackles of over-excited grandmotherly teachers echo violently against the bare concrete walls. The women, dressed in double-knit, elastic-waisted pants and various Granny sweaters and sweatshirts, share ailments, grandkid stories, and snarky comments about administrative

ineffectiveness. Sarcasm reigns. As I enter my classroom, I dart straight for my radio. Nothing like Louis Armstrong's "What a Wonderful World" to drown out the loud voices of minutiae. The irony makes me chuckle. There won't be another smile for eight hours.

I sharpen and count pencils as part of my morning ritual. Counting my stubby number two pencils is almost comical, but every pencil has to be accounted for at any moment for fear that a "student" may use one as a weapon. I've seen a kid's eye punctured by a pencil. It was not pleasant. Count my pencils I must.

Ms. Black, English teacher at Clarke County Youth Center for eight years, shares in this vignette the course of her day, illustrating the themes and patterns uncovered in the fieldwork during the span of this dissertation study. While her recount can be criticized as melodramatic or unrealistic, presented here is indeed her "reality" and thus one that is credible, authentic, and true to her daily experiences as a teacher in a detention center school. Through Ms. Black's voice and the voices of others' the world behind the razor wire topped fences comes front and center stage as the subject of this ethnography.

Despite her plethora of teaching experiences--having served in the peace corps, working in Morocco as a health educator and with the regional high school English classes, head of English department at the Egyptian American International School in Cairo, and a middle school English and social studies in the U.S., she is also a small town native of the state. And, despite the "cesspool" where "sarcasm reigns," Ms. Black returns each day.

8 a.m. Unit 5. Home Room. My supervisor insists that I tag along with my notoriously apathetic colleague. I'm expected to motivate him to motivate students. He has no desire to conduct his classes like mine, so I sit back and drink cocoa. Young men stumble groggily from their 10 by 6 cells to the weighted tables set up with cold cereal and bread for breakfast. They sit on plastic chairs. I observe, joke with the guard, and monitor my watch.

One-piece, navy blue jumpsuits are the uniforms. Upon arrival into the facility, all personal items are taken from the detainees and placed in storage. They are stripped, searched, and showered. Each detainee is given county- issued underwear, a jumpsuit, a t-shirt, and 1 pair of socks to wear. Guards have discovered contraband in places the average person wouldn't consider appropriate for storage. Cell phones in the soles of shoes. Metal items that could be used like a knife woven through hair braids. Drugs hidden in nearly every orifice. Jumpsuits don't eliminate hiding places, but at least when they enter general population, there's less of a chance that outside items will be a threat. Therefore, I'm okay with the jumpsuit uniform.

Breakfast is cold cereal in disposable bowls with plastic spoons, (Guards must account for spoons because plastic spoons could become weapons.) two pieces of day-old bread, and two cartons of milk.

“Good morning, gentlemen,” barks the guard, a former Marine who recites the same spiel verbatim every morning. “Today is (insert date here). As always at any meal time there is absolutely no trading or giving away of any food items including, but not limited to breads, milks, jellies. No food items whatsoever. Anything you do not eat, you throw away. Do not accept anything from anyone else or you will both be in trouble. We will begin the day with Mr. Greeley followed by Ms. Bailey. We will end the day with Ms. Black.

“Once you have finished your food, you need to raise your hand and wait for me to get you up. You can throw your food away and return to your room and close your door ‘steel to steel.’ For those of you that are new, ‘steel to steel’ is the steel of the door touching the steel of the door frame but not locking. Should it come open any wider than that for any reason, let me repeat that, should it come open any wider than that for any reason, I do not care if there are space aliens in your room, you want to ask me a question, you want to know what time it is, you would like to know my favorite color, ANY REASON, I will EBT (early bed time) you, crack your points and leave you in that room for the better portion of the day to think about it. At this time, do I have any questions?”

The young men hastily gobble their mushy cereal. “Can I clear?” echoes 14 times over because all movement around the room must be allowed by the guard. They

discard garbage and piles of leftovers into the large trash can. The amount of food dumped is shocking.

Individuals charged with first degree murder can be housed with people who are detained for status offenses such as truancy. It's a dog eat dog environment, and sometimes little dogs don't eat. Several years ago, a young man gambled his lunch away playing cards--daily. Then his cellmate would threaten to beat him if he didn't give up his evening meal. All of this occurred behind the scenes and in dark corners unbeknownst to the guard—the same one who now recites the above speech. After nearly a week of this cycle, the young man was so hungry he told the guards and then was reassigned to protective custody as a snitch.—which meant 23 hours a day locked in a cell by himself. So the no sharing of food policy may be wasteful, but it does have purpose. As the guard says, “My only fucking job is to make sure you stay alive and eat two meals from 7 to 3...”

My 30 minutes are up. That's another mandated unproductive chunk of my time that I can't get back. I push the button to request that the control room staff open the heavy steel door so that I may exit. I push another button immediately to request the second set of sliding doors open. It takes two people and nearly five minutes just to leave the room.

Nebraska Jail Standards requires educational opportunities for adjudicated and detained youth. The nature of the facility also falls under the umbrella of the Nebraska Department of Education's Interim Schools. Certified teachers and approved curriculum are mandated. Motivation is not. Despite best intentions and the captive audience, distractions are everywhere. They miss class because of court appearances, meetings with attorneys, routine medical appointments, visits with approved family members, pertinent phone calls, etc. Most don't know where they'll be sleeping in a month or have been sleeping at friends' houses for a month. However, regardless of their personal situations, I recognize the irrelevance of my teaching materials. What good is the recognition of evil in Lord of the Flies going to do the future resident of the Nebraska State Penitentiary? Is the 17 year old with a second grade reading level going to glean anything useful from mythology? Antigone, The Good Earth, Pygmalion, Death of a Salesman... all included in the approved curriculum. The uselessness slaps me in the face daily, but my complaints are met with indignance. I can't quit. My dogs need their kibble. So I bite my tongue.

8:30 a.m. Unit 8. Lockdown. Current population ... 4. I act as an escort or a body guard. Individuals not trained by the facility cannot be left alone with detainees. Therefore, instead of teaching, I babysit a special education teacher from the public school system for an hour. Another cluster fuck, courtesy of the current administration. I don't blame the teacher. She was assigned here. She's doing

what she's told—regardless of how inefficient and ineffective. The waste of my time is annoying, but I have to bite my tongue. I can't quit because I have dogs to feed.

Individuals in lockdown get out of their cells for one hour a day. No two detainees will ever be out at the same time. Strangely enough they're not excited about getting up at 8:30 A.M. to work on dull academic materials. Most of the time, they refuse. Once upon a time, that would hurt my feelings, and I would feel like a failure. Now I truly don't care. It pains me to feel this way because I was in the U.S. Peace Corps in Africa for two years. I truly believe in humanitarian principles. Apparently, most of these ungrateful little shits can't be bothered to try and improve their lives until after 10 a.m.

Fortunately a 17 year old, in the system for assault and subsequently locked down for fighting within the facility, agrees to work on math in exchange for a handful of candy. He's attempting to earn his GED. Who's going to bribe him with candy then? The special education teacher is at a loss regarding the high school math, so I step in—not because I'm particularly brilliant at math, but because I've been administering the same GED assignments for 8 years. An extemporaneous geometry lesson follows. Vertical angles, alternate interior angles, transversal. I'm having flashbacks from high school. (And I thought I would never use my high school geometry. Mr. Smith would be so proud of me.)

9:30 a.m. Unit 6. *Medium intensity. The first class of the day for English class. Twelve students ranging from 14 to 17 with charges that include anything from drug possession to first-degree murder. The racial make-up includes one Latino boy, one Native child, and the other ten students are Black. My lesson is about metaphors. They lean back in their plastic chairs. My only visual aid is a stained and ratty whiteboard that I prop up with books. "What kind of car would I be?" I ask to get the ball rolling. Station wagon is the consensus. I write it on the board in red marker. "Why?" Be careful what you ask. At six foot tall, I am long like a station wagon. Seating for 7. It's a social vehicle, and I'm around a lot of people every day. (I may joke with them, but they really don't know me very well.) I am built for comfort and function, not for speed or looks. They seem to get the idea. "What kind of animal would Mr. _____ be?" I ask because he's a colleague with a good sense of humor. The answers: Ape. Orangutan. I can't write those on the board. He's a black man, and racial tensions are already high. I should have seen that coming. "Let me specify, what kind of dog would he be?" Mutt, junkyard dog, etc.. Moving along... what would you be? Answers invariably include a blunt, 40 glock pistol-- all things violent and drug-inspired. It's the same thing every time. No imagination.*

Obviously this is a very concentrated demographic, but I can honestly say I don't like most of the kids that show up in my classes. As a whole, they are lazy, rude, undisciplined, whiney, and incorrigible. Once again my Peace Corps philosophy

opposes my reality. I was excited about the idea of working with troubled kids. Over the years, however, the environment has sucked the life out of me. The kids have gotten younger, more immature, and more engulfed in the entitlement attitudes. Years ago I did plays with students. They acted out Romeo and Juliet, and I videotaped it for the rest of the staff to watch. They performed Jesus Christ Superstar—a Rap Opera. We acted out the history of gangs, ancient civilizations. I was wicked with a video camera and movie-making software. Another teacher and I produced a quarterly newsletter highlighting outstanding writing by students. I supplemented lessons with art and music. I used to laugh. I miss my laugh lines. Now I haul my exhausted body and broken spirit to the units and force myself inside. “One hour at a time,” I say aloud. I wish I could quit, but my dogs need sustenance.

10:30 a.m. *Unit 10. Medium intensity unit. Fourteen students, 14-17 years old. Charges include running away from a group home to first degree murder. A psychologist has diagnosed one young man as sociopathic. The population is also predominantly Black excluding two Caucasian kids and three Latino boys. The tension is thick as I walk in. Something is definitely going on beneath the surface. Threats are mumbled back and forth between detainees. They are planning something. “This mug is full of Crip Niggas. We’ll beat his white ass,” said one young man in a mumbled, threatening tone.*

“Let’s leave white asses alone. I have one of those,” I sass, “and let’s focus on metaphors.” The stunned looks on their faces regarding my language and comment slows them down a little, but it’s futile. What’s happening is much bigger than me. A racial comment tossed across the room sets it off.

Three black boys simultaneously attack the white kid while he’s sitting in the plastic chair. There’s not enough room to get in a good punch with three of them crowding him, but he takes a couple in the face before the guard calls for assistance. From behind I grab one of the attackers in a bear hug, and the immediate guard grabs another. The one I grabbed goes face first into the table still in my grip. Seconds later a group of grown men arrive like a pack of hyenas foaming at the mouth to fight. Young men not involved in the fight dash to their cells to keep from getting slammed to the ground. Those still fighting get snatched up, cuffed, and tossed like limp bags of grass seed. I release the hug, but hold him down on the table with my hand on the back of his neck. One of the men come and handcuff him so I can release my hold. Grunts and threats still echo in the room. Splatters of blood and spit cover the floor. Two to the infirmary. Ultimately four to lockdown. A total of three minutes on metaphors.

I head to my room to complete piles of paperwork documenting an assault. I am a perpetual witness, not a teacher.

11:30 a.m. *Lunch. I get an hour for lunch. Shuffling through half-assed assignments I've collected through the morning, I sporadically sip on luke-warm vegetable soup. I used to gather with the rest of the teachers at lunch, but the constant bitching and vetching merely perpetuated my vitriol. Now I sit in my own funk and wade through visual reminders of failure. I do miss the Peace Corps. That population appreciated my efforts. They may not have understood why I didn't write a grant to get computers in a village without electricity, but they were grateful for a community well and latrines at the school. I reminisce sullenly. How far I've fallen.*

12:30 p.m. *Unit 11. Low intensity.¹ 17 students. Mostly first timers and the very young. 12 to 17 years old. They have the luxury of not sleeping in the same room that they defecate in. On this day, students include ten White kids, four Latino students, and three Black kids. Charges include sexual assault, burglary, drug possession, and, of course, truancy. The lesson is on inference and I'm attempting to use a simplified version of The Man in the Iron Mask. Two students are classified "mentally handicapped." One mild-- one moderate. Both are charged in separate cases with first degree sexual assault, which means penetration. I read aloud and assess for understanding. Then I shamelessly bribe them to read by dangling candy as a reward. The choppy, stuttering sentences are discouraging, but at least they try.*

¹ Since this time, Unit 11 has been transformed into "Staff Secure," a separate unit for minimum risks youth who are status offenders.

At what point does the internal motivator kick in? When did I try to do something just to see if I could? It hasn't initiated in them yet. Without candy, I get nothing. I truly believe that self-esteem is not the problem. These kids think every nugget they drop is golden, not the turd that it really is. Poor self-esteem is not an issue. I fuss and gloat over every assignment that gets turned in, every attempt made, knowing that in the real world, the quality of the work is crap. But in here, most won't even try. Self-efficacy is the issue. "Fuck this shit. But gimme some candy!" The current trend for credit recovery is computer education. It's unfortunate. These young people have already disengaged from humanity due to drugs, violence, etc. Propping them up in front of a monitor only further severs any connection. Besides, they can earn credits after 15 hours of clicking through flashing screens. Other recovery programs promote students just for showing up.

As a teacher, I have a problem with the integrity of these systems. The quality of what they turn in to me may be bleak, but they have to produce something—put some effort into something. Demonstrate knowledge of something. The administrator likes the high number of credits that can be hacked out on the computer and touted to his superiors. It's all about the show, not about learning. With my Peace Corps mentality, I see it like building a well that has no water. Or bringing computers to a village without electricity.

1:30 p.m. Unit 7. High intensity. Five students. Mostly gun charges and young men who have been in trouble for most of their lives. Ages 16-17. All involved in gang activity. Most will be graduating to deeper confines of the system upon sentencing or turning 18. By far, this is the toughest class of my day. I attempt a narrative writing assignment. "Tell me about a scar that you have." Mental or physical. They stare blankly at the paper. I feebly attempt to motivate by reading examples and asking questions. Four of the five open up their jumpsuit to show gun shot scars. They will tell their stories with grandeur; but they won't attempt to write. Am I playing into their shtick of glorifying violence?

They don't care about education because they can't see themselves doing anything other than what they're doing. Five years in the future is incomprehensible. Will they be in prison, rehab, back in the neighborhood, in the work force, dead? Their behavior is egregious. One recently sexually assaulted a religious volunteer while she was in the unit. He laughed about it. The others urged him on. If he is willing to dry hump the church lady who brings him donuts, there's no hope for the rest of us.

2:30 p.m. Detainees have to return to their cells for an official head count. I return to my classroom that hasn't had students in it for nearly 2 years—idiot administrator. After unloading my cart of letters to be mailed and of daily assignments turned in, I head to the daily staff meeting in which the administrator

pats himself on the back and preaches. I despise him. Narcissistic, self-promoting hypocrite. “There is no ‘I’ in team, but there is a ‘me.’” We have meetings so he has a captive audience when he wants to hear himself. Some in the audience doze because his talks are irrelevant. Two are texting jokes to each other under the table. Another is folding origami swans to stay awake. One is grading papers. I sit and stare at my bottle of water. I think about my dogs at home. It reminds me to keep my mouth shut. Topic for today was how we are not completing irrelevant paperwork efficiently. His cure for this problem—an additional form to complete—daily—regarding every child in the building. Three-thirty can’t come soon enough.

At home, my dissatisfaction festers. I’m exhausted, but I find myself stalling at bedtime because the sooner I fall asleep, the sooner I have to go back there. Sleep deprivation is starting to wreak havoc with my mind. I’m tired. Cranky. The people that I lived with in Africa wouldn’t recognize me now in my brooding, angry state. I am ashamed at how far I have dropped, but my spirit is beaten. Damn the cost of dog food.

Dramatic. Poignant. Unreal: words that may come to mind while reading this opening vignette written by Ms. Black, which forefronts the overarching question as to what is the best way to rehabilitate/educate youth in the juvenile justice system as well as equip professionals with knowledge, materials, and inspiration? Given the ever-presence

of security and its impact on the daily runnings of the school; apathy and/or frustration among fellow teachers; administrative--teacher tensions; student apathy and/or resistance stemming from external distractions; and lastly, the hard structural characteristics of a prison environment and its impact on teaching, learning, and daily culture--finding a meaningful and successful approach to educating this population of students under such extreme circumstances is seemingly unsurmountable. These observations and questions emerged throughout 18 months in differing detention school settings. What Ms. Black shares here is certainly a powerful perspective of the struggles and concerns of one teacher; while her sentiments may be prevalent and existent in the nation, hers is not the only perspective as educators in other observed facilities speak more positively or with greater hope in the circumstances under which they work. Perhaps Ms. Black was simply having a rough day--or a series of them. Nevertheless, her story is her reality and an authentic one, presenting the discrepancy regarding teaching experiences, bringing to light one final theme: consistency of practice--how to make curriculum, structure, daily routine, security, and all that is wrapped around the idea of the juvenile justice education consistent and standard enough to create a sense of peace, professionalism, and trust among school staff while simultaneously allowing the flexibility and adaptability needed in serving such a diverse population of youth.

A juvenile detention facility could be intimidating to many, given the extreme fencing, cold cement brick exterior, and the knowledge that some youth who are inside have committed violent crimes. Or, the idea could spark curiosity as we consider what events and circumstances in a young person's life led him or her to the point of

incarceration. But, for me, as an fellow educator, the detention center, specifically the school within, is the place of research to see how students, despite such a cold place of bland beige cement block walls and equally bland tiled floors, can find inspiration to attend school and learn. For three years I have visited and observed schools within three facilities in a mid-western state, noting teaching strategies and techniques, the impact and omnipresence of security, and most importantly, the behaviors, attitudes, and abilities of the students. Similarities and differences existed among these facilities, yet all took a student-centered approach determining what their specific student populations needed. The dilemma was finding consistent curriculum that worked within the transient nature of the juvenile justice system as well as finding the best way to inspire youth to attend school and learn when they were burdened with so many other social and emotional struggles. For this study, I have narrowed the focus to explore and examine the learning culture within two facilities--Clarke County and Erbine Youth Centers--and subsequently, to determine what we mainstream educators can learn from those who work with the most challenging student population in education.

The goal in juvenile system is to “rehabilitate the juvenile and prevent future delinquent acts” (Marshall et al., 2009, p. 4), yet my own observed return rate was high, seeing students “roll-up” and leave or return due to a repeated infraction; due to recognizing students during the time I conducted research, I found myself repeating the same phrase as other educators in the facility, “He’s back,” or “I wonder what she did this time.” While no national recidivism rate exists (Snyder and Sickmund, 2006), state-wide numbers are quite high. Youth with no prior court referrals experience a recidivism rate of

40%; for those who have prior court referrals, the number jumps to 60% (Snyder and Sickmund, 2006, p. 235). In informal interviews with administration and teachers, stories of youth returning multiple times, even as high as 15 or 20 times throughout their adolescence astounded me. Therefore, the essential question as to how to effectively rehabilitate youth while incarcerated or on probation hangs like a nagging nuisance for all professionals in the juvenile justice system. Certainly, social factors like poverty, neglect and abuse, racial tensions, gang presence, and substance abuse influence the ability of youth to successfully make the transition to social life in and out of schools after their release, and if those issues are not addressed, youth fall return to the negative environments and influences from which they came. Moreover, when they return to school in detention, they can be more damaged than the last time, less interested in academic potentials, and more implicated in the negative social structures that led to their delinquency. Thus, recidivism rates continue to be high, rehabilitation has not been successful, and youth--and their families--are not receiving the comprehensive services they may need.

Research questions revolve around the daily runnings of a youth detention facility and how teachers and students navigate the continual presence of security and procedure. First, how do educators and administrators approach the daily function of the school and select/incorporate various curricula and programs to meet the educational needs of such diverse broad spectrum learners? Second, how do students approach learning in a such a setting, considering the heaviness of their situation and the uncertainty of their future? Third, what happens to youth upon their release and how does the culture of education

within secured facilities address and work to revise negative attitudes towards learning to increase percentages of permanent reintegration back to students' home communities? What resources do they have with regard to credits earned, support services, counseling, and other transitional programming to aid in their re-entry? Lastly, what do educators need in connection to training, professional support, and instructional materials to comprehensively approach learning in this environment where security is primary, dictating school procedure and curricular offerings?

The Author: How I Came to This Study

As a veteran educator, I have observed youth in a variety of settings--from a private boarding school for disadvantaged youth, some of whom were a mis-step away from incarceration, to a rural public school in a corn field, and finally to a larger suburban school serving a spectrum of learners--but the one I find most intriguing is that within a detention center. My initial introduction to this population of students was filled with hesitation and fear, both of which quickly dissipated, re-emerging quite sparingly. In detention centers, I have found students who may fit the stereotype of deviant, but who also crave opportunity and attention, structure and safety. I have found students who fit along the entire spectrum of "deviant" but who still have hope in their future and goals they want to achieve--legitimate goals. They want to learn but may lack strategies or confidence, masking their fear of learning with over the top posing and "I don't care!" posturing, blaming the ghetto or group home environments for their inability to trust. They want to learn but may be stuck in the rhythm of an entire family dynamic of crime, drug dealing, and gang activity--with little knowledge as to the resources available to

help them find a way out. They have potential, as do all youth, but when released, they return quickly to the detention center due to the impact and influence of negative and unsafe living/learning environments.

These mysteries indicative of juvenile justice education discovered through various class projects and readings throughout my doctoral program sparked the decision to observe a local facility, the Wayne Youth Center as a course requirement in Ethnographic Methods. During this and subsequent class projects throughout my doctoral program, I found Wayne, its administrator, educators, and security staff to be intriguing: here students were stripped of anything in their outward appearance signaling their uniqueness or individuality--earrings, hair weaves, make-up, fake nails, clothes--and given state issued sneakers with velcro closures, elastic waisted pants, a polo, a sweatshirt, and undergarments. They were cleaned, fed, treated for medical problems or detoxed from whatever illegal substance was in their system. They were now locked in and put to a rigid daily routine with little flexibility. At Wayne, students are expected--no required--to attend school. While resistant to school at first, students soon learned attending classes was a way out of their cells/rooms and a way to make time pass more quickly. They were held to the expectation that they would learn, they would try, and they would be calm and respectful; if they refused or became belligerent, Wayne youth were removed from class and taken back to their cold, sterile rooms where they were locked down. Given this environment filled with procedure and security, my curiosity heightened as to how teachers functioned in a facility like this--with locked doors,

cameras in every nook and cranny, and youth who could be uncooperative, edgy, or emotionally troubled. Hence, my dissertation research began.

Due to my past observations, established level of comfort, and close proximity to home and the university, the obvious choice for fieldwork would have been Wayne; however, when considering the conflict of interest presented by my personal relationship with the Director of Education, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) determined that research ethics and practice would be compromised. Thankfully, the director was able to make calls and connections, which then led to my entrance into two other facilities in the region. Additionally, the director also continued to serve as a prominent resource, providing articles, current research and topics of discussion at regional and national conferences on juvenile justice education, and a key informant in regards to terminology, current legislation, laws, and policy addressing this particular youth population. Given the amount of time I had already spent observing the daily routines and classrooms at Wayne, I had a sound base knowledge of detention education to take along with me to the new sites to begin the data collection process. Wayne, unlike the other facilities, has within it a school contracted by the local school district, thus, Wayne teachers had the same calendar, benefits, support, and professional development opportunities as other teachers in the district, which serves approximately 35,000 youth and employs 3500 teachers. The other studied centers contract teachers through their respective counties..

Hence, Wayne provided a model, a backdrop, for comparison. While I can not use any of the data collected from my doctoral coursework such as student and teacher interviews, student writing samples and artwork, or classroom discourse, I can describe

the school within Wayne as well as its teaching philosophies and practices and provide a general sense of the culture there. Therefore, to suit the purpose of this dissertation and the presentation of a more comprehensive view of detention education, the incorporation and comparison of Wayne to the other sites is imperative; quite often, administrators among these facilities collaborate, share information, and share youth due to student transience, space/availability, and experimentation with placement by the courts.

Ultimately, my observations led to the obvious and grand question of how to best meet the educational needs of this population of students, which extends naturally to how to best prepare, train, and provide professional support to the educators and schools who provide services to these youth. While observing stimulating classroom activities and discussions, individualized credit recovery and GED programs, and talking directly with youth, I have recognized my own incorrect assumptions about detention centers (which are most likely consistent with others outside the system), this student population, and its teachers. Thus, I have developed a perspective unique and useful to juvenile justice education and one that will ultimately bring attention to an area of education oft forgotten and/or marginalized, just like the youth it serves. In addition, I have learned about different models of approaching the education of detention center youth and what follows is what I've learned in each and across them collectively. In my dissertation study, I have the opportunity to integrate my experiences as an educator in a variety of settings with my role as a educational researcher to begin to understand how to best advocate for youth in the juvenile justice system.

My objectives were first, as Agar (2008) suggests, “to learn--to acquire some knowledge that he [the ethnographer] previously did not have” (p. 127)--or build upon--and second, to share that knowledge with others, because “to be of value, it is suggested, ethnographic research should be concerned not simply with understanding the world but with applying its findings to bring about change” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 14). Although my purpose was initially a selfish one in completing my doctoral work, it was also one ensconced in the process of changing misperceptions about the juvenile justice system, the schools within, and the youth it serves, as well facilitating improvements in working conditions for teachers and learning opportunities for students. Essentially, a story needed to be told--and my vehicle of the ethnographic narrative potentially lends itself towards capturing interest and inciting concern and action. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) suggest weaving data into a storyline that is analytical, thematic, and one that becomes “a coherent ‘story’ about life and events” (p. 170). Additionally, Wolcott (2009) suggests I become the “storyteller...inviting the reader to look--through your [my] eyes--at what you [I] have seen” (p. 27). My overall goal is that my dissertation will spark further conversation and research and through the creation of compelling ethnographic narratives, these youth can be heard; these schools can get appropriate staffing and funding for the necessary resources, and those schools within detention centers who are making progress can inspire other programs, which, arguably, perform the most important and needed work in all of education.

Unfortunately, the conversation is a delicate and difficult one to have, as is the case with many areas of education, simply due to the level of complexity and nature of

juvenile justice. People enter education because they care about young people and want to improve their lives, yet, this passion can often be the curse, thus limiting progress. Emotions, belief systems, philosophies, and personalities sometimes impede worthy conversation, and therefore, action. The struggle and blessing in this dissertation has been acquiring a newfound understanding and respect for those in the juvenile justice education system; the conflict resides in accurately sharing observations and fairly representing the individuals who so willingly agreed to participate, opening up dialogue that may offend, but the benefit of potentially improving the lives of youth and professionals who live daily on the edge, ultimately wins.

History of Detention Education

From the outside, one may not know how to define juvenile justice education simply because the individual didn't even know that schools within such facilities existed. By law, every child must be educated, but for many, the vision of school does not extend past the typical school experience characterized by school buses, cheerleaders, mascots, athletes, musicians, colorful classrooms, playgrounds, and supportive neighborhoods. When I let people know that my area of research was schools within detention facilities, their tilted heads and raised eyebrows signaled that the thought of such a study had not occurred to them. Perhaps they think court affiliated youth just hang out in orange or blue jumpsuits all day and play cards. Maybe they just don't know what happens to young people who are not attending the institutions with which they are most familiar.

I have to confess that before I began to study this area of education, my own perception was that these “thugs” and “losers” and “delinquents” were mostly male, violent, didn’t value life or property, and were not youth who could sit and concentrate in any classroom. During my first observation, I thought surely that I would be hit on, that I would be the focus of their attention, and that inappropriate comments would be directed my way. In reality, these male students didn’t give me a second notice until the science teacher whom I was observing introduced me. They were used to visitors, researchers--outsiders--coming into their space and I was just another one of “them.” Actually, I have learned that I am not so different from the people whom I criticized; I never gave much thought to these students or what happened to them after they broke the law--or why they broke the law. I’ve known students who have been placed into group homes, foster care, or on house arrest. I viewed them as less inquisitive, less literate, less capable than my other students, not taking the time to investigate why this was so. I just knew that getting them to do the assignments I had created, or to participate in class at whatever level, was a challenge...and one that exhausted me. I was guilty of labeling and boxing these kids, even on the most subconscious level. I worried, then, to what degree I mattered , for better or worse, in the education of my own students.

However, through years of teaching and after studying the juvenile justice system and the educational programming offered in three facilities, I know the magnitude of the error of my previous thinking--and the impact that similar and widespread thinking can have on this area of education and the individuals it seeks to serve. Identifying and defining detention school curriculum and this population of youth is a complex and

daunting task. Nevertheless, doing so is one way of opening the outsider's eyes to these specialized schools that take in youth who have not been previously successful in school. Goals include finding methods, curriculum, strategy, and practice that lends to interesting and enjoyable learning experiences--those that inspire curiosity and life-long learning. Goals also include illustrating the benefits of improving skills like literacy, analysis, and dialogue with this population of youth--in essence, to equip them with the tools necessary to experience educational success.

Juvenile Justice Education Defined

Conceptually, juvenile justice education aims to socially and scholastically rehabilitate youth who cannot seem to get a hold on a correct and positive path in life. While one school I studied resembled my own on a smaller scale with individual classrooms, technology, a library and a gym, another school held classes in students' living units requiring teachers to load up carts with various class materials and travel to the students--and the third school was so small, that it was reminiscent of a one-room schoolhouse. Nevertheless, among the three, the goal was the same: to help students find confidence in their abilities to learn and their potential for success--but mostly, to help the students earn credits with credit recovery worksheet curriculums like Portable Assistance Study Sequence (PASS) or actual class/seated time, so that they returned to their home schools with more capital and academic progress. The other side to juvenile justice system is to rehabilitate the students and improve their social and decision making skills. Each facility had "leveled" programs with incentives that rewarded youth for positive behavior and progress. In addition, each day after school, both Wayne and Erbine had

“Life Skills” classes complete with consistent instructor and curriculum. For the educational programs within these facilities, educators were then charged with the responsibility of making gains when time was of the essence and student presence was often inconsistent. Due to various meetings with counselors, health staff, and probation officers, or due to court hearings and continual transition as youth moved from facility to facility, to group homes, to rehab sites or alternative schools, students were not always available for learning.

Daily, I try to impress upon my own high school students the importance of acquiring the skills needed to be successful in the post-secondary environments they will soon be entering, or in Bourdieu’s (1987) sense, acquiring capital in all its forms: cultural, social, linguistic, economic. The same message applies to students in detention, and perhaps for them, the message holds greater import and immediacy. They must be critical and analytical thinkers; they must be masters of written and spoken communication; they must be social, outgoing, appropriately aggressive, and agents of their own success--but how do teachers in this setting, with such a challenging population of students make these goals reality? Referencing Bourdieu, Lamont and Lareau (1988), note that students must possess these “desirable personal styles in American context” (p. 42) for high cultural status; for incarcerated youth who are in many ways culturally illiterate and deficient in regards to social etiquette and skill set, acquiring these “desirable personal styles” can be challenging. In addition, for those within the typically marginalized populations--immigrants, English Language Learners, students of low-SES, and students with identified learning disabilities--the challenges are even greater. Of

course, the students want this for themselves, too; they want the American Dream, but they become tangled up in their own feet.

According to the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice (2014), today's incarcerated youth are on the tail end of a history of juvenile detention dating back well into the 1800's with Houses of Refuge which were more overcrowded than rehabilitative. Training schools were then developed in the mid 1800's due to reports of abuse in these Houses of Refuge. The Society for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency, along with other reform organizations, were advocating for a separate court system for youth as early as 1825, but the first recognized juvenile court was established in Cook County, Illinois in 1899. By 1925, all but two states had followed suit, and with the creation of a juvenile courts, the jurisdiction subsequently created included all youth under the age of 16 who were in violation of any state or local law. Furthermore, the court was set up to serve as guardian/parent when parents could not longer appropriately care for their children and for neglected children...the court's objective was to supervise, care for, and rehabilitate youth.

Understanding the importance of removing youth from the negative and immoral influences of adult criminals, organizers of juvenile detention facilities, particularly the National Prison Congress of 1871, determined that education and religion were the two vital factors in assessing youth reform levels (Nurse, 2010, p. 55). In the early part of the 20th century, juvenile courts were then created, recognizing that the needs of children were unique and that their status should be kept confidential. Essentially, the feeling was that both the state and society had/have a responsibility not only to protect minors, but

also to see to their rehabilitation. Thus, the juvenile court system had dual roles: as a support system focused on the rehabilitation of wayward juveniles and a system in place to protect society against juvenile delinquency.

Present Day Detention:

Today, students within detention facilities, if they are in progressive “wrap-around” programs, receive counseling services, typically work toward their GED’s, complete assignments sent from their home schools, and/or attend school within the facility in hopes setting on a better path to educational success. Research shows, however, that stays in detention centers do not necessarily rehabilitate youth offenders; because recidivism can be measured in various ways (rearrest, referral to court, re-conviction, reincarceration) national rates can vary, as noted between 12-55% (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006 quoted in Read, O’Cummings, 2011). While we typically think of these youth as violent offenders, interestingly, youth are in also placed in detention centers for status (non-violent/non-criminal) offenses composing almost 20% of all youth arrests; they are placed because their home environments are unsafe or they are ungovernable. According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Detention Prevention (OJJDP), status offenders are mostly white (American Indian youth lead the minority populations) and male, except in the case of runaways where females account for 55-60% of reported runaways.

The OJJDP defines a delinquent as a youth who committed an act that, if it had been committed by an adult, would be viewed as criminal, as in crimes against others, crimes against public order, property, and drug offenses. When a juvenile is placed in

detention, typically he or she is sent to a secure facility under court authority. Some detention centers are more permanent than others; the Wayne County Youth Services Center, for example, is a pre-adjudicated facility where youth go to await their court hearings and more permanent placements. Average stay in Wayne is 10 days; longer stays occur, but are not as common. However, in Clarke and Erbine, students can stay for months. Nevertheless, detention centers are designed to restrict the movement of youth, occurring on the local, regional, and State levels.

As noted, youth centers often have two areas of housing students: detention² and “staff secure”³--an area separate from the detention. A court affiliated youth residing in the staff secure area did not commit what could be classified as an adult crime, and is typically responsible for lower level crimes such as truancy, curfew violation, incorrigibility, running, and underage possession and/or consumption of alcohol or tobacco (OJJPD). During one observation of a Life Skills class in the staff secure area, I heard from the girls stories of alcoholism in their families, or their own alcohol addiction, of dropping out of school and not wishing to return, and girls who just couldn’t be in their own homes because of abuse, and so, they ran. Male status offenders struggled with substance abuse, gang life/expectations, and authority. Essentially, staff secure is designed to keep youth safe, and so while still a secured area, the youth have greater flexibility and privilege than the detention youth from whom they are kept separate at all times due to court order. In staff secure, for example, girls and boys in all three facilities

² “detention” is specifically for violent offenses like gang activity, theft, fighting, weapon possession, etc.

³ “staff secure” is specifically for non-violent, or status offenses, like being truant, runaway, or even as a placement for youth in abusive or dangerous home environments until better placement can be found.

went to class together and often interacted, whereas in detention, measures were taken to separate genders.

Educational Programming

According to Read and O’Cummings (2011), 65% of residential juvenile justice facilities offer education to *all* youth in custody, yet the level of basic educational programming offered in facilities varies: 78 percent offer high school, 73 percent offer middle school, and 46 percent offer elementary school level education. The majority of facilities offer special education services (69 percent) and GED preparation (63 percent), whereas only 32 percent offer vocational or technical education and 21 percent provide access to postsecondary education opportunities. Among the three centers I observed, only one, Erbine, had a vocational program; for example, students used wood burning technology to create wood clocks to sell as a fundraiser, they learned how to lay and grout tile, and learned how to use an embroidery machine. The Wayne facility does have a metal lathe, but is still in the process of incorporating its use into the curriculum. The resistance to vocational programming is obvious given the risks of working machinery and potential security risks, yet the low percentage of vocational programming may simply be due to funding and hiring quality teachers who are skilled in using the equipment as well as costs to obtain tools, equipment, and supplies

Most facilities provide educational screening for grade-level proficiency, placement, and educational needs. About 81 percent evaluate all youth, 8 percent evaluate some youth, and another 10 percent do not screen any youth (Read and O’Cummings, 2011, p. 2). Typically, students are evaluated upon admittance and then every 30, 60, and/

or 90 days thereafter. During the screening process, it is documented that at least 30 percent of youth have been previously diagnosed with a learning disability (p. 2). About one-half of youth (45 percent) spend at least 6 hours a day in facility-based education programming; 62 percent spend at least 5 hours a day; and 76 percent spend at least 4 hours a day (p. 3) Student perception regarding the quality of educational services offered within detention centers is largely mixed with 51 percent of students indicating that facilities have adequate services and 49 percent indicating that they do not (p. 3). Interestingly, more than 20 percent of youth are not enrolled in school at all upon entering a facility despite having not yet completed secondary school (p.3). While in the field, I heard from numerous youth who had never been in a secondary school, but completed most of their coursework in detention centers or alternative placements. Nevertheless, schools in detention centers are progressing in achievement as during the school year 2008–09, over two-thirds of students showed improvement in reading (68 percent), 40 percent of students earned high school course credits, one-third of students enrolled in their local school district upon exiting a facility, and more than 4,000 students were accepted into postsecondary education either while in a facility or within 30 days of exiting (Read & O’Cummings, 2011).

How to Educate Court Affiliated Youth: Contemporary Debates Regarding Juvenile Justice Education

In 2006, Thomas G. Blomberg, professor at the Florida State University Center for Criminology and Public Policy research, created the Juvenile Justice No Child Left Behind Collaboration Project, funded by the US Department of Justice and the Office of

Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJPD). Held in Orlando, Florida, the conference focused on the four benchmark requirements NCLB set for detention education: hiring highly qualified and certificated professionals, showing adequate yearly progress, transition, and evaluation. The conference's objective was to discuss and address implications and potential roadblocks towards successfully meeting the NCLB guidelines. However, Tannis (2014) emphasizes that in a country where no child is to be left behind, some children *are* indeed left behind. One potential factor regards who is in charge of the actual education of youth, whether an education agency, or juvenile justice, social services, correctional, or correctional school district. Nevertheless, in his NCLB collaboration project, Blomerg (2008) found that 70% of state facilities reported "highly qualified teachers" (HQT) teaching more than 50% of the classes as well as a 54% increase in the hiring of HQT's. The NCLB collaboration project has fore-fronted the need to improve the services provided for youth as well as accountability for facilities to provide HQT's and pertinent/meaningful resources. Yet, given Tannis' comments since the date of Blomerg's project, work is yet to be done, mostly in the area of finding and retaining these HQT's. Blomerg (2008) notes the challenges: misperceptions (i.e. labeling and stereotyping) of detention centers and their environment; the challenges of teaching multiple core areas, electives, and to a broad spectrum on learners and age levels; teacher shortages and competition with local school districts; and high turnover rates. Ultimately, teaching in the juvenile justice system needs to be "sold" differently, enticing professionals during their pre-service coursework, practicums, and student teaching rotations. Currently, little to no exposure exists in education coursework for

future educators; given the right curriculum and approach, such exposure lending towards academic discourse and analysis may bring more HQT's into the field of juvenile justice education, particularly if specialized certification were offered and also rewarded/compensated. Just like students in the juvenile justice system need to shed the stigma of their assigned labels and improve their cultural capital, so does the stigma and "capital" of teaching in a detention center. Efforts should be in place to make such a professional valuable and desirable, to elevate the status; in these ways, youth can have the HQT's they need and educators can feel valued.

Because models of juvenile justice vary from state to state depending on state functional needs, overseeing departments can vary as well versus having one administrative body, like state and district level departments of education that oversee public/mainstream schools. Interestingly, most juvenile justice educational programs are not part of the local school systems (Blomberg, 2008, p.3).

In 1904, F. H. Nibechier, Superintendent of the House of Refuge in Glen Mills, Pa. recognized that "...the development of the education of delinquents should be differentiated from what is, perhaps, the necessary conditions of the common schools (p. 485). The question still remains, over 100 years later, just how exactly to go about educating youth in a secured facility, and so, is one of the greatest obstacles facing educators, administrators, and facility directors. Many questions arise regarding what school looks like: should individual classrooms for individual subjects be used as in a typical mainstream school, for math, social studies, art, English, and so on; should students be taught inclusively, or should lessons be more differentiated toward the

diversity in age and ability level; how long should class periods last; how many classes can students handle in a day, and so on. Decisions for administrators as how to organize the school day, what courses to offer, what sort of teachers need to be on staff, etc., also are endless. Considering that these youth have not functioned well in a traditional school setting--or simply have not experienced one--would a director of education want to model school in detention after what students are familiar with or take a route towards the alternative and unique?

A second issue stems more specifically from curriculum and what programs to offer students that will fill in the gaps or just inspire a love of learning. Mentioned earlier is the Portable Assisted Study Sequence (PASS) program used by many facilities, but specifically by the Clarke County Youth Center and the Erbine Juvenile Services Center. The PASS was designed originally in 1978 for migrant farm worker families who moved from district to district. Students were able to continue their coursework while being mobile and credits earned traveled with them. Considering the transitional nature of adjudicated youth, it's no wonder that the PASS program has been adopted in detention programs to serve students from 6th-12th grades. As noted by Robert Lynch, Director of the National PASS Center in New York, "the development of quality, standards based curriculum remains a priority of the NPC in order to maintain and expand PASS as a viable credit accrual option" ("PASS Program Implementation Guide," 2011). Although PASS sounds like an excellent option for court affiliated youth, it is a worksheet based semi-independent study curriculum, and critics will say that PASS and programs like it are allowing students to earn nothing but empty credits that often have difficulties

transferring to home community schools despite the selling point that they align with district/state educational standards. What do students gain from reading and filling out worksheets? Do they get the same experience as being in a typical classroom? No. Do they really grasp the complexity of history, literature, and current events? Probably not. Are they developing the necessary literacy and communication skills they will need in the future? Perhaps not. Nevertheless, at Clarke and Erbine, students are earning credits and returning to their home schools with something in hand, something to show for their time in detention--from a few credits to entire course work completed. As long as local school districts accept PASS curriculum, Clarke and Erbine will continue to use PASS despite the ongoing debate as to its effectiveness because credits earned look good to a judge, a school counselor, a principal.

Worksheet curricula in detention facilities receive criticism because, as critics are wont to say, they are not inspiring students to learn, to be curious, to want to improve themselves. Thus, other facilities rely more on the teaching staff to create daily lessons designed to inspire students with meaningful engagement, purposeful activities, and real-life problem solving that will serve students once they leave. Considering that one of the characteristics of these facilities involves the coming and going of students on a daily basis, teachers face quite a task creating self-contained daily lessons that meet learning objectives but also are designed so that any student can walk in at any time and pick up on the lesson. Due to the obvious challenge, administrators and curriculum coordinators are continuously on the hunt for anything, including professional development, to help their faculty. In this sort of setting, questions rise as to what students need: Core classes?

Music appreciation? Art? Physical education? Life skills training? Vocational and technology training? The challenge of curriculum programming is how do we take students who are not interested in learning and in the time we have them, which can range from days to months, to re-engage them in learning. What is the ultimate goal? Credit recovery or building confidence in learning? Despite the critics, worksheet curriculums can address the nature of the beast in that many students can be in one room at the same time working on various course subjects and at variant levels. Students can be individually tutored and monitored by teaching staff; the caution, however, is to keep programs like PASS from becoming babysitters and maintaining the focus on meaningful learning. One sacrifice is the loss of student interaction, class dynamic formation, debate, banter, developing social and communication skills, as well as critical and quick thinking. Nurse (2010) notes the weaknesses of worksheet curricula: “Incarcerated youth leave prison well versed in filling out workbook pages but ill prepared to write a paper, take an essay exam, or engage in an academic debate” (p. 167). I tend to agree, as do the teachers in these facilities with whom I spoke as they were certificated education professionals who knew the benefit of a “real” classroom environment.

Yet, another debate in educating court affiliated youth is *how* they attend school and the structure of the school day and logistics. Students are typically housed and grouped according to security risk, thus they attend school within these security rankings creating multi-age and multi-ability classrooms, of greater diversity and disparity than in any mainstream classroom. As mentioned, teachers are dealing with a one-room schoolhouse, essentially. Not grouping students according to ability level seems illogical

to most educators, but in a detention center, security is primary and cannot be compromised. To illustrate: in Wayne, juvenile detention officers (JDT's) escort students from their pods to their classes. Throughout the school day, students in detention move, escorted, in a rotational manner, never coming into contact with another pod/unit of students. At Clarke, detention students both live and learn in units, according to gender, ranging from high to low security, Erbine students travel, both genders attending class due to space limitations and the smaller, more manageable population. However, this debate is on-going as the Director of Education at Wayne insists that school can work, and still be safe, if students are grouped according to ability, literacy levels, language proficiency, etc., which would be best educationally for students and definitely easier on teachers. Yet, Clarke administration claims that by not traveling, education is safer and more efficient. Herein lies the clash between security and education that I have observed in all three facilities--what is the best way to run school and still maintain a level of safety.

Therefore, the gaps in juvenile justice education lie mostly in curriculum and programming and what would best serve the professional development needs of faculty and what will help students the most during their often limited stays in the facility. Tannis (2014), veteran educator and coach/consultant with the Center for Educational Excellence in Alternative Settings notes that little to no education research has been performed to instruct professionals to design, create, or use multiple-level subject specific content to meet a classroom of variant ages and abilities. Another gap in research to be addressed would involve building the bridge between security and education so that they can

recognize the value in greater communication and cooperation, blend better their specific goals, and design a seamless program that focuses on the complete rehabilitation of youth.

Literacy and Learning

Along with other support services like medical and psyche, school programs in detention centers are vital in positively impacting the lives of youth offenders, in their rehabilitation and placement on a path towards success. The juvenile system is a youth's last stop, last chance, to redirect his/her life before repeated infractions lead to adult court. Therefore, programs specifically designed on developing literacy, character, appropriate communication skills, and gaining school credits can make all the difference in student re-integration.

For example, the incorporation of literacy programs exist in all three facilities, namely Read Right, which is making the jump from juvenile to adult correctional facilities, and the Reading is Fun programs, a grant that provides reading books for students while incarcerated and then books to take home with them upon release. A study done by the Criminal Justice Policy Council reported that "37% of youth and young adults were less likely to return to prison if they learned to read , their incarceration" (Read & O'Cummings, 2011, p.2) thus supporting the development of literacy programs in the juvenile justice system. Librarian and researcher Stephanie Guerra (2010) reports that improving literacy is more effective than "shock incarceration" like boot camps and stays in adult prisons for reducing recidivism (p.1). Gail Coulter, who has written about one-to-one tutoring programs for adjudicated youth, furthers this

point by stating that the “corresponding increase in literacy and decrease in recidivism benefits both the individual and society” (p. 321). However, Coulter does stress the ever present challenge of increasing literacy skills in incarcerated youth because of their often short stay (average of 15 days), but still, reading programs in detention centers can “impact” and improve the literacy of their students even during this brief time (p. 330). Guerra (2010) echoes this point stating “reading remediation is a powerful deterrent to recidivism...literacy instruction does not need to be long term to make a difference” (p.3). Therefore, while serving time, adjudicated youth, through building literacy, earning credits, and receiving necessary counseling and medical services, can experience the pride associated with these tangible rewards (Nurse, 2010, p. 170), benefit from the acquired capital, and thus be better prepared to re-enter their home communities.

During the span of my observations, many youth shared their current reading selections and I witnessed students exchanging books with their teachers or requesting visits to the library to do so. The consistent rule allowed students two books and one magazine in their rooms. Students were reading *Harry Potter*, various Young Adult literature series like *The Hunger Games*, the *Crank* series by Ellen Hopkins, and Veronica Roth’s *Divergent*. One young man was even reading Shakespearean plays and Sophocles. The greatest common theme, perhaps, among all three facilities was the push for youth to read, to continuously have reading materials available to them on their units, in their rooms, and to take home with them upon their release. Each facility has a broad range of reading books and levels to address individual interest and need. Students

revealed that they read more while incarcerated than when “on the outs” because they had time and no distractions.

Maguin, Loeber, and LeMahieu (1993) stress that because low literacy levels, particularly reading, are associated with delinquency, early literacy development is key. Tannis (2014) echoes this sentiment suggesting that “children who are unable to read by the end of the 3rd grade and who have poor school experiences are at risk for dropping out of school and other negative behaviors.” (p. #) Thus, upon entering each facility, students are assessed/tested to gather information regarding reading grade level and skill and then quickly involved in each facility’s literacy program. According to Caryn, Read Right instructor at Clarke, while the program is repetitive, not that creative, and regimented, the “level 3” intervention is a 1:1 reading intervention that focuses and engages youth, enabling literacy coaches to personally work on student reading skills--essentially creating an environment promoting, accepting, and encouraging reading. Furthermore, because the local community college has had great success with Read Right improving the literacy of non-traditional students and learners, Clarke administrators and literacy coaches believed that the program is substantiated. During their stay, Clarke students have graduated from the program have then returned to their home schools and graduated with their classes. One student in particular spent one year at Clarke and by meeting once or twice a week with a Read Right instructor jumped in his Gates’ reading score from a 9th grade to a 12th grade level. As Caryn noted, “Once we get them past their elementary reading levels and into the middle school reading where they can experience more non-fiction--that gets them.” Caryn does know Read Right’s limitations,

but recognizes, as Guerra points out (2010), that any reading intervention is better than none at all:

Is it a tool we can use? Yes. But if you don't hold the students accountable...you gotta make them stick to it. It's scripted. Did I want to do that at first? No. Do I see it working with kids? Yes. The big push is how we can make--how can we make it better in their transition back?

During the Read Right process, coaches work one-to-one with students as the student reads the selection out loud checking for reading fluency. The literacy coaches then evaluate student reading on the spot with phrasing such as, "You blew through the punctuation; read it again," and "That doesn't work, read it again [mispronunciation]" and "Read again so it feels more comfortable." Caryn says context comes with repeated reading because the concept focuses on changing the neural network and how the brain processes the words students see and read.

While Clarke continued to use Read Right, Erbine tried the program for a year but then decided to abandon it due to the expense and uncertainties with new legislation, high transition/student turnover rates, instead relying on one teacher, an experienced elementary reading specialist, to provide literacy instruction and support. Nevertheless, Clarke, Erbine, and Wayne all recognized the value, importance, and necessity of improving the literacy of their students. The struggle is impressing upon youth to continue the reading once they leave. While all facilities have funding to allow students to take home two books of their choice upon their release, many students attested that

they don't read as much on the outside. As one student, who interestingly wants to someday teach in a detention center school, shared,

If I read bigger more complicated literature books, I'm gonna be smarter. That's why I got such a good vocabulary--it's from coming in here and reading. When I'm incarcerated or in a group home, I'm always reading. When I'm out--I'm with friends. In school, I'll read a book. But when I'm out, I'm with friends.

This student's comments are reminiscent of the character, Angel, played by Louis Diamond Philips in the film *Stand and Deliver*. He requests a second set of books to keep at home so that his friends won't see him carrying books to and from school. As his teacher, Jaime Escalante, played by Edward James Olmos, replies "Wouldn't want anyone thinking you're intelligent, would you?", I question peer impact--of course--not only on the resulting behavior of youth once they leave detention, but mostly, whether they are willing brave the front of peer criticism and continue the process of building their literacy.

The Objects of my "gawking" ⁴: An Overview

The Administration and Teachers. Not one teacher I met through this process, or administrator, entered education with the "dream" of working with adjudicated and delinquent youth. Many began their careers in special education, working with students with behavioral disabilities or issues, or in alternative education programs; others started their careers in the traditional classroom setting from elementary reading instruction to high school core subjects. While teachers were equally represented in gender,

⁴ (Peshkin, 2007, p. 13)

administrators were all male. One administrator came from a social services/human resources background with no education training or degree but had a deep understanding of youth; one had served 18 years in education with over 30 hours of post bachelor's work, and the third administrator had 23 years of experience in this field, had earned his MA in Education and had a supervisory certificate.

For all, however, detention education fell into their laps, almost accidentally, yet for some reason these professionals have remained in this field. A common joke among these educators is that they have been "ruined" by juvenile detention such that they could never return to a "regular" school; their interaction with students was marked by heavy sarcasm, banter, brutal honesty, and content that was heavy, dense, representing the often tragic nature of students' lives which teachers perceive as inappropriate for mainstream classrooms. While some educators were in their first year, like Mr. Lake, a social studies teacher, and others were nearing retirement, like Mr. Rogue who spent 24 years as a teacher before becoming a supervisor, the frustration was consistent and the same: addressing the educational needs and skill deficits of youth in the juvenile justice system is one of the greatest challenges facing education today. Despite the spectrum of age (11-18), learning level/ability, and family circumstances from which these youth come--despite the presence of abuse, neglect, and violence in their lives--despite the continual interruption of class instruction and limitations of security and working in a secured environment--teachers with whom I spoke were not interested in leaving their posts, but ultimately they expressed a commitment to these youth for better or worse.

None of these educators were specifically trained to teach in this setting, but they had learned along the way from other veterans, corrections specific or non-specific professional development that they've had to adapt to suit their own purposes. The teachers had to be creative, innovative, and persistent; they had to be sharp, witty, quick and on top of their game. Administrators had to be prepared to deal with professional stress, angst, and buffer the relationship between security and education so that their teams could "do school" in an environment where many believe school does not exist or should not exist.

In essence, the teachers were like many other educators--motivated yet exhausted, dedicated yet frustrated--and ultimately committed to finding ways to reach students, to help them earn credits, acquire new skills, and leave detention in a better place than when they entered. Masters of differentiation and inclusion, scholars of street life, and tutors in subjects not in their endorsed area, teachers in the juvenile justice system have to be flexible, patient, forgiving, and optimistic--these were those whom I observed. Administrators, daily, were pulled in multiple directions by the local school system, community/county offices, juvenile court, probation officers and case workers--everything that is not education, but still that which follows court affiliated youth. Administrators must busy themselves with stubborn recidivism rates, curriculum coordination with home and community schools, equipping professionals with schedules, materials, and the environment most conducive to allow learning to happen, and in such a way that is meaningful to students and can be translated to success post release. With the multitude of variables and obstacles educators and administrators face, the job can seem

pointless. These certificated professionals work in an environment few recognize or consider. Arguably, the work they do with young people, their approach and strategies, could benefit all education professionals, alter and enrich the manner by which we educate and train current and future teachers--if we would only take time to observe--to comprehend better the nature and nuances of this seemingly unreachable population of students.

Students vs The World: Classroom Life and Perception of Student Ability.

They're worried about family, they're worried about loved ones, worried about what's gonna happen in court, um, a lot of worries for these children. And for you to even ask anything of them is pretty intense...but you can reach them! You can reach them. It is possible...once you do that, seriously, they'll do almost anything in the world for you.--Rodney Rogue, lead teacher/supervisor

Youth who find themselves in detention, even repeatedly, or in staff secure as status offenders, come from various situations and have beside their name many labels, identifications, numbers, that help tell the story of where they've been, what they've done, services received, if they are a returnee, what has failed or succeeded, etc. Many are from low-income households, from homes where English is not the first language; many are minority in representation and illustrate low-literacy ability and academic achievement.

Many youth are runaways, no matter their placement, and so when caught, they are returned to detention. Some youth grow up in detention or staff secure and prefer the familiarity of the detention/staff secure facility and school to being on the streets, at

home, or in foster care. One young lady at Clarke County Youth Center (CCYC) shared that she's been on the run since junior high due to her family's involvement in the drug scene and was about to age-out of the system. Despite not attending high school, she reads and writes well, and has attended school only while at Clarke. After ageing-out, she would be on her own and would not have to worry about being caught for being a runaway. She was studying for her GED in hopes of completing it while still in staff secure or very soon after her 18th birthday when she would be released. Another young girl, at the Erbine County Youth Center (ECYC), repeatedly told her hearing committee that she would run, that she "didn't like group homes or the girls or the drama." Yet, they still placed her in these environments, and subsequently, she ran. Each time she was found, she was reassigned, experiencing over 14 different group homes and rehabilitation centers in the past two years. She preferred Erbine because "It just feels right here," speaking of the caring teachers, individual instruction, and safety it offered. For these students, their connections were in Clarke and Erbine, their teachers, and being on the outside was not successful for them. Other youth had been bounced from facility to facility, from boot camps in other states to local community youth transition/group homes, to specific lock-down substance abuse facilities. While the courts struggle to find placements that will ultimately help youth rehabilitate, youth go where they are told, making few connections and emotional attachments along the way. Furthermore, students are given little voice during their own hearings--legalese and adult conversations fly over head, around their backs, and they may not even understand the decisions that have been made for them about their own lives.

Once students arrive at any facility, they are processed, which involves collecting from them personal clothing and items, a rigorous cleaning, body cavity search, and the issuance of facility clothing. In one facility observed, students were given undergarments, a blue jumpsuit that snapped up the front, Bob Barker⁵ blue slip-on canvas shoes (although they could wear their own sneakers if they chose). At another, students wore elasticized tan khaki-like pants and t-shirts/sweatshirts depending on their status. Those in orange tops were identified as an escape risk; those in light blue were staff secure and those in dark blue in detention. Erbine students typically did not wear shoes, but walked around in socks, as youth were easier to handle during physical intervention if they had no traction. In other facilities, students could be given velcro sneakers as often shoe laces were seen as potential weapons or health risks to suicidal youth. Once students have their clothing and personal items stored, they are evaluated with regard to risk factor and consequently assigned a unit. Depending on facility, students then either go to their unit or are taken to the classroom to meet up with the pod/unit to which they've been assigned. As soon as possible, students' reading level is tested to determine base-line literacy needs. Samantha, transition liaison at Clarke, shares:

Yeah...we try to do it when they first get in here and that's probably the worst time. Because they just went to court or they're waiting to go to court or their next court date isn't for a month and a half, you know? So it's like, but when is a good time?

⁵ The Bob Barker company is the leading supplier of detention clothes, furnishings, bedding, etc.

Therefore, on these initial tests, youth typically do not score well, because they have more on their minds than concentrating and performing on a standardized test. In addition, students meet with a school liaison, like Samantha, or other teacher who assumes the role to review their school status: credits earned or not earned, grade in school, what credits they can work on or earn while in detention, etc.

Given that the male to female ratio in detention centers nationwide is about 4:1, more young men were observed than women. Interestingly, over the course of my 18 months in these facilities, I saw many youth who returned, and repeatedly. Some violated their probation within a few days, others had run away, while yet for others, placements such as foster care or group homes did not work out and so students were in holding until a new placement could be determined by the court--essentially and ironically, they were in the secured facility for safe-keeping.

National Statistics: Who are they?

In 2010, O’Cummings, Bardack and Gonsoulin reported that 2.18 million students had been arrested in the United States’ juvenile justice system and 93,000 were incarcerated (p.1). However, today in 2014, Tannis reports that the 2700 facilities in the United States incarcerate more than 150,000 youth under the age of 18; 75% of those young people are high school dropouts. Students today enter the juvenile justice system for various reasons, ranging from violent offenses like robbery, assault, and murder to non-violent offenses like vandalism, disorderly conduct, arson, and drug possession/abuse (“Voices for Children,” 2009, p.55). In addition, personal and family problems such as abuse, domestic violence, poverty, mental health issues, and self esteem can

further contribute to situations leading to youth entering detention centers. Brown, Russo, and Hunter (2002) share their findings that increased participation in delinquent behavior is characterized by 1) dropping out of school versus graduating; 2) being male; 3) being of racial/ethnic minority; and 4) involvement in and the use of drugs. Furthermore, their study also supports the relationship between the income level of the youth's family and school performance/behavior (p. 132), suggesting that students with low achievement levels and delinquent behaviors come from poor homes. The Center for Juvenile Justice Reform adds that "youth who are maltreated are more likely to engage in delinquent behavior and become involved in the juvenile justice system (Herz et al, 2012, p. iii). O'Cummings, Bardack, and Gonsoulin (2010) stress the link between youth with low literacy skills and the juvenile justice system, but also their proclivity towards destructive decisions post release (p. 1), also noting that poor academic achievement overall lends towards delinquent activity versus students with greater achievement (p.1). Children who are unable to read by the end of the 3rd grade and who have poor school experiences are at risk for dropping out of school and other negative behaviors. Those risks intensify when poverty is part of the equation (Tannis, 2014). An estimated 45-70% of youth in custody suffer from learning disabilities and emotional behavior disorders; 85% of teens in custody are male; 39% of youth in prison are White, 38% are Black, 19% are Hispanic, and the remaining few percent are Native American and Asian (Guerra, 2010).

In addition, the following percentages reflect the national trends in age and gender across the previous three years: the majority of students enrolled in State agency neglected and delinquent programs and receiving Title I, Part D funds were between the

ages of 14 and 18 years (75%) and 19 and 21 years (25%) and predominantly male (85%). Student participation by race/ethnicity in 2009-2010: 32.9% of youth in prison are White, 46% are Black, 17.2% are Hispanic, and the remaining few percent are Native American, Asian/Pacific Islander, or other (NDTAC, “State and National Fast Facts” 2010). In the state where this study was conducted, most incarcerated youth are White (49.4%), Black (25%), Hispanic (21.2%).

Given this information, not surprisingly, students in detention education most often have not and do not function well in a mainstream school environment due to the many community, social, and family nuances that have an impact on their ability to function and focus in school. Thus, many come to detention with an established record of poor academic achievement and once released, they return to their home schools with labels, a record, and a red flag for administrators and teachers--factors that also have impact on their future success. Moreover, O’Cummings, Bardack, and Gonsoulin (2010) and Drakeford (2002, p. 143) note that many youth quickly return to negative/delinquent behavior upon release. According to the National Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At Risk (NDTAC), students who are low-academic achievers are 3.1 times more likely to join a gang, and 35% of low-achievers became delinquent versus 20% of high-achieving students (Read & O’Cummings, 2011). In addition, many students in juvenile detention not only are “marginally literate or illiterate and have already experienced school failure” (O’Cummings, Bardack, and Gonsoulin, 2010, p. 2), that they are typically three to four years below their grade level (Nurse, 2010, p. 57; Coulter, 2010, p. 321). NDTAC

also reports that almost 50% of students enter residential detention centers at an academic level below their age-equivalent (Read & O'Cummings, 2011, p.3) and more than one third of incarcerated youth are illiterate (Guerra, 2010).

Whereas outsiders may view detention as a terrible place full of deviant and unruly youth, that is not the case, entirely. During the course of this study, students were observed to be quite calm, mostly due to the level of security, but also the presence of caring and interested adults made an enormous impact on the students. Sure, every facility visited had issues with fighting or students being verbally and/or physically inappropriate, but if we consider the circumstances from which they came, issues with trust, behavior, and confidence were expected. Because they were now in a structured environment with clear-cut rules and incentives designed to work with their individual needs--where therapists, counselors, pediatricians, teachers, and other staff focused solely on the rehabilitation of the students; because they were away from their negative home and neighborhood environments, gang affiliations, and lives filled with uncertainty; and because they were clean, fed, sober, and safe--detention became, for some, the best situation and placement. Michael Bloom, education administrator at the Clarke County Youth Center, commented that perhaps receiving simple health care, like dental checkups and medical screenings could help students feel better about themselves and could thus remove distractions that may keep them from learning or functioning in school. Essentially, Bloom emphasized that when a holistic approach is taken towards caring for incarcerated youth, they respond quite positively. As lead teacher at Clarke, Rodney

Rogue, furthered, “If you give them attention and respect, they’ll climb mountains for you...they want to please you.”

A Day In Detention. While Ms. Black’s opening vignette provided a stark look at her daily routine as an educator, the students’ days are even longer. At least Ms. Black can leave the facility for lunch, enjoy the sunshine, go home to cuddle with her dogs, and rejuvenate herself before returning the following day. The students, however, endure the cycle, rarely leaving their living units, waiting for something to change, for any excitement, a family visit, old doughnuts to arrive that have been donated by local bakeries, or a outsider like a university researcher who just sits and watches, taking down notes, photographing their art, recording their classes, reading their poetry--someone breaking up the day and offering attention.

The student day, as with any school, is structured due to the particular design and procedure of the facility. A typical day for students begins with an early 6 am wake-up call for youth heading to court or another placement. The remaining detainees have yet another hour to sleep on their thin plastic mattresses, to which they grow accustomed and so sleep fairly well I’m told. However, in one facility that is multi-leveled, through the night, students can hear voices of other girls talking to boys through the ventilation, sometimes inappropriately and sexually, and sometimes, just about life. Students listen to others’ nightmares, flushing of the toilets, self-pleasuring, and learn to block these things out to just rest their weary minds. But, at 7 am, they are up, taking care of their own hygiene, cleaning their rooms and making their beds.

After a breakfast of toast, cereal, and milk or juice, students take their medications, sign up to use the telephone that day, fill out requests to see the nurse, finish cleaning, and wait for their first period class. In some facilities, teachers roll through the door with their giant carts filled, perhaps also bringing candy incentives or other treats for them that day. In others, students are escorted by juvenile security officers (JDS/JDT/JDO depending on the facility) to classrooms. Classes run throughout the morning, lasting from 45 minutes to an hour, or less depending on the number of interruptions. Occasionally, classes are interrupted by severe weather, during which students must be locked down, or by fights and “lost” items like pencils. Often, classes are interrupted by nurses, therapists, para-educators removing youth to go work on their on-line courses or their reading, security staff breaks, or as expected, by inappropriate student behaviors. And, while like anything else, students grow accustomed and barely bat an eye in these situations, the interruptions add up to huge gaps in learning and loss in time--valuable time needed to increase literacy, to increase social skills, to increase cultural capital. Very rarely can any student or educator expect to sit through an entire class without at least one interruption. Very rarely can a student experience a lesson from start to finish, complete with a stimulating opener, a blend of cooperative learning activities that illuminate content, and a lesson closer that ties everything back to an objective. Certainly, the educators understand this process, but with everything else in a detention center taking precedence, one can understand how such instruction--typically occurring in public schools--may not be possible to the same extent in a detention facility.

After lunch, students have their final two periods of the day and then return to their individual cells for mandatory lockdown while the detention officers change shifts. After school and the shift change, students have access to religious services, life skills programming, or recreation depending on the services offered. Life skills programming can cover everything from building a resume to learning valuable social etiquette to cooking, and even just holding group discussion sessions addressing issues like addiction, alcoholism, abuse, neglect, family life, and gender issues. After dinner, students can make phone calls, shower, play games or work on schoolwork.

As one can see, the student day is highly structured as students can find comfort in routine and predictability. Essentially, the idea is to keep students busy, thinking, and focused on something other than being in detention. Nevertheless, their position is clear: one that is controlled and intendedly predictable; one that has personal rights, but one that has no authority or power. Students are highly regimented through the day with orders, constraints as to how procedures are carried out, and those who deviate are warned or lose points, which impacts their level/status on the unit, which in turn, impacts their benefits and allowances. Throughout their day, everything around the detainee--from the cold tile to the juvenile detention officers at each turn, is a reminder of his/her status as an offender. Nevertheless, each day also brings with it the opportunity to self-reflect, learn, and prepare for release.

CHAPTER 2

COUNTERING LABELS WITH INCREASED CULTURAL CAPITAL

Theoretical Framework Part I: Labeling Theory Explored

Continuing with the prior allusion to *Stand and Deliver*, Mr. Escalante makes quite clear to his students the eventual labeling or judgment they will encounter simply due to who they are: “[to his students] ... There will be no free rides, no excuses. You already have two strikes against you: your name and your complexion. Because of those two strikes, there are some people in this world who will assume that you know less than you do.” And while the film takes place in the late 80’s, not much has changed over 20 years later--and not just with students of color, but of low socio-economic status, or those with learning disabilities who are limited solely because these tags infiltrate the minds of educators as to the individual student potential. One major struggle towards instruction and learning within detention settings stems from the labeling and the stereotyping students have faced and continue to face, which can inhibit their own attitudes toward rehabilitation; in addition, once students return to regular classroom, these labels hang from them like neon signs impacting the “welcome” they receive or do not receive by teachers and administration. Consequently, educators and Juvenile Detention Officers/Specialists (JDO/JDS) both have to find a way to set aside youth labels and status to focus on not only learning needs but also coping strategies so youth develop resiliency against them, just as Mr. Escalante tries to do with his students in *Stand and Deliver*.

Rist’s (2011/1998) labeling theory proposes that student deviants are socially constructed by the labels education and society assign to them--the tendency to label

students prior to and during their time in detention only contributes to their struggle. For example, when children and adolescents attend school weighed down with the emotional baggage from conditions at home, and then are expected to leave their “bags” at the door and become model students, they understandably resist or have issues concentrating or making the shift between home and school. Rist (2011/1998) poses that “when that resistance is manifested in school by children and is defined by teachers and administrators as truancy, recalcitrance, unruliness, and hostility, or conversely defined as a lack of motivation, intellectual apathy, sullenness, passivity, or withdrawal, the process is ready to be repeated...” (p. 80). And with repetition comes the label “resistant learner,” “at-risk,” “slow,”--or perhaps to a greater degree, “trouble-maker” and “unmotivated.” Furthermore, if students are responding to their home environments via self-destructive behaviors or unacceptable appearance, labels can turn to include “cutter,” “deviant” (due to many tattoos, piercings, etc), “goth,” “emo,” “gang-banger.” Imagine all the social implications and assumptions made by educators and the community when such labels are assigned. Moreover, when students are labeled, that label becomes superimposed on parents, family, and the negative perception of student potential deepens.

Rist (2011/1998) notes that “the only time one can accurately be termed as ‘deviant’ is after the successful application of a label by a social audience...the contingencies of race, class, sex, visibility of behavior, age, occupation, and who one’s friends are all influence the outcome as to whether one is or is not labeled” (p. 77). Rankin (1974), quoting Becker (1963:9) similarly summarizes labeling theory’s definition of deviant: “one to whom that label as successfully been applied; deviant

behavior is behavior that people so label” (p. 584). Such comments suggest that labels can be addressed, minimized, and ultimately removed, lending towards curriculum in detention centers that focus on replacing/exchanging labels and consequently student perception of self--a negative for a positive. Such a comment also suggests that a strong transition program, complete with a school liaison, can help administrators and teachers in schools to which students return welcome them more positively. Therefore, we should ask first, how such negative labeling limits educators in their approach or ability to work with students; second, how these labels limit students’ perception of their own learning ability and potential; third, taking into consideration Rist’s question as to how students may be “socially reconstructed” by labels assigned to them, whether or not education helps to socially construct deviants; and fourth, to what degree, if any, do educators’ expectations of students change or are inspired when labels come attached to returning students.

Rist (2011/1998) approaches labeling theory in education as being concerned first with the self-identity and behavior of individuals and how they may be determined or influenced by the terms used to describe or classify them, and second, how it is associated with the concept of the self-fulfilling prophecy and stereotyping. Rist’s application of labeling theory to schooling can help explain the implications of the use of “deviant,” “slacker,” or “mis-fit” in all environments students enter. According to Rist (2011/1998), “The person who has been typed, in turn, becomes aware of the new definition that has been placed upon him by members of his groups. He, too, takes this new understanding of himself into account when dealing with them...When this happens,

a social type has been ratified, and a person has been socially reconstructed” (quoting Rubington and Weinberg (1973:7, p.77). Additionally, this labeling can occur silently: students know when they are placed with other at-risk students or low-level learners. They understand when curriculum is being adapted, and instead of seeing the situation as helpful, meaningful, and appropriate for their individual circumstance, they could begin to see themselves as always belonging in this place, with this group, and thus never leave this population. Hence, labeling can be a cause and factor in poor academic achievement, which can lead to behavioral problems, truancy, and delinquency. The greatest barrier can be the prolific nature of the label and the inability of the individual to shake what has been assigned--therefore, the status is perpetuated and students may not believe in their ability to succeed: “If men define their situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (Rist, 2011/1998, p.77). Here, Rist quotes W. I. Thomas, ultimately illustrating how the self-fulfilling prophecy works its way into the world of youth offenders. Considering that recidivism rates are still elevated, that many of the youth whom I encountered were repeaters to each facility, some having spent time in all three facilities, and some having been incarcerated over 15 times in their short careers, students take on the roles that are assigned to them by others.

Essentially, students are at the mercy of those in power and sometimes are labeled from an early age, a label that follows them through their educational and social experiences. The trick is how to continue to use the necessary labels education ascribes to in order to meet individual educational needs of youth, for example, accommodations for youth with learning disabilities, physical limitations, or behavioral disorders, while

disallowing those labels to alter a professional's belief as to the potential and learning capability of the youth. While educators may have more patience with a youth with an IEP or 504, does that patience falter when a youth appears in our classroom who has recently been in a detention center or who has returned from even a year at alternative facility like Boys' Town? What are the social and instructional ramifications when this young person tries to re-enter school and classroom culture?

School should "empower" students and expose them to enlightening lessons, stimulating activities, experiential learning, positive social interactions, and the creation of relationships that will aid, not hinder, their enjoyment of learning; but if students do not take on a positive attitude or experience success early on, the slippery slope towards delinquency can occur. Students can enter a classroom fearful, and mask those fears with posturing, a "tough guise" proposed by anti-violence/bullying/sexism educator Jackson Katz as one that pushes forth toughness, a fabricated "coolness," an off-putting attitude that alienates versus one that welcomes attention, help, and instruction, and more drastically, violent responses (*Tough Guise*, 2002). This "tough guise" is certainly not gender specific either as young women also can succumb to similar labeling. Maguin et al (1993), report that delinquent behaviors can begin as early as six or seven years of age, and that low performance in school and subsequent failures can leave students feeling unattached and frustrated. Statistically, in the mid-western state where this research took place, youth begin delinquent behavior at the age of 11 with serious involvement at 14. Essentially, education has time to make a positive impact and really investigate into the reason behind a student's lack of interest, improvement, and thus a decline in grades.

Versus determining this youth to be incapable or resistant or deviant, and thus signing him/her off and retracting, educators need to get close, find reasons, situations, and circumstances lending towards students sliding on that slippery slope--and re-attach the unattached.

Unfortunately though, when students *are* “disempowered,” a lack of emotional connection to school and limited literacy development results, as do poor achievement and at-risk status and/or delinquency. Winborne and Dardaine-Ragguet (1993) stress that the “at-risk” label “promotes class and racial segregation, prejudices, stigma, and a self-fulfilling prophecy of failure” and that “the cultural capital parlayed by students outside of the mainstream culture is considered worthless socially and academically in the classroom” (p. 196). It is in this way that education contributes to the social construction of the deviant by making the individual feel separate and devalued--something which is the complete anti-thesis of what teachers promise and vow to do with the youth in their charge.

Another consideration with labeling is its leaning towards injurious language with its ability to cut deeply and stick with a young person through his/her entire educational journey. While injurious language assumes that the recipient is aware of the term being pointed in his/her direction, I view the language used by educators and the community as injurious to the youth with regard to perception of worth and potential; Butler (1997) argues, “In being called an injurious name, one is derogated and demeaned...by being called a name, one is also, paradoxically, given a certain possibility for social existence, initiated into a temporal life of language that exceeds for social existence, initiated into a

temporal life of language that exceeds the prior purposes that animate that call” (p. 2).

Hence, the student becomes the position and identifies with it; the use of the term is to exert power over another, say from peer to peer, or adult to student, by catching the recipient off guard, out of control, which makes the injury so profound (p.4). While a teacher may never use the term “loser” or “deviant” in the presence of the recipient, attitude may come across in classroom management, perception of ability, and educational approach. All it takes is for one teacher to identify and label that youth in the presence of another educator to create an “identity” for that individual.

The trick is not allowing the label, even if it is accurate to a degree--say a young lady is a “stoner” or a known cutter--to cloud educator perception of student talent and potential.

To further illustrate, students from poor households who are on free/reduced lunch, may face difficulties in school based on the simple label of “poor kid.” Providing information from a national study of elementary school children, Evans, Brooks-Gun, and Klebanov (2011) emphasize common finding that children from the poorest American homes began kindergarten approximately 10 percent behind their wealthier classmates--and as these students progressed through their school experience they lagged even further behind, with a two-fold increase in the gap (p.18). My question, then, is aside from the issues at home, which have an obvious and studied impact on learning, within the school, how do educators perhaps alter their expectations of poor students knowing such information? As Evans et al. (2011) continue, the students who score poorly at the on-set of their educational experience then may be placed/tracked into low-achievement classes,

and thus are limited by their educational experiences, in exposure to “less rigorous curricula” and “less capable peers” which generates “even more substantial between-group gaps” (p.18). In essence, and to apply the theory of labeling, we cannot allow a label of “poor” to equate with “low-ability” or any other negative identity assignment.

Few educators would ever admit to allowing a label to frame their assessment of any youth, but I will admit, that despite many years in the classroom, I still struggle with labels framing my thinking as to what I will “see” within the students’ work or “hear” in the classroom through activities. Labeling exists, certainly, but nevertheless, labeling and labeling theory may have little support or acknowledgement based on education not wanting to admit its weakness. Labeling theory started to make a rise in the early 1970’s, but had little empirical research to back it up. Anne Rankin Mahoney from the University of Denver in her 1974 work, hoped to accumulate what empirical evidence existed to illustrate labeling’s impact on deviant youth. Whereas thoughts on juvenile delinquency focused more on poverty and environmental causes, discipline and punishment, Rankin hoped to illuminate community and societal response: how does societal response to certain behaviors manifest into deviance? (p. 584). According to Rankin, and what is further supported by Rist is the self-fulfilling prophecy of the individual absorbing the stigmatization, the labeling, and the perception of him/herself as a deviant. Thus, the individual accepts this role and the behaviors/peers that accompany it. The potential result is a series of “degradation ceremonies” such as disciplinary procedures at school, with the police, in court, etc., during which the individual “becomes in the eyes of the witnesses a different person” [Mahoney quoting Goffman,1956] and “through a process

of a response and counter-response, the youth moves into a delinquent career” (Mahoney, p. 585).

Interestingly, labeling theory proposes that all those who attempt to help the youth may instead disservice him via labeling, instead developing the delinquent identity. Further suggestion is that if we leave delinquency alone, it will disappear, that youth will mature out of their deviancy: it’s not necessarily peer pressure or socio-economic factors that lead to deviance, but the labeling by authorities, educators, and others who try to advocate for youth, but still use labels (Mahoney, p.585). Lastly, due to labeling theory’s definition, a student who is caught doing a misdeed and then processed is more likely to re-offend than a youth who is not apprehended. Essentially, how deep a youth goes into the juvenile justice system corresponds to the depth and magnitude of the label and the increased challenge of rehabilitation (p. 586). Therefore, when I consider youth, who, during informal interviews, shared their stories of years of placements in and out of group homes and detention centers, I ask whether professionals can take an alternative approach to immersing youth so deeply and recurrently in the system, that the trail of failures infiltrates their sense of worth and ability, which may then translate into classroom (if they are present) performance. Future research would benefit from addressing this question as to how the system itself perpetuates the label and impacts youth ability to leave the system (and the label) in a successful and healthy manner.

Challenging Rist and Rankin is Hirshfield’s (2008) more recent work questioning the notion that today’s incarcerated youth concern themselves with labels to the point that it impacts their self-esteem and therefore identity as a learner and potential good student.

Hirshfield determines that the two “preconditions” for the labeling’s impact to take shape following arrest--a negative connotation connected to the arrest and treatment from the community and peers which confirms that label/negative connotation--didn’t always occur in his study (p. 590), finding that many students “maintained healthy ‘delusions’ about their capacities (quoted in Maruna, 2001) and inflated expectations about their futures” (p 591). He notes that “virtually all the offenders reported being fully welcomed back to into their families, peer groups, and their communities soon after release” (p. 592). Of course they did. Students returned to the negative environments, the dysfunctional home situations, and peers who probably were also participating in the very activities for which the youth were charged. While many youth during informal interviews shared a belief that they would attend college and wanted to (they had dreams of being lawyers, architects, writers, business owners, and ironically, teachers), they just did not “see” the path to get there, the importance of attending school and doing the work, and the reality of the hard work involved, which is indicative of many youth who will be the first ones in their families to attend college--or simply graduate high school. Essentially, what Hirshfield saw was the “healthy delusion” and the “inflated expectations.” Even though labels may not influence the youth and their perception of ability, the labels are still attached and viewed by the other, and resultantly, can impact the adults, professionals, and community where the youth wishes to go--leading to shut doors and inaccessible opportunities.

In addition, whereas Rist’s theory would suggest that teachers negatively view “troublemakers” or “deviants,” or that students returning from being incarcerated are

tagged with red flag for potential disruption (Nurse, 2010), Hirshfield reports that teachers in his study altered their behavior towards returning offenders to help them, to prevent future issues...more like lectures and offers of help versus ostracizing them (p. 589). Nevertheless, my focus here is how teachers view student potential and ability given the court assigned label of juvenile delinquent/offender and thus frame their teaching approach. Teachers could be quite accepting and welcoming to returning youth yet still fail to challenge them academically or accurately measure student potential. For example, when doing this lecturing as Hirshfield suggests, what language do they use? What is the tone of the discourse? Do they use words like “thug” or “deviant” --or is their speech more positive and encouraging? During instructional times, is the curriculum simplified or “dumbed-down” for the juvenile delinquent? Are classroom educators willing to work through the tough guise, the hardened exterior until students are ready to learn? Certainly, how educators approach transitioning students can make the difference in student success and recidivism rates.

Thus, while Hirshfield’s recent study on labeling theory is relevant and addresses attitudes of current youth culture and urban communities, he fails to address that labeling can impact the teaching approach and methods used by education professionals to the point that inequity in education occurs. Students, therefore, from an early age can regard school with distaste, not finding the pleasure or excitement in school, and so fall behind. In fair turn, however, Hirshfield does quote Mahoney (1974, p. 588) supporting labeling’s possible impact: “The crucial labeling experiences for a juvenile may occur long before he finds his way to court. The court’s label represents the end product of a series of

institutional reactions to a youth” (p. 586). He also includes comments of Gabriel, a youth in his study, who shares his experience with teacher attitudes: “So, if they (teachers) see I’m a person that gang bangs in front of the school, comes to school high, cuts school, gets into fights, beats up kids, I’m not going to be looked at like a normal student” (p. 586). Any educator or adult may respond to Gabriel in such a way in response to these negative behaviors, yet, when the student sits in the classroom, whether in a mainstream school or a detention setting, he should be seen as a learner with potential, negative behaviors aside, so that maybe, just maybe, Gabriel can be inspired and then potentially change his habits. Additionally, people must consider why Gabriel does these things in the first place and whether his motivation to do so can be altered.

Theoretical Framework Part II: Cultural Capital at Work

By taking the perspective that education’s focus is to increase student cultural capital, analyzing the educational programs within the juvenile justice system using Bourdieu’s work seems appropriate. Most scholars would support the claim that having cultural capital is desirable and beneficial; in the field of education, cultural capital is an asset that assigns privileges, allowing for greater marketability for students and graduates. While cultural capital as a theory has been manipulated to serve various research purposes, in this dissertation study, the application of cultural capital exists within the field of the juvenile justice system and is defined as “the site of struggles in which individuals seek to maintain or alter the distribution of the forms of capital specific to it” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 14). Because altering the habitus of the adjudicated youth and increasing student cultural capital is the basis of rehabilitation, the Bourdieuan sense will

be applied here specifically to literacy acquisition, keeping in mind that facilities do offer a spectrum of other services in attempts to holistically serve youth. Also noteworthy, “deconstruction” and “reconstruction” of the habitus may present unpredictable conflict due to individuals being so predisposed in regards to behavior, tastes, what routine has been conditioned as “normal,” and what goals they set for themselves--all of which are quite unconscious. Bourdieu (1982/2011) stressed that cultural capital is the key to success in society and the way in which people can “produce profits of distinction” that make them more identifiable from others (p. 83); additionally, dominant groups use cultural capital to “mark cultural distance and proximity, monopolize privileges, and exclude and recruit new occupants of high status positions” (Lamont & Lareau, 1988, p. 38). Therefore, studying this field of education in terms of building cultural capital and changing habitus can offer a unique lens by which to study the current juvenile justice system.

As suggested, Bourdieu’s “habitus” refers to that which could be linked or manifested as traits or habits: John B. Thompson offers the following definition in his editor’s introduction to Bourdieu’s *Language & Symbolic Power* (1991), “The habitus is a set of *dispositions* which incline agents to act and react in certain ways. The dispositions generate practices, perceptions and attitudes which are ‘regular’ without being consciously co-ordinated or governed by any ‘rule’ (p. 13). We see habitus in these traits or habits that we acquire from our families and environments, and these dispositions can help or hinder social placement in the greater spectrum of society. As Thompson furthers, the habitus is composed of traits inculcated and second nature: how we hold

silverware or place our napkin at the dinner table; how we pronounce words and the colloquialisms we use; and ultimately, our manners and sense of etiquette. Secondly, these traits also mirror social positioning and structures under which we have been raised--and the habitus is most comfortable in the environment where it was created, because it dictates how individuals respond, react, and survive, employing the social norms and expectations of that environment. That habitus may not function as well, or experience resistance, in other environments or be accepted. We are talking here about youth who are polished, well-spoken, socially appropriate, versus those with a rougher approach and speech pattern that does not reflect the dominant culture or societal norm, in essence, youth often implicated in the juvenile justice system. One question that arises is whether the habitus of students within detention facilities can be altered or expanded in such a manner as to match expectations, or understand how to code switch, to increase the likelihood of successful re-entry to their home communities and schools.

Lamont and Lareau explain that while Bourdieu believed that youth could build and acquire “social, linguistic, and cultural competencies” (p.36) which mimic or match their wealthier counterparts, because of their habitus, some will never truly achieve the “normalcy” or the “inherentness” of these qualities, and so, will instead exist in lower class structures. Nevertheless, considering the position of youth in detention, improving upon their ability to read, write, and analyze, for example, to any degree, can improve their position upon release. Furthermore, expanding their awareness, their learning, and their comprehension of dominant structures, self-agency, and how to manipulate

environments to suit their purposes may improve their potential to accumulate more cultural capital as they progress through their transition.

As habitus leads us to think about the possible actions we can take, educators can help youth in detention change or alter how they view their potential and their possibilities. Bourdieu (1982/2011) believed that room for “human agency” did exist in that habitus is socially and culturally constructed (p. 36), and I, too, believe that some elements of habitus can be transformed, and thus, social placement. Yet, because “by virtue of the habitus, individuals are *already* predisposed to act in certain ways, pursue certain goals, avow certain tastes, and so on” (Thompson, 2001, p. 17), argument still holds against the possibility and potential of alteration. If we look at another definition of habitus--“the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them” (Wacquant 2005: 316, cited in Navarro 2006: 16)--we can consider the development of delinquent or other inappropriate behavior and their beginnings. For example, one youth encountered during this study whose parents were methamphetamine cooks and dealers who expected him to sell their product, and another youth stated that everyone in her family abandoned her, expected her to fail, and enjoyed watching her fail, and so became a runaway. Given these examples and others like them, try we must to help youth alter a habitus that lends to delinquent or self-destructive behaviors, actions anti the dominant and accepted structures. Students need to rethink their own perceptions of what they can do and be. By transforming their habitus--the undesirable socialized norms and tendencies indicative of their negative

environments--students may inevitably increase their cultural capital through the experiences that result. The trick is to inspire and facilitate this change while maintaining what is unique and special to them--their own cultural capital that can contribute to the richness of the world.

Typically, cultural capital alludes to the knowledge, skill set, and understanding indicative of the dominant culture and surroundings that allow one mobility on the social market; cultural capital is enhanced through education, social experiences, employment of speech and dress to match expectations. Can we consider, then, what cultural capital youth may possess or acquire from their home environments that is important, valuable, and beneficial as they proceed in life? Assisting students to become self-advocates in their own metamorphosis of sorts, by creating an awareness of what aspects of their habitus may negatively or positively impact their success, could be monumental in their post-detention life. The greatest obstacle, however, is finding a way to get these changes to “stick” as falling back into the old deleterious routine happens all too often. Bourdieu wanted room to exist for change, but accomplishing change for students so embedded in negative and self-destructive behaviors is a monumental task to say the least.

For some students, cultural capital ensures participation in higher class structures, but for the youth offender who is extremely lacking in the desired cultural capital, he/she is guaranteed a spot in the lower strata--unless a change occurs. The question becomes how to get delinquent students to grasp the concept of cultural capital enough to realize that it could be key in their permanent transition out of detention. Bourdieu (1982/2011)

comments that cultural capital is “the best hidden and socially most determinant educational investment” (p. 85); the problem however, is that while students can “see” what they need to be an accepted part of society, the pathway is obscured or fuzzy. Students in detention are often not lacking in self-esteem, as Hirshfield (2004) finds; they just lack in self-proficiency and skill/strategy sets needed to succeed. The challenge facing educators is to help youth offenders comprehend the difference between negative cultural capital acquired from involvement with gangs, deviant friends, inappropriate adult role models, and substance abuse, and the positive forms resulting from employment, participation in school clubs and activities, church organizations, healthy, nurturing relationships, and finally, the difference exchanging one (negative) for the other (positive) can mean in ultimately leaving delinquent behavior behind, and subsequently, youth detention forever.

Yet, acquiring cultural capital may be easier said than done within a detention center, as educators must additionally negotiate the environment of security cameras, locked doors, counselors, lawyers, judges, limited resources due to funding and once again security, and of course, students of wide-ranging abilities, experiences, learning levels, physical, emotional, and psychological inhibitors. Furthermore, schools on the outside with expectations such as standardized test scores and records of achievement may lack true understanding of the culture within a detention facility and that sometimes, test taking and assignment completion take more time simply due to student condition (mental, emotional, and physical health) and attendance. Students must negotiate the uncertainty of their future and the seriousness of their status, thus learning may not be at

the forefront of their concerns. Lastly, the two primary ways people can gain cultural capital, according to Winkle-Wagner (2010) are through social origins, family and schooling; unfortunately for many delinquent youth, both avenues are severely impeded. As Winkle-Wagner (2010) also emphasizes, “the cumulative acquisition of cultural capital is implicit: one who acquires high-status cultural capital through family origin and through education will be more privileged in society generally” (p.6), the obstacles facing youth in detention become obvious.

The first strike exists as family is often absent due to many factors listed here, but not limited to, 1) low SES and situations where parents must work many jobs to provide for their families; 2) the incarceration, incapacitation, or absence of one parent; 3) the results of divorce, i.e. less parental supervision, instability of living conditions, and emotional impact of a separated family; 4) lack of sibling role models, due to perhaps their own incarceration or involvement in destructive behaviors; and 5) disorganized neighborhoods that lack after school programs, mentoring, tutoring, or strong emotional attachments to elders and culture. Maguin, Loeber, & LeMahieu (1993) stress that family involvement has been “both theoretically and empirically” assigned to literacy development and success in school, as well as a factor in delinquency (p. 89). Thus, if family is not supportive or present, students will lack the cultural capital that would be rewarded in traditional schools or larger societies. Massey, Charles, Lundy, and Fischer (2003) present the “theory of capital deficiency” in their work that covers the social origins of first year college students in the U.S. They define cultural capital as “knowledge or the norms, styles, conventions, and tastes that pervade specific social

settings and allow individuals to navigate them in ways that increase their odds of success “ (p. 6). Parents of higher SES are able to provide the resources and experiences students need to acquire cultural capital--yet, students found in detention are typically from low SES families, and thus will most likely be capitally *deficient*. While Massey et al. (2003), focus on the spectrum of capital (social, cultural, human, and financial) in regards to the theory of capital deficiency, they also recognize their interrelatedness. Considering this, then, if students are deficient in one, say, cultural capital--the desired cultural capital--will they be deficient in the others? Perhaps. But ultimately, without family/social support, youth will struggle to acquire the necessary levels of cultural capital to be competitive in the world market or just to meet status quo.

The second strike, schooling, is rough for youth in detention because they typically have not experienced positive relationships or success in education environments. Doing work at home may be impossible; they may not have technology needed for today's school assignments. As a result, their literacy levels can be low, their confidence can be low, their grades can then take a dive while their truancy or disciplinary rates can climb due to not feeling or being successful, and their willingness or effort in the approach to learning can suffer. In essence, again, these youth are deficient because their primary resources have failed them. When students enter school lacking accepted forms of cultural capital that they should have received at home, they begin a step behind their peers. Because schools reward the desired cultural capital, which is expected of students when they walk through the door, when students come with empty pockets, they are labeled and placed on the shelf--even subtly--by the schools--

thus resulting in lowered expectations, potential tracking situations, increase in discipline, and unequal educational experiences. As noted before, youth entering the juvenile justice system test out at lower achievement levels than their non-offending peers. So, what happened?

Implications in Juvenile Justice Education

The juvenile justice system has a great responsibility and task in its hands: to repair labeling's impact, reinvigorate a love for learning, and rebuild lost or buried skills. Through literacy development and programming, schools within the juvenile justice system help form skills and awareness these youth need to survive within the dominant social structure. Given that dispositions are "inculcated, structured, durable, generative, and transposable" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 12), one must wonder, however, to what extent the habitus of the individual can be altered to potentially erase or push to the background undesirable traits--especially considering that many youth return to the very environments that influenced the habitus--and while incarcerated, they are living 24/7 around other detainees like themselves versus having exposure to more positive peer role models.

Moreover, when Bourdieu and Rist's theories are applied to students in the juvenile justice system, the juvenile justice "system" itself must be examined. A possibility exists that facilities can also limit literacy development and therefore youth success by perpetuating the stereotypes/stigma students face--even thinking that change is unrealistic. Further study into the actual curriculum adopted and used by detention center schools can illuminate impact. For example, worksheet curriculums such as the Portable

Assisted Study Sequence (PASS) may offer credit recovery opportunities, but how they are implemented can make the difference in building student confidence and actual skill base. Vocational programs would offer obvious benefit, but safety concerns with machinery and supplies make security departments hesitant.

Lastly, on-line credit recovery programs like A+, Odyssey, and Plato allow for individualized instruction and student ownership of learning through independent work, but can on-line replace the invaluable benefits offered by classroom/teacher interactions? And, to what extent and consistency are these on-line programs offered? Some schools do appropriate and meaningful work with young people, including the implementation of successful packet and vocational programs, but unfortunately, many other centers are merely holding facilities, doing little to engage and inspire youth--or facilities too encumbered by security policy to make any real advancement in educating youth. Tannis (2014) reports that only 65% of all residential facilities offer education programming to all incarcerated students. Ultimately, while increasing cultural capital and removing labels may present some insight and solutions, limitations and obstacles run so deep that one may question the point of trying, as success seems unreachable and distant.

A key missing element to potentially answering these concerns are the necessary conversations with the students themselves. Most of the information published on adjudicated youth seems quantitative in nature with little voice given to said youth, perhaps due to the difficulty in gaining permission and confidentiality constraints. Youth in the juvenile justice system are a highly protected population, almost to the point that developing appropriate curriculum and transitional services is encumbered. During my

own research, I was halted multiple times by various social services overseeing juvenile offenders. Seemingly, while we scratch our heads as to how to best help youth in detention facilities, state offices and politicians are quite bent on keeping people away from students.

Nevertheless, with persistence and the right advocates, research can venture on into this obscured area of education. Anne M. Nurse (2010), in her ethnographic study, *Locked In, Locked Out*, presents 40 adolescent males from within the Ohio juvenile justice system, noting the inconsistencies and conflicts of the system and how these challenges impact the boys she interviews. Readers learn about the crimes and situations that led these young men to their current status, how they perceive the incarceration process and the programs offered during their stay. While not theoretical, Nurse's study provides a necessary lens to view the culture of the adjudicated youth living in a lockdown situation, allowing readers to experience the boys as individuals who do want to improve their situation, earn a high school diploma, and get into counseling. Nurse supports the notion that many youth comes to detention with labels attached, as being on what she refers to as the "school to prison pipeline" (p. 39) for students who have experienced repeated educational failures and so are thought to be on the road to delinquency. And, when students are released back to their home schools, they are still red-flagged as having "disruptive potential" versus allowing a clean slate and the opportunity for a new, more positive label (p. 135). Nurse notes that while education within detention centers can help create responsible citizens and improved attitudes towards schooling, detention school administrators still face numerous challenges in

regards to curriculum, instruction, and assessment because students enter facilities years behind their non-offending counterparts. Nevertheless, many of the boys in her study attested to their optimistic view of the education and services they were receiving. They knew receiving counseling/rehab services and attending school were beneficial and necessary for a successful transition back to their home communities.

While Nurse's study makes sound recommendations for policy implementation, further research could specifically look at curriculum offered, where gaps lie, how teaching and learning occurs, and how to create implementation practices that would best serve the transient nature of the juvenile justice system. Devore and Gentilcore (1999) of the Montgomery County Youth Center in Norristown, Pennsylvania, share their program addressing the needs of youth in detention to produce a "smarter" and "better" person (p. 96). Their aim is to reject former theories of punishment and create new approaches to help students build relationships and mentor other students.

Thus, the more we know about incarcerated youth, the more opportunity we have to improve their rehabilitation experiences so as to give them a positive future. Learning about how they view their experiences while in detention and the struggles they face upon release will assist in development of better curriculum and practice, and more importantly, transition services and support. The number one goal of detention center curriculum should be to inspire youth to want to learn again, to help students earn credits and to believe that they can work towards a GED completion or a high school diploma, even take on dual credit or on-line college coursework. That goal should also include working on students' social skills, knowledge of etiquette, presentation, dress, speech--all

those points of polish that will lend towards societal embrace of the individual as part of the collective whole. In other words, the goal equals the alteration of habitus through change in self-perception and presentation while still maintaining that which makes the individual unique. This goal can become reality for many students if both the detention center and coordinating home/community school establish positive connections between student and adult, inspire positive attitudes towards learning, and do so in a trusting and respectful environment. This goal can also become a reality if relationships are also built with local businesses and community colleges to set up mentoring programs, scholarships for continuing education, and support services to maintain levels of confidence students have built while in detention.

This approach is supported by Blomberg (2010) of the Correctional Education Association, who maintains that “positive educational experiences and associated academic achievement that result in stronger school attachment and a sense of the benefits of education among incarcerated youths should increase the likelihood of youths returning to and staying in school following release” (p. 10). This notion is furthered by the *Wingspread Declaration: A National Strategy for Improving School Connections* (2004) which states, “School connection is the belief by students that adults in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals”; students must feel that high expectations exist for achievement, that they are safe physically and emotionally, and view their relationships to adults as positive (p. 233). The study, based on empirical evidence, wants to create a school environment in which all students feel a part of “the educational endeavor.” According to the study, evidence supported the connection

between student attachment and educational motivation, classroom engagement, and improved school attendance; in addition, these factors existed across racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups. Wright and Fitzpatrick (2006) also make the link between connectedness--i.e. students feeling cared for by their teachers and peers--and relief from violence or delinquency, as in they were less likely to cause or initiate destructive/violent behaviors (p. 1437).

Nevertheless, fostering such connections is challenging, because, honestly, educators are working with 11-18 year olds, who are *in prison*, facing an intense change in their life circumstances, one of uncertainty and unanswered questions--essentially, a challenging reality and condition for such young people. In addition, some of these youth face adult charges or longer incarceration for repeated offense. So, how do we consider youth in detention? As Randy, Director of Education at the Wayne County Youth Center shared (Personal Communication with Randy Farmer Spring 2010)

Well, they [students] hate being here. I'd hate being here--you're locked up--your life's under control by someone else. We have kids who will tell us they like it here. We have a lot of kids tell us they wish they could go to school here. None of the kids like *being* here, but they like the school, and there are kids who like the safety and the consistency, and by consistency I mean food and a routine, predictability which they don't always have in their life at home...while they may feel like they've lost some control, they are also realizing the ability they have to influence the outcome.

Within this particular program, the Randy (Personal Communication with Randy Farmer Spring 2010) stated that these students responded quickly to the calm/caring nature of the teachers and the creative activities they used. The school tried to be just that--a school--and withdrew itself as much as possible from the “behind bars” aspect. Randy shared that his staff’s focus is to be encouraging, supportive, and give students what they need: an opportunity to be successful and start the process of feeling good about themselves through positive interaction. Students in all three facilities observed throughout this study confessed a dual love/hate relationship with their respective placements: structure, predictability, and adult support was comforting, but the clothes, food, lack of control, and the prison-like atmosphere was understandably disheartening.

What many fail to consider is that in detention, one of the greatest obstacles for students is simply functioning in this dual role as a student/offender--yet another label. This dual status which Sarroub (2005) terms as “in-betweenness” or the “attempt(s) to create real or imagined boundaries to describe what people do to survive and get along with one another on a daily basis” (p. 80) can weigh heavily on the young person’s mind, affect attitudes towards school, and so impinge on his/her path towards rehabilitation because they, once again, do not belong. Much weighs on their minds: when is their court date, when will they “roll-up” (be released); who will “jump” or attack them in the hallway; is their girlfriend ok or even their child; should I kill myself; or where will I go when I leave here? Many youth observed and interviewed in facilities didn’t mind school, loved to read, and were certainly opinionated when inspired to discuss. One student claimed to love vocabulary and creating new words that “I’d have my own

dictionary by now!” Yet, with the complication of family, community issues, and well, having issues with authority, students admitted to skipping school and falling back into their delinquent ways. The desire was to connect with the home school, but the draw away from school was strong.

Undeniably, these youth must, by law, be educated; members of society may not take this into consideration or that these student/youth offenders need educational services just as much, if not more, than their adolescent counterparts. As noted, studies illustrate that a correlation exists between low literacy and youth offenses, and because “literacy represents a key determinant of academic, social, and economic success” (O’Cummings, Bardack, & Gonsoulin, 2010, p.1-2), literacy development and programming in juvenile justice education can be key in reducing recidivism. And not only development, but improvement and advancement to facilitate a successful reentry society following incarceration (Malmgren & Leone, 2000). Gail Coulter (2004) agrees, feeling that students who learn to read, write, communicate--expand their literacy to include technology--have a greater transition success rate back to mainstream life and public education (p. 321). Conversely, students who do not improve their skills (cultural capital) while incarcerated have a greater chance of *not* being successful upon their release (O’Cummings, Bardack, and Gonsoulin, 2010, p. 1). Therefore, curriculum focusing directly on the development of literacy--of multiple literacies--can make learning interesting for detention students, it can alter their habitus, their self-perception and view of their future, and it can help them build cultural capital, providing the tools they need to succeed post-release.

Yet, again, Bourdieu (1991) may remind us that because the habitus is stubborn and rigid, and that individuals are already predisposed to certain actions, interests, etc. (p. 17), students in detention may not know how to act or respond to educational programs geared towards improving their cultural capital simply because of their previous social status, environment, and experiences. Administrators and teachers in each facility observed, Clarke, Erbine, and Wayne, mentioned the initial resistance and attitude youth exhibit upon first arrival; they do not want to attend school, they do not want to participate or appear interested in activities. They are so conditioned to not “do” school, that they carry this mentality of “I can’t--I won’t--and you can’t make me” with them until they understand that they can learn and achieve. But, if they end up in a detention center with limited resources and inadequate educational programming, they will have greater difficulties upon leaving due to the unaltered habitus compounded with the record that follows them. If students return to school at a lower grade level, or with no earned credits during their incarceration, i.e., with no evidence of increased capital, then the school will not welcome them back as positively, or at all, which is a key factor in the reintegration process.

CHAPTER 3

SCHOOLS BEHIND BARBED WIRE: CLARKE, ERBINE, AND WAYNE

"I truly believe that everybody on the outside has very little sense of the culture inside."

Randy--Director of Education, Wayne

Agar's (1994) concept of "languaculture" (p. 60)⁶ can offer a vehicle for discussion as to the culture and language present within a school within a detention facility. The term can also be applied to the variant culture and language used within a facility school versus that used in an outside school. Additionally, professionals connected to the juvenile justice system must be well versed and able to shift space and terminology to address the plethora of audiences they face. For example, often, outside administrators who visit detention centers don't comprehend entirely what they witness or observe as they are looking for either typical school environments or they only see a prison and students who must be educated somehow. The culture and language present in a juvenile detention center attempts to blend education with security, working to integrate the nurturance of a school in a situation of punishment. Both sides are asked to acknowledge, respect, and be fluent in the others' beliefs, practices, and rituals--in essence, one another's culture. Translation, then, becomes a necessary tool for survival for teachers who take on the challenges indicative of this setting. The challenge comes with the shifting of space, of context, of *discourses* throughout the day. No student teaching prepares young professionals for this languaculture of "sliders," "segs," or "Control"--or of having security presence in the classroom. And throughout the training

⁶ "languaculture" refers to Agar's (1994) "clunky term"-- the "necessary tie" --(p.60) that brings together both culture and language, blending as they are two "necessary" parts of the same whole. One cannot exist without the other.

of security professionals, I doubt they are required to take courses in education theory, practice, and language--its own languaculture. Each audience presents obstacles of acceptance, so while professionals within a secured facility are members of each group and users working towards a mastery of each social language, finding the “sweet spot” or perfect blend of communication within each is tricky, and at times, daunting. Yet, as Agar (1994) notes, “forging connections between two languacultures enriches the understanding of both” (p. 96).

Gee (2009) further observes that when we are presented with two social groups, one of prestige (i.e. mainstream or “normal” education) and one more casual (i.e. alternative or detention based), we will “seek a satisfying balance and compromise” as we are “manipulating hundreds of variables at the same time” (p.118). Therefore, the concept of languaculture extends to the divide existing between classrooms on the “outs” versus those inside alternative environments. When I first began observing schools in detention centers and researching juvenile justice education, the focus was *not* what caused youth to be in the detention center, but what happened to them once the court placed them there. However, I have learned that the social circumstances surrounding court involved youth is directly connected to their past and current schooling experiences. As long as these social problems exist--poverty, gang violence, drug activity, and the lack of community resources--we will continue to need schools in detention and other alternative programs to bring services to these students that were missing prior. All educational professionals who touch the lives of court-affiliated youth need to forge connections suggested by Agar (1994). In essence, professionals must learn the language

and culture within these schools to bridge understanding, acknowledgement, and respect between educators on both sides of the razor wire. Therefore, what follows is a discussion of themes that emerged from an analysis based on field observations and interviews within each site. For these students, survival mode is all they know, and these schools commit themselves to pulling youth out of survival mode and into learning mode. The irony here is that often educators are also in survival mode, working with limited information, resources, and time to spark a flame, to alter self-destructive behaviors, to change self-perception, and increase personal cultural capital.

Wayne County Youth Center

The Mission of the Youth Services Center is to protect the interest and safety of the community and the resident by providing a secure, safe and structured environment for youth and to offer the necessary educational and developmental resources to a culturally diverse detention population. Our goal is to accomplish our Mission in a secure, orderly, and structured environment which is maintained through direct supervision by well trained competent staff. We are committed to providing a well-structured environment. This is being done through comprehensive educational, spiritual, and recreational programs which encompasses accountability based behavior management. Structure and accountability affords the youth less time to choose unproductive or problematic behaviors.

The students in the Education Program have diverse backgrounds, interests, needs, and academic records. It is the mission of the education program to

provide educational opportunities that allows students the opportunity to enhance basic academic skills, technology, career options, and develop personal growth skills through individualized instructional programs of study. The education program introduces multiple pathways which might include earning credits toward completing a high school diploma, preparation for the General Education Diploma testing, and Skills needed for lifelong learning. (School Website)

Wayne County Youth Facility sits on the west side of what is described by many as a “small big town.” With both an urban and suburban feel to it, the community’s population is roughly 270,000 people with a median income of \$46, 560. In 2009, juvenile arrests equaled 3224, with a male to female ratio of 2.3:1 and a white to non-white ratio of 3.3:1. The community is predominantly white with only 8.9% of the population identified as “non-white.” Lastly, 9.6 % of all ages live in poverty (Marshall et al., 2009, p.1-4). Wayne functions as a basis for comparison first, because as the newest facility, Wayne illustrates more modern trends in facility design; second, because it is the site of my first observations within a detention facility and classroom, Wayne serves as my starting point; however, all three sites share and exchange youth depending on court placement, available space, and student need. Administration and teachers in each facility to some extent communicate, visit for professional development opportunities, and exchange ideas about curriculum, procedure, and daily routine.

Wayne serves pre-adjudicated youth who await their hearing. Building capacity is approximately 80 youth, but average numbers fluctuate between 40-60 youth. Students

travel from their living areas, or “pods,” to school centrally located in the detention center, which has been explained to me as a “Big D” shape. Classrooms and doors all face inward; giant windows allow for easy monitoring by security staff and administration; and an impressive library and computer center sits at the center of the school. Bathrooms and drinking fountains are available here for students with permission. Each class is equipped with desks and plastic chairs, a teacher’s desk, a projector, screen--typical classroom items. Wayne also has a Smart Board and MacBooks on a traveling cart teachers can use for various projects. Wayne has a middle school sized gym where students attend PE regularly. Security escorts students to each class and remain in the classroom or in the doorway throughout the period. Student attend school before and after lunch which is served in a cafeteria setting, with each class running for 40 minutes. At 2 p.m., during the security shift change, students go on lockdown until 3 p.m. during the security shift change. At that point, they then attend Life Skills, an after school program, until 8 p.m. only pausing for dinner.

The building itself sat off of a typically busy road and behind a local mattress business, but the more important location marker was that across the field is the state penitentiary. The facility was relatively new, opening in February of 2001 and looked more like a school from the outside than the “prison” that it is. The school’s staff consists of certificated teachers and para-educators, offering courses in Math, Science, English/ Language Arts, Social Studies, PE, Computers/Technology, and Fine Arts, which involves the teaching of drawing skills, use of watercolors, etc, and activities involving music. Other classes offered were Gender Studies and Positive Action to address social skills

and building self esteem. The Life Skills program after school was created to “provide an individualized, comprehensive, and gender specific program focused on developing basic life skills,” which could involve everything from etiquette and character education, to cooking, sewing, resume writing, and learning more about the juvenile justice system and transitioning upon release” (Farmer, 2009, p. 9-10). Students spent approximately one hour in their rooms/cells during the day during the shift change of juvenile detention officers (JDO’s), and then again at night, from 10 p.m to 6 a.m. During the remainder of the time, when students were not in school or Life Skills, they had open recreation always separated by individual residential “pods.”

Educational services were provided by Wayne County who contracted through the local public school district; therefore, teachers and administrators are under agreement with the school board, as any other teacher/administrator in the district, and follow their salary schedule, benefits, and calendar. The county is reimbursed for expenses by the State Department of Health and Human Services.

I visited the facility off and on for various research projects, but also to gain a baseline knowledge and comfort level with the daily routine of such a facility. Randy, the Director of Education, or in more familiar terms, the principal, served as my main informant and guide, facilitating my entry into various areas of the school and pods, but also respecting the wishes of individual teachers who did not want me to enter their classrooms. For research prior to this dissertation study, the focus was on observing and recording what people said and did, the happenings, and the ways teachers were able to get students to learn. The focus was also gaining a more comprehensive understanding of

the youth who enter detention and staff secure. Given Randy's communication and conveyance of his teachers' protectiveness of their domains and the concern that my presence may compromise the nature of their classroom and the ability to work with the students, I hung back and did not impose on their space or time. Randy, with 22 years experience in education, had spent the last eleven years at Wayne, first as a Social Studies teacher and Staff Secure curriculum coordinator and then as principal.

Thus, the information presented here regarding Wayne stems mostly from visits chaperoned by the director of education and informal interviews with teaching and security staff, none of which can be shared here due to IRB limitations. Fortunately, what can be shared, still, are the nature of the school day, the culture, and philosophies present at Wayne.

Students in the center range in age from 10-18 because in the state of this study, youth are considered minors until the age of 19, unless they are placed in adult court. Students live in "pods" and are ranked during processing according to their individual security risk. Within each pod, available to students are televisions, video games, foosball and other recreational activities. The boys are housed in A, B, C, and D pods. Girls are in the E pod. B pod is the highest security risk and does not interact with the rest of the pods in detention. Teachers travel to the B pod and hold school within its commons area. B pod only leaves for PE; even their meals are brought to the area. A pod is typically made up of older youth and is next in line for security risk, followed by D pod. C pod is the lowest level of risk and composed of younger students. Girls are considered as "lower risk," and as the numbers of girls in detention is much lower than boys, they have only

one pod in the facility. Students at Wayne wear jean-like sweat pants with elasticized waists, sweatshirts or polos, and velcro sneakers.

In a separate area is Staff Secure, a minimum security school, segregated from detention, in which girls and boys go to school together, eat meals, and do chores, but always under supervision of the JDO's. Staff Secure students, like B pod, do not leave their area to go to school, as the others do; school comes to them so as to keep them isolated from the other pods according to court ordered segregation from violent offenders. Boys and girls rooms/cells lie in separate living areas positioned on either side of the classroom/learning space. Their doors are electronically monitored, but not locked, hence the term "staff secure" as the environment is secured by staff--unlike detention where the doors are always locked and monitored. Hence, Staff Secure students, because they are lower-level, non-violent offenders, have greater freedom and mobility.

In 2008, the Attention Center took in approximately 800 students, and of that number, as noted in Randy's annual report, 1 out of every 3 were repeat intakes (p.13). Boys outnumbered girls 3.4:1. White students made up the greatest number of students (56.3%), followed by Blacks (23.75%), Hispanic (13%), American Indian/Alaskan Native (2.88%), Asian/Pacific Islander (2.5%), and other (1.63%) ("Voices for Children," 2009, p. 56-57). Of those students, 233 were identified as special education students (Framer, 2009, p. 7). Randy (Personal Communication with Randy Farmer Spring 2010) shared that the average length of stay for a student in their facility is 10 days or less, but some can remain for thirty days or longer.

Clarke County Youth Center

...will create a safe, secure, stable and enriching environment for juveniles, staff, and all constituencies of the facility. We are committed to a holistic approach to assess and address individual needs of youth. We provide cultural awareness, respect, education and teach social skills of youth in our care. We are committed to high quality programs to strengthen the quality of life for youth and families which shall contribute to community viability. We are a supportive, unified team of trained professionals. We maintain high standards for staff and provide opportunities for growth and development--Mission Statement

The Clarke County Youth Center sits in a large mid-western city, the most diverse city in the state, with a population of 492,000 people, a median household income of \$47,193, with 11.1% of all ages living in poverty. In 2009, juvenile arrests totaled 4429 with a male to female ratio of 2:1 and a white to non-white ratio of 1.6:1. Total runaway arrests was 32. (Marshall et al., 2009). Within the Clarke County Youth Center, yearly admissions are approximately 1100 students with an average stay of 28.3 days, according to administrator Michael Bloom. Clarke may also house youth from three surrounding counties. According to the school's website, the mission of the center is to "provide students with opportunities to continue their academic course work from their home schools, to earn credits towards graduation or grade advancement and to plan a seamless transition to school or the world of work."

The school's capacity is roughly 144, with population rising to almost 200 in the past; however, throughout this study, numbers fluctuated between 60-100 youth in both staff secure and detention units. As of January, 2014, the student population was nearly

100 youth living in 2 female units and 9 male units. Each unit holds a maximum of 24 students. If the units are full, students double up in rooms using a “boat bunk” which is a green plastic, almost rescue stretcher like portable bunk that can slide in and out of rooms. Student population varies, yet incarcerated youth are predominantly minority, with a 4:1 male to female ratio. The facility has four administrators: a superintendent, Mr. Alex Benjamin (Caucasian), an academic administrator, Mr. Michael Bloom (African-American), a lead teacher, Rodney Rogue (Caucasian), and Ebony Forrest (African-American female) who retired from the local public school system as an administrator and now works part-time for Clarke running the Career Exploration Center. Clarke currently staffs eight certificated teachers in core subject areas--English, social studies, science, math, physical education, and special education. Two para-educators serve as support for study-hall like classes and on-line coursework through Plato, Angel, A+ recovery⁷, and in the future, on-line college course work through the local community college for students who have earned their GEDs. One former Juvenile Detention Specialist has now become a school liaison/transition specialist⁸ who keeps track of student credit status, reading and test scores, each student’s academic advancement plan, and student placement after release. Another former JDS was trained by the local school system in the literacy development program Read Right and now serves as literacy coach, accompanied part-time by another trained RR coach from the school district. Three teachers have their master’s degrees in either their discipline or in education, yet they

⁷ Plato, A+, and Odyssey are on-line credit recovery classes students can take independently. In mainstream schools, these programs are used as an alternate to the classroom.

⁸ Since the time of the completion of this research. Clarke has added another transition specialist/liaison

taught what was needed, often tutoring in all areas to help students acquire credits towards course and diploma completion, improve lacking skills, and mostly, to make social and emotional connections with students.

Clarke County is the oldest of the facilities visited/studied during the process of this research. The facility has a gym; individual classrooms (which are no longer used) with teacher desks, materials, files, cabinetry, and a computer; an on-line classroom with 6 computers; a small library; a medical office where students meet with nurses, psychological staff, and physicians; and a special location for visitation with vending machines available. Visitors to the Clarke facility are greeted inside the doors by a metal detector, a waiting room, and lockers for personal items. A darkened security window behind which Juvenile Detention Specialists (JDS) sit monitoring cameras and doors throughout the building sits to one side with a reception desk where people must sign in to the other. Information visitors must provide is whom they are seeing, time they are in, and time they leave. Clarke has a strict dress code policy for all visitors and no one under the age of 18 can visit, period. All doors from this point on are locked. The inside is tan floor to ceiling. The main entrance and building facade hides behind it the barbed topped razor wire, the high chain-linked fence, and the giant “block” of a building where the youth are housed.

The Clarke Youth Facility’s education program is led by Michael Bloom, who was always sharply dressed and professional looking. Whenever we met, Michael was welcoming and spoke in a calm, soft tone. He had been at the detention center for three years overseeing the academics and credit recovery programs, taking a holistic approach

to the education of the youth, believing in community and family involvement. Prior to coming to Clarke, Michael worked for the county in human resources doing training for 33 departments; he had also been a YMCA director (8 years), worked with the Boy Scouts as a director (5 years), as well as with the Girls and Boy's Club (4 years). During Michael's tenure, he implemented parent/teacher conferences four times a year as well as encouraged/invited outside businesses or advocates to "adopt" units in the facility to help cover costs like rewards and incentives for student achievement and to help with "extra" programming. He improved the library, increasing the number of books to over 7000 titles by holding book drives, incorporated the Read Right literacy development program, including the necessary and expensive training of one of their staff and bringing in a professional from the school district. In addition, Michael convinced the local school district to provide support for students who need special education services, so a teacher from the district comes to the detention facility specifically to work with identified youth. And lastly, he negotiated with the local community college scholarships for youth who have completed their GEDs to take college courses on-line while in the facility, a new program still in the formative stage.

Since his arrival, and despite his open door policy to be available for his faculty and staff, Michael encountered resistance among some of the educators as he tried to align the curriculum with state standards. Before his arrival, teachers were quite independent, and as Michael noted, "In their defense...some of these things were a little different than what they were doing before, and I could see how that could be a little bit tiresome or cumbersome." Given that his background is not specifically in education, his

ideas for implementation were met with criticism, specifically, that they were too quickly thrust upon teachers without adequate time, planning, and training. However, as Michael viewed it, “we don’t want to skirt around state standards.” If students were freshmen, they should be doing freshmen lessons geared towards earning credits for that class. If students were juniors, they should be working on specific junior English curriculum. He was aware that in a class of multiple levels of ability and knowledge that difficulties arose differentiating instruction, but a balance could be made and this hole in the teaching practices could be filled. Using the analogy of a one room schoolhouse, Michael believed that daily lessons and assignments should be geared towards the majority of students as class openers to engage youth, setting them up for learning, and then progress towards meeting the needs of individual students. The trick, however, is how to balance having a typical classroom environment with the challenge of such a broad spectrum of ages and learning levels. One “classroom” can include a 12 and 18 year old, a first grade reading level and a 10th grade one. Nevertheless, Michael saw the school as “not a finished product, but on the road for educational culture” as administration, teachers, and counselors routinely reevaluated and identified what students needed.

As mentioned, during my fieldwork, the school went through multiple changes as it tried to find its way: first, students travelled to traditional classrooms, but issues arose with security, the safety of youth and teachers, and losing instructional time moving youth. Given the multi-level layout of the facility and the location of the classrooms, student units could not travel to classrooms without at some point coming into close proximity to another unit, thus causing a security risk. By the time all units were moved

into the classrooms, little time would be left for effective instruction. In addition, the structure of the classrooms did not lend themselves towards valuable learning: the rooms were small, the desks were tightly packed, student seating ranged from 6-13 desks thus not accommodating enough of the units. In addition, the JDS accompanying the youth was not in the room during class. In other facilities, Wayne and Erbine, detention students travelled to their classrooms; however, at Clarke, the director of security determined that the compromise of the safety of students and educators was too great. Combined with Michael's concern as to the loss of instructional time, Clarke experienced yet another change: teachers traveling to student units.

Most teachers during informal interviews said they preferred teaching in their classrooms given that their resources, desks, white boards, and computer were there, but they accepted the directive of security to travel. The administration's thinking was that moving teachers would be simpler and safer than moving students. And so every day, teachers loaded up their carts with portable white boards, teaching materials like pencils, papers, markers, as well as individual files on students, PASS books, and candy rewards/incentives. The carts were quite large and cumbersome, yet served the purpose of packing for the day of visiting 5-6 units. Teachers were on a rotating schedule seeing units every other day, with each Friday alternating as well. Thus, school came to the students who were now remaining on their units all day except for physical education when they would still travel to the gym. Teachers did use their classrooms for IEP⁹ meetings with

⁹ Individual Education Plan (IEP) is typically used for students identified as SPED.

individual students. During this time, teachers were not instructing on the unit but pulling up to three students to work in small groups or individually to meet goals set by the IEP

Third, yet another change came in summer 2013, designed by Michael to mimic the one room schoolhouse, having one teacher teach on the unit, the same unit, for the entire day. Teachers were expected to cover all subjects, not just in their certificated area. Therefore, the English teacher was also teaching geometry, social studies, and life skills. The philosophy behind this decision was to create deeper understanding of student need, to develop relationships which would hopefully lead to greater improvement and gains in learning, and finally, to maximize instruction time. Michael explained that the change was to address the 60% of students with IEP's who return within a year and the more than 1/2 of the population who demonstrate proficiency in reading and mathematics at the elementary level. The change was to address these individual needs. For students who were at grade level, on-line learning was also as an option with on-unit computers as well as in a computer lab where two para-educators work and pulled students on a daily basis to complete on-line coursework. However, this concept did not work and was abandoned after less than a month and the school returned to affectionately termed "teacher a-la-carte"--traveling to various units, teaching their own curriculum in their certificated areas.

Essentially, at Clarke, educators had to be flexible, creative, and "restlessly patient" as Michael kept searching for methods and ways to best meet the needs of this unique population of students. Michael was quite self-aware that he lacked a background in education, and criticism directed his way stemmed mostly from that fact. Yet, he also

stressed that he was indeed an administrator and had that experience: “When I make my decisions...I really take a big step back and I research the things that I do and I try to understand what the effects would be...when you’re putting the kids first, you know, you’re going to do things that’s going to help them.” To Michael’s credit, he did have extensive experience working with youth, youth based service organizations, and he had travelled to other facilities as far reaching as Chicago to inform what may be best practice for educators at Clarke.

Although he held team meetings twice a week to touch base with his faculty and staff, Michael’s daily connection to the teachers was through Rodney, lead teacher and supervisor, a white man, about 62 years of age. Rodney had been at this facility for 24 years--first as a teacher doing art, math, and whatever was needed, and then for the last 15 years as lead teacher overseeing curriculum, supervising and evaluating teaching assignments, and PASS (Portable Assisted Study Sequence) the credit recovery program. For all practical purposes, Rodney could be viewed as a principal or associate principal with Michael as more of an assistant superintendent/community liaison. Rodney, who stood about 5’8” and sported a grey goatee, was enthusiastic and quite helpful with all requests throughout the study. He was excited for the research and wanted to do whatever he could to facilitate the process of my visitations, observations, interviews, and especially getting parent consent. Rodney came across as a hard working individual who routinely advocated for the students. One would never hear Rodney make a negative statement about youth in his care; he only spoke highly of them and instead focused his criticism on the circumstances from which they came--their neighborhoods, their homes,

even their schools. Throughout his day--which began at 6 am, Rodney provided teachers with information as to what students were there, who was new, who left, whose status changed, etc. He served as support to the teachers having his office in proximity (versus upstairs near other administrators) so he was “in the trenches” and closer to students.

Rodney enjoyed visiting units, especially the highest security unit, and making connections with kids. According to Rodney, “These kids will climb mountains for you if you give them the chance.”

Given his years serving as both educator and lead teacher, perhaps few professionals at Clarke knew the students better than Rodney. His sympathies laid with his faculty who were the heartbeat of the school, fully knowing and understanding what Michael and he were asking of them, and the monumental challenge facing them. His sympathies also lay with the students who came to Clarke with a variety of emotional issues, physical struggles, and enough intelligence to be successful. However, they lacked educational confidence--or consistent learning experiences--to demonstrate their potential as learners, thinkers, and doers:

They’re [the students] in a bad situation when they’re in here, they’re worried about home. They’re worried about family, they’re worried about loved ones, worried about what’s gonna happen in court, um a lot of worries for these children. And for you to even ask anything of them is pretty intense...and it can backfire on you. It’s all in your approach and how much respect that you show.

Rodney believed that for every student in the facility: “here’s a soul that we can’t lose. Period.” Even when youth returned numerous times, Rodney welcomed them with a

smile and a “What are you doing back here?” ready to listen and begin again the process of rehabilitation.

During my research Rodney was the primary gatekeeper and key informant, available on weekends for conducting student surveys, during which he had to be present at all times for security reasons. Rodney greeted me at the door, served as my escort, provided student records and information, and made arrangements for my day of shadowing teachers and security staff. He shared his passion for this place with me every time we were together, sometimes almost getting teary-eyed as he considered these youth and their pasts and futures. Without Rodney, much of this research and report would not have been possible, or data-collection as easily performed. Rodney knew the value and importance of researching education in the juvenile justice system and shared his excitement at the prospects of this research and future research and how it could help both educator and student.

When I first visited Clarke in March of 2012, teachers travelled with giant carts loaded with individual credit recovery workbooks, daily lessons, pencils¹⁰, markers, paper, portable white boards and markers, etc., to individual units--11 units over a two day period: one staff secure unit, one girls’ unit, and 9 boys’ units--if all units were open. (Population determined how many and which units remained open). Included in the schedule was one IEP period for teachers to pull students from their units--up to three youth--to work on IEP goals. Each class was one hour in length--give or take due to teacher travel time not being incorporated into the schedule beginning at 8:30 am and

¹⁰ Pencils are allowed but must be counted at the start and close of each class. If a pencil is missing, units go on lockdown and undergo thorough searching of units and of the students themselves.

running until 2:30 with a one hour lunch break. However, changes made by Michael in the summer of 2013 initially had educators preparing for a team-teaching type of environment, but was not fully implemented and soon discarded. Then, a few weeks later, a new plan was passed on to educators: each teacher would be assigned to his/her own unit to have for the entire day. For example: Ms. Black, the English teacher, loaded her cart and traveled to unit 6, a mid-security boys' unit, and that was her classroom. Mr. Lake, the social studies teacher, was assigned to Staff Secure. This change with Clarke assigning one teacher to one unit where he/she was responsible for the teaching and learning of all core subjects did not last but a month--except for Mr. Lake who remained in Staff Secure. Depending on the number of youth in that unit in detention, one teacher could have had 3 students or 14 ranging in age from middle to high school with broad spectrum learning abilities and styles. And, in staff secure, the one teacher could have had 20+ students as boys and girls are housed and attend classes together.

The benefit according to administration of the one teacher/one unit was that teachers could use the day to plan, organize, and instruct as they liked, developing much needed positive relationships and continuity with both students and security personnel assigned to that unit. Having one individual consistently allowed for the focused instruction and attention youth in detention need to make progress, self-reflect, and identify learning strategies they can take with them back to their home schools. Again, this change was met with resistance, but not by all faculty. The argument against such a change was that teachers were being asked to cover curriculum not in their endorsed area. Secondly, teachers were not be able to connect with as many students as when they

travelled, therefore, limiting opportunities for that one particular adult to make that all important impact on that one particular student. Thirdly, conversations about youth were limited during team meetings, because only a single teacher had access to that individual, with perhaps the exception of the chaplain, the Read Right specialist, and the JDS on the unit--some of whom did not attend team meetings regularly. Last, the model did not mimic a typical present day school environment, therefore, students would not learn while in detention how to adjust to different teaching styles and personalities.

Therefore, over the course of 18 months of observation, I observed teachers at Clarke facing a multitude of changes in their schedule and approaches to curriculum and instruction while administration searched for the best educational methods for students. At the conclusion of my research, the administration and teachers had co-created a traveling schedule having some teachers divided between the two floors to maximize teaching time and minimize travel time, although the English teacher seemed to rotate to all units and one teacher, Mr. Lake, remained in staff secure all day coordinating instruction for those students, taking on all core subjects. Also, at the conclusion of this study, Michael received word that Clarke would take in enough funds from the Sherwood Foundation grant to hire more teachers to conduct classes specifically for transitioning youth who were no longer detained. Essentially, the observed state of Clarke was in continual flux, debate, and experimentation, much like the juvenile justice system itself, as its administration and teachers worked to match the objectives and goals of this unique environment.

Youth at Clarke lived on bi-leveled units, but open, like in a loft-style design with stairs leading to the upper rooms. Students had rooms to themselves unless the center was overpopulated. Rooms were cement block with metal suspended bunks. The mattresses were 3-4 inches and plastic covered. Some toilet/sinks were porcelain depending on the security risk/unit students were in. The small window was covered with a film to let in light but to keep youth from waving out the window to people outside--particularly gang members, according to Karl Sampson, the head of security training and clearance. The rooms and walls were tan/cream painted and the doors to the cells were maroon--each numbered according to unit and door number, for example: E4, E5, and so on. Also in the unit was a cement block recreation area, small--20 x 30' maybe, but with high enough ceilings for a basketball hoop. In the unit were two open yet divided showers--the temperature of the water in the showers was "what you get" according to Sampson. In other words, the students never knew. A small kitchen was also in the unit where Juvenile Detention Specialists (JDS) made the morning breakfast. Four to five tables were bolted to the floor with plastic chairs where students could work, draw, read, play cards, and so on. Painted on the floor was a yellow and black hazard line, noting the entrance to the kitchen area and marking where students could and could not go. Sampson said that all volunteers and guests were to cross that line in case of an emergency situation and remain in the kitchen area because students knew not to go in that area and it was the safest place to be at the time. Any visitors to the unit, including teachers until class began, were to remain on the JDS side of the black/yellow caution line until they knew that crossing the line was safe or were given permission by the JDS.

Only students with the highest level/status were allowed to cross the line to help with food service and clean up. Each unit had a television as well, a video game console, cards, board games, and reading books. No male JDS were allowed on the female units, although female JDS could work male units.

Each unit had two heavy metal doors between it and the hallway. One door, the “slider” as the natives called it, slid open to an inside holding area between the outside hallway and the unit--like a pocket door frame. The other door opened to directly to the unit. Anyone wishing to enter or exit the unit must first call on the intercom the control center to ask permission by giving one’s name and then saying “Slider on 3” if, for example, she was on Unit 3. The units were numbered 1-10 and then Staff Secure. All girls were placed on one unit as they were typically lower in number, except those placed on staff secure, a separate area for non-violent/status offenders. The units were sterile, with a tan/black or tan/green checkered tile floor. Plastic porch-like chairs sat stacked in the corner of the room and only enough seats as needed were allowed by the JDS. When classes or meals were finished, chairs had to be returned. The JDS assigned to the unit sat in a chair, overseeing the unit, making notes, assigning points, taking calls, keeping track of behavior and levels, and helping with meal service. A radio was always nearby with any important security communication shared throughout the facility. For example, if students must leave the unit to go to medical, to see a counselor or probation officer, the request either came by phone or radio.

On one occasion while observing Ms. Black during her English lesson on *Beowulf*, we were hit with severe weather and a lightning crash landed very close to the

facility, right outside our window it seemed. The power went out momentarily and all the JDS's had for communication was the radio. The room was quite black and the male students gasped, moaned, and shrieked like any other high school youth I've ever experienced. The power immediately popped back on given the back-up generator, but communication still continued through the radio, telling JDS's to lockdown students while we were in the thunderstorm warning. So, we sat, Mr. Black, the JDS, and I alone, class interrupted indefinitely. Ms. Black and I couldn't even return to her office. Everything was on lockdown until the severe weather passed.

When travel was allowed, staff and faculty had to first radio Control for permission. Students were always escorted by Juvenile Detention Technicians (JDTs) or approved faculty to medical, dental, visitation, meetings with probation officers, to the technology/computer lab for on-line coursework, etc. When units left as a group to the gym for physical education, JDS/JDT staff again radioed control to approve safe movement. No two units were ever in the hallway at the same time due to the potential of students "jumping" one another, which happened not often, but regularly enough to warrant this policy. Throughout my time at Clarke, I observed only three fights, takedowns, or times when one or more JDS's had to quell a physically violent or potentially violent situation--however, I did hear of many events which occurred in my absence, some involving faculty who needed medical treatment or transport to the local hospital. Despite all these procedures and plans to keep youth separate and safe, during Easter and Christmas services, the students are brought into the gym together with plenty of supervision.

The greatest issue with each unit, except for staff secure, was how dark and cold the units were or seemed to be to visitors due to the limited natural sunlight, metal and cement composition, and tiled floors. As student liaison Samantha Stewart stated, “It’s not a happy environment.” Each unit did have an outdoor recreation area at the end of the unit, which one could see through floor to ceiling windows; the area’s ceiling equaled the height of the two floors of the unit and was composed of grey cement block. Large windows sat high up, covered by heavy wire, allowing for fresh air and some sunlight to make its way into the unit. The only other windows were those in each student’s room and that which looked out into the inner hallway of the facility. Students remained on the units all day except when traveling for physical education, family visitation, which was rare and non-existent for many, and other appointments. Essentially, the outside rec area was their only exposure to the “outdoors.” They did not feel grass under their feet or have the opportunity to stroll in the “yard” as perhaps inmates would do at an adult facility.

In contrast, students in staff secure, a holding area for youth who are status offenders and pose minimal risk to themselves and others, had a seemingly more open environment, larger windows to let in natural sunlight, and the opportunity to go outside to a large recreation area (still only concrete with no grass), about the size of a traditional high school gym, minus the roof. Like other units, staff secure was two stories, with boys’ rooms on the first level and girls’ on the second. The loft-style unit had two learning areas, separate bathrooms and showers, a small library of approximately 400 books, board games, game tables like ping pong and foosball, as well as video game consoles for play outside school hours. The cream and green color blocked tile, cream

cement block, and green painted steel doors were the same, but the room itself was brighter and warmer due to the placement of the windows and the lack of the cement block recreation area that limited actual sun-light exposure. One question came to mind during my observations as to whether this situation was intentional. Prior to becoming staff secure, this unit was the “honor’s unit” for the lowest security youth, which may or may not suggest that having the “better” unit may coincide with the reason for being detained.

Additionally, the clothing was different between detention and staff secure, but consistent in each area. Students in detention at Clarke County wore blue jumpsuits that snapped up over state issued underwear, shorts, and t-shirts. Students were allowed to wear their own sneakers or the issued Bob Barker blue canvas slip-on loafer. Girls were not allowed hair weaves, jewelry, or make-up. If girls refused to take out their weave, they were placed on lockdown¹¹ until they complied because a weave was considered a security risk to the youth and to others. Students were given shorts and fresh t-shirts for physical education classes and then allowed to change back into their undershirts/shorts and jumpsuits upon return. Students, when outside their individual rooms, remained in their jumpsuits at all times. Many students were witnessed folding their arms inside their jumpsuits for warmth or tucking their pant legs inside their socks if they were too long or fraying. Jumpsuits were the clothing of choice for the one-size-fits all convenience; essentially, jumpsuits can fit all body types. Furthermore, hiding anything in the jumpsuit is difficult with no waistband, pockets, or long sleeves.

¹¹ Used to discipline students or for medical reasons as in isolation for a contagious disease. Students are locked in rooms up to 23/24 hours a day with one hour of large muscle activity and recreation per day.

By contrast, students in staff secure wore jean-like stretchy pants with elasticized waistbands. Boys wore dark blue and girls wore deep pink scrub-like tops with large “CCYC” logos on them in white print. Footwear included tan flip-flop mules, or socks, or their own sneakers. Leniency was given to girls and their hair, with the allowance of “do-rags” but still no hair extensions or weaves. Boys were allowed to cut their own hair, supervised by a JDS. Students lived and attended school together in staff secure with girls’ rooms upstairs, boys’ rooms down stairs, and during school, sitting on opposite sides of the classroom. One male and one female JDS remained in staff secure at all times, monitoring the flow of the daily routine.

The differences between detention and staff secure were obvious, thus the question came to mind as to the intention of the differences and whether some youth were being punished more severely than others or were punishments equal, or whether the environment itself was considered or designed to be more punishable than the actual incarceration itself. And so, I asked one of the long standing security staff who had worked both detention and staff secured units if the cold and dark qualities were intentional, or created to satisfy certain levels of punishment. He replied saying that each detention/prison facility must meet “jail standards” in regards to number and size of windows, the amount of daylight, direct sunlight, fresh air, etc., to which residents, detainees, and inmates¹² have exposure--the school meets these jail standards. And, he said that despite the illusion, staff secure and the detention side have the same number and size of windows; staff secure is just a bigger unit to house both male and female

¹² Residents are youth in staff secure; detainees are youth in detention; inmates are incarcerated adults

students, more total students; it is taller and wider, so more light comes in, mostly due to its positioning. He also said that staff secure is called such because it is "secured by staff"--i.e. the doors are not locked to student rooms. Staff secure is essentially a "group home" and so the students had to have every amenity, recreation opportunity as a group home environment. In addition, their clothes had to reflect that sort of environment, not a "prison/detention" one. Whereas jump suits were standard prison issue, group home clothing must consist of a shirt and pair of pants--separates. Some students I encountered spent time in detention as well as staff secure depending on the violation associated with their current visit.

Everything was considered a security risk at Clarke and security ruled all. Youth were in for both violent and non-violent/status offenses. Students in detention were involved in the typical offenses, however, students in staff secure were there because they ran away,¹³ displayed ungovernable behavior, were abusive or truant, or had committed non-violent and status offenses. At times, the youth could be volatile, jumping or attacking another youth, especially if something transpired on the "outs" like gang activity and students knew who was in what unit; yet, mostly, the students were calm, conversational, social, and found ways to live with one another on their units. They played cards, games, watched television, worked on their credits for school, and played basketball. They enjoyed discussing current events and drawing, sketching, making artwork, or writing in their journals and reading a book. They laughed, joked, and slept like other adolescents, yet underlying stressors and issues were evident and omnipresent.

¹³ The concept of placing runaways in staff secure is/has changed since this study. LB451 has required judges to place youth in other care facilities that are not staff secure or detention.

Curriculum in any detention center has its challenges considering youth are assigned to units based on security risk not age, and certainly not academic standing, level, or ability. Therefore, when teachers enter a unit, they faced middle to high school students, high ability learners, youth with elementary reading levels, youth who have never attended a traditional high school (mostly due to repeated arrest or truancy/running away), and many who have not had previous positive experiences. Few to no text books existed. Internet was not allowed due to potential hacking, communication with outside gang members, and terroristic threats (which they have had in the past). Thus, educators had to be creative and flexible to address such a spectrum of needs with fewer resources--even seemingly “simple” materials like wooden/plastic rulers, scissors, paper clips--than most traditional teachers. Clarke had the typical core subjects: math, English, social studies, physical education, some science. There was no art, no music, no “electives” of sort; the focus was on credit recovery and getting students prepared to return to mainstream education.

Clarke offered the Portable Assisted Study Sequence (PASS) for its students, an individualized worksheet/workbook curriculum for each subject and grade level. PASS was originally designed for migrant families to address the needs of youth who travel from state to state with their parents looking for work. Due to the transient nature of youth in the juvenile justice system, PASS was thought to work nicely to keep students geared towards earning credits and working towards their high school diploma. PASS allowed for adaptation, so, for example, the English teacher could use alternate literature, poetry, or other means to meet the same end. Yet, PASS did not have a middle school

curriculum, therefore, helping younger students earn credits was more challenging. Many youth at Clarke attested that PASS enabled them to work at their own speed, to use their time productively, and to work independently. However, other students still preferred a class discussion/activity format, but understood the benefit of PASS. Thus, teachers blended daily lessons and group activities with the individualized PASS program.

According to Ms. Black, the greatest drawback with PASS was the choice of materials--at least in the area of English. The lessons were not using high-interest stories or novels that mattered to youth of today, which is also a concern even in current mainstream classrooms. As Ms. Black notes,

How can a teacher get a 16 year old gang member facing serious gun charges interested in *reading The Miracle Worker* or *Antigone*? At least they're shorter. Try *The Good Earth*! All are excellent literature, but these students have no desire to read about ancient Greece or ancient China.

Thus, Ms. Black supplements inaccessible PASS materials with DVD and graphic representations of classics such as *Ivanhoe*, *Excalibur*, *Moby Dick*, *Frankenstein*, and "tons of Shakespeare--novels that they could easily encounter in regular school." Ms. Black's goal is to present the information to students in a less daunting medium, but still demonstrate--both to the students themselves and those on the outs--that they can grasp the themes and conflicts presented in complex literature.

To address the issue of literacy and reading achievement, Clarke adopted Read Right, also used by the local school system and community college. Read Right is a national program created by Dr. Dee Tadlock when inspired by her own son's struggles

with reading to find a solution. The process includes read-aloud activities, student centered instruction, small group work, guided practice with a Read Right certified coach, oral and silent reading, ongoing formative assessment, summative evaluation, and comprehensive reporting (Read Right, 2011). Clarke had one full-time and one part-time certified coach on staff who worked with up to three students at once in the library or on the staff secure unit.

Some students did gain access to on-line work. Those who were at grade level and were not in credit recovery mode (and so use PASS), could use on-line programs through A+, PLATO, and Odyssey. Students either left their unit and were escorted to the technology/computer lab where a para-educator facilitated their learning or they remained on the unit where they now have computers available for youth.

Thus, Clarke, the oldest of the three observed facilities, the largest, and the one arguably serving the most violent and troubled youth, faced daily changes, which according to Rodney is simply both the bane and thrill of teaching and “doing school” in a detention center. While Michael worked to find his niche as the school’s administrator and educators entered daily not knowing what may be different or which student may have left or who may be new, Clarke continued to provide a safe, secured environment in which students could rest, reflect, and re-learn how to learn.

Erbine Juvenile Services Center

...provides secure, safe, custody and promotes the health and well being of juveniles committed for care and confinement at the Center. [Erbine} Juvenile Services will create a positive environment that fosters the social, intellectual,

and physical development of its residents. [Erbine] Juvenile Services endorses the basic concept of promoting adolescent development and addressing the needs of human dignity in an environment that encourages positive growth and self-improvement (School Website).

Erbine, situated in a rural setting, three hours away from Clarke County and over an hour north of the main interstate, sits tucked away among the corn and bean fields. Nestled outside a small town of only 497 people next door to the county jail and courthouse, Erbine housed youth from other surrounding counties and smaller communities indicative of the mid-west farming states. The median income of Erbine was \$35, 869 with 11.5% of all ages living in poverty. A large meat packing plant employed most of the town and surrounding smaller communities. Here, many Hispanics had settled, making the community about 80% Hispanic. Approximately 500 arrests happen annually with a male to female a ratio of 2.4:1 and a white to non-white arrest of 8.1:1 (Marshal et al, 2009). Throughout my visits to Erbine, student population fluctuated from 22-35 youth, boys and girls, ranging from middle to high school students. Fifty employees worked at Erbine, yet only five actually lived in the community. According to the lead teacher and acting administrator, Wyatt, adults wanted their own children to attend larger school districts or private schools versus the small town schools that were highly populated by Latino immigrant youth, thus a high ELL population. Once, years ago, the town of Erbine was a top performing school in the state, but now rests at the bottom of the list. Interventions were underway to help improve the school, but Wyatt's allusion to the lesser quality educational programming within the local school system

explained the reason those who worked at Erbine sent their children elsewhere. For example, Jillian, one of the teachers, sent her children to a nearby parochial school. Lastly, different from Clarke, black students were the minority at Erbine; as the population was predominantly Hispanic or Caucasian in representation.

The Director of Education, Wyatt, acted as both lead teacher and administrator, although he held no supervisory certificate; thus an external retired superintendent signed off periodically on many of the decisions and daily runnings/programming of the school. For the most part, however, Wyatt was in charge. Wyatt began his career at a juvenile center not too far from Erbine in 1996. Two years later, the facility relocated to Erbine. One year later, Wyatt took over as Education Director/Lead Teacher, and has since been in this position. He remained in continual contact with the administrators in other facilities across the state and attended professional meetings to keep up with current legislation affecting youth in the juvenile justice system. He actively participated in the everyday schooling of students, often team teaching with his faculty, covering if one of them were ill, or offering individual assistance for students working on credit recovery. During the summer and depending on the availability of his teaching staff, Wyatt was the sole teacher with the help of one para-professional, keeping students working on individual skill development and credit recovery work. While Wyatt oversaw a smaller facility, the students still walked through the door with the same emotional and physical baggage and lack of appropriate skills as they did in other places. And, like other facilities, recidivism was high. Wyatt's approach here at Erbine was informal, relaxed, calm, and purposeful. He wore jeans or khakis, a nice shirt or pull-over, loafers, and

displayed an even-keeled, matter-of-fact nature with the students. Like Rodney, Wyatt served as my guide, gatekeeper, and main informant.

The school had three teachers employed, who team taught as well as acted alone. Three teachers, Jillian, Scott, and Helen--all white--worked with youth and were certificated teachers. All had taught in mainstream public schools and stated that they would never return, due to enjoying their time with detention center youth. Yet, initially, none actually planned on teaching in a detention center--the position just opened at a time when they needed jobs, so they gave working in a youth facility a chance. They have remained due to the freedom, the flexibility, and the enjoyment of working with the students. As Jillian noted, "You just want to squeeze them, save them, give them what they are not getting on the outside." Also on staff was a female vocation education teacher who did small woodworking and tiling projects with students, but she left the facility for another position and so vocational programming was put on hold.

Throughout the school year, Jillian and Scott identified new students each day and started making contacts to find out where students were from, where they needed credit recovery, what they needed to work on, and then, with that information, created the academic advancement plan. They served as school liaisons similar to those at both Wayne and at Clarke. Along with Wyatt, Jillian and Scott worked individually with students throughout the day, conducted typical classroom activities with groups, assisted with Read Right sessions while Erbine used the program¹⁴, and communicated with

¹⁴ Erbine used Read Right for one school year, skyping in the certified coach, but then decided to discontinue for this school year due to cost (\$11,000) and the uncertain impact of LB561 which influenced overall student numbers and length of student stay. Wyatt hopes to bring the program back for the 2014-2015 school year.

student home schools. Helen served a dual role as classroom and life skills teacher, arriving later in the morning and continuing into the afternoon after Jillian and Scott had left, but was also working on a graduate degree in counseling to meet those specific needs of youth at Erbine. During a group interview over lunch, the education staff described the environment as “relaxed” and “a good school environment.” According to Helen, “Even under stressful situations, we try to keep it that way [relaxed].” Unlike Clarke County, no JDS or other security staff were present in the classrooms except when needed to escort students to and from class or other meetings. For example, during one visit, a student took a swing at another student, and of course, lost his school privilege. Wyatt quietly and firmly told the students to sit down; he called security who were in the room within seconds; and the student was taken back to his room for the remainder of the day. All was handled smoothly and without issue. Wyatt didn’t want security in the education environment as his philosophy was that they were not needed; they were close enough to get to any emergency situation if necessary. Essentially, with security cameras and radios, and due to the smallness of the facility, their presence wasn’t needed. As Wyatt noted, “It’s either two of the four or one person in here with all the kids, and it’s just like a normal school environment...we try to keep it as professional as possible, it’s very laid back, we have higher expectations in behaviors and attitude, everything.”

Medical services for youth were available on a daily basis to address student needs, but Erbine did not have counselors on site to routinely visit with youth, as did Clarke. According to Wyatt, students could request counseling and have one sent, but

ultimately, the teachers and staff at Erbine addressed these needs. To fill in the gaps, Erbine relied on volunteers. Wyatt explained:

Volunteers fill a pretty big void for us. State College sends counselors to us who are in training at no cost to serve our kids. (The counselors need many hours for practicums, and they appreciate working with our kids.) We have AA and NA groups come in weekly. We have a variety of church groups come in and work with kids. There are other groups that volunteer time such as girl scouts, and various individuals such as tutors, mentors, etc. These change from time to time. Average student stay at Erbine was three weeks, but they were also receiving youth with more serious charges, so the length of stay was increasing.

The 35 bed facility, due to space/classroom limitations, held class in one room. Whether they were in detention or in staff secure, boys and girls lived and attended school together--a situation unique to Erbine. When in school, students acted appropriately, but outside school when in their living quarters, relationships could blossom. Wyatt reported that youth learned how to prop open their doors or put their fingers over the detector to trick Control into thinking that their door was locked. Thus, having boys and girls together in the same living area lead to inappropriate conduct causing many issues for security staff outside the school day. Wyatt's only explanation was that when the facility was built, the county board, composed mostly of sixteen 60-80 year old men, didn't consider or foresee these specific needs/issues. They "threw together" what they thought was right at the time with no input from outside sources or consultants. Thus, they were forced to make do with the situation, bound by structure and

limited space. Erbine's male to female ratio more or less matches the statistics, with a 4:1 male/female representation. But, on my last visit, for example, only one girl among 9 boys was in detention, and in staff secure, two girls lived among 10 other boys.

Nevertheless, due to the presence of more than one educator, the quick availability of security, and the smaller class sizes, blending genders seemed to work for both students and adults at Erbine. I did not witness any issues during my observations; often, girls and boys sat together at tables, and other times, they did not. They discussed life, school, books they were reading, and conducted themselves quite respectfully.

During the regular school year, staff secure students remained in their area, but with the more relaxed approach of summer, they traveled to the classroom, and as always, never mixed with detention students. Students wore a colored shirt based on their status, whether they were an escape risk (orange), were in staff secure (light blue) or were in detention (dark blue). Youth wearing orange shirts were observed in both staff secure and detention sides. All students wore khaki colored pull on pants and mostly walked around in socks. Wyatt joked that they were easier to catch or handle during physical takedowns when necessary. Their clothes were not new to them, but worn by former detainees and washed. Some pants were raggedy and fraying on the bottom from students walking around in socks and dragging the pants on the ground. Some sweatshirts bore stains of the past. And, perhaps the worst part of the issued clothing was the underwear: while students were given fresh underwear daily, this was not new underwear to them, but that worn by former detainees, once again, washed and doled out to a new owner. According to one security staff/para--professional, she tried to sort out the severely stained, worn-out, and

“tired” underwear, throwing them away, understanding what it must be like to be given used clothing, even if it is washed.

The student living areas were small and indicative of a typical lockdown facility. In staff secure, students did not have sinks or toilets in their rooms, but external, private bathrooms where they could also shower. Staff secure students could come and go from their rooms freely and their doors were never locked. In detention, rooms were locked, students did have sinks/toilets in their rooms, yet were able to shower in private. As an incentive, if students achieved the highest level of behavior, they were allowed to paint one cement block on the wall, representing who they were with symbols, images, initials, dates, nicknames--whatever they liked and within reason. Students looked forward to this honor and “leaving their mark” at the center. Wyatt shared that this tradition was started approximately 13 years ago and every few years, they painted over the bricks as they kept running out of room. However, one brick by “Crystal” he pointed out had been there for seven years.

The two living areas/units had the same stacked patio chairs and square tables on which was painted a game board for checkers and chess as Clarke. For student viewing was a large flat screen television, a Smart Board for projecting movies or other video from a computer. In Staff Secure, posters and pictures hung on every side of the room and six computers lined one wall. One room adjoined the large room to be used for private instruction sessions, like Read Right. Tones of grey and white created a bland, but soft atmosphere. A large, rounded security desk sat to one side of the room, near the exit, where staff kept records, charts, phones, computers, and personal items. On many visits,

one security staff individual, Diane, sat grading student packets, doubling up as a teacher's aide. Eight student rooms lined the outside of the large room in which multiple bunks and "boat beds" could be placed in case of high numbers.

For youth at Erbine, the school day began at 8:15 and ran in two 90 minute blocks with a 15 minute break in between, finishing approximately at 11:30 followed by lunch. School resumed at 12:15 and continued in two more 90 minute blocks until 3:00 p.m. The morning activities focused mainly on individual work with the PASS curriculum, on-line credit recovery, or work sent from students' home schools. Each day, students watched CNN/Channel 1 news right before the morning break, which then provided topics for later conversation. Afternoon sessions geared more towards actual class lessons, for example grammar and punctuation, Social Studies exploration, or life science projects. Students in detention traveled from their unit to the classroom where tables, chairs, six computers and a small library awaited them. Adjoining the library and separate from the classroom was the vocational area--also quite small. Tools and machinery were locked in cabinets. Before the loss of the vocational teacher, one would see a wood burner which they used to engrave wood to make clocks, a tiled/grouted park bench which they built and would sell to purchase more materials, an embroidery machine among other equipment. The classroom itself was typical with two white boards, a SMART board, counters, cabinets, a sink, teacher's desk, with text and reading books stacked on shelves. Six small windows, about 8 x 12 let in some natural light and were low enough that students could see out, but both the view and light was minimal. Depending on numbers, students would have 1-2 teachers facilitating instruction for the day or bouncing from

table to table to offer individual instruction help. Posters and wall paintings decorated the classroom, including one small mural depicting a shadow outline of a student graduate shaking the hand of her teacher/professor while accepting her diploma.

As was the case with Clarke, Erbine used the PASS worksheet curriculum and Accelerated Reader (AR) testing on the computer for books read, school work sent from student home schools, or book work designed for students who have special needs or learning disabilities. In addition, Erbine used on-line coursework through Odyssey and Angel to help with credit recovery. While teachers did run lessons and co-taught, they also worked individually with students towards earning credits and developing skills. Despite having no gym for physical education classes, the staff at Erbine managed the best they could to offer opportunities for student activity. In nicer, warmer months, Erbine had an outdoor recreation area with basketball hoops and room to roam, but in the winter or during other inclement weather, day rooms were used for recreation and exercise;

To illustrate a common daily classroom situation, during one of my routine visits, I walked into the classroom full of detention students and spoke to one 7th grader who was working on reading recovery workbooks sent by his home school and then with another young man was working on his final class to complete his GED requirements. Among the eight boys in the room on this visit was a young girl of 17 working in the final packet to earn an English credit. A self-proclaimed perfectionist, “Andrea” shared her perfectly written notes in the neatest handwriting I may have ever seen. That afternoon, Jillian and Scott continued a Life Sciences unit on the four basic needs of animals, the importance of camouflage, the impact of humans on the environment, and

what leads to the extinction of certain species. This day's lesson focused on camouflage and its affects. Jillian had made a blanket with a colorful pattern of butterflies, also cutting out separate butterflies in the same material as well as coordinating colors made from construction paper. Placing both the colored and patterned butterflies strategically on the blanket, students then stepped aside to watch a peer attempt to identify and find as many butterflies as possible in 10 seconds. Of course, the peer had to close his/her eyes prior to starting so as not to see where the butterflies were placed. The interesting experiment revealed for students first hand the deception of camouflage, and how some of us are drawn to particular colors, shapes, forms, even dimension and depth. The students were interested as to how each individual in 10 seconds picked certain colors over others or and how many were able to find the butterflies made of the same pattern as the blanket.

Interestingly different from Clarke and Wayne who used the method of pencil counting--mostly due to a smaller population of students, pencils were assigned to students, having the student's name on them, and so the student was responsible for his/her own writing utensil. Students could freely take their pencil from an open pencil cup resting on the teacher's desk, again revealing the low-key and more relaxed nature of this secured environment.

Echoing comments made by Randy regarding the youth at Wayne, Wyatt explained that for some students, Erbine was the only experience with stability that youth have had in their lives: "...kids will say they prefer going to school here way more so than in public school. We kind of hear that consistently." Why? Because students were at

Erbine 24/7. They never had to leave school and go home; they never had to worry about transportation, cold weather, hunger, abuse, violence, and the consequences for not following the rules were clear and consistent. Furthermore, the adults in the school provided individualized treatment and attention in a small classroom setting. Students were among those like them and did not express feeling out of place, singled out, red-flagged, or labeled. Sure, they wanted to leave detention and be with their families, but most students recognized the positive impact of their time at Erbine. One 16 year old girl with whom I spoke stated about Erbine “It’s way better than a group home. There’s no drama and everyone is helpful and *calm*.” Scott, a teacher, also weighed in...“Because of the situation the kids are in when they get to us, you know, they’re behind, they haven’t had success with past experiences, obviously, and you know, we try to give them successes and positive experiences.” Scott’s comments are validated by the increase in success in Erbine’s total number of credits recovered. Wyatt reported that typically in a year, students in this small facility earn collectively a total of 1100-1500 credits on average, but for this school year (2012-2013) Wyatt believed that this figure would be “blown away.” Wyatt noted one young man, in for sexual assault and in for almost 11 months, completed his final two years of high school while at Erbine. Another youth whom I met with on more than one occasion during my field work, earned 113 credits during his stay.

We have kids who earn tons of credit while they’re here. Here’s the normal pattern: right when kids come here, they walk around school saying “school sucks, I hate it here, I’m not doing anything’--ok, fine, then don’t (laughter). And then, after

they've been here a little bit, we keep hammerin' it in to their head that, hey, you can earn credit while you're here, it's gonna go back to your school, it's gonna go on your transcript, and it's gonna help you graduate. And some of them are smart enough to take advantage of this and do it.

Wyatt and his teachers make sure that the credits are legitimate and the students' work is in accordance with school/state standards. Many youth shared that working in detention/staff secure is easy when they are encouraged and few to no distractions exist. In addition, incentives kept students focused. Similar to Clarke, Erbine's privileges depended on a youth's behavior and accumulation of points or leveled status. As Wyatt explained, "simply: the better your behaviors, the more tokens you earn which moves you up levels and you earn more opportunities." Students' rewards were mostly in the form of sodas (warm ones) and candy, but nevertheless, they enjoyed the positive attention they received for doing well, completing work and credits, or doing good deeds for other youth.

Wyatt noted that to teach at Erbine and places like it, a professional has to get along with and work well with other teachers, think creatively, and be willing to consider new and sometimes off-the-wall ideas/teaching strategies. Mostly, however, collaboration is key to understanding the type of students who find themselves in detention:

You have to be able to do that [collaborate]. You have to be able to appreciate, I don't know if appreciate is the right word, but you have to at least be aware of the type of students that you're dealing with, and know that it's not, you know your

normal kids...you have to be resilient, you have to be optimistic, you have to be flexible, because you're going to get pounded on.

When pushed about the concept of being “pounded on” Wyatt laughed and alluded to teaching in itself and the difficulty of getting through the continual routine of “I want to be a drug dealer” or “I want to be a pimp” or “I’m going to steal stuff my whole life.” Wyatt pointed out that after “6 million 450 times--it gets old, you know?” Wyatt’s comments remind of Bourdieu’s habitus and how grow up in and become so deeply ingrained in the street culture, or the deviant culture--the gangs, quick money schemes, gun charges, and just having that mindset of “pimp” (in the sense of being cool). Youth see this life as common, expectant, and who they are--how they fit in the world. This is also illustrated by Ms. Black’s (Clarke) consistent experiences with poetry writing--about the street, drugs, pimpin’, gang activity, poverty--all the issues and realities youth experience and have adopted as a way of life. Thus, while Wyatt jokes here, in essence, teachers must be able to work through those first moments of every lesson when students rely on what they know, what is safe and secure--despite its connection to violence or abuse. In these cases, teachers use the power of sarcasm, remain optimistic, flexible, and resilient. Wyatt shared more of what he and his teachers face:

Every day and class period is unique. If we have small numbers and students who have been with us awhile, our classroom can be productive and the environment can be positive. At the same time if our classrooms are over-crowded with new kids trying to "prove" themselves, it can be difficult in numerous ways. As a group of teachers there are days we struggle. Most often we struggle with

motivation and behaviors. Lately, this has been intensified with high a higher percentage of SPED children with varying disabilities. As a group of teachers we have to communicate, remain calm and keep encouraging and teaching our kids to the best of our abilities

Essentially, Erbine professionals have established an atmosphere that enables students to make progress and earn credits--they take the time to understand each student, how each student can affect the dynamic of the class/environment, and finally, to consider what approach is needed to reach their goals with the current population. The environment is not rowdy, not full of loud voices or poor language, and not one in which teachers do not have control or are disrespected by their students. The educators enjoy a professional and collegial dynamic. Due to the smaller, more intimate setting, a lower student population, and a certain level of autonomy, Erbine teachers offered youth a school where students were not labeled, categorized, condemned--or rarely jumped by other students. While Wyatt, Helen, Jillian, and Scott knew they were working with youth sex offenders, run aways, drug dealers, and sometimes, murderers, they also knew they were dealing with youth in pain, from negative home situations, from years of non-positive schooling experiences--most likely due to the home situation and lack of parental presence or support. Thus, the team at Erbine's philosophy was to provide for youth what they were not getting or did not experience on "the outs."

Jillian, during one conversation, also mentioned the idea of getting "pounded on" sharing Wyatt's sentiment of the day-in and day-out experience working with troubled, at-risk, and defiant youth:

The pounded on? The repeated defiance--and they will try to hurt you--yet you come back stronger every time because you want to defeat that--you want them to get over that hurdle and do what they are supposed to do to become good people.

Scott, standing nearby, shook his head in agreement. And so I asked him if he has ever given up on a youth, or even grunted or shook his head at the idea of working with a particular youth each day. In other words, did he ever tire of a certain student and thus dreaded having him or her in class. Scott suggested that while a student may be a pain in class that day, or during one period, later in that same day, or even the next, he [Scott] could be the one person that student needs to lean on for some guidance, "...and you cannot shut that door... There are so many good things that come out of here--so many awesome things and kids that come out of here..." According to Scott, students have to know that teachers continually forgive their antics, their attitudes, and their behaviors. They have to believe that teachers continually see their potential and their ability to change, to learn, to improve. Jillian supported Scott's comments:

You could be the one that they need--for example--Andrea [the perfectionist from earlier]--she has the biggest heart--talks lovingly about animals and her nieces and nephews--and takes great pride in being an aunt. I don't look at the kids in that way [what they've done]--for example a kid who threw his child against the wall...and I remember at that time 'How can I look at this person?' and in talking to him, it was the alcohol and the drugs and he was just beside himself that he could have ever done that. But, even before that I didn't look at him as a child abuser because he was a *kid* who wanted nothing more than to please me--he got

his GED--we worked with him for months. And when he finished, the glow on his face like a little kid.

Despite the amount of work the educators at Erbine do to help youth during their stay, sometimes, youth are taken away before their job is complete. Just when a young person is building momentum, altering decision making for the better, and developing appropriate coping strategies to handle stressful situations, case workers and the courts remove youth and send them to group homes or other placements. Due to LB 561¹⁵, the push is to not have students remain in detention for long periods of time, but get them into community support services and integrated back into mainstream schools. However, as already shared, many youth prefer living and attending school in a secured facility to the safety, the routine and structure, and the accountability.

In one recent case, Alecia, (pseudonym) a young Caucasian girl of 17, left late morning on my last visit. She was going to a group home in a nearby community but did not want to go because of the lack of structure and the unknown. When asked about this student's particular case, the security staff on duty, Diane, said, "She wants to stay because she *has* to go to school here. She *has* to do her homework...there are no distractions in here and she knows that." When I asked Wyatt about Alecia's case, he stated that she was close to finishing her GED and if she stayed she could finish and take that away with her. He even tried to advocate on her behalf by calling her caseworker:

I called and said 'hey, look, this young lady could finish and graduate if she stayed her another 3-4 weeks tops,' but the caseworker wasn't havin' that. They

¹⁵ Legislative Bill 561 was created to address the inadequate manner by which youth in the juvenile justice system receive treatment and how they are rehabilitated.

want to get the kids out of here as quickly as possible. I told the caseworker that if she left here without her degree, then she'd be on her own, turn 18, not get it, and probably re-offend.

The issue with Alecia is consistent among all the detention centers observed. Here, a student wants to work to complete her GED or certain number of credits. She has found a place with the guidance and instructional help that works for her learning. Sure, she is locked in a facility; sure she cannot leave and faces few distractions (like friends, movies, boys). Nevertheless, she is pulled from this environment, interrupting her progress, and potentially, derailing that progress to the extent that she may not ever get her degree. Thinking back to Randy's words--"we make the school fit the needs of the individual student; not try to force the student to fit the needs of the school"--I wondered why the system would untimely rip this student from an environment that was actually helping her versus adapting the system to suit her needs.

Taking this into consideration and to go with the times and the changing legislation, Wyatt says that the facility is applying for a shelter license so that Erbine would become a detention, staff secure, and shelter facility. Given a case like Andrea's, instead of her moving so far away to an unfamiliar community and group home environment, she could remain at Erbine but slide over to another part of the facility. The level of comfort would allow her to potentially transition more successfully, and if she did slip, she could be put back in staff secure where more structure and less freedom existed. Wyatt explained that a shelter environment means that youth can go to school, come and go with friends, but must adhere to house rules, like curfews and expectations

for respectful behavior. Therefore, the idea was met with some resistance from the county board--those 16 men aged 60-80: what is the liability with a shelter? If students leave or run away, we cannot lay hands on them to retain them, then what? What structural changes to the facility need to be made? Despite these questions, the application is in, and if Erbine can expand its services to more comprehensively serve youth in these rural communities, transition rates may improve. Perhaps such a move is one other facilities should consider, or their county/state boards: construct a transitional facility adjacent or in proximity to existing detention structures versus sending youth to outlying group home environments.

Interestingly, Clarke will be taking a similar step having just secured funding for a transition school program for released students, to be held on site, but outside the locked doors of detention. Thus, if both Clarke and Erbine explore and are successful with this concept, youth may be less likely to return to negative behaviors upon release and will maintain the level of academic success they encountered while incarcerated. Furthermore, a new area of juvenile justice education will be in need of research, curriculum development, and training for educators and community professionals to make the necessary connections youth need to successfully reintegrate.

CHAPTER 4

POWER PLAY: SECURITY VERSUS EDUCATION

You should understand them, get to know them, meaning the JDS's [juvenile detention specialist] that are on the job, um get to know them, because they're going to be very helpful to you. Um, they know what's going on in the unit, on a daily basis....so, if you know them and they're willing to share information with you it can provide a lot of good information for you before you even walk into the class...you know into the unit to teach a class. And, in fact if you don't have a good rapport with those individuals they can make your life a living hell.--

Rodney, lead teacher at Clarke.

Rodney's comment brings to light a major characteristic of a detention facility having an impact on the education of students: the presence of security. Security is everywhere--hidden cameras, intercoms, locked doors, security officers, two way mirrors--all of which, of course, is expected in such an environment. However, when considering school, a classroom, a place for learning, we may not consider the presence or the impact of security personnel, period. In a traditional school environment, we do see security professionals, metal detectors, and professional development as to emergency procedures; school shootings, stabbings, and other modes of violence have certainly altered our perception and hope that schools are a safe place for children to learn. Yet still, security professionals do not sit in each classroom in any public school and they certainly do not participate in the actual educational instruction of youth or impact the direction, delivery, or success of the lesson. Because of the juvenile justice system's focus

on corrections and behavior management, “few methodologically sound empirical academic intervention studies address the needs of this population” (Wexler, Pyle, Flower, Williams & Cole, 2013, p.2). Hence, the concern is to what degree does security impede not only the daily education of youth, but also necessary and vital research in the area of juvenile justice education.

Simply, their presence is not arguable; therefore, in what way can they add to rehabilitation of court-affiliated youth? Due to the omnipresence of security, security professionals, and their daily interaction with students, juvenile detention officers, by accident or purpose, become mentors, therapists, sometimes para-educators, teammates in physical education, opponents at ping-pong, and the individual who has the most contact with youth throughout their day. Their presence can simultaneously support and derail the plan of any teacher, thus, the relationship is a love-hate one, and as Rodney alludes, upon one that professionals tread lightly--and strategically.

At Wayne, juvenile detention officers, known as JDO's, escort students from their living units to classrooms and remain with the assigned unit throughout the school day. In the Clarke facility, teachers travel to the living units to teach where the “Juvenile Detention Specialist” (JDS) has been in charge of youth as they go about their daily routine. At Erbine, however, yet another different approach exists as security stays out of the classroom, only serving as an escort service and hanging back, on call so to speak, in case a situation arises. Despite these varying procedures, security officers with their loud radios and focus on safety, not on education, continually interrupted the flow of many lessons and activities I observed. They entered and exited at random times; they had little

concern about being quiet or discrete during instruction time, for example when receiving a phone call, radio message, or speaking to another visitor. Therefore, not only can the presence of another individual in the room impact teaching, student behaviors and attitude in a multitude of ways, but when that presence disregards or fails to acknowledge the process of learning and running a classroom, learning opportunities and relationship building can fly out the window. I, as an observer and an educator, could only watch in amazement as to the manner by which teachers handled, tolerated, and accepted security's both appropriate and inappropriate meddling into the daily lesson, blatant interruptions, and disrespect of students and teachers themselves. While some teachers were continually flustered and frustrated, others found ways to integrate security professionals into the learning, using them as examples, para-professionals of sorts, and to help with classroom management. Thus, questions emerged first, how security professionals contributed to students' perception of self, ability, and potential--both negative and positive, and second, strategies teachers used to keep security's interruptions from derailing lesson objectives. Often, student success or failure depended on, as Rodney suggested, whether personalities conflicted or conspired.

What Constitutes Risk to Youth, Educators, and Community

While the discussion here should focus on education, curriculum, and student learning, as we have seen, security's primary focus of maintaining a safe environment and protecting the community at large was a dominant theme. All educational programming had to pass through security first, mostly in regards to procedure, student travel, opportunities available to students, visitors, volunteers, and the practical/logistical

aspects of a detention facility. Inquiries regarding the safety of students fore-fronted those concerning serving the educational needs of youth.

Upon entering a detention facility, visitors face “Control,” a one room control center where juvenile detention officers sit behind tinted glass, monitoring every door, every unit or pod of students, every room, and especially, movement by all those within the facility. Filled with computer screens, camera monitors, switches and dials, this room is consistently staffed and no one enters without passing through Control first. Of course, Bentham’s panopticon comes to mind, as Foucault writes, it is a “privileged place for experiments on men...a laboratory of power” (p. 204). That the “director” can watch from a central location, via cameras and other technology, who moves, when they move, whether they should be moving, but mostly so that “he” can “judge them continuously, alter their behavior, imposing upon them methods he thinks best. Today, the panopticon schema is present all around us, in grocery stores, shopping malls, public schools, but perhaps we mostly think of Foucault’s discussion concerning the prison system and its influence on inmates, or as in the case of the juveniles, or “detainees.” At each site, Control not only monitored youth, but also all adult personnel, volunteers, and visitors, manipulating and approving movement as well as what could be brought into the facility, all with the intent to protect the safety of all those both within the walls and those outside.

Therefore, as the number one consideration, security’s presence weighed on all who work on site. One’s guard had to always be up, even though teachers and administrators in the school would sarcastically comment they had the safest school in the district. Teachers had to be ready for the outburst, for the fabricated weapon, for the

physical take-down of a student, for a hostage situation--for any crisis--though they were uncommon. In my own school, I rarely think of security, but while walking through the halls of the detention center schools, I was continuously aware of the intercoms, the cameras, the large metal sliding doors, the juvenile detention officers everywhere with their heavy and loud radios dangling from their belts. Yet, the greatest reminder of security's presence was having to ask permission to enter, to exit--essentially to simply travel anywhere in the building. Security *was* the culture--a culture that definitely affected the partnering culture of teaching and learning in a juvenile detention facility, often limiting what educators could do, thus forcing these professionals to be perhaps more creative, flexible, and innovative than their mainstream counterparts.

As one may imagine, the presence of security made these learning environments obviously different than a typical classroom. While detention officers rarely participated in the teaching/lesson, they did comment at both opportune and inopportune moments, offer motivation to students, discipline when needed, influence student behavior, and interrupt class when necessary to remove a student for various purposes (medical, visitation by a probation officer or counselor, inappropriate behaviors). Therefore, educators were forced to always consider potential interruption, the mood of the JDS/JDO¹⁶ or unit before their arrival, and the dynamic, whether positive or negative, between the youth and their assigned JDS/JDO. Furthermore, tension also existed between educator and security staff as both had an opinion as to what was best for students and thus often clashed, which was evidenced through informal interviews. As noted by

¹⁶ JDS refers to a Juvenile Detention Specialist; JDO refers to a Juvenile Detention Officer; JDT refers to a Juvenile Detention Technician. JDS/JDO professionals typically had more extensive education and received better pay than the JDT

multiple educators in facilities where officers actually sat in the classroom with students during instruction time, they could derail what the teachers were trying to do by entering the class conversation uninvited or by offering instructional advice.

Whether intentional or not, according to the Clarke County Volunteer Orientation Program Manual, education is listed as an “also provided” service. Other services like medical, food, safety, recreation, entertainment, and religion are all mentioned, highlighted, and explained, *prior to* education, which is mentioned in the same category as counseling services, dental, and hair cuts. The sentiment is evident that procedure and security are foremost, however, also mentioned in Clarke’s manual: “The teacher is the *primary manager* [emphasis mine] of all activity that goes on within the classroom settings. While a Unit JDS or Escort JDT is in the area, they shall be aware of the importance of *not compromising the authority of the teacher*” [emphasis mine] (n.p).; moreover, “upon entering the classroom area, the Unit JDS/Escort JDT shall first report to the teacher before interacting with detainees affirming to the detainees, the authority of the teacher.” While these excerpts seemingly support education’s efforts, they underline the continual struggle of security and education to find a balance, a mutual understanding. At least for Clarke, I did not get the sense that teachers believed themselves to be the “primary managers” nor that all JDS/JDT’s were cognizant of their negative impact on student learning. During classroom observations, interruptions were routine and teachers often had to accommodate everyone else’s needs versus others respecting the sanctity, so to speak, of class time.

By intervening, interjecting comments, making unnecessary production out of removing students or returning students, chit-chatting with other security personnel, the JDO/JDS became not only a distraction but at times, an unwelcome presence in the classroom. The paradox is that security also made education possible and were more than supportive of the importance of education in the rehabilitation of those in their charge. Many observed JDS staff at Clarke and Wayne held completed degrees in their field or were also working on their own advanced degrees. During moments of interaction, security staff prompted students to work, to focus, to pay attention, and in these ways, they were helpful keeping students who struggle with attention and behavior in-line and on task.

Essentially, both security and the school have the same mission--to help youth throughout their stay hopefully change their behaviors, attitudes, and ultimately, accomplish some school work; they simply differ in philosophy as to what is best and when for the students during their incarceration, clashing in regard to policy and methods of delivery. Security is punitive; education is nurturing. Educators have many ideas about classroom practice, materials, activities, guest speakers, objectives and goals, but security mostly has the final say, when they are not educational professionals themselves, thus stemming the frustration. When I inquired as to “Why not vocational programming?” or “Why not art class or a cooking class?”, the response was always “security.” In our interview, Randy administrator of the Wayne site, conveyed the relationship between security and the school (Personal Communication with Randy Farmer Spring 2010):

You know the job of safety and security and running this facility is not a job that you have to understand about education...Part of our job as the education program is to educate them about what we need and what makes kids successful. But, you're trying to overcome thought processes that are related to what their job and life and whose career has been about. So, you know, while they can come to us and say, "oh you can't use those materials in class because they're not safe," when we go to them and say, "we need to do this" because it's educationally the best thing, it's hard for them to understand that. And, it comes down to measuring risk versus benefit, that's where it should all boil down. How much risk are we taking with safety and security for the benefit that we're gaining. Right now, the bar is pretty heavily weighted towards if there is any risk, then the benefit doesn't matter; there should be almost no risk at all, no matter how big the benefit is...but now, I believe you have to work cooperatively and we have to educate them that the more engaged kids are, the more positive experiences kids are having, the less risk they have.

Here, Randy referenced the need to cross-educate security and education professionals to generate mutual understanding and their for coordinated efforts in the rehabilitation of youth. One basic truth to classroom management and behavior control is to engage students in meaningful learning, in routine procedure, and practice consistent expectations and discipline. As Randy suggested, if security would loosen the reigns as to what educators can do in the classroom to engage students, risk may be therefore be

reduced. The ultimate question educationally is whether security has to be such a “presence” ? Can security not be in the classroom? Erbine teachers worked with no security present, yet this situation may not function well at Clarke, a larger, more urban facility with more violent youth--but this doesn’t mean that Clarke could not necessarily find a way to work with less security or to provide collaborative opportunities during which security and education professionals could communicate philosophies unique to their position, compromise as to what occurs during official class time, and determine improved methods, as Randy suggests, to engage young people, therefore leading to improved management and less risk.

Clarke’s JDS’s stay on-unit with the youth throughout an 8 hour shift with teachers entering to teach their particular class each day, or every other day, depending on the schedule. While many JDS professionals have a degree, the degree is not in education, so teachers maintained that they had the upper hand instructionally. Yet, because the JDS was with students more consistently and routinely, they were in charge of disciplining and believed that they knew the students on a deeper, more social level. Almost always, an unspoken tension existed between security and education as they were forced by proximity to negotiate one another’s agenda in an already tense and potentially explosive environment. For the most part, detention officers had the power to determine who attended school, what privileges students had or did not have, and what “level” they were on (points system for behavior)--and such influence, at times, could be used inappropriately. Reconsidering Rodney’s earlier comment about establishing a solid relationship with any JDS then--or that life would then be “hell”--educators at Clarke had

to essentially defer and were at the mercy of the JDS on duty. A power struggle to say the least. One positive was the consistency of employment within the JDS staff and so time existed for relationships to form. I witnessed little turnover, however, during observation times, various teachers informed me as to the climate--positive or negative--we were about to enter based on a certain JDS' personality, means of running the unit, tendency towards favoritism, etc.

Education staff did have some influence on the students' level status by also filling out points sheets at the end of each class. Teachers evaluated each student on the unit in the areas of participation, following rules, directions, and instructions, the students' ability to control emotions and behave consistently, to manage time and their responsibilities well, and lastly, how well students relate to staff. Teachers did this daily providing reasons/rationale for the scores given. These points would then be combined at the end of the day for the unit JDS to then shift or maintain levels accordingly.

Erbine, however, addressed security concerns differently. Wyatt stated that the county hires "anyone with a heartbeat," 19-year-olds who have no clue about young people in detention and who are barely old enough to exert any real authority over the youth who are placed there. The low pay--starting at \$9 per hour with no benefits--and isolated location of the detention center makes hiring security staff for any length of period difficult, and so creating any consistency was a challenge. Therefore, not having much faith in their security professionals was the greatest reason Wyatt and his team decided to keep them out of the classroom. Needing security only for travel and rare cases of student fighting or lashing out, the team knew that due to the high level of

control they had established themselves during classroom instruction time with students, security could be called only when needed and would be there “quick enough” according to Wyatt. So, during instruction time, Wyatt kept their involvement with youth to a minimum. Yet, issues still arose outside the school day with security making, in the team’s mind, inappropriate decisions about student discipline with which they then had to address the next day when school resumed.

Security’s Daily Procedure and Influence on Learning

The JDS/JDO’s were quite recognizable in each facility by their colored polos, khaki pants, sneakers, giant key rings and radios attached to their belts. They walked around the school comfortably and casually; they were at ease with their stance, their mannerisms, their humor, and their interactions with students and one another. Sarcasm reigned as did street talk (mostly at Clarke and Wayne); often, I struggled with the quick nature of conversation and the “slanguage” that ensued: a blending of street vernacular and security lingo. Both genders were represented and ranged in age, size, and ethnicity. No school bells rang as in a typical school environment; the JDS/JDO’s were the bell and they were in charge of students travel as per directions over their radios. Although the JD/JDOS’s laughed and joked, they could be serious in an instant.

The continual and common conflict for these schools was overcoming the friction between security and safety with the needs of the educational facility and then finding a balance where youth were not only housed in a safe and nurturing environment, but also one that helped them regain an interest in and love of learning. The security staff, faculty, administrators, and students found themselves trying to find a compromise between the

rules of the detention center and goals of the curriculum. As each head of education in their respectful facilities, Randy, Wyatt, and Rodney pointed out repeatedly during their interviews, security was primary, and anything considered a safety risk was not allowed, or at minimum, they must gain approval of those in charge of security. Sometimes, however, they were a little secretive or subversive of security's rules, considering what they maintained was best for the student. They existed in a constant give and take, and while each principal had the same mission to help youth, he also had a personal and professional philosophy as to what worked best for the young people in their care.

While one may think security professionals may be sensitive to a classroom situation and the attempts of any teacher to inspire students to learn, because these men and women were in the mindset of "security first, education second," considering always what may be a risk to the safety of all in the building, often they appeared to be insensitive and in some circumstances, rude. In one example at Clarke, the JDS staff was loud, carrying on their own conversation while students attempted to work on their individual booklets and the teacher, Ms. Sergeant (science and study skills), tried to walk around and keep the girls focused. During the 50 minute class, the JDS went on break and returned--which meant that another JDS relieved her for that time, which of course, lent towards conversation and idle chatter. Also, the JDS supervisor came in--which churned up the girls because they wanted to talk with him--the nurse came in to give medication, and the transition specialist came to work individually with a new student. While these interruptions were more than just security personnel, they demonstrated a lack of reverence and appreciation for the education process. What about the lesson Ms. Sergeant

wanted to do? What about her ability to communicate with the girls and keep them focused? Every shift in personnel was loud and every entry/exit into the unit had to be announced to control who had to lock/unlock the door.

In another example, Ms. Black was prepared to begin and standing in front of her students. After starting, the on-staff JDS yelled, “C’mon Y’all! Come to Class!” which seems appropriate and supportive of education. But, she was yelling from her chair throughout the unit in a manner similar to calling one’s children to dinner versus standing up and walking directly to the student rooms to address them individually, and quietly, so Ms. Black could begin on time.

Conducting a classroom under such circumstances as these seemed daunting and nearly impossible. Considering that security was in charge, I questioned whether the supervisor of security personnel could limit the number of disruptions, determine how they could be handled more discretely, and enforce at minimum a politeness and respect during the school day, versus allowing such interruptions to “interrupt” learning and student progress.

Thus, Clarke’s students did not always have the advantage of a quiet classroom within which they could focus on academic work, which added to this tension between education and security staff. Furthermore, when the educators wanted activity, discussion, and involvement, often they were stifled by security’s “insecurity” with student movement and dynamic class participation. Typical teaching strategies like cooperative learning--Think-Pair-Share, Jigsaw, and Two-Stay/Two Stray--were rarely in practice. When I asked Rodney, he suggested that the challenge with cooperative learning in this

environment is the potential volatile nature of the students. Yet, considering the benefits of cooperative learning to develop socially appropriate communication skills, certainly some techniques could be incorporated. Additionally, teaching materials were limited: no hands-on experiments or physical projects were allowed; paper rulers were used in math class. The clash between teaching goals and what was allowed in the classroom regarding active participation, content, and response was evident when security stepped in to discipline. The on-going struggle was thus most evident when it affected what the school could do within the classroom (content) to educate every student.

One important point is that students in detention are grouped according to their security risk, not by their academic level. Therefore, students of different ages and wide ranging abilities were sitting in one classroom at the same time for math, English, Social Studies, science, and so on, because of their individual “score” given at the time of intake--whether they were low, medium, or high intensity risk youth. As Ms. Black shared,

My classes may have a 12 year old and an 18 year old. Both may have a 4th grade reading level, but the home schools consider one a senior and the other a 7th grader. I have to teach to the mean. The objectives may be too abstract for the 12 year old and the medium may be too juvenile for the 18 year old.

This situation would not exist in a mainstream school to the extent it does in the detention center. Many educators in the juvenile justice system would give anything for the ability to have children grouped based on their academic needs or grade level, all entering the same classroom at the same time, but just didn't, and doesn't, happen. I spoke with one

7th grader who was reading at a 2nd grade level and another young man, a 9th grader, working on 7th grade English, while yet another 17-year old-boy was working on his GED--all on the same unit, attending classes together. The teaching condition was not unlike a one-room school house given the variant learning levels and prior experiences.

This particular situation of grouping enhanced conflict because security believed that youth from different pods/units could not intermix; they believed that such interaction would create the potential for student communication and hence a sort of planned uprising among multiple pods/units that would be more than they could handle at one time. Educators understood security's point of view, but they recognized also that the current school structure did not adequately meet specific student learning needs, and therefore, was in direct clash with the teaching philosophy and the way they would like to hold school. As will be discussed later, curriculum at Clarke then took the form of individual course units/packets allowing students to work on credit recovery particular to their own records; however, students then lost the opportunities to develop social skills needed to establish confidence in class participation, cooperative learning situations, and school involvement.

Wayne seemed to have found a balance between security and education, mostly due to the leadership of Randy and his collaboration with the facility director who oversees all security. As Randy described (Personal Communication with Randy Farmer Spring 2010), while experiencing both conflict and communication, the education and security halves of the facility worked continuously to bridge the gap to ensure a seamless progression to the day. Students enter classrooms presenting an environment much like

their home community schools. Teachers have lessons and activities planned; they use white boards on the walls, a SMART board, technology, computers, art supplies, calculators, etc. Security hangs out in the door way or seated in the classroom, ready to do their job, but they allow the teacher to lead and conduct class as they have planned. The security professionals are present to escort and discipline, upholding their end of the responsibility of helping youth, yet are also cognizant and respectful that at that moment, youth were more than “detainees”: they were “students” and “scholars.”

Despite the high presence of security professionals, and the often overbearing nature of Bentham’s panopticon (Foucault, 1977, p. 200) soon enough, within these facilities, people forgot that the cameras were focused on them and found a routine despite being watched. And, while we could forget, security could not. They ensured a level of peace so indeed *some* schooling, which is better than none at all, could occur, as well as smooth operations. As Foucault notes, “The inmate [or teacher, visitor, etc.] must never know whether he is being observed at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so” (p. 201). Security was both a necessary blessing and an evil curse--the promise of safety at the expense of loss of privacy or dignity. Cameras kept professionals poised and prepared to break up any negative interaction or escort a student back to his/her room for inappropriate behavior. Despite the “advocacy” for the students on the part of their teachers and obvious frustration with some of the rules, what Security side *did* do was emphasize that the students were first and foremost in detention, in lockdown, and school was a privilege that could be taken away at any time--and students, for the most part--enjoyed school. Behavior management 101. Ultimately, these were juvenile

offenders who had broken the law, and those in security did exhibit sensitivity towards students, reminding youth where they were without stuffing that fact down their throats.

Many JDS/JDT professionals at Clarke advised, mentored, and socialized with youth, finding a balance socially and professionally that many educators experiences. Security staff also found ways to socialize with youth, participating in physical education classes in case team numbers were lopsided, playing ping-pong or foosball, of simply sitting and chatting, offering advice or just an ear. Some JDS/JDT's even allowed released detainees into their homes--those who were wards of the state--so as to help them in that transition process. Certainly, having a person on the outside who knew of the culture within a youth facility would be advantageous to any young person. As was shared during informal interviews, those fosters parents/JDS/JDT's were expectantly quite strict. To illustrate, one African-American JDS, a tall woman who looked to be in her forties who has fostered three girls and one boy from Clarke explained: "I take no nonsense and then they are out...no cell phones...no friends,...no cussing and you *will* go to church."

The JDS/JDO's were respected for the most part and garnered that respect because they were fair and illustrated that they did not respond in "violence," anger, or employ "spectacle" to impose their power. They did just the opposite. Foucault's (1977) "rule of lateral effect" can be applied here, as to what could be done to have the greatest impact on those who had *not* committed the crime--but in this case--on not only the "guilty" student in question, but also the students who had not misbehaved. Whereas the students expected and were prepared to "throw down the rope" and "go to war," the JDS/

JDO's were trained not to take the bait. The JDS's (and teachers) were trained to know that putting youth on display would not work because students were used to and therefore desensitized to this reaction. The approach of the adults must "leave the most lasting impression on the minds of the people [students], and the least cruel on the body of the criminal" in order to create the greatest impact (Foucault, 1977, p. 95). Foucault also believed that law and punishment should not be secret, and that it should be consistent and concrete (p. 96-97). However, the chink in the armor was that at times, Security forgot individuation in their approach.

The argument here considers whether security "allows" education to occur by keeping students in line, or whether security "impedes" the education process because they were so focused on security, that interruptions to the lesson and learning occurred or the atmosphere of learning and engagement was broken simply by the presence of a Juvenile Detention Officer or Specialist (JDO/JDS). Interestingly, I also witnessed situations during which security was an advantage, not only in keeping students disciplined and focused, but also by removing youth who were not "school-ready" that day. The JDO/JDS, while yes, interrupting the flow of classroom activities, also contributed by maintaining structure, discipline, and a baseline level of respect for any visitor to the unit, and at times, participated in the daily lesson. In one event, Mr. Keating, a Clarke detention specialist participated in the poetry exercise Ms. Black was conducting that day in staff secure, writing his own metaphor poem and sharing it with one student in particular. Here, Mr. Keating demonstrated the impact and benefit of connecting with students, supporting the teacher and the education process, moreover

making his own position more enjoyable. While the young man in staff secure wrote about his own situation, Mr. Keating decided to poke fun at his grandchild's "thunder diaper full of gore."

The job of safety and security and running the facility is a position that doesn't require an understanding of education; however, once a school is placed within that environment, an understanding must be facilitated. Thus, one recommendation would be to educate security staff as part of their own professional training about what the school needs to make youth more confident and successful learners. For example, Wyatt would love to have writing utensils more available to students outside of school: "I want kids to have more access to pencils throughout the day--more time to write--a lot of the times they are in lockdown because of security needs, but they cannot have pencils in their rooms." Certainly, students alone in their room presents obvious concerns about self-harm, but the counter argument may be that a student in that frame of mind would use the pencil outside his/her room as well in such a manner. However, again referencing Randy's comment that "...you're trying to overcome thought processes that are related to what their job and life and whole career has been about," (Personal Communication with Randy Farmer Spring 2010) getting the security staff to buy into certain ideas and programs for the school can be difficult. Security's position always measures "risk versus benefit." Thus, the way to overcome the conflict is to work cooperatively and educate security that "the more engaged kids are the more positive experiences kid are having, the less risk they have" which would be no shocking revelation to most educators, but for a professional who is so focused on "control" and "order" conveying the idea of

“constructive cooperative chaos” may not be possible. Nonetheless, if security would allow the school to teach the students according to their concept of best educational practice, then issues involving security could diminish.

Ultimately, teachers and their leaders within the juvenile justice system know their students, they understand the nature of the environment, therefore, a teacherly perspective would be that security should trust education to make sound judgement regarding tools, materials, and content that would be appropriate for a detention center. For example: art classes. Are paint brushes a security risk? No more than the lead pencils that are numbered and counted. In addition, consider vocational instruction and its presence in adult prison facilities. If adults criminals are trusted and allowed these programs and educational opportunities, then why not youth? If in certain adult prisons, inmates are rehabilitating dogs from local animal shelters to then be adopted by people in the community, why are not therapy dogs often allowed in youth facilities? One answer could be that security’s “power” can be misplaced or misdirected, hence, discourse within a detention setting, with administrators and decision makers on both ends, must occur to first, avoid the “living hell” mentioned by Rodney, and second, to create and establish meaningful, purposeful, and authentic learning experiences to develop the educational, social, emotional, and interpersonal skills these youth will need to improve their chances of a long-lasting and successful re-entry to society and their home schools.

CHAPTER 5

ADMINISTRATIVE AND TEACHER ETHOS

Randy pulled out his keys and unlocked the door. We exited the living unit and entered the commons where youth can play foosball, ping pong, cards, or simply relax. I looked behind the security desk where a giant window, from floor to ceiling, gave view to an outside recreation area which was small--octagonal in shape--about 40-50 feet in diameter. The cement floor had no markings despite the single basketball hoop standing to one side. The sky could be seen through the chicken-wire-like covering, enforced with slender white beam-like structures. Randy walked over to where I stood and pointed to the top right corners of the "cage" as he said the kids called it. There, a small white platform, about 10 x 6 inches, hung suspended from the caged ceiling. He explained that the birds would squeeze through the wires to make nests in the rec area, but then could not poke back through and fly away--they had no leverage. They became "imprisoned." Then, a maintenance man came up with the idea of building these small platforms close enough to the wired ceiling so the birds could fly up to this perch and then push with their feet to get the leverage needed to be free.

As I listened, the irony became clear. Randy's face in that moment of telling the story revealed that he had never before made the connection between the maintenance worker and his teachers, the connection between the students and the birds, and that the symbolism of the platform demonstrated the very philosophy of their school and of juvenile justice education, a philosophy I witnessed throughout my time in the field. The

irony also lies in the obstacles security places before education: “caging” the students in such a way that they will feel “trapped”--like deviants, outcasts, prisoners, yet simultaneously providing security, a sense of peace for students who are happy to be warm, fed, clothed, and away from negative, hostile environments. While some consider youth law-breakers or violent, the complete story is unknown; the goal is still to support improvement, to change their thinking, behaviors, and manners from destructive to constructive--a fruitless goal if students are limited in needless ways--by labels, materials, programs, or by their own devices. How often do young people enter “cages” from which they cannot escape? Who will be present, then, to create or provide that platform youth need, their “leverage” to be free. Through connection and teamwork within the juvenile justice system, here, the platform (education) enters the story, bringing students closer to the possibilities, the fresh air, the sky, and the freedom.

The Platform

If we look back to Ms. Black’s opening description of her typical day, we can get a sense of usual frustrations and reflection many educators in any environment have on a daily basis: frustration with rote routines, dictated curriculum, administrative decisions, policy, and its implementation, legislation and law, and frustration with the young people we hope to teach and inspire. Day (2004) notes that teaching is “demanding, complex, and emotionally and intellectually exhausting” (p.13) and further quotes Nias (1996, p. 305) regarding the possibility of teachers exploding, imploding, dying in a way, or simply choosing to leave the profession (p.14). Yet, like millions of educators who stay on year to year, Ms. Black returns, and despite her commentary that her motivation is to feed the

number of dogs she has at home, I've seen Ms. Black at work. I've seen her laugh uncontrollably with her students, celebrate their words of wisdom or profound moments, and listen intently to their stories of home, school, trouble, simultaneously honoring their experiences while also helping them to see and analyze the error of their ways. Hansen (2010) notes Day and Gu (2010) who comment that: "there are teachers everywhere who resist being molded into functionaries or hired hands" (p. 118)--this is Ms. Black. She exposes her students to what they do not know or have not experienced as well as invite them to share themselves; she opens her classroom up to all students respecting what they bring individually to the learning space she has created and maintaining a sense of awe and wonder about them--understanding that "the student as a person is as important as the student as a learner" (Day, 2004, p. 12); and she has the courage and perseverance to fight for and preserve her own personal pedagogy.

Thus, when I consider Ms. Black and her colleagues at Clarke, and then the teachers at Erbine, they *are* the platform, the leverage and stability youth need to rehabilitate and hopefully, become free and stay free. These teachers, like their students, face labeling and discrimination in their own right, illustrated by Ms. Black's notions of being the public school "cast-off" or "has been." While I did not sense from other educators that they were of the same opinion, Ms. Black's sentiment is still valid in her perception of the colleagues she works with day in and day out. The question is why these educators are not applauded for their chosen field, for the tireless work they do, and more importantly, why are they not leading professional development sessions for outside schools so those environments are more appropriately equipped to welcome released

students back to the classroom? Taking into consideration that Clarke teachers work year round as county employees, through non-governmental holidays and summers--and they are not compensated for continuing coursework as are often their mainstream peers--we can conjecture that around the country, other schools and their professionals working within the juvenile justice system, are not compensated or rewarded either. With this sentiment in mind, Day quotes Palmer (1998), “if we continue to demean and dishearten the human resource called the teacher on whom so much depends...if we fail to cherish--and challenge--the human heart that is the source of good teaching” (p. 11), then students lose on both sides of the fence. As Rodney shared with me repeatedly, “my team needs a break--they never get a break--and I’m not sure how to help them.” In the attempt to hire highly qualified teachers (HQT’s) to fill openings created by retirements and grant funding, Clarke was turned down by candidates who were offered positions for two main reasons: year long school and no compensation for advanced degree work. What message are we sending to educators who work in detention and other youth facilities?

Despite Clarke’s current situation, which is under negotiations with the county, teachers--including those at Erbine--do enjoy the students and their stories, their innocence blended with too much of the wrong knowledge, and their humor. So, they stay. For example, specifically, the teachers at Erbine see their jobs as cool--way cool, in fact. The emotional connection, the social commitment, the humanity of education is so enticing, that yes, they sign again on the dotted line each year, because as noted by Day (2011, p. 31) “it takes courage not to be discouraged.” These courageous educators who have chosen to teach in a detention setting--and more importantly--remain there,

according to Clarke (1995), “radically encourage(s) the human spirit,” and possess “confident, independent thought and action in an uncertain world,” preparing them [students] for “a world of difference” (p.7). Ultimately, as all education professionals can understand, the answer to the “why stay?” question is always “I stay because of the kids.”

In my experiences as a teacher, the administrators make sure to emphasize the need to “dress for success” stressing that both students and parents respond better to or actually prefer teachers who look professional. Yet, ties were rare. Dresses were rare. I never saw a tie or suit walk through the halls or enter the classroom, except visitors from the Department of Education or other legal professionals--or in the largest facility, Clarke County, upper level administration like Michael and the superintendent who rarely had contact with students and remained in offices in another area of the building, did dress more formally in ties and slacks. However, most teaching staff and faculty dressed down and comfortably so, similar to what I may experience on “casual Fridays.” Facilities had rules as to foot wear: no open toed shoes and less than one inch heel height for women. Earlier in her career at Clarke, Ms. Black would routinely wear 3-4 inch heels stressing the need to “wear pretty shoes” in such a dark place and the value in having conversations with her female students about fashion. Yet, while important connections were being made that could translate to better learning, high-heels were viewed as potential weapons and a health risk to teachers in case a student became violent or a physical take down was necessary.

Commonly, those who interacted with students remained casual in jeans or khakis, including administrator/lead teachers Wyatt and Rodney. Randy, Director of

Education in his facility noted that students often equate suits and ties with authority figures who limit them, talk over them, or who do not make attempts to understand them. Therefore, Randy will only wear a tie to work when he has official visitors or must attend a meeting and encourages his faculty to dress nicely, but comfortably to “hang” with students and get on their level. Yet, another strategy to connect with youth lay in the way students addressed adults: by their first names, nick names, or an abbreviated version of their professional titles. Essentially, the formality that may be found in a mainstream school, or the need to establish authority was not necessary in a detention setting because the students were already under the thumb of the law and the presence of security. Teachers, then, could focus more on making the human connection, building levels of trust and familiarity, and creating the positive interactions this population of students need, lending towards meaningful learning situations and then potential rehabilitation.

Furthermore, to exist and survive in this environment, teachers seemed to need the instinct of banter and playful sarcasm that would both reach students and not alienate them. Thus, humor was prevalent, a knowledge of street life, gangs, drugs, guns, and other “hard” things was necessary to converse with students, to “get down” with them, to know where they had come from, and ultimately, to engage them in classroom conversation. Essentially, again, the strategy to acknowledge the students, to give them power to participate, and to validate their identities and past experiences through language and conversation presented itself as a necessary tool--a tool perhaps mainstream public school educators could adopt on a broader scale, and one that will establish better relationships with at-risk youth and those returning from detention.

Leadership and Administrative Ethos

Wayne County Youth Center. “It is the teachers’ passions that help them and their students escape the slow death of ‘busyness at work’, the rituals of going through the motions, (Day, 2004, p.13 quoting Fried, 1995, p. 19). Taking Day’s comments into application, the professionals at the Wayne facility approached learning more in sync with mainstream education as students travelled to their classrooms where subject teachers waited to begin the lesson for that day. The Director of Education, Randy had over 16 years of classroom experience, with 6 of those years in either a behavioral skills program or detention setting, and finally, 7 years as the administrator. He held a Master’s degree in Education from Temple University and a supervisory certificate from the local university.

Newer than the other facilities in this study and contracted through the local school district, Wayne had advantages in regard to layout conducive to student travel and thus “attending” school in an actual school-like setting, available and portable technology for students, and professional development opportunities both required and supported by the local district office. Randy supervised school staff consisting of certificated teachers and para-educators, and a curriculum offering courses in Math, Science, English/ Language Arts, Social Studies, PE, Computers/Technology, and Fine Arts, which involved the teaching of drawing skills, use of watercolors, etc., and activities involving music. Other classes were Gender Studies and Positive Action to address social skills and building self esteem. Outside of the school day, from 3-8 p.m., students were involved in the Life Skills program, taught by different staff, the goal being to “provide an

individualized, comprehensive, and gender specific program focused on developing basic life skills,” which can involve everything from etiquette and character education, to cooking, sewing, resumé writing, and learning more about the juvenile justice system and transitioning upon release” (Farmer, 2009, p. 9-10). Students spent little actual time in their rooms, because the idea was to keep them busy, thinking, and active; students were in their rooms during detention officer shift changes and at night while they slept.

Administration and educators from other state facilities have visited the Wayne site on numerous occasions to observe, inquire, and brainstorm ideas as to how to adapt many of Wayne’s programs and procedures to their own unique existing structures and curriculum. While also coordinating individual homework assignments from students’ home schools, Wayne took the position of continuing the classroom experience for its students, keeping in line with the local districts’ standards and assessments. One major difference to note is that Wayne was a pre-adjudicated facility versus a more long-term placement for youth. Therefore, Wayne’s average stay for youth ranged from ten days to three weeks, although youth could stay longer. Therefore, this characteristic affected the school’s approach to teaching and learning during a student’s stay: classroom activities to reinvigorated a love for learning and build student confidence as participants in and contributors to classroom life.

Randy shared a particular co-teaching lesson created by his science and technology teachers on computer programming (Personal Communication with Randy Farmer Spring 2010). This program, developed by MIT, was designed to help students

create their own PONG games and to lure students into the computer programming field. During the lesson lead by the tech teacher and facilitated by the science teacher, students each worked on their own MacBook laptop following instructions projected on the classroom Smartboard (the facility had one portable Smartboard that teacher shared). According to Randy, students were being creative, they were collaborating, and at times, trying to “one-up” one another about what their game could do and its appearance. In a classroom of 11 male detainees, the teachers kept them engaged and opened up to them an area of potential future career study. Who would think that students in detention would be working successfully with an MIT program or simply that these youth *could* work with such a program? Obviously, Randy and his educators.

Another illustration of unique learning opportunities offered at Wayne was the motorcycle project Randy brought into staff secure during his time as an actual teacher in the facility. After personally purchasing three old motorcycles, Randy stored them at school, bringing them out for the students to learn about mechanics, engines, and problem solving. Even with students continually entering and leaving the facility, the motorcycle project was one that students could “enter” and “exit” in such a manner that didn’t exclude them from the learning, but allowed them to acquire new knowledge and take that away with them upon release. Students refurbished parts and constructed an entirely new motorcycle, a process that took a full school year. The finished motorcycle was then donated to another school in the district to complete the project with wiring and ultimately creating a usable vehicle. Randy took his passion with motorcycles and transformed it into a meaningful learning experience for students--of both genders.

Now that he is the administrator and the creator of curriculum and education programming, I asked Randy what he wanted to inspire as the overall culture of teaching and learning--in the actual classroom environment. Randy encourages his educators to think along the same lines as what would make an impact on youth and provide not only authentic and transformational learning opportunities by addressing student interest and need:

Randy: The culture we try to create here is that every room that you go into would be someone that cares about you and will work with you to make you successful. And the only way that you are unsuccessful is if you choose to be unsuccessful on purpose...Kids are unsuccessful in regular schools all the time and don't know why...Every possible accommodation is offered to change. What do you [the student] need? My favorite phrase is "What do we need to do to make you successful? You tell us what you need."

I: Do you think the kids get that?

Randy: Yea--I think they get that. I think that sometimes they are in an emotional place where there is no answer. And that's okay to say that too. Maybe this [learning] just isn't possible right now. How do we help you so that you can deal with this. Kids tell me, "I have court this afternoon--and I'm really upset about what's going to happen in court--and I just cannot focus." And I'll say, "What could you do; what will help you until you get to court?" And sometimes it's, "Can you get me a counselor?--I need to talk to a counselor." Great--we'll get you a counselor. Sometimes it's "I just need to sit and read my book--I love this

book, and it's the only thing I think that will keep my mind off of court for the next two hours if I can just sit here and read my book." Why wouldn't you let kids sit and read their book, which is at least something productive, when he's telling you, "I won't be successful in your classroom, I'm gonna cause trouble, I'm going to have a problem"? Why would you have him tell you that and have you say "Now I'm going to make you do that?" That's ridiculous.

Thus, students at Wayne participated in meaningful conversations and activities; they were regular students--they may have been criminals and "social deviants" but at Wayne, that wasn't the focus. According to Randy and the school's approach, seeing youth as "students" versus the more detrimental labels to which they were accustomed could make the difference as to whether they continued this path of learning, contributing, and participating outside of detention.

Randy's objective was having a continual and routine presence in his school, often observing his teachers and their classrooms--more often to witness the youth in action and out of a desire to simply be back in the classroom. Randy maintained that his presence allowed him to more adequately understand his teachers and what they faced, and, if a situation arose, he was better equipped to negotiate and advocate for both youth and teacher with security staff. Randy visited students on their units, in their rooms, when they had problems or were removed from class. He substituted for teachers who were ill, sometimes participating in P.E. games like hockey and steal the flag. During these times, Randy was able to see students outside the classroom, as simply young people, as someone else apart from their personal struggles that often define them. Tensions faced

by Randy stemmed from those outside the school in the school district not understanding the nature of the student they served, and the delicate and constant struggle/balance with security staff and their director arising simply out of desynchronized beliefs about rehabilitation, what students needed--and deserved.

Finally, Randy while at times clashing with his teachers as many administrators and their teaching team do, felt that he had their respect and support. As noted, Randy began his time at Wayne as a classroom teacher in Staff Secure, and when the administrator retired, Randy put his name in the hat. Teachers wanted someone who knew the system, their school, their kids, and their culture. Randy was given the position, but also did experience 1-2 years of transition as his position changed from colleague to supervisor. He demanded greatness from his educators, which meant that he was always looking for ways to improve the programs and instruction. Randy gained support from his staff because he encouraged professional development and training, offered time off for those to attend conferences, and took his staff to conferences with him. One difference separating Wayne from the other facilities is that teachers were contracted, as was Randy, by the local school system as the school within the detention center was considered part of the school district. This status allowed for a specific salary, opportunities for salary advancement with increased education, summer vacation as well as holiday breaks, paid health insurance through the school, and other perks typically associated with school districts connected with the National Education Association (NEA).

In contrast as will be discussed, Wayne and Clarke teachers were hired as county employees and negotiated with the county, a very different situation which could not lean

on standard education negotiations. To illustrate, while Wayne teachers were able to negotiate and enjoy a similar calendar to their public school counterparts, Clarke teachers were treated as county/government employees, working year round, and did not benefit from increased pay with post-graduate degrees.

Clarke Administration: Michael Bloom. According to Michael (Clarke), juvenile justice education “is a big animal and it takes small bites, it really does take small bites” to address holistically the needs of youth in the system. As Michael continued, sometimes those “bites” represent the differences in educational philosophy between admin and their teachers. Michael was fully aware that some of his ideas on curriculum, programming, and implementation did not sit well with his veteran faculty, especially given his lack of degree work in the field of education. However, Michael believed firmly in his goals for the improving the education and support system available to the students. Like the administrators in each facility, Michael expressed only high regard for these youth who were, as noted by all administrators, quite brilliant and as capable as any other student in any other high school, but because outside detention they are either tired, malnourished, high, abused, etc., their intelligence and abilities were masked by their increased stress levels due to their life circumstances. Rodney Rogue, head teacher at the Clarke said that all students in this situation needed was attention and respect--and to feel needed: “If a student needs me to write a letter to the judge, I’ll do that. If he needs a pop as a reward for earning credit, I’ll do that too. I visit the units all the time to just talk to kids.” While the commitment of the facility administration was

clear and evident; the tension that hung in the air (or didn't) rested mostly in the approach to running the school.

As with many school situations, the "view" of the school from the office of the administrator can at times vary from with the "view" from within the classroom--of the teacher and students. Within three observed facilities, two, Erbine and Wayne, illustrated positive relationships between administration and teachers, while one, Clarke, struggled with tensions stemming from Michael's lack of actual background or experience in education. While he did have experience in county human resource work and training, as well as experience with Boys and Girls' clubs and other youth organizations, he had never been a teacher, a principal, or administrator in a regular or alternative school. His lack of actual school experience and tendency to implement new programs, policies, procedures in a quick manner without providing necessary and needed professional development for educational staff and the lead teacher resulted in many instances of controversy and a lowering of team morale. Yet, I cannot say that if Clarke had an administrator with a strong education background that philosophical disparity would not exist. Michael had entered three years before the start of my study when the facility and the teachers were experiencing great liberty in what they were teaching and how.

With Michael's entrance and the philosophy of a holistic approach to rehabilitation--religious (mostly Christian based--another point of controversy as not all youth in detention/staff secure were Christian) and community based connections and programs, and hiring professionals to meet the variant needs of the youth--resistance also entered. Despite wanting to align curriculum and credit recovery programs with local

school and state standards, teachers questioned how this was to be implemented, monitored, and measured, how their roles would shift and their responsibilities. However, as Michael noted, “You have to be prepared to scratch where it itches and that’s the challenge. Our reading scores have gone up 6% over the last two years...education shouldn’t be rigid.” Essentially, Michael was aware of the tensions and communication gaps between he and his faculty, but ultimately he also understood the importance of working with a student to first understand why s/he was not learning, second, listening to the student, and then creating a better way of helping. Michael noted:

There’s a reason they [students] don’t want to work. They’re not going to work for themselves, but that’s why you know, you need to take the time to engage them and to say, ‘Well what can I do to help?’...And so, we’re, we’re really taking a holistic approach to working with the kids and I can sympathize with the teachers because they’re being asked to do levels of engagement they, when they were hired they weren’t asked to do.

During each conversation with Michael, his dedication to the improvement of Clarke’s program and to the rehabilitation of the youth there was evident. His respect for the teachers was evident; and he understood that students needed literacy programming, meaningful credit recovery opportunities, and medical/psychological services to address other needs that may be keeping them from learning. Michael believed in the young people to change; he did not view them as lost causes and considered, as other administrators, how to reduce recidivism and increase successful and permanent transition rates.

Michael's strength was his deep concern for the youth in the facility and commitment towards their rehabilitation, which was not denied by his team. He made community connections to involve people outside the detention center in special programming for the students; he researched and become well-read on juvenile justice education; he attended and presented at various seminars and conferences; and future plans involved traveling to other state facilities. Michael noted repeatedly in interviews taking his job quite seriously, dressing professionally in slacks, a dress shirt and tie, to present to the community and others an attitude of seriousness and dedication to the youth at this school. Michael's ultimate vision was to have Clarke become a national leader within the juvenile justice system in regards to holistic approaches toward the education and improvement of court-involved youth.

From the stance of Clarke faculty whom I interviewed, Michael's weakness was the one-sided nature of team meetings and implementation of new ideas. Teacher contribution was requested and welcomed, but it was rarely used according to some teachers. The teachers criticized Michael for displays of favoritism and designing/creating documentation sheets to determine whether teachers were helping students earn enough or expected credits during their stay. While such documentation would certainly measure the number of credits earned within the facility and if education goals were being met, the concern from staff was that if they were not "racking up" enough "cultural capital" in the form of credits--even empty ones--then they would be reprimanded or pushed to speed up the process. But, then again, if the process occurred too quickly, for

example, if a youth completed a credit within a week, teachers were also criticized. Thus, teachers felt that they were in a “no-win, no way for approval” situation.

As a result, the level of professional trust experienced in other facilities was not present at Clarke. During my 18 months of observation, Clarke teachers described four changes they faced in the school schedule and teacher assignments, at times given only weeks or a weekend even to prepare. Such a quick change would rarely, if ever, occur in a traditional school environment. Given the delicate nature of the detention setting and the population of youth so varied in ability, need, and emotional/mental baggage, unsettling the education staff, which served as a constant and much needed routine for youth, impacted the learning process, as educators claimed. To Michael’s credit, he didn’t stick with schedules that were not working, but attempted revisions, searching for the best design to address the individual learning needs of students and to appease educators. These changes were not to disrupt the school day or annoy teachers, but much like the writing process, as a way to revise, to experiment, to tweak, until the draft is perfected. The argument from the education staff was that if Michael were to seriously consider the ideas of those in the trenches, the teachers and para-educators, that the perfect draft for a new plan would come about more quickly.

However, some professionals supported Michael’s efforts, like the transition specialist/school liaison Samantha Stewart, who had an alternate perspective to many of her teaching colleagues. As a former juvenile detention specialist (JDS), Samantha had been around Clarke’s facility and its youth for many years prior to becoming the transition liaison with the public schools. Thus, Samantha was not an “educator” in the sense of

having a specific degree or certification. Considering that Samantha entered classrooms only to meet with youth about their credits, past work and placements, her vision of Michael was understandably varied and their working relationship different. While she viewed his goal as to help youth make successful transitions by earning credits and agreed with his approach, the teachers struggled with the process how that would happen--the method and implementation--and the best format/procedure for developing lacking skills. According to Samantha:

I love Michael to death. Personally and professionally, I think we're going in the right direction...and he wants many positive changes that I think some people fight over little petty stuff. And instead of saying, 'Hey, instead of this could we do this? Would this work? It's just "I wanna fight it all the way.' And, it's hard on detention--it's negative in here anyways--like even with the security, to make changes. You know some people just wanna fight just to fight. Like some people are just unhappy here and it's negativity that comes out where it's just like, 'really?' ..."It's not a happy environment. And, you know, we're all kind of closed in, you know what I mean, we don't have any windows down here, it's not a happy environment. So, if you don't 100% like your job, it's gonna be tough.

Samantha's comments allude to the dark and cold nature of the old building and the fact that the teachers are housed in the basement with few windows. Given her history and employment at Clarke, she was well aware of the emotional commitment needed while working in such an environment and with this population of youth. Dealing with youth who are detained all day can grow tiresome, and yes, the environment can be unhappy,

especially given Clarke's teachers' status as county employees who work throughout the year and do not have breaks like traditional professionals. Therefore, how much of the criticism of Michael is due to pedagogy and how much is simply due to the stress of working day to day in a detention facility is a question for consideration.

Daily tensions were a part of the culture of Clarke and Michael was fully aware and accepting of the clash between him and his teachers. In July of 2012, Michael suggested that teachers who were not on board with his ideas would be let go. At the completion of this study, 18 months later, Michael still had the same teachers working with him and had moved in the direction of greater consideration of their input, even if teachers still expressed that decisions were made without at least minimal consult. Stuck in the middle was Rodney, who tried to support his supervisor but also advocated for his teaching team. He wanted to trust in Michael's research and ideas, but due to his own experience teaching (24 years at Clarke) and knowledge of what his people did every day, led him to also to fight for the teachers to maintain some programs and procedures that were indeed working.

For example: the routine of the day involved teachers visiting units throughout the day, every other day, teaching their own subject matter. Ms. Black, endorsed in English, taught English. Mr. Lake, although a social studies teacher, did also teach basic math. Mr. Verone with a Masters in Physical Education, well, taught PE classes. However, Michael thought that given the complexity each teacher faced addressing so many learning levels and abilities with each class period (remember, students were grouped by security risk, not age or learning level), applying theory and practice similar

to a one-room schoolhouse may better address learning needs. His further thinking was that the JDO and the teacher could collaborate more on meeting the needs of specific youth on the unit. In theory, the concept sounded wonderful and student centered. Thus, Michael with Rodney's help, assigned teachers to their own specific "schoolroom": one unit, one teacher, all day. Such a decision meant that each teacher would not only cover his/her endorsed area but also take on the other core subjects. Teachers responded quite negatively to this concept, sharing their concerns and frustration with Rodney given that they were not part of the conversation or were asked to contribute. Teachers held reservations about their ability to take on such work, teaching in other core areas with which they were totally unfamiliar. Furthermore, another argument stemmed from the one-room school house idea not mimicking reality, so that when students try to reintegrate to their communities and schools, they would be at a disadvantage. Yet another argument regarded the students' lack of exposure to a variety of teaching styles, perspectives, and well, sometimes students just needed a break from a particular teacher, similar to what happens in mainstream public schools. Consequently, the new arrangement did not work out, and after only a few weeks, it was abandoned. Given more time, more collaboration, and more professional development to address teacher concerns and reservations, the concept may have been successful or at minimum approached with greater sense of collegiality. Clarke admin and teachers have, since the time of this fieldwork, held some transparent and productive sessions regarding scheduling, routine, and practice.

Erbine Juvenile Services Center. Contrary to Michael and similar to Randy, Erbine's acting administrator, Wyatt, was a certificated teacher with 15 years of experience and served as the lead teacher and acting administrator, although he had no supervisory certificate. Considering the complexity of the environment, ethos is everything when it comes to administration in gaining the support of the staff and faculty. The dynamic between Michael and his team versus Wyatt and his was starkly different.

By contrast, Wyatt at Erbine had great support and admiration from his teaching team of three professionals. A much smaller environment allowed Wyatt to participate in the education of all students, to team-teach with his faculty, and to know each of the students individually--something neither Michael or Rodney did, even though Rodney's office was among his teachers'. Wyatt was a down-to earth unassuming man who dressed casually--in jeans or khaki's, a polo or nice shirt, with loafers or other comfortable, yet casual shoes. Wyatt and his teachers determined together the flow of the school day, assessing student needs based on student population numbers, educational gaps, goals/objectives communicated via student transcripts and records. Because Wyatt was in the classroom daily, had an office on the same level as his teachers, and shared the same philosophy, he was supported. During the summer, Wyatt is the main and lead teacher while his team enjoys summers off like most public school teachers. His experience as a Special Education teacher and a teacher in a detention facility provides the necessary ethos to instill trust and collegiality between he and his team. During my time at Erbine, I did not witness a teacher complaint nor a negative interaction. Wyatt was always calm, in voice as well as in his body language, which could also have been due to the lower level

of operations Madison was able to enjoy in contrast to the often “walking on egg shells” atmosphere at Clarke. The students were not as violent, explosive, diverse, or confrontational. One example of Wyatt’s relationship with his faculty and approach to leadership was evidenced during our professional interview: instead of holding the interview privately in his office, Wyatt preferred to have the conversation out in the open, in the empty classroom, while he and his teachers--and I--enjoyed lunch. The questions were answered by all and often, Wyatt would turn to his teachers, Jillian, Scott, and Helen, and say, “What do you guys think?”

Thus, when a school within a detention facility fell under the same policies as a local school district in regards to negotiations, appraisal, tenure, teacher observations, hiring practices, curriculum, and the like, teachers and support staff could first, feel comfort in that they were a part of a larger education community; and second, that their administrator was hired by other education professionals and leaders who knew the sort of individual and credentialing necessary for such a position as director of education in a detention setting. Wayne teachers had due process if they had issue with their administrator, and likewise, they also understood the due process, a process *all* district teachers faced, if and when Randy had issue with their teaching and professional practices. Randy brought with his long standing background in education a peace and sense of calm that he knew what he was doing, and if he didn’t he would work with his faculty and colleagues to find the answers.

Ultimately, I saw the schools trying to *be schools*--despite the locked doors, standard issued clothing, bland food, and looming JDS/JDO’s. During class, students

could maybe forget for a time their status as delinquents and focus on their potential as learners. They could read books they selected from the library, write poetry, debate about politics, or learn about fractions. The staff was encouraging; they were supportive; and they gave the students what they needed: an opportunity to be successful and start the process of feeling good about themselves with positive interaction. Randy, during our interview commented (Personal Communication with Randy Farmer Spring 2010) that: “we make the school fit the needs of the individual student; not try to force the student to fit the needs of the school.” I met warm, welcoming individuals who were calm and who possessed an odd blend of energy and-fatigue, perhaps a result of the continual impact of working in essentially a secured high risk environment. Often, when the teachers or the juvenile detention officers appeared tired, they found ways to laugh and connect with one another--and with students. Yet, on almost every visit, tensions surfaced and ones that impeded the progress of education.

Classroom Environment:

Clarke County Youth Center. Clarke County approached school with its students a little differently combining/alternating whole class activities with the Portable Adapted Study Sequence (PASS) that involved teachers working individually with students on credit recovery and homework from their home schools. Clarke County teachers travelled to each unit, teaching in the students’ living quarters. Students would be ready and waiting, for the most part, seated at individual square tables in plastic patio-like chairs. Chairs remained stacked on one side of the room and only those needed were set out. Teachers rolled their carts in to the front of the room, propping their portable

white board on top, ready for class activities and demonstrations; other teachers left the cart behind the black/yellow warning line that students could not cross without permission. Teachers carried with them resources they needed--counting and recording all material at the start and finish of each class. In between classes, teachers could make a pit-stop back to their office areas to restock and reload and use the restroom, but ultimately, many teachers expressed a longing to hold class in their traditional classrooms. Yet for Clarke, that was not the reality due to the nature of the youth assigned there, the structure/layout of the building, and the “too-small-to-use” classrooms.

Some students, 3-5 at a time, were removed from class or their living units to go to a small computer lab with a technology para-educator to work on their on-line classes and credit recovery programs. Students were also removed to attend Read Right literacy improvement sessions with trained reading coaches in the small library, but only 3 at a time could travel as noted for security reasons. Therefore, seeing 50-80 students in the facility took many days, many hours, and so consistency and contact time did remain an issue.

Erbine Juvenile Services Center. Erbine, a facility having a capacity of only 36 youth, held classes in one room with a 20 student capacity. Off to the side, through an open doorway, available to students was a limited, yet impressive, library and a small vocational area; within the room were 6 computers, 8 desks surrounded by chairs, a teacher’s desk, a Smart board, white board, typical classroom cabinetry, and a sink. The students, whether they were in detention or in Staff Secure, all came to class together, despite their security risk. Two to three teachers would then work individually with

students on their PASS booklets or GED or other homework to help earn credits. Erbine was the only facility where detention officers were not present in the classroom as the teachers stated during interviews that they could handle any situation that may arise; security was only a phone call away, security cameras were everywhere, and thus security could be alerted quickly. Given the size of Erbine, security could be anywhere in a matter of moments versus the larger facility like Clarke, complete with stairs, elevators, long hallways, and many locked doors to navigate.

Despite the method taken towards school for students in detention, every educator had the same goal of helping students find some level of success during his/her stay. I witnessed the building and eruption of volcanos, student silent reading, journal writing, letter writing, worksheet activities, computer programming and web surfing, classroom discussions and debates on topics such as stress and anger management, alcoholism, decision making, pop culture, gang life, living on the streets, and current events. I viewed displays of colorful artwork and clever poetry and the tiling and grouting of park benches. Essentially, these students had ability and potential; they just needed support, guidance, affection, structure, opportunity, and mostly, no judgement. As Rodney, head teacher at Clarke County emphasized, “Make it fun, make it doable, be encouraging, give incentives and rewards, talk to kids on their level, never condescend, never label or hold what they do against them...always give second chances...”

The Teachers: The Best in the Field

Randy (Wayne) will argue that teachers in the juvenile justice system are not the “castoffs” noted by Ms. Black, but instead are the best in the school district, simply

because they work without continuity or consistency, something which mainstream educators can enjoy and on which they rely for student learning. Yet, a teacher within a detention center faces daily uncertainty and almost thrives on that characteristic of this environment. Rodney, (Clarke), shared that this is the excitement and allure of juvenile justice education:

I don't know what I'm walking into each day, except the truth that is working in a detention center. But, the thrill of it all is not knowing what kids are here, who has left, who has returned, what they will need, and the challenge of discovering new ways to teach them better.

Due to his 24 years specifically at Clarke, Rodney has more experience than any other individual interviewed or observed. He has watched administrators, teachers, and students come and go; he has witnessed changes in curriculum, procedure, and building structure as Clarke went through a renovation/addition process in the '90's. Therefore, when asked what sort of individual a teacher must be to work in this environment, Rodney responded that teachers must remaining calm even though they're not; be collected even though they're not; teachers cannot hold grudges; they have to be receptive to whatever they hear even though the student may be using inappropriate language; teachers have to sift through that [language] to find the content, the concept, the process. "There's a time and place to pick your battle...and certainly not in front of all the other kids or peers and you just have to be very cautious...". Ultimately, in this context, "a good teacher must be...a fluent translator" (Clarke, 1995, p. 13) The qualities Rodney mentioned do not sound altogether unlike what any teacher should be or the

qualities indicative of a master teacher. Yet, within a detention setting, tensions were exponentially heightened due to the instability of the students and the unforeseen possibility of violent outbursts, suicide attempts or self harm, negative outcomes of court hearings, or gang rivalry and violence making its way into the school/facility--all which affected student approach to learning. Therefore, a point of discussion was the type of individual who *could* work in this setting and the tool kit necessary to not only survive, but thrive in this role leading to professional longevity, as the impact of qualified and experienced professionals can be substantial.

Often during our time together, Ms. Black, the English teacher, joked that she had been ruined by the detention center classroom and could never teach in a regular classroom. She claimed that her “potty mouth” was too rancid for typical students and her sarcasm too biting. She requested stories from my own classroom to hear what was happening on the outside as if she were a detainee like her students. However, I found Ms. Black--and her colleagues--to be engaging, encouraging, hilarious, thoughtful, quick-witted, and ultimately, yes, necessarily sarcastic with the young people at Clarke. Given Ms. Black’s comments in her opening vignette, I questioned whether other teachers felt the same: did they feel a level of inadequacy or inability to work in a more traditional setting? Would they want to return if they could to a mainstream classroom? Interestingly, teachers unanimously said no, they could not, or would not want, to work with other youth outside detention. While a certain level of freedom does exist working with this population of youth--for example, the type and amount of homework, freedom from district-wide curriculum and some testing--the struggles--are much different. And, as with

just about every other educator I encountered, teachers in these detention centers carried home with them the stories and trauma of every student in their classroom.

Mr. Greeley: Social Studies

One of the only African-American male teachers among all three sites, Mr. Greeley served as a social studies teacher at Clarke. Despite being endorsed in Health/P.E., which he preferred teaching, he did enjoy history, reading, and learning about his subject. Finishing his degree without a teaching endorsement, Mr. Greeley spent time as a JDS prior to finally earning his endorsement and “jumping” on the chance to teach at Clarke. A shorter, stocky man and father of two daughters, Mr. Greeley enjoyed playful banter with the students, falling quite comfortably into their adolescent vernacular to find out how they were doing, why they were there (or back), and in general, to check the mood of the room before teaching. Mr. Greeley had an easy-going almost laissez-faire way about him, never being in a hurry or razzed, just maintaining a relaxed way in his approach to young people. Like Ms. Black, he felt that “I wouldn’t know how to work with other kids” and so, evident by his 15 years at Clarke, this was the place for him. Yet, still, he craved collaboration with other educators in the field: “I’m itchin’ to hang with someone else because you feel like you are in your own little world...it’s not like there are 12 of these [detention centers] in the city.”

I followed Mr. Greeley to various units: to the staff secure unit where he would be individually working with the girls on their PASS packets; to an all-boys unit for a geography lesson--including one he specifically and independently designed for his middle schools students; and finally, to lockdown--a place for detainees who have been

assigned isolation, more or less, for fighting or other extreme infractions. Three youth were in their rooms with the doors locked, one student was outside for his single hour of recreation that day, and another young man was working on his PASS workbook for Mr. Greeley. Because he was not teaching a large group, we, along with the unit JDS, another African-American man, had the opportunity to talk about why youth end up detained.

For the first time that day, Mr. G grew quite serious and passionate.

Parents and family. If you are young and you don't have that to back you up...you know what I mean? Parents and family are not backing these kids up. Parents are the biggest factors. Society have too many single parents. Mom trying to be mom and dad. No fathers in the home, therefore, men don't know how to act like men and women don't know how to be respected without a man in the household. The kid learned early not to care.--it's all about men--without a man in the household--no man is around to teach them. Women have to carry the load because of stupid men.

For Mr. Greeley, the greatest frustration does not stem from the youth themselves; but from the conditions outside the center from which they came. As he continued:

In my limited experience, from what I've seen, we get them [kids] from all around. Clarke is the worst of the worst. The fact is that they don't want to be in school; our job is to try to motivate kids--motivation alone is hard--and, we have the largest urban area. They're [students] directly from urban areas--not a lot suburban, rural--a few--that's the one element. I won't say inner city, but the urban--and the other schools [Erbin and Wayne] get kids from suburban areas,

even though Wayne is located in a city, it's not 'urban.' It's like a medium big town.

Greeley shared his frustrations with home and the lack of support or parental presence, frustration that students were passing classes in public school when they couldn't read, and that graduation meant getting out of school versus actually achieving something and becoming a learned individual. Seniors may make it through school, and graduate, but with what skills to graduate? According to "Mr. G," students are not learning the social skills they need to survive in the world, to survive the next step. "In 1960, parents yelled at kids for failing. In 2013, parents yell at the teachers for the kids failing," thus, teachers cannot hold youth accountable, teachers cannot fail students, and students do not acquire the skills they need. In essence, Mr. Greeley, a man heavily involved in his community youth programs and church, felt that members of the community at large needed an education on these young people who have no job skills, no interview skills, but who do want a chance. The community needed to know more about its role in the rehabilitation of youth and creating a positive, supportive environment neighborhood where everyone watches out for young people, holds them accountable, and provides appropriate and public reinforcement of appropriate behaviors--like creating a rewards system. Unfortunately, however, according to Mr. G, the students in his classes are "like water" and "go to the path of least resistance"; students want the quick money and because parents are not around, students get into trouble.

Even though Mr. Greeley's teacherly objective was to help students earn credits and improve their skills, he was most concerned with students and why they were there,

why they returned, and how to motivate and counsel them so as not to return. As Greeley repeatedly emphasized, parenting was the reason and the most important factor why students found themselves in detention. Concerning why they returned, why recidivism was so high, despite measures to increase literacy and cultural capital through credit recovery, Greeley stated that youth were often returned to the exact environment where the trouble began; it was most comfortable for them, it was where their family existed, and unfortunately, the negative influence of their peers.

I think what it is that they come back to the same environment. What's more powerful? Their education or their environment? I tell kids "when you come back, don't go back to that particular part of town, go somewhere else." But they come back to the exact same spot, the exact same homies-- 'Whassup homies!'--the same people they were runnin' with before, and BOOM. You done got a new perspective on life from bein' away, but you pretty much back where you was comfortable because you miss it...ain't changed and that's where they grew up at...that's why I'm like, "I hope you do alright out there," cuz I don't know...the neighborhood has a hold on those kids.

Therefore, unless we (society) can address the social circumstances under which these students live and try to function, we may never be able to fully address their emotional and educational needs. "That's the rotating door" Greeley observes, "and they don't get it, and this ends up being their life."

Clarke's Newbie: Mr. Lake

Far removed from Ms. Black--both logistically and experientially--was Mr. Lake, the newest member of the Clarke team. While Ms. Black's dynamic and creative use of language certainly facilitated positive and useful connections with her students, Mr. Lake remained more formal, calling his students ladies and gentlemen and maintaining a calm voice throughout his teaching. With his "radio-perfect" voice, Mr. Lake did not try to be what he was not or use language with which he was not comfortable. Perhaps this approach could be assigned to his newbie status, and given more time, like Ms. Black's 9 years or Mr. Greeley's 15, for example, Mr. Lake will take on the language style and vernacular of the youth in detention, or perhaps he may become "ruined" as Ms. Black suggested she is, but during this study, Mr. Lake maintained the use of proper and "clean" language during observed classes.

I call them gentlemen and I call them ladies...I don't like to yell at them because at that point you know they don't need to be yelled at and they're in here. I feel that that's almost counterproductive. You know, scolding them more than you really need to, but...the best way to try to do it is to reason with them. Tell them...lay down the expectations, 'this is class you need to be working you're gonna lose points for not working' and then 'obviously you need to realize this is what you need for school, we are in school, our ultimate goal is to get credits, get graduated, move on to the next thing.'

Nothing seem to rile Mr. Lake, and in all my observations, I never heard him raise his voice except to gather students and gain attention. In addition, he did not see that much of a difference between these youth and those in a regular school. Mr. Lake substituted for

the local school district before discovering that the county was hiring a teacher...just a teacher...that's all the advertisement said. So, he applied not knowing what to expect. Why not teach in a detention center? After all, he had substituted and student taught in some of the more diverse and rougher schools in the surrounding urban area, and he had his Master's in Education. Mr. Lake, standing about 5'10" with close cut dark brown hair, dimples, and a slight build, never seemed shaken or stirred, his voice never rose in panic, and he was prepared to handle whatever sarcasm, comment, or question came his way. Mr. Lake had the ability to ride the waves at Clarke, given that in essence, he was in his first year in his first permanent teaching position. Furthermore, because of his "freshie" status, he was able to remain outside much of the tension-filled space between teacher and administration. However, I also sensed that Mr. Lake preferred to stay well outside the borders of any controversy. Yet, among the youth, he enjoyed controversy surrounding professional and college sport debates and why "doing math" was an important skill to have.

Although endorsed to teach social studies, Mr. Lake found himself teaching mostly beginning math, and after about eight months was reassigned to be the teacher in staff secure, supported at times by the Read Right literacy coaches, covering/teaching all major core subjects to as many as 24 youth in staff secure. His responsibilities in staff secure further included managing student credits and transcripts, serving as somewhat of an assistant to the transition liaison for staff secure youth.

Mr. Lake, upon his hire, had to complete five weeks of training that any security officer would also go through. Then, he had to complete four weeks of teacher training,

and two weeks of shadowing. His final week of training was “Get ready! That’s all!” as Lake jested. During our interview, Lake shared that his training opened his eyes to how much different the atmosphere was going to be, his teaching environment, unique to any other school where he had worked prior:

On my first day of training, I do think I had a good trainer, he actually, well, I guess, he kinda scared the crap out of me, to tell you the truth. The first thing he told me was they’re probably gonna start calling you [me] white--you know which I think he was definitely a little extreme...the connotation that goes with a place like this is, it’s all bad kids, you know. I mean it’s--but the way I almost view this place is you get the bad kids--but the bad kids here aren’t necessarily any worse than the bad kids at a regular public school. Kids here I think they might be tough, you know--hard to work with at times--but I do think they appreciate you because you’re here at least a little bit. Maybe not but I think there’s some kind of respect you get from them because you are working with them and they know they’re not where they wanna be.

Lake thought that students dropped out of school or become truant because they were pushed along the curriculum line despite not having the skills, say, for example, in Algebra when they couldn’t reduce fractions. Lake felt that sometimes students were not placed in the correct classes or programs according to their ability. Thus, students reached a point when they could not do anything that teachers were trying to teach them:

What’s the point of going to school if I can’t relate to anybody in class because everybody’s smarter than me, the teacher’s not gonna really...unless they’re a

good teacher--or not necessarily a good teacher but one that's really in tune. And it's [referencing Clarke's school] a small class size...they [outside teachers] cannot give students the amount of effort that they [teachers] really need to get them to somehow catch up.

Here, Lake addressed an important issue in educating youth who struggle in school, echoing prior comments shared from Mr. Greeley; they have been passed along versus having their lack of skills addressed--and perhaps no fault of mainstream teachers who must deal with larger class sizes and overall student numbers. One observation of Lake's was that people on the outs, "don't think kids are getting the same quality education that they would be not in a facility. There's definitely a negative connotation that goes with the facility itself but also with the education department. How could kids in jail be getting the same kind of education as kids that are going to school?" Mr. Lake finds this situation highly ironic considering how so many youth enter facilities like Clarke completely lacking in skills--math skills, reading skills, and especially communication skills. He inquired how any youth could be asked to do, say, Algebra or Geometry when they didn't understand fractions? How does a 16 year old make it to that point in his life without understanding fractions? If anything, Mr. Lake believed that students at Clarke were receiving better instruction due to the smaller class sizes, the more individualized attention on particular skills, the structure, routine, and yes, a safe environment enforced by security.

Ms. Black, students, and the power of poetry

Mr. Greeley and Mr. Lake provide an appropriate backdrop to present here, Ms. Black, the one teacher whom I observed the most and had lengthy conversations about youth, literacy, and culture. Give that we are both English teachers, the dialogue between us was easy, relaxed, and collegial; we were able to share ideas, consider strategies to improve literacy for a spectrum of learners, as well as student skills in the areas of literary analysis, writing of all kinds, and of course, classroom discourse.

Clarke (1995) emphasizes that a teacher who “radically encourages the human spirit,” and what is more important, who possesses “confident, independent thought and action in an uncertain world,” can prepare students for “a world of difference” (p.7). Enter Ms. Black whose sometimes “radical” ways are those that inspire students to think and to write. This, of course, may be easier said than done because, as Day (2004) points out, teaching is “demanding, complex, and emotionally and intellectually exhausting” (p. 13) especially when the setting is a detention center--certainly illustrated by Ms. Black’s opening descriptions of the culture of teaching in a youth facility.

While Ms. Black (Clarke) had her darker days, she was one of the best and most favored teachers by the students. Multiple JDS professionals attested to this fact during my observations. According to one JDS, Mr. Keating, Ms. Black was creative, she challenged the students, and no matter what the kids tried to say or do, she didn’t skip a beat. Her quick wit matched those of the students before her and this was her strength in this place: humor, sarcasm, and speaking to the students in a way they understood and one that did not offend. Certainly, many high school teachers can attest to the fact that sarcasm is their greatest tool, but in a detention center, it’s a lifesaver. As Ms. Black

shared, “I pick on kids, sure, to make them laugh--but I pick on something they can control like a zit or their hair or body odor--or what they say. I never pick on them about why they are here or their family/home life. Sarcasm keeps them awake and keeps the lesson lively.” Through her sarcasm and comments pointed towards students, Ms. Black was noticing them, giving them attention, and demonstrating that someone cared about their day and their problems. Laughter was the best way to handle the darkness of detention.

Ms. Black certainly had a way with students, getting them to consider *Beowulf*, *The Kite Runner*, (both in graphic novel and DVD form) and other complicated texts. Despite her comment that “They don’t care about education because they can’t see themselves doing anything other than what they’re doing. Five years in the future is incomprehensible,” she persevered. Her favorite unit was that on poetry, often using herself as the brunt of jokes, on the chopping block, fair game for students to make comments. As long as they were learning the concept/objective, Ms. Black didn’t care what came her way. For example, a lesson about metaphors led into a poetry exercise during which Ms. Black was compared to a bus and then a station wagon. The conversation was very lively about the metaphor.

Ms. B: “If I’m a bus, what does that mean?”

Boy 1: “Transporting kids...like from being dumb to being smart”

Boy 2: “The bus bounces so you are...like...moody”

Boy 3: “You got big lights...you do nasty stuff on the bus...”

Ms. B: (responding with sarcastic warning, yet still within the metaphorical context): “You’re gonna get kicked off that bus!”

Ms. Black’s ability here to keep the metaphor going, to address the student’s inappropriate and obviously sexual comment, and still maintain authority illustrates her skill and polished tactics needed for teaching in this environment. She gets on their level in a way that both motivates and slaps the wrist in the same moment. Ms. B then turned to another example, asking the students “What is Miss P?” Miss P (Petit), the computer lab para-educator, is middle-aged, stands about 5’2”, and has wavy brown hair reaching her shoulders. She helps students with their on-line credit recovery work through PLATO, ANGEL, or A+. The students replied to Ms. B:

...she is a pit bull

...she is protective

...she is aggressive

...she is cute but vicious

...she has a loud bark

Despite the stereotyping here (pointed out by Ms. Black) and chatter about pit bulls, these youth shared what their experiences may have been--pit bulls, dog fighting, professional football player Michael Vick and his court case/trial, and what they saw on television.

Ms. Black chimed in about Miss K: “She may beat your ass but she’s not going to let anyone else beat your ass.” She then asks, “What does a pit bull look like? Does it look like Miss P (Petit)?”

She told the boys that they would now make a poem out of all these descriptions. She read poems made by previous Clarke youth from a publication she and Miss Petit put together a few years ago.

Ms. B: "I am a rearview mirror/ I only see my mistakes once they are behind me/
my past is closer than it appears"

Ms. B: "I am a street corner / where rocks are sold /and lives get stole"

Ms. B shared that this writer is now dead, shot three years ago. She chose one youth to pick on this day as an example for a class poem and then set the boys off to write their own. The student smiled and willingly became the object of this activity.

Ms. B: "If Blake were a weather condition, what would he be?"

Boy 1: "...a thunderstorm"

Boy 2: "...a tornado"

Ms. B: "What is thunderstormish about Blake?"

Crowd response: "...he is spontaneous...loud and obnoxious...he rumbles but nothing happens...I like thunderstorms but I don't like Blake (in jest)."

Ms. B: "Work with the question here..."

Ms. B said looking at the boy who made the previous comment. Ms. B then wrote on her portable white board

Start with "I am"...you get the idea...but no "I'm a pimp" or "I'm a thug"--I don't want crap like that...cars, animals, weather conditions, a weapon, are you sly and sneaky like a knife...are you laid back like marijuana?

Students began to work--some were drawing, doodling. Ms. B floated from table to table to help boys get started, stopping at one table to comment: “interesting concept guys.” During the time students worked, the phone rang three times to call students to the door to be taken to admissions. I asked the JDS if the boys were being released, but he just shrugged and said that they were probably meeting with lawyers, or family, or “something.” At that moment, a tall Caucasian youth with obvious jitters approached the JDS desk to share his poem; I asked to see it:

people hate me but can't live without me
 I am a cigarette
 all I need is a spark to ignite
 I am addicting
 once they get what they want, they throw me away

The JDS and I then showed the student parts of his poem that we especially liked; I did not point out the misspelled words but the JDS did. As he walked away, mostly proud of his work from our comments, Ms. B came over near us and side spoke/whispered, “Baby steps...baby steps...” to which I nodded, understanding her meaning to praise the power of his words and leave behind the errors. Another Caucasian boy who was in 8th grade, asked if he could read his poem:

I am a sidewalk--people walk over me all day...
 I am an ocean because I am full of life--
 Inside me is a deep abyss with a hatred
 for tiny fish.

I sat moved by the creativity of these young men and also the depth of their understanding of the metaphor as a literary device. The freedom with which they wrote suggested that they were not worried what others here in prison thought, and enjoyed the opportunity to write creatively.

Figure 5.1: Student Poetry Using Metaphors

My hatred is in the form
of Blood and Gore and Death
Plus thunder strikes dead of
night but in the end
love prevails.

I am a tree
tall with deep roots
powerful in my silence

I am a rock/I get hit
I get punched
I get kicked
People try to break me down
I'm a rock
I have a great structure
People may break pieces off
I may become smaller
but yet I stand strong.

Figure 5.1: Student poetry using metaphors

Ms. B in this unit had youth write seven different forms of poetry, from limericks to haikus to metaphorical pieces. Students were engaged, working, and creative--though not all of them. Some were inattentive, distracted, or simply observant--like in a typical classroom--but essentially, students were learning about poetry, about their own creative potential, writing and developing their own literacy skills.

Throughout the lesson, Mr. B was comical, patient, and encouraging. She never suggested to any student that his poem was not worthy or was unacceptable. While

though two students during this lesson did write inappropriately, she did not call them out publicly, but instead chose to address their behavior at the end of class using the points system, talking with them individually, and also discussing the situation with the JDS on the unit. Her voice inflection, her movement around the room, the gentle poking of the students to keep them focused, use of proximity, snapping, pointing--all classic teaching moves--Ms. B used to provide the students with a meaningful classroom experience. In that moment, I considered Ms. B's ability to inspire boys in detention to write powerful poetry and have the courage to share their work.

Ms. Black uses poetry for many purposes--it's easy to manipulate in a constant changing environment, the readings are short, diverse, creative, and manageable for many ability levels, and with the popularity of rap, slam poetry, and the writing of both, students are more easily engaged. But, on a deeper level, students as well as administration may not understand exactly what is happening in the classroom when Ms. Black asks students to read, create, and respond to poetry--written by the greatest of poets and by their own peers.

Mostly, however, Ms. Black uses poetry to empower student voices, to illustrate for them that writing can serve as a means to acknowledge the identity that led them to destructive behaviors, develop a deeper understanding of that identity, and to explore/discover a better "self" and purpose. What Holquist (2002) terms as Michael Bakhtin's "dialogism" (p. 15) applies well to the idea of writing for these purposes. Dialogism means that we are polyvocal, communicating through the voices of ourselves in combination of those others that we have read, heard, written to and about, talked with,

listened to; in writing, and other forms of communication we “grasp human behavior through the use humans make of language (Holquist, 2002, p. 15). Basically, our consciousness is embedded in our relationships with others--we are simultaneously both a “self” and an “other” in our relationships, our conflicts, and how we see the world; via dialogue, we can understand how relationships work. Meaning comes when the two (self and other) occupy the same place/space but have differing and conflictive perspectives based on individual experiences. Therefore, we can consider the “others” students encounter during their stay in detention: acquaintances they know from the outside, relatives (brothers, for example, or cousins were in the facility at the same time), adults of great diversity, experience, and knowledge, and religious and emotional counselors. Then, we can see how dialogism can reframe thinking and allow students to use writing to suit the purpose of self-exploration and potential change. They can experience the redemptive and “self-altering” power of sharing one’s voice and having it received by the other.

Bakhtin’s point that “existence is the event of co-being” (Holquist, 2002, p. 41) defines the peer writing experience and its purpose for turning writers into authors. Even author Mary Pipher (2006) adds to this notion in her book *Writing to Change the World* quoting a Zulu belief that “A person is a person through other persons” (p. 63). One obstacle in the teaching of writing is convincing students that a world exists around them which they must consider--as well as their place within that world. All writing has an audience, and students must reflect on not only the needs of the audience, but also on the experiences and viewpoints of that audience, otherwise, the writing will have limited

meaning. For Ms. Black and her students, the first step was finding their voice and identity--a self. The second step we can take from Michael Holquist (2002), who reflects on Bakhtin's position that, "nothing means anything until it achieves a response," (p. 48) which of course takes form when the audience shares a reaction or a critique. Therefore, Ms. Black provided such opportunities for students to share their work and to receive and enjoy that response. Publication of a student newsletter, displaying student poetry at parent teacher conferences, and once videotaping slam poetry to show other units what students created--all of this empowered students and provided as sense of "I matter."

Students composed in order to respond, to share a voice and connection to their environment; with the help of "publication" like this, however, they shifted from the me/mine and began to view the other, and in turn, received a response, realizing that what they had written held meaning for someone other than themselves--which transferred to improved empathy and awareness of others' experiences. Once students learned to view the relationship between themselves and their audience as a "condition" necessary for exchange that would improve their writing, and that to be writers, they had to recognize the dual role each played in the "ownership" of the final product, they become authors. Indeed, student writers, upon discovering the value in the "other" or audience, then comprehend the contribution of the other to the meaning and experience of the writing process itself (Holquist, 2002, p. 41). Ms. Black's activities added social context to writing; via relationship, students gained understanding in the imperative connection of the writer to his/her audience as well as the benefit of seeing their work from the position of the peer "other."

In the exchange between self and other, the authors see that “being” is a shared event—as mentioned previously, Bakhtin’s “co-being” (Holquist, 2002, p. 25). And, in this co-being, student writers can then assign meaning to their texts: their writing matters; someone can relate to it, and they are not alone. Their experience in the “event” of sharing on multiple levels has “unified” them. For youth in a detention center, having affirmation in their experiences, feelings, and reasons for their negative behaviors can increase confidence in their overall literate selves.

Hence, students learn in Ms. Black’s classroom that their writing--that their existence--is part of a social/world structure—that theirs is not a “lonely event” (Holquist, 2002, p. 38). The poetry activities allowed for students to engage in dialogue regarding their writing in a non-threatening situation in which they shared ideas, opinions, conversation, in which they learned to edit, revise, practice humor, irony, wit, rhyme, of course, and learn about the experiences of their fellow classmates. If “dialogism is based on the primacy of the social, and the assumption that all meaning is achieved by struggle,” (p. 39) then student writers, through social exploration of their compositions, viewed the struggle as a necessary means to the end of turning in an assignment that has considered its audience and the needs of that audience. Holquist (2002) emphasizes that, “we see the world by authoring it, by making sense of it through the activity of turning it into a text” (p. 84). In the end, teaching young people to write is to teach them to see the world, from multiple perspectives, to author it, and write to make a change--even if that change is within their own lives.

Writing for any individual should be a transformative act and emancipatory; writing should be taught then as the opportunity to have a voice, to express one's thoughts and experiences, and almost a responsibility to the self and one's readers. Given power structures that exist in society, the connection of language to those power structures (i.e. mastering the dominant language both in written and spoken form in order to be successful in the world market), writing of all kinds not only teaches students how to exist and practice language within those power structures, but it also illustrates for them the impact doing so can have. Yet, the reality, once again, for Ms. Black, is that despite all these wonderful things writing can do for young people who are detained, the process is slow as some youth have no words within them, or few words; the process is slow because youth are resistant or unwilling; the process is slow because Ms. Black must pull back from creative writing to satisfy the requirements that students earn actual credit in the approved PASS curriculum; and lastly, the process is slow due to interruption and high levels of student turnover.

Throughout the 20 years of development as a secondary English teacher, I have learned that I must use a particular language with my students in order for them to come to me as learners, for them to trust me, and finally for them to feel valued as members of their own culture and creators of language. I must continually shift and blend when the moment arises--shift from my own teacherly language to student vernacular or perhaps blend the two. Likewise is the case with Ms. Black, her colleagues at Clarke, and the team at Erbine. Each group of teachers identified, absorbed, and employed the language of the students they served, to better address their learning. To illustrate, Ms. Black, in

her attempts to teach students representing all levels of learning and abilities the classics such as *Beowulf*, *Macbeth*, and *Moby Dick*, employed these strategies of shifting and blending, namely in the forms of “talking smack” and “gettin’ down” with the youth she encounters. These seemingly inaccessible texts, a challenge for *any* high school student, were made accessible and interesting to the youth I observed. Gee’s (1995) idea of social languages (teacher and student) identifies this shifting and blending, giving it a name and legitimacy as an instructional strategy; the purpose of the occasion to help students think and learn, requires that we blend their language with our own to create a space for learning to happen.

To clarify, talking smack is essentially exchanging put-downs or negative commentary, sometimes in jest and sometimes in all seriousness. We often may witness talkin’ smack in pop culture in the form of “yo-mama” jokes with the goal of “one-upping” the opponent. Talkin’ smack also shows up in competitions, such as athletic events, with unsportsmanlike conduct. However, this form of communication certainly is not one typically found in a classroom setting--at least not used by the teacher directed at students--as it can be viewed as demeaning or exerting unnecessary power. Gettin’ down, a more friendly technique, simply means hanging out on an even level, using the same language, verbal and non-verbal, coinciding in understanding--i.e., the space where no gap exists. In the space of “gettin’ down” the teacher employs student language and pop culture to complement teaching strategies, which should then lend towards greater learning. Thus, as a teaching strategy talkin’ smack and gettin’ down as used by Ms. Black and other professionals can shed light on useful strategies for educators not within

a detention setting--to reach those detached students. In this environment, I witnessed not only the non-traditional and perhaps shocking language used and teaching style of Ms. Black, but through discourse analysis, uncovered her ability to employ such strategies to engage students in learning by connecting and “hanging” with them.

Through discourse analysis of two classroom situations, we can see how language can inspire these youth to learn and provide opportunities for critical thinking. Mostly, however, discourse analysis can reveal the potential of these youth as learners and reveal their desire to learn and to succeed. Ultimately, within an ethnographic study of the culture of teaching and learning in the juvenile justice system, discourse analysis exposes teaching strategies at their elemental level, strategies that can potentially be transferred to mainstream schools to not only help exiting youth reintegrate successfully, but perhaps to provide those positive learning experiences and relationships missing for youth *prior* to their delinquent activities. During my fieldwork, I often considered the specific “tools” each administrator suggested educators needed to have to survive and thrive in this high-intensity setting. Could one tool be a specific language/knowledge? Yes. To a degree, context and culture influence discourse between students and teachers considering the complexity of the juvenile justice system and the home environments students have experienced. As Gee (2011) emphasizes, discourse analysis is “...the study of language in use in the world, not just to say things, but to do things” (p. ix). Therefore, the goal here is to analyze what Ms. Black tried to accomplish with some of her most shocking or unorthodox comments.

The discourse analysis here shares Ms. Black teaching *Beowulf* to a group of 14 boys, ages 13-17, in the lowest security unit as well as another segment in the lockdown unit with one student, Jay, who was 17. Ms. Black preferred to teach the classics to these youth to expose them to what they may not get in their home school as educators there may not see them as capable of taking on such dense literature. The classics, according to Ms. Black, presented universal and timeless themes of revenge, moral dilemma, definitions of masculinity and “rep,” as well as codes of conduct that not only her students needed to explore, but wanted to explore. In whatever form (DVD, graphic novels, and other modified forms), these texts served Ms. Black’s self-defined “reconstructionist”¹⁷ teaching philosophy, highlighting societal issues and developing social consciousness.

Gee (2011; 2011; 2007), Tannen (2007), Cazden (2001), as well as Rud & Garrison (2010), and Rud (1995) provide the framework for analysis and interpretation. Essentially, Gee presents the purpose of discourse analysis that provides a way “to explain how and why language works the way it does when it is put into action” as well as to consider how such analysis can help us address some “important issues and problems” (p. 12) that matter to us not only as educators, but also as community members. Gee further stresses that “the theory of language...is that *language has meaning only in and through social practices*,” (p. 12). In applying the most relevant of Gee’s seven building tasks, my goal is to illustrate how, through these social practices and

¹⁷ “Reconstructionist” as defined by Ms. Black is “trying to bring the problems of the world into the classroom through literature so that students will think about solutions instead of just living with problems.” (Ms. Black, personal communication, February 2014).

languages present in a detention setting, that identities are created, relationships are formed, and connections are established.

Tannen's (2007) involvement strategies, specifically repetition, metaphor, and use of lexical colloquial expressions "contribute to the point of discourse, presenting the subject of discourse in a way that shapes how the hearer or reader will view it (p. 42). Cazden's contribution stems from taking cultural and experiential differences into account, the teacher becoming her own ethnographer (p. 160), discovering and building off of what students already know (p. 2). Rud and Garrison (2010), similarly, provide a philosophical application of reverent listening and hospitality, which they emphasize can be transformative, arguing that "reverence is central to the kind of teaching and leadership we need in today's schools and that *listening* is one of the prime activities of reverence" (p. 2777).

As previously mentioned, the segment(s) presented here are 1) the opening moments of class when Ms. Black introduced the story of Beowulf to a unit of 14 boys and 2) during a pre-teaching conversation with a male student in lockdown. Below, students began to draw chairs closer towards the television in anticipation of watching the 2007 3-D animated version of the epic. The particular segment illustrates Ms. Black's use of repetition, deictics and slang (lexical colloquialisms) which allowed her to involve the students, moreover, as mentioned, "hang" with them on their level of conversation and understanding.

Ms. Black commented on a student's acne:

1. **Ms. Black** [to an African-American boy as she's handing out a sheet] "You need to lighten' up today--what's the matter with you?"
2. Grumpy! [calls him this name]...
3. Oh I know what it is! That' zit's starting to take over, huh? That **zit** on your
4. nose is startin' to **piss you off.**"
5. **Student:** "It hurts..." [the student touches his nose, patting the blemish]
6. **Ms. Black:** "I bet it does!"

While at the time I was both curious and shocked--why would she point out a giant blemish on a student, something I would never discuss with a student unless he/she brought it up first--I began to see, however, that here was one way she was recognizing the student and offering her attention. According to Ms. Black "I do tease the kids...it is meant as playful jabs to lighten up otherwise sour moods and perhaps take their minds off the heavier burdens. Most seem very gregarious and appreciate the playful attention." Thus, empathizing with the student by not only noticing that the student wasn't feeling well that day, but also identifying the acne as the cause of it, (e.g. "piss you off") could have revealed a deeper reason for the grumpiness. Did she use the acne as a door to future, more personal conversations? Perhaps. Yet, the larger question, coming back to Gee (2011), is determining what Ms. Black was trying to *do* or *accomplish* in the calling out of the zit (p. 47): making a connection, noticing the student, using humor and attention to address something potentially embarrassing, relaxing the student so that he could be more focused on the lesson.

In the next section, Ms. Black's strategy was to find ways to connect a classic piece of British literature to students in this detention setting who may have not been previously exposed to such a text. By bringing in *Beowulf*, however adapted it may be, she believed that the students could grasp the larger ideas of myths, legends, honor, "rep," and flawed moral codes of conduct. Her decision not to give way to students' comments attempting to distract or derail learning or objectives (the Angelina Jolie reference and the inappropriate student comment which closely follows) not only illustrates her ability to regain or maintain control, but also to do it in a manner that although may embarrass the student, doesn't demean him or count his contribution as incorrect. Ms. Black uses language "...powerful enough to change behavior without force" (Johnston, 2004, p. 1). Noted with underlining are Ms. Black's use of repetition and lexical colloquialisms to stress important concepts.

Ms. Black: Importance of Identity

1. **Ms. Black:** "Yea, ok, anyway. A couple of things to think about while
2. we are checking this out: the importance of identity. Now, they will also refer to Beowulf as the son of ECTHGOWWWWW. Why do we care? Why do we care who is "pappy" is?"
3. **Boy 3:** "I don't care about his pappy--I just care about Angelina Jolie."
4. **Ms. Black:** "You care about seeing Angelina Jolie...ok...alright." [Locked doors open and a young man entered returning from medical] "Have a seat "
5. **Ms. Black:** "But WHY would THEY care about who the pappy is?"
6. **Student:** "Because they need to know cuz he runs everything?"

7. **Ms. Black:** “He does kind of run everything, doesn't he? Ok, but what gives him the power to run everything?”
 8. **Student:** “Because he's a king?”
 9. **Ms. Black:** “He could be a king. But in this case, Echthgow was...”
 10. **Student:** “Could be a pimp.”
 11. **Ms. Black:** “He could be a pimp. But, if well let's say if your Daddy is the O.G.? [OG = “original gangster”] That gives you a little rep, right?”
- [Boys' laugh]
12. **Ms. Black:** “I know, sounds stupid when I say IT. If you're Daddy's the O.G. versus the guy who flips burgers, you know you get a little legitimate rep there. Right? Same concept here. They're telling you who his daddy is, it must mean something [student yawns loudly] so it shows that their identity is something that they have legitimate power to rule.

Here, Ms. Black in her use of terms such as “flip burgers,” which has a negative connotation as a limited and undesirable identity, and “pappy” and “OG,” which has a more desirable connotation of power and honor, removed the stuffiness that can come with the presentation of British Literature and instead placed key ideas from *Beowulf* into language students could grasp. using their prior knowledge as a teaching strategy suggested by Cazden (2001).

Ms. Black talkin' smack

[An inaudible and inappropriate student comment]

13. **Ms. Black:** “Shut-up!” [spoken in tone of shocked exasperation--not loudly, but whispery. Ms. Black’s eyes grew wide, she half-smiled in disbelief and humor].
14. **Student:** “I’m just sayin’...”
15. **Ms. Black:** “I’m going to send you to your room with a bottle of lotion you nasty little thing. [Pause] Anyway...”

The “talkin’ smack” with the lotion comment allowed Ms. Black to shift power from the student back to her, illustrating also that she was not distracted or offended by student comments--comments which are not uncommon in a juvenile facility. Her retort was quick, on the spot, and snapped students back to the lesson. In a setting where “one-upping” happens often, Ms. Black was obviously skilled, on pointe, and ready to compete. This is not to suggest that mainstream teachers could or should use such language in their classrooms; however, techniques of banter, playful sarcasm, and the demonstration of “hanging” with them are valuable. In a detention facility, the audience--the crowd--is rough, and as has previously discussed, resiliency is key to keeping learning moving forward.

As Ms. Black continued with her introduction of *Beowulf*, here she used the strategy of repetition and revoicing of student language, again designated with underlining, to consider the reputation and intimate relationships of people during this time:

16. **Ms. Black:** “Also notice, also notice the heroic code of Beowulf. He's worried about reputation; he's all about doing this great deed; he's not worried about money; he's not worried about...he's worried about building his rep. But, that's

getting in the way of some of the other value systems that are stepping in here.

Hmmmm, what kind of value system might that be? [shows sign of a cross with her right and left index fingers].

17. **Student:** "Positive."

18. **Ms. Black:** "Positive? [boys laugh] The CROSS!

Christianity...ok...yea...THAT [crossed left and right index fingers] was my little subtle hint there. Positive, uh-huh [sideways glance at the boy who answered]. So, he's going to have this warrior code that tells him to go out and avenge death and do these warrior things, but then he's gointa have these little elements of Christianity that you're supposed to turn your cheek and forgive your enemies. [pause]

19. **Ms. Black:** "...and, in the pagan society, back in the day, talk about like medieval times. They just slept with all kinds of people: male-female...male male...I mean it was ALL game!"

20. **Students:** [shock, surprise--Ms. Black has their attention] "Huh? What?"

21. **Ms. Black:** "Absolutely!"

22. **Students:** "Huh?"

23. **Ms. Black:** "Huh?" [she mimics with a funny, twisted face].

24. **Ms. Black:** "Ok, they didn't necessarily get married--they just did whatever they wanted to do."

Ms. Black gettin' down

25. **Student:** "They just 'banged' it out." [student laughter]

26. **Ms. Black:** [laughing] "Delicately put, thank you...yes, they just 'banged it out.' ...Yea."

28. **Ms. Black:** "Ok, but when Christianity comes into play, what happened?"

29. **Same Boy:** "They quit banging it out."

30. **Ms. Black:** [laughs--boys laugh] "I cannot argue with that!"

31. **Student:** “Maybe they just slowed it down--”
32. **Ms. Black:** “No, they just tied it to one banging. One person. [chatter and laughter].
33. **Student:** “That’s a little creepy.”
34. **Ms. Black:** “It *is* a little creepy, isn’t it? Ok, but when Christianity came into play--monogamy--one person...”
35. **Student:** [interrupting]“...or sex after marriage.”
36. **Ms. Black:** “Sex after marriage, exactly....you don't go bangin' it out. You have a wife, you know, you start your family. NOW...that wife could have been 12 years old...
61. **Students in Unison:** “Huh?”

If these sections illustrate anything, they reveal the blend of traditional teaching (repetition/revoicing) involvement strategies with necessary knowledge of street culture and language as well as the ability to blend with students, requiring a quick wit and tongue. Ms. Black’s repetition of “Huh?” teased the students by mimicking their response, and combined with a wrinkled nose and twisted mouth, Ms. Black poked fun at their lack of knowledge. The “banging it out” section becomes a shared space of language use, a game almost, and the students cleverly continued the banter, while Ms. Black extended the repetition into a “word play,” building off of the student’s introduction of the term “bangin’.” What can be learned from Ms. Black’s classroom here is that teachers should not shy away from street language, AAVE, or other vocabulary indigenous of these “natives” in the normal teaching of their content areas. For example, “balla” (a player), “bounce” (to leave), or phrasing such as “oh snap!”. So what if we sound silly? So what if the students laugh? The point is that we have them; we have their attention,

their grace (we hope), or their pity! The essence here is that we have them; we are connecting, sharing, and most importantly, learning about one another and about the content.

To apply and illustrate Rud & Garrison's (2010) notions of reverence and hospitality, I have chosen a segment when Ms. Black was working to connect with a student by handing over the floor, giving him a chance to tell his story. Quoting Nouwen (1975), emphasizes that "the hospitable teacher has to reveal to students that they have something to offer" (p. 123). According to Nouwen (1975)

Hospitality...means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place...Teaching, therefore, asks first of all the creation of a space where students and teachers can enter into a fearless communication with each other and allow their respective life experiences to be their primary and most valuable source of growth and maturation...(pp. 75, 85, 87).

No lecturing or blatant criticism occurred; yet, however, subtly, Ms. Black impressed upon Jay the weight and ridiculousness of what he had done. We were seated in the center of the lockdown unit at a table, just the three of us, Ms. Black, Jay, and me, while two other boys peered at us through their own windowed locked cell doors. For approximately, 15 minutes, we talked with Jay about his nose piercing, his English work and use of a paper dictionary (they cannot have hard bound books in lockdown), and why he was there--again--after being out only a few days. In what follows, Gee's (2011)

stanza tool facilitates sectioning parts thematically in “idea units” (p.75) to aid in interpretation, and in addition, underlined pertinent words choice represent detention culture and Ms. Black’s use of student slang. In the spirit of reverence, the full section of Jay’s testimony within the transcript is shared in attempt to re-create the space in time when we “listened.” Each section is titled to match the theme of Jay’s story.

Stanza 1 (Taxed¹⁸)

1. **Jay:** This time around...they...they taxed me...I'm here for a month now...they TAXED me.
2. **Ms. Black:** Ok yah, ok you know, I was thinkin' , you were just getting out. Oh, it's like... yea you did and I saw you on the unit and here you are back again.
3. **Jay:** Hey--
4. **Ms. Black:** --for what?
5. **Jay:** [laughs] That...I found out some things about this one kid and I don't get along with those kind of people I don't know...and I just kinda...
6. **Ms. Black:** Those kinds of people?
7. **Jay:** Yea--[stalling]

Stanza 2 (Charged)

8. **Ms. Black:** K. And so you just kinda what?
9. **Jay:** [laughs] I kinda took off.. [term for attacking someone] and they're trying to get

¹⁸ “taxed” in this context means the price Jay had to pay, the “cost” of his infraction.

10. me an assault on staff because I went to push the kid off so I could hit him again I missed and accidentally kicked the staff.
11. **Ms. Black:** [long gasp] Oh...
12. **Jay:** So they...so they try gettin' me for an assault on staff...which...
13. **Ms. Black:** [cutting him off] You want a new charge, huh? [whatever charge causing Jay to be in lockdown is separate for whatever he does while inside-- he could get a new charge, a new court case, especially if he hit staff pending on whether charges are filed].
14. **Jay:** No, I didn't mean to!

Stanza 3 (Gettin' Down & Talking Smack)

15. **Ms. Black:** So you're a sloppy fighter, is that what you're sayin'?
16. **Jay:** No, I...I was...was like on the ground, my face was like on the ground like I couldn't see nothing--and I was still hittin' him and I couldn't see nothing.
17. **Ms. Black:** [Interrupting] If your face is on the ground doesn't that mean you lost [she laughs]?
18. **Jay:** No like he was like I was trying to flip him around but I ended up on the ground--but I was still hitting him--boy--and [pause] I couldn't throw my weight around him--he was, uh, too fat.

Stanza 4: (The Truth)

19. **Ms. Black:** You don't like fat people, I see how it is!
20. **S:** Is that what "those" type of people are, who are those kind of people?
21. **Ms. Black:** (aside to me) Apparently fat people.

22. **Jay:** No--he was a sex offender and I don't get along with them.

Stanza 5: (Discovery)

23. **Ms. Black:** How did you find that out?
24. **Jay:** The black book.
25. [Ms. B: makes long overly dramatic gasp, backing away from the table a little bit]--
26. **Jay:** Well I knew the staff book was out and I seen...
27. **Ms. Black** [to me, interrupting Jay] The black book has the students' hard card with their charges and their *addresses*.
28. **Jay:** Oh I didn't look at that...I was like "oh shit" and was like...
29. **I:** So, you saw that and it just set you off, huh?
30. **Jay:** Yea, I don't get along with some people.

Stanza 6: (Investigation)

31. **I:** Did you know that about him prior? And did you get along before you knew that?
32. **Jay:** Well...some people had told me that about him because they had seen it, and then, uh, so I was like, man, I gotta see this for myself cuz I don't believe people you know? I don't trust nobody, and so, I jus--you know--I looked, so I go, you know...want to stop and open it up on his page and I looked in there.

Stanza 7: (Lazy)

33. **Ms. Black:** Where was the staff at?
34. **Jay:** They were filling in or putting in new cards or somethin'.

35. **Ms. Black:** Ok, so you were just looking over their shoulder then--it's not not like you snuk over there and pulled the book out?
36. **Ms. Black:**--ok then [understanding/nodding]
37. **Jay:** Naw, I'm too lazy for that [overlapping]
43. **S:** [Laughs]
44. **Ms. Black:** You're too lazy for that! [repetition]

Stanza 8: (Security's Omnipresence)

45. **JDS (Ms. Colton):** What's that?
46. **Ms. Black:** [loudly to the JDS] He was lookin' through the book.
47. **Ms. Colton:** I know that...where was the staff at?
48. **Jay:** That's what they were doing.
49. **Ms. Black:** on....on...on the other side of the yellow line?
50. **Ms. Colton:** Right.
51. **Jay:** Yea...
52. **Ms. Colton:** You had no business crossing that line.
53. **Jay:** No..I said I was getting the water pitcher [laughs--he wasn't getting the water pitcher]
54. **Ms. Colton:** [more emphatically, hands on hips] You had NO business crossin' that line.

Stanza 9: (The Blind Spot)

55. **Ms. Black:** Ok....
56. **Jay:** So, yea...

57. **Ms. Black:** ...and so after that you walked over there and just *took off*? Or, did you think about it for a while?
58. **Jay:** No, I just was late from coming from the rec area, cuz then...you know...there's a blind spot over there--
59. **Ms. Black:** The corner yea? [a blind spot from the camera]
60. **Jay:** ...the corner--where they normally do “body” and all that on unit [“body”: referring to students running up the wall: they run at it, run up, run across, and then run down]...I was just waiting for him to get in the corner--when he just walked out, like...I just...like...man let's do this...yea...[shrugs shoulders]
61. **Ms. Black:** And *here--you--sit!*

Stanza 9: (Lockdown...again)

62. **Jay:** 30 days...
63. **Ms. Black:** 30 days!
64. **Jay:** Well, 28.
65. **Ms. Black:** Close enough, [Jay laughs] it's...it's going to seem like 30. Especially since you just....How long...how long...were you off the unit-or this unit. Three days?
66. **Jay:** Wednesday, Thursday, yep...
67. **I:** You were here, and then out for 3 days and now you're back?
68. **Jay:** I was here 21 days before that--and now I do 28--[I look at him in disbelief]
69. **Jay:** Don't ask...I don't think. Yea.

Stanza 10: (Calling Jay Out)

70. **Ms. Black:** Well, you must have had some thought process going on if you waited for him....were planning out to get him in the rec area...
71. **Jay:** Um, yea...
72. **Ms. Black:** Uh-huh...you didn't plan on getting caught!
73. **Jay:** I
74. **Ms. B:** *Schneaky!*
75. **Jay:** Well, I didn't plan on him yelling at the staff--the staff didn't even see it. Then they [the kids] yelled out, like "he's been hittin' on him" I was like "aw, crap!"
76. **Ms. Black:** Did they have to look at the camera then?
77. **Jay:** No the kids ran in there...and then *they* ran out cuz I was still beating on him.
78. **Ms. Black:** [whispering and shaking her head] Jay....Jay...

Even though Ms. Black listened to Jay, she used humor once again (“sloppy fighter,” for example) to point out the severity of the situation: he looked in the forbidden black book; he crossed the yellow line; he was losing the fight; he allegedly kicked security staff; and he was now in lockdown for another month. During our conversation, Jay was pleasant, calm, amusing, reflective, and remorseful, yet, just the notion that he was in the same unit as a sex offender “set him off” to plan an attack that would certainly, given the omnipresence of security, get him into trouble. Nevertheless, our sitting with Jay and giving him the floor was mostly likely important time for him. According to Rud

& Garrison (2010) young people need attachment, spiritual support, and to be revered--no matter their faults. "Reverent listening is the recognition of the need for aid and sustenance by others and the good of human relationship and communion" (p. 2778). Ms. Black during this exchange gasped at hearing Jay's story, she "talks[ed] smack" criticizing his fighting abilities and his "schneaky" ways of finding out information, and to an extent acknowledged his side, his defense, how he acquired the information, despite what he did was wrong. By listening to his story, she gave him a platform to speak, to share, and to explain, Jay's behavior may change as he confessed that "I don't think." Again, referencing Rud & Garrison (2010) reverence "arises from a profound comprehension of human limitation, frailty, and finitude, prompting awe and wonder at the incomprehensible" (p. 2777) and allows us to enter their world--to understand them. Essentially, we were in "awe" of Jay's decision, that it was "incomprehensible," but because we sat around a table and *listened* to Jay, we understood him better. Bryan Stevenson of the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) emphasizes the importance of seeing juvenile delinquents as "better than the worst thing they have done"; this time with Jay allowed us to consider him as such.

Ms. Black, here, serves as a representation of the work educators in this complex environment. The essence is respect, reverence, and grace. By looking at these short sections, I have identified strategies used by Ms. Black in a unique setting where the heaviness of the past and of an uncertain future may weigh more on the minds of the youth than learning about *Beowulf*. First, Ms. Black used Tannen's (2007) involvement strategies which "contribute to the point of discourse, presenting the subject of discourse

in a way that shapes how the hearer or reader will view it (p. 42). For one, Ms. Black's use of repetition of student vernacular confirms the legitimacy of its use and contribution to the greater conversation--and yes, does keep students involved and invested in the direction of the conversation. According to Tannen, repetition offers "ways that meaning is created by the recurrence and recontextualization of words and phrases in discourse" (Tannen, 2007, p. 9). Ms. Black's use of repetition for "production, comprehension, connection, and interaction" (p. 58) builds relationships that "serve to create rapport and ratify an interlocutors contribution" (p. 84), even if it is one boy focusing more on seeing Angelina Jolie in the movie versus understanding Beowulf's moral dilemma, which is further illustrated by the extensive and playful conversation on "banging it out." Her use of tropes, particularly metaphor (Beowulf's father as the "OG") created "abduction" or "lateral extension" for greater student understanding, extending the image of Beowulf to student culture; her use of tone--sarcastic, inquisitive, and authoritative--established her place as teacher and context. And finally, her re-voicing confirmed students' discourse as legitimate contribution.

Moreover, by turning Beowulf and his father into gangsters defending their "reps," and presenting Beowulf's "warrior code" in a manner with which many of the boys could identify, Ms. Black reinforced the observation that context and culture do influence the discourse in this setting. Cazden (2010) quotes British researcher Barnes: "In order to learn, students must use what they already know so as to give meaning to what the teacher presents to them" (p. 2). Ms. Black took otherwise out of reach character due to the nature (British Literature) and the complexity of the work (epic poem) and

transferred it to their cultural understandings/experiences. Ms. Black accomplished this by employing student language, blending it with her own. As she confessed that it sounded silly when she said “OG” or “pappy,” nevertheless, the students were impressed or minimally appreciative of this adult using their talk, on their level, versus speaking “over” them. All while doing so, Ms. Black maintained control, as Cazden (2001) emphasizes is her responsibility, to “enhance the purposes of education” (p.2).

Yet, Ms. Black did not control the talk by forcing students to raise their hands to be called upon, nor did she expect the students to formalize their speech. Class time was quite open for anyone’s contribution with little framework except that she was the teacher and they were the students. She was an individual who, as Rud & Garrison (2010) suggest, knew her subject matter well, knew her students, and was open to their off-task comments but mostly, that she practiced, in a detention center full of security and surveillance, a Deyewan ideal of a participatory classroom: all opinions mattered, everyone learned from everyone else, and what was taught and learned was dependent on the daily composition of the classroom, the dynamic, the mood, of the students (p. 2779). Another point on reverence made by Rud & Garrison is the importance of a teacher to “create openings and opportunities in their talk that accommodate students who might otherwise maintain a subjugated silence” (p. 2780). Again, in an unorthodox manner perhaps, Ms. Black accomplished this task. Initially, I asked myself why she needed to include within the *Beowulf* lesson, first that people during medieval times would sleep with whomever--male/male, male/female--that it was “all game,” and second, that the marriageable age was so young--12 she said. Both of these comments made by her

received “Huh’s” of disbelief. Why this knowledge to present to students when so many other historical, social, and cultural avenues regarding the literature could be taken?

Because adolescents are concerned with sex, with “banging it out,” and other comments and topics dealing with sex get their attention. Ms. Black had everyone involved...even the silent. Not only it is a tool to check for listening, but it’s a tool to invite involvement and interaction.

Did she enhance their learning experiences? I believe so. Within the entire transcript, students responded to her questions, they watched the film with interest and curiosity, and mostly, they were receptive to her as a teacher. Considering the three features of classroom life: the language of curriculum, the language of control, and the language of personal identity (Cazden, 2010, p.3), Ms. Black confirmed their identity as valid and valuable. Resultantly, fluency in the culture, language, and thus “languaculture” (Gee, 2007) becomes a necessary tool for teaching, and thus learning, to occur in a detention center classroom of urban youth with all its complexity, specialized vocabulary, and diversity. Ms. Black’s effective use of lexical colloquial expressions like “talk smack” and “get down” with students (banging, OG, pappy, sucker, piss you off, pimp, took off, etc.) illustrated her fluency and her fearlessness when using such language may be perceived as bogus, unorthodox, or insulting.

Ms. Black believed in humor as a strategy and use of student language as an invitation to learning: “Humor is the most vital strategy...humor helps.” So, while she may have called a student out on his acne or called another student a “sloppy fighter,” her goal was to connect with students and not be aloof or that distant teacher. Humor and

sarcasm were her survival tools that allowed her to illustrate to the students, that yes, she could hang with them and that she cared enough to do just that.

As noted, Clarke teachers were not part of a local school system, and so had to bargain with the county about salary, benefits, vacation, and school calendar. Erbine followed the local school district and based its pay, calendar, benefits, etc., off of school districts in the area yet were still employed by the county. Clarke teachers, throughout my observations, were in continual negotiations. While they had recently joined the local education association (part of the National Education Association), they were working with a county board versus a school board. These teachers did not benefit from increased professional development or degree work with increased salary and they worked year round--no summers off. They did not work government holidays, and they had little break over the holidays unless they had accrued vacation time. Students were continually in school and teachers worked day in and day out. They did not enjoy the same benefits and their colleagues in the local school district and their status added to the tension; essentially, it was inequity in education. Due to their status, these teachers did not feel valued or held to the same status as their public school counterparts. Despite three of the nine having Master's degrees and multiple years of experience, they were working for much less than if they worked in a traditional school. They experienced 235 contract days, 14 days of pro-rated sick leave, two-four weeks of vacation, and 12 paid government holidays.

According to Ms. Black, daily, teachers struggled with unmotivated students for whom "learning is not a priority" given past negative experiences. Furthermore, "It's

difficult to get a child to think about writing complete sentences of dividing fractions when he doesn't know in what state he will be waking up next week or if his last sexual encounter made him a father." Students have a deficient educational background; supporting national statistics, Clarke has had 17 year old students who cannot identify letters in the alphabet.

So, again, why stay? For Ms. Black, Rodney, and Mr. Lake, students at Clarke were students in need, and they felt a connection to this population of students. Ms Black, although jokingly stated that she had been ruined by teaching in a detention center school, realized the impact she was making on youth, at least getting them to read, to write, to think...probably just a little bit more than they were on the outs. Mr. Lake shared that "sincerity is what's most important...if they can realize that you actually care and respect them, that's gonna go a lot more than what...you look like. These kids need to know that you care about 'em because...who does? You know that might be part of the reason they are here." Thus, again referencing Day (2004) that "In teaching...it is impossible and undesirable to sustain divisions between the personal and professional. In teaching, care and compassion are essential features of becoming and remaining better when they are cared "about" (p. 27), the approach by all teachers to show up each day, to give youth attention, to try various strategies to get them to learn or to open them up to learning, is one of the heart and makes these educators uniquely talented.

The Team at Erbine

Writing about individual educators at Erbine was a challenge as they all worked so closely together that they are interchangeable, and not in a way that reduces their

individual identity as teachers, but in a way that allowed them to combine strengths and ideas on educating youth under their care in the most powerful way possible. Their day with students began with individual PASS book and work time; their afternoon was then composed of team teaching time.

The Erbine teachers may have been more relaxed than their professional counterparts because they worked side-by-side with their supervisor, who was routinely in the classroom, offering support, instruction, and feedback. No one came in to “check” on them so to speak according to Wyatt. This teamwork and relaxed atmosphere may also have lent to minimal issues with students. Wyatt did understand that Clarke had to take a “more hard core approach” due to the nature of the students they received: mostly urban with high gang involvement.

The Erbine team demonstrated the same dedication and caring attitude towards their students as teachers found at Clarke. Supporting Day’s (2004) notion that “teaching is a continuous activity of encouraging or fueling attitudes, orientations, and understandings which allow students to progress rather than to regress as human beings, to grow rather than to become narrow in their outlook and range of capabilities” (p. 16). Helen, Scott, and Jillian, all said that they would never leave the detention center classroom, despite the fact that this job just fell into their laps; they had no deliberate intent to work in a detention center school. Jillian, a parent in her 30’s, worked for 13 years as an elementary teacher before entering her current position, “When I look at them, some of them, you just want to wrap them up in your arms they are so young. They are just special kids.” Jillian carried a smile on her face whenever she talked about

students and while helping them. She knelt down to their level; she sat next to them and listened. She was patient and calm, witty, and encouraging. For Helen, a newlywed and enthusiastic new teacher, the position at Erbine came open at a time when she was looking for work; this was her first teaching position and it would be her last--unless she worked for another facility--but she would continue in this area of education. Scott, a young father of five children shared that motivating students stemmed from the emotional connections teachers made with the students and as his colleagues agreed, must come first before students will do the work. Each teacher with whom I spoke believed that these students were “victims” of their social and educational environments and lacked meaningful relationships that were inspired them to be better more appropriate young people and students. Agreeing with Mr. Greeley’s assessment that parents were mostly at fault, Scott and Wyatt particularly mentioned that some youth were encouraged by their drug using and dealing parents to enter into the “family business” and others, particularly young women, were responding to abuse and neglect at home through self-destructive behaviors that resulted in their arrest and incarceration.

Thus, the emphasis of these educators was developing positive relationships with youth, developing some level of trust which was key to student learning. This approach is supported by Blomberg (2010) of the Correctional Education Association, as he maintains that “positive educational experiences and associated academic achievement that result in stronger school attachment and a sense of the benefits of education among incarcerated youths should increase the likelihood of youths returning to and staying in school following release” (p. 10). Simply put, get students to enjoy school again by

making meaningful relationships, and they will stay in school and out of trouble. In addition, at Erbine, if an educator does not support this philosophy or compromises the healthy environment of the school, the individual can expect to be let go--as Wyatt has had to do in the past when an educator created tensions between the line staff and the school.

Erbine teachers expressed that their decision to stay stems from the great deal of freedom, flexibility, and “good school culture” they enjoyed. They were a small team of 4 serving up to 35 students. They never required substitute teachers; they simply adjusted the schedule and covered for one another. Wyatt, although a lead teacher who served the administrator role, was continuously present in the classroom, teaching, supporting, interacting with teachers and students. “It’s very laid back...we try to keep it as professional as possible” Wyatt commented noting also the high expectations they have for behaviors and attitudes, especially in the conditions they face most: students floating from one program to the next thus limiting any consistency of treatment or educational programming, which then limits students ability to make any positive connections and develop the much needed relationships with teachers. Because the language of credits and coursework does not always directly translate, a weakness in the system lends to inconsistent or redundant work. During one visit, 11 out of 13 students in detention that day had been to Erbine before. Wyatt questioned obviously the transition programs in place and what schools were doing on the outside to welcome students back. However, he also noted that just because students learn and complete, their behaviors do not necessarily change. “Kids don’t see the logic.” Perhaps too many social ills and factors

are present to overcome, as Mr. Lake and Mr. Greeley both suggested; students may accomplish many positives while incarcerated that do not translate to success on the outs due to inadequate parenting, community schools, foster care, and group home services.

If Agar (2008) says that ethnography is a systematic looking for patterns, then ethnography may also be a systematic looking for what is *not* there, a pattern in itself. In the Erbine facility, I didn't hear teachers being sarcastic, except in a playful or jesting manner, or raising their voices to demean, belittle, or discipline. I didn't see impatience, annoyance, or hear anyone making negative comments about students except in private team meetings designed to find better ways of working with the individual student. I didn't hear labels or tags tossed around; no student was a "loser" or "bad kid." For example, when Wyatt shared information about young men who were sex offenders or young women who incited fights, he was compassionate not condemning.

Moreover, I didn't see the unruly, aggressive, mouthy students I half expected to see. I did, though, witness the pattern of adults who saw potential in those whom they "served." The conversations--during class time and individual work--were both entertaining and impressive. These students were engaged, they were thinking, they often cared about what the other person had to say, and they were participating in school, whereas prior to their incarceration, school may not have been such a positive place, educationally or socially. Considering Clarke, the most urban school with the roughest crowd of students, many youth used their time to complete credits, to read book after book, to participate in the creative writing Ms. Black proposed or the math lessons from Mr. Lake. I am reminded of Ms. Black's comment, "Baby steps...baby steps..." when

considering the approach to these youth and that “some days will be ugly.” Time is limited; distractions are constant; attitudes may flare; thus, patience, flexibility, and resilience are necessary tools for an educator in a youth facility. Educators have to know something about every core area, not just their own; they must know how to focus on the individual student, the person, not the crime, the behavior, or the outbursts. Every day, educators must return to their classroom with hope and a basic belief that on this day, students will listen, learn, respect, and grow. Inside the classroom, the curriculum is scripted (PASS) yet varied, with obstacles evidenced by the huge variance in learning needs. Outside the classroom, however, another obstacle exists: negotiations, the contract, and the conditions of their employment.

Context and Culture: Influence of Discourse Between Teachers and Students

Previously, I asked whether a specific language and knowledge is needed to teach in this setting. I answer yes, and I would argue based on the observation of Ms. Black that all teachers must have a knowledge and level of comfort using the language of the youth whom they teach in whatever context. If we cannot converse with them using their language, how do we expect them to converse using ours? Reciprocal learning is reverent learning (Rud & Garrison, 2010, p. 2779) and co-creating a space that invites learning versus shoving it down kids’ throats can mean the difference between success and alienation. Ayers poses “when teachers look out over their classrooms, what do they see?” (p. 26). Do they see a barrier or do they see a bridge? Ms. Black approached her class pedagogically to see “the present situation and experiences of the child and value them for what they contain” (Van Manen, 1991, p. 75), allowing herself the opportunity

to learn something from the diverse students before her and then use it to her teaching advantage. Ultimately, what teachers *do* with their language--instructing, being reverent and hospitable--epitomizes the *guts* of teaching--the courage to loosen the reigns and suspend our own beliefs and routine and enter the world of our students. Teachers and students are on the same team, yet often are two separate cultures at odds--which may have been exactly the learning experience of these youth before their incarceration, but now in Ms. Black's classroom, the two were blended.

In *Social Linguistics and Literacies* (2009), Gee's observations that, "none of us speaks a single, uniform language, nor is any one of us a single, uniform identity" and that the "different social languages we use allow us to render multiple *whos* (we are) and *whats* (we are doing) socially visible" (p. 93) offer explanations as to how we are able to negotiate various relationships throughout each day and through the span of our lives. For example, as educators, daily we shift from administrators, to students both new and veteran, to colleagues--some of whom we respect and some we don't. In each of these contexts, we use separate languages and take on an altered posture, having to shift, having to blend. Intimacy, shared experiences, initiation--all of these variables categorize our various "social languages" (p.92).

Therefore, the combining of social languages, the adolescent and the adult, the teacher and the student, further illustrates why we may see ourselves as members of a multitude of "cultures," just as Ms. Black had to illustrate to her students that she was a member of their culture, or at least a respected guest when she entered their space--a co-created space nurtured by her. Furthermore, such a concept could explain why Ms.

Black--and other educators like her--used vocabulary and phrases current with their students, which can shift every year: one day “phat” means cool, and another day it’s “kewl”, while on another day, “dope” is the term to be used. Essentially, because we educators spend eight, and sometimes 10 hours a day with adolescents, their [students] language infiltrates ours. Yet, often, this infiltration is what allows us--and Ms. Black, Mr. Greeley, Wyatt--to do our best work, especially with at-risk and resistant learners like those found in detention settings.

This is not to suggest that a teacher should give up his or her identity and force a language with which he/she is uncomfortable or not quite knowledgeable just to be “kewl.” Mr. Lake at Clarke spoke to the “ladies and gentlemen” of his class; his manner was cool and calm, never a moment of panic. Mr. Lake, a young teacher in his first permanent position, had not yet adopted the street vernacular and colloquialisms that Ms. Black or Rodney had--and to some extent the professionals at Erbine. Yet, they did use street language to satisfy their purposes and to illustrate an awareness of youth culture.

For these students, a typical mainstream public classroom can be overwhelming with the vocabulary, quick banter, and communication between teacher and the class. The teacher may or may not work to include all students by shifting and blending, i.e. “gettin’ down” or “hanging” with those seated before her; I certainly doubt that the teacher is “talking smack” with her students--at least to the degree of Ms Black. However, arguably, students would learn better or approach class with greater optimism, if they viewed the teacher as one trying to work with them within their culture, using their language, taking the risk towards the ridiculous. While a teacher’s syntax and diction may flabbergast a

student or the assigned readings and materials can overwhelm, especially when other students in the room may seem to comprehend the lesson, these youth may find themselves faced with a “languaculture” (Agar, 1994) well above their awareness or knowledge at the time. Because they may be from families or neighborhoods with divergent or limited vocabularies and different (yet rich) life experience, students struggle to learn. And so they sit, listening to language that is English, yet foreign, with words they encounter little and question: where is their “talk”? Where is their culture represented, respected, or integrated into the language of learning in their classrooms? Students can therefore feel lost and overwhelmed. Translation then becomes a tool for survival, yet some are not prepared, willing, or confident enough to take the risk.

Therefore, the challenge of educators comes with the shifting of space, of context, of *discourses* throughout the day, in each class faced. Each audience presents obstacles of acceptance, so while educators can consider themselves members of each group and users working towards a mastery of each social language, finding the “sweet spot” or perfect blend of communication within each can be tricky, and at times, daunting. Applying these concepts to the teachers at Clarke, Wayne, and Erbine and their time with students in detention--a place where student rosters changed daily and learning levels and age ranges were as heterogeneous as a one-room schoolhouse--we can certainly learn the benefits of adopting student language and incorporating their culture and traditions into our own teaching strategies. Johnston (2005) points out that “language that teachers (and their students) use in classrooms is a big deal”--and it is, considering as Johnston also emphasizes that “these words and phrases exert considerable power over classroom

conversation, and thus over students' literature and intellectual development" (p. 10). If educators take the time, like Ms. Black to be reverent, to listen to young people, to allow adolescents to keep us hip and "in the know," we simultaneously allow them to broaden our perspective and stretch our brains, as we ask the same of them.

Educational Successes and Exchanging Labels. In the juvenile justice system, teachers must act quickly to remove negative labels youth have experienced in prior educational settings. "Exchanging labels," in essence, replacing the label of "delinquent" with "scholar" or "life-long learner" helps put students in the frame of mind that they can learn and that someone believes they *can* learn. Helen (Erbin) shared that

...you have to give the kid an opportunity to prove that they can overcome the label and step into a new label--and then point it out to them [teachers] that you [the student] are making this change, that you are not that person, that you are 'here' now--this is your next level, your next label, "professor" someday, maybe.

This statement is meaningful in that it does put the responsibility into the laps of the students and telling them to exert some agency as to how other people view them. Helen added, "...for me, the kids made a mistake, we're not going to keep bringing up the past, we're going to forget it and move on," supporting the philosophy of eliminating labels.

Teachers must also, as is indicative of the profession, be caring motivators of youth--which despite tired eyes, snarky commentary, and the occasional complaints--was evident in each observed facility. Motivation stems from the emotional connections teachers make with the students and must come first before students will really do the work. Every teacher recognized that these students were "victims" of their social and

educational environments and lacked meaningful relationships that were motivational. Ms. Black, Mr. Lake, Rodney--all communicated on the students' level, simultaneously trying to teach skills and sneak in a little counseling too--like a mother pureeing vegetables to stick in the meat loaf. Scott, Jillian, and Helen started classes by asking students about their lives, who they were. Teachers strove to meet the individual needs of their students, not unlike their mainstream counterparts, but in the juvenile justice system, validating youth for the individuals they are--which have often *not* been validated in any way--for the skills they do have, and building a caring atmosphere in which youth can expand their confidence is vital. As Wyatt emphasized a point echoed routinely during my formal and informal observations: "The connection comes before the work; the kids gotta trust you before they do the work."

One of the greatest misperceptions of youth in the juvenile justice system is that they are not intelligent or capable of higher level learning. While many youth are have IEP's and are identified as needing accommodations through Special Education services, youth do have potential, are creative, and can contribute towards a positive learning environment. Curriculum is not "dumbed down" for these students, just presented in a manner that is doable, interesting, or one that addresses unique learning levels of particular youth. In some respects, strategies used in detention may be those that would work well in the mainstream schools. The curriculum and strategies observed if shared with teachers on the outs may be beneficial in student transition success. For example, in the technology class I observed, students successfully used a program designed for MIT freshmen; in Language Arts, they read Edgar Allan Poe, *Beowulf*, *The Kite Runner*, and

Malcolm X, multi-cultural works, and other classic high school reading. They participated in meaningful conversations about choices and decision making; they created compositions and artwork. They were regular students--they may have been criminals and “social deviants” but here, that wasn’t always the focus. According to the professionals who worked with these youth--seeing themselves as “students” can make the difference as to whether they continue this path of learning, contributing, and participating outside of detention.

On one visit to Erbine, I sat at a table with two brothers, one a senior, the other a freshman. They were, as can be expected, happy to be in the same place given that neither of them cared for their home situation. The older brother had plans to finish his G.E.D. while at Erbine, and upon his release and turning of age, would try to get custody of his younger brother. The older sibling was reading *Macbeth* and, since I am an English teacher he asked for help. On his own, he was grasping the plot, but no different than my own students, he struggled with the language. For this young man and his detainee peers, PASS curriculum helps students earn credits so that when they return, they have some human and cultural capital in their back pocket--whether to return to school or the world of post-secondary education and work. This particular young man completed two years worth of work in one year of detention.

Given the wide range in ability in a small facility like Erbine, professional support and collaboration was still key to determine which teacher’s strengths matched best the needs of students and the dynamic of the day. Teachers at Erbine conveyed the need to conference routinely, stressing the importance of the support system among teachers and

the collegiality which occurred. Wyatt emphasized that professional collaboration was the single most important tool for survival in this arena of education. His teachers and he agreed (as did other educators at Clarke and Wayne) that the opportunity to meet and collaborate with other educators in other facilities is as necessary, but due to scheduling and the inability to get time away from each group's site, such professional development is not as common as they'd like. Like Ms. Greeley stated earlier, they were "itchin'" to have the same collegial opportunities as typical mainstream teachers in any school district.

Again, returning to Agar's (2008) statement that ethnography is a systematic looking for patterns, I observed the pattern of adults who saw potential in those whom they "serve" versus a label placed upon them by others--police officers, prior teachers, community members, and peers. For example, Randy's philosophy entails one simple question, "What do you need to be successful today?"--or, Ms. Black's observations about student writing, "I have such bright kids come through here...they come in reluctant, but when I give them something individual to do, you can see the range that they are capable of and the level they can aspire to." I observed a pattern of educators who may be providing these students, for the first time in their (the students') lives, the opportunity to be heard.

While chatting over lunch one day at Erbine, Wyatt and his team of teachers shared their thoughts about students, where they come from, perceptions, and what they need:

Wyatt: Well, they come from, just, they come from the stuff that you watch on TV, you know? These kids are sexually abused, physically, mentally, and verbally, you know...

Helen: Because when we get them, they're not that way.

Scott: Yeah. Every kid that comes in here, the police will say, "Be careful, this kid's a violent kid." They come in here and they're the nicest kid in the world."

Jillian: They're as sweet as can be.

Helen: They just want somebody to take the time to love them, to show them some care, to take an interest in them. That's it. It's amazing what they can do.

Wyatt: In some ways...it comes back to the parents...just like the parents have no parenting skills, the parents also probably have pretty low social skills which doesn't help their child at all.

Scott: For some, this is the only stability they've ever had in their life.

Wyatt: A lot of kids will say they prefer going to school here way more so than in public school. We kind of hear that consistently.

The conversation here with Wyatt and his teachers raises some fundamental issues surrounding juvenile justice education and identifies potential reasons as to why recidivism is so high: parents. Parents often have created the situation and circumstances under which youth go to school, approach school, and have an environment at home conducive to learning and accomplishing school work.

When we reconsider the “cage” and “platform” that opened this chapter and the metaphor of setting youth free through education, we can look to the words of Tannis (2014) for reflection:

How do we expect any child to ever be truly free if he is not challenged and supported to be a lifelong learner? How do we expect our incarcerated children to someday be a force for good in their communities and society at large if punishing them for the crimes they committed also means denying them the right to a high-quality education?

Silenced Voices

What should be here, at this moment in the dissertation, are student voices from almost 50 surveys conducted during time in the field. However, once again, young voices of court affiliated and at-risk youth have been limited and stifled. Originally, IRB approved the gathering of 50 student surveys of students within a detention setting and then 10 more with youth who had been released and were in the transition phase. However, the current CEO of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) denied the use of over 40 surveys I gathered before the inquiry into my study, consequently halting what was thought to be an approved process. The risk, supposedly, was too great or outweighed the benefits.

To determine the best manner by which to ascertain parent and/or guardian consent as well as student assent, I approached administrators and transition specialists. Initially, administrators shook their head in worry and concern; finding parents would be difficult and nearly impossible. Parents rarely visited youth; they moved often from home

to home, changing addresses to the point that many youth didn't know where to find their parents. Furthermore, even with a mailing of consent forms, administrators and lead teachers stated that due to the language and appearance of the consent form, that I would be lucky to get but a few returned. To offer a solution, Michael (Clarke) suggested I contact a woman he knew at the Office of Juvenile Services to see if she could help. Michael also explored with another OJS contact on my behalf whether my research would be supported. Enthusiastically, both women agreed to help, with one stating that she could sign consent for students who were wards of the state to participate, as OJS/DHHS were their "guardians." Thus, we put a system in place: lead teachers at both facilities would generate a list of youth who were state wards; the OJS contact would cross-check this list and sign the consent for youth to be approached for their assent. The lead teacher and I would then visit each student in his/her unit and in the company of the lead teacher, I would explain my study, explain the form, and ask students to participate. Upon signature of the assent, students were then given a paper survey (as no internet was available for such surveys for security reasons) to complete. I was present, as was the lead teacher to answer questions during the process.

Often what occurred was that while students completed their surveys, they shared stories inspired by the questions. For example, one young man when asked about writing and reading shared his love for vocabulary and understanding that big words would make him sound smarter. Another youth shared that while she understood the use of PASS workbooks to help her earn credits, that she mostly enjoyed class time with Ms. Black and the writing of poetry, the discussions, and interacting with her peers. Students also

shared stories of home, their experiences struggling in school, their goals for the future, and how the detention center was or was not helping them. Most interestingly, however, the survey provided youth the opportunity to “speak” to their teachers, *all* their teachers and share with them what they wanted most for them to know. For example: to be patient, to be kind, to know that they were trying, and that they want to learn--but it may take time. Unfortunately, the specific stories, personal comments, and magical and powerful phrasing that only these students could create cannot be shared here, or ever.

After eight months of repeated visits and meetings with students, I received an email from a DHHS lawyer stating that they needed to investigate my study. Simultaneously, I received an email from my OJS contact stating that she discovered that she may not have had the authority to sign off on youth participation, but she sincerely believed that with a review, DHHS would ultimately approve the use of data. After sending in the necessary materials, including the IRB protocol, approved stamped forms, and permission to enter letters from each detention center administration, I waited over four months. Despite a favorable review of DHHS lawyers and a recommendation for the CEO to approve the research, he denied the use of student data. I was allowed an appeal, which I submitted, but was once again denied although the CEO “admired” my “passion” and wished me great luck in the future of my research. Thus, while this section cannot present those specific findings, the voices of the many interesting and dynamic personalities I encountered have nevertheless informed my analysis; informal interviews, content from various student artifacts like poetry, journals, and artwork, and classroom observations have also informed my analysis. Triangulated data here presents the student,

the individual, and authentic voice that is their experience as a young person within the juvenile justice system.

Despite the differences that Clarke, Wayne, and Erbine have, for example total number of youth, minority vs. non-minority representation, and school day structure, all three share perplexities that consistently enter the conversation of how to best address the needs of the youth while still protecting the communities at large. Yet, what about protecting the students? What about their contribution to their own learning and state while incarcerated and becoming agents of their own success? Do we adults--in the classroom, in the administrative offices, as security professionals on the unit, as judges behind the bench or probation officers during consultations--talk *to and with* young people, or over them, assuming we know best because we are adults, older and wiser, who have a better view of the situation? Yes, they have made errors, and sometimes quite violent and grave errors, but they are still thinking, functioning, and often repentant individuals who would like to provide input as to what might make the difference in their rehabilitation. Yet again, I consider Rodney's profound directive: "Here's a soul that we can't lose. Period."

The student identity is complex and is created by notions of self and other, as victim and perpetrator, as youth offender and student and the duality, or in-betweeness of that identity. Like their counterparts in mainstream education, these youth know themselves well and so should be included in the conversation about their futures, their interests, goals, and the process that is needed to achieve these goals. Yet, as noted by Osher, Sidana, & Kelly (2008), "many youth in N[eglected] or D[etention] facilities view

adults as being uncaring, manipulative, and punitive. Although this perception may not be accurate, it nevertheless affects their ability to learn from the adults whom they encounter,” (p.11). Student surveys given and collected by Mr. Lake at the onset of his Staff Secure teaching assignment revealed student sentiment regarding how others view them and only wanting more patience, understanding, and the opportunity to speak. Students described themselves as outgoing, dangerous, relaxed, intelligent, talented, and free-spirited. They cared about grades, but hated to follow rules. They had dreams, goals, aspirations; they loved to read, to write creatively, and understood the importance of a meaningful degree or certification. Yet, they were stuck between the proverbial rock and hard place, knowing that their stubborn ways could mask who they were underneath.

Considering Bahktin’s self and other--that truth comes from knowing the other so that one can know the self--and considering the concept of self-eclipsing proposed by Rud & Garrison (2009), the value of including student/offender voices in educational research is evident. Author Mary Pipher’s quoting of a Haitian proverb here is both profound and applicable: “The rocks in the water don’t know how the rocks in the sun feel” (p.133). Considering that some of the youth in detention or staff secure are there only for their safe keeping, some as young as 10 or 11 years of age, we must ask--both ourselves and especially the youth--how time in such a facility impacts the individual? What trail follows them when they share that they have spent time in a youth facility, detention center, or other place of detainment or treatment?

When students enter the Clarke facility and before they are taken to their living unit, they are presented with a pamphlet titled “Detainee Handbook” which, as the title

suggests, explains the rights and responsibilities of the young person, rules and regulations, daily activities, and services offered during their stay. On the first page, students read,

You have been detained by the request of the courts, state parole office, or a law enforcement agency and you will remain detained until the courts or parole office request that you be released. During your stay you will be provided opportunities to attend educational, recreational, religious and other various types of programming. We will provide you with three meals a day. You will also be afforded a medical screening at admission and subsequent medical attention when requested. You may also receive emergency dental care when necessary. Our main objective is to provide you with a safe and secure environment while the courts are finding a more appropriate living setting for your. We hope, however, to provide you with a positive experience as well (p. 4).

For youth who have never been admitted to a detention facility the process is most likely frightening. These opening words to the pamphlet may or may not quell those fears, but the essence is to educate the young person on what is inside before he/she arrives. The pamphlet also ensures that the experiences on the unit will be “comfortable and positive” (p. 6) yet considering the metal bunk and four inch plastic mattress and pillow for example, what could be “comfortable”? Considering the youth is wearing state issued underwear, that is not new, but worn by a prior detainee and then washed, what is “comfortable”?

Every aspect of a student's life is regimented and according to procedure. From how many letters they can write per week, to how to clean up after meals, to how much soap and toothpaste they are given--students are directed, ordered, and not allowed much room for variance. Interestingly, the pamphlet says school is required--but I watched students refuse to go to school and remain in their rooms. For this, they lost a level, and therefore, certain privileges like snacks, games, and later bedtimes. Students had access to religious services which were voluntary. Special programs were offered to help youth with drug and alcohol abuse as well as "with the specific needs of different ethnic or heritage groups." Students received clean clothing three times a week and clean undergarments daily. During meal time, talk was kept low, students could not leave without JDS permission, but the facility did make accommodations for special dietary needs, for medical or religious reasons.

Students were expected to behave in "a positive and responsible way" suggesting that perks and rewards result from acting appropriately. Negative actions, of course, resulted conversely with loss of points, which were, throughout the day, awarded to youth by the entire staff--detention officers and specialists, educators, counselors, etc. Level 1 detainees were at the bottom with no extra allowances; bed time was at 9 p.m. and 1 personal and legal phone call were allowed. All youth who entered Clarke, however, began as Level 2's, falling to level one if they could not maintain Level 2 for two consecutive days. Level 2 youth could watch television, play video and board games. Level 3 and 4 youth worked their way into the realm of snacks, a later bed time, extra phone time, and for Level 4 youth, special work assignments. Interestingly, if students

had to be contained to their room for any infraction, they immediately dropped to a Level 1 status. Incentives and rewards kept students mostly in behavioral check. However, I witnessed dialogue and physical violence, illustrating adolescents acting on impulse or determining that attacking another student, even a planned attack, was worth losing Level 4 status. Student did have an appeal/grievance process if they felt that any of their rights within Clarke had been violated. Yet, as Rodney shared, these grievances became quite the issue if students didn't like a teacher or how the teacher responded to the student that day. Students viewed grievances as a way to "get back" at teachers with whom they are not pleased--their power play in a facility full of power plays.

I looked at the students in their blue jumpsuits (Clarke) or their khakis and sweatshirts (Erbin), some of which were tattered at the ankles and all I wanted to do as talk with them more closely to find out how they were doing. They had a sense of humor; they were social for the most part; some students were quite jovial. Others barely looked my way and were stand-offish. I saw "clusters" of kids, a spectrum of tattoos on arms, necks, hands, and ankles, imagining that many more graced their bodies underneath the state-issued clothing. Family names, dates of birth and of death, gang signs, religious and inspirational quotes turned out to be great conversation starters as youth shared stories of lost relatives, the birth of their own children, how their faith kept them believing, and how the tattoos reminded them of the trouble they faced. I saw tired eyes, smelled rancid breath, and heard scuffling feet. I saw posers masking hidden fears; I heard adolescent laughter at crude jokes. I heard girls giggling about boys who would pass by their window, escorted, of course, and unable to respond or wave themselves. Hair was

untamed and mostly dry, sometimes half braided tucked up in do-rags. Weaves were removed for security reasons, so many students, both male and female, spent time braiding, corn-rowing, or brushing another student's hair.

At Clarke, I saw eyes peering at me through the small windows in their locked cell doors--those who did not attend class that day but still tried to participate by shouting or making faces. At Erbine, I saw boys and girls who were too small and too young for detention it seemed, slight in stature, barely 5 feet tall and 90 pounds, and all I could do was wonder how that boy or girl could be here, in the same facility with another student who dealt meth or who had killed someone. The blend didn't add up until the stories came out--of sexual violence, of abuse, of theft, arson, anger management issues resulting in the attack of parents or peers--of two brothers in for separate offenses, at least thankful to be together. I saw young criminals whose size, age, or gender did not factor, correlate, or correspond to any predictor; they were in the wrong place, with the wrong person, at the wrong time. Someone "created" these youth; somewhere along the span of their short lives, life lacked consistency, security, enrichment, and support. Life for them lacked encouragement, treatment, or the presence of a caring adult.

But also, I saw students. I saw young people similar to those in my own classroom. I witnessed students asking questions, answering questions, and doing the poetry, math, art, or writing that was asked of them. They admitted that they made poor choices in friends; they ran because they didn't like group homes, their own homes, or the school they attended. They survived on the streets by bunking with whomever would let them. They had dreams of writing music, becoming nurses, architects, and being reunited

with their families. They understood the importance of education but many obstacles impeded their learning, including learning disabilities, needing an adjustment in medication, or simply having the time and help they need to first, get work accomplished, second, gain a sense of accomplishment, and third, develop confidence as a learner. Some students shared that they hated school because teachers red-flagged them as trouble; some youth had never been to high school at all because they didn't like the structure, the lectures, the lack of individualized instruction. Some didn't attend school because warrants were out for their arrest or they had run-away from home or a group home. Finally, and interestingly, many youth loved school and admitted to attending daily; they enjoyed writing, reading, math, and hanging with their friends.

When students enter the facility and school, they have, as we have learned, been through quite an intake process of questioning, searching, scrubbing, and transformation from free to detained. Wyatt explains that at Erbine, "The very first couple days, sometimes it's hit and miss and they're still trying to put on their front and show attitude and stuff like that. But after they get to be here for a couple days, and they know that we're here to help them, usually it's pretty good." Prior negative learning experiences often gets in the way; before youth come to the detention centers where teachers await to address their individual needs, students have already been labeled, tagged, and determined to be no good or terrible youth. Therefore, teachers have to work through these barriers, breaking down walls constructed to shield against any more lashing or weakness. During a group interview over lunch, Scott, Jillian, and Helen each had a point of view regarding what impacts students and their attitudes upon entering the facility:

Scott: They come in here and they're the nicest kid in the world...how in the heck are we to help these young people when the organizations set up to help them limit them?

Jillian: They just want somebody to take the time to love them, to show them some care, to take an interest in them. That's it. It's amazing what they can do.

Helen: And, a lot of times when I and, and it's different every time, but when it gets to the kids that come in that are uncontrollable, they have the parents that are trying, but they cannot handle. The kids are threatening to kill them, they're kicking, but that's because they haven't had the parenting skills...a lot of our kids have parents in prison, a lot of kids don't know who their parents are, you know, they're passed from one place to the next to the next."

These teachers bring forth important observations about court affiliated youth--that they have been identified as "bad" to the point that we should "watch out," that they are neglected and do not have others who express an interest in their lives, and that sometimes, youth suffer from mental illnesses or behavioral disorders that can ultimately be the cause of their inappropriate and/or illegal behaviors. In their article, Osher, Sidana, & Kelly (2008) state that youth involved in the juvenile justice system lack the social-emotional skills or appropriate coping strategies to handle the situations they face; many due to their behavioral issues experience academic failure and so addressing all of these areas, helping students identify and develop appropriate strategies is important to help students find academic success. Essential psychological and social needs must be met, as Jillian suggests for example, to feel secure and valued by someone else, and when they

are, students are more apt to adopt appropriate classroom/school behaviors (Osher et al., 2008, p. 5). Students must feel safe, which they do in detention; students must get support, which they do with individual instruction and education plans; students need help learning to manage their own responses to various emotional situations, to learn how to keep in check their behaviors, and one way is to be surrounded by youth who do practice appropriate behaviors/strategies. Finally, students need engagement and challenge:

For example, adolescent perceptions of connections with teachers have been shown to predict academic growth in mathematics (Gregory & Weinstein, 2004) and teacher nurturance has been found to be the most consistent negative predictor of poor academic performance and problematic social behavior (Wentzel, 2002).

Similarly, in another study (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003), teachers who had high-quality relationships with their students had 31 percent fewer discipline problems, rule violations, and related problems over a year's time than teachers who did not (Osher, Sidana, & Kelly, 2008, p. 10).

Understandably, students often face great uncertainty, anxiety, and difficulty in transitioning back to their home communities. Detention center schools and outside programs for at-risk youth give students what they need, for example, individual attention, medication regulation, structure, adult interest and relationship, essentials like food, clothing, a safe environment, counseling--etc. However, when students are released back to their home environments, they may do well initially, but then get off track again due to peer influence, parent/home environments, or once again, negative educational

experiences. Referencing Mr. Greeley and Mr. Lake's prior comments about youth going home to their block or neighborhood, until life at home is also addressed, potentially, schools both in and out of youth facilities can only do so much to increase cultural capital and help detainees recognize their own value and potential. Therefore, one goal and developing program is to help the released youth make connections and establish support systems in their home schools and communities so as to create successful and permanent reintegration.

CHAPTER 6

THE FUTURE OF JUVENILE JUSTICE EDUCATION: ROADBLOCKS, RESEARCH, AND CONCLUSIONS

Grace

So many times I fail to respect

And still so many people choose to protect

I've done so many things I regret

But it's not me they choose to forget

So many times I'm trapped in depression

But sometimes that when I make my biggest impression

Sometimes, I just need a glimpse of hope

or for someone just to show me the rope

Forgiveness takes courage but you have the power

forgiveness to grace is as sweet as a flower

I, an English teacher in a public high school, have the luxury of entering a classroom of students whom I know I've seen the day before and who I will see the day after. While I struggle at times differentiating instruction to meet IEP's and reading levels, at least the grade disparity is a mere 1 or 2 grades and their ages are relatively the same...lending towards similar maturity levels and interests. Certainly, I can complain or bang my head against the wall some days in frustration, as many educators do. Yet, when I consider the daily routine of the teacher in a detention center classroom, I am bewildered. When I create lesson plans, I know who sits in my classroom, their abilities,

strengths, weaknesses, and prior learning. For a detention center teacher, what she sees day to day can change, and that day's lesson has to be malleable to fit the content, mood, and variety of her students. Therefore, working in a detention center takes a unique professional--one who is quick on her feet, who is flexible, creative, street-wise, clever, and perseverant. As Rodney noted earlier, youth in a detention facility would move mountains for their teachers...that they just want the opportunity to learn and to please. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Education, notes that education plays the greatest role in the rehabilitation process. Furthermore, both have strongly recommended that juvenile correctional systems adopt a comprehensive educational program (National Council on Disability, 2003). Quite simply, sure, teaching in a detention center is a challenge, but if we train teachers and make this training part an educational certification, like special education, or English for Language Learners (ELL), then perhaps we can make more of a dent in recidivism statistics and create better relationships between detention centers and schools.

Why Not Teach in a Detention Center?

Finding qualified/certificated teachers to work in a detention setting can be a challenge. While every teacher I met throughout my observations was endorsed, and many had earned or were working towards a Master's degree, teachers were also asked to cover a variety of core areas and disciplines, to cross-teach, to fill in, to substitute when needed (substitute teachers are quite difficult to train, prepare, and retain in such a setting, and so facilities often fill in with existing faculty or administration--or classes are

cancelled for that section). If they are endorsed, if they are addressing the needs of a variety of learners and essentially becoming masters at differentiation, then why would a teacher feel like a cast-off or has been?

Perhaps educators in detention settings also suffer from labeling, as in who takes them seriously? Who knows their job, values their job, or checks in on them--or evaluates and provides meaningful feedback? If a teacher had worked in a detention setting but then wanted to transition to a mainstream school, how would her application be received? I would imagine with great respect and admiration. I would hope with excitement in knowing that the candidate could work with all sorts of learners and connect with students who are difficult to reach. Yet, for some reason, teachers in a detention setting feel less than their public school counterparts. They are not included in the same professional development, assessment training, or similar district-wide goals for educators. Considering that Clarke and Erbine teachers are hired by the county, they certainly are not held to the same requirements. Wayne teachers, however, as contracted through the local school district do attend some training/meetings. Nevertheless, are they recognized? Erbine and Clarke teachers could argue that being left alone is a blessing, that autonomy is quite nice. The other side is legitimacy, endorsement, and support. This may be what Ms. Black wants.

While all speculation the above comments lend towards the need for specific teacher education programs in juvenile justice education. Similar to training educators in the areas of SPED or ELL, an endorsement/certification in corrections and detention

education could serve these schools and the students to a greater degree than what is currently happening. Furthermore, having such endorsed faculty would only increase the legitimacy of the program and help students transition with greater cultural capital. If a student's home school recognized the "cred" of the facility from whence he came, the work he accomplished while there would transfer without question. Students within detention centers would perhaps feel more valued because they were being taught by specialized educators. Just as the hope is for youth to increase their cultural capital, imagine the "capital" a facility would have if its teachers were endorsed as experts in their field--and compensated for that endorsement.

A particular education program would also recruit or entice future educators to consider this area of education so that hiring was not as difficult. Why do we not offer a specialized endorsement to help recruit great teachers, literacy specialists, counselors, and other professionals who are trained to work specifically with youth in these circumstances? Here, as I, and other researchers, turn to the future of juvenile justice education research, to what extent have these questions been answered here and what further study is needed? Elementally, looking at the school within a detention center as just that--a school--may lend towards a shift in security's focus to maintain the sacred nature of a classroom, of a learning environment.

First, how do educators and administrators approach the daily function of the school and select/incorporate various curriculums and programs to meet the educational needs of such diverse broad spectrum learners? Curriculum is based on credit recovery

and helping students acquire as much academic capital as they can prior to release. This capital can serve students well not only in the acquired skill through their coursework, but also in the teacher/administrator perception of their ability, behavior risk, and the student identity as learner. If a student can illustrate through completed credits and transcripts that he has been diligently working to advance his own learning, he will be received back to his community school with greater interest and support. He will be viewed as a scholar versus a delinquent.

Second, how do students approach learning in a such a setting, considering the heaviness of their situation and the uncertainty of their future? Students say they want more time in traditional schools, they want more support and teachers who don't assume that they will cause trouble or just not be a willing student. They want to be perceived as someone who can learn; they want to be understood. According to the teachers, students in detention centers typically resist school at the start, putting on the tough guise, posing, complaining, lashing out, which only results in lockdown situations, room restrictions, more limitations on what they can have or do on their units, etc. However, with time, youth see that other students are working, attending school, learning, that teachers are trying to help, they are indeed getting individual attention, more time, and are surrounded by professionals who believe in their ability and potential.

Third, what happens to youth upon their release--what follows them in regard to credits earned, support services, counseling, and other transitional programming to aid in their re-entry? Youth often leave a detention facility and enter a foster care situation, a group home environment or other transitional housing, to a rehab facility, or released to

their parents or guardian. Youth may have completed entire courses or caught up on missed class/coursework while in detention. Youth testify that having time, and nothing but time, motivates them to read a number of books, complete work in various core curriculum areas through PASS,

Lastly, what do educators need in regards to training, professional support, and instructional materials to comprehensively approach learning in this environment where security is primary, dictating school procedure and curricular offerings? Thomas Blomberg (2008) notes the need for increasing the awareness of the complexities of the culture of teaching in the juvenile justice system and the vital role coordinating colleges and universities can and should play in the preparation of future educators as well as the continuing education of such professionals to address this specific population of youth. Blomberg further suggests special educators become endorsed in core content areas and training teachers in appropriate on-line and electronic versions of juvenile justice curriculum to work with students from both the inside and outside of any facility. Tannis (2014) also contributes: “we must fully equip our juvenile-justice educators with the proper training and support to be successful in these unique alternative educational settings”--a sentiment shared routinely during my fieldwork, from professionals at all levels.

Meeting the Needs of Students and Teachers

First, through a myriad of metaphor and personal recollections, Agar (1994) conveys his position on language, culture, and the marriage of the two into what he names “languaculture.” While Agar’s focus is on making “a multi-cultural world

work” (p. 29), I see his position also applying appropriately to the field of education, specifically to juvenile justice education which is caught between two cultures, trying to blend its own culture of teaching and learning with both the culture of security and the culture of mainstream education to reach its goals of rehabilitating youth and helping them make successful transitions back to their home communities. As with many cultural conflicts, each possesses what Agar emphasizes as a “different theory of what reality in fact is” (p.66); they lack complete comprehension as to one another’s experiences working in such a challenging environment. But, administrators and educators in these schools struggle due simply to communication and conflict in beliefs, policy, and practice. According to Agar, culture “is something that fills the spaces between you and them, and the nature of that spaces depends on you as well as them” (p. 135). Educators of court affiliated youth have the daunting task of bridging the gap between detention education and mainstream education as well as the chasm between security and school. While schools in youth detention centers are succeeding in serving students and their families, the gap of communication still exists, leaving these students without a voice or language that translates; they are in a position of “in-betweeness” (Sarroub, 2005) that can be limit their learning, rehabilitation, and eventual success.

Furthermore, not only does a gap exist between mainstream schools and those in the juvenile justice system, but also Security does not have the “communicative competence” (Agar, 151-152) to understand the nuances of teaching students who are at-risk, the challenges of teaching a young person to read, or the small celebrations that need to occur when students do achieve--and the importance of revering class structures so that

time spent with youth is sacred and as uninterrupted as possible. Thus, a recommendation would be for new languacultures to be created, formed, by representatives from all sides, to engage in discourse about the rich points, the dilemmas, and the intricacies each side faces running a youth detention center and a school at the same time. To apply Agar, first, education professionals inside and out must collaborate towards greater communication and seamless transitions for youth; second, educators and security staff leaders must also forge “connections between two languacultures” which therefore “enriches the understanding of both” (p.96). Until those in the trenches can come to agreement and understanding of each other’s needs, students will continue to fall into the gap between detention and public schooling, and security will always clash with and thus limit educational opportunities for youth during their stay. While outside schools may tend to red flag returning students or shut doors to them altogether, they have a responsibility by law to meet the needs of returning students; collaboration with teachers who worked with youth in detention can only ease worries for the home school. And while security can argue, and rightly so in some cases, that their procedures and presence enable education/learning to occur, the rigidity of their perspective confines teachers and leaders as to the experiences they can offer students.

Given that students are offenders, one can understand security’s resistance given its role to protect the community and the safety of all detainees. Yet, for mainstream schools, their responsibility plays perhaps the greatest role in student reintegration and the reduction of recidivism; they have to know and understand the vocabulary of adjudication and the different status points students encounter along their journey through

the court system. Furthermore, as students sit in detention and try to earn credits towards graduation or their GED's, both schools must be in continual contact and communication, speaking the same language in terms of credit recovery and what support services students need to be successful during reintegration. Coordination must exist, transition specialists must be in place, connections linking schools and youth facilities must be established to support and enhance the transition process so that youth know where they are headed, where to turn when issues arise, and who can serve as support when they find themselves slipping. As Blomberg (2008) stresses, impediments to successful transition truly lie in what coordinating schools are willing to do--the extent of their advocacy for a returning student--can make the difference in a young person's success. Services must be provided and schools cannot red-flag or negatively label the student. Releasing youth and expecting them to simply transition and never return is ridiculous, especially considering the deep rooted habits, practices, social, and family connections which are still present and remaining, as well as other factors such distance between facility and a student's home community, which makes follow-ups challenging (Blomberg, 2008). Nevertheless, some level of "hand-holding" or emotional connections have to be in place. Youth want to succeed, as noted by NDTAC (2011), "Despite academic difficulties and truancy, there is evidence that youth who are incarcerated or formerly incarcerated maintain educational aspirations" (p. 1). However, of the 75% who say they want to graduate, only one-half will actually succeed in returning to school, and fewer will complete their coursework (O'Cummings, Read, & Bardack, 2010).

Every administrator in each facility--Rodney, Wyatt, Randy Michael--all stressed the value and importance and creation of professional development programming focusing on bringing security and education together, a team-building curriculum, to create shared philosophies, and to create awareness of the specifics and challenges of each “side” to the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders. Because the struggle between security and education is evident in three different youth centers, the struggle occurring on a larger scale is probable. Every administrator also stressed and encouraged the development of specialized teacher preparation coursework and specialized certification/endorsement in the area of detention education to legitimize and validate the professionals who choose this path. Resultantly, educators in these schools should be paid as professionals in other school districts and rewarded for increased schooling and certification. Student teachers should have to shadow in facilities to acquire some empathy for their future students who may become court affiliated. The concept is to take the area of juvenile justice education and blend its vocabulary, culture, language, strategies and blend it with traditional public school settings.

Further research could essentially bridge that gap, create more cohesive programming, and build the relationship between students’ home schools and the detention school. Often, mainstream schools do not support the credit recovery programs or resist taking the credits students have earned, so students are once again disappointed, potentially reducing further their faith in the system. The labels that can follow students in their transition can also be eliminated through communication, meetings, and reports as to student progress, and establish student-school contract agreements regarding the

transition and approach to continued academic progress. Therefore, research is necessary in the transition process and establishing positive relationships between detention center and home schools. Mainstream schools should have a voice in the curriculum within detention centers, and detention centers need to educate those outside schools as to the nuances impacting student work--and the type of work they can do--while in detention. Hence, in the long term, I am hopeful that my research can present options and information that may address these gaps in juvenile justice education to address more holistically the rehabilitation of youth, and ultimately, encourage future researchers in all areas of education to consider including this population of students in their array and data collection. By not including them, we are again, excluding them and discounting their importance as research continues in its goals of improving learning and teaching experiences for all students and professionals, no matter the environment.

Empathy and Awareness

While the importance of credit recovery to increase student cultural capital is obvious, and certainly student confidence can increase with every credit earned, the criticism with worksheet curriculums and continued individual instruction is that the development of empathy and respect for others, appropriate social and conversational skills, as well as learning to function accordingly in a mainstream classroom, can be ignored or altogether forgotten. Furthermore, do worksheet curriculums translate to actual acquired knowledge and the ability to apply that knowledge in the given content area? NDTAC suggests that to enhance the learning of neglected, delinquent, and at-risk youth that educators need to push beyond the individualized worksheet curriculum to develop

important life-long skills such as cognitive skills through “comprehension and complex, meaningful problem-solving tasks,”; real-life problem solving;. “team-based” approaches to learning like cooperative learning, tutoring among peers, and “team problem-solving activities; “metacognition” or “the ability of a student to perceive his or her strengths and weaknesses”; and lastly, “life and social skills competencies” (Oshay, Sidonis, & Kelly, 2008, p. 17). NDTAC further stresses the importance of schools stimulating youth through creative and exciting lessons directly connected to or derived from student interests. Ultimately, NDTAC states that because learning is simply not cognitive, but also a social and emotional process, to ensure success for youth in the juvenile justice system, “it is important that all students feel engaged and challenged in their learning environment, with high expectations set for all” (p. 19).

One manner by which this can occur is through an insertion into the curriculum lessons on empathy via readings and class discussions, which can come from young adult literature, conflict writing, the reading of non-fiction narratives like those by Frederick Douglass, Mark Mathabane, Malcolm X, etc. As Christensen (2000), notes, “empathy puts students inside the lives of others” (p. 6). Students through a variety of writing activities can understand about people different from themselves, those with variant cultures, religions, family structures, and gender and sexual orientation. The answer lies in the self-eclipsing suggested by Garrison (2010): “offering hospitality to the differences of others instead of reducing everything and everyone to the sameness of a predetermined mode” (p. 2763). When self-eclipsing, we set aside, or suspend, our position--all that composes our identity--to take upon ourselves that of the other, so we can “see” them for

who they are. In this sense, educators step back from their agenda (of the individual/Pass worksheet programs) and focus on the students' stories, experiences, opinions, and needs to determine the ongoing in class. Self-eclipsing educators (and administrators) inspire others as well to do so, in that "to grow, we must learn about others, while to learn about others, we must learn about ourselves" (Garrison, 2010, p. 2763)--a paradox Garrison emphasizes which also applies to student-student engagement.

Students who share their own stories, for example, through conflict writing--or even Ms. Black's poetry assignments--during which they write about personal struggles that they have overcome or that which are ongoing, can do so in the self-eclipsing environment. Sharing such work with peers during reading circles or peer-feedback sessions can allow students to learn about others' lives as well as illustrate the power in sharing one's own experiences. Christiansen (2000) notes that then, students understand the universality of human pain, emotion, struggle, and then feel more connected to their peer community and are less likely to then attack another student or feel disengaged from school (p. 8). Author Mary Pipher (2006) stresses the importance of sharing our personal narratives with the world to make change: "write your own stories, to tell us what in your history made you the person you are today. The deeper you explore your own life, the more ways you will discover to connect yourself to the greater and universal stories" (p. 64). How often young people in the juvenile justice system have been given the floor to share their stories, and in such a manner that empowers and validates their experiences as something "real" from which we can all learn? Thus, the sharing of writing can inform students about what they do not know--more importantly about what we educators do not

know--foster awareness on a deeper level, and develop the student identity as a writer with a purpose. Pipher states, "Writers benefit from reading aloud to people who do not think as we do" (p. 151). Exactly--so, students feel a sense of empowerment in sharing their side of their story when often, perhaps, they do not have the stage to do so. While students may complain about reading aloud their work, students may also testify that the stories gave them moments of thoughtful pause and empathy for others. Reading something to people who may disagree is risky and brave--but entering that debate or position or venue for discussion can be therapeutic for both audience and author.

Providing meaningful and authentic learning experiences for youth in the juvenile justice system can only help them process their situation on a more meaningful, creative, and applicative level. Therefore, creating a balance between the credit recovery programs and perhaps finding a way to incorporate more activities that provide a means for students to share their experiences could serve the students in a more holistic manner. If they learn empathy on the inside and to acknowledge the experiences of others, that empathy and understanding may translate to outside life and transition. One approach educators may take to facilitate this process is by considering Hansen's (2011) cosmopolitanism.

Infusing Cosmopolitanism

Hansen's (2011) cosmopolitanism lens may not be a typical tenet for analysis of education within the juvenile justice system, but considering instructional approaches and theories, such a philosophy can serve the purpose well. The central thesis of cosmopolitanism--"moving closer and closer *apart* and further and further

together” (Hansen, 2011, p. 3)--allows for its participants to “*hold* their values and beliefs in ways that keep them open to the concerns and perspectives of others” (p. 87). Students learn about one another’s distinctness, so they grow apart, yet, because of this sharing of individual identities, students simultaneously develop a closeness, a community, through the understanding of such unique qualities. Because it is malleable and adaptable, the cosmopolitan orientation transcends time, place, community, country, culture--everything. In many ways, it simply is the perfect answer to everything that obstructs the type of learning that is transformative for young people. Moreover, because it “brings the person into the world and the world into the person” (Hansen, 2011, p. 86), cosmopolitanism, when combined with creative writing, meaningful classroom dialogue, and social action based activities, can also help solve the issue of cultural illiteracy among students. While Hansen (2011) makes clear that cosmopolitanism is not multiculturalism, “cultural cosmopolitanism” allows for intermingling of people and cultural “borrowing and exchange,” that people can be “rooted” within more than one culture or community (p.11). Taking a cosmopolitan approach into the classroom can ease or erase fear of the unknown, prejudice, ignorance--replacing them with awareness, comprehension, empathy...and even awe. Furthermore, cosmopolitanism allows people to learn from one another versus being just tolerant. Hansen (2011) emphasizes that we should be “culturing” our students, as already noted, bringing them into the world and the world into them (p. 86). Considering the nature of this “world” today, its accessibility to contemporary youth, and the responsibilities awaiting these young people, teachers cannot deny the value of a cosmopolitan position in their own classrooms, no matter the

environment--in this case--detention settings. Cosmopolitanism is the foundation to being passionate, caring, and mostly, it is what will lead to the realization of a class dynamic and smooth management system. It both inspires and preserves human dignity in our students. To believe that students in a youth facility could not 1) take on such a venture, and 2) could not benefit from such exploration is an injustice in itself. Yet, the challenge yet again, is curriculum design and the navigation of ever-changing classrooms--new students arrive, some leave, and age and ability levels are in constant state of flux.

Inspiring Hospitality, Reverence, and Promoting Human Dignity

Stemming from cosmopolitanism, resultantly, are ideas of hospitality, reverence, and, as noted, preserving the human dignity of our students. In his work, *A Culture of Fear*, Palmer (1998) discusses the importance of educators' listening, hospitality, and opening ourselves up to be silent, to hear our students, and ultimately, "hear another person's truth" (p. 46). Doing such allows for the connection to form between educator and student, which can lead to more positive schooling experiences. Palmer echoes Rud's (1995) thoughts on hospitality: "The hospitable teacher has to reveal to students that they have something to offer...A good host is the one who believes that his guest is carrying a promise he wants to reveal to anyone who shows a genuine interest," (referencing Nouwen 1975, pp. 71, 85). In addition, Garrison (2010) emphasizes that "To listen well to others is to join with them in the joys of creation, while listening compassionately is to join them in the suffering" (p. 2773). And finally, Rud joins Garrison (2010) to emphasize that "small acts of reverent kindness, like the acts of reverent listening accomplished by teachers and leaders in schools, can be transformative..." (p. 2777).

Keeping in mind these statements, and applying the notions of hospitality and reverence to the juvenile justice system, students must be valued, or they will have no interest in contributing, learning, cooperating, making it a safe place to learn. Even “deviants” or the bad youth needs to feel valued. Otherwise, school becomes more of a security risk as students have greater tendency towards violence or self-harm.

Therefore, encompassing the central thesis of cosmopolitanism--moving closer and closer together and further and further apart (Hansen, 2011, p. 3)--i.e. applying these notions of hospitality, reverence, appreciation, and creation of a positive classroom and school dynamic will only benefit facility, school, and community goals. In addition, these notions can also be applied to addressing the gap between education and security. The students learn from another and grow together, but then also learn about their distinct and individual qualities that add to the fascination, richness, and depth of the learning experiences. Cosmopolitanism is the key to being passionate, caring, and mostly, what can lead to the creation of a class community and smoother management system--even in an ever-changing environment--yet mainly, what will inspire and preserve human dignity in students. Teachers can jump to conclusions about their students, categorize them, assume that they are doing wrong or be altogether apathetic. However, young people need someone to be patient, to listen, and to grant those much needed second chances. A day in the life of a youth in detention or staff secure is quite trying with adults looming from every angle criticizing, commanding, advising, and unfortunately, ignoring. We can argue that this [detention] is what they deserve; it is their punishment. Nevertheless, they are children and have a greater chance of rehabilitating if just one adult can sit and listen,

value the individual student, and relinquish enough power to actually learn from the student, together, they can “co-create” that *space* where learning and respect grows. Here is the space where not only students are saved--but teachers, like Ms. Black and her colleagues--as well. Even though Hargreaves (2001) notes that teachers can be “...questioned about their competence, expertise, program decisions, and assessment practices--at heart their very purposes” (p. 1068), as long as teachers have a strong sense of self and purpose, and a grounded rationale for what they do, blending in appropriate pedagogical practice as determined by administration.

The incorporation of a cosmopolitan orientation is great in theory, but can be challenging in practice due to the stress on individual curriculum and credit recovery which--while highly important regarding the lack of credits, skills, and abilities typical of youth in detention, can lend to a stale classroom. The lack of creative exploration then can lead to student disinterest, passionless teaching, classroom management issues, and hollow learning. Due to the lack of an inspiring environment, students are not reinvigorated as learners; they are not rediscovering the joy in learning. Youth who end up in detention mostly do so due to negative experiences in school, limited their developing the necessary literacy and thinking skills to succeed. Therefore, the job of educators within youth facilities is to inspire--by adopting this approach of cosmopolitanism for any content area--or blended with the PASS and other individualized programs to improve content retention and make real-world connections.

To illustrate, at the Clarke County Youth Services Center, head teacher Rodney talked about the culture and environment of this school/prison, all the while reminding

me of Garrison and Rud (2011) and their article on reverence and listening. I heard Rodney talk about his 38 years in education and 24 in corrections. He loves the students who have not been loved as they should. He became emotional talking of past students and sharing the struggles of making education work in a place of security and inconsistent policy observance. Mostly, though, he shared that these students are bright--they have all the potential in the world, but they have not been “heard” and instead have been shut down their entire lives. Thus, they end up broken, uneducated, and in a locked facility where they are wearing blue jumpsuits and “Bob Barker” slip-on canvas shoes. What is wrong with mainstream education that these students didn’t find the “love” that Rodney and other professionals like him work to provide in detention? What if someone had listened or valued their presence in the classroom? What if someone had stepped in and showed them that they had something meaningful to offer? Mr. Lake shared his own thoughts about establishing connections with youth:

...unfortunately, the kids keep coming back, they build more rapport with you and they’re eventually more willing to work for you. I start[ed] to form the relationship with these kids and I think once they respect you at that point you’re gonna get the most work outta them and they know you respect them.

Rud, Garrison, and Palmer emphasize that young people need emotional attachment, spiritual support, and to be *revered*: “Reverent listening is the recognition of the need for aid and sustenance by others and the good of human relationship and communion” (Rud & Garrison, 2011). When educators consider the many students in detention who come from environments where no parents are present to listen, where the

community is too hardened and frightened of them, and well, at school where they are marginalized for various reasons, we should wonder how could we have been that one influence that mattered? Furthermore, how are we *that one influence that matters*? Thus, Rodney's words remind us to find something within each individual student that we can be "in awe" of--something that makes us look for what makes that individual unique--to see potential versus trouble. For teachers both inside and outside of detention our job is to--as Rodney notes "save a soul worth saving"--the downtrodden, the insecure, the worried, the stressed, the hungry, and the bored. All young people want is to be noticed and inspired. Echoing this concept, Oshay, Sidonis, and Kelly (2008) discuss the importance of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)--a process by which students learn to control emotions and manage their relationships with others. SEL helps promote empathy, acceptance, and understanding, which leads to tolerance, a willingness to work with others who are different, and mostly, how to be resilient and appropriate when faced with classroom challenges or setback. SEL establishes a positive learning environment and subsequently, greater academic confidence and success. According to their research, Oshay et al. found that SEL improved levels of academic motivation and emotional ties to school--which resulted in lower drop-out rates (p. 13).

With this in mind, observed education professionals during my time in the field adopted a calm reserve with students, keeping emotions in check and inquiring more about what was happening with them--in essence, changing the position and focus from what they wanted to what student needed--strategies mainstream teachers can take into their own classrooms, especially when walking into a room of resistant or at-risk learners.

Day (2004) notes that “Positive emotional relationships with students are also likely to reduce the incidence of behavioral problems and increase students’ motivation to learn...” (p. 52). Oshay et al. (2008) add that neglected and delinquent youth “often have poor social communication skills and lack proper anger management and conflict resolution capacities” and that “that many youth view violence as a functional and commonplace solution for solving problems” (p. 13). Hence, through the incorporation of SEL, by creating reciprocal relationships through hospitality, taking a cosmopolitan position, and mostly, listening, teachers will find students more willing to help out, to meet us half way--or all the way--and to give *us* the opportunity to teach *them* because we have addressed their emotional need to feel safe, secure, and welcomed in our classrooms--no matter on what side of the razor wired fencing they attend school. With the incorporation of reverential listening (Rud & Garrison, 2011) we are invited into their world, and the more we learn about their world, the greater chances we have of keeping youth in school, helping them transition back to school upon their release, and reducing recidivism. Reverence “arises from a profound comprehension of human limitation, frailty, and finitude, prompting awe and wonder at the incomprehensible,” (Rud & Garrison, 2010, p.2778). The *incomprehensible*. When we can hear them, we can understand them, and thus will have a better understanding where to aim objectives in serving their learning needs.

Having Courage to Persevere/Trading Fear for Fearlessness

While an enticing solution, hospitality and open conversation can be bittersweet as both lend to an environment where the painful is made possible (Rud, 1995, p. 125)--

where material and conversation are uncomfortable and delicate--where students are tentative and insecure--where teachers may be afraid to tread. One task as a teacher is to get students to take the journey to the place where they can be receptive to the other which can be messy, unsettling and full of friction (Hansen, 2011, p. 104). Yet, as Hansen (2011) emphasizes that “every human contact is potentially unsettling or destabilizing, even while it may also appear intriguing or even compelling” (p. 49) educators should not back down. Consider the youth who returns from a detention setting or who has spent time in staff secure--or the student who is a ward of the state and now lives in a group or foster home. Teachers on the outside can shy away from important conversations both on a personal level and when topics arise in class, simply in fear of the ensuing discomfort and what may lead to seemingly inappropriate conversation. The fear is the emotional geography Hargreaves (2001, p. 1058) discusses and one educators must negotiate to illustrate the hospitality, the reverence, and employ the cosmopolitanism discussed earlier. Doing so could make a difference in that transitioning youth’s success as he or she tries to navigate the unfamiliar, to negotiate his/her new status as full-time mainstream public school student and ex-offender. Teachers cannot allow fear of incoming youth to paralyze education (Palmer, 1998, p. 37) and their passion for helping youth; we owe them a fearless education.

Thus, educators on the “outs” can learn from the techniques and strategies used by the fearless educators to work with the more diverse population of youth in education. If we note Ms. Black and her banter between the “other” and the “self”--teacher to student and student to teacher; with her knowledge of youth culture, street life, language, and

especially the juvenile justice system and every state agency who has their hands in the lives of these youth, she opens up a classroom towards reciprocal learning and new discovery. Herein lies the gap posed by Biesta (2004) between educator and pupil: the space in which instruction, reception, and mutual understanding exists (p.12). Biesta comments that the gap is what educates (p.18); it is the place from which teachers draw information, feedback, praise, frustration, and awareness. The gap forces us to be uncomfortable, to face fears and insecurities, and allows us to celebrate the “a-ha” moments. Similarly, in Bakhtin's (Holquist, 2002) dialogism, meaning is constructed when someone exists to receive--the other--an active participant (Holquist, 2002, p. 21)--i.e. Biesta's recipient of the learning. As Holquist notes, “Being for Bakhtin...is not just an event, but an event that is shared. Being is a simultaneity; it is always *co-being*” (p. 25). Thus, teachers do not create their “selves” in a vacuum; who they become professionally (i.e. the good teacher) is reliant on reciprocal relationships and through not only listening to the “other truth” of our students, but also taking them seriously (Clarke, p. 15).

Essentially, with youth in detention, and then youth in transition, educators don't have to know all the answers, but we may get to the answers sooner by including youth in the exploration and searching for answers *together*. When allowing students to partner with us, we are granted entry into their culture, their circles--and learning those intricacies helps educators determine better ways of presenting any aspect of any course. Quoting Nouwen (1975, p.89) Rud (1995) emphasizes that “[students] are like guests who honor the house with their visit and will not leave it without having made their own

contribution (p. 124). Young people are just plain smart and clever--and what a shame and loss for us if we educators do not take what they want to willingly give--and then teach them how to use those strengths to be successful.

Teachers often valiantly champion the notion that teaching *is a fearless profession*--however, are we fearless when we allow students to fall behind, to skip school? Are we fearless when we know a youth is in trouble? Are we fearless when a student comes back to our classroom with a house-arrest bracelet on her ankle? Are we fearless when we witness the marginalization of youth who are in transition? The more we know about these youth, what they do in school while incarcerated or detained, and who their educators are (fearless), we can truly become fearless in our approach to youth who have been through the juvenile justice system. Ayers poses, “when teachers look out over their classrooms, what do they see?” (p. 26). Many teachers look for the students who will give them headaches and the ones who will not. That teacher has already made assumptions about the abilities and learning level of her students based on appearance, cleanliness, organization of materials, hair color, number of tattoos or piercings, and body language. She is asking herself, “How do I teach these kids?” Her labeling has already impacted her approach. Instead of approaching her class pedagogically to see “the present situation and experiences of the child and value them for what they contain” (Van Manen, 1991, p. 75), she is already locked in by fear versus allowing herself the opportunity to learn something from the diverse students before her. Once again, the answer is the self-eclipsing suggested by Garrison (2011): “offering hospitality to the differences of others instead of reducing everything and everyone to the sameness of a

predetermined mode.” Self-eclipsing educators inspire others as well to do so, inviting the paradox that “to grow, we must learn about others, while to learn about others, we must learn about ourselves” (Garrison, 2010, p. 2764).

Ultimately, standing in front of a classroom full of young people, day after day, with the approach of self-eclipsing, embodies the challenge of teaching to suspend our own beliefs and routine. Teachers and students should work as a cohesive unit, yet often are conflicting cultures. In some ways, neither wants to be in school, yet still enter with hope and optimism that this year may present magical moments. Sure, both have flaws that lead to resistance and fatigue, but they are equivalent: they have been chosen to meet in this relationship of teacher and student. No one knows what they will get when they enter a classroom, but they have to find the common ground where they can learn to respect, accept, and inspire--and self-eclipsing is key to just that. According to Garrison (2010) “...when teachers listen carefully while providing instruction and merciful helping, they learn and grow cognitively, creatively, and spiritually along with their students (p. 2769). When students see teachers in this light, us stepping aside to give them room to share and “dispossessing” (Garrison, 2010, p. 2773) ourselves, they will then open themselves up to us.

Van Manen (1991) thankfully allows for imperfection in teaching, acknowledging that at times we may be “crabby, bitchy, gloomy, or glum” or at times “acting” (p. 81) and that yes, teaching consumes our spirit (p. 82). He allows for our personal inadequacies and limitations--we cannot always “teach impeccable lessons” or be “wise and fair...explain difficult concepts with ease...keep the whole child in view...be an inspiration

to students...understand perfectly the child's needs...help students through deep learning difficulties (p. 82). The growing pains of teaching never end; yet, we learn better strategies of working through them, such as self-eclipsing and being reverent. The "idealist" that Day (2010) discusses who exhibits "the courage to stand up for her beliefs and be prepared to argue for her views..." (p. 21) can often be overshadowed by the "fearful" educator who fears losing her job, fears failing, fears being found a fraud, fears looking foolish, fearful of not being liked--all those insecurities that can distance us from our educational community (Palmer, 2001, p. 36, 49).

In *A Culture of Fear*, Palmer (2001) suggests that teachers have the ability to choose from where their teaching stems--from a place of fear or a place of "curiosity or hope or empathy or honesty" (p. 57). Thus, educators in the juvenile justice system do not have time to be afraid--and their students do not deserve or need a fearful teacher--they need a fearless, self-eclipsing cosmopolitan superhero. In addition, those of us on the "outs" need to visit schools in alternative settings such as detention centers to witness the fearlessness, to see youth for the incredible learners they are, to also witness their stories of trouble and frustration at their own lack of skill, and lastly to witness their triumphs and celebration as they increase their reading level, as they write powerful poetry, as they complete on-line coursework, and earn credits towards their high school diplomas. This realm of education need not be foreign; we should choose to voyage "into the new, the unscripted, the unexpected, the unplanned, and the unpredictable..." to contribute "to the human richness of the cosmos" (Palmer, 2001, p. 118).

Conclusions and What We Can Learn

The gap between mainstream and juvenile justice education is not so large that it cannot be bridged, but construction must begin. Consistently high recidivism rates call for professionals to begin the collegial discourse necessary to first, catch youth early and prevent delinquent tendencies, and second, determine best practice to ensure successful transitions--the first time. *Language Shock* by Agar is about “forging connections between two languacultures enriches the understanding of both,” thus this idea can be applied to building bridges between the alternative and traditional. No reason should exist for an educator in a detention center to feel like a “public-school cast-off” as Ms. Black notes in the opening vignette. Additionally, as we have heard from the team at Erbine, Scott, Jillian, and Helen, they would not teach anywhere else, hence suggesting a strong sense of pride in what they do and where they work. Yet, little communication occurs between schools, teacher to teacher, and often, administration and transition liaisons in all facilities struggled with the accuracy of student records or simply the frustration in waiting for them to arrive. Therefore, I consider what communication, procedures, and practice can be improved so as to better serve these youth and hopefully reduce a recidivism rate that seems to boggle all professionals and agencies who work with this group of young people.

As an educator myself, I have a great and deep responsibility to accurately represent those whom I have studied and to convey their world as “thickly” as I can. The struggle, however, is human error, subjectivity, and perception, especially because I am not a native/participant in this culture. For example: what are my biases regarding juvenile justice education? Does my advocacy for these students--and their teachers--

cloud my observations? How have I been swayed by certain tensions that arose during my observations? Merriam (2007) cites Wolcott (1994) who argues “the absurdity of validity” (p. 211)--that Wolcott seeks something other than validity: “a quality that points more to identifying critical elements and writing plausible interpretations from them, something we can pursue without becoming obsessing with finding the right or ultimate answer...” (p. 211). As I see it, Wolcott allows for and accepts human error and so releases some of the pressure from this researcher; the dissertation is the best analysis I can provide given the extreme and varied circumstances indicative of a potentially volatile and certainly dynamic environment. Because of the ever-changing nature of the juvenile justice system, I could observe and gather data for years to come and not “get everything.”

Still, I wondered how my research mirrored reality and how my reality may or may not have been the same as that of the participants. I am just an observer, and my audience will have the “reality” presented of just that--a visitor to the site/school--which I will hope will be enough and still serve as a valid contribution to the wider research and continued and greater conversations. Merriam stresses that even though reality itself “can never be grasped” (p. 213), we researchers should strive, as she references Lincoln and Guba (1985), to present the “credible” given the data presented (p. 213). Hence, while some necessary and valuable data is not present (i.e. student voice), what is here is the reality of my experiences, and therefore, credible.

When I entered the detention center, I was within everything that encompassed security and institutionalized living. Yet, when I was in the school, with the students, I

forgot that they could have murdered someone, stolen something, committed some other heinous act, or just simply be a runaway, a victim of an abusive and borderline terroristic home environment. When I looked at the stainless steel sink/toilet combos in students' living quarters, the rooms set aside for lockdown and isolation, the slots in the doors through which their food was passed, the state issued clothing, I remembered where I was. When I sat on a thin plastic mattress, looked out the narrow window, and heard the student in the next cell using the toilet, I remembered where I was. At Clarke, I saw walls that had been scratched on with "tags" and gang symbols, paint chipping off of bunks, and darkness, as in some units, natural light was lacking. At Wayne, I was frisked prior to entering. At Erbine, I saw young people tired, disheveled, worn, and worried. Every experience was a reminder.

Yet, I also remembered that these were still kids--just kids--and those who have potential and even dreams. Education still has a responsibility to them as they *are* students too, and taking the lead from our detention center colleagues, mainstream educators should shift focus from the punitive to the potential. As I see it, the juvenile justice system itself has decided that youth are not morally responsible for their actions and it is society's responsibility, adult responsibility, to help these detainees see the error of their ways, the logic in making a change, and then set them free with the opportunity to change. According to Jones (1941),

...punishment has no place in the treatment of delinquent children, since the child does not willfully violate the social code. Punishment is replaced by training, guidance, and a favorable environment which will permit socially accepted

response...inherent in this philosophy is the recognition of the fact that the child grows and develops in a society where the multitude of personal and impersonal factors and situations in which he finds himself leave their mark and influence. Moreover, the child is helpless to select or control the factors, experiences, or situations which impinge upon him...the child has not and cannot control the influences that have molded his personality. The constellation of physical and social characteristics social habits, and social attitudes which make him a person are not of his choice and selection. (p. 439-440)

Jones makes an important point here that much of modern society, over 70 years later, has forgotten. We can say that youth must suffer the consequences of their actions and endure the punishments set by society and the court. We can further say that these youth must be incarcerated to protect society from their irrational and violent tendencies. However, as Jones emphasizes, “the child *has not and cannot control* the influences that have molded his personality” and that everything that has made him an individual--an offender--“are not of his choice and selection.” Thus, who is responsible for the creation and development of the youth offender? Those who box, label, and fail to education that young person. Those who neglect, abuse, abandon, and use that child for their personal gain. Those who have turned away when the child needed attention, praise, and consistency. More recently, according to the Supreme Court in *Roper v. Simmons* (2005):

The susceptibility of juveniles to immature and irresponsible behavior means ‘their irresponsible conduct is not as morally reprehensible as that of an adult.’ Their own vulnerability and comparative lack of control over their immediate

surroundings mean juveniles have a greater claim than adults to be forgiven of failing to escape negative influences in their whole environment...From a moral standpoint it would be misguided to equate the failings of a minor with those of an adult, for greater possibility exists that a minor's character deficiencies will be reformed" (p. 1)

Thus, juveniles are deserving of every opportunity we adults can provide them to "be reformed" versus the marginalization and isolation that can occur. By creating/improving schools within detention centers, providing credit earning opportunities towards degree or certification completion, establishing positive connections and relationships, and teaching valuable life skills, education can help students improve their cultural, social, and linguistic capitals. Moreover, through studying this area of education, we can consider what could improve curricular programming within the juvenile justice system to ensure a permanent and successful reintegration. Tannis (2014) emphasizes that

We must seize the opportunity to capture the hearts and minds of our nation's incarcerated youth while many of their distractions from the outside have been removed. While it might be easy to forget those kids we don't see, or perhaps the young person who in some way harmed us, our families, or society, we must not lose hope in what we've all been led to believe—that education is the key. If this is the case, we must use this important tool to free the minds and lives of our nation's most disenfranchised and educationally neglected youth.

Taking into mind Tannis' words, then, educators should consider what our contribution can be to this area of education and research. My contribution with this dissertation, has

been to be the “storyteller..inviting the reader to look--through your[my] eyes--at what you[I] have seen” (Wolcott, 2009, p. 27), so that through the creation of a compelling ethnographic narrative, I may help to end the stereotyping and stigmatizing of the youth within the juvenile justice system and the schools they attend, which, arguably, perform the most important and needed work in all of education.

Sure, some truth does exist in the stereotype; these students are the posers, the tough guys, or girls, the resistant learners apt to explode at any moment, etc. If we peel back the layers representing every negative influence or missing support system, we will find simply a child who wants to learn, to please, to succeed, to fit in, and probably one with his/her own unique capital to share--and a child who responds to structure. Because of this, I want to, as Geertz (1973) profoundly states “expose their normalness without reducing their particularity” (p. 14). They are “just kids” and in that way, normal, silly, funny, and troubled, but this particularity, this status as offender, is worth studying to help them be exactly what they are--“just kids”--and, as previously stated, view their lives as becoming more than the worst thing they have ever done--a sentiment posed by Bryan Petersen of the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) and attorney for juveniles facing extreme charges. Geertz (1973) suggests that “The whole point of semiotic approach to culture, is...to aid us in gaining access to the conceptual world in which our subjects live so that we can, in some extended sense of the term, converse with them” (p. 24). As these students have literally “failed” according to societal norms and so must be punished, they also need advocates who will begin the “conversation” with them towards their own personal rehabilitation and reintegration.

Essentially, through qualitative research and “conversing” with students and educators within juvenile justice education, worthy study of a section of society and education that is too often left out of research can occur and potentially be applied to mainstream classroom practice as well as detention center classrooms. Furthermore, research in this area can prompt others to include the population of youth in detention or alternative settings in their data collection versus excluding them because of their non-presence in the chosen site of study. A sentiment posed by Tannis (2014), and a quite ironic one at that, regards the whole concept of “no child left behind.” Yet, is this tenet applied to *all* children, even the deviant? “We cannot throw away the keys to a better future by denying these children the right to a good education.” Tannis (2014) exposes further illogic that children, by law, are required to attend school, and if students are truant too often, parents and child find themselves in court facing a judge: “go to school or face legal consequences” Tannen reminds us. Yet, when students do wrong and end up in detention, is school compulsory or even available? In a January 2011 publication by National Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At Risk (NDTAC), only 65 % of juvenile detention facilities offer education programming to all students, and for youth with IEP’s or identified with special needs, only 45% receive adequate or specialized/adapted instruction (Tannis, 2014).

To further illustrate, if an education researcher is curious as to teacher questioning in the classroom or how the teacher incorporates student cultural capital into the overall learning of the classroom, does that researcher consider also observing a classroom in a

detention setting? Through inclusion and comparison studies, researchers can add to the study of the transitional process and bridge the gap, both cultural and linguistic, between the “outs” and the “in.” This dialogue may lend towards the necessary conversations allowing mainstream educators to learn techniques employed by facility teachers and for facility teachers to understand where students are heading post release and so can prepare them better for what is to come.

Through building literacy skills in particular and meeting individual needs of the students, educators can save lives. The students can get counseling; they can be stimulated and participate in self-discovery. Their cultural capital can improve in their understanding and awareness of the world, and they can learn to enjoy learning for the “refining” of their habitus and continued acquisition of cultural capital. In essence, *they can*. In Agar’s (2008) view, ethnography’s responsibility is to bring “ways of understanding into awareness, making them explicit and public, and building a credible argument that what one learned should be believed by others who were not present” (p.1). To bring understanding. To believe. To help those not present “see.” Exactly. Hence, current and future educators and researchers must consider this area of research to “reduce the puzzlement” (Geertz, 1973, p. 16) and help advocate for these students who can become better individuals and contributing members of society.

Lastly, Winborne and Dardaine-Ragguet (1993) remind us that removing two major characteristics of at-risk and delinquent students, low socio-economic status and ethnicity, is impossible--and almost nearly as impossible is fitting these youth into the educational standard that assumes they, who exist outside the dominant culture, will

learn, behave, and perform like those students within it (p. 195-196). Nor, as Gee (2009) also reminds us that “we still have the problem that school cannot make up for inequities that exist in society. Invention in communities and at the level of economic and social policies is necessary...” (p. 41). Yet, what *can* be altered surrounds education and the delivery of information. Obviously, researchers and practitioners ought to work on discovering, creating, and implementing ways and methods of teaching these youth *before* they give up on school or get into trouble. Day (2014) reminds us that “Teaching is moral in the sense that it is designed to benefit humankind...”(p. 24), which also means it is moral to prepare new teachers and help existing teachers by way of purposeful research. Obviously, professional development for those who work within detention centers is also key. Training, credentialing, and supporting future and current educators in the field of juvenile justice education will only aid in closing the achievement gap, lowering recidivism rates, and improve teaching and learning conditions in these facilities. As part of this process, we ought to examine how labels may or may not impact teaching practices, perception of student ability, and student placement both inside and outside of detention. And, more importantly, research needs to create improved and meaningful curricula specific for teaching within the juvenile justice system, which brings with it not only transience, but perhaps the greatest diversity of youth in terms of ethnicity and culture, learning levels/abilities, counseling and health needs. Somewhere, the public education setting participated--at least to some extent--in the failure of these students, becoming yet another factor contributing to the end result. Therefore, society has the responsibility to right the wrong, to remove whatever labels may have impacted

learning experiences as young as kindergarten age and to build student levels of cultural capital through meaningful, creative, and individualized curriculum. It follows, then that education professionals have the job to believe in individual potential and accept the challenge to shift the label of “deviant” back to “student” for everyone to see these youth as life-long learners and valuable members of the society.

APPENDIX A

DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGY

Emic in design, ethnography is the logical manner by which to present the culture of a school within a detention center and allow the voices and stories of the students, educators, and staff, to be told. Spradley (1979) notes that ethnography “is the work of describing a culture” and that “the essential core...aims to understand another way of life from the native point of view” referencing Malinowski’s emphasis on realizing the native’s “vision of his world” (p. 3). In Agar’s (2008) view, ethnography’s responsibility is to bring “ways of understanding into awareness, making them explicit and public, and building a credible argument that what one learned should be believed by others who were not present” (p.1). Thus, my objective as a researcher and educator has been to, through ethnographic research, to “reduce the puzzlement” (Geertz, 1973, p. 16) regarding at-risk youth and juvenile delinquents in an advocacy manner. I employed critical ethnography, specifically, (Agar, 2008, p. 28) with the objective to question how the education of incarcerated students takes place and what needs to happen to improve policy, practice, and rehabilitation. As an educator, I’m concerned with curriculum, practice, classroom management, instructional strategies; but also, as an ethnographer/sociologist, I am concerned with how the culture of the detention center impacts learning. With that said, critical ethnography permitted research to raise social consciousness about these schools, and ideally, to inspire improvements in this area of education.

Creswell (2007) notes that for ethnography, interviews and observations are primarily the methods employed for data collection, with wrapping the study around

entire cultures and subcultures (p. 143). Merriam (2007) furthers that “the process of data collection and analysis is recursive and dynamic” (p. 169); therefore, to record the “thick descriptions” coined by Geertz (1973), I performed interviews with faculty and staff within two sites, collected a diversity of teaching materials and student work examples (poetry, journals, artwork), and spent over 200 hours in the classrooms observing, determining from the previous visit as to the focus of the next. Interviews participants included administrators and lead teachers in each building, the English, Staff Secure, Social Studies, and Math teachers at Clarke, the teaching team at Erbine (as they coordinate to cover all areas); informal interview participants included students, juvenile detention officers, teacher aides, medical staff, and Read Right and literacy coaches. I also conducted surveys with 42 youth, focusing on their prior educational experiences, interests, opinions on traditional and detention schooling, as well as their thoughts on literacy--reading, writing, and how they perceived each and their abilities. (Unfortunately, however, the use of these surveys was denied by the Department of Health and Human Services, a point to be discussed later). Accordingly, as Creswell (2009) notes Fetterman’s (1998) ethnographic perspective of casting the “big net” (p. 128), I “mingle [d] with everyone” to create the most informed understanding of the culture of teaching, learning, and simply living safely, in a locked youth detention and staff secure facility.

A note on ethnographic interview: although formal interview questions are supplied in Appendix B, interviews were semi-structured, conversational, and open-ended--providing the opportunity for me to shape the interview in an emerging direction when the opportunity arose, yet not with the intent to force data. Interview question

documents were only to provide a idea of what I, as researcher, wanted to cover during the interview.

Generally though, interviews lasted from 30-60 minutes and follow-up interviews with education staff and administration occurred as needed. For example: the Clarke facility experienced four shifts in teaching assignments and scheduling during my 18 months of observation. Therefore, interviews with administration and faculty helped gain better understanding as to the goals and objectives of each switch. Ethnographic classroom observations, observations of daily interactions/movement around the school, and the collection of student/educator artifacts provided valuable data to supplement and reinforce interview generated data, as Pascoe (2005) notes in her ethnographic study of adolescent male culture and masculine identity formation.

Considering the ethics of this study involving minors, and those within the juvenile justice system no less, I needed to collect assent forms from students and consent forms from parents/legal guardians. Gaining access to parents/legal guardians was a challenge, so while the initial hope was to meet with them during or around visitation hours, the logistics of this was impossible. Many youth do not get visitors and visitation hours conflicted with my own schedule. Furthermore, considering the great lengths many families took to visit their relatives, interrupting that valuable time seemed inappropriate.

Instead, another brainstorm emerged with the help of the administration at Clarke: I identified and contacted a representative at the Office of Juvenile Services to inquire if OJS/DHHS, who serves as guardian for youth who are wards of the state, could sign off on the participation of these youth. After reviewing the necessary materials and protocol,

they agreed. At that point, my contacts at the detention centers identified youth who were wards of the state. The lead teacher at Clarke, Rodney, and I confirmed this list with OJS/DHHS and once given consent, approached youth for their assent and then delivered the survey. Students completed the survey in the presence of myself and Rodney, or Ms. Black. Due to security reasons, internet was not allowed and I could not administer the surveys or be alone with students. Assent/consent forms defined my purpose and explained the methods to be used, outlining interview questions, ensuring confidentiality, and communicating to participants that they could withdraw at any time, that no risk was involved in their participation, and that I would audio tape interviews and classroom observations with their permission with tapes stored in a secure location. In essence, I presented myself as an individual who desired to work in the best interest of all participants and to convey the purpose of this study to share their voices and improve juvenile justice education.

Specific artifacts collected from the Director of Education and lead teacher included, curriculum outlines, class schedules, policies and procedure documents, annual reports, and information regarding specific students, a visitor's handbook, Read Right pamphlets, sample 30-60-90 day student credit progress and behavioral review documents, visitation hour documents, parent/family night documents, and teaching schedules and rotations. From teachers, artifacts included lesson plans, overheads, handouts, assessment results, texts, photocopied materials, that they use during instruction or evaluation of student progress, and work by other students was also collected by participating teachers and photocopied, keeping student identity anonymous,

providing a more comprehensive view of student ability, interest, and perspective. Lastly, from students, journal entries, artwork, scratch paper doodles and drawings, photographs of student artwork, assessment results, and a wall mural students painted during my time at Clarke--anything that I thought would help comprehend the culture of the school and the experience of these students. All gathered materials were photographed with permission. Collecting the artifacts generated by students provided a window into literacy practices broadly defined as well as an indication of identity in the making in this particular institutional setting. Due to confidentiality regulations, I could not photograph youth or take pictures of classrooms while they were present. I did, however, photograph the various environments to serve as reference points and confirmation of my field notes.

Classroom observations occurred monthly during the school year, and 2-3 times per week during summer months due to my own full time teaching schedule. Observations were audio-taped as any camera was not allowed into the facility by security due to the risk of revealing student identity. Visits to Clarke were more frequent due to location and accessibility. Erbine was observed mostly during summer months with a few visits during the actual school year. Observations lasted throughout the school day, ranging from 3-6 hours. Pre and post observation conferences with teachers occurred with each observation lasting 5-15 minutes, most often during travel time in between classes and upon arrival on the units until students arrived to class. Teachers and administration were consulted for clarification and confirmation of the content of my notes, i.e. what was witnessed while not implicating my own point of view as the observer. Fieldnotes encompassed sketches and descriptions of the environment, physical

descriptions of the people, non-verbal communication, body language, interactions between students, between student/adults and adult to adult, and security operations and their impact. Notes included sensory detail, rich descriptions, patterns of interactions witnessed, and student behavior and approach to learning/school. All materials gathered and recorded were stored in a secure location in my office during the extent of my doctoral research.

Essentially, my overall approach to data collection was to follow Creswell's (2007) suggestion that I first be the outsider, calm, gracious, "passive and friendly" starting with "limited objectives," (p. 134) then progress to insider status so that I could interact more, participate in classroom activities, and *immerse* myself in the culture of the school within the detention center--which occurred more towards the end of my study. Nevertheless, Merriam (2009) discusses ethical concerns for researchers regarding relationships, knowing when to step in or to step back, how to remain in researcher mode versus tempting to counsel or judge (p. 231-232). I believe I achieved this status as I was often welcomed by all in the facility--or perhaps I was just "entertainment" as Agar (2008, p. 129) jests. Some teachers did comment on the nice break in their daily routine to have a visitor, one who was an educator like themselves, one interested in who they were, what they did, and who admired their work. I was from the "outs"--they seemed to crave that connection to a world far removed from their own and at times, the role of interviewer shifted. Questions ranged from what I encountered in my own classroom to whether students were well-behaved or cared about their education, to what materials I used and the freedom I had in their selection and assessment. The ensuing discourse

between this educator and her detention center counterparts furthers the suggestion that more conversation needs to exist--an exchange of content ideas, a sharing of student experience and teaching strategies, yet most importantly, an opportunity for simple understanding and awareness. Ethically and professionally, I could only do my best, as at times I felt caught up in the tensions and frustrations, unable to comment or counsel. I communicated concerns with my gatekeepers and advisor, and learned from any issues that arose, and within the juvenile justice system, there are, and were, many.

Data Analysis Strategies

Ethnographic collection of data was the starting point. Despite Merriam's (2009) advice to not wait until I have piles and piles of data, but to begin analysis after each piece or interview is collected (p. 170), the piles did occur, yet the re-organizing and compartmentalizing of data allowed for important reflection and reminding of where I had been. Ethnographic data analysis strategies included the transcription and domain analysis of interviews, theoretical analysis of fieldnotes, memoing, compilation of surveys, and gathering of instructional and student generated material to search for patterns and emerging themes, which then led to the "a-ha" moments. Transcriptions were both done by me and by the Bureau of Sociological Research (BOSR) on the university campus with approval from my advisor. Although not employed, concepts and strategies taken from grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) led to the cycle of gathering rich data, analyzing that data, coding for themes, and then refining to determine where next I should turn and what methods were appropriate based on those themes. Charmaz (2006) explains the grounded theory strategy: "Seek data, describe observed events, answer

fundamental questions about what is happening, then develop theoretical categories to explain it” (p. 25). Initial and focused coding lent towards the comparison of data with data and then data with codes (Charmaz, 2006 p. 42). Seemingly, ethnographic coding and grounded theory coding are similar in their line by line approach to analysis, the need of the researcher to be open minded during analysis, and then grouping thematically what was found in the initial coding process. Furthermore, as I was observing culture, *in vivo* coding was necessary to identify specific language employed by those within the observed sites.

Lastly, every re-entry to the site occurred with a refined lens to gather more data to fill identified gaps or to confirm/deny prior data. I had to routinely ask myself whether I had compiled enough data to accurately and fully describe the environment and the people with the range of views and voices present within the center. When is enough data enough data? The question presented quite a challenge as within the juvenile justice system, given the changes which occur daily as students come and go, as educators strive to find appropriate curriculum and programming, and as state legislators continually explore how to approach the creation and revision of laws surrounding juvenile offenders. Appropriately, Hatch (2002) quotes Bodgken and Bilken (1992, p. 29): “You are constructing a picture that takes shape as you collect and examine the parts (p.10), but in the juvenile justice system, the picture keeps changing. Thus, the greatest difficulty has been walking away, knowing that the picture I have painted may only be but a glimpse, a moment in time; upon publication of this dissertation even, situations, policies, procedures, and daily cultural happenings could indeed be different or have shifted. Agar

(2009) may have said “The ethnographer’s purpose is to learn--to acquire some knowledge that he previously did not have,” but he also said that this is “a simple-minded statement (p. 127) referencing the difficulty in “paraphrasing,”--a “powerful test of comprehension” (p. 128)--interpreting, and imposing our own experiences and cultural awareness, or lack thereof, to our analysis and report.

Nevertheless, the picture presented here stems from collected artifacts from educators and administrators who gave consent. Examples of student work shared in the dissertation were collected from classroom observations, documents shared with me by administrators and teachers, and displays from around the environment. A troubling gap in the collection of data was the inability to gather evidence from the students themselves. Due to the involvement of DHHS and the determination that student work and surveys could not be used, despite the IRB approval, what is shared is limited. Fortunately, educators in both facilities did provide various samples of evidence demonstrating student voice and agency in their own learning. For example: DVD’s of student performances and poetry slams and artistic wall murals which hung outside one facility each probably 10 x 12 feet. Student artists on the outside met with selected individuals from the inside who shared their personal stories of struggle, uncertainty, hope, and the future and how they thought they could be conveyed through art. The banners were thus created by the peer student artists with an overseeing mentor from a local art institute. Ironically and unfortunately, however, youth who participated in the endeavor could not view the banners. Nonetheless, evidence such as these murals and other creative works further advances the rich ability of the youth in detention, which in

turn should inspire and fuel the dedication of education researchers and professionals to address the complexities and issues within the juvenile justice education system.

Student Voices Silenced: DHHS Survey Intervention

Over a seven month period, I was able to interview/survey 42 youth, 41 of whom were wards of the state, and 1 individual who was not, whose parents signed consent. Because internet is highly monitored or disallowed in a detention setting due to the potential of hacking or terrorism via communication with gangs or other outside organizations, youth participated in a paper/pencil survey inquiring as to their educational background, future goals, and experiences both in their home schools and the detention center. Getting permission from the Office of Juvenile Services (OJS) to approach youth was more efficient than finding the parent or guardian of non-ward youth. I was advised by administration in two facilities that parents/guardians often are unreachable, by phone or otherwise; they move, they work odd hours, they don't or cannot read their mail, or probably would not return the consent form anyway. Thus, the suggestion was to find a representative in OJS or DHHS who could serve as one to provide consent for youth participation, as OJS serves as their guardian/parent. The OJS contact approved the participation of all wards, with the last communication to this effect on June 10, 2013. However, only 10 days later I would receive an email from my contact and a lawyer from DHHS stating that I could no longer interview wards of the state and they were suspending my ability to use the surveys I had already gathered. The OJS contact apologized, stating that indeed the authority was not with OJS, or her position. I would have to submit the requested forms as well as my IRB protocol, approved forms, letters,

etc., to the lawyers at DHHS. They would make a recommendation, approve or deny the research, to the CEO of DHHS. Forty-five days was the maximum wait time, I was told. She, my contact, did not think the review would take long.

During the process of gaining youth research participants, however, LB 561 came into effect July 1, 2013 redefining the status of youth who are state wards and removing them from detention and staff secure facilities, instead focusing on keeping them in home or group home environments, assigning them to the care of Probation versus DHHS. LB 561¹⁹ complicated the investigation and halted progress for over four months as I waited for attorneys and DHHS executives to review my protocol/study. Finally hearing news from my DHHS contact in early November, I was told that the use of my existing surveys and access to youth was once again approved--preliminarily--and a favorable recommendation was to be given by the lawyers to the DHHS CEO. I was to receive a letter of approval from the CEO soon via mail. Three weeks later with no response, I again contacted my liaison who was as stunned that no word had been received. A few days later, December 8th, 2013, I received notice from the CEO denying the use of my data. Of course, I immediately contacted my liaison asking his thoughts as to a potential mix-up or mistake, but again, shocked, he stated his consternation at the final decision. An appeal was possible to him, but unlikely, as the CEO rarely changed his mind. All I could do was write a letter requesting an appeal and submit a change of protocol to IRB,

¹⁹ LB 561 has a goal of instead detaining juveniles placing them in a community based diversion program, keeping them closer to their home and schools, and providing rehabilitation and treatment services. The Office of Juvenile Services (OJS) will be dissolved and replaced with the Office of Juvenile Assistance (OJA). Wards of the State will now be under the office of Probation.

stating that I would only be using data collected from adults, classroom observations, and informal interviews.

Again, the irony here is how highly protected these youth are and how many “hands” are in the decision making, yet, how little research, aid, and assistance is given to the rehabilitation/education of these youth. As noted by Randy (Personal Communication with Randy Farmer, Winter 2014), administrator at the Wayne Youth Center, LB 561 was designed to streamline the decision making process, to move youth through the courts faster, and unfortunately, as a result, also reduced the comprehensive representation and input of various student advocates. Most importantly, LB 561 reduces the voice of the student him/herself to virtually nothing. Time will tell as to the impact of LB 561 on youth, but for this study, the legislative bill was simply another roadblock to providing a more comprehensive picture of learning in a detention/staff secure setting, as well as giving voice to young people in detention so they feel empowered and a part of the process of their own rehabilitation. Nevertheless, while I cannot use the specific data from the survey, I can still present interactions between student and teacher as I share the techniques and strategies used to help students find their identities as learners.

Through informal conversations with youth who have not made successful transitions and thus have experienced repeated placements, some as high as 15-20 different facilities and group living environments, I have been able to share the complicated nature of their lives and the struggle they face in a standard schooling environment, but not to the extent I would like. Students feel misunderstood, misinterpreted, red-flagged, and simply request patience from their teachers--and to be

kind. Another missing element is student input regarding the consideration of transitional programming and support system provided to youth and their re-entry to mainstream education--a vital element in reducing recidivism. Student voice would be the best key to creating and improving programs, training educators, and preparing schools for the return of these youth, yet, they are not present. The intent was to conduct semi-structured, open-ended interviews lasting from 10-30 minutes with students. Questions for these interviews were to develop and emerge from the ethnographic fieldwork, including the observations conducted during the first part of the project. In addition, the interviews would draw information from responses taken from the survey data. The setback was unfortunate; nevertheless, the wealth of information obtained throughout the two years of observations and interviews provided excellent material for analysis.

Essentially, my overall approach to data collection was to follow Creswell's (2007) suggestion that I first be the outsider, calm, gracious, "passive and friendly" starting with "limited objectives," (p. 134) then progress to insider status so that I could interact more, participate in classroom activities, and *immerse* myself in the culture of the school within the detention center. Doing so was facilitated by the willingness of the facility directors to allow entrance and the eagerness of the faculty/administrators to have someone present who 1) knew education, 2) knew young people, 3) approached research from a genuine interest and advocacy stance. Therefore, gaining access, trust, and information from those within these facilities was not difficult, although certainly, some confidential information was withheld and thus I could not press my requests to risk losing the level of trust I had built. Merriam (2009) discusses ethical concerns for

researchers regarding relationships, knowing when to step in or to step back, how to remain in researcher mode versus tempting to counsel or judge (p. 231-232). Due to my years in education, maintaining neutrality also presented a continual struggle--to not advise, suggest, weigh-in, or say, "well, maybe you should..." or "what about this idea?". However, I did participate in collegial conversation when invited--as to technique, strategies, content, I use in my own classroom or find in my own school. Such conversation aided in understanding the limitation and also the freedom educators had within each facility. Nonetheless, I had to continuously remind myself that I did not live daily in this world, that I was but a visitor, and despite routine visits, I did not encounter or gain understanding of every facet of the youth center; I did not sit in on every team meeting. Ethically and professionally, I could only do my best, report what I witnessed, communicate concerns with my gatekeeper and advisor, and learn from any issues that arose. My advocacy stance and appreciation for all professionals in these facilities is hopefully present and obvious. Without their gracious participation, this dissertation would not exist.

Seemingly, ethnographic coding demands that the researcher be open minded during analysis; Fetterman (2010) states that the best "guide" through the process is "clear thinking" (p. 93). Because I have spent a great deal of time observing these sites, I was able to bypass what I already know regarding specific language of the facility, like "staff secure" versus "detention" and procedures for volunteers to focus more on the actual educational programming. Yet, thinking clearly and remaining objective was challenging as I witnessed variant strategies and means of practice at each site. Putting

aside my affinity for a particular style, climate, and leadership was difficult, especially during the analysis and coding process. Fetterman (2010) notes that, “ethnographic analysis is iterative, building on ideas throughout the study” (p. 93), and so, while I have used my previous findings to guide my way through this dissertation and its goals, allowing themes and conclusions to “crystalize” via analysis (Fetterman, 2010, p. 109), I had to continually force myself to allow themes to emerge purely, not force them as I wanted them to appear, and make judgements stemming from my own experiences as an educator. Thus, I checked and re-checked my observations, comparing them to previous notes, looking for patterns and repetitions, coding them as a verification strategy. Because interviews were semi-structured and audio-taped, transcribing them and having participants read them and check them for accuracy has ensured validity and truth, a strategy Merriam (2007) calls “member checks” or “respondent validation” (p. 271). As suggested by Creswell (2007), saturation was another verification strategy, when I began to see the common patterns and hear/see/record the same things routinely.

Triangulation (Creswell, 2009, p. 208) helped with this “crystalizing” and process. Triangulation of data is essentially an ethnographic must and a method used to test various points of information against other points in my search and quest to prove a hypothesis. For example, I compared/contrasted perceptions of teachers and the lead teachers/administration to gather an understanding of the school’s philosophy and mission; does everyone understand the mission, follow the mission, and believe in it? Does consistency exist in its perception? Even from site to site--what is consistent and what is unique to the specific culture of that environment? The goal with triangulation

was to check the accuracy of my findings (Fetterman, 2010, p. 96) and allowed me to grasp the core values and practices of this “culture” yet also understand that Clarke, Wayne, and Erbine created their own specific dynamic and culture to match the students whom they served as well as the local school districts to which these youth would be returning.

Ultimately, I looked for patterns and used multiple forms of analysis, as Bodgken and Bilken (1992, p. 29) appropriately note, : “...constructing a picture that takes shape as you collect and examine the parts (qtd. in Hatch, 2002, p.10) in my quest to fairly, accurately, and justly present and represent the facilities, faculty, staff, and students.

Validation/Verification Strategies:

As an educator myself, I feel a great and deep responsibility to accurately represent those whom I study and to convey their world as “thickly” as I can. The struggle, however, is human error, subjectivity, and perception, especially because I am not a native/participant in this culture. For example: what are my biases regarding juvenile justice education? Does my advocacy for these students--and their teachers--cloud my observations? How have I been swayed by certain tensions that arose during my observations? Merriam (2007) cites Wolcott (1994) who argues “the absurdity of validity” (p. 211)--that Walcott seeks something other than validity: “a quality that points more to identifying critical elements and writing plausible interpretations from them, something one can pursue without becoming obsessed with finding the right or ultimate answer...” (p. 211). As I see it, Wolcott allows for and accepts human error and so releases some of the pressure from this researcher; the dissertation is the best analysis I

can provide given the extreme and varied circumstances indicative of a potentially volatile and certainly dynamic environment.

Still, I wondered how my research mirrored reality and how my reality may or may not have been the same as that of the participants. I am just an observer, and my audience will have the “reality” presented of a visitor to the site/school which I will hope will be enough and still serve as a valid contribution to the wider research. Merriam stresses that even though reality itself “can never be grasped” (p. 213), we researchers should strive, as she references Lincoln and Guba (1985), to present the “credible” given the data presented (p. 213).

IRB Approval: Getting into Prison is More Difficult Than Breaking the Law.

Of course, prior to entering any site to collect data, one must have stamped authorized approval from IRB. My road, however, was certainly rocky. In April of 2010 while taking a course in Ethnographic Methods and observing the Wayne facility for the class project, I began writing my protocol and ascertaining the necessary forms for IRB: permission from education administration to enter the facility, as well as permission from the director of security. Meanwhile, in subsequent coursework, I used the Wayne facility as the basis for class projects, continuing to develop my knowledge of the culture within and to gain “native” status and a level of comfort when in the facility. The security staff grew to know and trust me; I understood protocol; I had completed volunteer security training; and the teachers welcomed me into their classrooms.

As is routine, revisions were made after each request sent, and finally, in September of 2011, I was granted by IRB entrance to Wayne. I had but only visited the

site to approach teachers to gain their participation in the study when days later, an IRB representative called to halt my study, resulting in a termination that October. The issue: my connection to the director of education, of which IRB was not aware, and thus concerns rose of maintaining participant anonymity and confidentiality given opportunity for conversations outside the school day. IRB concerns also extended to ethical reasons as the Director of Education interviews, hires, evaluates, makes recommendations to Human Resources for disciplinary action, etc. Of course, shock and disappointment was the result as well as some consternation. Obvious positives discussed by my advisor and I included having an accessible, knowledgeable, and trusted “gatekeeper,” close proximity of the facility to campus and home, and an established “native” status--each a bonus that would exponentially enhance and facilitate the research. IRB decisions, however are final, and so none of the data from prior class projects--or potential data--other than interviews with the administration could be carried over into this dissertation except for creating within me a sound knowledge foundation and basis for comparison and contrast with the other later approved sites.

IRB’s termination came as a shock to many colleagues and professors as well, but in hind sight, served its ultimate purpose in forcing me to explore other youth-serving-facilities in the state, Clarke and Erbine. The strength was that I already had a sense of Wayne’s programs, educators, culture, and philosophy; now I would add the knowledge and understanding of two others, which has provided a greater wealth and diversity of information, exposed me to urban, rural, and immigrant youth, and finally to variant models and modes of instruction. No doubt had this dissertation study focused solely on

Wayne, the ending report would not present as comprehensive a view of the culture of teaching and learning in a youth facility. After necessary revisions, in April, 2012 this study was approved.

Moving Forward:

First contact with administration in both sites was made in March of 2012 in anticipation of approval as I first had to obtain permission letters to gain access to the school, the teachers, and the students. After IRB approval, I could formerly begin observations and data collection. First, however, I had to gain volunteer status and clearance by security professionals. At Clarke, this meant taking a tour with Karl Sampson, head of security, teacher, and volunteer training. A tall African-American man with a kind yet firm presence, Karl took me down many halls, through many secured doors, and up back staircases, all the while explaining the process and procedures surrounding daily life in a detention facility. Karl was also the individual who determined how long students would be on lockdown for fighting, making threats, or when taking a hostage (very rare, he said). After our tour, I was asked to watch three videos. The first, “Gangs, Dreams, Underfire” shown to all volunteers, stars Malcolm Jamal Warner of *The Cosby Show* as a narrator. According to the video, “Childhood has become a dangerous condition” and that “gangs are becoming so common, that their violence only gets brief mention on the news.” Next was a 1992 video called “Lockup USA” about dealing with a hostage situation and how I as a volunteer should handle myself. According to the video:

- the first hours of a hostage situation are the most dangerous
- if deadlines aren’t met, the danger is real

- I shouldn't antagonize them [the detainee]
- I shouldn't make threats--I need to be human and treat the detainee(s) as such--yet be dignified as a prisoner and compliant
- I shouldn't bond with my captors
- I should resist being "hooded" at all cost--lie that I have allergies, asthma, something--because it removes humanity

Interestingly, at Erbine, no security training or clearance was required. I received a tour from Wyatt, the lead teacher and was introduced to a few key personnel, but that was the extent to my "training." Given my experience in detention settings and the knowledge that I went through security training at Clarke, Wyatt was satisfied with my ability to negotiate around their small facility. However, only when exiting the building was I free to move independently. In addition, Clarke was more consumed by what I had in my bag as I entered the facility each day (cords, keys, pens, sharp items) whereas Erbine waved it off as no safety concern.

After gaining security clearance, and over the course of 18 months, I spent hours in the Clarke facility observing teachers, primarily the English teacher and the Read Right literacy specialists/coaches. Time was also spent conducting the 42 unusable student pen/paper surveys and informal interviews. Interviews were conducted both during the school day and on weekends when youth were not in class or under an alternative schedule. Rodney Rogue, the lead teacher and Ms. Black (English) alternated accompanying me during the survey data collection as I could not walk freely from unit to unit without an escort for security reasons. Youth were willing to participate; only 2

students approached refused to participate in the study. Although these interviews were not allowed, the time spent with youth allowed for casual conversation regarding their personal stories, situations, and struggles. Despite losing the use of this particular data, I was able during my time with them to get to know them as individuals, as human beings, and mostly, as adolescents working to navigate their way, just like their mainstream counterparts.

Interviews of teachers occurred during pre and post observation conferencing in their offices, classrooms, during lunch, and also in transit between classes. Ms. Black (English), Mr. Lake (Social Studies/Math), Mr. Greeley (social studies) were the primary interviewees at Clarke; teachers at Erbine, Miles, Jillian, Helen, and lead teacher, Wyatt, were routinely interviewed during group lunch sessions between the morning and afternoon sessions. The directors of education at Clarke and Wayne facility and lead teachers were interviewed privately in their offices, yet at Erbine, teachers and their supervisor were interviewed simultaneously. All interviews lasted 45 minutes to one hour and were digitally recorded and transcribed. Often, I followed up with teachers and administration through email, at lunch, or by phone to clarify certain points from the interview or to confirm observations present in my field notes.

APPENDIX B
SURVEY AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Student

1. Before coming to the Detention Center, how often did you go to school?

- a. 0-1 days per week
- b. 2-3 days per week
- c. 4 days per week
- d. 5 days per week

1. What determined how often you went to school?

- a. transportation
- b. a job
- c. parents' schedule
- d. responsibilities at home
- e. didn't like school
- f. didn't have my homework finished or had a test
- g. illness
- h. other _____

2. What does being successful in school mean to you? Circle all that apply.

- a. getting good grades/doing schoolwork
- b. being involved in clubs, athletics, or other activities
- c. being popular/ well-liked
- d. going to classes

e. passing classes and eventually graduating

f. getting through each day

g. other _____

3. List three things that would help make you more successful in school (if you cannot think of three, that is ok--list what you can).

1.

2.

3.

4. What about school keeps you from being successful?

5. What about school *does* make it easier for you to be successful?

6. How could schools be better in the way they teach and help students?

7. Do you see yourself graduating from high school? Yes No

8. What would you like to do after high school?

9. What are you doing right now to reach those goals?

10. Did your parents graduate from high school?

Yes No One (mother or father?)

11. Did your parents go on to college or get some sort of certification or degree?

Yes No

If yes, what degree was completed? _____

12. Do you have any siblings who have graduated from high school?

Yes No

13. And if so, did they go on to college? Yes No

14. Do you read books or magazines? If so, can you give titles of books you have read or magazines that interest you?

15. When was the last time you wrote something for class--like a paper, or journal? What was this assignment about?
16. How do you feel about writing and do you see it as an important skill to have?
17. How do you feel about reading and do you see it as an important skill to have?
18. If you think that writing is important and/or reading is important, can you state why?
19. What about technology? Do you have a cell phone? A computer? What do you know how to do with your cell phone or your computer?
20. Describe what it means to you to be in the Detention Center?
21. How would you describe your experience here at the Detention Center?
 - a. Terrible
 - b. Not bad
 - c. Pretty good
 - d. It's a good place to be.
 - e. I love it here.
22. Describe what you are learning here at the Detention Center?
23. Describe what you would like to learn at the Detention Center that maybe you are not learning?
24. How do you feel at this time about returning to your home school environment? Do you think you will make a successful transition?
25. What do you think will help you be successful in your home school when you are released?
26. How would you describe yourself before coming to the Detention Center?

27. Have you changed during your time at the Detention Center? If so, what has changed?
28. Have you had a teacher in the past, or present, that you like? Can you describe that teacher and why you like him/her?
29. If you could tell teachers one thing that they need to know about young people, or just about you, what would it be?

Education Professional: Certificated Teacher/Para-Professional

1. How long have you been a teacher and how long have you worked at this facility?
2. How would you describe your first day of teaching here?
3. What have you learned, changed, since then?
4. What are your objectives as a teacher within a detention facility?
5. What strategies and knowledge do you use to meet these objectives?
6. What are the specific challenges you face as a teacher within a detention facility?
7. How would you describe the students who walk through your door?
8. How would you evaluate their abilities, i.e. critical thinking skills, writing and reading, communication skills, social skills, etc.
9. Many other educators and the general public would wonder why a teacher would take on a position within a detention center. How would you respond to their “wonder”?
10. What might be important for people outside the facility to know about what goes on inside?
11. What misperceptions, if any, do you feel people have about schools within the prison system, their students, etc.

12. Have you ever experienced a moment during which you were not sure which way the situation was going to go? As in a confrontation with a student? Can you share this moment and how you handled it?
13. What support do you receive to help you function in your job? In other words, what sort of staff /professional development do you attend; what materials do you use—or cannot use due to the restrictions within the center; and what sort of connection or teaming do you have with other teachers?
14. When students walk out of your classroom, what do you hope they have learned?
15. What is the greatest or most vital strategy you employ with your students?
16. Can you share any particular successes you have had with students--focusing on literacy skills, social etiquette, attitude and approach to learning/school?
17. As a professional, what do you see these students needing to make a permanent and successful transition away from the juvenile justice system? i.e. what do you think is the key, or are the keys, to reducing recidivism?

Administrator

1. Can you describe for me what you do in your administrative role?
2. What is your educational background and how did you come to be director of education here?
3. What is your daily life like around the school?
4. Can you describe the “culture” of a school within a detention center?
5. What makes up the typical day of a student here?

6. How would you compare the educational environment here to that of a more typical public school?
7. How many students--or what is the range of students--you have on a daily basis.
8. Can you provide a ratio of girls to boys?
9. How long do students stay here?
10. What is their living environment like?
11. How do you perceive student attitudes to school, learning, and being here?
12. How much interaction do you have with students on a daily basis?
13. When do you meet with educators and how often?
14. What kind of educator does a person need to “fit in” here, to work with this student population?
15. What kinds of professional/staff development, then, do you do that is specific to educators here?
16. When talking of assessment of student growth, achievement, etc., how does that happen here?
17. How would you describe the relationship between educators and security staff?
18. Can you express your goals for the education program?
19. What do you see as working towards reaching these goals?
20. Can you express your “educational philosophy” when it comes to juvenile justice education?

APPENDIX C

VOCABULARY OF A DETENTION FACILITY

Detention:

Juvenile detention is court ordered short-term/temporary confinement of a youth in a locked secure facility while the court determines the best course of action.

JDS/JDT/JDO:

The various terms for security staff. The Clarke facility chose to distinguish security staff by degree of education and wages. Juvenile Detention Specialists typically have a degree in criminal justice or related field. They work full-time on units and also provide breaks for other staff. Juvenile Detention Technicians have lesser degree work, can be part-time, and are typically used to transport/escort youth and help provide breaks for JDS professionals. Juvenile Detention Officer is another term used at the Wayne and Erbine facilities; security staff in these facilities are not distinguished by name, but are paid according to education and experience.

Lockdown of Facility:

Simply meaning “in your rooms with the doors locked” facility lockdown occurs for a variety of reasons: an emergency (large disturbance, threatening weather), for facility procedures such as a shift change, for facility search, even for a staffing shortage. Lockdown can happen for a single unit or for the entire facility.

Lockdown of Individual:

Used to discipline students or for medical reasons, as in isolation for a contagious disease. Students are locked in rooms up to 23/24 hours a day with one hour of large muscle activity and recreation per day. But, recreation doesn't have to be out of their room. At Clarke, students are fed in their rooms and can only come out for medical reasons or if a teacher comes to work on assignments, yet at Wayne, students are not allowed out of lockdown for schooling purposes. Length of time locked in per day is determined by the security supervisor, the pod/unit JDS/JDO, or a discipline officer.

Portable Assisted Study Sequence:

PASS was originally designed to assist migrant farm workers' children continue their education despite moving and changing school districts. The PASS program is self-contained, semi-independent study enabling students to earn secondary credits in a variety of core and elective areas. The translation to students in the juvenile justice system is obvious due to the transitional nature of the JJS. Youth can work at their own pace to complete courses, meet graduation requirements, and gain lost ground.

Read Right:

Read Right is a small group comprehensive reading program designed to improve the overall literacy/reading ability of youth. Read Right is a scripted process during which the RR coach guides students through various texts,

measuring their comprehension and fluency. Students can work towards improving their reading grade level and eventually graduate from the program.

Seg:

An on-unit lockdown that is less rigid. Students are segregated from the others on the units and can only be out of their individual cell when others are locked in their cells. The 23/24 hour rule may or may not apply; it is the unit JDS' call.

Slider:

The heavy metal doors at Clarke separating the units from the hallways of the facility. Another locked door gives access to the actual unit. The "slider" allows entry to a locked secure room prior to entering the unit.

Staff Secure:

Staff secure is an area for status offenders, low level offenders who present minimal risk, and anyone else the judge doesn't feel needs to be detained in locked facility. These youth do not integrate with detention youth by court order. "Staff Secure" is a legal term for "non-secure detention"--students are court ordered to stay there but they are not locked in their rooms. Very limited use of physical intervention exists in staff secure. The rooms are locked so other students cannot get into each other's rooms, but students can come out of their rooms, but are required to follow the directions set by the facility.

Status Offense:

An offense that can only be applied to youth, minors, and not adults. For example: truancy, running away, minor in possession (MIP).

Transition Liaison:

This individual meets with youth to set up an education plan while he/she is in that particular facility. Responsible for student records, the transition liaison contacts prior schools to gain information about credits earned, grade level status, and other pertinent information. The transition liaison, upon a student's release, also contacts schools to inform as to what the youth accomplished during his or her stay.

APPENDIX D

Clarke County Youth Center

Position	Pseudonym
Superintendent	Benjamin Johnson
Administrator	Michael Bloom
Lead Teacher/Supervisor	Rodney Rogue
Security Trainer	Karl Sampson
English	Ms. Black
Social Studies	Mr. Greeley
Special Education	Ms. Bailey
Science	Ms. Sergeant
Tech Para	Ms. Petit
Staff Secure	Mr. Lake
Career Center	Ms. Ebony
Read Right	Caryn
Physical Education	Mr. Vernon
Transition Specialists	Samantha Stewart

Erbine Juvenile Services Center

Position	Pseudonym
Head Teacher/Principal	Wyatt
Teacher	Helen
Teacher	Jillian
Teacher	Scott
Special Programs	Jack

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