

A Race Conscious Pedagogy: Correctional Educators and Creative Resistance inside California Juvenile Detention Facilities

Jerry Flores

University of Washington-Tacoma

Abstract

The United States leads all advanced nations in rates of incarceration with a total of 2.3 million inmates. Although most prisoners are adults, rates of juvenile incarceration are equally high. Most scholars overlook the large amounts of young people who attend schools behind bars. This article discusses how teachers in three juvenile detention facilities in southern California adopt a race conscious pedagogy. This teaching approach allows educators to provide incarcerated students with resources unavailable to them in their own communities. Through semi-structured interviews and participant observation, I took an in-depth look into the teaching techniques used in these facilities. My results indicate that teachers in correctional classrooms are adopting a race conscious pedagogy that allows them to participate in “creative resistance” inside of institutions of confinement.

Introduction

The United States leads all advanced and developed nations in rates of incarceration with a total of 2.3 million inmates (Shelden, 2010). Several authors have addressed the issue of mass incarceration and the social repercussion that this incarceration has on communities, especially Communities of Color (Alexander, 2012; Davis, 2003; Flores, 2013; Shelden, 2010). Although much has been written on this topic few authors have addressed the education individuals receive inside of detention facilities.¹ Formal correctional education first began as an established institution in late 18th century Philadelphia (Roberts, 1975). Today, especially in juvenile detention facilities, schools exist as inside of the larger institutions of confinement. Currently, California state laws require all minors under the age of sixteen to attend school whether they are free or incarcerated. This means that approximately 100,000 minors attend correctional schools daily (U.S. Department of Human and Health Services, 2009). Due to the increase in incarcerated youth studies of correctional education are becoming increasingly important. Furthermore, the strong relationship between educational attainment and positive outcomes, including a lower likelihood of recidivism (McCarthy, 2006) and the fact that incarcerated youth are receiving their education in correctional institutions, means that studies of education inside institutions of confinement are becoming increasingly important. This study begins to address some of these shortcomings by discussing how educators behind bars provide instruction.

Prior studies of education in correctional facilities evaluate specific programs and their ability to reduce reoffending (Berhan, 2007). Most of these studies do not explicitly examine educator’s² pedagogical approach inside detention centers. Although recent studies (Flores, 2012) give us some insight into teaching in corrections, little to no work discusses how instructors approach teaching incarcerated Kids of Color who make up the majority of incarcerated individuals in California. The few studies that focus on teachers’ experiences and pedagogical approach in detention facilities identified three common challenges teachers face: frequent harassment of prisoners by staff (Gehring, 2007), the high frequency with which incarcerated individuals have lower-than-average levels of formal education compared to their non-incarcerated peers (Foley & Gao, 2004), and inadequate resources for teachers and students, such as books and basic classroom supplies (Thomas, 1983). As helpful as these studies are in identifying some of the challenges teachers face, they do not provide much insight into the teaching approach of correctional educators. Further, the literature provides us with almost no insight into how teachers provide instruction to incarcerated Youth of Color.

The goal of this research is to show how educators in corrections are adopting a race conscious pedagogy.

¹ Detention facilities, juvenile detention facilities, juvenile justice facilities, and institutions of confinement will be referred to interchangeably throughout the article.

² The terms instructor, teacher, and educator will be used interchangeably throughout the article.

This “creative resistance” is taking place in the most unlikely of spaces-juvenile detention centers. Most work on compulsory education (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Kim & Taylor, 2008) and several theoretical notions of punishment (Foucault, 1977), incarceration (Goffman, 1961) would lead us to believe that these institutions can provide nothing other than punishment. While detention centers may use education to control and regulate their subjects, the correctional educators interviewed in this research were adopting a teaching approach that gave students opportunities they did not have in their own communities. Using interviews with 12 teachers, this article discusses how they developed an innovative teaching approach in this punitive setting. First, I review work that address public compulsory education in the United States. Second, I discuss the current state of American incarceration and punishment. I then review work that focuses on teaching in corrections. I follow this with a discussion of my methodological approach. I then segue way into the “creative resistance in correctional classrooms” section where I discuss my central findings. I conclude the article with a discussion of the distinct contributions these findings make to the existing literature in sociology and education.

Public Education and Educating People of Color

Public compulsory education in the United States began as a way to transmit dominant cultural norms to new immigrants in the country (Neubeck, M. Neubeck, Glasberg, 2007). Proponents of public compulsory education intended to create a system that could serve as the great equalizer, where people from all walks of life could gain skills that would allow them to attain social mobility (Kosters & Mast, 2003). Although the US educational system is a pathway for social mobility the goals of education have expanded. Education is also supposed to provide individuals with a basic set of cultural characteristics that will help them assimilate into American culture (Neubeck et al., 2007). Another goal of public schooling is to give individuals basic skills that will allow them to join the country’s labor force (Hochschild & Scovronick, 2003). Finally, education is intended to prepare students to participate in the American political arena.

Schools are designed to transfer information to new members of society in order to have students adopt dominant cultural norms (Greer, 1972). In the US, these dominant norms include a belief in competition in the classroom that extends to understandings of the economic system and as such serves to promote capitalism as superior to other forms of economic existence (Neubeck et al., 2007). Further, such competition is encouraged without regard to how it negatively affects others. Similarly, young people are encouraged to adopt biased euro-centric ideas that do not address the multiple forms of oppression imposed on subordinate groups by people in power (Loewen, 1995; Zinn, 2003). Students are also encouraged to believe in the “American Dream” that through hard work, they will win material security in the form of opportunities for higher education, home ownership, and a life with some degree of security and leisure (Hochschild & Scovronick, 2003). Teaching these inaccurate ideas about an ideal meritocratic society often misleads students who are quick to blame themselves for structural forms of inequality.

A related goal of the educational system is to provide students with a basic skill set that will allow them to enter the job market and attain employment (Hochschild & Scovronick, 2003). The practice of school attendance acculturates students into the life of a desirable employee. Specifically, education is designed to make students punctual, disciplined, and willing to accept authority outside of their families (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Kim & Taylor, 2008). Mainstream education is often intended to make students more passive and manageable by discouraging spontaneity and creativity (Silberman, 1970). The instruction provided to students is designed to prepare pupils for different economic niches (Wheelock, 1992).

Finally, compulsory education is designed to create citizens that are informed and ready to participate in the country’s political system (Hochschild & Scovronick, 2003; Neubeck et al., 2007). However, early proponents of compulsory education were explicit in their belief that creating politically astute citizens would discourage them from participating directly in social change through direct political action. Instead, they would be encouraged to channel their dissent through existing political channels (Greer, 1972). Apple (2004) states that current education fosters political acquiescence instead of encouraging individuals to actively take part in the political spectrum.

Compulsory education seeks to create a passive, assimilated, and semi-skilled labor force. This process compounded by inferior education Students of Color receive reinforces inequalities among this group (Kozol,

2005; Valencia, 1993). According to Kim and Taylor (2008) schools in general work to benefit elite and privileged groups at the expense of people in marginal positions (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). This often results in the reproduction of current social inequities (Kim & Taylor, 2008). Giroux (2001) discusses how Students of Color are less likely to be included in classroom discourse. Schools, especially those that serve marginalized communities often provide their students with basic skill set instead of preparing them for college or teaching them critical skills (Dance, 2002; Oakes, 2005). Similarly, Sadker and Sadker (2001) found minority students are more likely to “receive fewer academic contacts in class, . . . are asked fewer complex and abstract questions, receive less praise or constructive feedback and are given less direction...” (p. 129). Howard (2002) and Valencia (1993) finds that schools that serve Communities of Color, especially Latina/o communities, are often underfunded and racially segregated. Moreover, students at these schools experience system-wide discrimination by teachers. Finally, because poor students and students of color are disproportionately concentrated in underachieving schools, they are more likely to encounter teacher that have low academic expectations (Ferguson, 1998; Hirschman & Lee, 2005). These low academic expectations and lack of resources often result in students performing poorly as compared to their white or more affluent classmates (Rose, 1995).

Incarceration and Punishment

The US has the largest proportion of prisoners in the world, even though the country makes up only about 5% of the world’s population; it holds 25% of all prisoners (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009, p. 1-2). Strikingly, this rise in mass incarceration was not preceded by a surge in crime. In actuality, more prisons, jails, camps and detention facilities, were built when crime was declining (Gilmore, 2006 Western, 2007). Instead, the increase in mass incarceration was accomplished by assigning mandatory minimum terms of incarceration to crimes, which may have previously received no jail or prison time (Platt, 2006; Reiman, 1995). This is part of general pattern of policing strategies that have put subaltern groups on an accelerated path into incarceration by unequally pursuing, detaining, and prosecuting poor people, especially poor People of Color (Davis, 2003). Whether we examine adults or juveniles one simply truth remains, different populations run different risks of incarceration.

In 2004, approximately 95,000 juveniles were incarcerated in the US (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). However, this number undercounts minors by excluding those who are jailed in adult facilities. While juvenile incarceration has not increased at the same rate as that of adults, both juvenile and adult crime rates roughly increase together and most adult felons have a history of juvenile offending (Western, 2007). Friedman (2003) state that the demand for beds in juvenile facilities will continue to increase and so will the number of minors sleeping in these beds. Once juveniles leave detention facilities they must deal with more than the experience of being incarcerated. Past research indicates that formerly incarcerated youths experience difficulties reintegrating into society. For example, they encounter difficulties finding employment, avoiding drug and alcohol use as well as staying away from other high risk criminal behavior that is likely to result in their re-arrest and re-conviction (Barclay 2004; Bullies, Yovanoff, & Havel, 2004; Ramchand, Morral, & Becker, 2009). These difficulties may be harder to avoid if prisons emphasize punishment rather than rehabilitation.

Both Erving Goffman (1961) and Michel Foucault (1977) see prisons as total institutions. Goffman (1961) defines a total institution as “a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life.” (p. XIII). Most importantly for the purpose of this article, Goffman (1961) argues that total institutions condition inmates to accept notions of social control by stripping them of agency, autonomy, and self-identify. Similarly, Foucault (1977) says that although imprisonment and executions have shifted from being public acts to now being largely hidden from public view, the goals of these institutions remain the same, to punish and discipline inmates. Thus, for Foucault and others the primary goal of prisons is to control human behavior and make inmates obedient (Ayers, 1997). Empirical research suggests that this vision of the prison is consistent with what occurs in juvenile facilities where the emotional, physical, and sexual abuse of inmates is ubiquitous (Friedman, 2003). Yet, when kids are imprisoned they are not just incarcerated they are also supposed to be receiving an education. In the next section, I explore the literature on education including the goals of public schooling.

Teaching in Corrections

Criminologists, rather than sociology or education scholars have written most of the empirical literature addressing correctional education. As a result, they tend to focus on whether education in general or specific educational programs are effective in reducing recidivism. However, information regarding the overall process and outcomes of providing education to incarcerated youths has seldom been the central focus of academic or policy research. Typically, when such goals are mentioned they are brief allusions noted only as part of the process of describing and evaluating the effectiveness of specific programs. I identified four major issues in this literature. First, scholars have noted that correctional education programs are more likely to be judged as successful if they prepare graduates to become gainfully employed than if they work towards basic skills (reading, writing and mathematics) proficiency or college preparation. Second, these scholars note that incarcerated youth are often several grade levels behind and the knowledge they have may contain substantial gaps (e.g. a student may be a high school senior despite reading at a 6th grade level). Third, previous researchers have noted that the safety and control measure of an institution of corrections often interrupts the time that may be set apart for instruction and also limits the instructors' classrooms activities. Finally, many researchers have argued that vocational training is the primary way to get young people re-started on the right track. For example, Foley and Gao (2004) call for a shift away from programs that are focused on granting GED's to an educational model that emphasizes vocational training. Hollingsworth (2006) writes that specific courses are needed for the professional development of inmates. Mattucci (2006), who teaches adult education in a New York state prison, justifies a shift towards vocational training because he believes that these courses provide inmates with practical training that will translate into better prospects for being hired. Other research suggests that emphasizing vocational training in corrections is misguided, because higher education has proven to be the best way to prevent recidivism (McCarthy, 2006). However, juvenile justice policies that require convicted individuals to pay restitution to their victims or make employment a condition of early release encourage programs that lead to immediate employment rather than programs that require long-term investments before they will pay off in the form of new employment. As a result, some students may re-enter society with the ability to do certain types of labor, but without the basic mathematics and reading skills that would allow them greater flexibility and independence in choosing a lifelong career.

Teaching in corrections usually involves instructing students who have many educational deficits that are not addressed by penal institutions (Zable & Nigro, 2007). Prison educators encounter students with educational handicaps such as undiagnosed disabilities, linguistic impairments, physical and psychological disabilities, or drug dependence (Gehring, 2007; Iasevoli, 2007). An increasingly large percentage of inmates are culturally and linguistically diverse, meaning they speak English as a second language (Collier & Thomas, 2001). In addition, many inmates lack basic academic skills such as phonemic awareness and the ability to add beyond single digit numbers (Foley & Gao, 2004). Not addressing the special needs of inmates can lead to adverse and unintended consequences for both the jail staff and the inmates by leading to behavioral and educational problems in the classroom.

In addition to the specific characteristics of the student population, the structure of correctional facilities creates its own special challenges for effective teaching. Correctional officers³ are supposed to maintain order inside of the detention facility, enable prisoner rehabilitation, and keep them and other prison staff safe (Dvoskin & Spiers, 2004; Gray & Salole, 2006; Rutherford, 1993; Stadler, 1992). Although correctional guards are supposed to enable rehabilitation they tend to view their jobs as primarily about maintaining social control of inmates and ensuring they conform to the rules and regulations of the facility (Crawley, 2004). They view educational opportunities and classes as either an undue reward for prisoners or as a situation that presents new challenges for their own safety (Crawley, 2004). Thus, research has shown that correctional officers tend to view teachers with apprehension and contempt, as they believe instructors are overly compassionate and empathetic (Bouchard & Kunze, 2003). As a result, guards often engage in behavior that undermines the educational process through the harassment of teachers, the harassment of students, and by micromanaging educational programs. Guards sometimes prevent teachers from getting to their classrooms or fabricate rules to justify excessive waiting times for access to facilities and other resources (Thomas, 1983; Zabel & Nigro, 2007). The harassment of students

³ Correctional officer and correctional guard will be referred to interchangeably throughout the article.

by correctional officers can range from rude statements to bodily assault. Iasevoli (2007) found that prisoners are often terrorized by the guards when attempting to do homework for class or are physically intimidated when they try to attend their courses. In the state of Michigan, a professor in an all women's facility teaching a women's studies course, shared this: "...another [guard]...[told] the women that they would have to stay in the class 100 years because it would take that long to understand women. Such comments are unfortunately not unfamiliar..." (Lempert, Bergeron, & Linker, 2005, p. 203). It is not only low-level guards who engage in harassing behavior, wardens and administrators may also put up barriers to effective correctional education. For example, many wardens are constantly reviewing educational programs in an attempt to manage every aspect of their institution (Gehring, 2007). Often detention centers use access to education as a way to "reward" incarcerated individuals who show "obedience" to detention center authorities. Harassment by guards and administrators discourages instructors from working in correctional institutions and also pushes inmates out of educational programs (Zabel & Nigro, 2007).

The School-to-Prison Pipeline

During the early 1990's, education and policy makers began to notice the increasing connection between public schools and the criminal justice system. However, it was not until the early 2000's that research began to pay attention to what is referred to as the "school-to-prison pipeline." The school-to-prison pipeline "pushes children out of school and hastens their entry into the juvenile, and eventually the criminal justice system, where prison is the end of the road." (NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund Inc., 2005, p. 11). This pipeline has contributed to increasing numbers of children being detained and incarcerated in American schools. Most scholars agree that a school-to-prison pipeline exists. Within this pipeline there are several interlocking practices that place kids on a path from school to secure detention that include zero-tolerance policies, police officers in schools, metal detectors, and school wide searchers (Bracy, 2010; Hirschfield, 2009; Kupchik, 2009, 2010; McGrew, 2008; Thomas & Stevenson, 2009; Wald & Losen, 2003).

Initially the school-to-prison pipeline disproportionately affected young Black boys. However, recent work in this area has explored how this punitive phenomenon is affecting Latin@s students. For example, the Association of Mexican American Educators Journal recently published a special issue dedicated entirely to the experiences of Latina/os in the school-to-prison pipeline. This special issue addresses the unique ways the school-to-prison pipeline has negatively affected Latin@s. This issue included discussions on how undocumented students negotiate this pipeline (Annamma, 2013; Pantoja, 2013; Rios & Galicia, 2013) and the specific gendered challenges young women with disabilities face when attempting to negotiate the recent fusion between schools and institutions of confinement (Annamma, 2013). Other work in this special issue address the specific challenges this community faces when attempting to deal with the increasing amounts of Latin@ family members who find themselves behind bars and how this affects their educational experiences (Nuño, 2013). Other research like that of Rios and Galicia (2013) address the hyper-criminalization of Latino youth. For these young men, simple behavior like speaking loudly, defending yourself against an attack, pulling a water bottle out of your backpack or being perceived as "gang member" can result in harassment or even arrest by law enforcement agents (Rios & Galicia, 2013). This treatment coupled with the fact that students now receive criminal punishment at school for behavior that was previously handed by school staff (Hirschfield, 2009; Kupchik, 2009) means that Latin@s and other Students of Color are more easily caught up in the school-to-prison pipeline. While this article as a whole is not about the school-to-prison pipeline, it provides readers with any idea of the multiple challenges Latin@ students and other students face before ending up in classrooms behind bars.

Creative Resistance

My findings illustrate some of the key ways educators in my study participated in "creative resistance" inside these very punitive settings. Creative resistance is a phrase I coin to describe the multiple ways instructors in this study undermined the punitive nature of detention centers. The teachers in my study participate in creative resistance in three distinct ways. First, instructors are creating programs in their classrooms that provide students with resources they often lack in their own communities. Second, they are emphasizing critical

thinking skills in their classrooms although it is very uncommon in correctional education. Finally, instructors are adopting a race conscious pedagogy that incorporates students' culture in the classroom. Given the harsh nature of life behind bars, the new challenges associated with the school-to-prison pipeline and the increasing amount of Latino@s in detention research like this merits sustained critical attention. I will expand on creative resistance later in the article.

Methods

Using ethnographic research I entered the social world of juvenile detention facilities for 15 months. According to Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995), the goal of ethnography is to immerse oneself in the lives of the study's respondents and to understand what is meaningful and important to them. I achieved this by undertaking a two-fold methodology: observations and in-depth interviews. Moreover, I supplemented my interviews with participant observations at three juvenile detention facilities in southern California. Prior to beginning this project, I developed a key set of questions that guided my research.

Five main questions guided my semi-structured interviews. 1) Tell me how you got into teaching in corrections? 2) How can you describe your teaching experiences in Juvenile Hall? 3) How would you describe the highpoints you have encountered working here? 4) How would you describe a typical day of teaching? 5) What do you think is most important that your students go away with from your class? During the interviews I encouraged participants to focus on issues that they felt were particularly important to teaching in corrections.⁴

Each interview lasted between one to three hours with most lasting about an hour and a half. At the end of this process I had gathered approximately 18 hours of digitally recorded data. I primarily used snowball sampling to recruit teachers for my study. However, I also used multiple contact points in order to obtain a wider breath of teachers' experiences. Instead of relying on my first respondent as the sole means of find other participants, I randomly called teachers employed by juvenile justice facilities. Using this technique allowed me to reduce the bias of using a convenience sample.

During our jail visits, we toured the facilities, interviewed teachers and guest-lectured in correctional classrooms. During these lectures I discussed how to gain access to academic resources and how to transfer from community college to four year Universities. Agreeing to guest lecture allowed me to gain access into the facilities where my respondents worked. This greatly enhanced the study as it allowed us to contextualize the teaching environment of the instructors we were trying to understand. Moreover, it allowed me to gain access to total institutions that are often off limits to researchers.

Of the twelve participants, five were male and seven female. Two of the males self-identified as Mexican-American or Latino. Two male teachers self-identified as white and one was African-American. Of the seven female teachers we interviewed, one identified as Chicana while four women self-identified as white. Finally, two of the female instructors were African Americans. It is also important to note that none of these instructors themselves were previously incarcerated.

The teachers varied in age from early twenties to mid-fifties, although most instructors were in their late thirties or early forties. All of the teachers had worked in juvenile facilities for at least one year, but most of them had worked in corrections for ten or more years. While all the instructors were currently teaching in detention facilities, two of them were employed as long-term substitutes rather than as tenure-track teachers. However, all teachers had the same day-to-day responsibilities. Of the teachers we interviewed four taught special education, five taught English and history and three taught math and science. Most of them were educated at traditional teaching colleges and two were educated in elite research Universities. All of them had a bachelor's degrees and at least one teaching credential. Several of the instructors have multiple teaching credentials and/or a master's degree.

As a field researcher who is dedicated to social justice it is also important to reflect on my privilege and power when doing this type of work. As a Latino man, individuals like myself do not often get to conduct research in this setting. This is especially the case since Latino@s are more likely to end up behind bars than to be a researcher (Gilmore, 2006). Doing this type of work was also important to me given my history as an "at risk" youth and high school dropout. The young men I saw in these classrooms often reminded me of a younger

⁴ My findings section doubles as a summary of how instructors answered these interview questions.

version of myself and of friends and family who currently find themselves behind bars. Given how the current system of mass incarceration disproportionately affects Communities of Color, this research took on special meaning. I also shared my previous challenges in hopes some of these young people would find inspiration or hope in my experiences. I was also aware of my ability to leave these detention centers at any point during my visit. This is a privilege people who are incarcerated do not have and that shapes their daily lives.

Creative Resistance in the Correctional Classrooms Findings

In this study, I gained a better understanding of the experiences of teachers who work in juvenile detention facilities in Puerto Imperial. In particular, I was interested in the pedagogy employed by instructors who work in corrections. During our interviews correctional educators also provided me with several details unique to teaching in this setting. Based on my interviews, I found that the teachers who work in this setting are a caring and compassionate group. They seemed very socially conscious and cognizant of the inequalities that contributed to their students⁵ being incarcerated. Several of them noted that most of their students are Students of Color and talked about discrimination, injustice, sexism, and white privilege freely and openly although half, six of twelve, are not themselves People of Color. In spite of working in this unorthodox and often difficult environment, the teachers all described their jobs as being extremely rewarding. Nevertheless, all the instructors described teaching in this setting as being challenging and often emotionally draining. As I discussed previously, instructors in this study participated in creative resistance in three separate ways, which I describe in the paragraphs below.

Nine of the twelve instructors I spoke with created various academic programs for their students. These programs allowed teachers to address the varying needs of their students. Creating new programs also allowed teachers to provide more resources for their students while in detention. Anna, a seasoned instructor and ex-correctional guard started a book club for her students. Anna said this about the book club:

We try to find authors that are either writing novels that somehow relate to the kids experience. So we don't do a lot of the traditional classics, we have read Jimmy Santiago Baca who is a man that spent time in federal prison and was illiterate when he went in and he just became this prolific poet while he was there. So we have that extra component in the classroom, the kids can write extra credit essays to go along with so they are actually reading the novel in their room. They are doing that on their own time...which is something they wouldn't normally do in their homes. So the combination of taking a quiz on the book, reading the book, and then writing a five paragraph essay will get them one additional credit a month.

In the book club Anna and her students collectively choose the reading material. This allows students to pick texts that speak to their situation or that are relevant to their lives. After they have chosen the text, Anna comes in during lunch periods and after school to help lead discussion groups. Teachers like Anna use these programs to provide students the opportunity to earn units toward a high school diploma, which they often lack. Tim, a correctional educator of 18 years started a drama program at his facility. He said this about the program:

My big thing now is my drama program. I am excited to see kids get up and use things that I taught them, that they have been able to improve upon. They have taken the skill I have and taken it way beyond what I can do. And that is gratifying when the student becomes better than the teacher. I know that sounds real cheesy but it is true. (For Example) I ran into a kid a few months after he had gotten out and he had a speech impediment. He had a really bad lisp and he still remembered all of his lines. He saw me at a coffee shop and just started saying his lines out loud, he still remembered them.

⁵ The students in these classrooms resemble the general makeup of the imprisoned populace of the US. The inmates in these juvenile facilities range from nine to nineteen years of age. They are predominantly Black and Latino and come from working class families (Gilmore 2007; Reiman 1995). According to instructors they often have low academic skills and have not attended school regularly throughout their lives.

Tim discusses his drama program and how his students are able to excel in this area. He also provides an example of a student that retained knowledge of a play after he left the facility. Tim also organizes plays and brings in professional actors to teach his students about pursuing acting as a career. Several of the instructors I interviewed also started poetry slams, gardens, independent and collective tutoring as well as special education classes for their students. Most of these programs are started and managed by teachers volunteering their time after school, during lunch breaks, and on the weekends. These programs not only provide students with resources, they also encourage students to think critically.

Seven out of the twelve teachers I spoke with emphasized thinking critically in their classrooms. This is unique to the teachers I interviewed as no current research discusses teaching incarcerated students critical thinking skills. The instructors achieved this by overtly emphasizing critical thinking or by providing their students assignments that encourage critical analysis. Manuel described this process as follows:

A lot of the times it is about building their critical thinking skills. Not so much of give me the facts, but also how has that influenced how we are living today and how will our actions and what we do influence our future generations. So getting kids to build their critical thinking skills to think for themselves (is important). I can teach you all you want but if you don't think for yourself it will not get you anywhere. You have to be a problem solver, you have to be able to do things for your self and that is what employers want. They want people who are critical thinkers who can solve problems and that don't need someone to hold their hands through the whole thing. So building critical thinking skills (is my goal)...

Manuel discusses the importance of building critical thinking skills in his classroom. He encourages his students to think about what they are learning using a broader historical and social lens. Doing this pushes his students to understand the wider implications of what they are learning. When I asked Frank, an African American special education instructor, what kind of education his students needed he said this:

Frank: I think students need critical thinking skills, they are pretty important. I say that because that is not only important for the GED but also for all students. Investigating problems at as deep a level as possible.

Interviewer: How are you able to accomplish this in your classroom?

Frank: One, by the projects and things that we study. Case and point the current events...we go deeper than the questions on the work sheet. I make sure that I ask the kids questions, I have a list of questions and strategies and I make sure I hit everybody. I visit each question in a number of ways basically restating in a number of ways what they have said. I guess just looking at each answer as deeply as possible.

Frank embodies the sentiments of the other instructors who believe critical thinking skills are key in correctional teaching. The teachers I spoke with push their students to analyze and deconstruct what they are learning. While the educators I interviewed are emphasizing critical thinking skills, they are also adopting a race conscious pedagogy.

Finally, ten of the twelve teachers I interviewed are adopting a race conscious pedagogy. They openly acknowledge the social inequalities that contribute to a disproportionate amount of incarcerated People of Color. They also speak about race and ethnicity openly although only half are People of Color. Javier, an energetic and compassionate Latino language arts teacher said this about the two largest ethnic groups in the classroom:

I am going to be the only thing I know how to be and that is honest and those groups are Brown and Black. It is as plain as the nose on your face to anybody that works in these places. 90% of my population are Kids of Color. So it tells me that we as a society, and the juvenile justice system being a part of that, we really need to dig down deep and find some of the deeper root of why my class consist of 90% plus brown and black kids. It is troublesome to me because I think I

understand some of the issues, the larger societal issues. It is frustrating but again I can get down on that and focus all my energy on that aspect of it or I can say I have these kids now, I can have that opportunity to maybe make a difference. So it weighs on me but I chose to put the energy on them and given them what I have and that is 41 years of life and having gone through some of this stuff my self and just my understanding and those types of things...Race is deeply ingrained into the environment...because guess what? You look around we are all black and brown in this place. We are all the other.

Javier discussed the high amount of People of Color in his classes. He also believes society needs to further analyze the reasons that contribute to high amounts of incarcerated People of Color. Anna, like Javier discusses race openly with her students. However, she goes further and simply discussing race and how it affects her students. She said this:

...Since our students are predominantly Students of Color we need to understand how our students learn and how their educational experiences have been affected by the color of their skin. And the way they (students) are treated by our society and our educational system and the kind of issues that they bring with them to a classroom. And then how they then interact with a white teacher who might, then just represent every other white teacher they have ever had in their entire life. So what we are doing is really examining the issue of race and its impact on education... Because the first thing that we begin examining when we start talking about the impact of race on students and educational equity is we examine the role of whiteness in society. And the idea that a white person just benefits, that they receive white privileged, meaning that they might just from the nature of being white. And a lot of white people in general are really uncomfortable with that idea, they like to believe that everything they have, they have because they earned. They don't like to acknowledge that they ever received any kind of preferential or differential treatment because of the color of their skin.

Anna discusses how race affects educational attainment for People of Color. She also examined her white privilege and the role of whiteness in society. Although she understands that discussing race openly makes several of her coworkers uncomfortable, she believes that discussing race relations in her classroom is necessary in order to provide her students with a better education. Finally, instructors are adopting a race conscious pedagogy by connecting students to their culture. Manuel said this about incorporating the cultures of his students in a history lesson:

...Whatever I am teaching I try to incorporate whatever relates to them (students). If we are talking about history stuff I try to bring in as much of how did a Chicana/o or African American contribute to that cause. We were talking about the Vietnam War and the Black Panthers and Brown Berets came into play and we talked about the Chicano movement. And everything kind of came into full circle and the kids digged it man, they were all into it. For some of us we hear the Chicano movement and we hear Dolores Huerta, César Chavez, Reyes Tigerina, and Corky Gonzalez and all of that makes sense to us, but a lot of these kids have never heard of these people. And I think it is important to teach them about what certain people did, certain voices for the Chicanos and African Americans like Malcolm X. Now you are relating it to them, to their background, and to their experiences and as soon as you sparked that interest than that kid is all yours and what every you tell him from that point is money.

Correctional educators like Manuel realize that kids in corrections often have little knowledge of civil rights leaders from their own communities. Connecting these events to every day curriculum allowed him to engage students by teaching them about their own communities and cultures. This changed students' perspective about education and made them more open to accept new academic information. Manuel, Anna, and Javier are adopting a race conscious pedagogy when teaching in corrections. They are questioning the social inequalities

that contribute to a large incarcerated population of color. Finally, they are attempting to aid their students by adopting a pedagogy that better serves the needs of their predominantly Black and Brown pupils.

Conclusion

Given the large incarcerated population, institutions of confinement represent an important social institution that affects the lives of young people and has implications for the long-term health of society. The increase in incarceration rates disproportionately affects People of Color. Although there is a vast body of literature evaluating specific correctional education programs, little research focuses primarily on the experiences and pedagogy of instructors who work in this setting. This article helps fill that gap by exploring how teachers in juvenile detention facilities provide education.

The educators I interviewed provided me with an interesting look into teaching in corrections. Initially, I expected correctional instructors to be punitive agents of the detention center. However, the teachers in my study created programs that provided their students with resources. For many of these young men, this was the first time they had access to drama programs, book clubs, and tutoring. They are also teaching their students critical learning skills. This practice is uncommon as no other correctional education study mentions this process. Finally, the educators I spoke with are adopting race conscious pedagogy. First they are doing this by acknowledging the social disparities that contributed to a large amount of incarcerated People of Color. Second, they discuss race and white privilege openly in their classrooms. Finally, they incorporate the cultures of their students during classroom exercises and discussions. Although I believe these educators genuinely care about their students, I am not trying to condone incarceration and I cannot prove that teachers are succeeding in educating their students. I can, however, show that these teachers are adopting a race conscious pedagogy. In my future work, I would like to explore if teachers are adopting a gender conscious pedagogy, one that seeks to understand the interlocking forms of inequality that contributes to the incarceration of poor women and women of color. I believe that the actions of these educators do more than attempt to provide their students with a quality education. These educators are resisting the racial state.

Based on empirical and theoretical work, one would expect educators to help reinforce the marginal position of youth in this setting. However, they are doing the opposite by providing their students with resources and by critiquing the social inequalities openly in their classrooms. They are resisting detention facilities that seek to punish inmates and strip them of their individuality (Goffman 1961; Foucault, 1977). Finally, they are fighting against the goals of compulsory education that has historically provided People of Color with a marginal and inferior education and has sought to make them passive, obedient, and semi-skilled entities (Glenn, 2002; Greer, 1972; Neubeck et al., 2007). These educators are participating in creative resistance by using their classrooms as a space to provide their students with critical resources and a critical consciousness. Thus, the educators I interviewed are participating in creative resistance and are working as agents of change from within an institution that seek to further marginalize People of Color.

This research provides a key point of intervention for future work. First, this area of study would benefit from a larger investigation that explores the teaching approach of instructors across the United States. This would provide academics and practitioners with a better idea of how these teachers' pedagogical approach might work across various regions. It also might help strengthen (or disprove) the findings of this study. More research is also needed in understanding this stage of the school-to-prison pipeline. While researchers have built their understanding of this process, academics still know little about how education works behind bars. Or how education in this setting influences the future educational trajectory of youth who attend school in detention centers. Scholars also know little still about how multiple institutions like home, school, secure detention, and alternative schools like the one in this study might affect the educational and life pathways of students, especially Latin@ students who find themselves increasingly attending school behind bars.

References

- Alexander, M. (2012). *The new Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness*. New York, NY: The New Press.
- Annamma, S. (2013). Undocumented and under surveillance. *Association for Mexican American Educators Journal*, 7(3), 32-41.
- Apple, M.W. (2004). Away with all teachers: The cultural politics of home schooling. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 10, 61-80.
- Ayers, W. (1997). *A kind and just parent: The children of juvenile court*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Barclay, C. (2004). Future employment outlook: A tool measuring the perceived barriers of incarcerated youth. *The Journal of Correctional Education*, 55(2), 133-46.
- Berhan, C. (2007). Context, creativity, and critical reflection: Education in correctional institutions. *The Journal of Correctional Education*, 58, 157-169.
- Bouchard, J., & Kunze, L. (2003). Teaching diverse students in a corrections setting with assistance from the library. *The Journal of Correctional Education*, 54, 66-69.
- Bowles, S., & Gintis, H. (1976). *Schooling in capitalist America: Educational reform and the contradictions of economic life*. New York, NY: Routhledge Press.
- Bracy, N. L. (2010). Circumventing the law: Students' rights in schools with police. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 294-315.
- Bullies, M., Yovanoff, P., & Havel, E. (2004). The importance of getting started right: Further examination of the facility-to-community transition of formerly incarcerated youth. *The Journal of Special Education*, 38(2), 80-4.
- Crawley, E. (2004). *Doing prison work: The public and private lives of prison officers*. Portland, OR: Willian Publishing.
- Collier, V. P. and Thomas, W P. (2001). "Educating linguistically and culturally diverse students in correctional settings." *The Journal of Correctional Education* 52, 68-73.
- Davis, A. Y. (2003). *Are prisons obsolete?*. Toronto, Canada: Seven Stories Press.
- Dance, J. L. (2002). *Tough fronts: The impact of street culture on schooling*. New York, NY: Routledge Falmer Press.
- Dvoskin, J.A., & Spiers, E.M. (2004). On the role of correctional officers in prison mental health. *Psychiatric Quarterly*, 75(1), 41-9.
- Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L.L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Flores, J. (2012). Jail pedagogy: Liberatory education inside a California juvenile detention facility. *The Journal of Education of Students Placed at Risk*, 17, 1-15.
- Flores, J. (2013). "Staff here let you get down": The cultivation and cooptation of violence in a california juvenile detention center. *Signs: The Journal of Women and Culture*, 39(1), 221-241.
- Foley, R. M., & Gao, J. (2004). Correctional education: Characteristics of academic programs serving incarcerated adults. *The Journal of Correctional Education*, 55, 6-21.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline & punish: The birth of the prison* (2nd ed). New York, NY: Vintage Books
- Friedman, A. (2003). Juvenile crime pays—but at what cost? In T. Herivel & P. Wright (Eds.), *Prison nation: The warehousing of America's poor* (pp. 148-153). New York, NY: Taylor & Francis Books, Inc.
- Gehring, T. (2007). The organization of correctional education services. *The Journal of Correctional Education*, 58, 323-36.
- Gilmore, R. W. (2006). *Golden gulag: Prison, surplus, crisis, and opposition in globalization California*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Giroux, H. (2001). *Theory and resistance in education: Towards a pedagogy for the opposition*. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.
- Glenn, E.N. (2002). *Unequal freedom: How race and gender shaped American citizenship and labor*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Goffman, E. (1961). *Asylums: Essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates*. Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing Company.
- Gray, G.C., & Salole, A.T. (2006). The local culture of punishment: An ethnography of criminal justice worker discourse. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 46, 661-79.
- Greer, C. (1972). *The great schools legend*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Hirschman, C., & Lee, J.C. (2005). Race and ethnic inequality in educational attainment in the United States. In M. Rutter & M. Tienda (Eds.), *Ethnicity and Causal Mechanism* (pp. 107-38). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Hirschfield, P. J. (2009). Another way out: The impact of juvenile arrests on high school dropout. *Sociology of Education*, 82(4), 368-393.
- Hochschild, J.L., & Scovronick, N. (2003). *The American dream and the public schools*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Hollingsworth, T. (2006). Highly qualified correctional educator. In R. Wright (Ed.), *In the borderlands: Learning to teach in prisons and alternative settings* (pp. 101-113) California: Correctional Education Association.
- Howard, T.C. (2002). Hearing footsteps in the dark: African American students' descriptions of effective teachers. *Journal of Education for Students at Risk*, 7(4), 425-44.
- Iasevoli, D. (2007). Behind education: How can you "be the book" behind bars?" *English Journal*, 96, 19-23.
- Kim, J. H. & Taylor K. A. (2008). "Rethinking alternative education to break the cycle of educational inequality and inequity." *The Journal of Educational Research*, 101(4), 207-18.
- Kosters, M.H., & Mast, B.D. (2003). *Closing the education achievement gap: Is title I working?* Washington, DC: The AEI Press.
- Kozol, J. (2005). *The shame of the nation: The restoration of apartheid schooling in America*. Michigan: Crown Publishers.
- Kupchik, A. (2009). Things are tough all over: Race, ethnicity, class and school discipline. *Punishment & Society*, 11(3), 291-317.
- Kupchik, A. (2010). *Homeroom security: School discipline in an age of fear*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Lempert, L.B., Bergeron, S., & Linker, M. (2005). Negotiating the politics of space: Teaching women's studies in a woman's prison. *NWSA Journal*, 17, 199-207.
- Loewen, J.W. (1995). *Lies my teacher told me: Everything your American history textbook got wrong*. New York, NY: New Press.
- Mattucci, R. (2006). Personal reflections on Austin MacCormick's 1931 correctional education book: The integration of vocational, academic, and social education. *The Journal of Correctional Education*, 57, 26-41.
- McCarthy, H.J. (2006). Educating felons: Reflections on higher education in prison. *Radical History Review*, 96, 87-94.
- McGrew, K. (2008). *Education's prisoners: Schooling, the political economy and the prison industrial complex*. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund Inc. (2005). *Dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline*. New York, NY: Legal Defense Fund.
- Neubeck, K.J., Neubeck, M.A., & Glasberg, D.S. (2007). *Social problems: A critical approach*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Companies.
- Nuño, L.F. (2013). "Whisper to a scream": The collateral consequences of parental incarceration. *Association for Mexican American Educators Journal*, 7(3), 67-74.
- Oakes, J. (2005). *Keeping track: How schools structure inequality* (2nd ed.). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press
- Pantoja, A. (2013). Reframing the school-to-prison pipeline: The experiences of latin@ youth and families. *Association for Mexican American Educators Journal*, 7(3), 17-31.
- Platt, T. (2006). "The prison fix." *Social Justice*, 33, 203-205.
- Ramchand, R., Morral, A.R., & Becker, K. (2009). Seven-year life outcomes of adolescent offenders in Los Angeles. *American Journal of Public Health*, 99(5), 863-70.
- Reiman, J. (1995). *The rich get richer and the poor get prison: Ideology, crime, and criminal justice* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

- Rios, V., & Galicia, M. (2013). Smoking guns or smoke & mirrors?: Schools and the policing of Latino boys. *Association for Mexican American Educators Journal*, 7 (3), 32-41.
- Roberts, A.R. (1975). *Sourcebook on prison education*. Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas Publisher.
- Rose, M. (1995). *Possible lives: The promise of public education in America*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- Rutherford, A. (1993). *Criminal justice and the pursuit of decency*. Oxford, UK: Oxford Press.
- Sadker, D. & Sadker, M. (2001). Gender bias: From colonial America to today's classrooms. In J.A. Banks & C.A. McGee Banks (Eds). *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives* (pp. 135-63). New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Silberman, C.E. (1970). *Crisis in the classroom*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Shelden, R.G. (2010). *Our punitive society: Race, class and punishment in America*. Longgrove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc.
- Stadler, R.L. (1992). Correctional officer role ambiguity. In The Correctional Association, *The Effective Correctional Officer* (pp. 21-30). Fredericksburg: BookCrafters.
- Thomas, J. (1983). Teaching sociology in unconventional settings: The irony of maximum security prisons. *Teaching Sociology*, 10, 231-50.
- Thomas, D.E., & Stevenson, H. (2009). Gender risks and education: The particular classroom challenges for urban low-income African American boys. *Review of Research in Education*, 33(1), 160-180.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2009). *Child maltreatment, 2009*. U.S. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Valencia, R.R. (1993). The plight of Chicano students: An overview of schooling conditions and outcomes. In R.R. Valencia (Ed.) *Chicano school failure and success: Research and policy agendas for the 1990s* (pp. 3-26). New York, NY: The Falmer Press.
- Wald, J., & Losen, D. (2003). Defining and redirecting a school-to-prison pipeline. *New Directions for Youth Development*, 99, 9-15.
- Western, B. (2007). Mass imprisonment and economic inequality. *Social Research* 74, 509-533.
- Wheelock, A. (1992). *Crossing the tracks: How "untracking" can save America's schools*. New York, NY: The New Press.
- Zabel, R., & Nigro, F. (2007). "Occupational interests and aptitudes of juvenile offenders: influence of special education experience and gender." *The Journal of Correctional Education*, 58, 337-55.
- Zinn, H. (2003). *A people's history of the United States: 1492-2001*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.