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*Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College*

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PRISON TO SCHOOL TO REDEMPTION: A FULL CIRCLE CHANNEL TO THE  
COMPLETE THE 'SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE'

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Human Sciences and Education

by  
Kristen Alana Antoine  
B.S., Louisiana State University, 2003  
Masters of Natural Science, Louisiana State University, 2013  
August 2017

This paper is dedicated to the men and women in the Louisiana penal system who are serving life sentences or are serving excessive sentences due to the present Louisiana laws. Especially those who have chosen rehabilitation and redemption despite the grimness of their circumstances. Please continue to better yourselves and enhance the lives of those around you. There are people who sympathize with your cause, and we will continue to fight for restorative justice and penal reform.

Pastor Hicks, Ronnie, Neal, and Randy continue to be role models for the Angola community.

Your presence is a beacon of light in darkness.

Swann, please continue to be an example of positive societal integration for the returning citizens who get the opportunity to return to society.

*Offenders who have committed crimes of violence in their past are not necessarily currently violent people. Changes come in all shapes and forms, and opportunity for parole eligibility should be afforded to anyone who has served 20+ years in prison no matter the charge.*

## **Acknowledgments**

First and foremost, I'd like to thank God for the attitude, aptitude, and opportunity to write about something meaningful and powerful in my pursuit of higher education. To my parents, Mr. Allen and Dr. Sandra Antoine, you have always encouraged me to carve my own path and be the best person I can be. Thank you for giving me the education background, love and support, as well as the social awareness to make decisions that can evoke change within my community. To my siblings, Tonya and Allen Jr., thank you for your love and support throughout this process. My cousins and friends, Tyra, Teirsen, Stephanie, and Brittany you all were sounding boards and confidants that never let me down. Your love has given me peace on many stormy days. To my prison family, especially Fox Rich and the boys, thank you for your continued encouragement and for setting a positive example for others within the situation of incarceration. I cannot forget my work family in East Baton Rouge Parish Schools who continually encouraged and pushed me when I was tired and ready to stop. You all kept me sane. To Dr. Sulentic Dowell (Dr. D), God could not have blessed me with a better advisor. Our meeting was happenstance, but I believe you were put in my path for a reason. I will be eternally grateful for all of the guidance, discipline, and encouragement you have given me. To my committee members, Dr. Mitchell, Dr. Tobin, Dr. Wheeler, and Dr. Copeland, thank you for agreeing to participate on my committee and challenging me to dig deeper in my thinking and writing. To my Keith, you have given me purpose and taught me how to live, love, grow, and learn. Thank you for all that you are and all that we are together. Finally, I'd like to acknowledge Big Freedia, Master P, No Limit, and other various New Orleans Bounce artists that got me through long days and nights of reading and writing.

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to investigate education and self-efficacy for incarcerated men who have chosen to pursue post-secondary educations despite being in the confinement of the PIC. A narrative inquiry design was used. This is where the story of a real life problem or situation is used to provide sufficient background data in order to analyze and solve a problem. It was important to share the stories of the participants so that readers could understand the overall effects of education and religion in this culture. The study data was collected through participant letters, face-to-face discussion, PASCI survey, artifacts, and researcher's notebook. The process of triangulation, where the sources were verified, validating or disconfirming, was used. The findings in the study revealed six themes: K-12 Education Issues that Contributed to Incarceration and the School-to-Prison Pipeline where the participants repeatedly discussed how their lack of interest in school led their dropouts; Impact of Earning a Degree While Incarcerated on Self-Esteem where the participants overwhelming noted that their presently high sense of self and self-worth was not enhanced by their experience, but their purpose and drive, as well as their need to spread the word of God was enhanced; Background Issues that Contributed to Incarceration where the issues of parental involvement, age and brain development at the age of incarceration, and discipline were repeatedly noted; NOBTS Experience that Led to Growth and Positive Reintegration into Society where personal growth, enhanced religious conviction, teaching, and sharing were discussed by the currently incarcerated men, and the success of reintegration was discussed by the returning citizen; Mechanisms that Led to the Culture Shift within the Prison where the cultural shift was attributed more so to the administrative changes, the new system of privileges and morality, and the individual inmate personal changes within that led to the decrease in violence and calmed environment; and Participant Self-Evaluation of Their Path through the School-to-Prison Pipeline where the participants reported factors that

impacted their experience as youth that contributed to their eventual imprisonment such as poverty, dropping out of school, *street life*, and their K-12 environment.



# **Chapter 1**

## **A Historical and Current Perspective of Mass Incarceration in the United States: Micro and Macro Perspective**

Data from the Louisiana Department of Corrections indicates that currently there are approximately 49,000 prisoners in the United States (U.S.) serving a life sentence without the possibility of parole consideration. Of that number, 4,885, or 10% of these inmate are located in Louisiana (The Sentencing Project, 2016). Louisiana currently has the highest prison population in the world relative to the overall prison population; 13.6% of these individuals are serving a life sentence. Of the 13.6%, 73.8% are Black American men. Louisiana is also one of a handful of states that *only* mandates life without the possibility of parole (LWOPP) as their mandatory life sentence.

Prisons are means to foster penalization, solitude, and dehumanization. This dehumanization can and has bred violence. The Louisiana State Penitentiary, known as Angola, has a status of brutality that extends over a hundred years (Hennis, 2015). World renown recording artists and Louisiana native, Arron Neville, has captured this perception in his song, co-written with his brother, Charles, *Angola Bound*.

If it wasn't for the Captain, oh Lord, I'm shaggin' house  
I'd be with my woman, yeah, before the sun goes down  
You come up here skippin' and 'a jumpin', oh Lord it won't last long  
Gonna wish you was a baby boy, in your mother's arms  
Angola bound, now, Angola bound  
Angola bound, now, Angola bound (Neville & Neville, 1991)

Perceptions of Angola are negative, fear-inspiring, and brutal; it is a name synonymous of hopelessness (Hennis, 2015; Neville & Neville, 1991). In this song, the Neville Brothers elude to the brutal, ungodly conditions awaiting those sentenced to imprisonment in the notorious Louisiana State Penitentiary, especially those given a life sentence. This *hell* was experienced by

Charles Neville himself for a short period, and only his music allowed him to make it through with sanity (Lomax, 2001).

Research suggest that having faith-based programs and institutions within a prison environment has a notable effect on the reduction of prison violence and disciplinary actions. In the case of the Louisiana State Penitentiary, Angola, LA, there was a 74% reduction in prison violence after the establishment of the Leavell College New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in 1995 (Sharkey, 2016). Participants in the Bachelors of Art undergraduate program receive a degree in Christian Ministry which they are able to use to develop and facilitate faith-based discipleship training courses and assist chaplains with various worship and religious obligations. The program increases participant education levels by providing them with a college degree, and prepares them for various employment opportunities if afforded release from the prison (Sharkey, 2016). If these men have given a significant amount of their lives to their sentences (15+ years), and at the same time used that time to truly rehabilitate through school and religion, ultimately increasing their education and faith base, why do we continue to perpetuate LWOPP for all cases of life sentence incarceration? Shouldn't the prison system be about rehabilitation and not just penalization?

### **A Historical Overview of the Growing Prison Industrial Complex**

In this section, the origins of the Prison Industrial Complex are presented. This historical context is important in examining current prison policies and practices, as well as the current disparity in numbers of incarcerated Black American men and women.

#### **Convict Leasing (Post Civil War)**

Post-Civil war reconstruction was beyond what many thought it would be. The Southern economy was in ruins and resources were scarce. The idea of "reintroducing the forced labor of

Blacks as a means of funding government services was viewed by Whites as an inherently practical method of eliminating the cost of building prisons and returning Blacks to their appropriate position in society” (Blackmon, 2008, p. 53). Even though the Thirteenth Amendment to the constitution abolished slavery, the constitution still permitted *involuntary servitude* as punishment for convicts. This in turn meant that “forcing convicts to work as part of punishment was clearly legal” (Blackmon, 2008, p. 53). As a result, “every southern state enacted an array of interlocking laws essentially intended to criminalize Black life” especially after 1877 (Blackmon, 2008, p. 53). For the purposes of this study, the term ‘southern states’ is defined as the states displayed in Table 1 as well as the target state in this study, Louisiana.

Criminalizing Black American life was fairly an easy task in the reconstruction era. Many of the laws created in this era did not specify that they were directly put into place for Black Americans, but they were rarely offenses that could be committed by White Americans. Vagrancy laws were passed in every southern state except for Arkansas and Tennessee. These laws, punishable by prison, vaguely meant that “any freed slave not under the protection of a White man could be arrested for the crime” (Blackmon, 2008, p. 53). In Mississippi, the law required that freed slaves had to enter into labor contract by the first of every year with White American farmers in order to evade arrest, and in some other southern states freed Black American slaves could not legally be hired for work without permission and discharge papers from their previous employer, *their former slave master*. It was also a crime in some places for a Black American man to change jobs without consent. It was clear by these laws that the newly freed Black American slaves were not full citizens and in many instances and contexts, targeted for crimes which would ultimately, by the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment, return them to the same servitude

from which they had been emancipated. The system was set up to criminalize Black American slaves and return them to slavery.

Convict leasing was another profitable venue for the states which allowed it. At this point, the criminalization of Black American life had led to an increase in Black American incarcerated individuals. “Many states in the South and the North attempted to place their prisoners in private hands during the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries” (Blackmon, 2008, p. 54). In this way the states were no longer responsible for the care of the prisoners and responsibility was all left up to the *private wardens* and their discretion. This worked at saving expenses, but ultimately the states did not profit or gain any revenue from the arrangements. Not long after the Civil War, states began leasing and selling their now majority freed slaves – incarcerated individuals to railroad companies, planters, and various mining companies in order to receive a profit and lessening the burden of having to feed, clothe, and house their state prisoners. States like Texas in 1866, would lease out 250 convicts to a railroad and profit \$12.50 a month; and states like Texas would lease out 100 Black American inmates to a railroad company for \$2500 (Blackmon, 2008). Moving forward it was clear that “the combination of trumped-up legal charges and forced labor as punishment created both a desirable business proposition and an incredibly effective tool for intimidating rank-and-file emancipated African Americans” (Blackmon, 2008, p. 55). See table below with examples of state convict leasing records:

Table 1: Sample of convict leasing records post-Civil War (Blackmon, 2008; Carlton, 1967)

State	Year	#Convicts Leased	Company
<b>Texas</b>	1866	250	Railroad
<b>Georgia</b>	1868	100	Georgia/Alabama Railroad
	1868	134 sold	Selma, Rome, and Dalton Railroad
	1868	109	Railroad construction
<b>Alabama</b>	1866	374	Alabama and Chattanooga Railroad Company
<b>Arkansas</b>	1867	Selling rights to prisoners	
<b>Mississippi</b>	1868	241	Planter Edmund Richardson
	1871	241	Planter Nathan Forest
<b>Florida</b>	1869	50	
<b>North Carolina</b>	1872	farming out	
<b>South Carolina</b>	1877	430	Sold
<b>Tennessee</b>	1871	800	Tennessee Coal, Iron, and Railroad Company
<b>Louisiana</b>	1870	Entire LA State Penitentiary at Baton Rouge	S. L. James and Co. 21 year lease voted on by the government for \$25000

Convict leasing continued for several years, post-Civil War, especially in the Southern states.

## Jim Crow Era

Jim Crow way of life was focused around an unyielding set of codes and anti-Black American laws which governed many states – Southern and Northern – within the United States from 1877 to the mid-1960s. In more of an attempt to *criminalize Black American life* these laws prohibited the mingling of Black Americans and White Americans, and made this mingling a criminal offence for anyone attempting to go against it. Many restrictions were placed upon Black Americans that made them susceptible to being labeled as criminals. Black Americans and White Americans were not allowed to use the same public facilities such as restaurants and restrooms, transportation, entertainment spaces, nor public venues. These facilities were supposed to be considered *separate but equal*, but in most cases the Black American facilities were substandard, far below the quality of the White Americans'. For Black Americans to use White American facilities would lead to arrests and jail time, but White Americans were not limited to usage of only their facilities. Mingling of Black Americans and White Americans was prohibited, but Black Americans were usually the recipients of the criminal label. The *redemption* period post-civil war ushered in a time of abandonment of southern Black Americans, where they were no longer under the protection of federal troops and were subject to legislation and laws that terrorist White American organizations put into place to supposedly *redeem* the southern states. "Tens of thousands of African Americans were arbitrarily arrested during this period, many of them hit with cost and fines, which had to be worked off in order to secure their release" (Alexander, 2012, p. 31). Once again this fed into the *convict leasing* pool where "prisoners were sold as forced laborers to lumber camps, brickyards, railroads, farms, plantations, and dozens of corporations throughout the South" (Alexander, 2012, p. 31). Convicts were literally considered *slaves of the state*, and all rights and liberties were relinquished upon conviction.

During the years following the *redemption* era of the south the “convict population grew ten times faster than the general population” (Alexander, 2012, p. 32). The disproportionate amount of Black Americans within the convict population was staggering. Oshinsky explains, “As we were looking at the country’s first prison boom, the ‘prisoners became younger and blacker, and the length of their sentences soared’” (1996, p. 63). The conservative efforts of southern White Americans ushered in more segregation laws which were deliberately set to “encourage lower-class Whites to retain a sense of superiority over Blacks” (Alexander, 2012, p. 34). This kept the upper-class White Americans from contending with the possibility of poor Black Americans and poor White Americans from forming alliances which could topple their caste system which was politically, viably, and economically important for them. Throughout the Jim Crow era, laws were passed in the South that disenfranchised and discriminated against Black Americans in every aspect of daily life. This racial isolation was evident in “schools, churches, housing, jobs, restrooms, hotels, transportation, restaurants, hospitals, orphanages, prisons, funeral homes, morgues, and cemeteries” (Alexander, 2012, p. 35). This oppression of Black American life and perpetuation of laws to criminalize that life or being Black American, continued well into the 1950s. Racist White Americans had successfully put their social class system in order, and any crime that could be associated with Blackness led to jail time. This was the way of life - especially in the Southern states - up until World War II led to the *grassroots* of the Civil Rights movement.

### **The Era of America Tough on Crime**

Although the Jim Crow Era officially died with the completion of the Civil Rights movement, which abolished laws that segregated Black Americans and criminalized Black American life, there was still a need for White American conservatives to “search for a new

racial order that would conform to the needs and constraints of the time” (Alexander, 2012, p. 40). “Barred by law from invoking race explicitly, those committed to racial hierarchy were forced to search for a new means of achieving their goals according to the new rules of American democracy” (Alexander, 2012, p. 40). The proponents of the racial caste system would now stand behind the words *law and order* as opposed to *segregation forever* (Alexander, 2012). The term *law and order* projects a reasonable view of society; the hidden intent was insidious. That intent was to maintain the status quo of enslavement of people of Color. Black Americans were still subject to the same demoralizing conditions of slavery, but now it was masked with the words found in the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment that allowed for the enslavement of people who’ve committed crimes. *Law and order* essentially was a way to continue to criminalize Black American life and railroad Black Americans back into another system of slavery. The *law and order* was essentially *laws* to continue to keep the caste system in *order*.

All efforts to support civil rights and demonstrations associated with the movements were considered by southern conservatives as threats to natural *law and order*. As an example, “Civil rights protests were frequently depicted as criminal rather than political in nature” (Alexander, 2012, p. 41). Ironically during this time, overall crime rates in the nation had spiked. It was not necessarily linked to the Civil Rights Movement, but the media perceived it as such. The media and politicians would label actions of *defiance* in conjunction with the Civil Rights Movement as criminal offenses. Whenever Black Americans participated in sit-ins, protests, boycotts and other forms of social order *defiance*, they were then labeled as disrupting *law and order* thus perpetuating criminal acts against the state. Economic and demographic issues coupled with the large number of baby boomers reaching the typical crime-producing age was largely the blame for the spike, but the media chose to sensationalize crime reports and offer this as further



evidence that there was a breakdown in “lawfulness, morality, and social stability in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement” (Alexander, 2012, p. 41).

*Law and order* became a central theme in political views and agendas of candidates based on an “effort to mobilize the resentment of White working-class voters...threatened by the sudden progress of African Americans” (Alexander, 2012, p. 46). Where political party lines were once drawn based on regions-typically Democratic southerners and Republican northerners - now were being assigned based on the *Southern Strategy*, where “law and order rhetoric among working-class Whites and the intense resentment of racial reforms...led conservative Republican analysts to believe that a new majority could be created by the Republican Party. (Alexander, 2012, p. 44). Not only was there a shift in political party allegiance, there was also a change to the basis of how candidates appealed to their constituents. Overwhelmingly, now Republican candidates leaned toward the use of *coded anti-Black rhetoric*, which peaked the interest of “Southern White Democrats (who) had become angered and alienated by the Democratic Party’s support or civil rights reforms” (Alexander, 2012, p. 45). *Law and order* was the main topic used for presidential debates. Following the 1968 election of President, Richard Nixon, “race had become, yet again, a powerful wedge, breaking up what had been a solid liberal coalition based on economic interests of the poor and the working and lower-middle classes” (Alexander, 2012, p. 47). And “by 1972, attitudes on racial issues rather than socioeconomic status were the primary determinant of voters’ political self-identification” (Alexander, 2012, p. 47).

Promises to get *tough on crime*, an extension of *law and order*, began to emerge during the Ronald Reagan campaign. Once again politicians were using carefully crafted language and concepts, “racialized appeals (to) target (the vote of) poor and working-class Whites” (Alexander, 2012, p. 49). President Reagan and the Justice Department launched a crusade

against *street crime* by cutting the agents assigned to White-collar criminals and shifting attention to it, specifically urban drug-law enforcement. The *War on Drugs* officially began in “October 1982” and “by waging war on drug users and dealers, Reagan made good on his promise to crack down on the racially defined *others* – the undeserving” (Alexander, 2012, p. 49). During the War on Drugs campaign, federal monies were allocated for punitive instead of rehabilitative methods of fighting the drug epidemic. For example, Black American citizens living in the inner-city were the target of this war as “the decline in legitimate employment opportunities increased incentives to sell drugs” (Alexander, 2012, p. 51). The epidemic, which swept the nation in a media frenzy, was *crack cocaine*. “Crack hit the streets in 1985 leading to a spike in violence as the drug market stabilized” (Alexander, 2012, p. 51). Instead of responding to the epidemic with “treatment, prevention, and education” initiatives the U.S. government responded with antidrug legislation which was “extraordinarily punitive, this time extending far beyond traditional criminal punishments and including new *civil penalties* for drug offenders” (Alexander, 2012, p. 53). The criminal punishments included in the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1998:

authorized public housing authorities to evict any tenant who allows any form of drug-related criminal activity to occur on or near public housing premises and eliminated many federal benefits, including student loans, for anyone convicted of a drug offense. The act also expanded use of the death penalty for serious drug-related offenses and imposed new mandatory minimums for drug offenses, including a five-year mandatory minimum for simple possession of cocaine base — with no evidence of intent to sell. Remarkably, the penalty would apply to first-time offenders (Alexander, 2012, pp. 53-54).

The War on Drugs continued into the next presidency of George W. Bush, Sr. and was concealed in race-neutral language that allowed White Americans who were opposed to racial reform a platform to express their resentment toward Black American progress without being labeled as racists.

Though the media and political agendas overpublicized public concern over crime and drugs, there was little to no correlation with the actual crime rates. This politically created frenzy of a need for anti-crime toughness geared toward communities of Color would now give way to the “new racial caste system- mass incarceration” (Alexander, 2012, p. 55). Prison and jail populations exploded, and the “number of people behind bars in the United States was unprecedented in world history, and one fourth of young African American men were now under the control of the criminal justice system” (Alexander, 2012, p. 56). Republicans were no longer the authority on tough on crime issues, whereas both political parties used it as an avenue to obtain popular votes. Democrat President, Bill Clinton, “endorsed the idea of the *three strikes and you’re out* law” which issued a life sentence to those convicted a third time offense (Alexander, 2012, p. 56). He created “dozens of new federal capital crimes, mandated life sentences for some three-time offenders, and authorized more than \$16 billion for state prison grants and expansion of state and local police forces” (Alexander, 2012, p. 56). During his two terms in office during the 1990s, President Clinton created a plethora of laws and mandates that led to the largest increase in in federal and state prison population than under any other presidency. During Clinton’s tenure the federal government cut funding for public housing by 61% and increased funding for corrections 171%. This created more housing for urban poor within the jails than within the standard housing project (Alexander, 2012).

Thus, increases in incarceration can be directly linked to political aspirations and resultant catch phrases over the last several decades in the U.S.. Figure 1 outlines increases.

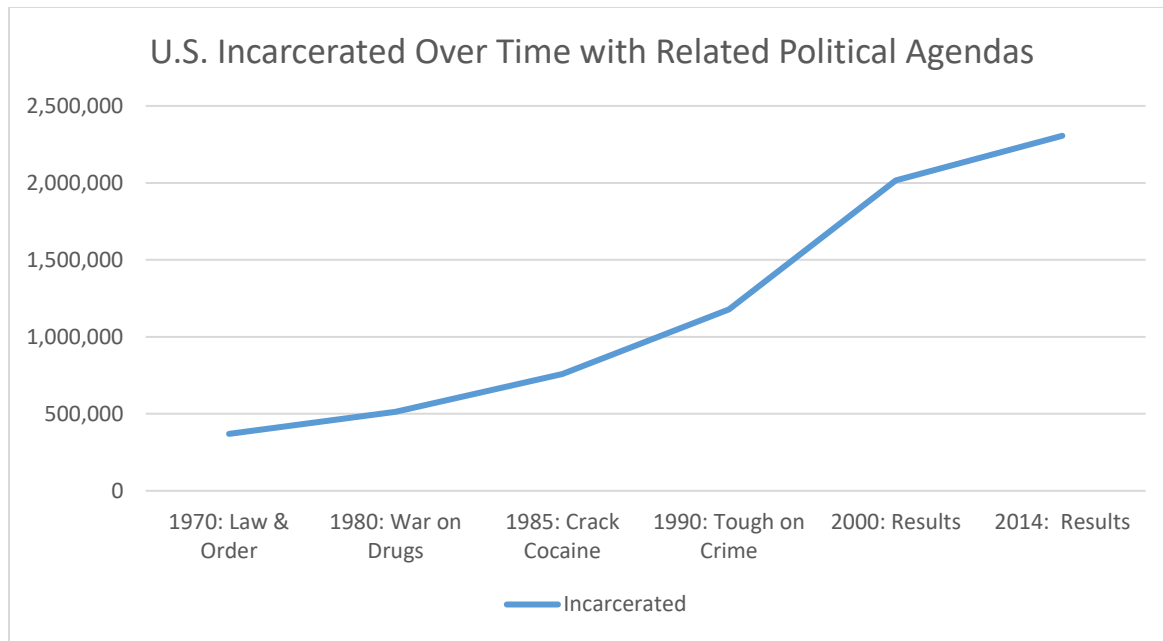


Figure 1: U.S. Incarceration Rates over Time with Related Political Agendas (DuVernay, 2016)

### Current Prison Industrial Complex (PIC)

The term Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) is used to describe the overlapping interests of government and industry that use surveillance, policing, and imprisonment as solutions to what are, in actuality, economic, social, and political problems (Herzing, 2005). As discussed in her 2005 *What is the Prison Industrial Complex* article, Herzing highlights the ever-growing issue of mass incarceration and the industrialization of the prison system which has led to the use of this term as opposed to the term Criminal Justice. In her article, she dissects the issue from various angles as she looks at criminalization, media, surveillance, policing, courts, and the prison system.

For the purposes of this research, I focus mainly on the courts and the prison system complex. The emphasis of this research is on education and self-efficacy for incarcerated men who have chosen to pursue post-secondary educations despite being in the confinement of the PIC. Within the PIC the court system is “shaped by structural inequalities, so it follows that the

courts target people of Color and poor people” (Herzing, 2005, p. 5). These people are typically the ones who cannot afford proper legal representation and therefore are forced to wrangle with overburdened public defenders who are unable to give their cases the type of extensive support and counsel that they may need. This in turn, leads to being charged with and also convicted of crimes for which they may have otherwise been able to receive a lesser charge and lesser jail time (or avoid jail time all together), hence, flooding our jail system with people of Color and people who are in impoverish situations. As a personal, current example, I have recently witnessed in the news a case of a man who murdered a pastor in Calcasieu, Louisiana by shooting him during a church revival. With an experienced attorney and finances, the man was able to get the grand jury to reduce the charge from second degree murder, which holds a mandatory life sentence in Louisiana, to manslaughter, which only carries a sentence of 40 years of jail time with parole eligibility. “State law defines manslaughter as a homicide without any intent to cause death or as a homicide committed in the heat of the moment when a person was provoked beyond the point of self-control.” (KPCLTV.com, 2013). In this case, who can truly judge whether or not there was intent to cause death and whether or not the provocation was beyond the point of self-control? The court system is in complete control as to whether a person is charged with first or second degree murder for life, versus a manslaughter charge which gives them an opportunity to redeem themselves and actually have a chance to be rehabilitated and reintroduced to society after they have paid a hefty price for taking a life. In another instance Seth Fontenot of Lafayette Louisiana, an 18 year old White American male, was found guilty of manslaughter in the 2013 shooting death of a 15 year old White American teen, Austin Rivault. Fontenot was originally charged with first degree murder because of the circumstances of the crime. Subsequently, an investigation revealed that Fontenot’s vehicle had been previously

burglarized and that he had sat in wait for the culprit to come back. There were numerous text messages where Fontenot stated that he was going to *kill* the assailant; and when the opportunity presented itself, he not only chased them down, but also fired his weapon into their vehicle killing the 15 year old boy, taking the law into his hands versus contacting law enforcement. All of these things pointed to the fact that by definition, this was premeditated murder which constitutes a first degree offense punishable with a life sentence in Louisiana. Surprisingly even with all of these facts in play, due to representation and undoubtedly the presence of *White American male privilege* - defined as “entitlement, sanction, power, and advantage or right granted to a person or group solely by birthright membership in a prescribed group or groups” (Black & Stone, 2005, p. 245), Fontenot received thirteen month sentence for manslaughter and aggravated battery instead of the original charge of first degree murder and attempted first degree murder. Part of his defense was that his 18 year old brain was not fully mature enough to know the gravity of what he was doing, yet in this state we have countless juvenile offenders (charged at 17 years old or younger) currently illegally serving natural life sentences for various crimes in Louisiana. This story is yet another example of how the legal system is set up to make allowances when certain people deem it necessary. In Louisiana, there are currently more than 4,000 individuals serving life sentences without the possibility of parole (LWOPP). The majority of these people are serving this sentence because of a first or second degree murder conviction, defined by the Louisiana law as “when the offender has a specific intent to kill or to inflict great bodily harm” – again – my perspective – I feel as though the charging and conviction for these crimes can be totally subjective on a case by case basis. As stated by Herzing,

the rich have crucial advantages when it comes to the court system. Those who can afford to hire their own attorneys are less likely to be imprisoned. They can afford bail, which

allows them to leave jail and conduct their own investigations and better prepare for trial. They can afford better attorneys, better expert witnesses, better private detectives, and more *respectable* alibis. Those who cannot afford bail and come straight to court from jail are more likely to be imprisoned. Additionally, poor people are not only found guilty more often than people who are not poor, they are also recommended for suspended sentences and probation less frequently than people with more money (Herzing, 2005, p. 5).

All leading back to the notion that court system is deeply engrossed in the PIC and that imminent jailing and slavery is overwhelmingly disproportionate to the disadvantaged and underprivileged in our society.

The Prison System itself is the epitome of the PIC. The dehumanizing effect of the prison structure lends to the lowering of self-efficacy and lack of socialization within the walls of the institution. This in itself aids in the fortifying of the infrastructure of the PIC. When humans are isolated from one another and from societal norms this can lead to system dependency and lack of self-worth. In turn, this system can be continually perpetuated within the eyesight of normal society without being looked upon as the modern day slavery that it is. The use of prison labor has caused an increase in American business. Paleaz illustrates this, stating, “At least 37 states have legalized the contracting of prison labor by private corporations that mount their operations inside state prisons” (2014, p. 2). Using prison labor at lower cost to companies has motivated the court systems to place longer sentences on many crimes, thus sustaining and increasing their workforce. The private prison industry has also boomed over the last 10 years going from five institutions to over 100 across the nation. In private prisons, the company receives a set amount of money per prisoner which is not correlated to the daily maintenance of the individuals (Paleaz, 2014). The warehousing of human beings has had a prolific effect on the economy and “the private contracting of prisoners for work fosters incentives to lock people up. Prisons depend on this income. Corporate stockholders, corporations, and other entities who

make money off prisoners' work, lobby for longer sentences, in order to expand their workforce” (Paleaz, 2014, p. 1). Thus, just as convict leasing post-Civil War was a profitable and resourceful means of harnessing human labor, the PIC extends and expands this view of accessing cheap human capital.

### **Families Pay the Price**

While stakeholders continue to accumulate wealth from the use and everyday life of the disenfranchised incarcerated individual, the families of these individuals ultimately pay the large price tag that is associated with incarceration. People often think about prison life and how one could essentially want for nothing as they are provided state-issued shelter, food, and some basic clothing; but this is only the case if prison is meant to be totally about penalization, solitude, and dehumanization. Many incarcerated individuals have lost loved ones and friends based on the financial demands that the PIC places on families to maintain communication, palatable food, adequate clothing, medical care, and basic needs – like soap and deodorant – that make everyday life *livable*. Incarcerated individuals in Louisiana make an average of \$3.20 a week based on their job and whether they work a 40 hour week or not. The maximum state wage is a whopping \$.08 an hour for typical work at LSP at Angola. As full time students, the men who agreed to participate in this study did make this *top dollar* wage, and once graduated were able to take on jobs within the prison that hopefully allotted them the same. Some men are able to get extra work for a small amount more, or they get jobs within specific programs that can allow them to make a few extra dollars from grants provided, but most must support themselves and their families with the \$3.20 they make weekly. Needless to say, the true cost of the PIC falls on the loved ones of the incarcerated. Listed below are typical expenses for the families of incarcerated men at LSP Angola without the \$3.20/weekly salary of their loved one:



Table 2: Average cost for amenities for prison families at LSP

Item	Incarcerated Family Cost Within Prison	Free Person Cost Outside Prison
<b>Phone Calls</b>	\$3.20/15min	Free
<b>Emails</b>	\$.25/email	Free
<b>Medical Care (Call Out)</b>	\$6 appointment \$12 emergency	Insurance
<b>Average Meal at Visit</b>	\$10-\$12per visitor and inmate	\$5-\$7 per person
<b>Visit Pictures</b>	\$3 (4X6)	Free
<p><b>This table does not include the weekly expenses of toiletries, food, and clothing that incarcerated men must buy within the prison at inflated costs.</b></p>		

With these non-tax deductible expenses looming over loved ones, it is difficult for incarcerated persons to maintain continual contact with their families. It is also difficult for families to assist their loved ones with purchasing commissary items because most of the items are more expensive than they would be in the stores (See Appendix A for Union Supply quarterly *care package* cost.). It is evident that the incarcerated individuals would not be able to afford these things on their own, so ultimately, the burden falls back on the families.

### **So Why Aren't People in Outrage**

The state of the PIC in the United States has set the stage for much of the way we operate as a nation of commerce. Just as in the case of the ending of slavery, the U.S. economy would suffer a great disparity from the breakdown of the PIC. Prison is big money. "The market trend

toward increased outsourcing and privatization results in growing businesses for numerous industries at the expense of our communities” (Political Research Associates, 2005, p. 1). Most people in those communities are unaware of the financial gain that businesses and commerce are making from the PIC. The people in these communities are faced with the cycle of poverty and incarceration on a daily basis. It is a way of life for them. People who are not directly involved with the PIC or have a loved one who is incarcerated for the most part do not know that this issue exists.

Using myself and my lens of experience as an example, as a middle class educator, I was completely unaware of the issues associated with mass incarceration. I surmise that had I just been told about it and not affected by it because of my ties to my loved one, I wouldn’t have given it a second thought. The way the PIC is set up it is “structural not superficial” (Shah, Aziz, & Chamberlain, 2005, p. 1); therefore, it is woven into the way our society operates and is kept hidden in plain sight.

Since the first colonists set foot on the shores of what is now called the United States of America, the political, economic, and social structures of U.S. society, including the U.S. State, have been based on systems of oppression that enable one group of people to enjoy privilege and to hold and exercise power over others; and these systems have been ideologically justified (Shah, Aziz, & Chamberlain, 2005, p. 1).

These interwoven hidden systems of oppression have permeated the history of U.S. society from its inception and have been the driving force for our societal norms. In some instances there have been social justice advocates who have attempted to expose and combat the existing state of affairs, but most of these efforts are met with “political and social forces calling for retaining the status quo, which privileges the wealthy, Whites, heterosexuals, and men; and that supports an imperialistic and militaristic international agenda while opposing social and economic equality

and justice within the United States” (Shah, Aziz, & Chamberlain, 2005, p. 1). Hence, the issue remains unaddressed and out of accepted public discourse.

### **Personal Experience with Louisiana State Penitentiary Angola**

In this next section, I present my personal experience with Angola, Louisiana’s State penitentiary. Providing a context for my journey and what I have come to know as my truth through lived experience offers a unique perspective.

#### **Before Angola**

Coming from a Black American middle class family in southwest Louisiana, I inherited the value and cultural capital of education as a mode of personal growth. My parents are both educated individuals who worked within the public school system. My father received a trade in auto mechanics and worked for Shell Oil Company until I was about nine years old when he became a school bus driver; my mother attended post-secondary universities all of my young life, ultimately receiving a doctoral degree in education. She was a secondary school teacher and retired as a high school administrator. My two siblings are also educated individuals. My older sister has a master’s degree in computer information systems, and my younger brother – also an educator – has a master’s degree in educational leadership and currently works for Rice University. At the writing of this dissertation study, I am currently pursuing my PhD at Louisiana State University (LSU), and previously received my bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, and educational specialist degree at LSU as well. I have successfully worked in education for over 13 years, ten of which I was a classroom high school science teacher. I have served as a district science instructional specialist for the last 3 years. Hence, education has been a major part of my life experiences.

Growing up I never had any association with the penal system. Yes, of course, in high school I knew the *round the way* thugs who were habitual offenders; but most of them were in and out of jail or on small time probation and just *friends* through association. They were not in my circle of friends. Never did I fathom visiting anyone in jail or writing a letter to an inmate. I had no reason to cross the barrier from my middle-class suburban lifestyle into the subculture of prison life and prison families. All of my collegiate and young adult friends and associates were college-educated, gainfully employed, and for the most part, not involved in criminal lifestyles that might result in any prison stay. I surrounded myself with people *like me* and didn't consider the world outside of my sphere of experience.

In 2007 while teaching at a high school in New Iberia, a colleague and I decided to take the high school's Black American Culture class on a school field trip to the Louisiana State Penitentiary (LSP). While there we toured the facility from our bus and were allowed a small glimpse into the daily on goings of prison life. I found the experience and the small look into the lives of these men intriguing. Actually, I was simultaneously intrigued and appalled by the experience. Seeing all of these Black American men of various ages and backgrounds in a seemingly *enslaved* situation struck a nerve with me. I was appalled and recall thinking, "*How could all of these people be serving a life sentence and have no hope for redemption or re-entry into society? And, What kind of life can a person live, no matter what the cause of their incarceration, which could be purposeful without hope?*" During the tour, we were given an opportunity to meet one of the inmates and have a motivational talk as well as a question and answer session for the kids. The older gentleman that came to speak to us was about 55 years old and was serving a life sentence for a knife fight that resulted in a death at a night club when he was 19 years of age. He had been in prison for more than 25 years of his life and was

obviously no threat to anyone being that he was often chosen to speak to visiting students. He recounted his crime and expressed his extreme remorse for what he had done. All I can remember thinking is that this man had missed out on all of the milestones a person would have that makes life worth living, and that no crime (including murder) should incur such an inhumane amount of servitude. I was moved by his story and felt compelled to be an advocate for prison reformation, but at the time I was neither in the right place educationally nor socially where I felt that I could truly make a difference. I also didn't have a personal connection to anyone who was an inmate or a victim that could strengthen my drive to advocate for rehabilitation of incarcerated individuals and to attempt to put an end to the warehousing of individuals. I just didn't know enough, and didn't have experience or firsthand accounts to act upon. All I had was my opinion and a gut feeling as a Catholic woman that there had to be a better way to receive justice for all involved parties in criminal situations.

Eventually, I let go of the deep feelings I had and proceeded forward with my middle class lifestyle. I had fleeting thoughts about my experience on the LSP tour, never forgetting the experience, but didn't act on my thoughts and feelings. Anytime the issue would come up, I'd always say I didn't agree with people serving life sentences without some sort of opportunity for parole, and I often referenced my experience with LSP as visiting a *modern day plantation*.

### **Welcome to the Prison Rodeo**

On October 11, 2015, for my 36<sup>th</sup> birthday I decided I wanted to attend the Louisiana State Penitentiary Angola Rodeo for the first time. The Angola Prison Rodeo is a professionally produced rodeo put on by inmates and trained rodeo professionals. It is held yearly on every Sunday during the month of October. Hobby crafts are sold by inmates during this "all-day full-

blown arts and crafts festival, complete with entertainment and food galore” (Louisiana State Penitentiary, 2016). I was determined to see what it was about and find myself a really nice LSU rocking chair for a good, cheap price. I had heard so many things about the Prison Rodeo from others who had been, that I was curious about the event overall and the hobby crafts that they had to sell. I met up with my family and friends that morning and drove out to St. Francisville for the rodeo, where we immediately went in and found our seats for the 2 PM show. I was shocked, sickened, and stunned by the show because it had so many racial overtones. It seemed to me as if the inmates were on a spectacle display reminiscent of the spectacle of slaves made by slave owners (not to mention, most of the inmates were Black American men). It also reminded me of the Black American minstrel shows where Black American lifestyles were exaggerated for entertainment.

Despite my disgust, after the show, my family and I split up into pairs to go do our hobby craft shopping. Even though the rodeo experience was so off-putting, I retained my original anticipation for this visit. I had been excited all day about getting a rocking chair and a belt with my name on it. This was my mission for the trip. Putting aside my revulsion of the rodeo itself, I continued my mission. While perusing the area for nice crafts I got a call from my cousin. She was calling me over to the pavilion where there were a plethora of chairs that I hadn’t seen and to show me some of the things she and our other cousin had purchased. I went over to that side of the rodeo grounds to check it out (my heart still set on finding my LSU chair).

Reaching the pavilion, I spotted the chair that I wanted but couldn’t locate the inmate who was selling it. After waiting around for a few minutes, here appears an attractive and articulate man who wanted to give me a birthday bargain. As we were negotiating the price of the chair, I shocked myself as I couldn’t help but to feel a slight attraction and what I thought of

as chemistry between us. But due to the circumstances – he incarcerated – me free – I knew that it wasn't feasible for me to even entertain the thought of anything more than buying that chair.

Once we had decided on a price, I walked away to go and pay for my item. The chance encounter stayed with me. Even now I cannot rationally explain what I was thinking and feeling, but I can best describe it as I felt a yearning to know more about this person. When I returned to him with my receipt, I boldly asked him his name, and we dialogued a little bit more. He seemed so normal and so nice, but again I knew better, or so I told myself. So again, I walked away.

But as I walked to the car, I vacillated, fixated on this chance encounter; all I could do is discuss with my friend how much I was interested in knowing his story. I spoke candidly to her and expressed the “what ifs” to her, and recall thinking “maybe he doesn't have long left,” “he's so attractive, maybe I can work with him and get him out,” “he can't be that bad if they allow him to mingle with the public” and “everyone in Angola can't be bad people?”. My girlfriend and I laughed at possibilities I proposed, but I ultimately rationalized it was a *next lifetime* situation. After driving to the front of the rodeo to pick up my chair and my other passengers, I was determined to let this all go and return home – mission accomplished. My cousin approached me with a slip of paper. To my surprise, this slip of paper contained the *inmate's* name, department of corrections number, address, and email information.

All the way home my mind was reeling. I was scared, but I wanted to know more. I struggled for a week with my conflicted feelings. *What does this mean? Should I contact him? I don't know this man. But I want to know his story. He was so articulate. He seems intelligent and talented. Am I going to reach out? What will I say? How do I come at him? Why am I thinking about this? Am I crazy? Why am I so intrigued? What will people think?* After days of contemplating, I decided to sit down and write a letter with just some simple questions to ease

my curiosity - *so I thought*. I put the letter (Appendix B) in the mail on the next Sunday and hoped it would find its way to Keith.

Two weeks later I fatefully decided to return to the rodeo for its final week. I wasn't exactly sure why I was returning. *To end my curiosity? To pursue my conflicted thoughts and feelings?* While there I walked over to the pavilion where I had previously met Keith, but entered on the other side. To my surprise, I ran into Keith immediately but not in the place that I had secretly anticipated seeing him. I was excited that he had crossed my path without me having to go looking for him. He recognized me immediately, we stopped to chat for a moment, and he asked me if I had gotten his letter. I hadn't, so I promised him I'd check the mail when I returned home. We chatted off and on throughout the day while I was there, and I gave him my phone number to call me later. I didn't think it could hurt anything just to talk. Later that evening I went to my mail box and found his letter (Appendix B). What I learned amazed and fascinated me. And I knew I was walking through a door that would change me forever.

This man was a 40 year old inmate, who committed the crime of murder at 19 years old – only one year older than Seth Fontenot. He admitted to selfishly taking a life while surrendering his own. In the letter, he meticulously answered all of my questions. He let me know about his roles in the prison environment as a Bible college student working on a bachelor's degree, a softball coach, a boxing trainer, and the cofounder of the Malachi Dad's program for prison fathers which has been spread throughout 22 prisons in the U.S. I was completely blown away! My thinking was, *This man is serving a life sentence in a totally bleak situation, yet he still moves forward to do good things for others and work toward some sort of redemption*. He actually was doing more *inside* the prison than many of the men I knew outside of the prison.



There were so many things that I wanted to know about him and the prison culture. I rationalized this was my shot at revisiting the advocacy I had felt eight years previously during my first Louisiana State Penitentiary tour visit. I was excited yet very apprehensive about getting to know him further. Caught between thinking this was a dead-end, he was a *lifer* and my obviously piqued interest, I felt compelled to know more about this person. I opened my heart and my mind to exploring his world. I took a leap of faith.

### **My Introduction to the Prison Culture**

Given my seemingly privileged upbringing and selected way of life, it was hard for me to actually consider a lifestyle connected to the penal system. It was a strange time for me. I wanted to know more and allow myself to be open, but I also knew I'd be met with disapproval. I was conflicted by my thoughts, my feelings, and how others would perceive me, especially my family.

**The Visiting Shed.** After numerous phone calls and emails, I finally got approval to go up to the prison for my first visit with Keith J. Morse, inmate #3\*\*\*\*6. Nervous is not even the word to describe how I felt as I prepared for that first visit (not to mention only two people knew that I was going, so it was this BIG secret). I remember wanting to be attractive, but not too attractive; cognizant that I was within dress code, as to not get denied entry; and anxious that I knew all of the printed rules and what to expect as I entered the gates of a maximum security facility. I didn't know what to expect of my feelings; I swear I was on pins and needles for a week. None-the-less I made the hour and a half trek to LSP early one Sunday morning in November of 2015.

Walking into the check point I was greeted by a drug dog sniff down; an identity check; a shoeless body pat down; metal detectors; and a 20 min wait for a bus to the interior of the prison.

Once arriving at the *visiting shed* we were led off the bus to iron bars and gates. Inside one set of gates we were locked in and waited for the next set of gates to be unlocked so that we could completely enter the facility. My heart was beating fast; and I was excited and scared – not knowing what to expect. Upon entry, Keith met me and escorted me to a table over near the children's corner. Although I was vague about my expectations and where this would end up, I was surprised that we spent the day talking, laughing, eating, and enjoying each other's presence in what felt like a somewhat typical first meeting. After that day we spent time together weekly; and through emails, phone, and visits I got to know the *heart of a man*. We would spend our time together reading; writing; going to church at Methodist Men's, Full Gospel, and Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church on the grounds of Angola, and coming to know each other's thoughts.

**Chapel Visits.** Most people don't realize that among the many subcultures within a prison's walls there is a subculture within the prison system which allows for praise and worship for inmates with the people that they love. Every Sunday, Keith would get us a special signed chapel visit which allowed me to go within the actual prison grounds to attend church with him. There are three chapels within the main prison, the main chapel which hosts various denominational services, the smaller chapel which also hosts smaller congregations of various denominations, and Our Lady of Guadalupe, the newly-built Catholic chapel. Each one of these chapels are frequented throughout the week by the inmates that belong to the different congregations. I was amazed by the normal functionality of the various church services as it relates to their particular denominations. I was privileged to attend Full Gospel services, Men's Methodist services, as well as frequent my own faith congregation at the Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church – where I was accepted with open arms and deemed an honorary member.

Being able to share in these intimate ministries and experiencing religion in a place that most others have not or would not be able to infiltrate was an honor for me. Most people don't think about LSP and have their thoughts jump to God, faith, hope, ministry, and love; but after experiencing the ministry of the *transfigured* prison life of Angola, I do. With the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS) mission statement being fulfilled – “to win unbelievers to Jesus and to equip believers to fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandments through the local church and its ministry” – the religious focus of LSP is met by the established offender churches within the institution (Sharkey, 2016).

**My Prison Family.** Within the prison walls – within the church walls – I not only found a deeper understanding of my faith, but I also found a family of people who stood by their faith and used that faith to persevere within the institution of their captivity. During many of my weekly visits I came to know a number of men who, through the ministry of the prison and the guidance of the NOBTS program, had found a meaningful way to survive and thrive as model inmates, as well as function as family men to their children and loved ones. Every week I sat down and visited with wives, mothers, fathers, children, and a host of other family members who are positively impacted by the men they visit, love, and for whom they care. We are inspired by the words we receive from our inmate family, what I came to see as my extended family, and we depend on each other for encouragement and strength as we coexist in this modern day slavery.

I've watched as fathers teach their sons how to play chess and sit and color with their daughters; I've seen husbands and wives quietly read the Bible together in the morning. I've watched men pray over their loved ones as they prepare to share in a simple corn dog lunch, which to them is like having a four course meal with the president. I've watched men with vast

intelligence compassionately give wisdom to their teenage children, and men with some education pass that on to their wives who may be in pursuit of her own education.

Most people don't believe me, but walking into the visiting shed at LSP for me is just like walking into any other facility in the outside world. There are people from all walks of life. I've met people who are impoverished, and those who are wealthy with good jobs. I've interacted with people who are just as educated as me, and those who never completed high school. People automatically assume that because you are visiting a prison that all of the people are uneducated, illiterate, and ignorant; but this is not the case. Yes, of course, there are going to always be those type of people in any situation; but just like walking through Walmart, a person can interact with people from a vast number of circumstances. For instance, when you think of a prison wife with five children what comes to mind? *An uneducated Black American woman struggling to make ends meet with five children who can barely read and are prone to getting in trouble?* Well, one of my prison family wives is a Black American woman with a master's degree who has four sons in college – one in dental school – and a youngest in a performing arts micro school in New Orleans. They own and run a lucrative car dealership, all the while her husband has been incarcerated for close to 20 years. My prison family is diverse, intimate, and connected; and led by spirituality, hope, faith, and perseverance.

As I came to know Keith over the course of the first three months, I learned about his life inside prison walls. The more I learned, the less I cared personally about where he was. Although I was still conflicted about the situation, I knew I wanted to share as much of my life as I could and understand as much of his life as possible. The intimacy found in conversations and time spent made it feel as if I had known him for a lifetime. I no longer saw him as a stranger and the emotional, spiritual, and mental aspects of this relationship far outweighed the physical

separation we were forced to endure. Interest deepened to genuine care and concern. Care and concern became what I describe as love. In a sense, I believed I had found my soulmate.

**Are You Desperate?.** One thing I've learned about this experience is that calling up your relatives and friends to tell them that you are involved with and in love with an inmate is NOT the best way to introduce the situation. I was not sure how to do this at all because I expected disapproval, and disagreement, and disbelief. I do believe that it is important to *own* your situation and be open and forth coming, but the bluntness of the reveal can sometimes cause others to panic or overreact. As I stated before, I come from a background that did not include any type of blurred lines between myself and anyone within the penal system. So to say it was a shock to my family members and friends would be a serious understatement. For the handful of people who were *in the know* or told me to take the *leap of faith*, I received phenomenal support and encouragement; but as I began to share my feelings for this man outside of my immediate circle there were mixed reviews and discombobulation.

The first immediate family member that I shared with was my sister. I think that because of my normal tendencies to go against the grain it wasn't a shock to her, but I also think that she did not take it very seriously either. She asked many questions about how I would handle various situations that could definitely come along, and we discussed my relationship needs. After an hour long phone call she gave me her support, but not necessarily her blessings. It was one of those *if you like it; I love it* type situations. She did offer to be the conduit between me and my parents and continue to be a support base as I needed. She also gave me warning to *put on my thick skin* because there would be many people who oppose to my choice of partner and I should be prepared for derogatory opinions and comments.

Next, I had to tell Dr. Sandra Antoine! Telling my mother was something I said I was going to wait a year to do, but for some reason I felt that I needed to do it way sooner than I planned. In the month of January, 2016, I wrote her a letter (Appendix B), and sent a very well-crafted email in regards to my relationship with Keith. About two weeks later I got my first response from my mother in regards to my letter. Basically, she wanted me to know that she had received it, and that she had gone into her *prayer closet* in regards to the situation. Well, she must have enjoyed that closet time, because she didn't come out to discuss my situation until the summer.

Six months later, in the month of June, 2016 my mother asked me to join her for lunch in order to discuss *my friend*, Keith and my intentions as it related to him. During the lunch date she asked me what was going to be my future as it related to a relationship with an incarcerated man, and was not pleased when I told her that I was planning to marry Keith in 2017. We ended the conversation with her saying, "I don't agree with your decision, but please just keep me in the loop as it pertains to your intentions." I took that as, "Kristen, don't run off and get married without telling me first."

As for my father and my brother, they both found out at the same time. During the Easter holiday I had decided not to go with my family to Dallas, TX; and opted to stay in order to attend mass with Keith at Angola. I'm not quite sure how it happened, but I believe that my brother asked my mother and sister why I had stayed behind, and they revealed to him that I had gone to visit a man at Angola. Then he passed that information on to my father who was oblivious to what was going on and took it as an insult that we had been supposedly *hiding something* from him. My mother called me and informed me that I needed to call my father and tell him about my *friend* because he was asking questions. So I did. When I called him I started off with an

apology for not telling him sooner as well as possibly disappointing him with my actions. He seemed to be more disappointed in the fact that I hadn't told him and that he was the last to know, even though he did ask me if I was desperate. The conversation ended with him saying, "Kristen, I don't agree with your choice, but I've always told you it's your life. You are going to do what you want to anyway, so do as you wish. I just don't understand how you always get caught up with *bad people*."

About a week later I called my brother, and he didn't want to hear anything about it. He said that it wasn't his concern because he had no intentions on having a relationship with a dude in jail for murder, and that *of course I am a prize to him* because he probably doesn't have anyone else. His final statement was, "I don't want you to end up doing time with him." With all that being said, I think it's safe to say that *family support* is not something I have genuinely received. I would consider it *family tolerance*. I believe that eventually my family members will have to come around to accepting my decision, but for now they tolerate my involvement with Keith. We have a long way to go as it relates to their support.

### **Six Months Later**

By April of 2016, my immersion into the prison culture had been beyond the limits of the surface level. I was no longer an observer, but now a part of the tapestry of the inner-workings of the culture. My relationship with Keith had surpassed my wildest imagination, and my interest and compassion for the men in which I interacted with on a regular basis had increased tenfold.

At this point, my plan was to conduct my PhD research on educational pedagogy as an attempt to try and make it *easy* on myself to do a quantitative study that I was familiar with; but I don't think my heart was truly into classroom pedagogy anymore. I had shifted profoundly in

my thinking, my world view, and my feelings and was in such a different place than six months prior. I knew that my heart was completely engulfed in the life that I had established with Keith and within the walls of the LSP institution. I truly had a passion for knowledge and knowing more about the experiences of those in the NOBTS program, as well as being able to advocate for the rights of rehabilitated individuals, whom I could see with my own eyes as changed men deserving of a second chance. So, I decided to ask Keith how he felt about me changing my PhD research focus to study his/our world as it related to higher education and religion. I did not want him to feel as if I was looking at him as a test subject, but only taking a chance to look at the great story we had begun to create and to document the marvelous things which most people are unaware of that are transpiring behind the prison walls. He graciously and honorably agreed, and there we were; in a personal loving relationship, while I researched and prepared to document certain aspects of our experience and advocate for changes to the current Louisiana criminal justice system.

### **One Year and Beyond**

As of summer 2016, the relationship between Keith and I had grown from a friendship, to a love interest, to an engagement for marriage. Taking a leap of faith has led to fulfillment beyond my wildest dreams. As I have worked on my dissertation he has completed his undergraduate studies, and in December of 2016 he received his Bachelor's Degree in Christian Ministry from NOBTS. We also co-labored in writing and editing his book, *Finding Higher Ground: A Spiritual Guide for Incarcerated Men*, which was copyrighted in January 2017 and was used for a six-week course leading up to the Higher Ground Ministry retreat within the prison. This annual prison ministry retreat is put on by Willow Creek Church in Chicago, IL and was hosted this year by special guest, Darryl Strawberry; along with a congregation of other



professional athletes interested in ministering and encouraging men at the prison. In this time since first meeting Keith, I have become an advocate for prison reform and have become an expert of sorts at the U.S. penal system especially as it pertains to Louisiana and its law making process. My thoughts and views have shifted profoundly. As an educator, my notions have expanded to understanding the School-to-Prison Pipeline as first explained to me in graduate coursework (Fasching-Varner, Mitchell & Martin, 2014; Wald & Losen, 2003). I look back on the children I have taught and wonder about and think about my experience as a teacher. I know that I made conscious efforts to care, encourage, and personally push my Black American students, but how many others actually see that there is a need for addressing their needs specifically? How many classrooms have I entered in a district specialist role and witnessed firsthand how sometimes these children are not challenged or are regarded as discipline problems? I feel more seasoned as a teacher and empowered as a district specialist, and I understand the urgency of an education and a future.

As my professional perspective has grown, so has my personal views. Once we completed our marriage counseling and interviewed with the chaplain at Angola, we were approved by the warden to be married in October of 2017 which will be two years from the day we met. In moments of introspection I think to myself that a two year courtship is somewhat typical. But I also know my life is anything but typical. As it pertains to my relationship with Keith and learning more about who I am and who I am with him, for the past year and a half my days have felt like weeks, and my months have felt like years. In ways I do not even fully grasp, my personal and professional selves have blended together. All I know is that I am on a path that feels right to me.

Keith applied for a pardon within the month of May, and hopefully he will be granted a pardon hearing in order to display his growth and change in his 23 years of incarceration. If not, we will be applying again as soon as Louisiana law allows which could be anywhere from 3-5 years. We have the support of his friends and family in Bossier City as well as our prison family here in Baton Rouge. It's not going to be easy moving forward in this situation because of his incarceration, but as laws change and he continues to be the man that he is, our future as a couple is still bright. We are currently working on starting a non-profit organization to address restorative justice for victims of violent crime and offenders (The B.E.L.O.V.E.D. Community: Bridge to Enhance the Lives of Offenders and Victims through Education and Dialogue). At this point, I believe that my spirit for social change and helping others coupled with his charm and ability to evoke change within the prison community will surely lead us positively on this path to redemption. Has my family come around? *Of course not.* But, am I the happiest I've ever been despite the situation of our separation? *Yes, definitely.* Am I wiser, more knowing, and articulate? *Again, yes.*

### **Personal and Professional Stakes**

As an educator of 12 years I've witnessed many of my students face the reality of the School-to-Prison Pipeline treatment. Even though I consider myself a culturally responsive and open minded educator, many others that I have run across are not. Although I haven't always known what to call the educational failure of so many, Black American males, knowing that many of my male Black American students are being subjected to the pipeline has always caused me to be more protective and sensitive to them as a teacher. I strive to be that educator who instill efficacy within them and pushes them to be the best students they can be. I've always taken an interest in young people and their futures, and I pride myself on being a role model to

many. Because of this it has saddened me over the years to witness former students become part of the penal system because of irresponsible mistakes they've made. They've created *paper trails* for themselves at early ages and are forever marred by the stigma of the PIC. Now I realize the consequences more fully.

My experience with my fiancé and the men and families at Angola has forever changed my perception of what prison culture is supposed to be. Had I never experienced this, I might still believe what media portrayals suggest. I was unaware of the lives that were being lived spiritually and fruitfully behind the prison walls. Becoming part of the culture has empowered me to witness firsthand the changes that can occur within a population of men when education and religion are introduced. Finding out about the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and the cultural shifts that have occurred in the penitentiary has made me aware of what redemption can come from education. I never thought about their being anything beyond *prison* in the School-to-Prison Pipeline, but I now know that there are possibilities for education beyond just a high school diploma or HiSET within the prison system. A person does not have to become a barbarian just because they have been subjected to a barbaric situation. I also feel as though it says a lot about a person's character when they choose education and religion that is not a requirement for their survival.

My experiences over the course of 18 months has me advocating as a social activist and membership chairperson for the Coalition for Mercy; it is important for me to document and reveal the experiences of the men in Angola whose voices have been muffled by legislation and silenced by society. We cannot continue to throw people away and forget about them. Louisiana needs to rid itself of the *lock them up and throw away the key* mentality. Through my research and the narrative stories of these changed men, I'd like their stories to be models for the

redemptive process. It is not common to regard convicted felons as scholars, but some of the ones I know are. We cannot allow the mistakes of someone's past dictate their ultimate future. After all, then what does that say about redemption and education?

### **Self-Efficacy and Social Learning Theory**

Seeking a theoretical frame for this study, I elected to consider two equally – Self-Efficacy and Social Learning Theory. In each theoretical underpinning, I apply these theories to the context of incarceration. Is self-efficacy influenced by the environmental factors surrounding one's educational setting? Bandura defines self-efficacy as “beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations” (Bandura, 1995, p. 2). Self-efficacy is the way a person perceives his own abilities to complete a task or perform a skill. In education it is important to address student self-efficacy at all levels and make the necessary adjustments to ensure students are learning in an environment that is conducive to their view of self and their ability to learn.

Efficacy beliefs help determine how much effort people will expend on an activity, how long they will persevere when confronting obstacles, and how resilient they will prove in adverse situations- the higher the sense of efficacy, the greater the effort, persistence, and resilience (Pajares, 1996, p. 4).

Student perceived efficacy can enhance learning, and student learning environments can be key to academic motivation.

Within a specific environment the way one perceives himself can influence the types of groups with whom he associate himself (Hayes, 2012). Perceived efficacy plays a key role in how students interact because it affects behavior and has an impact on other factors such as goals and aspirations and their opinion of opportunities in their immediate social environment (Bandura, 1995). Social Learning Theory suggest that knowledge is gained through observation of surroundings and modeling perceived immediate norms (Miller, 2002). When combining the

two theories it is evident that learning environment can have an effect on student self-efficacy, and that if given the right motivation for efficacy students can improve their self-worth and ultimately chose to *upgrade* their social surroundings.

Hayes' 2012 study of the Be the Change Program in Commonwealth Correctional facility in Virginia pointed out many instances of how education can positively affect self-efficacy in incarcerated Black American men. She found that

through the men's experiences of deciding to enroll in college classes and being college students, there is a transformation in their beliefs about themselves – especially regarding their academic and personal expectations and capabilities. The participants used college as a way to claim, test, assert, and establish a new identity (Hayes, 2012, p. 124).

It was evident through the narratives that the men felt very comfortable within the school and within the Be the Change Program. Their status was updated as they were housed together with other program participants in their own *college student dormitory*. They were known within the prison as college students and felt respected by their peers. Most of them describe their college life in prison as better than their K-12 school age experiences. “Within the context of prison where all incarcerated people hold negative labels, the prison school was a site where the men experienced positive acknowledgement” (Hayes, 2012, p. 132). In her study, Hayes found that the men in the college program showed a growth in their self-efficacy. “The men began their prison school experiences with feelings of low self-efficacy,” but “their experiences of being recognized for a positive attribute countered the negative labels that they bore as incarcerated men” (Hayes, 2012, p. 132). This ultimately led to the positive shaping of their personal perceptions. Through education, self-efficacy can be fostered and increased in students with low self-perceptions.

When we know better, we do better. Again, self-efficacy as defined by Bandura is “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the sources of action required to manage prospective situations” (Bandura, 1995, p. 2). Within a specific environment, the way one perceives themselves can influence the types of groups with whom they associate (Hayes, 2012). Perceived efficacy plays a key role in how students interact because it affects behavior and has an impact on other factors such as goals and aspirations and their opinion of opportunities in their immediate social environment (Bandura, 1995). In order for people to change they must be able to understand the mistakes they made, and be able to envision better lives for themselves and a future that is realistically attainable. When we promote mass incarceration for long - inhumane - periods of time we remove hope for a better tomorrow. This does not encourage change and can possibly lead to more disheartening behavior and lack of self-worth. In this study I will be examining the individual case studies of five men – four of which are facing insurmountable periods of incarceration and one who is a returning citizen who spent 20+ years at LSP. They all found a way to attempt to create a better future for themselves through education. These men took a bleak situation and turned to education to become better men, seeking to redeem themselves for the horrific mistakes of their pasts.

In the following section I explicate the proposed questions for this study as well as provide a list of terms germane to this study. My interests lie in exploring factors that impact self-efficacy. Specifically, I am interested in examining the lived experiences of four men who are incarcerated at Angola State Penitentiary near St. Francisville, Louisiana, and the one returning citizen who was previously incarcerated. The following terms are defined first.

### **List of Terms Used in Study**

- Bible College/Seminary: sometimes used interchangeably throughout the paper in reference to the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary Angola Extension
- Criminal Justice: generic term for the procedure by which criminal conduct is investigated, evidence gathered, arrests made, charges brought, defenses raised, trials conducted, sentences rendered and punishment carried out (Law.com, 2017)
- HiSET: formally known as the GED (General Equivalency Diploma), gives out-of-school youth and adults the best opportunity to demonstrate their skills and knowledge and earn a state-issued high school equivalency (HSE) credential (Educational Testing Service, 2017)
- Incarceration: to put in prison or subject to confinement (Merriam-Webster, 2017)
- Returning Citizen: previously incarcerated persons (The Friend's Center, 2017)
- Recidivism: a tendency to relapse into criminal behavior (Merriam-Webster, 2017)
- Redemption: serving to offset or compensate for a wrong doing (Merriam-Webster, 2017)
- School-to-Prison Pipeline: separation and disproportionate over-disciplining of poor children and children of Color in the K-12 school systems, the over representation of these children in special education referrals and labeling, and the effects this has that ultimately leads to overwhelming incarceration rates in these individuals into adulthood (Wald & Losen, 2003)

## **Use of the Term Black Versus Use of Term African American**

Throughout writing this paper I was faced with the challenge of choosing to use the words Black or African American when describing people of my own ethnic origin. There is no formal scholarly standard set in which one word should over the other, only that one should be consistent in the use of one or the other and capitalize both as racial designations (American Psychological Association, 2013, p. 75). Being raised in the early 80's, my family has always used the term Black to describe us, therefore I consider myself a Black woman. In order to remain consistent with the term I most closely relate with while still incorporating what can be perceived as politically correct, I have opted to use the term *Black American* to represent people of color of non-Hispanic origin born and living within the United States of America. In turn, to describe the Caucasian population in America I will be using the term *White American*. The only places where the term may be changed are in direct quotes from outside sources.

## **Research Questions**

1. How does the attainment or possible attainment of a Bachelor's Degree in Christian Ministry while serving a prison sentence (15+yrs) increase the self-efficacy of the participants in this study?
2. How do the incarcerated men/returning citizens from Louisiana State Penitentiary, Angola who are participating in this study have graduated from NOBTS with a BA degree in Christian Ministry and are currently serving or have served a 20+years sentence feel about their experiences throughout the program and how it could possibly affect their futures if afforded an opportunity for release?
3. How do these participants feel about the issue of the *School-to-Prison pipeline*, and how does it correlate with their personal life experiences as K-12 students?



4. How do the incarcerated men/returning citizens in this study feel that the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary on the grounds of the prison has changed the social environment of the prison as a whole?

In this chapter, I provided a rationale for the study, the theoretical frames for the study, background, a list of terms, and proposed research questions. In addition, a brief history of the Prison Industrial Complex was provided as well as my lived experiences with incarceration. In chapter 2, a review of literature is presented.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Review of Literature**

In this chapter, an extensive review of literature is provided. The chapter is divided into subsections: School-to-Prison Pipeline; The Myth of Black Progress as it relates to education, economic well-being, political participation, and social integration; the Defunding of Higher Education and the Prison Industrial Complex Funding in Louisiana; Post-Secondary Correction Education and implementation, funding, self-perception, prison culture, and recidivism; the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary: Angola Extension; the Louisiana Life Sentence and Its Impact on Current Prison Numbers at Angola; Education and Religion as a Path to Redemption; and the Summary discussing the 2016 Baylor Study.

### **School-to-Prison Pipeline**

The term for this phenomenon is relatively new, but the concept behind it is something that is deeply rooted in our post-desegregation education system. The *School to Prison Pipeline* (SPP) (Wald & Losen, 2003) is a term that refers to separation and disproportionate over-disciplining of poor children and children of Color, especially Black American boys, in the K-12 school systems, the over representation of these children in special education referrals and labeling, and the effects this has that ultimately leads to overwhelming incarceration rates in these individuals into adulthood.

Policies in schools have changed dramatically to fit a *zero tolerance* code for discipline. This has resulted in increased student suspensions, increased police presence in schools, metal detectors and search and seizures in schools, and students being referred to law enforcement personnel for multiple school code violations (Wald & Losen, 2003). This has had a profound impact on the school culture and student views of discipline. Walk the halls of most elementary

schools in Louisiana and you will see that children are no longer able to be children. The youngest students are expected to walk down the halls with their hands over their mouths and a hand behind their backs in order to prevent talking and fidgeting. What children don't talk and fidget? Many of the students who are disciplined for not adhering to such restrictive school policies are minority children, and "despite the seemingly objective neutrality of a policy titled 'Zero Tolerance', the actual operations of school discipline and related systems reveal a host of subjective factors that appear to be a breeding medium for disparities and discrimination" (Wald & Losen, 2003, p. 3). These *zero tolerance* policies mirror mandatory prison sentencing with their severe predetermined consequences that make no concession for the severity of the infraction, the specifics of the situation, or any mitigating circumstances to the case at hand (Darensbourg, Perez, & Blake, 2010). Just as in the *tough on crime* push experienced in the late 80s and early 90s, these *zero tolerance* rules "assume that an increase in school violence warrants a 'no nonsense' discipline strategy and these strategies serve as a deterrent to inappropriate behavior" (Darensbourg, Perez, & Blake, 2010, p. 4).

A Zero Tolerance frame of reference assumes that students are safer in schools when students who violate the rules are removed from the classroom environment, but Black American males appear to be affected more often than others by the rules set forth by the schools. They are often viewed by their school staffs as intimidating and labeled as trouble makers when they behave in the same way that other students of their age behave. This leads to higher office referrals and exclusionary discipline tactics that remove them from the classroom environment (Darensbourg, Perez, & Blake, 2010). Personally, I have witnessed this as a teacher, but more so through the eyes of my cousin who is raising a Black American male. During his time in elementary school, my cousin's son was sent to a predominately White American Catholic

school, and they experienced the exclusionary actions and labeling first hand. My cousin and her husband, both college educated individuals with multiple degrees, were constantly being called to the school for disciplinary actions related to their son. Many times when they would go to conferences, the teachers had lists of things they alleged that their son was doing, but never could link it to behaviors the other children – White American children – in the class were exhibiting as well. He was always the culprit and always the target of discipline. Thank goodness they were so diligent about making sure he was treated fairly, because if they had not been, he may have fallen into the trap of being alienated from school. None the less, they removed him from that school mid-year and opted for a more diverse, more inclusionary school environment.

The exclusionary discipline mandated by many schools often leads to students feeling as though they don't belong in school, which leads to higher dropout rates, and ultimately, increased incarceration rates (Darensbourg, Perez, & Blake, 2010) thus perpetuating the School-to-Prison Pipeline. Exclusionary discipline policies have far reaching impact.

### **The Myth of Black Progress**

The 2008 Presidential election was a monumental step in the history of Black American people in the U.S. America elected our first Black American President, Barack Obama. There were cheers and tears of joy. A feeling of acceptance and pride swept across the Black American community, and many felt as if this was a symbol that total equality was on the horizon – we were finally bridging the overall perceived Black/White gap. However, this historic moment also exposed the subverted racist attitudes of many U.S. citizens, not just toward Black Americans but generally, against people of Color. But was this really the case? Have Black Americans truly progressed from the post-slavery and the post-Jim Crow era?

Affirmative action, particularly when it is justified on the grounds of diversity rather than equity (or remedy), masks the severity of racial inequality in America, leading to greatly exaggerated claims of racial progress and overly optimistic assessments of the future for Black Americans. Seeing Black American people graduate from Harvard and Yale and become CEOs or corporate lawyers - not to mention president of the United States - causes us all to marvel at what a long way we have come. As recent data shows, however, much of Black progress is a myth. Although some Black Americans are doing very well - enrolling in universities and graduate schools at record rates thanks to affirmative action - as a group, in many respects Black Americans are doing no better than they were when Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated and riots swept inner cities across America. The child poverty rate is actually higher today than it was in 1968. Unemployment rates in Black communities rival those in Third World countries. And that is with affirmative action (Alexander, 2012, p. 245).

Pettit states in her book, *The Myth of Black Progress*, that “research that relies on data from the Census and household-based sample surveys misrepresents the American social condition, especially as it concerns Black American men. Conventional survey data overstate levels of *education, economic well-being, political participation, and social integration* of Black American men. The exclusion of the prison and jail population creates an illusion of Black progress and obscures the continuation of racial inequality well into the twenty-first century.” (Pettit, 2012, p. L. 683)

## **Education**

The myth of Black American education statistics is rooted in the fact that many census numbers taken are not inclusive of incarcerated individuals. “One in nine Black men was incarcerated on any given day in 2008, and a full 37% of young, Black, male, high school dropouts were behind bars” (Petit, 2012, p. 1). During her research for her article, Petit, along with her partner, Bryan Sykes, found a major glitch in data reported about educational progress - as well as other things - as it relates to Black American males.

Prison and jail inmates are simply not included in many of the most important population surveys. That’s a glaring oversight that generates a misleading snapshot of America and overstates the educational, political and economic progress of Black Americans. This

collective blindness has effectively concealed decades of racial inequality, undermining social science research and leading to misguided policy (Petit, 2012, p. 1).

They found that in the 2008 Census Bureau Survey it was noted that the high school dropout rate of young Black American men was now at 13.5%. This would show evidence of a decline in the Black-White gap in high school completion over the past few decades (Petit, 2012). But, when including the prison population which includes that 37% of young Black American men spoken of above that number changes dramatically. “The nationwide high school dropout rate among young Black men in 2008 was actually 19% which is 40% higher than conventional estimates suggest” (Petit, 2012, p. 2). Petit also states that in 2008, Black American male drop outs were more likely to be in prison or jail than to be employed.

### **Economic Well-being**

Most estimates of employment and wages are also spun to reflect Black American progress. “Wages of young Black men have seen little improvement relative to the wages of White Americans since the mid-1980s” (Petit, 2012, p. 2). Petit states, “Increased joblessness due to incarceration drove up reports of average wages of Blacks, inflating estimates of Black economic progress” (Petit, 2012, p. L. 1134). The economic well-being of Black American households has not improved significantly since the 1980s. Further, “Not only did Black men earn less per hour worked, but fewer Black men were working in paid employment. By 2008, Black earnings had fallen to 38% of White men’s earnings on a per capita basis” (Petit, 2012, p. L. 1146).

Incarceration was also a large contributing factor to the unemployment numbers in Black American men.

Because of steep increases in joblessness due to incarceration and other factors, in 2008 Blacks earned on average 30 cents on every White-earned dollar. Claims of improvements in the economic standing of Black men, and of young Black men in particular, are often supported by analysis of conventional data sources that exclude the incarcerated. Unfortunately, the men who are incarcerated have among the poorest

economic fortunes of any social group, and their exclusion leads to growing sample selection bias. Including them in accounts of the well-being of the population contributes to a much less optimistic story of the relative economic standings of Blacks in America through the first decade of the twenty-first century (Petit, 2012, p. L. 1160).

Though positive economic well-being is a large myth as it pertains to current Black American progress, political participation is also something that has been vastly inflated.

### **Political Participation**

Petit articulates:

Mass incarceration artificially inflates our perception of voter turnout among Black men, as inmates and former inmates are often excluded in surveys used to measure trends in voting. When they are added back into the equation, it becomes clear that the idea that young Black American men are now more engaged with politics is an illusion. (2012, p. 12).

When taking into account incarcerated populations, nearly identical to the 1980 Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter Presidential race, for the 2008 Presidential election of President Obama only one in five Black American male dropouts voted even though it was reported to have a record high turnout of young Black Americans (Petit, 2012). Political participation by Black Americans and voter turnout have not come anywhere near their peak rates of 1960. “High rates of incarceration coupled with voting restrictions tied to felony convictions are hypothesized to have disenfranchised a growing number of minority voters” (Petit, 2012, p. L. 1225). When accounting for extreme mass incarceration it is easy to see how what Petit aptly describes as a practice that is, “excluding institutionalized persons from the Current Population Survey (can) inflate voter turnout in groups with high incarceration rates by removing large segments of the population from estimates of voter turnout” (Petit, 2012, p. L. 1234). It is also disparaging to see that some convicted felons had low voter turnout rates even before their incarceration. Clearly, continuing to rely on “household based probability sampling methods” currently being used will

give us skewed data as it relates to voter turnout and political participation in subgroups with high incarceration rates. “Excluding currently incarcerated inmates who are unable to vote...from surveys like the Current Population Survey inflates turnout rates in...those groups that are most likely to be disenfranchised by mass incarceration” (Petit, 2012, p. L. 1245). While the incidence of mass incarceration falsely swells the view of voter turnout among Black American men, another issue is also important. Some government policies only benefit some segments of the U.S. population. These policies also may impose financial costs on other segments of the U.S. population that are unfair, yet they are only observed when specifically compared to one another.

### **Social Integration**

Although many measures have been put into place in order to increase opportunities for Black Americans – “busing for school desegregation, open housing laws, and various affirmative action efforts in education and employment” – these policies have faced intense public opposition (Bobo & Kluegel, 1993, p. 443). Should we bring attention to the low levels of support for government policies that help Black Americans? In 1993, Kluegel and Bobo addressed three mechanisms they felt somewhat explained the overall low level support of the White American majority for government measures that support racial equality: *Self-Interest*; *Stratification Beliefs*; and *Racial Attitudes*. They expressed that *self-interests* of the majority are “unlikely to support policies from which they do not benefit and that may impose cost on them” (Bobo & Kluegel, 1993, p. 443). Stratification beliefs in the majority promote a feeling as if these types of race related policies challenge the “traditional American values of individualism” and violate the basic norms of American society which does not allow for allocation of social awards (Bobo & Kluegel, 1993, p. 443). And although we believe these things have been long



since gone, some White Americans, due to *racial attitudes*, “perceive a lack of effort on the part of Blacks themselves” to be the cause of their current economic inequality and therefore they “doubt the need for race-targeted policies” (Bobo & Kluegel, 1993, p. 444).

Moving into the current era of Black American perceived progress, Bonilla-Silva brings about discussion concerning the *new racism* which is the “subtle, institutional, seemingly nonracial practices....which have all but replaced the Jim Crow” era (Bonilla-Silva, 2015, p. 1369). This form of racism does not stand out as did “racism as prejudice” and “racism as discrimination.” For the most part, avenues that previously allowed for these Jim Crow era types of racism have been outlawed. The *new racism* is comprised of the following elements: covert racial disclosure and practice, avoidance of direct racial terminology, racial political agendas that steer clear of direct references, cover methods for racial privilege, and new expressions of past forms of racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2015, p. 1361). An example of an arena where the *new racism* is prevalent would be in open housing. Although the direct racism policies of the Jim Crow era are now illegal, “segregation persists because discrimination in the housing and lending markets remain” (Bonilla-Silva, 2015, p. 1362). With this type of racism, difficult to pin point and label as blatant and intentional racism, most who’ve experienced it were not even aware they were being targeted until they were given a chance to compare their experiences with their White American counterparts. Many “Blacks and Latinos experience discrimination in forms such as steering by realtors, receiving a disproportional number of subprime loans net of their credit worthiness, and being given differential information about the availability of housing units” (Bonilla-Silva, 2015, p. 1362). In looking at just this one example one can start to assess that “racial inequality is still produced in a systematic way, but that the dominant practices that

produce it are no longer overt, seem almost invisible, and are seemingly nonracial” (Bonilla-Silva, 2015, p. 1363)

### **Defunding of Higher Education and Prison Industrial Complex Funding in Louisiana**

Currently, Louisiana is experiencing the worst financial crisis in recent history. Current Governor John Bel Edwards (elected in November 2015) addressed the citizens of Louisiana on February 11, 2016, to discuss the *historic financial crisis* into which the state was plunging due to the budget shortfalls of the previous administration. “Despite all the cuts of the previous years, the nation’s second-poorest state still needed nearly \$3 billion — almost \$650 per person — just to maintain its regular services over the next 16 months” (Harlan, 2016, p. 1). This news rocked many Louisiana residents like myself, to the core and revealed to them the reality of the desperate financial position of the state. In the following months, there were a plethora of plans introduced and multiple state agencies that were threatened with cutbacks to try and offset this historic budget shortfall. Of these agencies that were targeted for cuts, Higher Education took one of the most daunting hits. Higher Education has already taken significant hits over the last ten years in comparison to other state institutions. While reviewing the Louisiana state budgets from 2005 to 2015 it was noticed that there was a 19% increase in revenue dedicated to the department of corrections and the individual facilities, but only an 11% increase in revenue dedicated to Higher education and state colleges and universities (LeBlanc, 2004; Nichols, 2014).

Higher Education being on the chopping block first for budget cuts caused many Louisianans to panic when faced with the loss of the *state past-time* of Louisiana State University (LSU) Football. It was stated by the governor that LSU, the state’s wealthiest higher

education institution, would only be able to pay its bills through April 30, unless some tax increases went into place.

The governor went so far as to say that LSU football was also in jeopardy, due to a threatened suspension of spring classes that would put college athletes' eligibility in danger next year. "He said the state would no longer be able to afford one of its most popular programs with middle class residents – the TOPS college scholarship – without tax hikes" (O'Donoghue, 2016, p. 1). This did not happen due to the diligence of the legislative body during the 2016 special legislative session. By the end of the session "higher education in the state would still see an \$86 million cut, which means layoffs and more hard times ahead of LSU, but the cut was reduced enough for schools to stay open" (Trahan, 2016, p. 1).

While trying to find ways to cut the budget and save Louisianans money this past legislative session, the largest pit of money depletion was overlooked – Department of Corrections and Penal Reform. Even though it was stated by Governor Edwards that this would be a focus for the 2017 Legislative session, it was still for the most part, overlooked when the legislative body was trying to find money to save our state in this dire time of financial distress. The 2014-2015 Louisiana State Budget allocated \$532,313,541 for Corrections services. This includes \$430.6 million for adult offenders housed in state facilities (~\$37.72 per day, per inmate), \$36.4 million for adult offenders housed in privately owned facilities (~\$31.51 per day, per inmate), and \$65.4 million for adult offenders under Probation and Parole supervision (~\$2.57 per person, per day) (Nichols, 2014). In comparison, the base cost per pupil in the Louisiana education system did not change from the 2014-15 school year to 2016-17 school year. Per pupil allocated was an amount of \$22.38 a day for the 678,570 students in 2014 and also still allocated to the 684,798 students in 2016 (Louisiana Department of Education, 2017).

This is at least \$10 less than what has been allocated for incarcerated individuals, meaning that Louisiana spends more to incarcerate than to educate. It's as if this is off limits – but why?

In Louisiana there is a mandatory sentencing of death and/or life imprisonment for first and second degree murder charges, and in Louisiana *life means life* (life without the possibility of probation or parole- LWOP). Those serving these sentences are normally housed at the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola, LA. Currently there are approximately 4000 inmates serving life sentence at this facility (The Sentencing Project, 2016). Many of them are enrolled in programs that promote reformation for their crime, yet there are very limited opportunities for them to legally surpass the LWOP mandatory sentencing and have the possibility for eventually gaining their freedom. Many of these men have paid an insurmountable amount of time in incarceration for a crime of their youth and have found personal redemption through work, education, and religion. They have been reformed on multiple levels and their threat to society can be assessed through state tested, approved, and funded inmate risk assessment tools like Louisiana Risk Need Assessment (LARNA), Louisiana Risk Need Assessment II (LARNA II), and Targeted Interventions Gaining Enhanced Re-entry (TIGER) which are “static driven instruments which assist with determining the custody level and identifies programmatic needs of offenders....normed and validated for use on the Louisiana incarcerated offender population” (ASCA Responses: Risk Assessment Survey - February 2009, 2010, p. 2). If taking into account only 25% of the 4000 inmates currently serving a life sentence and allowing them parole eligibility, the state could save approximately \$13.8 million dollars in one year. For the 2015 Louisiana state budget, \$135,065,254 was allocated for Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola alone (Nichols, 2014).

Higher education has taken and is proposed to take massive financial cuts, while the PIC of Louisiana steadily grows. It seems as if Louisiana law makers would rather pay to lock up our youth, our Black American youth, than to educate them. It also seems as if in some cases we are bettering and preparing inmates for a world that our legislators do not want them to see. Many of the offenders who have been given mandatory LWOP sentences, have used their time in incarceration to better themselves and become tax paying members of society, but currently none of them will get that opportunity. If as a state we could find a way to put some of our lower risk offenders back into society and have them become taxpaying citizens, we could allocate more funds to our higher learning institutions. This is a fix that makes sense to someone like me, so I reason, it should at least be a consideration. I reason that we want a more robust and secure economy, so why aren't Louisiana politicians and taxpayers willing to consider all angles?

Table 3: Corrections and Higher Education Funds Allocations for Louisiana 2011-2017

<b>Proposed Funds</b>	<b>Corrections</b>	<b>Higher Education</b>
<b>2011-2012 (Jindal)</b>	<b>\$495,655,721</b>	<b>\$3,011,910,054</b>
<b>2012-2013 (Jindal)</b>	<b>\$463,514,553</b>	<b>\$2,911,502,336</b>
<b>2013-2014 (Jindal)</b>	<b>\$492,414,442</b>	<b>\$2,628,754,956</b>

(Table continued)

<b>Proposed Funds</b>	<b>Corrections</b>	<b>Higher Education</b>
<b>2014-2015 (Jindal)</b>	<b>\$532,313,541</b>	<b>\$2,634,208,496</b>
<b>2015-2016 (Jindal)</b>	<b>\$508,555,771</b>	<b>\$2,412,147,450</b>
<b>2016-2017 (Edwards)</b>	<b>\$416,159,960</b>	<b>\$2,242,599,329</b>

### **Post-Secondary Correctional Education (PSCE)**

Post-Secondary education is not a typical topic when discussing education within the correctional setting. Most people are concerned with the literacy levels and lack of education that is found in incarcerated populations. In this section I will be discussing Post-Secondary Correction Education and its implementation, funding, inmate self-perception, institutional cultural shifts, and recidivism.

### **Post-Secondary Correctional Education (PSCE) and Implementation**

The 2010 paper, Implementing Postsecondary Academic Programs in State Prisons: Challenges and Opportunities, looks at the implementation of Post-Secondary programs in 38 prisons across five states in order to study the characteristics of students in PSCE academic programs, the program contents and delivery methods, the instructional support and resources available to the students, the personal student benefits as well as the benefits to the institutions, the factors which could possibly interfere with successful implementation, and suggestions from stakeholders as to how to improve the programs (Meyer, Fredericks, Borden, & Richardson,

2010). Within the 38 programs studied, there were 15 students selected to participate based on certain characteristics.

Criteria for participation in the study included requirements that students: be between 18 and 25 years old; have a release date of between 1 and 5 years; have a high school diploma or equivalent; and have tuition costs paid with external grant funding (Meyer, Fredericks, Borden, & Richardson, 2010, p. 154).

The average age of the students was 22 and the majority of them were males that identified themselves White, Black and Latino. The majority of the participants identified as White American - possibly because they were more likely to fit the profile of the criteria for participation. Almost half of the students had at least one parent with some college experience, but most of those did not finish with a degree. The students were all given a baseline Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) Critical Thinking Test and their

scores ranged from 50 to 71, with an average of 58.8, which is just below the 50th percentile based on norms associated with a national sample of sophomores at 2- and 4-year colleges and universities in the United States. These baseline scores indicate that study participants, most of whom had no prior college experience, had critical thinking skills that were close to those for a typical American college sophomore (Meyer, Fredericks, Borden, & Richardson, 2010, p. 158).

The different program deliveries were done through various methods. Most students took "freshman- or sophomore- level liberal arts courses in English composition, sociology, economics, psychology, political science, history, and environmental science" (Meyer, Fredericks, Borden, & Richardson, 2010, p. 158). The courses included a combination of videos with readings, study guides, text book assignments, CD-ROMs and workbooks. They were also given assignments and exams which were proxied by site facilitators. The site facilitators were charged with various tasks that included, but were not limited to: recruiting participants; class instruction; monitoring student work or assessment; and managing student records. Some

facilitators also worked with external groups, facilitated communication between inmate and faculty, tutoring and support for inmates, and working with necessary program technology.

The researchers discovered that the inmates experienced instructional resources and support in certain instances, but not necessarily in others. Looking at the positive aspect,

Encouragement from families and peers was discussed most often by students. Other types of support that were mentioned included encouragement from education and other prison staff, support from tutors who were usually other inmates, and instruction by teachers who cared about student success (Meyer, Fredericks, Borden, & Richardson, 2010, p. 161).

A few of the inmates in other institutions reported that they experienced “indifference or hostility from correctional officers. These students said that correctional officers made negative comments about their education and sometimes prevented students from attending class or impeded their attendance” (Meyer, Fredericks, Borden, & Richardson, 2010, p. 161). One site coordinator reported that corrections officers resented the prisoners in the program because they had not had the opportunity to attend college themselves. On the other hand, some reported that they “received support from correctional officers, such as officers helping to keep students out of lock-up so that they could attend classes or encouraging inmates to enroll in or attend college classes” (Meyer, Fredericks, Borden, & Richardson, 2010, p. 161). Less frequently it was reported by the student inmates that they were given access to “publicized available courses, provision of a computer lab, free tuition and books, access to a library” (Meyer, Fredericks, Borden, & Richardson, Implementing Postsecondary Academic Programs in State Prisons: Challenges and Opportunities, 2010, p. 161). This means that they were often deprived of some of the usual amenities afforded to college students in normal university settings. Aside from those immediate gratifications in some cases, site coordinators mentioned availability of “good



time credit” for participation which went toward lowering of sentences, and provided tutoring/counseling as well as library access to enrolled students. All in all

students tended to agree that they felt safe in their learning environment and had opportunities to study outside of class. Average ratings showed only moderate student agreement that there were quiet places to study, that books and learning materials were easily available, and that the prison made it easy to participate in college programs (Meyer, Fredericks, Borden, & Richardson, 2010, p. 163).

There were other overall benefits experienced by the students and the prison environment as a whole as a result of the post-secondary programs implemented. Among the many things students appreciated were “having an opportunity to gain knowledge, face a positive challenge, and become a better person” (Meyer, Fredericks, Borden, & Richardson, 2010, p. 163). Site coordinators noted that there were many positive aspects of the programs. “They identified furthering inmates' education knowledge, the ease of delivery associated with distance learning programs, giving students some degree of independence, having study guides, and offering courses needed for general education as positive aspects” (Meyer, Fredericks, Borden, & Richardson, 2010, p. 164). There were also outcomes identified that affected the students as well as the institution.

Most site coordinators identified positive changes in the areas of improved student attitudes, behaviors, and skills such as reduced behavioral problems and detention; improved ability to abide by behavioral norms in the classroom; increased confidence, motivation, self-discipline, and maturity; improved self-image and grooming; improved communication skills and willingness to engage in thoughtful conversations; improved logical thinking skills; and higher ambitions (Meyer, Fredericks, Borden, & Richardson, 2010, p. 165).

Also, site coordinators also noticed

improvements in relationships among inmates or between inmates and institutional staff. Other outcomes identified by site coordinators included the encouragement for others to learn and grow; stabilization of inmate behavior; inmates being more supportive of each other; inmates becoming more responsible in facility jobs and seeking higher level jobs; and positive influence on hearings with parole boards (Meyer, Fredericks, Borden, & Richardson, 2010, p. 165).

Along with notable positive changes from site coordinators, student inmates reported that they felt as though they gained better

study skills and test taking ability; improved writing and content knowledge; improved social, communication, presentation, and critical thinking skills; improved relationships with peers; increased willingness to interact with and help out others in the program; increased self-esteem; a sense of accomplishment; and the ability to be a role model for others (Meyer, Fredericks, Borden, & Richardson, 2010, p. 166).

Finally the authors discussed some of the challenges associated with the implementation of the post-secondary programs. Depending on the site and the delivery method of the program, some students had issues with motivation, feedback, communication with instructors, outdated videos and textbooks, and program/instructor expectations. Some of the other negative responses from inmate students were

limited reference materials in the library; lack of introductory materials in some courses to clarify learning goals and course expectations; late receipt or unavailability of textbooks; inadequate preparation to take college-level classes; lack of a place to study and limited time for study; lack of choice in courses, course cancellation, and limited funding to take multiple courses; delays in receiving feedback on coursework and receiving grades; and unconstructive critical feedback from an instructor (Meyer, Fredericks, Borden, & Richardson, 2010, p. 168).

Site coordinators and administrators highlighted some of the same issues with the program, but “unpreparedness for college-level work” was one of their major concerns. With that they also “expressed frustration that there was no extra compensation given to them for the responsibilities associated with postsecondary programming and that no other work was taken away to compensate for the additional demands on their time” (Meyer, Fredericks, Borden, & Richardson, 2010, p. 169).

Both students and site coordinators found that overall there was a positive outcome from the implementation of post-secondary programs in the 38 prisons studied.

Site coordinators identified improvements in student behavior and attitudes, including increased confidence, motivation, self-discipline, and maturity. Students mentioned improved study skills, improved social, communication, and critical thinking skills, and increased self-esteem. Students and site coordinators mentioned that there were improvements in prison climate, including improved relationships among students and between students and institution staff (Meyer, Fredericks, Borden, & Richardson, 2010, p. 173).

Despite the issues reported by participants, there were many suggestions and ways to make the programs more operable while still maintaining the positive attributes gained. In each case, implementation of PSCE in all institutions had a positive overall outcome for the incarcerated individuals as well as the prison staffs. Funding for the programs is a necessary component for lasting positive effects after implementation. In the following section I will discuss this funding.

### **Post-Secondary Correctional Education (PSCE) Financial Aid**

Federal financial aid in the form of Pell Grants was taken away from those imprisoned under the Clinton administration in 1994. “On September 13, 1994, President Bill Clinton signed into law the Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, which prohibited all prisoners from receiving Pell Grants” (Page, 2004, p. 359). Prior to this all inmates were allowed to receive federal financial aid for post-secondary education while incarcerated. “The elimination of prisoner eligibility for Pell Grants in 1994 was a severe blow to post-secondary correctional education programs nationwide, and many advocates of higher education for prisoners have focused their efforts on reinstating this funding” (Erisman & Contardo, 2005, p. 28). In the meantime there are multiple ways to try and scrape together funding through prisoner self-funding, donations, state funding, and university partnerships.

It is extremely difficult for prisoners to attain enough money to fund their own learning while incarcerated, especially given the financial hardship having a father figure incarcerated imposes on a family. “According to the College Board, the average cost of tuition and fees for

the 2016–2017 school year was \$9,650 for state residents at public colleges” along with an “average cost for books and supplies of \$1,250” (College Data, 2017, p. 1). Being that prisoners on average make less than \$0.50/hour wages for jobs within the prison this would be completely unfeasible especially when their wages must also go toward “clothing, phone calls and postage, books or magazines, food purchased from the prison canteen, and in some states, toiletries such as shampoo or toothpaste” (Erisman & Contardo, 2005, p. 30). Therefore the burden of a college education would most likely again fall back onto the families of the incarcerated.

Private funding is another alternative that states use to fund PSCE. In the Baylor study, private funding in combination with an agreement with NOBTS is how the program at Louisiana State Penitentiary is paid for and how the tuitions, books, and school building are covered (Hallett, Hays, Johnson, Jang, & Duwe, 2016). Many other states have also turned to private donations to defray the cost of PSCE. “In Texas, for example, donors interested in helping prisoners gain access to higher education, including corporate donors and advocacy groups, have created scholarships through some of the public colleges and universities that provide post-secondary instruction” (Erisman & Contardo, 2005, p. 30). Even though there are groups, individuals, and companies willing to donate to PSCE “most private funding sources are limited to supporting the creation of new post-secondary correctional education programs, as opposed to simply funding additional students in already established programs” (Erisman & Contardo, 2005, p. 31). With this in mind it is evident that there must be other sources of fiscal support to assist with maintaining PSCE.

Some states have programs and funding that are part of their correctional rehabilitation budget. “States that adequately fund postsecondary programs in their prisons tend to also be the states that recognize the benefits such programs can have in reducing recidivism and saving

money for the state's taxpayers" (Erisman & Contardo, 2005, p. 32). These states have recognized that an increase in PSCE and an increase in employability of returning citizens, in turn causes a decrease in recidivism, which ultimately saves their states money. "In Texas, for example, nearly 5 percent of the annual funding for postsecondary correctional education comes from the Texas Public Education Grants" (Erisman & Contardo, 2005, p. 32). Texas government has long been aware of the positive effects of PSCE. In a 1995 reporting of a two year study on recidivism by the criminal justice center at Sam Houston State University it was found that of the 60 men and women who "earned degrees and were released, 10% (6) returned to prison. Generally, the recidivism rate of most inmates in Texas is 36%" (Stevens & Ward, 1997, p. 109).

Some states also work in conjunction with their colleges and universities to help with the funding of their PSCE. States like North Carolina are "an excellent example of this type of partnership...where long-term administrative and financial cooperation between the Department of Corrections and the North Carolina Community College System has led to a flourishing post-secondary correctional educational program" (Erisman & Contardo, 2005, p. 33). It should be noted that prior to this partnership "correctional education in the state of North Carolina (was) not encouraged or supported by state policy," but it is evident that some minds were changed after the 1995 study that found that with the lowered recidivism produced by PSCE there was also financial savings for the state (Stevens & Ward, 1997, p. 108). Because of the lowered recidivism which was approximately a difference of 21 inmates who had PSCE, the North Carolina taxpayers saved \$1942.29 per day which is equivalent to \$708,935.85 for every year they did not recidivate (Stevens & Ward, 1997). No doubt the potential for taxpayer savings went a long way with aiding in the change of lawmaker opinion of PSCE and finding ways to

fund it. The most important take away from this section should be that PSCE needs to be funded and that currently there is a need to develop various funding sources.

### **Post-Secondary Correctional Education (PSCE) and Inmate Self-Perception**

In her 2012 paper, *College Student and Inmate: A Narrative Ethnography of the Be the Change Program Participants at the Commonwealth Correctional Center*, Hayes focuses on self-perception of inmate/students participating in post-secondary correctional education. My study also looks at this aspect, but also delves into the student/inmate perceptions of social change within the prison with the implementation of a faith based college program, as well as student perceptions of the *School-to-Prison Pipeline* in relationship to their life experiences.

Hayes' study is an

in-depth look at incarcerated African American college students in the Be the Change program at the Commonwealth Correctional Center. The research seeks the stories of the program's six members as they discuss their experiences in postsecondary correctional education. Generally speaking, how does participation in college classes affect incarcerated students? In particular, how does college education change African American men's self-perception? (Hayes, 2012, p. 3).

As in my study, the participants were questioned and the proposed responses were crafted into narratives. Hayes points to this format as efficacious, "Through storytelling, the men were encouraged to reflect on how they had thought about themselves, named themselves, and had been viewed by others at different times in their schooling" (Hayes, 2012, p. 5).

Hayes sought to answer her research questions through narrative ethnographic methods. She "recognized the need for a thoughtful integration of narrative inquiry and ethnography to collect information about inmates' influential experiences in the college program" (Hayes, 2012, p. 24). "Emerging narrative ethnography methodology not only highlights stories and

experiences of people who are rarely heard, it also underscores the importance of the social and environmental contexts of those stories” (Hayes, 2012, p. 24).

Blending narrative inquiry and ethnographic methods was significant to this study because the participants and their stories were located in the social and environmental contexts of a prison. Their narratives and experiences were set in the prison and the prison school. They referenced attending classes in a prison, studying in prison, and having limitations and challenges associated with prison life. Because the prison and the prison school were the men’s social and cultural contexts, stories without attention to the prison context would be a shallow representation. Both narratives and contexts were critical textures and were given equal treatment in the study (Hayes, 2012, p. 26).

In her study, Hayes looked into the educational experiences of six incarcerated Black American men. Her previous work with a drop out recovery program for 18-24 year olds in Virginia, led her to have an affinity for those labeled *bad kids*. This gave her a glimpse into the lives of students who had negative experiences in school which caused them to leave high school. Her research was inspired by “a tour of the Commonwealth Correctional Center in April 2009” (Hayes, 2012, p. 38). When she toured the facility she was “surprised by the variety and depth of educational programs offered; these included literacy, pre-GED, GED preparation, dog training, horticulture, vocational classes (for college credit), and college classes” (Hayes, 2012, p. 38). She also learned that the prison “offers college classes and college degree programs (certificates and associate degrees) to incarcerated persons” which intrigued her (Hayes, 2012, p. 38). This interest led her to begin work with education in incarcerated men at this facility. She began to visit the school weekly to assist with an Adult Basic Education class for a final project for one of her classes; she started observing the Be the Change group meetings in the prison on a weekly basis; and upon gaining IRB approval she “conducted a pilot study in connection with her Advanced Qualitative Methods class” where she looked into their discussions and levels of genuine concern for education from a group of men labeled *criminals* (Hayes, 2012, p. 38).

After compiling her observational data with the narrative stories and interviews of the men involved in the study she was able to look at how their stories “provided insight into how each man made sense of his journey from childhood to prison to college” (Hayes, 2012, p. 111). Many of the men in Hayes’s study described experiences with the prison school in positive ways. They described their time with the Be the Change program discussions as *sacred* where they could use their time in prison to do something productive. “All of the men spoke about their love of learning” (Hayes, 2012, p. 110). They described the prison school as a caring place where they could learn, and “each man told stories about times when a teacher, the principal, or a peer acted in a caring, concerned way at the prison school” (Hayes, 2012, p. 110). Not surprising, but “experiences of learning in the prison school were the opposite of some of the men’s experiences of learning communities in K-12 schools” (Hayes, 2012, p. 110).

### **Post-Secondary Correctional Education (PSCE) and Prison Culture at Louisiana State Penitentiary (LSP)**

Just the mention of the name *Angola* is known to bring fear and anxiety to most people. I can recall my first visit to the facility with a group of high school students on a field trip. We were bringing them there to *scare them straight* and show them where they didn’t want to end up. Not knowing that the prison which had a reputation for being the “bloodiest prison in America” was now a model facility that was envied by corrections departments in other states across the U.S.

The Louisiana State Penitentiary, L.S.P., otherwise known as Angola, has a reputation of brutality that has covered over a hundred years. Murder and rape are synonymous with the name Angola. So much fear is connected with the mention of its name that often, when people are sentenced in court to the penitentiary, they breakdown in uncontrollable sobs, screaming for mercy. Some have even committed suicide rather than face the terrors on the 18,000 acre prison. However, today reports are coming out of the penitentiary boasting of L.S.P. as being one of the safest and most peaceful prisons in America (Hennis, 2015, p. 2).



But there has never been an announcement made or press conference held to let the public know of the changes that have occurred within those prison walls. No one made the public aware of what faith and religion were doing for a group of hopeless men who had sordid pasts and bleak to no future. All we, the public, knew was that Angola is a place you never want to end up in and that it is filled with horrid criminals whose fates have been sealed.

Alex Hennis is a current inmate at LSP who has served nearly 20 years of incarceration at Angola. He is also the only inmate in the facility who received a Master's degree in Divinity from Global University. Alex wrote his Master's thesis paper on the cultural shift within the prison walls that no one in this state addresses. Alex was able to use multiple methods for research, but was also on *the inside*, therefore his perspective and accessibility to the cultural shift with the inception of the Bible College and prison life are unprecedented. I've had the pleasure and honor to meet Alex; through my fiancé, Keith, and I was able to contact Global University library to attain a copy of his work.

Alex set out to “analyze the unstable, violent culture of the Louisiana Penitentiary's past and compare it to the analysis of the stable, peaceful one at present in order to discover what caused the cultural shift” (Hennis, 2015, p. 1). He wanted to look at reasons for the change through five hypotheses that revolved around philosophies from previous administrations, increases in privileges, swift and fair punishments for infractions, Christian conversions, and accountability on the part of security officers. He also discusses the five basic reasons that penal systems fail which fall in line with the perpetuation of the PIC discussed in detail earlier. Because America has completely immersed itself into having “imprisonment as its primary fighting tool,” they have failed to see the weakness and flaws in the system. Having laws that target victimless crimes like prostitution and drug usage; giving police, prosecutors, and judges

broad discretion as to who is arrested, charged and imprisoned; having prison experiences that are demeaning and painful; gaining no skills or knowledge applicable to the real world; and being given the label of ex-con upon release which is accompanied by a harsh stigma creates the overall vision perpetuated by the failing U.S. penal system (Hennis, 2015). So, what sets LSP as an outlier to the failing system? Why is this now a facility that is visited by corrections officers, wardens and senators from other states? How has the cultural shift at LSP shaped what possible *penal reform* looks like?

Hennis used several methods of data collection for his qualitative study. Because he is incarcerated, he was unable to use the internet, but he had friends and family members look up information and send him articles and websites in order to send him hard copies of information he needed as it related to LSP and Louisiana governmental policies. He did have several avenues for research at his disposal within the walls of the facility. Alex was able to use the “decades worth of prison journals” from the *Angolite* which is the official prison publication produced at LSP, as well as chat with and get information on prison history from the curator of the Angola museum. He was also able to access many documentary videos produced over the years to document the history and culture of LSP at different times. The data that he gathered which was probably most influential to his study were the “interviews conducted with fifteen inmates who had been incarcerated for a minimum of thirty-eight years” (Hennis, 2015, p. 14).

These inmates discussed with Alex their past experiences with coming to prison, and he performed his research through informal and formal interviews with these men. He actually had two occasions where he was able to bring together seven of the fifteen to discuss in a round table type situation. The questions he asked about the early years at LSP highlighted the processing experience, everyday prison life and pastimes, as well as job availability, acts of brutality, and

rehabilitation offerings. Alex was also able to get anonymous interviews with seven corrections officers who had valuable information from their 35 years in the prison system. Also, being an inmate himself for almost 20 years, Hennis was able to give personal insight on prison transformation and the current culture he is experiencing. As a result of his study, “significant insight has been gathered about the prison that could not have come through another avenue” (Hennis, 2015, p. 16).

In his findings, it is evident that the early years of the penal system of Louisiana was corrupt and immoral. He gives us the horrid depiction of the political views and actions that correlated to the times. Beginning in 1901, the prison system in Louisiana was no longer under private control and leasing as it had been under the James family for years post-Civil war. During the James, Buckner, and Company lease, Major Samuel James acquired all of his wealth from the leasing of inmates, who proportionately were 70% Black freed slaves (Hennis, 2015). Under the James leasing era, prisoners were treated brutally and had a work/life expectancy of five years. They were confined to the ex-cotton plantation, Angola, and subjected to brutal beatings and inhumane conditions. The original goal for the state was to turn a profit from the inmate work, but Major James, in the 40 years he was over the leasing program, did not pay the prescribed share to the state. His son, who took over the family business of the inmate leasing in Louisiana for seven years, continued with the harsh dehumanizing conditions but was forced to pay the proportioned share to the state, which ultimately led to more inmate mistreatment and blood profits. The changeover to state running of the facility only came after public outrage for the inhumane treatment of the inmates that was often documented by the *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, and *Times Democrat* that officially merged into the *New Orleans Time-Picayune* in 1914 in articles going back to the early 1900s through the present day (Hennis, 2015).

Once the state took control of the prison and the lives of inmates, there was a dramatic rollercoaster of events that showed glimmers of hope and then pits of despair as it related to the inmate treatment. This all correlated directly with the political plays in motion, the key players in office as well as in control of the facility, publicity of the conditions, and the overall focus for the Louisiana penal system. The tumultuous past of the facility led to it being labeled as the “bloodiest prison in America,” mainly because profit from prisoners held a higher precedence over rehabilitation and reform. “Politics more than penology determined the course of the penitentiary” (Hennis, 2015, p. 25). The fate for LSP remained ever changing with ups and downs that ultimately fed into the notion of the Prison Industrial Complex. Inmates were subjected to brutal floggings, mistreatment by staff, brutality of other inmates, deplorable conditions, and mistreatment that dehumanized them. With a lack of self-worth and no hope for sustainable change, inmates lived a life of despair, which ultimately led to immoral behavior and violence.

In January of 1995, Burl Cain was appointed warden of the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola. Warden Cain had spent a large portion of his adult life working in and with Louisiana corrections. As a vocational agriculture graduate of LSU he began in corrections as an overseer for farming opportunities in different Louisiana prisons. From there his career led to various roles in the system leading up to warden of Dixie Correctional facility and ultimately head warden of LSP (Hennis, 2015). The brutal and immoral culture that he walked into gave Warden Cain the insight to use religion and hope to civilize the incarcerated masses under his control. He made himself accessible to the inmate population and “established himself as the sole (benevolent) ruler over Angola” (Hennis, 2015, p. 59). “When it came to institutional policy and rules and regulations, his word was law. The inmates seemed to catch on pretty quick, but old

habits among the security would be hard to break” (Hennis, 2015, p. 59). Warden Cain realized that “the true battle for Angola would be spiritual” (Hennis, 2015, p. 59).

With his religious upbringing always at the forefront of his mind, Warden Cain set out to bring spirituality and education to a group of men who lived in despair and lacked hope. After speaking with representatives from the Judson Baptist Association and the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS), the plan was conceived to organize an extension center at Angola. “In September of 1995, a regionally accredited seminary program would be planted in the middle of Angola’s main prison” (Hennis, 2015, pp. 60-61). Participants included church and club leaders from the prison, and after a few years there was a graduating class with both an Associates in Christian Ministry and a Bachelor of Arts in Christian Ministry. These graduates would go on to become inmate ministers and chaplains who spread the word of God throughout the facility by starting churches, preaching, and offering bible study to other inmates (Hennis, 2015). They also eventually became ministers and chaplains that were distributed to other state facilities in order to increase their faith bases. “What started off as a plan to offer hope and educate prisoners turned into a state-wide program that would end up influencing thousands of men” (Hennis, 2015, p. 61). Warden Cain introduced many religious outlets to the prison culture and instituted changes that affected every aspect of the prison make up. He spiritualized everything from the new inmate orientation to the procession of burial for those that were deceased. The prison became a place of peace, and many of the men gladly jumped on board with the changes that were occurring. They were given hope and normalcy, as well as recognition and praise for accepting the morality that was now being infused into the prison culture. With all of this came media coverage from the outside. “Within a few short years major

television, magazine, and newspaper reporters were walking through Angola, marveling at the change” (Hennis, 2015, p. 68).

All of this being noted, bad things still happened, but the larger picture of what was to come and the cultural shift was streamlined in a faith-based facility. There were many other changes implemented by Warden Cain that was situated in faith and ministry. The hiring of female corrections officers who would oversee inmate dormitories lends to the fact that the culture of the prison had changed drastically. No longer was it that place where people constantly feared for their lives and plotted to do immoral things just to survive. Inmates were given opportunities for education and vocations which guided them to make better decisions. And based on their behaviors and the amazing cultural shift, they were also given freedoms and privileges that were unheard of in prisons across the nation.

At present, Angola is an American Correctional Association accredited institution. This means that the prison is identified nationally as a “stable, safe, and constitutional” environment (Hennis, 2015, p. 70). The religious and educational efforts continue, despite Warden Cain’s resignation in January 2016. As more programs are offered and prisoners are given a chance at education and redemption, this system continues to be a catalyst for continued positive change.

### **Post-Secondary Correctional Education (PSCE) and Recidivism**

“Recidivism, whether defined as re-arrest, reconviction, or return to prison, is disturbingly high” (Erisman & Contardo, 2005, p. ix). Many “prisoners are serving longer sentences than in the past but are then released without the education or skills necessary to find productive employment” (Erisman & Contardo, 2005, p. ix). These individuals return to society labeled as *ex-convicts*, with no hope of being able to find employment that will provide them with a better life and keep them from returning to lives of crime. “Despite limited funding and a

frequent lack of public support, corrections officials have made efforts to establish prison programming that helps inmates successfully re-enter society after release from prison” (Erisman & Contardo, 2005, p. ix), and time and time again it has been proven that “participation in educational programs while incarcerated reduces recidivism rates by increasing an individual’s ability to successfully rejoin mainstream society upon release from prison” (Erisman & Contardo, 2005, p. ix).

In many instances society frowns upon PSCE. Many people feel is if it isn’t fair to offer prisoners educational programs, while some law abiding citizens can’t afford it; and they feel as if prison should be completely about punishment to deter people from committing crimes. Despite these notions there are other people, including many corrections officials, who believe that “the benefits of postsecondary correctional education seem so many and so important that they far outweigh these concerns” (Erisman & Contardo, 2005, p. 7). As I have personally witnessed, PSCE can be a light in the darkness for those serving long-term sentences, and can be an avenue of change for those serving short-term sentences and are trying to turn away from a life of criminal activity. The men that I interact with on a weekly basis have used PSCE to improve their lives in a lot of ways. Many of them would have never experienced a chance to experience post-secondary education if they hadn’t come to prison, and I believe that any benefit that a person can gain from education should be explored and allowed no matter the circumstances that led to their enlightenment.

By examining Gaes’ Meta-Analysis of the Impact of Prison Education Programs on Post-Release Outcomes, readers get a glimpse of multiple studies that were conducted to compare recidivism rates for returning citizens who received PSCE while incarcerated. These studies explored the options for the returning citizens of either recidivism or employment. In the

findings across the data collected it was concluded that “Correctional education improves the chances that inmates who are released from prison will not return” (Gaes, 2008, p. 24). It was also found that “among minorities correctional education increases the wages they will earn when they return to the community” (Gaes, 2008, p. 24). Using recidivism as the definition for recommitment to a correctional facility, the research implies that “educated prisoners are less likely to commit crime once they are released to the community” (Gaes, 2008, p. 25).

Other studies over a span of 25 years have found that recidivism was greatly reduced by PSCE. These studies compared recidivism in groups of incarcerated individuals who received PSCE and others within the same systems that had not received similar education. In the 1986 study by Holloway and Moke, *Post-Secondary Correctional Education: An Evaluation of Parolee Performance*, they studied successful reintegration into society based on not returning to jail or prison within the first year of re-entry as a returning citizen. They compared three groups: associate degree recipients, high school diploma recipients, and high school dropouts at Lebanon Correctional Institution in Ohio. The findings in this study illustrated “11.6% of the college graduates returned to prison by the end of their first year on parole; 15.5% of the high school graduates returned, as did 29% of the high school drop outs” (Holloway & Moke, 1986, p. 11). They also found a correlation between PSCE and employment. Two-thirds of the returning citizens with associate degrees had gainful employment within the first year post release as compared to 60% of the high school graduates and 40% of the high school dropouts (Holloway & Moke, 1986). In the 1990 study, *Correctional Higher Education: Reduced Recidivism?*, Marian O’Neil “sought to determine if there was a lower rate of recidivism among those who had participated in post-secondary education while incarcerated as compared to” the recidivism of a group of their peers who were qualified, but did not participate in any post-secondary study



(O'Neil, 1990, p. 28). It was found in this study that the recidivism rate for the students with no PSCE was 11.5% while those with PSCE was 3.9%. This was a 7.6% reduction in recidivism overall. The conclusion made by O'Neil was that “ the combination of higher education along with incarceration for the qualified inmate cannot help but increase the safety of society when the offender is released” (O'Neil, 1990, p. 31).

Another study, conducted for the New York State Department of Corrections, was an Analysis of the Return Rates of the Inmate College Program Participants in 1991. In this study the New York Department of Corrections examined a sample of inmates who attempted to earned college degrees while incarcerated. The sample included the 356 men who actually attained degrees and the 630 men who were either removed from or voluntarily left the program.

These 986 released citizens were monitored over a one year period and then assessed based on whether or not they returned to the department of corrections. The 356 graduates had a lower rate of recidivism than the 630 people that didn't complete the program. The recidivism rate for the graduates was 26.4%, and the recidivism rates for the non-graduates was 44.6%. This was an 18.2% difference in recidivism. Results indicated that the "degree earning participants also returned at a lower rate than would be expected when compared to the overall male return rate" as well (Clark, 1991, p. 1).

The overall conclusion for this study “supported the position that earning a college degree during a period of incarceration is positively related to post-release adjustment” (Clark, 1991, p. 4). Additional studies have also revealed similar recidivism results (Lockwood, Nally, Ho & Knutson, 2011; Stevens & Ward, 1997).

One of the largest differences in recidivism numbers noted comes from research conducted by Stevens and Ward, (1997). In this study “60 student-inmates who had earned their associate and /or baccalaureate degrees while incarcerated were tracked after their release from the North Carolina Department of Corrections” (Stevens & Ward, 1997, p. 1). The returning citizens were tracked for three years, and of the 60 students released three of them which is 5% of the total recidivated. All three of these individuals had attained an Associate’s degree while incarcerated. None of the recipients of Bachelor’s degrees recidivated. When comparing this to the general prison population in North Carolina, there was a 35% difference. Individuals released in that same time frame without the attainment of a college degree had a 40% recidivism rate (Stevens & Ward, 1997).

Stevens & Ward’s study concluded that “after pooling their data, it appears that the awarding of both 2 year and 4 year college degrees to student-inmates lowers recidivism rates” (Stevens & Ward, 1997, p. 108). Similarly, Lockwood, Nally, Ho & Knutson achieved similar results. In their five year follow-up study of the Indiana Correctional Department, Lockwood, Nally, Ho, & Knutson, “revealed that an offender’s education and employment were the most important predictors of post-release recidivism” (2012, p. 1). The returning citizens who were released to five selected counties in Indiana were tracked from 2005 to 2009; a total of 6,521 released citizens which represented more than 43% of the total 15,184 returning citizens that had been released in the entire state during 2005 (Lockwood, Nally, Ho, & Knutson, 2012). Of the 6,521 returning citizens studied, only 306 had attained a 2-year or 4-year college education. The total recidivism rate overall for the 6,521 studied was 48% over the five year period. The breakdown of this indicated that for those that received PSCE, recidivism was 31% as compared to those who did not which was 50.1%. These researchers also explored how educations affected

employment and reported, “that 66.7% of the offenders who had a college education had been employed in a variety of job sectors...but only 57.0% of the offenders who had an education below high school had been employed” during the study period (Lockwood, Nally, Ho, & Knutson, 2012, p. 388). This suggests a direct correlation between increased employments leading to lowered recidivism. Table 4 highlights these five aforementioned studies and compares the 25 years of studies examining PSCE and its effect on recidivism.

Table 4: 25 years of studies looking at PSCE and its effect on recidivism

Study	Year	State	PSCE Recidivism	No PSCE Recidivism
Holloway and Moke	1986	Ohio	11.6%	22.1%
O’Neil	1990	Alabama	3.9%	11.5%
Clark	1991	New York	26.4%	44.6%
Stevens and Ward	1997	North Carolina	5%	40%
Lockwood, Nally, Ho, and Knutson	2012 (2005-2009)	Indiana	31%	50.1%

Overwhelmingly, education in general leads to lowered recidivism rates in returning citizens, but there is even lower recidivism for those who have received PSCE while incarcerated. Studies have revealed that PSCE increases offender awareness and self-efficacy as well as decreases negative behavior. PSCE also aids returning citizens in attainment of jobs upon release which ultimately assists in keeping them focused and employed so that they have less of a need to return to a life of crime. Recidivism is a large problem in most correctional systems, and an issue that greatly impacts the fabric of our society, but giving offenders a chance to better themselves through education has proven to be a way partially close the *revolving doors*

of our country's jails and prisons. Faith-based education is a viable option for providing offenders a chance to better themselves personally.

### **New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary: Angola Extension**

The New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS) was founded in “1917.... and offers an academic environment that utilizes innovative delivery systems, preparing students for ministry (New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016, p. 1).

New Orleans Seminary was the first theological institution to be created by direct action of the Southern Baptist Convention. It was originally created as an undergraduate institution modeled after Moody Bible Institute. Gradually, the school began to move toward graduate level training, and in 1946 the Convention renamed the institution ‘New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary’ (New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016, p. 1).

It is “accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award associate, baccalaureate, master, and doctorate degrees” (New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016, p. 1).

“Since 1982 New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary has been engaged in extension center work at the master's degree level” (New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016, p. 1). There are extension center locations spread out across various parts of Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and Florida which offer Bachelor's and Masters of Art degrees in many aspects of Christian Ministry. The Leavell College-LSP Joan Horner Center Campus Extension of NOBTS was founded 1995 within the maximum security compound of the Louisiana State Penitentiary (LSP) at Angola, LA. Its purpose is to provide a post-secondary education to offenders incarcerated at LSP which “is to prepare offender leaders to evangelize their peers within all areas of the prison, and other institutions of the Louisiana Department of Corrections” (Sharkey, 2016, p. 1). In order to be accepted into the seminary, offenders must be a member of a local church, have attained a high school diploma or GED (HiSET), complete the *Experiencing God*

course, submit a written recommendation from their pastor, and write a statement of their religious experience. Offenders have an opportunity to attain a Faith-Based Certificated, an Associate Degree in Christian Ministry, and/or a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Christian Ministry (Sharkey, 2016).

The graduates of the Bible College are used throughout the Department of Corrections facilities throughout the state of Louisiana. They work with chaplains at various locations to encourage participation in religious programs in other facilities. “The graduates develop and facilitate faith-based discipleship training course and assist the chaplains with worship services, prayer meetings, Bible studies, one-on-one ministry visitations, and other duties designated by supervising chaplains” (Sharkey, 2016, p. 4). These offender ministers deal with the needs and problems specific to offender populations. They are housed with their peers and are recognized by their peers as leaders, religious leaders, who maintain peace and tranquility while instilling hope through spirituality.

Overall, the program increases the offenders’ educational levels by providing them with college degrees. Upon graduation they have other opportunities to utilize what they’ve learned in seminary. The program also can provide offenders with access to job opportunities upon release being that they are marketable as having these college degrees. They can pursue employment in fields such as “pastoring, counseling, teaching,” or other related disciplines (Sharkey, 2016). It is the hope that the graduates “can use the education to change their own moral and spiritual values. (That) It will increase their ability to make positive decisions in negative situations. (That) It will certainly enhance their chances of remaining law abiding citizens in society” (Sharkey, 2016, p. 6).

## **The Louisiana Life Sentence and Its Impact on Current Prison Numbers at Angola**

After researching and seeing so many of the positive outcomes available when education and religion are introduced to a prison population, my question is: How can we say that we have a rehabilitative penal system when we basically have a *lock them up and throw away the key* mentality? The state of Louisiana is known as the Prison Capital of the World. We have the highest prison population per capita on the globe. “Louisiana’s incarceration rate is nearly five times Iran’s, 13 times China’s, and 20 times Germany’s” (Chang, 2012, p. 1). Our numbers are high, but not because we as Louisianans are inherently more violent or immoral than anyone else, but because of mandatory sentencing, nonviolent offender recidivism, and the underlying monetary gain of the Louisiana PIC our prison beds stay full and our men and women remain in an ultimately desolate situation. I’ve heard many politicians in Louisiana speak about crime and high rates of recidivism. They comment about how nonviolent offenders are influenced in the prison system and how they should create laws that will lessen their time served and keep the crime rates down by not exposing them to violent offenders, but in my opinion it is not just those individuals that should be the target of advocacy. In this state, over 6000 individuals are housed at the Louisiana State Penitentiary, Angola. The majority of these men are charge with violent crimes from their past and many of them were first time offenders. Louisiana life sentences are given out mandatorily to all first and second degree murder offenders. And in Louisiana *life means life*, a judge is unable to place a term of years for parole eligibility with the sentence. All cases are treated the same no matter the situation, and most of the ethnic populations (Black Americans) and those with low socioeconomic status are railroaded into convictions; with resources and knowledge, however, they could have received a lesser charge which in turn carries a lesser sentence. What happened to forgiveness and redemption? Have people forgotten that the person they were 20+ years ago is not the same person they are today? Life changes and

molds us into who we are, but we have all had some sort of indiscretion that we wish we could have avoided years ago. These adult defining moments forever change us and cause us to choose a path that will dictate our life work and our self-worth.

In my 20 month long experience with so-called *violent offenders*, I have stumbled upon a group of individuals whose moral compasses surpass that of my own. The men with whom I have interacted on a daily and weekly basis have shown me more of a Christ-like existence than many on the streets. Is it possible that their path to redemption and education was supposed to lead them through the trenches of the penal system? Yes. Maybe. But. This should not dictate their future life circumstances. These men may have committed violent offenses in their past, but most of them are considered *low risk* offenders. Many of them have beat the odds of what institutionalization should have done to them. They have used the tools given to them within the walls of the institution to become better individuals who deserve a chance at life outside the prison walls where their testimonies and stories of redemption can be an example for those seeking forgiveness. The men in my study have been given a chance to turn over a new leaf and change their lives for the better. Angola is a model facility for other prisons throughout the nation. And despite this turn over, the inmates in this facility have been saddled with life sentences that will more than likely never allow them to live freely as the men they've become - valuable assets to society as well as to their families.

Louisiana has no pity... Angola is home to scores of old men who cannot get out of bed, let alone commit a crime. Someone who made a terrible mistake in his youth and has transformed himself after decades in prison has little to no chance at freedom (Chang, 2012, p. 4).

Until their plight, *our plight*, is heard; our state will continue to turn a blind eye to these families and continue to perpetuate penalty over rehabilitation when these men are ready and able to return to society and become hardworking, taxpaying citizens.

### **Education and Religion as a Path to Redemption**

As a practicing Catholic, I follow a religious doctrine that prides itself on the tenants of both social justice and forgiveness. We are taught as Catholics that God is the only true judge as it pertains to our sins and that if we repent and are truly sorry for our sins (*no matter the enormity of that sin*) we will be forgiven. In the Catholic Church, we are also given opportunities to confess to our priests and repent for our sins and in return we receive absolution from God. With this being the doctrine that I have grown up knowing and practicing, I feel as though everyone deserves a chance at redemption and that their families and communities should be involved in that redemptive process with love and open arms.

The family structure is something I have witnessed and experienced to be strong within the prison culture at Angola. This does not necessarily mean *blood* family relationships, but more so the close-knit family created between inmates, their wives, and their children not dissimilar among a school community. Sometime actual blood related family members share in the experience, but for a lot of the *long-term* inmates those people have long since cut themselves off. The prison family network that I belong to works together to bring as much normalcy to this dark situation as possible. Many of the women involved in relationships with inmates are religious women who believe strongly in redemption. On any given weekend as you walk through the visiting shed you will see husbands and wives (and sometimes children) sitting together reading from the Bible or having a discussion to increase their knowledge base. These



families encourage each other to be better people and to be good stewards of the opportunities given to them as incarcerated families.

Twenty years is a very long time to think about the mistakes we've made and to try and make amends for them. In my experience with my fiancé, he has clearly taken responsibility for the grave mistake he made and lack of judgment that led to him taking a life and surrendering his own. As his family, I believe it is my duty to support and care for him without judgement.

Being able to feel and experience the emotions of love and forgiveness enables incarcerated men to have a sense of humanity, which in turn aids in completing the redemptive process. I feel that to know someone else believes in them will certainly enhance one's view of self-worth. With self-worth increased, Self-efficacy as described by Bandura (1995) will also increase and Social Learning Theory as explained by Miller (2002) will be enacted.

Returning to the literature, Haye's (2012) study results posited that the students/inmates in her study felt validation and worth when their scholarship was recognized by outside persons. Having others see something in them that they didn't see in themselves helped them in building their self-worth (Hayes, 2012), connecting directly to Bandura's Self-efficacy Theory (1995) in a very real way.

Families can have the same impact, and they can and do provide the support and affirmation needed by their incarcerated family members. Education coupled with religious notions and family support can lead to rehabilitation and reform in these individuals. This rehabilitation and reform should allow them a chance to become valuable members of society once again which directly connects to Miller's (2002) notion of a Social Learning Theory.

### **Summary: The 2016 Baylor Study**

“A first of its kind prototype in a quickly expanding policy arena, Angola’s unique Inmate Minister program deploys trained graduates of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in bi-vocational pastoral roles throughout the prison” (Hallett, Hays, Johnson, Jang, & Duwe, 2016, p. i). This unheard of tactic to redeem the morality and return hope in a group of men with sorted pasts and bleak futures was implemented at the Louisiana State Penitentiary by Warden Burl Cain with the inception of the Prison Seminary program and the use of inmates as ministers. The most recent study conducted on the prison seminary at Angola was a three year analysis performed by a group of professors from Baylor University, published in 2016. This study was carried out by using “survey analysis along with life-history interviews of inmates and staff to explore the history, purpose, and functioning of the Inmate Minister program at Louisiana State Penitentiary” (Hallett, Hays, Johnson, Jang, & Duwe, 2016, p. iii).

“As a group, Angola’s Inmate Ministers are drawn from a pool of the prison’s most accomplished prisoners” who are trained and disseminated throughout the prison as beacons of God’s word and His light for their peers (Hallett, Hays, Johnson, Jang, & Duwe, 2016, p. 21). The level of trust placed in the hands of offenders was unprecedented. When *unit management* became the standard at LSP as a form of operations, there was an enormous increase in the productivity of the prison and a hefty decrease in violence. Warden Cain had essentially broken the prison down into “well-defined inmate groups which were identified with a specific unit and with staff who were responsible for delivery of specific programs and services” (Hallett, Hays, Johnson, Jang, & Duwe, 2016, p. 10).

The Angola Prison Seminary was the focal point of this transformation which bridged the gap between inmates and staff, and allowed inmates to experience redemption along with the

responsibilities that came along with it. Inmate Ministers who gained their status by graduating from the NOBTS bachelor's degree program in Christian Ministry or by the Catholic theological formation program called Ministry and Theology I & II, were selected based on their disciplinary history to be an example for their peers of moral rehabilitation, behavior, and ethics. As "class A" trustees, they are allowed access to different parts of the main prison as well as the outer camps to minister to other inmates. Most Inmate Ministers have "bi-vocational" roles at the prison having "regular work assignments in addition to their *always on duty* status as an Inmate Minister" (Hallett, Hays, Johnson, Jang, & Duwe, 2016, p. 17). It is important to note that these ministers make up the population of inmates that navigate through the normal everyday goings of prison life and deliver conflict management and counseling services to their peers on a daily basis due to their extensive study during their time in the NOBTS program where they study these things as required minors. They are able to discuss and participate with other inmates, while keeping normalcy without being "too preachy outside of voluntary worship services" (Hallett, Hays, Johnson, Jang, & Duwe, 2016, p. 18). "Inmate Ministers often have more education and training in counseling than many corrections officers and chaplains" (Hallett, Hays, Johnson, Jang, & Duwe, 2016, p. 21).

Angola Deputy Warden, Davy Kelone, a skeptic in the early days of the program implementation, said that the inmate minister program

would help with everything....because it would give hope....in the early days of this prison, that was one of the terrible things, that there was no hope, because of the darkness and no hope...as an inmate, you were here to die (Hallett, Hays, Johnson, Jang, & Duwe, 2016, p. 20).

To introduce hope into this prison society of long-term offenders and *lifers* can make a difference, and placing Inmate Ministers throughout the prison in carefully chosen areas would prove to bring about improvement from every aspect. Over time, the prison seminary at Angola has provided “opportunities for men serving life in prison to move beyond their criminal identities by offering them a vocation founded upon reexamination of transgressive behavior through an ethic in love and service” (Hallett, Hays, Johnson, Jang, & Duwe, 2016, p. 76).

*Making Good* is a characteristic where by an ex-offender begins to establish redemption through goodness, and with the help of outside forces, *someone who believes in them*, the ex-offender is able to feel accomplished and achieve the good things that they were possibly *always meant to do*. In turn the *newly empowered* ex-offender now seeks to give something back to society in order to display gratitude or make amends for their past transgressions (Maruna, 2008). In the case of the student inmates and graduates from the NOBTS program they have been given an opportunity to *make good* and have chosen to do so while providing other inmates within the facility and across the state with hope. These types of paths to redemption often “allows the person to rewrite a shameful past into a necessary prelude to a productive and worthy life” even inside of the prison walls (Maruna, 2008, p. L1817). The combination of education and religion allows the incarcerated individual to use this catalyst to change, but ultimately use their inner feelings of self-worth to allow goodness to emerge. “The outside force – education - removes the brick wall, but it is up to the individual to take off” (Maruna, 2008, p. L2018) and to use their new found educational knowledge, self-efficacy, and religious enlightenment to carve their individual paths to redemption.

While chapter 2 offered a review of literature encompassing the School-to-Prison Pipeline, The Myth of Black Progress, the Defunding of Higher Education and the Prison

Industrial Complex Funding in Louisiana, Post-Secondary Correction Education, the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary: Angola Extension, the Louisiana Life Sentence and Its Impact on Current Prison Numbers at Angola, Education and Religion as a Path to Redemption, and the 2016 Baylor Study; chapter 3 presents the design of the proposed study. In chapter 3, the parameters of the study are detailed as well as data analysis techniques.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methods**

In this chapter, I present the study design, a narrative case study, and highlight aspects of the study. Included are: participants, setting, situatedness of researcher's position, data sources, and analysis strategies.

#### **Narrative Inquiry**

"A narrative case study is a story of a real life problem or situation that provides sufficient background data so that the problem can be analyzed and solved" (Laurel and Associates Ltd, 2014, p. 1). Telling one's story is a way of finding out what's important to the individual and being able to compare the stories of others in order identify a common thread that may link individual experiences.

Narrative inquiry follows a recursive, reflexive process of moving from field (with starting points in telling or living of stories) to field texts (data) to interim and final research texts. Commonplaces of temporality, sociality and place create a conceptual framework within which different kinds of field texts and different analyses can be used. Narrative inquiry highlights ethical matters as well as shapes new theoretical understandings of people's experiences (Clandinin & Huber, 2010, p. 1).

When studying specific cases, a researcher may want to employ the narrative inquiry process in order to get the best understanding of the perspective of the participants. Sometimes using the narrative stories of the subject is the only way to completely delve into the psyche of the participant in relationship to the case being studied. The subject's life reflection on how his story impacts the case in question is an important aspect of the part his experiences play in the totality of the case study being researched. The way that the participants view themselves is important in framing the way that they've responded to the situation in which the researcher is studying. "The construction of self, others, and events are necessary in telling stories; in so doing, the narrator imposes meaning on actions, events, and characters" (Hayes, 2012, p. 36).

Relationships must be built in order for there to be the most comfort for the participant throughout the research process. “Because of the collaborative nature of narrative research, it is important for the researcher and the participant to establish a trusting and respectful relationship” (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006). This means that the researcher must interact with the participant in a way that is beneficial to the research information being gathered while building a personal, non-biased, and cordial rapport with the subject. A participant needs to be comfortable sharing his story with the researcher without fear of judgment or misuse of information. “One of the goals of narrative research in education is to increase understanding of the central issues related to teaching and learning through the telling, and retelling, of teachers’ stories” (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006). In this particular study, it is imperative to share the stories of the participants in order to understand the overall effects of education and religion in this culture.

### **The Appropriateness of Case Study Research**

“Case studies are a design of inquiry found in many fields in which a researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals” (Creswell, 2013). This type of research is the “preferred strategy when *how* or *why* questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (Yin, 2003). There are three different types of case study research: Intrinsic, Instrumental, and Collective (Stake, 1995). An intrinsic case study focuses directly on the case in particular and is specific to just dissecting and understanding that particular case. A collective case study “involves more than one case, which may or may not be physically located with other cases” (Goddard, 2016). This type of case study was chosen “because it is believed that understanding them (the participant case) will lead to a better understanding, perhaps a better theorizing, about a larger collection of cases”

(Stake, 1995). The type of case study used for this research was the instrumental case study. In this type of design, “a particular case is examined to provide insight into an issue or refinement theory” (Stake, 1995). The case or cases that are being examined are playing a secondary role as they are being used to foster a better understanding of something greater. When looking at both Stake and Yin’s definitions of case study research, one thing stands out as a difference that can be left up to researcher interpretation is the type of study that will most benefit from case study design. Stake notes that a case study “would be more beneficial to study programs and people and less beneficial to study events and processes” (Yazan, 2015, p. 6), whereas Yin “finds case study methods a best fit for program evaluation” (Yazan, 2015, p. 6). For the research that occurred in this study, the case study design was applied to study a program and people within a culture, and it evaluated how that program could possibly effect the overall mindset and rehabilitation of a group of individuals.

### **Why Use This Method?**

A combination of the case study method and narrative data collection was chosen for this research because of the need to explore the questions through the stories of the participants. Relying on the work of Hayes in a similar context, a narrative case study was selected as the most appropriate design. “While the stories, perspectives, and experiences of the incarcerated students are central, the cultural context of the prison is also significant” (Hayes, 2012). In her study, Hayes collected data through “observation, participant observation, interview, and review of archival data” (Hayes, 2012, p. 40). Throughout her personal observation, she was able to gain general knowledge about the prison and the prison school. For approximately three months on a regular basis, Hayes was allowed to see and spend time in the physical school environment and other spaces in the prison the participants frequented. She created field notes on what she



saw and experienced in the school and during the Be the Change meetings. Her observations also focused on “behaviors, words, and actions of incarcerated learners regarding education, self, and community” and, she, “took field notes, highlighting examples of the community and ways they discussed labels and labeling, social skills and community, academic learning, and significant experiences” (Hayes, 2012, p. 41). The participant observations gave a “more detailed picture of life and education for the students” (Hayes, 2012, p. 41). Hayes not only attended the weekly Be the Change meetings, she immersed herself in the culture by volunteering to facilitate group discussions. She felt as though full “participant observation was a way to develop a deeper understanding of individuals and the community” (Hayes, 2012, p. 41). She added that participating as a facilitator created a space for her to contribute to the prison community and gave her time to interact with the students building relationships. Interviews were conducted twice with each of the six study participants “in order to hear their personal educational narratives” (Hayes, 2012, p. 42). She asked mostly open-ended narrative questions which “sought participants’ stories and experiences related to labels and labeling, social skills, academic learning in college classrooms, as well as experiences in prison and school” (Hayes, 2012, p. 42). For archival data she looked for information and published data about “the Be the Change Program, Virginia Community College, and the Commonwealth Correctional Center”, but was unable to find much relevant information.

Being able to gather participant perspectives through their own stories and in their voice was essential to this study. “Typically case study research uses a variety of evidence from different sources, such as documents, artifacts, interviews and observation, and this goes beyond the range of sources of evidence that might be available in historical study” (Rowley, 2002). For this study there were multiple artifacts that were directly procured from the participants in order

to paint the picture of narrative that best describes their personal experiences in the prison Bible College. Through open ended narrative questions, discussion, and observations, I was able to give an account of their experiences and tie it directly to the ideas of the School-to-Prison Pipeline as well as the prison to school to redemption full circle. Using narrative data collection in conjunction with the case study design allowed me to focus on the participants and their voices and understandings of their experiences.

### **Parameters of the Study**

In this next section, I detail specific methodological aspects of the study. These aspects are typical of both case study design (Goddard, 2016; Stake, 2005; Yazan, 2015; Yin, 2003) and narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Huber, 2010; Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2006).

### **Participants**

As part of this study, I have chosen participants to represent three different aspects of the Prison to School to Redemption cycle. These participants were selected based on their relationship and familiarity with the Bible College as well as their understanding of the prison culture and religious influence through ministry. The five participants in this study consisted of four current incarcerated men who have served 15+ years at the LSP (two pastors, one teacher, and one new graduate) and who have completed a BA in Christian Ministry at the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary while incarcerated and one returning citizen who served 20+ years at LSP and completed a BA in Christian Ministry at NOBTS while he was incarcerated. All five of these participants provided a wealth of knowledge about the prison culture as well as the effects of the Bible school on the individual inmates. The four current incarcerated men as well as the returning citizen were able to provide the researcher with pertinent knowledge specific to prison life at Angola and their educational journey that would not otherwise be attainable. They

were also able to point out key factors in their lives that may have led them through the School-to-Prison Pipeline and have a bearing on their reasons for seeking education as incarcerated men. These five case study participants were able to give the researcher and the readers a glimpse into the cultural and educational shifts that have happened within that institution.

## **Setting**

Having its own zip code, the LSP is located in Angola, Louisiana near the town of St. Francisville, La, in West Feliciana Parish. “It is the only fully maximum security institution in the state, housing over 6,300 adult males, over 85% of which are violent offenders” (Prison Pro, 2016). Approximately 4000 inmates in this prison are serving life sentences, and the facility houses the states male death row inmates. Once being known as the *bloodiest prison in America*, LSP has made a drastic shift to a more peaceful and spiritual place. Within the walls of the Main Prison, the Leavell College NOBTS was constructed. “The specific purpose of the NOBTS Extension Center at LSP is to prepare offender leaders to evangelize their peers within all areas of the prison, and other institutions of the Louisiana Department of Corrections” (Sharkey, 2016). Along with the Bible College, Angola has a host of programs available to their incarcerated population. “LSP has educational and vocational programs that allow inmates to earn a GED and adult basic education and teach carpentry, welding, horticulture, culinary skills, automotive repair, H-VAC, electrical, and industrial painting” (Prison Pro, 2016).

The incarcerated individuals in this study live within the walls of the Main Prison in designated dormitory areas. There are two yards in the Main Prison (east and west yard), and the incarcerated individuals live their daily lives moving between the dormitories, their assigned jobs, the bible college, the gym, and the yard. If they have visits or jobs there, they are allowed to go to the A Building or visiting shed on Friday through Sunday. The visiting shed is where

they get to spend time for a few hours with their families and loved ones who come to see them. All of the face-to-face interactions with the participants occurred in this visiting shed on the weekends and at the spring Angola Prison Rodeo.

### **Researcher's Positioning**

My research has been inspired by my personal interactions with the inmates at LSP. I situate myself as a full participant in this proposed study (Spradley, 1980). In 2015, I met Keith Morse, a current inmate at LSP, and we began a friendship which evolved into a relationship that will be finalized in marriage. Keith is currently a graduate of the Bible College and has received his B.A. in Christian Ministry, and he has given me much insight on the program and the overall change in the prison culture as a result of it. Prior to meeting him, I was unaware of such programs and unaware of the normalcy of the prison culture. Spending time with Keith over the span of 18 months has made me a more socially-conscious individual. I am able to see things through another lens and operate more aware of my surroundings and privilege, as well as of the circumstances of those less fortunate. Keith is not a participant in this study.

I have been an educator for 14+ years and have worked with children from varying backgrounds. I have watched some of the best kids become the worst adults and some of the worse kids become sensible responsible citizens. I have always taken an interest in my low performing and/or disadvantaged students. I took pride in being able to have them actually want to learn and being there for them to show them that they can learn. I've always had the most rewarding experiences with my jobs when I was able to teach and mold the students that others had written off as problems. Seeing the children actually believe in themselves because I believe in them is astounding. Therefore, learning about the School-to-Prison Pipeline and being able to link both of my passions together is a worthwhile opportunity.

My research into the full cycle of *School-to-Prison to School to Redemption* is very important to me. I feel as though I am able to give a voice to those who may not have otherwise gotten one. I reference this to children experiencing the School-to-Prison Pipeline as well as the incarcerated adults who have chosen school and redemption.

As a researcher and educator, I was interested in exploring the mindsets of the men who have chosen to become educated despite their desolate situations; as a social activist I'd like to delve into how the educational training they have received as well as the religious foundations have helped them to become better men. Men who are able and ready to be redeemed by society and rejoin the world as law abiding, God fearing, educated, citizens.

### **Data Sources**

In order to collect my narratives for this case study, I used a blend of data collection methods. For this study, with IRB approval and committee approval, I gathered participant narrative response through hand written letters, field notes generated from face-to-face discussions and visit observations, Personal and Academic Self-Concept Inventory (PASCI) Survey (Appendix C), review of selected artifacts, and a researcher's notebook. Triangulation, the process of verifying, validating and disconfirming, (Charmaz, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; 2011) occurred from utilizing different sources of data. Table 5 presents a data collection timeline.

Table 5: Data Collection Timeline

Type of Data	Participant	Collection Start	Collection End
<b>Researcher Journal</b>	Kristen Antoine	December 2015	Ongoing
<b>Participant Survey and Written Responses</b>	Ronald Hicks	April 10, 2017	April 16, 2017
	Ronald Olivier	April 10, 2017	April 16, 2017
	Randy Finch	April 10, 2017	April 16, 2017
	Neil Spencer	April 10, 2017	April 16, 2017
<b>One on One Face-to-face/Phone Interview</b>	Daniel Swann	April 2017	April 2017
<b>Discussion Face-to- face Interview</b>	Ronald Hicks	April 23, 2017	April 23, 2017
	Ronald Olivier		
	Randy Finch		
	Neil Spencer		

**Letters.** Once agreement was made through email to participate in the study, physical copies of the Participant Consent Form were mailed out to the prison via US Postal to be filled out and returned to me by mail or in person as per IRB approval requirement. I also sent them each a hard copy of the questions and a research article on the School-to-Prison Pipeline (Beyond School-to-Prison Pipeline and Toward an Educational and Penal Realism; (Fasching-Varner, Mitchell, Martin, & Bennett-Haron, 2014) for a personal reflection based on the idea of *the Pipeline* and how or if they were impacted by it as school-age children as per the aforementioned authors' notions.

**Face-to-Face Discussion.** During the 2017 spring Angola Prison Rodeo (April 22 to April 23), I had an approximately hour-long discussion with the incarcerated participants individually and through phone contact was able to interview the returning citizen. During the face-to-face discussions, we revisited the original questions proposed for this study. Participants had an opportunity to expound on their original answers upon discussion and reflection. Depending on the intensity of the discussion and the willingness of the participants, I asked other questions in relationship to the original research questions to get a better gauge of their perspectives. This face-to-face meeting was an opportunity for me to discuss, read body language, and get a better understanding of the uniqueness of this situation. Field notes were generated immediately after each discussion.

**Returning Citizen.** The one remaining participant, the returning citizen, was contacted through phone and regular email. He received the Participant Consent forms, and we scheduled a time for phone interview because he is currently working in Maryland; a physical meeting was not feasible. He was asked the same questions as the incarcerated individuals and asked about his experience with the School-to-Prison Pipeline after a discussion was had about what it really is as per Fasching Varner, Mitchell and Martin's (2014) notion of the concept.

**PASCI Survey.** The Personal and Academic Self Concept Survey was created as a tool to measure multiple dimensions of self-concept. For this study an adapted version of the original Fleming survey which uses academic and non-academic categories which have both been broken down further into more categories (Fleming & Whalen, 1990). This altered survey assessed self-regard, social acceptance, academic ability, verbal ability, math ability, physical appearance, social anxiety, and parental acceptance. All participants answered on a scale of 1 to 7 with seven being on the higher end for positive self-efficacy in each category. Some of the questions were

scored in reverse (signified by R on the answer key) which meant that the score given for that question would be the numerical opposite in the range (ex. 1R=7; 3R=5).

**Artifacts.** Selected artifacts about LSP were utilized as well. These included brochures from The NOBTS, Prison newspaper articles, the 2016 Baylor Study and the *Angolite*- quarterly magazine created, edited, and published by incarcerated men at LSP, Angola.

**Researcher's Notebook.** A researcher's notebook was maintained as a final data source. Originally it served as a way to record any ideas such as resources, events, and situations. Implementation decisions were also recorded. Reflections were used as an analytical means of confirming field notes and adding more contextual depth to findings.

### **Data Analysis**

The data collected in this study were categorized and organized by each of the question types (6) for each of the participants involved in the study. The narrative stories of the participants from who they are, to their early educational experiences, to their prison life and college experiences, and finally their opinions and thoughts on the School-to-Prison Pipeline (as laid out by the article they read and further discussion) was collected and organized according to the questionnaire responses. Analysis began with transcription of interviews, questionnaire responses, field notes, and my researcher's journal. I applied inductive open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to sentences and/or phrases from each of the data sources. Codes were consolidated and categorized and finally collapsed into code categories, and from categories, themes were extracted (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldaña, 2009). Trustworthiness was achieved through member checks (Patton, 2002) and prolonged contact with participants and the workings of LSP. The member checks were performed by reading and rereading participant written responses; then having face-to-face interviews with participants in order to assure



researcher assumptions of the narrative stories were correct. Participant data collected through PASCI survey was also a third check to have a normalized way of assessing participant self-perception.

**Open Coding.** Because the data analysis in this study “involves collecting open-ended data, based on asking general questions and developing an analysis from the information supplied by the participants” *open coding* procedures were used (Creswell J. , 2009, p. 184). While carefully reading through the participant written responses to the questionnaire responses, I sorted and grouped the responses by code (Roberts, 2010). Next, I compiled a list of common codes as they relates to each of the survey questions and the participant answers. This allowed me to create a *master coding list* which was a combination of topic codes which became themes, patterns and categories related to the individual research questions. Code instances will be counted. I made sure to illustrate the similarities and differences found within the responses, and identified the common threads of information while acknowledging the possible outlier information. NVivo Software was used to sort responses and create table data for participants (QSR International, 2017).

### **Ethics of Representation**

“Ethical issues in research command increased attention today. The ethical considerations that need to be anticipated are extensive, and they are reflected through the research process” (Creswell J. W., 2013). Prior to beginning my research and throughout data collection and reporting attention was placed on the ethical concerns as it relates to working with an incarcerated population. Creswell believes that attention must be given to ethics in research “prior to conducting the study; beginning the study; during data collect and data analysis; and in reporting, sharing and storing the data” (Creswell, 2013, pg. 92). In this particular study, I had to

make those ethical considerations in order to protect my participants as well as to report appropriately on my findings.

Prior to conducting the research, I completed the National Institute of Health Protecting Human Research Participants Ethics training and submitted my proposal to the LSU Institutional Review Board with a full review for approval. The Ethics training course reviews and gives quizzes over considerations for human subjects and specifies certain restrictions for children, pregnant women and incarcerated individuals. This was most pertinent to my study in that it deals with incarcerated individuals.

Prior to beginning of the study, the purpose of the study were disclosed to the participants and there was no pressure placed upon them to participate. While collecting data, I sent the same documents to all participants and there was only one when as a researcher, I conducted questioning within the facility. This gave the participants autonomy to write their own responses separately and only report verbally with me if they chose to expound. Having them do their responses separately on their own time also lessened the potential power imbalance that could occur.

A relationship has been established with the selected participants, therefore I ensured that each individual felt as though they are a vital part of the study and not being *used* for information. I also forewarned them that I did not want to collect data that could possibly be harmful to them as participants. We did not discuss anything that is related to their specific court cases or past incriminating actions. The study questions were strictly centered on their educational experiences as a youth and their Bible College experience in prison.

While analyzing and reporting the data, I made sure that all perspectives were reported. I did not focus only on one participant or perpetuated bias toward anyone's case. As the data was collected, it reflected on the participant and their views regardless of whether it fit with the researcher's projected outcome. If the participant chose to remain anonymous, pseudo-names would have been used, but all participants consented to using their real names and experiences. Participant data was reported and analyzed using common language, and all participants were allowed to view the findings prior to final submission as a form of member checking (Patton, 2002). If the paper is considered for publication, participants will also be notified and asked for consent to use their names.

**Bias.** In qualitative work, bias is often acknowledged as an issue. Is my enthusiasm for Keith a potentially bias? Will participants respond as was expected because I was asking the questions? My position as not incarcerated and my frame of reference as an educator may impact my interpretations and are also potential biases.

In this chapter I outlined the proposed study design, data sources, data collection and my stance as a researcher. In chapter 4, I present results, while chapter 5 highlights study implications.

## Chapter 4

### Data Collection/Analysis

The findings of my study were collected through written interview questions, participant self-efficacy survey, researcher journal, individual discussions with participants, and written response to the School-to-Prison Pipeline article. In the following section the five written interview questions have been examined for the four currently incarcerated research participants.

Table 6: General information for four currently incarcerated participants.

Participants	Nick Name	Age at Incarceration	Current Age	Highest Level of Education Before Incarceration	Length of Incarceration	GED Completion	Year NOBTS Completion
Ron C. Hicks	Pastor Hicks	19	45	11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	26 years	1992	2002
Neal Spencer	Neal	20	46	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	26 years	2002	2016
Ronald Olivier	Ronnie	16	42	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	24 years	1995	2005
Randy Finch	Randy	24	39	1 year Community College	15 years	1994	2011

### Written Interview Protocol for Currently Incarcerated Participants (See Appendix C for Questions)

The participants in this study were all mailed written interview questions (Appendix C) approved by the L.S.U. Internal Review Board, and submitted their answers in writing. Upon analyzing the questions I found where some needed to be expounded on, fleshed out, and extended. This is when the individual face-to-face interviews came into play. As in Hayes (2012) study, “This format allows each man to tell personally significant stories and gives readers an understanding of each man and his personal journey in education” (Hayes, 2012, p. 47). Both of these methods were used in collection of the original data. The information was categorized and sorted using NVivo Software (QSR International, 2017) and responses were

arranged in order of graduation dates with most recent first. Below are the specific interview questions and answers for each of the four participants:

**Question One.** Describe your background: where were you born, family structure, and level of education.

- Neal Spencer: “I was born and raised in Beaumont, TX. My mom and dad divorced when we were young, so my mom raised us. It was 3 boys and 2 girls. I quit school after the 9th grade” (Spencer, 2017).

In my face-to-face interview with Neal he elaborated on his childhood experiences and his family structure. Neal revealed that his parents divorced when he was about twelve years old and his father remained in the Beaumont area, but he wasn’t really present in their lives. His mother made sure they had everything they needed, but she wasn’t really strict; therefore they were allowed to do many things within the home that typically one wouldn’t see. As long as they were home they were allowed to drink, smoke, etc. Neal felt as though if he had had more of a father figure or stricter mother figure present he may not have been so way-worth. Neal was incarcerated at 20 years old and has spent 26 years at Louisiana State Penitentiary.

- Randy Finch: “New Orleans, LA. Typical family structure; mother, step-father, (1) brother, (1) Sister and High School Equivalency” (Finch, 2017).

In my face-to-face interview with Randy he brought more clarity to his background information. Randy lived with his mother and step-father. His mother had some college experience and his step-father had completed high school. Randy dropped out of school during the 11<sup>th</sup> grade because he just didn’t want to be there. He had missed 66 classes and was not interested in the school environment. At the age of 16 he entered into a program called Youth

Challenge where he was able to attain his G.E.D. Randy said his time in high school was very rough. He said it was the “typical hood New Orleans school”. He even equated it to the movie *Lean on Me* in the beginning when there was chaos and violence daily on campus. Randy eventually went into the military and was discharged after three years of service. He was incarcerated in 2002 at 24 years old and has been incarcerated for 15 years.

- Ronald Oliver: “I was born March 10, 1975, in New Orleans, Louisiana by the proud parents of Reginald Payne Sr. and Adrian Olivier. I came from a broken home and scattered siblings. My mother has two other kids; younger brother and an older sister. On my dad's side, I have an older brother and sister and a younger brother and sister” (Olivier, 2017).

During my face-to-face interview with Ronnie he reiterated the trauma he experienced when his father moved to Florida. This was a very painful experience for him as a small child. He told me that he felt abandoned. His father was an authoritarian and without his guidance, Ronnie fell victim to bad influences and *the streets* at an early age. In 1991, Ronnie was 16 years old and in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, when he started selling drugs. As a result, in December of 1991, he was incarcerated and served with a mandatory Life Sentence as a juvenile. Ronnie has been incarcerated for 26 years.

- Ron Hicks: “I was born in Opelousas, LA in a family of five siblings. I am the youngest of two brothers and two sisters. My parents are still alive and have been married for over fifty years. I have a BA Degree and a few vocational certifications” (Hicks, 2017).

When sitting down to talk to Pastor Hicks, we first discussed his humility in answering his Personal and Academic Self-Inventory survey. Then when asked to expound on his background

information he shared with me that as the youngest of six children his parent were not very strict with him. He shared that his father was a strong *provider* but wasn't really involved in their daily lives. His mother did more of the day to day involvement. Pastor Hicks dropped out of high school and *ran the streets* which ultimately led to his incarceration at 19 years of age. He has been incarcerated for 26 years.

In reflecting on the responses of these men, I found that that there were many similarities as well as differences in their family structures and background information. Two of the participants grew up without an immediate father figure within the home. Their upbringing was dominated by a combination of their mothers' coaching as well as their *street life* family. The other two participants had a father figure within their homes, but the father figures did not take a direct interest in their daily on-goings. I surmise that their upbringing was very similar to the participants who lacked a father figure in that they did not receive that one on one attention and fatherly encouragement that could have persuaded them to stay in school and away from the *street life*. It also stood out that their households were not strict, and their mothers, although present, did not require them to follow true *house rules*. They were allowed to participate in *street life* activities and it was acceptable. All of the participants, except for one, entered prison as an adult. The other one was a juvenile sentenced to LWOPP at the age of 16. Their amounts of time incarcerated ranged from 15 years to 26 years, and this has a lot to do with their ability to give information from different perspectives. The above data is important in establishing the validity of their perspectives.

**Question Two.** Describe your high school and post-high school educational experience prior to incarceration.

- Neal Spencer: “I never cared about school. I only did what I had to do to get by. I just wanted to run the streets and have fun” (Spencer, 2017).

When speaking with Neal further about his high school experience, he said that he did just enough to get by, but because he was allowed to drop out after the 9<sup>th</sup> grade he didn’t really have a high school experience. In high school, he *ran the streets* and had fun.

- Randy Finch: “I dropped out in high school. Obtained GED and attended Delgado Community College for (1) year” (Finch, 2017).

Randy revealed that he was never interested in school, and his high school was a very tumultuous environment. He had missed a significant amount of school, yet his teachers still were listing him as passing. School was pretty much a joke. This is why he dropped out and went to Youth Challenge at 16 where he attained his G.E.D. Randy attended Delgado Community College for one year and then, as stated above, he entered the military where he stayed for three years.

- Ronald Oliver: “My high school experience was short lived. It was very boring and not motivating. I was still in the 9th grade when I was incarcerated” (Olivier, 2017).

Ronald did not have much extra to say about his experience with high school prior to his incarceration. He was a juvenile when arrested, and did not get to have much of a high school experience. He did say that he went to school off and on while he was involved in *street* activities leading up to his crime and his arrest.

- Ron Hicks: “My education before coming to prison was just to make a grade that can keep me on the football and basketball teams. So, I only did what was required to stay on the teams” (Hicks, 2017).



Pastor Hicks was an athlete in high school, therefore the coaches were very concerned about his grades and eligibility while he was playing. He did just enough to keep the 2.0 grade point average to participate in sports. He completed school through the 11<sup>th</sup> grade, and during 12<sup>th</sup> grade year in school he just stopped going during the last 6wks of school. We discussed how a lot of young black athletes get abandoned after their coaches feel they've gotten all of the use out of them- something I've witnessed as an educator. He said that his coaches were not concerned with him quitting school even though they had been *caring* for him and his grades all before.

In the above responses it was evident that all of the men had a reason for not completing school, and it wasn't because they didn't think they were capable. All of the participants dropped out of high school. The participant that was a juvenile at the time of arrest, Ronnie, did not get to have much time in high school because he was arrested during his ninth grade year. It also seemed as if everyone opted for the *street life* as opposed to going to school. There was a genuine lack of interest in school, and all participants decided to drop out because they saw no value in the education they were being provided. When looking at the data, none of the men had someone in their immediate lives to foster in them a need for education. It seems as if Pastor Hick could have possibly had some role models in his coaches, but once he was no longer of use to them he was casted aside. I presume that had these man had someone in their lives that would have instilled in them the importance of education and thwarted the need for the *street life* they could have had more of an opportunity in having a more positive future outcome. Ronnie seemed as if he appreciated his father's authoritarian ways and would have wanted to continue to be molded by him. There was definitely a need for structure.

**Question Three.** How has the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS) College experience impacted your view of self? What has changed and How?

- Neal Spencer: “Through seminary I began to see myself as a person with a purpose. It’s cool to have fun, but that wasn’t it. It’s building a personal relationship with Christ so that I could be taught how to operate in my purpose. Now with having fun I can share the word and love of God so that people will see Christ” (Spencer, 2017).

During our interview Neal explained to me his path to the seminary school. When he first entered the penitentiary in 1991 the atmosphere was toxic. He explained how he fell into the culture and exhibited a lot of the bad behavior that was associated with being incarcerated. He spent time in Camp J (main punishment unit at L.S.P.) because of his behavior, and while he was there all he had was books; so he started reading. Throughout his time in punishment at Camp J he found where he began to read for understanding and wanted to continue his learning. When he entered back into general population in 2000 he worked on his G.E.D. and attained that in 2002. Neal did not initially want to attend the Bible College, but after witnessing the changes going on around him he decided to apply. His application was declined three times until he went to Camp C (another one of the many housing facilities at L.S.P.) and worked in the chapel there. He took a Faith Based course which usually takes two years to complete in a one year time frame and was finally accepted into the NOBTS Bachelor’s degree program in 2008.

- Randy Finch: “Obtaining a B.A. from NOBTS enhanced my view of self as a person able to obtain higher education. I consider myself a competent researcher and minister able to gather the facts and teach” (Finch, 2017).

During my interview with Randy we discussed his role as a teacher within the prison. Randy currently teaches classes to other inmates throughout the prison. Randy said that he has learned

well since being an NOBTS graduate, and enjoys learning so he can thoroughly pass the information to others.

- Ronald Oliver: “The NOBTS college experience gave me a lot of confidence and options. It was evidence that I was changed and growing into a very passionate and productive person. NOBTS helped me to discover my purpose. It helped me to live my life intentionally and with significance” (Olivier, 2017).

During my face-to-face interview with Ronnie he reiterated what he had said in response to the original written questions. He felt as though his time in the NOBTS program helped him to gain confidence. He was able to minister to other offenders not only at L.S.P., but he was sent to another prison in the state- Cottonport- to minister to them as well.

- Ron Hicks: “My experience in seminary has totally changed the way I view education and how important it is to continue the learning experience throughout my life. My confidence has grown and now I am able to help lead others to the well so that they can drink from the water of education” (Hicks, 2017).

In 1991 Pastor Hicks entered into L.S.P. to begin serving his Life Sentence. He obtained his G.E.D. in 1992 and entered into NOBTS in 1995. He completed his coursework for graduation in 2000, but had to wait until 2002 to actually graduate and get his degree because they did not have enough students ready to graduate at the time he completed his studies.

Each participant experience was different as to how they became Bible College students, but it seems as if their experiences within the college were very similar. Participant self-perception was also similar in that they all considered themselves to be confident and worthy people prior to entering the college. They all expressed that their changes within self were not a direct reflection

of the college. They expressed that the change happened first within and the Bible College enhanced what they already knew they were capable of. Their views of education was also similar in that they all knew they had the ability to perform on a college level, but were apprehensive about how well they would actually do. They all became more confident in their knowledge of the Bible and their ability to help others.

**Question Four.** How has the NOBTS College experience impacted your view of your educational/mentorship abilities?

- Neal Spencer: “This NOBTS experience has taught me how to study the word of God, how to use the word in a modern day application so that it may be shared and received in truth” (Spencer, 2017).

During our face-to-face interview, Neal expressed to me that he has always been a confident man; but he had a desire to be better. After his *awakening* during his time at Camp J, he desired to make better choices. This is what led to his eventual entry into NOBTS, and the experience only strengthened what he already knew he had the ability to do. Through the Seminary experience he could work on himself,

- Randy Finch: “I learn not just for self but thoroughly enough to teach” (Finch, 2017).

Randy feels very comfortable in the role of teacher. Since the attainment of his B.A. in Christian Ministry from the Bible College; Randy has taught classes to other offenders in substance abuse, anger management, the Thinking for a Change program, and Malachi Dads program. He says that he enjoys passing on information to others.

- Ronald Oliver: “It added depth and insight to the way I approached people and moments interaction” (Olivier, 2017).

During his time at Cottonport, where he ministered to offenders at that facility, he was able to interact with many other offenders. His knowledge of the Bible aided him in doing his work as a missionary. He has also been a minister on call for other camps within L.S.P. where the offender ministers have been called to minister to their peers and help to deescalate situations like talking to other offenders after the loss of a fellow inmate.

- Ron Hicks: “My view of education has evolved as a result of my experience in the NOBTS. The college experience has opened many doors for me, and now I am able to mentor others without fear” (Hicks, 2017).

As a result of his NOBTS experience, Pastor Hicks shared with me that he is able to better understand the word of God and pass that word on to his congregation. Pastor Hicks is the pastor of the largest inmate led church at L.S.P., Leadership Builders, which was formally known as Men’s Methodist. He interacts with other offenders on a daily basis and is revered for his moral compass and humility.

Teaching and passing on the word of God seems to be a common theme in the responses to the question above. All of the participants found that the Bible College gave them confidence in their abilities to teach and aid others. The confidence and self-worth that they already possessed was put into a purposeful plan. As Bible College students they were able to focus on ministering and counseling others who may have not been able to understand the teachings of the Bible. Being able to teach, coach, and advise others provided them with the opportunity to use their talents in a positive way within the prison environment.

**Question Five.** Describe the impact have you observed of the NOBTS College experience on the prison environment during your incarceration? Provide a few specific examples.

- Neal Spencer: “I saw with my own eyes how NOBTS students began to change for the good. They began to show a love and respect that was unheard of in this prison. As they, themselves began to fall at the feet of Jesus; they would openly cry and ask for forgiveness, and hug each other where in prison this was considered a sign of weakness. But shortly after their lifestyle began to rub off and spread throughout Angola” (Spencer, 2017).

As stated above, in my personal interview with Neal he said that he originally was not interested in attending the Bible College. He said that he witnessed the positive effect that the inmate ministers and the other graduates had on the prison environment which prompted him to move forward and apply for admissions. After three attempts to enter he was accepted and now holds his B.A. in Christian Ministry.

- Randy Finch: “Most graduates have become offender ministers. Those offender ministers provide a calming (effect) to the population. The religious teachings serve as a sort of behavior modification technique” (Finch, 2017).

Surprisingly, when asked about the effect of the Bible College environment, Randy viewed it overall as a *behavior modification tool*. Randy also spoke of how most of the offenders within the prison who are connected to a church or the Offender Ministers are genuine in their approach to fellowship and care for one another. Even though the Offender Minister program was initially

put in place for education and to affect behavioral changes within the prison, it served to be more therapeutic for the offenders in their healing and overall redemptive process.

- Ronald Oliver: “The NOBTS experience has tempered the attitude of the prison as a whole. It has calmed its pulse. The prison no longer suffers from hypertension. The Seminary has allowed for the forming of many Offender-led church fellowships. It has also allowed for Offenders who felt called to missions to experience the domestic and foreign mission fields of this prison and other satellite prisons, respectively” (Olivier, 2017).

When asked to elaborate on the cultural change within the prison, Ronnie told me that personally the NOBTS program wasn’t what changed him. He said that finding Christ and being saved was the beginning of his path to redemption. Only with his finding Christ did he want to continue on and go into Seminary. He said that the College gave him purpose and direction. He also spoke about how after the Bible College was started the number of churches within the prison grew. They went from approximately ten churches to more than 25 offender led churches.

- Ron Hicks: “The NOBTS college experience has changed the way the church in Angola functions. The church now have more opportunities to minister in areas of the prison that was restricted to everyone. The Angola church has the opportunity to be missionaries in other prisons around the state” (Hicks, 2017).

Pastor Hicks reiterated the sentiments of the other participants. Being one of the longer serving participants with 26 years of incarceration he was able to experience the pre-Cain era briefly. He explained how the church population changed and that it was given more validity

with the Bible College on the grounds, but again it was the privileges and trust issued by Warden Cain that brought the most change to the environment. The combination of Cain's style of administration and the offender willingness to usher in positive change, coupled with the opportunity for religious and educational opportunity brought about a lowering of violence and an expansion of hope within the prison culture.

The consensus from the group is that there was a positive change that overwhelmed the prison during the time of the Bible College inception and the beginning of the tenure of Warden Burl Cain. The participants all noted that they saw a change in the prison since 1995 when Warden Cain was brought in as head of the prison. The most notable comments came from Neal, Ronnie, and Pastor Hicks who were all able to experience the *pre-Cain era*. They were able to reflect on the changes that they personally witnessed. The change in church participation and the spread of religion and inmate led congregations was evident. These things played a part in the cultural shift of the prison, but after speaking with all participants it was evident that Cain's style of leadership which offered them more opportunities as well as having more privileges. Now, it was not clear as to if this was what was meant by the Cain administration, but there was a positive and calming affect across the prison. Some of the participants noted that Cain was not the sole provider of change, but his willingness to try a new way of management made a way for the prison to change. Once this change was beginning to unfold and was noted, he nurtured it and continued forward with the religion, education, and privileges afforded to prisoners who behaved accordingly.

### **Phone Interview with Returning Citizen**

In this section I will discuss the five interview questions discussed with Daniel Swann on our phone conversation. Swann is a graduate of NOBTS, and has returned to society. He was



sentenced to 50 years for drug racketeering and spent 23 years at L.S.P. where he attained his GED and Bachelor's Degree in Christian Ministry. He was able to gain his freedom early due to the *double goodtime* law that he was sentenced under in 1994. He currently does pipefitting and welding work in Great Mills, MD; and resides in both Baton Rouge, LA and Maryland where he works. Swann was selected for this study, because he is one of the handful of incarcerated men from Angola who have been afforded release. His testimony gives the perspective of the degree attainment from that of a person who has functioned as both an incarcerated man and a returning citizen.

**Question 1.** Daniel was born in Orange County, CA where he lived with his mother, step-father and twin sister. Swann's parents made sure he had everything he needed, but he grew up around the California *gang culture*. His parents were both high school graduates with decent jobs. His twin sister currently works as a project manager, and was formally a pharmacy technician. Swann was arrested and extradited to Louisiana at the age of 22 for drug racketeering. He was convicted and sentenced to 50 years at L.S.P. where he served 23 years and was sent to work release in 2014. He was released on parole in 2016, and currently resides between Baton Rouge, LA and Great Mills, MD where he works as a pipefitter and welder.

**Question 2.** Swann considered himself a smart kid, but was not interested in going to school. The *street life* was of interest to him, and he was sent to an alternative/continuation school in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade because of days missed of school. He dropped out in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade to pursue the *fast life*.

**Question 3.** "The character you see right now has always been my character. I wasn't and a\*\*hole on the street or in prison" (Swann, 2017). Swann discussed with me that he always had a high opinion of himself. The Bible College did not help him to change personally. It did

help him to find God and define his purpose. He was able to get some perspective and guidance. Swann said that as a returning citizen the vocational technology and welding programs helped him more with finding a job when reintegrating into society. He is successful today because of his training in the work field. The Bible College helped with his spiritual growth and afforded him a chance to earn a Bachelor's Degree, but he was already a forward thinking person before entering the program.

**Question 4.** "Change comes from within" (Swann, 2017). During our phone interview, Swann was adamant about the Bible College not necessarily changing who he was as a person. He stated that many of those who entered the Bible College already had a progressive mindset and were going through the program to better themselves more than they already were. He said that his personal experience with the Bible College served to enhance him spiritually, but the program was primarily a means to attain a degree and increase his already high self-concept and abilities.

**Question 5.** "Of course the more people started finding God, the more the violence would stop" (Swann, 2017). Swann said that he saw more of a change in the prison culture to be in line with Warden Burl Cain and the way he ran the prison. Yes, the prison environment changed with the introduction of serious religious practices, but more of the change came from Warden Cain's *loosening of the rope*. He allowed more privileges and treated everyone like they were human beings. "Guys realized that if they were ever to get a chance to go home, that they would have to better themselves and have something positive to show for their time in prison" (Swann, 2017). Essentially, with more privileges, an infusion of religion and finding God, and more a more humanizing environment this gave the men newfound *hope*.

## **Returning Citizen Perspective of Post-Release**

As Swann and I were wrapping up our interview he decided he wanted to say some things about his post-release observations as it pertains to the degree, finding work, parole eligibility, and offender rehabilitation:

With that degree, people feel like if they get the degree okay Imma go get a job because I have this Bachelor's degree. No. ... The only thing that I see from this degree that they'll look at and that'll give you some type of recognition is the point that you went to a 4 year college. And they look at where, okay well if he can sit in school for 4 years, we have to look at him a little different (Swann, 2017).

Swann commented to me about how his job related to the degree and his vocational-technology training at L.S.P.:

Yeah. I'm a pipe-fitter. Well I do both. Pipe fitting and welding. So, my degree here is really ... The only thing my degree could make them look at me as they might be like "Well you know what man, he went to school". Because matter of fact, that's funny you said that, because I was talking to a engineer. This was about 2 weeks ago. He came up to me, he was just telling me what's goin on, and he heard me talk. And I was explaining to him some of the things going on and he was like "Man, have you ever thought about speaking for safety? Like transferring to safety and speaking about it?" He said "Do you know anything about safety?" I told him I know what I'm supposed to know, but if I wouldn't have learned more about it of course I had to get some books and read it and really abreast myself to it. And he was like, and he said "because man you speak real good" And then, we can use someone like you to do that and I think my degree is somewhat kinda helped me with that aspect right there.

And, another thing is, like okay, like say if you go, we just say for instance, you go to a Burger King. You trying to get a job so you go to a Burger King. Your degree will probably enable you to become a manger off the top.

But, see those Vo-Tech Schools? That is also great, because, the Vo Tech schools is what's going to get you the job right now. Because no corporation is gonna offer no counselor type atmosphere is gonna get a guy coming straight out of prison and try to hire them. You know guys get that ... And I tell dudes this all the time. Don't think when you get out of prison that it's gonna be a cake walk, because everybody has a billion and one ideas (Swann, 2017).

During the discussion he gave me his thoughts on aging offenders and their ability to find work if afforded release after decades of incarceration (even with degrees, trades, and certifications):

Then, another thing that they really forgetting about, you're getting older now. You're not going to be able to work, like you was able to 10 years ago. And that's the sad part because what's going on is, the penal system is taking their youth from them. So if you're taking all their youth that means you're taking their ability to fend for themselves once they get out. And that is really, that is really the truth of the matter is, they're holding people, they're incarcerating people too long and I understand that people you know did their crime. I understand all that. But, the question is, when is enough? When is enough? I mean come on, when is enough? I mean, if someone's showing you he rehabilitated, he's steadily showing you over and over and over, why would you want to keep this man until he's 55 years old knowing when he gets out, he's not going to be able to fend for himself out there? Because of probably health issues, the corporate level don't want to hire older people at they company. And that's a number one thing too. No one wants to hire a older person. So now, now they stuck at, okay I'm out, I thought it was going to be easy, it's not, but guess what? I have to live somehow. I don't want to turn back to this way right here, because I've been gone forever but I'm not going to struggle out here, so Imma have to do what I have to do..... And once you start thinking about it, and everything just keeps on going wrong wrong wrong wrong wrong wrong? They're gonna do it. And then they gone end up back in prison and they're gonna be messed up because they didn't want to do it. And the people, the first thing they're going to say is "Oh we knew we should have never let him out because they were gonna come back", but they don't know, you the one that pushed him to do that. (Swann, 2017).

Daniel asked me specifically to include his thoughts on the matter, and I obliged his request because I believe his words were powerful. He is a man who spent 23 years of his life incarcerated at L.S.P., but has returned to society and been successful in his transition. He is an intelligent, hardworking, tax paying citizen and can give insight from both sides of the issue. I thanked him for his commentary and made sure his words were recorded, analyzed, and presented here.

### **Personal and Academic Self-Concept Inventory (PASCI) Survey Questions**

Each participant was asked to fill out a survey to gauge his Self-Concept (Swann answered by phone) (Fleming, 2007). The altered survey assessed self-regard, social acceptance, academic ability, verbal ability, math ability, physical appearance, social anxiety, and parental acceptance. The Table below list the results for the four incarcerated participants.

Table 7: Results of PASCI Survey: Personal and Academic Self-Concept Inventory  
(Appendix C)

Categories									
Participants		Self-Regard	Social Acceptance	Academic Ability	Verbal Ability	Math Ability	Physical Appearance	Social Anxiety	Parental Acceptance
	Ronald Olivier	7	5.8	6	5.4	5.6	6.2	6	5.2
	Ron Hicks	4.8	5.4	5.2	3.6	5.2	4	5.6	5.4
	Randy Fitch	6.4	5.2	6.6	6.8	5	6.4	4	5.6
	Neal Spencer	6.2	6	5	5.2	4	6.2	5.4	5.2
	Daniel Swann (R)	6.6	6.4	5.6	5	5	6.2	5.6	7
	Average score was taken for questions in each category (5 each) with reverse score calculated in. Positive > 4; Negative < 4; No Effect = 4								

During the face-to-face interviews each participant was asked if prior to their acquisition of their degree they felt the same way about themselves in the eight categories as they do now.

- Neal Spencer: Neal stated that he has always been a confident person, and that his answers would have probably been the same before NOBTS.
- Randy Finch: Randy stated that he has also always been confident, but he probably wouldn't have been so confident in his academic ability prior to NOBTS.
- Ronald Olivier: Ronnie stated that he always thought he was smart, but he never applied himself. He said that the NOBTS experience enhanced his confidence as a student as well as an individual.
- Ron C. Hicks: Pastor Hicks informed me that his confidence in self was always there. Prior to entering the Bible College he did not have reservations about himself and his personal abilities. He did though, have some concerns about his academic abilities on a college level because he had dropped out of school, but during his time in the Bible College he was able to prove himself to be a good student. He became confident in his

abilities as a student and the more time he was in the program that academic confidence was strengthened.

- Daniel Swann (R): Swann said early on in the interview that he has always been a confident and competent person. Though the NOBTS experience gave him a better relationship with Christ, he always knew he was capable doing well in school and has always been an outgoing person.

Along with the general question above they were each asked about the area/areas where they may have had a lower score in.

- Neal Spencer: Neal's lowest area was his Math Ability perception. Neal revealed that he has never really been good with numbers and that when he took his GED test and other standardized tests he's always scored lowest on the math portions.
- Randy Finch: Randy's lowest area was Social Anxiety perception. Randy said that he considers himself anti-social, therefore he tries to feel people out before he shows his true self. He is wary about others and their intentions.
- Ronald Olivier: Ronnie's lowest area was Parental Acceptance perception even though it was above four. Ronnie felt as though his father's absence and move to Florida was the pitfall that led to his behavior change as a youth. He was really affected by it and he felt like he was abandoned. He said he remembers the last thing his father said to him and his brother on the night before he moved, "Ya'll know I'm not leaving ya'll like some dogs. I'm gonna send for ya'll." After that the first person he sent for was his brother (by another woman) and Ronnie felt played. By the time he got to go meet his father he was so conditioned to the New Orleans ghetto that the normalcy of Florida was not normal to him. He viewed the abnormal situations of the ghetto as normal

- Ron C. Hicks: It was especially interesting to me that Pastor Hicks had a low score in the perception of his verbal ability. After going back and looking at the question, he realized that he answered it wrong. He was under the impression that it was referring to comparing himself to people outside of his immediate community, but if he had known he was assessing based on the people around him he would have given himself a higher score. He also said that he answered most of his questions out of humility (as a pastor). This was why his score seemed lower than the others.
- Daniel Swann (R): Swann's lowest scores were tied between two areas, math ability and verbal ability. Though they were both above the median score of four, they were still lower than his other categories. Swann said that he sometimes gets nervous with test taking and that he may have given a lower score for those. He thinks he'd do ok in those areas, but probably not the best.

## **Results Synthesis**

Taking a look at the Table 7 above many assumptions can be made about the participants and their self-concept. Looking at the categories of self-regard, social acceptance, academic ability, verbal ability, math ability, physical appearance, social anxiety, and parental acceptance we can get a glimpse of how the participants viewed themselves. In the category of self-regard every participant scored above a four (out of seven), the data that stood out was that of Pastor Hicks scored the lowest amongst the group, and as stated above his position as a church pastor calls him to exhibit humility in his daily life. In most categories he had the lower scores which were no doubt due to his humble nature. When looking at the social acceptance data the participants scored between 5.2 and 6.4 with Pastor Hicks having the lowest score and Swann having the highest. It is possible that because Swann is actually a returning citizen functioning

and flourishing as he reintegrates into society that he feels the most social acceptance because he has been accepted back into society after being incarcerated for 23 years and is doing very well for himself.

In academic ability the scores overall fell between five and 6.6. These were pretty strong and across the board they were very similar to the math and verbal ability scores (as they are similar in function). Randy seemed to have the highest scores in two categories. As it pertained to academic ability and verbal ability he scored above everyone else, and this could possibly be because of his year of Community College prior to incarceration. As stated above Pastor Hicks did not read the questions correctly for the verbal ability portion which caused his score to be significantly low. If he had read the question differently he said he would have answered differently. Neal had the lowest scores in two of the academic categories. As it pertained to academic ability and math ability he scored lower than everyone else, and this could be due to his lack of school experience prior to incarceration. Neal only completed through the 8<sup>th</sup> grade of school before he dropped out. Ronnie, surprisingly had scores on the higher end for all three academic categories, despite his dropping out of school in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade when he was arrested. This could be because he was incarcerated as a juvenile and was excited about still having the opportunity to get an education.

The last three categories were physical appearance, social anxiety, and parental acceptance. Everyone, except Pastor Hicks, scored themselves high on their physical appearance. This mirrors the discussions I've had with all of them about their confidence levels and personality. For social anxiety, Randy had the lowest score which also matched with the results for social acceptance. He clarified with me that he is very wary of people and considers himself to be anti-social with people he doesn't know. This could explain his lower scores in the



areas having to do with being social. Across the board the other participants scored between 5.4 and six which is very close to the higher score of seven. This could possibly be explained by the confidence they had fostered when learning to share their knowledge, counsel and teach others. Parental acceptance was something everyone seemed to have. The most acceptance was perceived by Swann. This could be because as a returning citizen he has been reunited with his family, and because he was not a *lifer* his family knew that he would one day come home from prison. In the case of the other participants, they all have LWOPP sentences and have spent over 15 years in prison. They still seem to have family support, but with their families believing they have been *tossed away* by the state of Louisiana they may not be as supportive as they may want to be.

The data from the PASCI Survey was important as in it was a way for participants to answer questions about themselves that were not open ended and fell into categories that could assess their self-concept by looking at how they answered the questions. The questions also looked at academic as well as social perceptions of the men in the study. The participant answers and scores could be compared and contrasted for scores therefor discussed. Being able to discuss the answers with the participants after scores were tallied gave them a glimpse of how they thought about themselves, and they were able to elaborate on reasons for their scores. Most of the participant survey data was consistent with their actual feelings about their self-worth and self-concept.

**Response to Article: Beyond the School-to-Prison Pipeline and Toward an Educational and Penal Realism** (Fasching-Varner, Mitchell, Martin, & Bennett-Haron, 2014).

Each participant was asked read and respond to the article about the School-to-Prison Pipeline. Because it is a relatively new phrase in academia, I was interested in whether or not the participants (who have been incarcerated 15+ years) have had any of the experiences associated with the Pipeline during their K-12 educational journey. I was also interested in their opinion of the School-to-Prison Pipeline and how it has affected poor, minority, and persons of Color in the United States. The participants were asked the following question: After reading the article, *Beyond the School-to-Prison Pipeline and Toward an Educational and Penal Realism* (Fasching-Varner, Mitchell, Martin, & Bennett-Haron, 2014), how do you feel about the topic as it relates to your personal life experiences and circumstances that may have led to your incarceration?

- Neal Spencer: “I believe that my lack of education and *street life* caused me to miss a lot of valuable information. This article is so close to my personal life story that it is scary. I grew up poor, dropped out of school and sold drugs to make money in the black communities. I didn’t understand how prisons were a mega-million dollar business until I was locked up. That was when I began to educate myself. There is plenty of educational programs, job training and trades to have. You just have to get in and get it” (Spencer, 2017).

During his face-to-face interview Neal spoke about his time in Camp J and how he used that time to read and better himself. He had never heard of the School-to-Prison Pipeline, but in his reading while in Camp J he came across articles having to do with the Prison Industrial Complex, and he began to understand how he fit into that picture. He never thought about mass incarceration and how it affected poor people, but his K-12 learning experience was right in line with what was described in the article.

- Randy Finch: “I feel that *crime and punishment* is an oversimplification of the true circumstances. Though I did commit a crime, I also understand that in light of all things considered my charge was over-criminalized. This was done in a *tough on crime* atmosphere to squeeze as much jail time out of my conviction as possible. After reading this article, and factoring in Louisiana being the foremost jailer in the world, it makes more sense that my lawyer seemed impotent and the D.A. seemed omnipotent. I also understand why D.A.’s have 96% conviction rates and why legislature enacts laws to increase the jailing power of the judiciary over the impoverished” (Finch, 2017).

Randy and I discussed his feelings about the School-to-Prison Pipeline, and he said he wasn’t aware of the term as he was going through that part of his life. He realized later in life how he fit into the penal system of the U.S., and his K-12 learning experience was liken to that of what is described as the pipeline. He referred to his high school as a *chop shop*. He also stated that he had read somewhere that roughly 15000 students drop out of school in Louisiana coincided with the approximately 15000 first time offenders that end up in jail.

As Randy shared with me his feelings about this topic, it was obvious that had he understood the ramifications of his life choices and his disadvantage as a Black American man he would have made better choices. His K-12 learning experience in New Orleans was not one that was beneficial to him, but he attempted to make changes by attending community college and going into the military. I was especially interested in his comments about his crime being *over-criminalized*. He was correct. During that tough on crime era and still today, District Attorneys are trying to give the worst convictions so that they can get more jail time. As I have done work with various penal reform organizations within the state, the District Attorney’s Association has been the biggest *thorn in our side*. It is their job the convict and imprison, but they oppose any

and all legislation that has come about that will lower time served and truly help people who have shown growth and change in prison. They seem to want to maintain the current status as number one in incarceration, but none of our current laws have made the state any safer while at the same time they have sucked and will continue to suck millions of dollars from our budget annually.

- Ronald Olivier: “The problem of mass incarceration in America is not one that happened by happenstance. I believe It was very Intentional and strategic. I believe lack of funding for education in lower-class neighborhoods and governmental assistance programs catered to the delinquency of my experience. Though there are success stories from the ghetto, growing up in the minority almost certainly made the way straight for me to end up in jail” (Olivier, 2017).

Ronnie said that he was shocked when he read the article because people actually knew what was going on. It amazed him that people realize this and are actually writing about it. He mentioned that he had become aware of the School-to-Prison Pipeline about six or seven years ago, and he felt like it was strategic in design. During his travel to another facility as an offender minister, he said that they were all funneled through the *hub* of Elayn Hunt Correctional Facility. This was the place where traveling inmates passed through for departure and transfer to other facilities. While sitting for hours in that *hub* he realized that all of the men were young and Black American. He said that it felt like a *slave trade post* as depicted in movies. I commented to him about my experience with attending prison boxing matches at Dixie Correctional Facility and how I had noticed the same thing.

Ronnie’s case is very disheartening because he was only 16 years old when he went to prison. It was obvious that early on he wanted more structure and a better lifestyle, but when his

father left his life was destroyed. He accepted the lifestyle that was handed to him. In his comments about the School-to-Prison Pipeline he was very interested in the research around it and that people actually knew what it was and had a name for it. When he talked to me about seeing so many young Black American inmates being *traded* from one facility to the next, I could completely understand the parallel to the slave trade post. With the PIC being such a well-organized mechanism for re-enslaving people, it is easy to see why Louisiana legislators do not want to make changes to the present laws. Many of the Sheriff's Association members are big stake holders in the warehousing of bodies. Just in the last 25 years Bossier Parish has built a four facility prison complex to house every level of offender, and those beds must stay full for them to profit. If we were to start to give parole eligibility to the longest serving offenders in Louisiana- *the lifers*- and beds would become open in the state facilities, then the local Sheriff's Offices would lose out on bodies (which are funded by the head). My cousin, Harry Daniel III, Esq., a criminal defense attorney in this state, made a comment to me one day about the prison system here in Louisiana and it has stuck with me ever since. He said,

You have to remember how many jobs depend on jobs. And how many of the people in the system are interrelated... Many people working in the system would be working on an oil rig or shrimp boat if it wasn't for corrections (Daniels, 2017).

Harry's sentiments made me realize that we are dealing on so many levels with systematic oppression, privilege and racism that have been interwoven into the fabric of our society. The School-to-Prison Pipeline is only the beginning of a lifelong battle for Black American males to exceed the perceived status quo.

- Ron C. Hicks: "This is a very eye opening article and mirrors my experience in the public school system. The over-crowded classroom and the lack of attention given to students who needed help (be)cause our educational experience to unsuccessful. All the

factors mentioned in this article have touched my life and played a major role in my decision making. The more opportunities we are exposed to in our educational experience give us a greater chance at success in life and to be an influence in the generation after us” (Hicks, 2017).

Pastor Hicks was taken aback by the article and was unaware of the term or how systematic it was for Black men to end up incarcerated. He said that he did experience the School-to-Prison Pipeline, but as an athlete he was allowed certain conveniences (as long as he was playing). Once he was a senior and dropped out of school none of his coaches tried to stop him. He proceeded to run the streets which later led to his incarceration. We also discussed segregation and how Black students and teachers took pride in themselves and their schools. He stated that he felt as if as a race we were more positive before integration. The problem he had with some Blacks is that once they got out of the hood or ahead they did not reach back to the community and help those who were experiencing the same things they had experienced.

All four of my participants felt as though they were products of the School-to-Prison Pipeline, and that had they or their families known that it existed and was systematic they could have done something to possibly alter the course of it. All of them mentioned that there were not strict discipline in their home environments; and they believed that had they or their caregivers known the ramifications of such a relaxed environment, they would have had a more restrictive environment and they would have valued their educational opportunities. As young Black men, they were set up to fail from the beginning. The lack of quality and care in their educations caused them to not show interest in school and to opt for the *street life*. None of them completed high school, but all of them learned the value of education *after* being incarcerated.

The fact that they learned the value of an education *after* being incarcerated strongly impacted me. As a Black American woman and an educator I have witnessed on many occasions where Black American males have been unjustly treated within their school sanctuaries. I have also seen where they have been the targets of over-disciplining and exaggerated consequences. In many cases these instances of systematic bigotry would not be noticeable unless compared to children of other ethnicities. But when the problem is centered on schools that are predominately Black American or are found in impoverished neighborhoods, one cannot see the division in the way different students are treated. As it pertains to the men in this study, it is evident that as they progressed through their K-12 schooling they and their parents were unaware of the way the system could go. As Black American boys it is difficult for them to find the balance between becoming a successful individual and combatting the outside influences that could lead to their downfall. I believe that as Black American parents it is our job to empower them on their way out the door every morning and as educators we should be mindful of the possible circumstances in which they can encounter in the schools setting and empower them to make the best choices for their futures.

### **Returning Citizen Response to the Idea of the School-to-Prison Pipeline**

For the phone interview with Daniel Swann he was unable to have time to read the same article that the other participants had read, so during the interviews I explained the concept of the School-to-Prison Pipeline and asked him if he experienced a similar environment in his K-12 education prior to his incarceration. Swann talked more about his aversion to school. He was sent to an alternative school in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade because he was not attending school regularly and he ultimately dropped out. He said that he didn't go to school because he was interested in doing other things.

- Daniel Swann: “In California, I’m dealing with gang affiliations... Ya know it’s like a different culture where I’m from than in Louisiana. What I mean by did circumstances play a role... It did because my dad and cousins were *on the wrong side of the street* my whole life. All the people that I was surrounded by did wrong. So by me growing up I looked up to that. And that’s what I wanted. I wanted that fast money... that \$5000 a day money and that I knew guys that was getting it. So even though I was going to school, even though I wasn’t a dummy... You know I wasn’t struggling in school academic wise. But at the end of the day I wanted to be like them. I wanted the fast money and cars right then. I didn’t really have no problems with my teachers. They were just teachers. At my school they would just give you your book and be like ‘Ok well now you do it if you do it; if you don’t you don’t’” (Swann, 2017).

During my discussion with Swann he focused more on his surroundings and his need to participate in *street life* and the gang culture of California. His experience was different from the other participants in that he was sent to an alternative school because of lack of attendance in regular school. The alternative school is where he encountered his teachers who had that attitude as stated above of “you do it if you do it; if you don’t you don’t”. Based on his responses and my on teaching experience, I believe that the alternative school setting is set up for students with perceived behavior problems and made for a short term solution to a problem that regular schools and teachers don’t want to deal with. In my experience with some alternative schools the students are transient and not much emphasis is placed on their learning, but more on their attendance and compliance with the rules. This is a form of isolation that take students out of the mainstream classroom environment and can ultimately lead to them dropping out due to lack of interest. In Swann’s case it is evident that he was just there to fill a seat. As in the prison



system, he was just another body to fill a quota. This definitely mirrors the way the prison system in America is set up for warehousing of individuals. Outside of the influence and lure of the *street life* this could have added to the societal prescription that led to his being a victim of the School-to-Prison Pipeline.

### Data Analysis and Coding

After looking at and analyzing all of my research data sources and employing the methods for open coding, I was able to organize data findings into six major themes; *K-12 Education, Self-Worth, Background, NOBTS Experience, Prison Culture Shift, and School-to-Prison Pipeline*. Table 8 presents code instances, code categories and resultant themes:

Table 8: Data Coding Results

Codes	Instances	Code categories	Themes
Dropped out	6	Root Causes of High School Drop Out29	K-12 Education Issues that Contributed to Incarceration Creating the School-to-Prison Pipeline
Lack of interest	8		
Ran the streets	6		
Getting by	5		
Sports vs Education	4		
Purpose/Person	31	Changes in View of Self38	Impact of Earning a Degree while Incarcerated on Self-esteem
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### **K-12 Education Issues that Contributed to Incarceration Creating the School-to-Prison Pipeline**

There was a total of 29 instances where the K-12 issues that contributed to the participant incarceration was discussed. The participants repeatedly discussed instances where they dropped out of school, had a lack of interest in school, were more interested in *street life*, and just getting by with the bare minimum if effort in school. In these instances it was clear that there was no

motivating factor that caused the men to want to continue with their education. There were various factors that enticed them into other ways of life and led them to see no value in the school environment. Had they had the guidance and motivation they needed to value and education and want for a more solid future than they could have possibly not been funneled through the pipeline. Surprisingly, all of them actually considered themselves to be intelligent individuals academically, but due to the circumstances and other appeals around them they opted for a less restrictive environment that ultimately led to their incarcerations.

### **Impact of Earning a Degree while Incarcerated on Self-esteem**

The premise of this study centered self-efficacy and how participants were affected by their attainment of a Bachelor's Degree while incarcerated. Within the data there were 75 instances where the participants referenced the impact of their degree on their self-esteem. This was a significant finding. Viewing one's self as a person with purpose and drive as well as living a Christ-Like existence were two ways that participants were partially affected. As stated before, all of the participants saw themselves as people of worth and sustenance prior to entry into the Bible College; but the change occurred where they were able to funnel that into a purpose-driven life that highlighted the word of God and helping others. Participants also referenced multiple times the impact of education on their already high confidence. Having the degree and being trained to be purposeful allowed them to teach and share the word of God with others. This helped with their immediate environment and also boosted their confidence and purpose to the next level. I believe that the pre-existence of their self-worth and confidence is what led them to want to pursue a better education and life even within the walls of the institution of their confinement. As I have seen in previous studies and also have come to understand, it says something about a person's character when they want better for themselves

and to help others even in the mist of bleak circumstances and despair. The Bible College was not what redeemed the participants. They were redeemed before they entered. The Bible College was a mechanism to enhance what they already knew they had inside.

### **Background Issues that Contributed to Incarceration**

When discussing their backgrounds, data revealed 44 instances where the participants discussed where their background issues could have possibly contributed to their incarceration. The absence or presence of a father figure surfaced prominently in the data. In two of the participants, the father figure was absent which led to some feelings of abandonment and perceived lack of a male role model. It was surprising that the other three participants did have a father figure present, but still did not receive the male guidance that would have shown them the value of a strong educational foundation. This could have possibly be because those father figures did not know how to show their sons the value of education, because they did not value it themselves. It is possible that as Black American men, they were never taught the value and placed value in other endeavors that would lead to financial stability. They also discussed their siblings and where they fell within their familial structure, which also could have also contributed to the amount of time and attention they received from their parents.

Their age at the time of incarceration and the length of time they served were also common data themes. All of the participants except for Randy, were under the age of 20 years old when they were incarcerated and given a life sentence, and they had served over 20 years of incarceration. I think it is important to reflect on the age of maturity or the *true* age of being considered legal and how that could have possibly affected their decision-making at the time they committed their crimes. In the courts, you are legally considered an adult at the age of 18 years old, but when it comes to maturity in decision making – like alcohol consumption and

marriage- the legal age is 21 years old. It is hard to sometimes fathom that we can make decisions about laws that pertain to age and maturity, and only include certain types of judgement when considering criminal activity. *Mental Health Daily* states, “Someone who is 18 may make riskier decisions than someone in their mid-20s in part due to lack of experience, but primarily due to an underdeveloped brain.” and that, “most experts suggest that the brain is fully developed by age 25” (Mental Health Daily, 2017, p. 1). Either we consider a person capable of decision making or we don’t. In the case of Seth Fontenot mentioned earlier, he was considered incapable of making sound decisions because of his age, 18; but there are many others who also are below the age of full brain development as described by scientist, and they have been held accountable for their actions as if they have the brain maturity of fully functioning adults. If the age that scientists believe the brain is fully capable of making important decisions is 25 years old, then that is the age by which both criminal and social standards should be set. In the case of Ronnie, he wasn’t even age 18 years old –he was 16 years old - when he was convicted; so his age and maturity should have played a pivotal role in his criminal case. It wasn’t, and eventually he was tried as an adult and given adult consequences. And in the case of Randy, he may have been 24 years old, but he was still under the age of 25 where scientists believe he should be at optimal decision making. These issues with maturity and decision making could have also ultimately affected their choices to drop out of school as well.

The other background factors that could have led to participant incarceration were discipline and the lack thereof. The only participant who did have structure and strict discipline as a small youth was Ronnie, but he lost that structure when his father moved away to Florida. Everyone else reported that their parents were not authoritarians as it pertained to discipline within the home. It was easy for them to slip through the cracks when the environment they

were in was not structured for success. Even in the case of Swann, he said that his parents were there and he did not want for anything, but the California gang culture was in his immediate vicinity, and without structure to be pulled away from it, it was emanate that he would follow the examples of those around him. I feel as if the men would have had more of a constant, fair discipline structure within the home, this would have caused them to see the value in education as well as making good life choices. Without that structured discipline they were left to their own decision making which obviously they were not mature enough to do.

### **NOBTS Experience that Led to Growth and Positive Reintegration into Society**

This theme was relevant to the men as it pertains to their lives now. There were 71 code instances where the participants discussed their NOBTS Experience and how it was related to their personal growth, and in the case of Swann how it related to his reintegration into society. The participants referenced their personal growth as it pertained to teaching and sharing the word of God. Four out of five participants made definite mention of how their Bible College experience helped them to better understand God and their religious beliefs. As stated previously, most of them felt as though they already possessed the skills necessary to be successful, but the NOBTS experience enhanced their purpose and confidence in what they were doing with their lives. Though they had made poor choices in the past, they were better equipped to make good choices as well as counsel others and assist them in making better choices as well. The instance of rejection was discussed by Neal when reflecting on his three attempts to get into the NOBTS program. It was important to mention this because it showed his tenacity in wanting to be able to better himself. He made a personal choice to get into the program and did not let rejection deter him. He used all mechanisms necessary to assure that he

got in. This says a lot about Neal's character. It is obvious that he was serious about getting into the program, and he stuck it out until he graduated.

The reintegration portion came mostly from the reflections of Swann. Swann, who is currently on parole after serving 23 years of a 50 year sentence, gave his thoughts on the program as well as other programs within the prison that contributed to his success as a returning citizen. He believed that his job readiness came from the combination of his Vo-Tech skills acquired while incarcerated and his attainment of his Bachelor's Degree. He put more emphasis on the Vo-Tech training because he felt as though that prepared him for the kind of work that could be offered to a convicted felon. The Bachelor's Degree was more like an added bonus that allowed him to be more articulate and could enhance his chances at getting job. He reiterated several times that it would be difficult for a felon to get a job and also put an emphasis on the difficulty for an aging offender to come out of prison and get a job that was sustaining. He gave his statements and thoughts on rehabilitation and that it was happening within the prison, but he was saddened by the fact that our law makers are unaware (or don't care) that many of these men have shown tremendous improvement and are ready to be reintegrated into society. His fear was that they are keeping people incarcerated for lengths of time that would make it difficult to reintegrate, and that it would cause some to recidivate on the sheer fact that they were unable to fend for themselves as an older person. Swann's information was integral to this research as he has seen both sides of the issue.

As a felon and returning citizen Swann has the ability to look back and reflect on the positive choices he made as an incarcerated man and how those choices have aided in his reintegration. I think that his sentiments on aging offenders as well as his sentiments on the combination of Vo-Tech skills and his BA Degree are significant and can set the tone for other

incarcerated men looking to be positively reintegrated into society. His words are powerful and real, and they should be taken as something serious for law makers to consider.

### **Mechanisms that Led to the Culture Shift within the Prison**

In a total of 53 instances, the participants discussed how the prison as a whole changed culturally. Initially they discussed the changes in the prison environment, and then they talked about the tools that were used to cause this change. Behavior and its modification was common throughout the data. All of the participants reported seeing a positive effect on the prison in 1995 with two things occurring: a new warden- Burl Cain- and the NOBTS program. It was a commonality amongst the participants that they felt the change within the prison came from within the prison itself. Men were given an opportunity to be treated better and be trusted, and in turn were afforded privileges that were unheard of before. The combination of religious practices found in the offender-led church congregations and the knowledge and skills being offered to the men made for new found hope. It seems as if the men were ready for change, and they accepted the opportunity for a cultural shift. Warden Cain may have not known what the outcome would be of his *new style* of leadership, but when he realized it was working and that the prison environment was changing, he moved forward with his initiative to bring morality to the prison environment. In turn, this caused the positive cultural shift that has been maintained until today.

### **Participant Self-evaluation of their Path through the School-to-Prison Pipeline**

When the participants reported on their life experiences, data revealed there were 99 instances where they actually realized that they had experienced the School-to-Prison Pipeline. This particular theme had the highest results of all codes. The participants reported factors about the pipeline similarly in the following impact categories: poverty, drop out, *street life*, and K-12



environment. These are factors that the men in this study actually felt contributed to their spiral into the life that led to their incarceration. It was ironic that all of them shared similar characteristics, but none of them had ever heard of the School-to-Prison Pipeline *before* they went to prison. Prior to participating in this study, they were unaware of how they had been affected in this grand scheme, and until they became a part of the system, they didn't understand how they were to fit in. It wasn't until they had come to prison and reflected on their life choices that they made the decisions educate themselves on the disparity of the path they chose, but also make choice to attempt to rectify those indiscretions.

Randy specifically talked about the *omnipotence* of the District Attorney who handled his case, and how he didn't understand how his charge was over-criminalized. Through this research though, I have personally read through cases where strategic racism led to the over-criminalization of many Black American men. This covert racism is not noticed unless cases are compared, but in many instances a Black American man will get the harsher charges that lead to the longer amount of jail time.

Despite my education and teaching experience, prior to my dissertation research and activism with penal reform I was unaware of how the system is pitted against poor people and people of Color. As an educator, I had always made it my duty to assist and uplift my disadvantaged and marginalized students. As a Black American woman with a middle class upbringing, I witnessed my own parents strategically uplift and motivate my siblings and me, so that we could learn to function in a society that could be programmed against us. We were taught to have pride in who we were as Black Americans, but also how to be functional assets to the world around us. We were also taught to give back to our community and to understand that

not everyone had been afforded the opportunities that our parents afforded us. As I reflect, I was guided by my upbringing to avoid the pipeline.

As it pertains to my participants, I feel that as an educator and a Black American woman, it is my duty to be a voice for them as well as so many others whose lives were programed from the beginning for failure. I have taken into account all of the data reported herein and have posited suggestions in chapter 5 as to how to begin to combat the issues that led there to incarceration and are keeping these men and others like them incarcerated.

### **Summary**

The data presented in chapter 4 came from over 20 hours spent observing and discussing with participants over a few months' time in 2017. The men in this study gave clear statements as it pertained to their thoughts and experiences related to the NOBTS, its impact on their lives, its impact on the prison, and their personal feelings about their own self-efficacy and survey results. Mr. Swann's testimony was especially important as he spent 23 years at L.S.P. and has been reintegrated into society. Thus far he has proven to be successful and well-adjusted, with limited risk of recidivism.

As a researcher, I also collected data over a timeline of more than a year through my observation and interactions within the prison environment. I gathered information and had discussions inside and outside of the prison that can be used in the discussions clarification of the participant data interpretation. The next section of this paper will focus on the discussion of the data as it relates to the original research questions as well as looking into the future of the Louisiana PIC and implications for redirecting the SPP.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion/Conclusion**

In this section of the paper I will be addressing the original research questions from Chapter 1 and how the study data as well as scholarly research literature merged and confirmed each other. This chapter will reflect upon post-secondary correctional education and participant self-efficacy; the participant NOBTS experience at Angola; the School-to-Prison Pipeline and participant experience; and the NOBTS and prison cultural shift. I will also discuss the current status of Louisiana as it pertains to our issue of mass incarceration by discussing Louisianans for Prison Alternatives; the current Louisiana legislation; and future prospective possibilities. And finally I will address the School-to-Prison Pipeline by looking at recommendations for preservice teachers and educational programs; culturally relevant pedagogy; and acknowledging the student-teacher gap.

#### **Post-Secondary Correctional Education and Participant Self-Efficacy**

The participants in this study were given an altered PASCI Survey and then categorized based on how high they scored in each of the eight categories. This survey was altered from the Fleming Personal and Academic Self-Concept Inventory (Fleming & Whalen, 1990). “The PASCI is a self-concept scale that integrates both one- and multidimensional models of self-concept” (Woddland, 2008, p. 456). The PASCI model uses academic and non-academic categories which have both been broken down further into more categories. This gives a more rounded view of self-concept, and has been considered a “brief but reliable and valid instrument” to measure the self-concepts of young adults (Woddland, 2008, p. 457).

When the results were tallied for each category for each of the participants it was noted that they all had self-concept scores of at or above the median scale of four. When asked about their self-concept before and after completing the NOBTS program, most of them said that they

thought highly of themselves before entering the program. Many of them felt that their academic abilities either increased or were actually utilized due to the program, but as for the other categories they were already confident in them. This could possibly go back to what was said in the Meyer, Fredericks, and Borden article about participants in state facility implementation of PSCE, where it was stated that “students who were successful were those with strong motivation, self-discipline, academic ability” and that these students possessed “the ability to collaborate with other students on learning activities, strong reading ability, good social skills, and the ability to pay attention and maturity” (Meyer, Fredericks, Borden, & Richardsdon, 2010, p. 175). A case could be made that these students already possessed the skills and self-worth needed to be successful, and the NOBTS program only provided them an opportunity to express that. A case can also be made that these participants became interested in the NOBTS program because they knew they could be successful and because they had the drive and the want to improve their situation. “Participants in these programs expect(ed) to make educational progress such that passing tests and completing courses would be attainable goals as well as stepping stones to success upon release” (Reed, 2015, p. 539). The above median scores for the men in this study lends itself to say that the participants in this study perceived themselves to have the academic and personal abilities needed to be successful in their PSCE.

### **Participant NOBTS Experience at Angola**

When conversing with all participants in the study, an overwhelming trend that surfaced was that the NOBTS experience was about finding God. My participants all felt as though their time in the Bible College gave them a greater understanding of the word of God and an avenue to share that word with others. As the Baylor Study noted, there are five specific achievements of

religious faith for long-term inmates:

Creates a new social identity to replace the label of prisoner or criminal. Imbues the experience of imprisonment with purpose and meaning. Empowers the largely powerless prisoner by turning him into an agent of God. Provides the prisoner with the language and framework for forgiveness. Allows a sense of control over an unknown future (Hallett, Hays, Johnson, Jang, & Duwe, 2016).

When discussing the seminary experience with my participants it was evident that they already had high expectations of themselves and regarded themselves as more than just *inmates*.

Through the Bible College they were able to attain the social identity that they had already felt they possessed inside by completing the program and getting a higher level of degree than most.

It was noted by more than one of the participants that they found meaning and purpose throughout their seminary studies which helped to better direct them to bettering their lives as incarcerated men despite the gravity of the long-term mandatory sentences they had been handed years ago. Being a part of the inmate minister community has empowered all of the participants who are still incarcerated. They have been given roles as pastors, ministers, and teachers within the L.S.P. as well as in some cases at other correctional facilities throughout the state. They all spoke of being able to spread the word of God and have confidence in their abilities to help others. The participants in this study all noted that their morality was found before entering the seminary, therefore their journey as it relates to forgiveness had more to do with their ability to now serve others through Christ. Four of the men in this study are currently incarcerated and facing a life (without the possibility of parole) sentence. In a sense, their futures are not necessarily in their control; but their involvement with the Bible College and inmate minister program have afforded them a slight luxury of being able to have control over their Angola experience. Their faith in God has given them hope that they could possibly have a true future outside the walls of LSP, and they pass this feeling of hope onto others through their counseling,

ministry, and teaching. Essentially, they have taken their talents to use for a purpose and to help others within the bleak situation of decades of incarceration.

### **School-to-Prison Pipeline and Participant Experience**

After reading through the article and discussing what the SPP is by definition each of the participants in the study noted that they felt they had been a victim of the SPP in their K-12 school experiences, and each one of them dropped out of school at some point during their high school tenure. “The adult prison and juvenile justice systems are riddled with children who have traveled through the school-to-prison-pipeline. Approximately 68% of state prison inmates in 1997 had not completed high school” (Wald & Losen, 2003, p. 4). Four out of the five participants were incarcerated prior to 1997, and was sentenced at the height of the *tough on crime* era of the 1990s. As Black American males in urban settings, research shows that they were targeted by the growing PIC.

Some research suggests that when African American males enter school their educational path is altered by situational variables. These situational variables include experiencing harsher discipline practices, being taught by unprepared teachers, being referred for special education, and a feeling of detachment from school. The combination of these factors within the education system have been purported to contribute to the overrepresentation of African American males in prison. This is referred to as the School to Prison Pipeline (Darensbourg, Perez, & Blake, 2010, p. 2).

None of the participants noted that they had any academic difficulties, and all of them considered themselves to have adequate intellectual abilities even leading up to their leaving school. When comparing their experiences to the quote about, the situational variable that stood out the most for all participants was the feeling of detachment from the school environment.

Detachment from the school environment was evident for all five of the participants. They felt as if they did not need to be in school, and when not stimulated by things within the school environment their attention was focused elsewhere. The preference was to involve

themselves in the *street life* of their immediate environment. “Students with sporadic attendance tended to be more disconnected from school” (Brown, 2007, p. 452). All participants reported that they felt disconnected from school, and they were uninterested in academic activities, unless they played sports. In an October 2015 article from the *Washington Post*, a survey was taken of young Black youth in Montgomery County Schools “that examines the disconnection from work and school among young African Americans in the Washington suburb” (George, 2015, p. 1). The survey results came “from 1,200 young people ages 14 to 24, a roughly equal mix of high school students, graduates and dropouts” (George, 2015, p. 1). In her survey results George found that “majority of those who responded to the survey said they felt as if they were part of their schools, although most also said they need more teachers and counselors who care about black students being successful...and that some African American students feel discriminated against or disconnected ” (George, 2015, p. 1).

As a Black American myself I can relate to the need for more teachers and counselors that care about the success of Black American students and the feeling of unacknowledged discrimination. In my household it was important to my parents that we had Black American role models. They both made sure that I and my siblings knew that we were capable of success, and they set us up to be able to achieve our goals knowing that other Black Americans had paved the way for us despite discrimination. Not everyone has that type of home environment, and the school environment should be a surrogate setting for students to be able to visualize their future success and their ability to overcome discrimination. The participants in my study found the streets to be more comforting and welcoming than the school atmosphere, and their success and acceptance could be found by navigating and manipulating the *street life*. This, in combination with other bad choices, led them down the pipeline to end up in prison.

### **NOBTS and Prison Cultural Shift**

When discussing with all five participants it was evident that the Bible College had a significant effect on the cultural shift of the prison. From being known as the *bloodiest prison in America* to being nationally recognized and toured by prison officials from other states, Angola has made a tremendous change since the beginning of Burl Cain's administration and the inception of the university campus on the main prison grounds. The 1995 the prison began an upward spiral which ultimately led to new found hope and a sense of peace within the walls. The Bible College was significant, but by all accounts of the study participants Burl Cain's methods of bringing in not only education and religion but also privileges and trust contributed to the substantial overall change. As stated by Cain in the first chapter of the book *The Angola Prison Seminary: Effects of Faith-Based Ministry on Identity, Transformation, Desistance, and Rehabilitation*:

I'm going to be good as you let me or as mean as you make me. It's just business. I can't give away this prison. You might take it, but I'll take it back. It's going to be bad when I take it back. So let's just work together (Hallett, Hays, Johnson, Jang, & Duwe, 2016, p. 3).

This statement was made within his first week as prison warden, and moving forward from that he allowed unheard of privileges like "family visitation, liberty, and freedom of movement for prisoners who earn the privilege" (Hallett, Hays, Johnson, Jang, & Duwe, 2016, p. 3). The participants in this study all agreed that the methods implemented by Cain led to the calming of the prison environment, and the NOBTS program flourished as a result of his trusting of the incarcerated men to take advantage of and grow from the opportunity to receive a quality education while accepting Christ into their lives.



### **Current Louisiana Legislation**

On April 11, 2017, the Louisiana State Legislative Session began. Over the last ten months the Louisiana Task Force for Justice Reinvestment has been working to find ways to eliminate the mass incarceration problem in this state. They have worked tirelessly alongside the men and women of the PEW Charitable Trust Institute to make sure they had the correct data and information to make choices that would be beneficial and safe for all stakeholders involved. Throughout the ten months that the Task Force has been in action they have come up with a host of suggestions for the 2017 Legislative Session and one of them has to do with Louisiana Lifers and parole eligibility. After looking into all of the data as it pertains to other states as well as violent offender recidivism rates, criminal menopause, and the cost of warehousing aging individuals, the Task force made the following recommendation for offenders serving life sentences in Louisiana:

To address Louisiana's growing elderly inmate population that poses a low risk to recidivism ensure that inmates sentenced to life imprisonment who have demonstrated substantial growth behind bars receive an opportunity for release by creating a parole valve for current and future inmates who have served 30 years behind bars and reached the age of 50, excluding those sentenced to first degree murder (Louisiana Justice Reinvestment Task Force, 2017).

This recommendation was forwarded to the members of the Louisiana Legislature, and Senator Danny Martiny incorporated them as a part of Senate Bill 139 for the 2017 legislative session. Senate Bill 139 had a host of other proposals for criminal justice reforms that were geared toward violent and nonviolent offenders. This bill was presented on May 2, 2017 to the Judiciary C committee chaired by Senator Dan Claitor, and was amended to omit all proposals for offenders serving a life sentence for violent crimes. This eliminated the majority of the over 4000 lifers serving time in this state. The District Attorney's Association was in strong opposition to all legislation geared toward parole eligibility for those deemed violent offenders

and during the session it appeared as though only the district attorneys could testify to the contents of the amendments. As of present, there has been no legislation made in regards to addressing LWOPP for adult offenders. For the juveniles who have been given a life sentence for violent crimes, currently there is Senate Bill 16, authored by Senator Dan Claitor, which provides for parole eligibility for these individuals after 20 years of incarceration. This bill has made it pass committee, and has passed on the Senate floor. It is now to be reviewed by the House of Representative to be approved in order to be signed into law.

The Task Force will still be moving forward and making more recommendation in this three year overhaul of the Louisiana Criminal Justice System. They did originally say this was going to be a bit by bit process. Until Louisiana dispels of LWOPP and gets rid of the *good ole boy* semantics, we cannot see improvements to our prison numbers. Warehousing 4000+ aging individuals because they are considered *violent offenders* due to crimes committed over 20 years ago will only continue to compound our legal system and prison facilities. Hopefully during this overhaul of the system the right decisions will be made, and entities like the District Attorney's Association will not be able to make decisions that will hinder the progress of changing Louisiana's #1 in the world prison status.

### **Future Perspective: Where Do We Go From Here?**

As stated by Jennifer Crawford in her May 4, 2017 Face Book post on the day after the disappointing Judiciary C committee meeting,

We have to start recognizing that being number 1 in incarcerations, number 2 in exonerations, and number 50 in education is not acceptable. We have to stop letting emotions rule what we are doing. Or start letting the right emotions rule. We need to identify that as long as our children are not being educated, they are going to be incarcerated. As long as we allow District Attorney's to hide evidence and convict innocent people, we will continue to steal these same children's parents from them. It is time for the State of Louisiana to recognize that we are not using our taxpaying dollars

wisely. It is time for us to show the Legislators that we will not put up with these kinds of back room, closed door deals, especially when they occur with the very people who got us into this bind in the first place (Crawford, 2017).

The Louisiana Legislature let the penal reform advocates of Louisiana down on May 2<sup>nd</sup> by allowing the District Attorney's Association to bully them into making amendments that perpetuate out *lock 'em up and throw away the key* mentality and will ultimately lead to our prisons becoming nursing homes and hospice facilities. Not all people with violent convictions are still violent people. Many of the men at L.S.P., especially the men who have completed the NOBTS program, have been rehabilitated and have spent 15+ years in incarceration.

Criminal menopause is “a stage in life during which an older, habitual criminal loses interest in crime or when an older prisoner no longer poses any threat to society” (English for Students, 2017). When an offender reaches this age, usually listed as 45 years of age, he or she has become a very low risk offender. Criminal menopause coupled with long sentence of 20+ years has in some cases been referred to a time in which criminal justice systems institute *Geriatric Parole*. Our prisons are currently filled with 4000+ lifers whose only mode of possible release is through the pardon process. If we still perpetuate LWOPP for all of our Louisiana Lifers, we are setting ourselves up for expensive, unnecessary warehousing of individuals who have spent decades in prisons and pose low to no risk to society. We are holding people based on anger, condemnation and vengeance; not for public safety.

“According to Human Rights Watch, from 2007 to 2010, the increase in the elderly population, 65 and up, being sentenced to state and federal prison outpaced the increase in the total population by 94 to 1” (Ollove, 2016, p. 2). Like Louisiana is attempting to do,

Many states have taken steps to reduce their prison populations by releasing nonviolent inmates or by diverting some offenders to community programs before sending them to prison. But corrections officials say those reforms alone will do little to decrease the

population of older prisoners who are serving mandatory sentences or have committed violent crimes (Ollove, 2016, p. 3).

Some states have adopted *Geriatric Parole* laws to deal with their aging offenders, but they are often “cumbersome and restrictive” (Ollove, 2016, p. 3). Louisiana is a state that boast having a 20 years served/45 years old parole eligibility, but this does not pertain to the Louisiana Lifers or any other offender who has committed a violent crime, including armed robbery. Thus, it does not affect the increasingly growing number of *aging, rehabilitated* offenders. States like California, who do not have the mandatory LWOPP for similar crimes as in Louisiana have sentencing policies where these same offenders “are sentenced under the Indeterminate Sentencing Law (ISL) and will serve a term of life with possibility of parole. Offenders sentenced to a life term with the possibility of parole cannot be released on parole until the Board of Parole and Hearings determines that they are ready to be returned to society” (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, 2017). If Louisiana Law makers do not address this problem, and start assessing offenders on rehabilitation and age as opposed to assessing them based on crimes performed decades ago we will find ourselves saddled with unimaginable expenses for 4000+ men and women within our state prisons who are in their, 50’s, 60’s, 70’s and beyond. I personally met a man at LSP who is currently 81 years old and has served over 50 years in prison. Is he there because he is truly a threat to society, or is it to just endlessly punish, judge, and condemn him for his one greatest mistake in his life?

### **Redirecting the Pipeline**

As a teacher leader/instructional specialist for K-12 education, I have witnessed many instances in which the SPP could be addressed and possibly redirected. It is essential that at the university level in educational programs preservice teachers are made aware of the ramifications of the choices they make in the classroom. They need to be educated about the SPP, and given

the tools needed to properly address and teach students who may fall into the category of those most susceptible to the SPP. It is also important for teachers to recognize cultural differences within the students they teach and acknowledge the differences that they may have from their students while incorporating culturally relevant pedagogy. Being able to assess the student-teacher gap is an amazing first step in possibly redirecting the pipeline. In this section I address the next steps in teacher preparation.

### **Recommendations for Preservice Teachers and Educational Programs**

In many teacher education programs throughout universities as well as alternative certification programs, a need exists to address the reality of the SPP and attempt to address it as it pertains to preservice teacher education. With the SPP being a large concern in the U.S. it is imperative that we start to address possible ways to combat the rising problem. When addressing such a widespread problem it would only make sense to start with the basics or at the root of where the problem could possibly lie. As stated previously, the SPP refers to separation and disproportionate over disciplining of poor children and children of Color, especially Black American boys, in the K-12 school systems; the over representation of these children in the special education referrals and subsequent labeling; and the effects this has that ultimately leads to overwhelming incarceration rates in these individuals into adulthood. Teaching is a multifaceted issue, considering among other factors, the majority White, female, middle-oncome teaching force in the U.S. versus the student populations in many urban areas, and in certain locales, which is predominantly children of Color (Cochran-Smith, 2000; Delpit, 1995; Howard, 1999; Irving, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Sulentic Dowell, 2008; Sulentic Dowell & Bach, 2012). This disparity between teaching forces and enrollment demographics is but one aspect that indicates the complexity of teaching in U.S. public schools. Other factors are inequity of

funding, access issues, and teacher preparation. The assumed, or in many cases, the expected role of educators is another dynamic to consider.

It is important to look at the “link between the surveillance role played by many teachers in public schools and the over-representation of youth of Color in the U.S. penal system” (Raible & Irizarry, 2010, p. 1196). Teachers are often called on to be disciplinarians as well as educators in their day to day interactions within their classrooms. This can be frightful for the teacher and detrimental for the students if one has not been appropriately trained in either arena. The focus of many teacher education programs usually is on the education aspect of the field as opposed to the discipline role he or she must play. Novice and poorly trained alternatively certified teachers who are not used to or prepared to face the unruly and sometimes deviant behaviors that they may encounter in the classroom may have a propensity to label and isolate students whom they deem as *problem children*. New teacher educators have a responsibility to use teacher education as a way of combatting the ways in which “teachers are encouraged, most recently in the name of accountability, to become principally agents of surveillance and behavior management” (Raible & Irizarry, 2010, p. 1197). Using our collective professional responsibility to promote social justice in and through education teacher preparers can assist new teachers in deciphering what is tolerable and normal in children of all backgrounds so that they can make wise decisions as it pertains to discipline.

New and preservice teachers “must be encouraged to clarify their understanding of the socio-political context of their work and the political nature of the roles they will soon take on while they fashion identities as novice teachers” (Raible & Irizarry, 2010, p. 1197). It is important to put into context the potential roles they may play in the sorting and labeling of children and their possible contribution to “criminalizing certain segments of school-age

populations, namely students from poor communities of Color” (Raible & Irizarry, 2010, p. 1197). Two direct ways of supporting new and preservice teachers with their choosing an identity of tolerance would be by educating them about the problem, as well as training them on “the use of positive behavior supports for at-risk students” (Elias, 2013, p. 40). When we know better we do better. Many preservice and new teachers have no idea what to expect as it pertains to *real* classroom discipline and interacting with students who may be deemed *trouble makers*. Many of the preservice teachers come from family structures that allowed them to pursue their educational endeavors in effective and positive environments, and they were not hindered in any way by labeling or stereotyping as children who have experienced the SPP. It is also safe to assume that most of them (young women of middle class backgrounds) have never experienced or witnessed the SPP directly. It is the responsibility of teacher educators to introduce as well as explain and explicitly familiarize these individuals with the term as well as the causes, effects, and overall possibilities of the outcomes. Awareness is key to preparation. Having these teachers learn about the problem and behavior to recognize it as well as contributing factors will allow them to be better prepared to put into practice alternative methods of discipline, and have a better understanding of what it means to be tolerant of children from backgrounds unlike their own. “Instead of pushing children out teachers need a lot more support and training for effective discipline” (Elias, 2013, p. 40). This will give teachers the power to continue to educate their students instead of isolating them. “Schools also need to use best practices for behavior modification to keep these kids in school where they belong” (Elias, 2013, p. 40). This is important in setting the tone for the student body, and within the classroom the teacher sets his/her expectations on their own. “When teachers take a more responsive and less punitive approach in the class-room, students are more likely to complete their education” (Elias, 2013, p.

40). Perhaps having a preservice class specifically dedicated to the SPP and positive support best practices for at-risk students would be a great starting point for addressing the problem on the university level.

### **Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

Presently there is a trend in the local educational community to address the cultural differences within the students we teach. Here in East Baton Rouge Parish Schools due to the current social climate of the city because of the Alton Sterling and police shootings the summer of 2016 as well and the overall social climate of the country due to the 2016 presidential election, we have opted to incorporate Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) into our daily school curricula. CRP is defined as “effective teaching in culturally diverse classrooms” (Irvine, 2010, p. 57) “that is specifically committed to collective not merely individual empowerment” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 160).

Culturally relevant pedagogy rests on three criteria....Students must experience academic success; students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 160).

This type of teaching is made to engage and motivate students of all cultural backgrounds.

“Learning may differ across cultures and teachers can enhance students’ success, by acquiring knowledge of their cultural backgrounds and translating this knowledge into instructional practice” (Irvine, 2010, p. 58). For a teacher to acknowledge these differences in students who have may have a propensity to get funneled into the SPP - poor children and children of Color - could possibly enhance the student self-worth and view of their future prospects as valuable human beings. When a teacher possesses the knowledge of their content and presents it using the lived experiences of the students they teach in order to better connect with the students’ communities and surroundings this constitutes the beginning of culturally relevant teaching.



“Culturally relevant teachers form caring relationships with their students” (Irvine, 2010, p. 60), and from this caring relationship stems the grassroots of self-worth and efficacy within students which could possibly prevent them from being funneled into the SPP.

### **Acknowledging the Student-Teacher Gap**

Edmin writes in his book, *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood...and the Rest of Y'all Too*,

If aspiring teachers...were challenged to teach with an acknowledgment of, and respect for, the local knowledge of urban communities, and were made aware of how the models for teaching and recruitment...reinforce a tradition that does not do right by students, they could be strong assets for urban communities (Emdin, 2016, p. 7).

The student-teacher gap is not just about race and ethnicity. There are many ways that teachers are unable to connect with their students - especially poor children and children of Color.

Teacher must understand that they may have different backgrounds from the students they teacher and acknowledge their students' differences from them with care and understanding. The way the educators engage with urban youth of Color can be significant in the overall educational processes of the students, and for the teacher to recognize “the ways they perceive, group, and diagnose students has a dramatic impact on student outcomes” (Emdin, 2016, p. 9).

Often times the cycle of poverty that some poor children and children of Color experience is impacted by the PIC. “There is a complex relationship between incarceration, the breakdown of the family, and academic achievement” (Emdin, 2016, p. 122). Not only are many of these children affected by the PIC from their environment at home, they are also reminded of the prison environment within their schools and classrooms. Within on Detroit school visited by Emdin it was noted that “everything from the metal detectors...entering each building to the tile in the bathrooms and framing on the bulletin boards were eerily similar” to the inside of a prison (Emdin, 2016, p. 170). Children who are already possibly ill-fated to end up in our penal system

need teachers who acknowledge the need to foster caring relationships with these students, and teachers that enhance their view of self and overall perception of achievement.

As Delpit states in her book *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*, “we live in a society that nurtures and maintains stereotypes” (Delpit, 2006, p. Loc 244). It is imperative that our teachers know what these stereotypes are and that they *are* just stereotypes. Teachers need to be able to look past the possible differences they have with their students and learn to differentiate learning in order to reach students who may be struggling due to their cultural identity and the way the teacher is presenting the information. We must also remember that the school environment is often set up in ways that perpetuate a state of control and discipline similar to what is found within the prison system. School and district based policies like *timeout rooms*, *silent lunches*, and *school resource officers* that rely on extreme discipline and unclear regulations also play a large role in the continuation of the SPP. Teachers are often do not have a say in these regulations and policies, but they should be made aware of the roles they play and how their decisions on classroom management and discipline can play out on a larger scale. As mentioned in the section above CRP can be used effectively in most classrooms; it is up to the teachers as to whether they are ready to acknowledge their students’ cultural identities that may vastly differ from theirs and whether they want to employ methods to reach those students socially and academically while operating within the system of their school environment.

### **Concluding Remarks**

As stated by Hayes in the conclusion of her work with the men of the Be the Change Program, “Prison, at its best, has the potential to facilitate lasting, meaningful change. It could be a site of change and rehabilitation” (2012, p. 163). With this in mind, it is important for us to

start thinking of our prison facilities as being place to create that change and promote opportunities for growth. Obviously, the system has a disconnect, and we have regarded prisons as places for merely punishment and isolation. Many incarcerated individuals can and will be reintegrated back into society, and they deserve a chance at a fresh start. Being saddled with the label of *felon* already contributes to the difficulty of reintegration, but providing them with meaningful education while incarcerated gives them a chance at being successful upon release. Through these research findings I want to contribute to what legislative bodies, political figures, and religious groups know about and elevate awareness of the changes that have occurred in so many men; and that they will find a way to show mercy to this disenfranchised group of individuals.

As it relates to Louisiana and its fear of allowing offenders with violent charges to have a possibility at returning to society, education can be a mechanism of preparation for release. The men in the NOBTS program have chosen education and religion despite the grim circumstances of their incarceration. This speaks to the character of the individual, as well as the potential for the individual to be positively reintegrated with a low to no chance of recidivism. If we believe that education is valuable and creates opportunity, then we must believe that this is applicable across the board. We also are a state that prides itself in our religious practices and convictions. To provide our incarcerated populations with mechanisms for religious expression and aid them in making morally ethical decisions gives them an opportunity at redemption. Yes, victim's rights are important, but what about all of the forgotten victims like children of the incarcerated, and those who were victims of a system that was meant to fail them. As in the cases of Seth Fontentot, a young 18 year old white man, who was charged with first degree murder, but was convicted of manslaughter – which does not have a mandatory life sentence - due to his

perceived mental capacity because of his age; and Ronald Olivier, a young 16 year old black man, who was held accountable for his actions, tried as an adult and convicted of second degree murder – which holds a sentence of LWOPP - despite his age; what do we make of the individual cases of their situations and punishments. What defines a victim? How many incarcerated individuals were essentially victims of the system due to their impoverished state or victims of the School-to-Prison pipeline because of the expectations set forth for them at an early age? We as Louisianans need to be more fore thinking about our stance on prison reform, and realize that all of us have made mistakes in life, but some of us were allotted the tools to overcome or circumvent the consequences of those mistakes when many others were not. To continue to perpetuate LWOPP alludes to the fact that we do not believe in forgiveness. As a state that prides itself on Catholic heritage we must begin to think beyond the realms of punishment and look forward to the possibility of redemption. In the words of the 266<sup>th</sup> leader of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope Francis: “A life sentence is only a hidden death sentence.”

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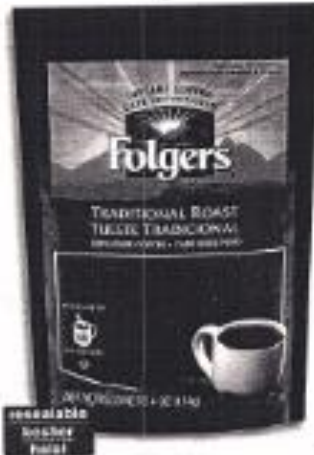
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B 8045220	Hawaiian Punch Sugar Free Juicy Red Singles To Go (8 count)		.74 oz		\$2.25
C 8432879	Welch's Grape Singles To Go (6 count)		.45 oz		\$2.25
D 8045308	A&W Root Beer Sugar Free Singles To Go (6 count)	K	.53 oz		\$2.25
E 8096019	Crush Pineapple Sugar Free Singles To Go (6 count)		.45 oz		\$2.25
F 8045270	Crush Cherry Limeade Sugar Free Singles To Go (6 count)		.59 oz		\$2.25

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Union Supply Direct



pastries & candy



Item #	Description	[K]=Kosher [H]=Halal	Net Wt.	Value	Price
A 8071092	Mrs. Freshley's Red Velvet Cupcakes (2 count)	K	4 oz.		\$1.50
B 8071208	Mrs. Freshley's Strawberry Cheese Danish	K	4 oz.		\$1.40
C 8071036	Mrs. Freshley's Big Cheese Round Danish	K	4 oz.		\$1.30
D 8071035	Mrs. Freshley's Jelly Filled Honey Bun	K	4 oz.		\$1.40
E 8008177	Skittles Original Big Bag		14 oz.		\$5.95
F 8008179	Starburst Original Fruit Chews Big Bag		14 oz.		\$5.95



health & beauty (taxable)



Item #	Description	Net Wt.	Value	Price
A 7360038	Daily Defense 3N1 Mens Ice Body Wash/Shampoo/Conditioner	15 oz.		\$2.95
B 7055077	Daily Defense Green Apple Shampoo	16 oz.		\$2.95
C 7010118	Daily Defense Green Apple Conditioner	16 oz.		\$2.90
D 7055071	V05 Shampoo Moisture Milks Strawberries & Cream	12.5 oz.	NEW	\$3.00
E 7360062	Power Stick Cool Blast Shower Gel + Shampoo	16 oz.	NEW	\$2.75
F 7055048	Personal Care Dandruff Shampoo 1% Pyrrithione Zinc	13.5 oz.		\$2.60
G 7360052	Soft Soap Body Wash Acai Berry and Tropical Water	18 oz.		\$8.95
H 7050231	Zest For Men 2 in 1 Hair And Body Wash	18 oz.		\$6.95
I 7060251	Soft Whisper Pomegranate Lemon Verbena Body Wash	16 oz.	NEW	\$2.70
J 7060243	Suave Creamy Cocoa Butter & Shea Body Wash	12 oz.	NEW	\$5.95

Order Online @ [LAinmatepackage.com](http://LAinmatepackage.com)

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health & beauty (taxable)



Item #	Description	Net Wt.	Value	Price
A 7060903	Irish Spring Aloe Bar Soap	3.75 oz.	NEW	\$1.95
B 7060063	Irish Spring Icy Blast Bar Soap (3-Pack)	3.75 oz.	NEW	\$5.95
C 7060102	Dial Advanced Deo Bar Soap with Lather Pockets (2-Pack)	5 oz.	NEW	\$7.50
D 7060147	Zest Cocoa Butter Bar Soap (3-Pack)	4 oz.	NEW	\$6.95
E 7060501	Level 10 Cocoa Butter Bar Soap	5 oz.		\$1.25
F 7060502	Level 10 Sport Antibacterial Bar Soap Blue	5 oz.		\$1.25
G 7020203	Soft Whisper Cucumber Green Tea Anti-Perspirant/Deodorant	2 oz.	NEW	\$2.75
H 7020108	Dial Scented Roll On Crystal Breeze Anti-Perspirant/Deodorant	1.5 oz.	NEW	\$2.60
I 7020205	Power Stick Cool Blast Anti-Perspirant/Deodorant	1.65 oz.	NEW	\$2.70
J 7020204	Power Stick Hurricane Deodorant	2 oz.	NEW	\$2.70
K 7020114	Brut Solid Gel Blue Wave Anti-Perspirant/Deodorant	2 oz.	NEW	\$5.40
L 7020121	Right Guard Sport Anti-Perspirant Deodorant Clear Gel	3 oz.		\$6.95







Item #	Description	Net Wt.	Value	Price
A 7004110	Personal Care Lotion Cocoa Butter	20 oz.		\$2.85
B 7040501	Level 10 Lotion With Aloe Vera	15 oz.	NEW	\$3.75
C 7040030	Suave Lotion Cocoa Butter With Shea	10 oz.	NEW	\$5.95
D 7065010	LA Looks Extreme Sport Styling Gel	8 oz.		\$3.20
E 7065108	Lusti Hair Food	4 oz.		\$2.95
F 7046006	Closeup Mouthwash Cinnamon Alcohol Free Sugar Free	16 oz.		\$2.95
G 7005029	Good Sense Cough Drops Cherry (30 count)			\$1.95
H 7099025	Body Puff White Net	.96 oz.		\$3.25
I 7015012	Tek Pro Straight Toothbrush Medium	.64 oz	NEW	\$1.00
J 7075042	Ultra Brite Advanced Whitening Clean Mint Toothpaste	6 oz.	NEW	\$2.95

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25

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LAPRA29 / 021010

## Appendix B

### Letters

#### First Letter from Me to Keith Morse (10.16.15)

□

10/16/2015

Keith,

My cousin passed on your information to me, so I decided to contact you myself. I am very curious to know your story. I taught high school for ten years and have seen many of my young male students do things in adulthood that led them down a "not so great path". All of them were smart and talented, and could have really done some good things. That leaves me to question many things I've always seen as automatic in life's journey.

So, sir, I'd truly like to know what led you to end up at Angola. You seem very intelligent and talented, so just give me a snap shot: (my info)

1. How old are you? 36
2. Where are you from? New Iberia, LA
3. Do you have kids and/or a family? Nope...just me and my dog
4. How did you end up at Angola? N/A
5. How long you gonna be there? N/A
6. Who's uc favorite football team? Saints and LSU
7. What's uc job where you are? District Instructional Specialist for H.S. Science 2yrs
8. What was uc job before u got to where you are? H.S. Biology/~~PSci~~ Teacher 10yrs

Feel free to add anything more about yourself that can paint a better picture for me. I'm a pretty straight forward woman, so I ask straight up questions. But I answer questions straight up too!!! ...lol... So feel free to ask me about "me" beyond what I have already disclosed...

Best,

Ms. Kristen Antoine

P.S.

LOL.... Why did you include that ~~Why~~ info??? (Eyebrow raised) LMAO....

And my chair looks great!!! I didn't want to put it outside!!!!



Response Letter from Keith Morse to Me (10.21.16)

Dear Kristen,

10/21/15

I received your letter today and I must admit it was a very pleasant surprise. Unfortunately, while receiving your letter I was also notified by administration that my mother was admitted to hospice and her condition is declining rapidly. Therefore as I try and deal with the uncertainty of a cluster of spiralling emotions I'll do my best to be as forthcoming as possible.

..... About Me .....

Although my story is highlighted by guilt, grief, tragedy, innocence, and despair it's contrasted by strength, perseverance, triumph, fortitude and glory (All the ingredients of a epic odyssey) ☺

As you're aware my name is Keith James Morse and I'm from Bossier City La. I'm 40 years of age (3/28/75) and currently serving a life sentence for murder. I've been incarcerated for the last two decades of my life (21 years) which implies I've dwelt within the walls of this <sup>institution</sup> ~~correctional~~ for longer than I did in society. The tragic

(2)

selfishly

tale of a promising young man who made a life altering decision to take a life while surrendering his own. The inevitable aspect of life is that each day it presents obstacles that require moral judgement. Because we're more products of our experiences many of our moral decisions are predicated on the lessons we've learned in life (The man with experience is never at the mercy of a man with only a judgement). Unfortunately some decisions come at a higher price than others. Therefore my life message to younger people is "The preparations that you make today will be the ones that create your tomorrow." To count the cost because sometimes "I'm sorry" will not be enough to pay for a lapse of judgement.

Known as it stands I'm the proud father of two children (Keith 22 & Seaton 22). Fatherhood is and has been always my greatest passion in life. In 2007 I co-founded a person ministry called "Malaichi Dads" to help redefine and raise the status quo of fatherhood in incarcerated men. Because this is my passion this is where I would love to pitch my tent and fully elaborate. However for the sake of time you can read more about it at [Amazonslifeline.com](http://Amazonslifeline.com) and create "Fathers for Life" and "Don't waste your life sentence".



(3)

I'm a huge sports fan. Over the last 20 years sports has been extremely therapeutic in helping me relieve stress and cope with the state of my existence. I've played football and baseball my entire life. Unfortunately due to injuries my playing days are over however for the last six years I've coached the Marshfield Dads softball team (6 championships in a row 😊). Even though it's a out reach ministry tool I love being able to use the team to pour into the lives of the younger inmates.

My Teams.....

NFL - Any team with a black QB. I understand the disparity therefore I pull with the minority.

College football - Fla. St

NBA - NY Knicks

College basketball - North Carolina

MLB - Yankees

College baseball - LSU 😊

As you can see I'm very diversified.

My job here at the prison is a full time student at the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary where I'm working toward a BA in Christian Ministry. Although I've already completed my course requirements I'm waiting on the next graduation to receive my degrees. I'll be first college graduate in my family. Prior

(4)

to person my last job was working at Skyline.  
A company that manufactures mobile homes.

With that being said it's getting late  
and I'm mentally and emotionally drained. Hopefully  
I've given you a glimpse of who I am and  
it will prompt you into desiring to want to know  
more about me. Kristen, I love to meet  
new people and make new friends. Please  
don't feel any pressure to respond. I have  
no hidden agendas or ulterior motives other than  
pursuing a meaningful friendship.

I Am,  
Keith

P.S. Ipay is where you can set up a email  
account. I haven't hand written a letter in  
forever. Emails are more convenient, quicker,  
not to mention cheaper 😊. Emails are same day  
attention. Snail mail is forever! 😊

## My Letter to Sandra Antoine (02.10.16)

Moma,

I'm writing this letter to you about four months into the most wonderful time in my life. In October, I met an awesome person who's spirit and aura captivated me from the moment I laid my eyes on him. I was not looking for him (nor him for me), but God saw fit to place him in my path. Believe me when I say I tried to avoid him and this situation, but there were just too many signs and signals that just kept leading me back.

After careful consideration and my curiosity got the best of me I reached out to Keith J. Morse. I was curious about how such seemingly intelligent, poised, attractive, and talented man could end up at the LA State Pen. I sent him a letter with all intentions to just quench my curiosity, but the letter I received in return blew me away... (See attachment)

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=lt03FChMp1A> (Fathers for Life)

Since that day we have been in constant contact. Through email and phone I have gotten to know the "heart of a man" (title of his stolen curriculum workbook for prison fathers). And I have been visiting him faithfully every Sunday since November (hence my absence and elusiveness when asked about my weekends.... I just don't think you are ready to accept my truth yet...but know that I am the happiest I've ever been). We spend our time together reading; writing; going to church at Methodist Men's, Full Gospel, and Our Lady of Guadeloupe Catholic Church on the grounds of Angola (where I assist with some music ministry), and enjoying each other's thoughts and company.

This is an experience that I never thought in a million years I'd be a part of, and it's nothing like I'd ever thought it would be.... But the things that I have experienced, the people I have met, and the time that I have spent has been phenomenal.... I've learned so much about myself and about people in general that I'm in a really good sound place spiritually, mentally, and emotionally....and Keith has everything to do with that... He encourages and uplifts me... He is the best thing that has ever happened to me. He is a good man...A spiritual man... An educated man.... A person who made one bad decision as a "19 yr old child"-like I have- that has costed him everything (thrown away by the State of Louisiana).... But he is also a person who has used his experiences and leaned on his faith to make a better man –a reformed man- of himself.... A man that was made for me... (and I believe that with every fiber of my being...). He is everything I could want in a man....only his address makes this difficult to tell you about...but know that I want to shout from the rooftops of my happiness!!!! And I will breathe the biggest sigh of relief when I finally send you this message.

Right now I need your support and comfort more than anything, and if all I will receive is your condemnation for my life choices I will be forced to continue to hide and stay away. (I don't want to do that at all because I need you more than you'll ever know)... I wish so much to be able to vent and talk to you about my joy as well as my frustration... This is difficult path I've chosen, but I know that it's right for me.... Your love and lack of critical judgement will help me through some of my hard moments.... I need you to understand and give me the same acceptance that you've taught me to extended to others in my life....

Right now only a handful of people know about Keith, but I'm not embarrassed (he's a good man).... I just wanted to keep my circle small until I told you....

Finally sharing my world.... Your Daughter,

Kristen



## Appendix C

### Research Materials

#### Written/ Face-to-face Interview Protocol

Suleantic Dowell\_Antoine\_2016

Prison to School to Redemption: A Full Circle Channel to Complete the “School-to-Prison Pipeline”

#### Written/ Face to Face Interview Protocol

##### Inmate/Returning Citizen Individual Written Interview Questions

1. Describe your background: where were you born, family structure, and level of education.
2. Describe your high school and post-high school educational experience prior to incarceration.
3. How has the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS) College experience impacted your view of self? What has changed and How?
4. How has the NOBTS College experience impacted your view of your educational/mentorship abilities?
5. Describe the impact have you observed of the NOBTS College experience on the prison environment during your incarceration? Provide a few specific examples.
6. After reading the article, *Beyond School-to-Prison Pipeline and Toward and Educational and Penal Realism* (Fasching-Varner, Mitchell, Martin & Bennett-Haron, 2014), how do you feel about the topic as it relates to your personal life experiences and circumstances that may have led to your current incarceration?
6. Is there anything else you want to tell me about your NOBTS and redemption experience?

*Altered P A S C I*  
Student Self-Concept Inventory

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ NOBTS Bachelor's Degree Completion Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Highest Level of School Completed Before Prison:

6 7 8 9 10 11 12 Fr So Jr Sr Grad

**Instructions**

Please answer each item below by checking (✓) the most appropriate blank in the series. Consider this example:

Do you often have trouble saying "no" to a sales person?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

If you never or almost never have trouble saying "no" to a sales person you should check the last blank on the left, on the "practically never" side. If you always or very often have difficulty when faced with this kind of experience, you should check the farthest blank on the right. If you fall in between these two extremes, check the blank which you believe most applies to yourself that is in between the two endpoints.

Take a reasonable amount of time to complete this form accurately, but do not spend too much time reflecting. Remember that your initial reaction is often the most valid.

1. Do you often think of yourself as an outstanding student?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

2. How much do you worry about whether other people will regard you as a success or a failure in your job or in school?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

3. How often are you troubled with shyness?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

4. Do you ever think that you have more ability in mathematics than most of your classmates?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

5. Do you often wish or fantasize that you were better looking?  
practically never\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very often
6. Do you ever feel less capable academically than others at your grade level?  
practically never\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very often
7. Do you think of yourself as a worthwhile person?  
practically never\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very often
8. Do you often think that you are quite physically attractive?  
practically never\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very often
9. Have you ever thought that you had a greater ability to read and absorb articles and textbooks than most people?  
practically never\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very often
10. How often do you have difficulty expressing your ideas in writing for class assignments?  
practically never\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very often
11. When you think that some people you meet might have an unfavorable opinion of you, how concerned or worried do you feel about it?  
not at all worried\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very worried
12. Most of the time, do you genuinely like yourself?  
practically never\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very often
13. Do you ever doubt that you are a worthy person?  
practically never\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very often
14. Do you often think of yourself as good at mathematical problems?  
practically never\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very often
15. Do you think of yourself as a generally competent person who can do most things well?  
practically never\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very often
16. Compared with others, how confident do you feel in your mathematical abilities?  
not at all confident\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very confident

17. Do you think of yourself as someone who can do quite well on exams  
and assignments in most of your classes?  
practically never\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very often
18. How often do you feel concerned about what other people think of  
you?  
practically never\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very often
19. How confident are you that others see you as physically appealing?  
not very confident\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very confident
20. Do you usually feel comfortable and at ease meeting new people?  
practically never\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very often
21. How much do you worry about criticisms that might be made of you by  
others?  
not very much at all\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very much
22. Do you ever feel that you are less physically attractive than you  
would prefer to be?  
practically never\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very often
23. Do you feel comfortable and at ease when entering a conversation at a  
gathering where people are already talking?  
practically never\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very often
24. Are you frequently concerned about your ability to do well in  
school?  
practically never\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very often
25. Do you ever feel especially proud of, or pleased with, your looks  
and appearance?  
practically never\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very often
26. How much do you worry about how well you get along with other  
people?  
not very much\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very much
27. When in a group of people, do you have trouble thinking of the right  
things to talk about?  
practically never\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very often

28. Do you often feel nervous or self-conscious when called upon to speak in front of others?
- practically never\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very often
29. When you have to read an essay and understand it for a class assignment, how worried or concerned do you feel about it?
- practically never\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very often
30. When you have to write an essay to convincingly express your ideas, how confident do you feel that you have done a good job?
- not at all confident\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very confident
31. How often have you felt that your mathematical ability was far below that of your classmates?
- practically never\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very often
32. How often do you feel that you have a strong sense of self-respect?
- practically never\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very often
33. Are you often concerned that your school performance is not up to par?
- practically never\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very often
34. How confident do you feel about your ability to do well on a standardized achievement test with respect to the verbal comprehension portion?
- not at all confident\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very confident
35. How confident do you feel about your ability to do well on a standardized achievement test with respect to the mathematics portion?
- not at all confident\_ \_ \_ \_ \_very confident

**Note:** For the remaining items the term "family" refers to your parents or adult guardians - the family that you grew up with. If family members are far away or not living, try to answer as you would have when you were together.

36. Have you often wished that your family would be more supportive of you?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

37. Do you often think that your family holds you in high regard?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

38. Do you sometimes feel that your family does not respect your individuality?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

39. Do you usually feel that your family sees you as capable and competent?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

40. Do you ever feel that your family does not accept you for yourself?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

Altered Key to PAsCI (Without Physical Ability Questions)

(R means "reverse score" the item, e.g., 7 -> 1, 6 -> 2, etc.)

Self-Regard:	7,	12,	13R,	15,	32
Soc. Acceptance:	2R,	11R,	18R,	21R,	26R
Academic abil.:	1,	6R,	17,	24R,	33R
Verbal abil:	9,	10R,	29R,	30,	34
Math abil:	4,	14,	16,	31R,	35
Phys. Appeal:	5R,	8,	19,	22R,	25
Parental Accept.:	36R,	37,	38R,	39,	40R
Soc. Anxiety:	3R,	20,	23,	27R,	28R

## Appendix D

### IRB Forms

#### Original Approval

##### ACTION ON PROTOCOL APPROVAL REQUEST



Institutional Review Board  
Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair  
130 David Boyd Hall  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
P: 225.578.8692  
F: 225.578.5983  
[irb@lsu.edu](mailto:irb@lsu.edu) | [lsu.edu/irb](http://lsu.edu/irb)

TO: Margaret-Mary Sulentic-Dowell  
Education

FROM: Dennis Landin  
Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE: October 27, 2016

RE: IRB# 3772

TITLE: Prison to School to Redemption: A Positive Full Circle Channel to Complete the "School to Prison Pipeline"

New Protocol/Modification/Continuation: New Protocol

Review type: Full ☒ Expedited ☐ Review date: 10/14/2016

Risk Factor: Minimal ☒ Uncertain ☐ Greater Than Minimal ☐

Approved ☒ Disapproved ☐

Approval Date: 10/14/2016 Approval Expiration Date: 10/13/2017

Re-review frequency: (annual unless otherwise stated)

Number of subjects approved: 4

LSU Proposal Number (if applicable):

Protocol Matches Scope of Work in Grant proposal: (if applicable) ☐

By: Dennis Landin, Chairman 

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –  
Continuing approval is **CONDITIONAL** on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects\*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. SPECIAL NOTE:

*\*All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at <http://www.lsu.edu/irb>*



## Modification Approval

### ACTION ON PROTOCOL APPROVAL REQUEST



Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair  
130 David Boyd Hall  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
P: 225.578.8682  
F: 225.578.5983  
[lrj@lsu.edu](mailto:lrj@lsu.edu)  
[lsu.edu/research](http://lsu.edu/research)

TO: Margaret-Mary Sulentic-Dowell  
Education

FROM: Dennis Landin  
Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE: April 18, 2017

RE: IRB# 3772

TITLE: Prison to School to Redemption: A Positive Full Circle Channel to Complete the "School to Prison Pipeline"

New Protocol/Modification/Continuation: Modification

Brief Modification Description: Increase participants to four incarcerated individuals

Review type: Full ☐ Expedited ☒ Review date: 4/7/2017

Risk Factor: Minimal ☒ Uncertain ☐ Greater Than Minimal ☐

Approved ☒ Disapproved ☐

Approval Date: 4/18/2017 Approval Expiration Date: 10/13/2017

Re-review frequency: (annual unless otherwise stated)

Number of subjects approved: 6

LSU Proposal Number (if applicable):

Protocol Matches Scope of Work in Grant proposal: (if applicable)

By: Dennis Landin, Chairman 

#### PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –

Continuing approval is **CONDITIONAL** on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects"
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. **SPECIAL NOTE: Make sure you use bcc when emailing more than one recipient.**

*\*All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at <http://www.lsu.edu/irb>*

## **Vita**

Kristen Alana Antoine, a native of New Iberia, Louisiana, received her bachelor's degree in Biological Sciences at Louisiana State University in 2003. Upon moving back to New Iberia, she taught various high school science courses at New Iberia Senior High School for six years and completed her teacher certification requirements through the University of Louisiana at Lafayette in 2005. In 2010, she moved back to the Baton Rouge area where she taught high school Biology at Northeast High School, while working on her master's degree and +30 hours of education credits simultaneously. She completed 30 hours of Educational Leadership courses at Southern University and A & M College in the Spring 2013 semester and received her master's degree in Natural Science from Louisiana State University the following August. In 2014, Ms. Antoine was promoted to East Baton Rouge Parish Schools Secondary Science Curriculum Specialist, where she oversaw science curriculum on a district level. Ms. Antoine continued to further her education by moving into the Educational Specialist program at Louisiana State University, and she completed this degree in 2015. Upon completion of this degree she was asked to assume the responsibility of K-12 Science Curriculum Specialist for East Baton Rouge Parish Schools. This is the capacity in which she is currently employed.

Ms. Antoine entered the doctorate program in Curriculum and Instruction at Louisiana State University in 2015, and will receive her doctorate in August of 2017. Throughout her time with her research into inmate self-perception, post-secondary correctional education, and the effects of the School to Prison Pipeline, Ms. Antoine has found a true passion for penal reform efforts as well as efforts to redirect the School to Prison Pipeline. Upon graduation she will be furthering her research and starting a non-profit organization tailored toward her interest. B.E.L.O.V.E.D. Community: Bridge to Enhance the Lives of Offenders and Victims through Education and Dialogue is a grassroots organization that she would like to grow into a positive avenue to address penal reform and victim concerns.