UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,

Santa Barbara

“Pushed-out” and “pulled in”:
Observing the effects of a school-based gang intervention program

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Education

by,

Mario Gerardo Galicia, Junior

Committee in charge:

Professor Richard Duran, Chair

Professor Victor Rios, Co- Chair

Professor Mary E. Brenner

December 2017

The dissertation of Mario Gerardo Galicia Junior is approved.

_____
Richard Duran, Committee Chair

_____
Victor M. Rios, Committee Co- Chair

_____
Mary Brenner

September 2017

“Pushed-out” and “pulled in”: Observing the effects of a school-based gang intervention program

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I would like to acknowledge all of the wonderful people that have been a positive influence in my life as I set out to accomplish my dream of earning my doctoral degree. It would be impossible for me to list everyone that I have come into contact with through my time in college. I do want to make sure to thank my friends and family that have supported my efforts and shared a shoulder for me to lean on, or offered me some advice to take to make this process easier.

First and foremost I want to acknowledge my wife, Maria, and our children Michelle, Mauricio (Xoaquin) and Marco. My wife has been a presence in my life for over the past decade and she has shared with me the ups and downs of being a college student. We met at Moreno Valley College at a time when we were both trying to figure out our futures. I am very lucky that my future ended up with her in it as my partner. She has seen me go through long days of being in class, at work or in the field collecting research. She has also stayed up with me many nights while I stayed up writing, editing, grading or preparing for my lectures. She is the best friend I could have ever asked for, and in my opinion she is an even better mother. Maria, without you, there is no Dr. Mario. We have three beautiful, smart and energetic children. You serve as inspiration during my most trying times and you light my inner fire every day to keep improving myself. I look forward to sharing the rest of my life with you and watching you accomplish all your goals and dreams!

I would also like to acknowledge my parents for their hard work and unconditional love throughout the years. They have taught me the value of hard work, sacrifice and altruism. Although we were raised under impoverished conditions we always had a roof over our

heads, clothes on our backs and food in our stomachs. Next, I would like to recognize my nephew Julian. I really look to his birth as a huge moment in my life that pushed me to try to make myself a better person, not just for me, but for the younger people in our family looking up to me. You have kept me striving for my best ever since then mijo. !Si se pudo!

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MARIO GERARDO GALICIA, JR.

https://sites.google.com/site/marioggaliciajr/

EDUCATION

Doctorate of Philosophy

Dissertation: "Pushed Out" and "Pulled In": Observing the Effects of a School-based Intervention Program
Gevirtz Graduate School of Education, University of California, Santa Barbara
(Defended May 9, 2017)

Master of Arts

Master Thesis: Measuring the Effectiveness of a School-Based Gang Intervention Program
Gevirtz Graduate School of Education, University of California, Santa Barbara. (Winter 2013)

Bachelor of Arts

Senior Thesis: Mis(sed) Education: Chicano Experiences in San Bernardino Public Schools
Chicana/o Studies (Honors) and Sociology, University of California, Santa Barbara.
(Summer 2008)

Associate of Arts & Associate of Sciences, Moreno Valley College. (Summer 2005)

Academic Publications

- Rios, Victor & Galicia, Mario. *Policing Racialized Students (forthcoming).*
- Rios, Victor & Galicia, Mario. (2013) *Smoking Gun or Smoke and Mirrors?: Schools and the Policing of Latino boys.* Association of Mexican American Educators Journal: Special Edition on Latina/o Students and the School-Prison Pipeline. Volume 7: Number 3, pp 54- 66.
- Rios, Victor, et. al. *Santa Barbara School District Gang Intervention Specialist Evaluation Report* Chicana/o Studies Institute, University of California, Santa Barbara. 2010.

Academic / Conference Presentations

- Galicia, Mario & Rios, Victor. *From "Pushed Out" to Pulled In": Creating Spaces of Cooperative Learning Using Cultural Education*. World Education Research Association Conference, Washington D.C. (2016)
- Galicia, Mario & Rios, Victor. *Conscientization Through Intervention: An Argument for a Culturally Relevant Education.* American Education Research Association Conference, Washington D.C. (2016)

- Galicia, Mario & Rios, Victor. *From "At-Risk" to "At-Promise": Critical pedagogy at work with urban Latino youth.* AERA Conference, Philadelphia, PA. (2015)
- *"Policing Youth of Color in Santa Barbara".* Guest Lecture, Pushing Forward: Continuing a Legacy of Student Leaders in Social Justice, Multicultural Center, UC- Santa Barbara (February 2013)
- Galicia, Mario & Rios, Victor. *Analyzing the Cultural Relevancy of a Gang and Violence Intervention Specialist;* AERA Conference, San Francisco, Ca. (2014)
- Galicia, Mario & Rios, Victor. *An Internal Exploration of the Santa Barbara School District's Gang and Violence Intervention Program*. AERA Conference, Vancouver, Canada (2013)
- Galicia, Mario. *Mis(sed) Education: Institutional Failure and Individual Success in San Bernardino*. Chicana/o Studies Department Senior Honors Project, University of California, Santa Barbara. 2008

GRANTS

Chicana/o Studies Institute Graduate Student Research Fellowship, 2009-10, ($1600)
Chicana/o Studies Institute Graduate Student Research Fellowship, 2013-14, ($1200)
USAP Fellowship Recipient- Graduate Division (2009- 13) (Tuition, plus partial insurance fees)

Student Services Outstanding Student Award, Riverside Community College, Moreno Valley campus 2005) ($1000)

Graduate Student Travel Grant, UC Santa Barbara, Academic Senate, (2013- 14) ($800)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant/Evaluator (2007- Present)-

Dr. Victor Rios, Professor, Sociology, UC, Santa Barbara

- **Research Evaluator** for Santa Barbara School District Gang and Violence Intervention Program, 2010-2011
    - Experience with developing, collecting and analyzing surveys as well as qualitative research data.
- **Research Assistant** Santa Barbara Youth Projects (2009- 2013)
    - Experience with conducting ethnographic research including interviewing Latina/o youth.
- **Research Coordinator**, Project GRIT (summer 2013)
    - In charge of maintaining the research budget (paying for interviews, purchasing food, recorders and other field related technology.
    - In charge of data collection including assigning / collecting recorders from youth participants on a weekly basis.

Graduate Division, University of California, Santa Barbara (2010- 2013)

Diversity & Outreach peer

- Assisted with the recruitment, retention efforts of Graduate Division. Some of my responsibilities ranged from clerical office assistance to assisting with fundraising efforts. \
- I was also an online editor for the *UCSB Graduate Post*;
- I assisted the UCSB Graduate Division recruitment efforts by attending college fairs and leading campus recruitment tours.
- I assisted with the coordination of workshops and GRE Prep course for the student scholars of the UCSB Graduate Division summer ARC program.
- I provided year-round workshops geared at preparing undergraduate students (McNair Scholars, Fraternities, Sororities and other student organizations) for their careers as future graduate / professional students.

Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), University of California, Santa Barbara (2007- 08)

Transfer & Non-Traditional peer

- Provided workshops geared towards undergraduate transfer students, specifically, non-traditional underrepresented students.
- Provided informational workshops on financial aid, graduate school admissions, as well as hosted various cultural events.

Transfer Services, Admissions Office, University of California, Santa Barbara (2007- 2008)

Transfer Services Intern

- Provided clerical assistance, including creating welcome packets for prospective transfer students.
- Assisted with recruitment efforts by providing admissions presentations, and campus tours, for prospective transfer students and visiting community colleges.
- Assisted transfer student recruitment efforts by attending college fairs.
- Created a UCSB alumni contact list of all faculty members at California Community Colleges.

Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships, University of California, Santa Barbara (2006-2008)

Financial Aid Student peer

- Provided clerical assistance including filing, answering phone calls, and office upkeep.

- Assisted in the front office with student financial aid inquiries.
- Helped with recruitment efforts by providing campus presentations on financial aid in Spanish. I also assisted with the developing content in Spanish for the UCSB financial aid website.

Mario Galicia Jr Educational Services, Inc. Transfer Student Research Academy

Founder and CEO (2012- Present)

- Our non-profit organization aims to specifically serve under-represented students enrolled in community college. Develop funding to provide research stipends.
- The program aims to provide the students with faculty and peer mentorship; from the community college to the 4-year institute they plan to transfer to. Transfer students have an opportunity to communicate, and possibly meet with, transfer student advocates whom have training in conducting research in their particular field of research. These academic mentors provide guidance to help pursue future research and publications.
- Provide Latina/o and African American community college students with educational research workshops. Research workshops range from *"Introduction to Research Methods"*, *"How to Create Your Online Image," "How to Apply for Funding,"* as well as *"How to Prepare Your Research for Conference Presentation."*

AWARDS & FELLOWSHIPS

University of California, Santa Barbara, Graduate Division Student Commencement Speaker (2015)
University of California, Santa Barbara, Academic Senate Outstanding Teaching Assistance Award Recipient, (2014-15)
President's Volunteer Service Award, California State University, San Bernardino, L.E.A.D. Summit (2013)
Academic Senate Outstanding Teaching Assistance Awards, finalist (2010)
Undergraduate Student Commencement Speaker, University of California, Santa Barbara (2008)
Student Services Award of Distinction, University of California, Santa Barbara (2008, 2015)
Magna Cum Laude, University of California, Santa Barbara (2008)
Student Commencement Speaker, Riverside Community College (2005)

(ASRCC) Reginald Willis Award for Leadership and Perseverance, Riverside Community College, Moreno Valley (2005)

Student Services Outstanding Student Award, Riverside Community College, Moreno Valley campus 2005)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Lecturer, Black Studies 122, The Education of Black Children (fall 2017)

Lecturer, Black Studies 129, Urban Dilemma (fall 2017)

Lecturer, Black Studies 1, Introduction to African- American Studies (summer 2017)

Lecturer, Black Studies 174, From Plantations to Prisons (summer 2017)

Lecturer, Black Studies 129, Urban Dilemma (spring 2017)

Lecturer, Black Studies 154, Environmental Racism & Environmental Justice (spring 2017)

Lecturer, Black Studies 160, The Scientific Origins of Racism in the United States (spring 2017)

Graduate Teaching Associate, Black Studies 131, Race and Public Policy (fall 2016)

Graduate Teaching Associate, Black Studies 118, Comparative Rebellion (winter 2017)

Teaching Assistant, Introduction to Chicana/o Studies (History), Chicana/o Studies 1A (fall 2008)

Teaching Assistant, Black Studies 1, Introduction to African-American Studies (fall 2014; winter 2015; summer 2015; winter 2016; summer 2016)

Teaching Assistant, Black Studies 3, Africa Studies (summer 2016)

Teaching Assistant, Black Studies 4, Race and Racism (spring 2016)

Teaching Assistant, Black Studies 6, Civil Rights Movement (spring 2014)

Teaching Assistant, Black Studies 45, Arts Expressions (winter 2014)

Teaching Assistant, Black Studies 50, Blacks in the Media (summer 2014)

Teaching Assistant, Introduction to Chicana/o Studies (Culture), Chicano Studies 1C (S' 12)

Lead Teaching Assistant, Chicana/o Studies 171; The Brown/Black Metropolis: Race, Class, & Resistance in the City (winter 2010)

Teaching Assistant, Introduction to Sociology (spring, 2009; fall 2013, fall 2015)

MEDIA (selected)

- Latino Education & Advocacy Days (L.E.A.D.) Summit, 2013
    - Latino Education & Advocacy Days Summit Draws Nearly 8 Million Participants
- Graduate Post: University of California, Santa Barbara
    - Graduate Student in the Spotlight: Mario Galicia Jr.
- University of California, Santa Barbara: UCSB Current, June 2015
    - "Paying it Forward"
    - From "Broken" to "New Beginning"

SERVICE

LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

- President, Graduate Students Association, UC- Santa Barbara, 2012- 13

- Vice President, External Relations, Graduate Students Association, Education, UC- Santa Barbara, 2011-12
- Student Representative-Proxy, Graduate Students Association, Education, UC- Santa Barbara, 2009-11
- Undergraduate Student Representative, Chicana/o Studies, UC- Santa Barbara, 2007- 08
- Director, Multi-Cultural Activities, Associated Students, Moreno Valley College, 2004- 05
- President, Title V Club, Associated Students, Moreno Valley College, 2003- 04

COMMITTEES

- Academic Senate, Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award Committee, U.C. Santa Barbara (2015-16)
- Hiring Committee: Vice Chancellor, Administrative Services, U.C. Santa Barbara (2013-14)
- Hiring Committee: Executive Vice Chancellor, U.C. Santa Barbara (2013-14)
- Hiring Committee: Director, Career Services, U.C. Santa Barbara (Summer 2013)
- Executive Committee, Graduate Students Association, U.C. Santa Barbara (2012- 2013)
- Latino Education Advocacy Days, Planning Committee, California State University, San Bernardino (2012-2013)
- Gevirtz Graduate School of Education, U.C. Santa Barbara, Diversity & Equity Advisory Committee (2011- 2012)
- Student Resource Building Advisory Committee, U.C. Santa Barbara (2010- 2012)
- Student and Faculty Code of Conduct Committee (Graduate Student Representative), U.C. Santa Barbara (2009- 2012)
- Ombuds Advisory Committee (Undergraduate Student Representative), U.C. Santa Barbara (2009- 2010)
- Chicana/o Studies and Faculty Committee (Undergraduate Student Representative), U.C. Santa Barbara (2007-2008)

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

- National Association of Student Personnel Administrators **(NASPA)**, 2008- Present
- American Education Research Association **(AERA)**, 2008-Present
- Association of Mexican American Educators **(AMAE)**, 2012- Present
- American Sociological Association **(ASA)**, 2010- Present
- American Society of Criminology **(ASC)**, 2010- Present
- American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education **(AAHHE)**, 2012- Present
- Board of Trustee Member, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2012- 2013
- Board of Trustee Member, Mario G Galicia Jr. Educational Services, Inc. (Non-Profit Corporation)

LANGUAGES

- Spanish – Fluent, Written & Oral
- English – Fluent, Written & Oral

ABSTRACT

"Pushed-out" and "pulled in": Observing the effects of a
school-based gang intervention program

by

Mario Gerardo Galicia Junior

In the spring of 2007 in Golden Coast, California there were a few incidents involving underage Latinos that led local law enforcement and media outlets to describe the series of events as a sign of increased local criminal gang activity despite reports to the contrary. Some of these reports came from senior law enforcement officials whom were quoted in local media as describing a decrease in criminal activity. Shortly thereafter, the local school district implemented a committee tasked with formulating the guidelines for an intervention program aimed at curbing youth from continued criminal and/or gang activity. This research is a longitudinal ethnographic study, spanning over 5 years; focused on a group of 8 youth participants' from the intervention program. Participants experiences and perspectives on gangs, policing, schooling, and the gang intervention worker were examined. This study also focuses on interview data collected during the first year, the third year, and the fifth year of the study, as well as field observations, taken during the 5-year period.

This study finds that the youth benefitted immensely from exposure to the program. First, the youth's perspectives and accounts, since joining the intervention program,

indicated a stronger bond with the other youth participants within the same program, and by extension, their lived community, since they all resided within minutes of each other. This research also notes the importance that *"culture"* played to the youths engagement in the program.

The coordinator of the GVIP first used his culture and personal life experiences to help build rapport with the youth participants of the program. The coordinator then held weekly workshops that included local business owners, non-profit educational programs such as Planned Parenthood, as well as other guest speakers ranging from recent college graduates to college staff and faculty that were within the coordinator's network of professional acquaintances. The youth also watched movies and held discussions surrounding current events and local politics. The goal of the program was to help youths desist from violence and gang participation. The program ended up offering the youth a space for growth and grieving. For instance, participating in meditation circles led the youth to achieve a deeper understanding of themselves and their personal identities.

Finally, the importance of the coordinator's ability to assist the youth navigate their local resources and begin to create a network with their community. Through a combination of a curriculum focused on cultural relevancy, meditation, and network building, the GVIP was able to assist the youth participants focus on their academics and personal lives, while also providing them a vision for a more successful future.

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Chapter 1- Introduction

A blue rod-iron fence surrounds the perimeter around the salmon colored buildings that made up the Pacific Coast High School[1] (PCHS) campus. Next to the administration office there were large pine and palm trees that lined the front of the school, definitely giving the air of an affluent southern California town. The main campus, where most of the field work would be conducted my on-site through field observations, was overtaken by the aroma coming from the blooming trees that filled the school's interior landscape.

As I searched for a visitor parking space I happened to notice that visitor parking spots were located right next to the "SRO" parking spots. I later found out what "SRO" stood for, "Student Resource Officer". An SRO is typically an off-duty law enforcement officer used as an on-site police presence, even offering assistance with students seemed most egregious in behavior. These students included students, labeled "at-risk". I would later come to find out more about the "SRO's" and their relationship with the youth participants in this study.

After checking into the front office to receive my "visitor" pass I walked through the interior administration buildings' hallways, slowly making my way through a large corridor that took me past the offices of the vice-principals, counselors and a series of other administrative employees of PCHS. As I exited the main administration building I walked towards the assigned room for the intervention program. I then noticed about 25- 30 teenage Latino male students standing outside under a tree near their classroom, forming a circle. In the middle of the circle was a gentlemen standing over 6 feet tall, wearing square- framed prescription glasses, with his hair parted into two long braids that extended over both of his shoulders, down the front of his chest. The gentleman in the middle of the circle was named Richard, the coordinator of the program. He was taking the beginning of his class to *"break*

down" the rules and expectations for the youth participants of the intervention program. Richard was going over several rules that everyone affiliated with the intervention program would have to adhere to. At the same time, Richard mentioned that they were also going to develop their own set of rules, through time, and experience. Richard mentioned that the youth would be instrumental in helping develop these rules. Matter of fact; the first rule they came up with was that they would begin every meeting with a check-in circle, beginning with their first day. The check in would include questions such as: *"What's your name?"*, *"Do you have any siblings in this program?"*, *"Where were your parents born?"*, *as well as*, *"How are you feeling today?"*, to name a few of the questions. Some of the youth were not too happy about having to speak in public, and they voiced their concerns. The coordinator addressed their concerns and negotiated with them and allowed a few of these students to just say their names when their turn came. However, he did inform them that he would be expecting more participation from them as time went on. He reiterated to the group that they would be instrumental in developing the curriculum and culture of their program. This initial interaction with Richard would prove to be influential to many of the youth participants, as many of them would later mention that although they did not want to speak in public, they noticed it did offer a space for their peers to vent. The ability to share a space with other boys from similar cultural backgrounds assisted their transition to the intervention program.

Culture

For this study I point to Geneva Gay's definition for culture : *"Culture is a term used to describe a person, or group/s, whom share a similar set of beliefs, motivations, and even social group membership (religion, education, etc.)"* (Gay, 2010, pgs. 8-9). Thus, the

[1] Pacific Coast High School is a pseudonym used to protect the identity of the

teacher who practices culturally relevant teaching understands that culture manifests in a variety of adaptations within how students learn more efficiently. A culturally responsive teacher uses differentiated instruction to tailor learning to every aspect of a student's culture. Furthermore, by emphasizing, respecting and applying the personal learning strategies, particularly for underachieving students of color, helps develop their overall aptitude potential, while transforming these youth from being labeled "at-risk" to being described as "at-promise" (Boykin, 2002; Gay, 2010; Rios 2011).

Going beyond the traditional race and ethnicity narrative, *culture* is also defined to include a people's beliefs (religious, political, etc.), motivations (personal enlightenment, wealth, etc.), and even social groups and norms. Data from this research suggest that having a culturally relevant intervention coordinator further assisted the youth's engagement in the program and to its curriculum, therein creating an avenue for the youth participants to begin to create their knowledge foundations. These knowledge foundations include using personal knowledge either from home, at play with friends, vocational or mechanical, etc., as means to help them explore connections to their education.

For instance, one of the youth participants, Cairo[i], has a father who worked as a mechanic for a local dealership. Cairo described to me his love of cars almost from the moment we met. We were sitting outside of a Mexican restaurant waiting for food we had ordered when all of a sudden three brand new sports cars drove by. As they drove by Cairo managed to accurately name all three vehicles, and even had enough know how to suggest what types of extra features are offered, per vehicle. When I asked him how he knew so much about cars he told me about his father being a mechanic. He also mentioned to me that Richard had told him that maybe he should look into becoming an automotive engineer.

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coordinator of the gang and violence intervention program.

Cairo said, “Richard told me I could design engines, instead of working on them for other people. Before this class, I never knew I could do anything else beside be a mechanic. Now, I’m even thinking of taking business classes so I can start my own car customizing business one day. Maybe I can help design inexpensive engines for people like us that can’t afford to spend all that money on their own rides?”

Changing the youth’s perception of themselves from only having the ability of being manual laborers, to planting a seed that Cairo could potentially become an engineer and design engines, is exactly what culturally relevant education should aim to do. Not only did the youth feel empowered to become viable in their communities, the youth also began to see the true value of their cultural capital. Once the youth began to understand this value they began to apply it in areas they never imagined, or thought possible (i.e. becoming an engineer), which then created internal motivation for the youth to graduate high school, seek internships, apply for college, etc.

Furthermore, the implementation of this intervention program allowed the youth to re-engage their studies and graduate high school. Graduating high school, college, graduate / professional school have long been used as a gauge for determining an individual’s long-term earning/living capacity. By creating this intervention program, the school district aimed to curb violence and gang activity, yet they never imagined the social solidarity that the program would also foster amongst the youth participants. This is imperative as strong peer relationships account for a change behavior along with academic success (Horvat & Lewis, 2003). Initially the youth showed strong “association” to the program’s coordinator. Research suggests that cultural relevance can be a significant factor to the strength in relationship between student and instructor (Waxman & Padron, 2002; Rios & Galicia, 2013). Moreover, emergent research shows that there is a strong connection between the

time when a youth has felt justly treated and their behavior (Peguero, 2014) as systems of education play larger roles in the process of dehumanization (Morrell, 2008). Also, student voices within the program demonstrated "how" institutional bridging assisted the program by providing various opportunities to transform participants' perceptions, and actions, described as *conscientization* by Paolo Freire (1970), in their quest to re-engage in school and provide hope for a more promising future (Conchas, Rodriguez, 2009).

Statement of Issues

The youth of this study were brought together to form the Golden Coast Gang and Violence Intervention program (GC GVIP) after several instances of perceived youth gang violence. The youth participants were an amalgamation of students with prior records of suspensions, truancy, or by being associated / related to some of these youths, as later found out through exposure with the program. At the beginning of the study several of the youth participants complained of unfair treatment by teachers in the classroom, as well as by school administrators in some of the punishments they received, compared to other non-Latino students. This study is representative of larger societal issues that have been in the nation al spotlight for the last decade; such as community / school policing, zero-tolerance community and school policies, and the subsequent results that lead to the "*pushout*" (see pg. 23 for definition) phenomena experienced by many Latino youth in the US public education system.

For instance, the "War on Drugs" proposed by the Richard M. Nixon administration started off as an attempt by Nixon to incorporate a rehabilitative program into the American prison systems. However, what ensued is described by many as the creation of what we know today as the *Prison Industrial Complex,* (Brewer & Heitzig, 2008). Some may ask, "Why is this important to education?" The importance that the "war on drugs" has on

education lies mainly in the form of punitive influence. As early as the 1970s but especially during the Ronald Reagan administration of the 1980s, law enforcement departments developed “zero-tolerance” and “3 strikes” policies that eventually trickled into many school districts nationwide, including the one focused on in my study. George L. Kelling’s and James Q. Wilson’s *Broken Windows* theory for preventative policing was highly influential, and well accepted, by many law enforcement departments nationwide (Kelling & Wilson, The Atlantic, March 1982). The implementation of *broken windows theory* into community policing allowed for schools to then apply similar policies, eventually allowing police onto their campuses. Some schools, such as the school in this study, had administrators go as far as allowing police authority over school infractions (Mallett, 2015).

Zero-tolerance laws and policies result in automatic punishment for a student caught violating any classroom or school rule. Often, severe school punishments involve the use of suspensions, citations, probation, and even imprisonment. Many times the youth are reprimanded for minor offenses such as “insubordination,” or other types of “disruptive behavior” (Skiba, et. al., 2006). This system creates a “*pushout*” effect, which then channel youth towards recidivism, which is shown to be a major predictor for youth incarceration. In other words, through excessive punishment, institutional collaboration between schools and law enforcement departments, along with the implementation of zero tolerance policies nationally, schools have assisted in the creation of the school to prison pipeline.

In 2011, then Attorney General Eric Holder, addressed this issue in a statement he issued through the U.S. Department of Justice website. In it he addressed a new program aimed with eliminating harsh punitive measures still used in schools. The Supportive School Discipline Initiative (SSDI), was intended to “ensure that (the American) educational system is a doorway to opportunity – and not a point of entry to our criminal justice system".

According to the U.S. Department of Education, American public schools have systematically supported the school-to-prison pipeline by "pushing-out" school-aged children, specifically, through the adoption of "zero-tolerance" policies (Department of Justice, 2011). The presence of law enforcement on school grounds has led to an increase in school suspensions, usually for non-violent, or victimless offenses. Suspensions have increased anywhere from 300-500% since zero tolerance policies became popular in schools (Theriot, 2009; Thurae & Wald, 2010).

Gilberto Q. Conchas and James D. Vigil suggest that oftentimes, working-class Latino youth regularly encounter negative educational encounters, intensified by punitive school policies and adversarial treatment by teachers, which tend to lead some of these youngsters to being pushed out of school (Conchas & Vigil, 2012). Schools also have the authority to "package, construct, label, and deem students as troublemakers and offenders, thus, often becoming a launching pad from which young people are catapulted into the criminal justice system" (Rios & Galicia, 2013). Given the demographic shift in California where Latinos are the largest represented population (Census 2010) it is important to understand how zero-tolerance policies in schools assist in perpetuating the school-to-prison pipeline that continues to marginalize and stigmatize poor urban Latino youth, specifically, with the youth participants of the GVIP.

For example, Chapter 5, *Smoking Guns or Smoke & Mirrors*, focuses on the events that led up to a school lockdown at PCHS. The school lockdown was the result of a parent witnessing an argument amongst 2 groups of Latino boys and then the parent mistook one of the youth's water bottle for a gun. The parent then relayed their eyewitness account to school administrators whom called the local law enforcement department and ensued a total school lockdown, limiting entry and exit to campus to all people, except law enforcement agents.

All of the youths detained during this school lockdown happened to have been participants of the GVIP. As such, I took the opportunity to interview the youths to ask them their accounts of the day's events. The day after the school was locked down I interviewed all of the youth individually, and the following week I was able to interview them in a group setting. I did this to make sure that they were all consistent in their accounts. What ensued from the interviews left me speechless. The youth shared descriptions of their experiences and their personal accounts spoke of school administrators and local law enforcement agencies abusing their power. First, they created an aesthetic of the boys as "criminals" once they were handcuffed and arrested in front of their classmates. Then they were separated into different rooms, and left without food or water for several hours. Although the youth were eventually cleared of any wrong doing, even for possession of a firearm, they were still treated as criminals and thugs by some of their teachers and peers as a result of how the police treated them when they were first detained. Neither the local law enforcement agencies involved in this investigation, nor the school or school district put out a statement clearing the boys' names after their release, despite the fact that media outlets had been reporting on the issue all day as an issue of the perceived increase of Latino youth violence and aggression.

Goals of the Study

First and foremost, the goal of this study was to understand the role of a gang and violence intervention coordinator. Given that this was a unique program to the area, I believed it was important to understand 1) how the GVIP coordinator defined his role within the program as well as with its surrounding community and 2) how did the youth help shape the coordinator’s role within the program through time?

Secondly, I sought to uncover the reported negative treatment of these Latino youth in school. Through field observations, interviews and also group conversation, several such instances are analyzed. I was also interested in finding out how the youth would "grow" or "develop" through time from these moments, especially with relation to the tools they were being taught in the GVIP (i.e. meditation, mediation, proper communication, etc.).

These findings also can be helpful to assist with developing solutions through a framework of workshops, guest presentations and other educational programs that made a difference towards assisting other marginalized Latino youth overcome their obstacles. It was important to understand the efficacy of culturally relevant curricula, especially as an option to help lower the increased number of high school push-outs. Culturally relevant models for educational programs have shown to help youth create personal connections with their school material (Moll,et al., 1992).

Finally, in an effort to provide the youth with a voice I hoped to redefine the narrative of how the youh were depicted by the local and national media outlets. By providing these youth perspectives, I hoped to help the youth help shape and develop the narrative of their own lives.

Research Questions

1. Did the youth change through time? If so, what was the role of the GC GVIP through their development?
2. What was the impact of zero-tolerance policies on the youth?
3. Did the intervention program help young people develop resilience in the face of punitive school treatment?
4. Can a culturally relevant pedagogy assist youth participants connect themselves more intimately with their academics?

Overview

The following research resulted from data collected over the span of 5+ years at PCHS. The data was collected using ethnographic research methods and includes detailed accounts of 8 youth as they navigated through their day-to-day experiences and try to balance their personal life with their academics. This project focuses on both the *"pushed out"* effect, as well as the *"pulled in"* factors that played key roles in these young men's lives. In effect, most of the youth participants went from being labeled as "at-risk" students pushed out of schools to being seen as "at-promise" youth pulled in to become valued, positive members of their community. The strength of this study is that it provides solid examples of the role that the GVIP played in the youth's lives and how it proved to have served as a bridge to assisting the youth's personal and educational transformation. As much as this research aims to desist the progress of zero-tolerance school policies, in the end it is also an example of what culturally relevant educators and curriculum can provide *suppressed* youth.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

By utilizing prior research on similar roles of other coordinators/detached workers, as well as other community and school-based intervention programs, I hope to better define and understand the role of the GVIP coordinator in this study.

One of the major concepts utilized to help understand Latino youth culture came from a variety of areas. The *youth control complex* (YCC) is one of these concepts. As youth move through their day to day interactions they are met with a process created to assist the institutionalization of the criminalization of youth behavior. The YCC operates through punitive collaboration between institutions. Schools, community centers, retail stores, restaurants, and even parents have been known to foster relationships with local law enforcement. The result of these relationships, as defined under the YCC, leads to the creation of a system of institutions that cooperate and collaborate together for the purpose of hyper-surveilling, and eventually criminalizing and punishing, youth for what may be deemed as typical cultural behavior (Rios, 2011). Regardless of where the youth find themselves, at home, school, eating at a restaurant, the YCC helps explain how the various networks exist, and operate, together to create a system of multi-layered surveillance. For more detailed information on how the *youth control complex* operated specifically in this study please refer to chapter 5, *Smoking Guns or Smoke & Mirrors*.

Gang Prevention Program Literature

There are two main types of gang prevention programs: (1) community-based and (2) school-based (Howell, 2000). Typically, community-based prevention programs focus on gang and violence prevention with youth participants through local organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club, YMCA or other local non-profit youth development organizations.

School-based prevention programs focus on preventing additional participation in youth gangs through school organized event programming and curriculum (Howell, 2000).

"Social intervention can generally be classified as any program that emphasizes and reinforces positive behavior at the individual level" (Lopez-Aguado, 2010, Oehme III, 1997). There has been a steady evolution of gang prevention programs from group focused to individual focus while offering counseling and mentoring components. Additional services that some gang prevention programs may offer include: tattoo removal, job training, substance abuse rehabilitation, tutoring, conflict mediation and referrals to social service agencies (Klein 1995; Klein & Maxson 2006; Lopez-Aguado, 2010; Oehme III 1997; Spergel 1995).

Previous studies have considered whether gangs are more useful when seen as integrated groups or as loosely organized collectivities. Gangs that are the most delinquent also show the most organization. Such a gang may develop phases of organization and disorganization as well as increases and decreases in their group solidarity. The implications of these findings are that gang youth find it easier to interact through delinquency than traditional methods of socialization. Solidarity within the group is also important because a decline in solidarity could represent a threat to the gang youth, similar to rival gang members and the threat they represent to them as well. This is where protective factor of the youth gang is also exhibited: the more cohesiveness a gang has, the more it is able to serve as a protective factor for its members (Jansyn, 1966). This protective factor of gangs to their members is one I will explore further below because it has implications for prevention and intervention programming.

Gang prevention programs have grown over the past 25 years. Simultaneously, more cities reported youth gang problems as gang membership increased nearly 7 times (Howell,

2010). Despite the reports of increased gang membership and development of the gang prevention programs, few rigorous scientific evaluations of gang prevention programs, community-based or school based, have been undertaken (Howell, 2010).

Detached Worker Programs

The GC GVIP is a model of a detached worker program that was first developed out of the Chicago Area Project (Klein, 1995). The Chicago Area Project was created during the 1930s to help empower the community by developing leaders from within the community through social programming (Krisberg & Austin, 1993; Lopez-Aguado, 2010). A detached worker is an individual, usually with social work orientation, who is assigned to one or more urban street gang. A detached worker operates by meeting the youth in public spaces within the youth's home community (Klein, 1965). The Chicago Area Project used local residents as the detached workers to organize events and find jobs for the youth. The detached workers also attempted to deter the youths from further acts of deviant behavior (Krisberg & Austin, 1993; Lopez-Aguado, 2010).

The New York City Youth Board that was established in the 1940s was an attempt to transform gangs into pro-social groups. Although it was never evaluated, the program's detached workers documented their activities as assisting gang members to secure employment, health care and even become community advocates working alongside the courts and police to curtail gang delinquency (Geis, 1965). One study found that detached workers were more effective, because they were from their own community, and were better able to relate to the neighborhood gang youth and also play crucial roles in establishing diplomacy by voicing the concerns of their community during times of urban crisis (Jankowski, 1991).

Another study of gang prevention detached workers found that (1) increased cohesiveness within gangs and (2) as a result of increased cohesiveness there was also an increase in gang delinquency. This study also found that detached workers' programs focused on individuals rather than groups also have shown to decrease gang member arrests and gang cohesiveness (Klein, 1995). The San Diego Youth program staff established a network for the gang youth to use as resources and referrals. During the period the program was evaluated, recidivism and felony crimes showed significant drops. The evaluation also stated that additional efforts are needed to assist with job training and placement, as well as more efficient programming for the gang youth (Pennell, 1983).

The Boston detached worker program consisted of 3 major components: community organization, family service and gang work. The community component consisted of two efforts: the first was development of local citizens as detached workers to assist the efforts from an internal perspective. The second effort was to create collaboration between professional and citizen agencies. An evaluation of this program found it of negligible impact (Miller, 1962).

The Los Angeles Bridges program originated from many non-profit and public services agencies joining forces under one domain. At one point there were over 160 agencies affiliated with the LA Bridges program. The communities selected for participation had high rates of juvenile violent crime arrests. However, prior to the LA Bridges program ever launching the local politicians attempted to expand from 18 to 29 communities to provide service for. The additional 11 communities ended up severely diluting the effect of the program (Klein, 2006).

The 1980 Los Angeles Community Youth Gang Services intervention program was the most extensive of its type. It was modeled after a similar program in Philadelphia. Detached

workers were given radio-dispatched vehicles to respond to conflict as quickly as possible. The workers attempted to build relationships with their communities while also working to prevent violence (Klein, 2006). However during the existence of the CYGS gang homicides quadrupled, leading many to wonder about how effective the program was (Klein, 2006).

School-Based Prevention Programs

Although Herbert Gans' Urban Villagers (1962) does not directly address delinquent peer groups, it does note that youth exhibit an action-seeking lifestyle within their peer groups and find the pattern-building lifestyle that adults exhibit difficult to communicate or relate with. Additional research also states that a youth conceives the perception of their legitimate roles in society, often as a result of membership in an all-male peer group. Failure to gain membership or participate within such a group may prove detrimental to the development of the individual gang youth. This research posits that the all-male peer group is important because it provides stability and opportunity to learn some of the basic and essential roles of survival amongst groups of similar context and/or background (Miller, 1958). An older male peer group is also crucial for feeling safe in poor neighborhoods (Harding, 2011).

Schools have a tremendous influence on youth development because school factors may be more controlled (relationships with teachers, discipline policies, etc.) compared to youth gang risk factors (dilapidated housing, poor family interactions, and poverty) As such, school factors may influence student engagement as well as their personal characteristics (Sharkey, 2011). Research conducted on adolescents in schools that were involved in gangs showed that the youth gang associates were more likely than their control group counterparts to engage in violent and / or risky behavior. Furthermore, there is evidence that suggests that prolonged exposure of gangs to criminal or violent acts increases the magnitude of

association between the two (Li, 2002). Few studies have addressed protective (resilience) factors that buffer children and adolescents from gang involvement. Protective factors may reside in mental and social development processes that are not linked to risk factors. Maxson and associates (1998) state that the protective factors associated with youth gangs might also help buffer adolescents from further gang involvement (e.g., counseling for youth who experience multiple stressful events).

Studies have also explored the effect of structures and organizational practices of high school institutions that influence drop-out and retention by focusing on two (2) student variables, academic performance and their social background (Lee, Burkam, 2003). The implications could mean that there are protective factors that the schools can provide the youth with. For instance, when high schools adopt a more empathetic role with the "at-risk" youth and provide services like counseling, mentoring, and tutoring, research shows that violence and gang membership reports decrease. When the schools eliminate the "risk factors" for gang membership, they become a protective factor for the youths to depend as they avoid youth gangs.

There is a strong relationship between achievement and violence rates. This indicates that providing equal access to quality education could help shift rates of school violence. Large variations in student achievements can also lead to other students feeling or perceiving themselves as failures (Akiba, LeTendre, et al., 2002). If the schools assist with providing the youth with a shelter that they can feel secure under and also provide adults that positively influence their learning and reasoning skills, youth will begin to resist gang membership.

In an attempt to curb gang membership the city of Paramount, CA created the *Gang*

Resistance Is Paramount (G.R.I.P.) program. In three successive research studies conducted by Paramount's Community Services and Recreation, they found there were significant program effects. One of the effects was that the youth participants developed negative attitudes toward gangs, which assisted in deterring the youth from joining them. In longitudinal studies of G.R.I.P., results have showed that 96% (2,880) of 3,000 program participants were not identified as gang members in any type of police records (Howell, 2010). An Evaluation of the G.R.I.P. program found it difficult to quantify the contributions of the program to observed outcomes. According to the study, this was due in large part to complementary programs that exist to address similar issues. Those complementary programs lacked consistent data that would have clarified their personal contributions as well as those of the G.R.I.P. program. Additionally, the evaluation also found that the local law enforcement agencies had inconsistent data recorded over time, limiting cross-cities comparisons (Solis, Schwartz & Hinton, 2003).

Another school-based prevention program is the *Gang Resistance Education and Training Program* (G.R.E.A.T.). This program attempts to deter youth from gang membership through classroom curriculum administered from local peace officers. According to the National Drug Intelligence Center (1994), G.R.E.A.T. has also been seen as one of the most cost-effective approaches to reducing youth gang crime (Howell, 2010). Although cost effective, several evaluations of the G.R.E.A.T. Program have been mixed. For instance, although cost-effective, the actual implementation of the curriculum by the peace officers has been put into question because some peace officers have incorporated personal morals and beliefs into the G.R.E.A.T. curriculum. As such, by compromising the mission and goals of the G.R.E.A.T. curriculum, it can out into question the quality and efficacy of the program.

Although it is difficult to find empirical evidence on school-based gang prevention programs, research suggests using a more comprehensive focus on both school climate and student engagement. This last suggestion could prove to be beneficial in conducting future research of the GC GVIP. The research further posits that teaching in unique curriculum and utilizing "dynamic participatory classes" that incorporate cultural practices unique to the community of youth participants are effective methods for engaging students (Sharkey, 2011). This raises the question, "does experiential relevance assist the GC GVIP specialist with youth development in his program?"

Community-Based Prevention Programs

The history of community based, or street based, programs spans over 150 years when churches and local organizations began holding "Boys Meetings" for youth delinquents. Subsequently, because of their organic presence in the community, programming was taken over by the YMCA, the Boy Scouts and other Boys' Club (National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 2009). The Boys and Girls Club of America operated the *Gang Prevention Through Targeted Outreach* (GPTTO) program (Vilenchik, 2008). The (GPTTO) incorporated four objectives: community mobilization, recruitment, mainstreaming/programming, and case management. The GPTTO is similar to the GC GVIP in that both programs recruited youth through a referral network that included the local police departments, schools, social service agencies and community organizations. As with the GC GVIP, case management is an integral part of the program. The (GPTTO) staff documents monthly progress on specific goals for the youth. The GGTTO kept track of the youths progress throughout the evaluation period by collecting data in the following areas: academics, class attendance, suspension rates and their behavior while participating in the

GC GVIP (Arbreton, McClanahan, 2002).

The Mountlake Terrace Neutral Zone is another example of a community-based gang prevention and intervention program. Dr. Quint Thurman, et al., observed and interviewed over 190 youth participants in Mountlake Terrace, Washington. At least 50% of the youth had already been incarcerated, or held some sort of juvenile record, while 75% of the youth participants said they would have definitely gotten into more trouble with the law had it not been for the Neutral Zone program (Thurman, Giacomazzi, et.al, 1996). A unique quality to the Mountlake Terrace Neutral Zone is that many people volunteer to assist and other people donate food and materials to help curb costs. Ultimately, Neutral Zone has proven to be so cost-effective that they consistently have at least 15 youth involved with the program on any given day (Thurman, Giacomazzi, et.al, 1996).

Theory for Resistance

Schools are tied to the hegemonic processes of political, cultural, and economic life. It is these same processes of authority that support and legitimize the replication of the "banking" system of education. For example, "teaching-to-the-test" is one way that many students in the GC GVIP described as the method most used by their other teachers outside of the GVIP. Those teachers that employed a "banking" model for learning in their classroom were also less effective at motivating the youth to learn. As a result, students are taught to become submissive and conform to a standardized system for education (Darder, 2015). Several students expressed interest in bringing these issues to their teacher's attention, but they struggled on how to communicate effectively with them, until, according to them, the GC GVIP gave them the tools they needed to do so.

Banking Model of Education

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* Freire wrote, "the interests of the oppressor (capitalist) are to "change the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation of the oppressed" (p. 141). Furthermore, Freire explains that another major component to critical pedagogy is the analysis of the modern educational systems and their affect/effect on the communities and people they serve. A major critique of educational organizations is that they rely far too much on the banking model of education, as mentioned earlier. The banking model results in linear transference of knowledge from teacher to student, with no regard for students' perspectives and/or lived experiences as a means for contextual application and/or comparison. Freire states that "the more students work at storing the deposits entrusted them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world." In other words, the more information teacher's transfer to students, the more dependent students will become on being told what to do. Students today tend to have to spend much more time memorizing facts, for testing, than they spend on learning how to think critically. "The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them" (Freire, 1970, p 71).

Moreover, as Ernest Morrel stated, "Freire's work begins with the concept of humanization, and the reality of dehumanization. In countries with current capitalist states at their charge, many "oppressed," or marginalized peoples, experience the tragedy of dehumanization. For Freire the educational system plays a major role in the process of dehumanization" (Duncan- Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 29). This is an important component towards assisting the youth develop their own sense for *critical praxis*.

Critical Praxis

Another important factor to understand within Freire's argument is his model for critical praxis. In this model, Freire engages the relationship between the teacher and learner through dialogue. Both teacher and student first identify a topic to discuss; then they conduct some research (praxis) on the topic of discussion to assist them in developing/negotiating a plan of action. They will then implement their plan for action and plan on meeting soon thereafter in order to assess their initial plans and draw any conclusions, make additions, or revisions and then re-assess their problem (Darder, 2015). After this last step you begin the process all over again. I have included a figure below, from Joan Wink's Critical Pedagogy reader, to example said model for critical praxis (Figure 1). Through the use of critical praxis (naming, reflecting and acting), critical pedagogy can help communities of people overcome their social stigmas; communities similar to those studies here locally through the GC GVI program. Thus, I believe that further exampling (through field notes and interviews) how the coordinator of the intervention program and the youth participants interacted with the critical praxis cycle.

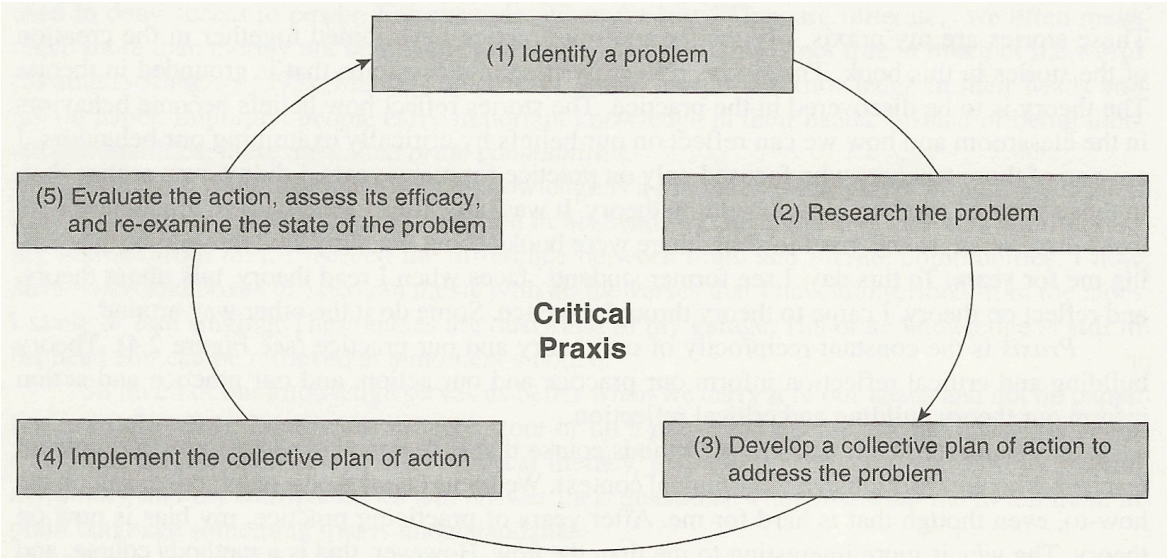

Figure 1. Critical Praxis Model, (Wink, 2010, p. 50)

Dialogue

Freirian principle is also deeply tied into the GVIP. There is a strong belief, based off of this ideology, that only through dialogic and problem-posing pedagogy that members of historically marginalized groups would come to recognize their own oppression. Freire also believed that the process involved decentering the relationships between teachers and students and situating the learning process within a dialectic of thought and action the referred to as praxis (Morrell, 2008; Freire, 1970).

Dialogue is also a key component as part of the process for conscientization, a critical reflection of one's own daily life and the transformation of oneself. According to Freire: "it is speaking… that people, by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which they achieve significance as human beings. Dialogue is an existential necessity" (Cahill, Rios-Moore & Threatts, 2008; Freire, 1997, 1970).

I believe that by allowing students to participate in constructing the learning process, especially with roles of educators themselves, encourages them to perceive education as their project, something they create. Tapping into the creative spirit of poor urban Latino youth will render education exciting and thus inspire them to learn. They no longer feel education is something done to them, but rather something they're doing to recreate themselves and their lived contexts (Romero, et al., 2008).

Towards a Critical Consciousness- *Conscientization*

Paulo Freire stated "education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students" (Freire, 1970). I see this exampled in how the youth describe their interactions with their teachers, counselors and administrators. For instance, during one of

my visits in 2012 there were a few youth that described their experiences with teachers as "speaking to a brick wall" or trying to speak to "someone who doesn't understand me or care what I have to say." In contrast, when students interact with Ismael they are received differently. Students have described that Ismael is "easy to speak to" and that he is willing to have "tough talks about what's going on" in the lives of the youth participants. The difference in approach, to me, suggests that the youth are more willing to engage with Ismael on deeper issues because he is willing to discuss and dialogue with the youth, not just direct and order the youth on what to do. Morrell furthers Freire's position by stating that, " true revolutionary change of the self or the social necessary begins with critical literacies". Critical literacies refers to the act of how people come to understand, analyze, create, and disseminate their language and texts that identify, and eventually challenge, the current set of norms and social control relations in the cause of supporting change (Duncan- Andrade & Morrell, 2008). Many of the youth, after their enrollment in the GC GVIP, have chosen to volunteer their time in many local projects, specifically projects focused on educational programming as well as community organization. I would like to use the aforementioned youth's interviews to help highlight specific examples of their involvement, or disinvestment from participating, in local organizing. As Paulo Freire once wrote, "the oppressed must participate in the revolutionary process with an increasingly critical awareness of their roles as *"subjects"* of the transformation" (Freire, 1970, p. 125).

In *Teaching to Transgress*, hooks states that "students are adamant that education should be liberatory. They do want an education that is healing to the uninformed, unknowing spirit. They do want knowledge that is meaningful" (hooks, 1993, p. 19). Politicization can be understood as being a state of conscientization. This state of political consciousness can come in many ways, including in the form of a "crystallization" moment.

As Paolo Freire would describe, this moment of crystallization occurs at a time when an individual's mind floods in a moment of transition (Freire, 1970).

Freire wrote in *Pedagogy of the City* that "Nobody is born an educator or marked to be one." He goes on to further suggest that educators make and develop themselves as educators through reflexivity. Educators do this by practicing and then reflecting upon said practices; "nobody is born ready." Freire then explains that he began honing his skills for becoming an educator by reflecting upon his experiences as a student (Freire, 1993). I have observed Ismael use his educational experiences, both positive and negative, as examples for his discussions with not only the youth, but in general, with everyone he engages through his role as GC GVIP coordinator. Again, this is another reason for which I would like to go back and use my interviews and field notes to compile additional data of how Richard directly impacted the youth of the GC GVIP through his use of reflexivity. Additionally, and more importantly I believe, I would like to document, longitudinally, the youth's own exercise of this pedagogical instrument.

"We cannot enter the struggle as objects in order to later become subjects" (hooks, 1993, p. 46). For instance, hooks notes, when desegregation came into effect, it altered the way many Black students learned. Black students had become accustomed to their schools' valuing youths' life experiences, and often times, incorporated the youths' lived experiences into their curriculum for teaching new material. After desegregation Black students "were forced to schools where they were regarded as objects, not subjects" (hooks, 1993, p. 37). Rather than succumbing to hegemonic practices, many Black students challenged the educational system by providing their socio-historical lived experiences and perspectives in order to help shape current and future politics and policy.

"Conscientization involves the critical reflection upon the contradictions in one's own everyday life and the transformation of oneself as part of this process. Dialogue is a key component of conscientization, according to Freire: "it is in speaking…that people, by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which they achieve significance as human beings. Dialogue is an existential necessity". An important component to the dialogic process is the collective act of sharing and processing together our personal experiences. It is through this act of sharing and processing together that we can begin to offer new possibilities for recognizing new means of existing in the world. (Cahill, Rios-Moore & Threatts, 2008).

The following chapter will help provide a background to the youth involved in the GVIP as well as begin to provide an understanding for how, or why, the youth have come to be labeled as "at-risk" by their schools' teachers, counselors and administrators. The methods used are ethnographic and rely heavily on 5 years of site visits / observations, as well as 5 years of in-depth interviews with the youth participants.

Chapter 3: Methods

Ethnography

This dissertation research project was an ethnographic research study of a school-based gang and violence intervention program from Central California. My interests for conducting a qualitative dissertation was the emergence of social connections, which could only be understood by conducting research beyond the traditional (quantitative) measurements. While quantitative research methods serve a purpose, the personification of a particular individual, or group of people, through the issuance of a number still would not offer a holistic understanding of the participating Chicana/o youth of the intervention program (Irizarry & Nieto, 2010). Michael Agar further posits that using the usual social research methodological framework of "theory/ hypothesis/ measurement/ sampling, design/ significance level" does not depict much of what ethnographers do. Moreover, the goal of an ethnographer is to assist in the identification of emergent patterns of actions and perceptions. In order to assist the patterns to become recognized an ethnographer must observe and report on all of the material noted and / or considered as markers for these patterns (Agar, 2004). It was my belief that by having documented the youths' interactions, and subsequently their perspectives, of their relationships, those pertaining to the program, the outreach coordinator, their families, home communities, etc., I was able to present a clearer description for the youth of the GC GVIP.

Furthermore by building off of my master's research project where survey data showed a "strong attachment" to the youths parents, as well as with Richard, the intervention coordinator, I was able to gain a better understanding for "why" the attachment was strong; what about these people did the youth value? Given the limitations of surveys there was no option for immediate follow-up questions to help better assess the "how," or "why" the

youth participants showed "strong attachment." I felt that interviewing the youth to inquire about specifics would allow me to get a more holistic understanding of their lives. C. Wright Mills (1959) states in his theory of the sociological imagination that, "*neither the lives of an individual, nor the history of a society, may be understood without understanding both*" (p. 3). That is to say, there was much to be understood from considering the connection/s that exists between peoples lived experiences and society at large. I believe this was true of the youth I got to know over the last half decade while researching the Golden Coast GVIP. Furthermore, a 2002 publication of the National Research Council's, *Scientific Research in Education,* points out that ethnographic research is "particularly important for describing information about the group or setting is nonexistent or scant" within educational settings (Shavelson & Towne, 2002, p. 105).

As such, this study aimed to provide the youth an opportunity to have a voice and express their accounts, concerns and use their suggestions regarding their experiences as participants in the GVIP. That is the very reason why conducting an ethnographic research study was most appropriate for collecting research with marginalized youth, including the youth involved with the GVIP. In this case, in order to establish an effective lens into the world of the youth participants I used interviews, as well as observations of the youth's experiences (every day interactions) to contextualize their shared and observed experiences in accordance to their individual social landscape.

One of the major challenges to understand as an ethnographer was that I had to be available, and willing, to go into these youths spaces: schools, communities, hang out spots, etc. Given that there is a vast range of activities that as an ethnographer I had to partake in, and become familiar with, some of these activities and events were a bit distracting to the original purpose of the study; in this case, observIn order to better understand the youths

perspectives on their experiences I also participated in their program's activities, to the extent that I was able to establish trust and rapport with the youth, without creating any legal or moral conflict. By observing the youth outside of their respective schools and, instead, in their neighborhoods (as residents and consumers), in their community centers (i.e. YMCA, community centers, churches, etc.), I was also able to observe the youth in a more holistic context outside of their school settings, surrounded by their family and/or close friends outside of school. perspectives on their experiences I also participated in their program's activities, to the extent that I was able to establish trust and rapport with the youth, without creating any legal or moral conflict. By observing the youth outside of their respective schools and, instead, in their neighborhoods (as residents and consumers), in their community centers (i.e. YMCA, community centers, churches, etc.), I was also able to observe the youth in a more holistic context outside of their school settings, surrounded by their family and/or close friends outside of school.

It was once I gained entrée into the youths inner circles that they allowed me to collect my field notes and interviews of the youth, in their respective environments. Collecting these data supplied me with a more holistic understanding of why the youth felt as they do about their schools, teachers, administrators, law enforcement, their communities, and even how they felt about their participation in the GVIP. The youth narratives also allowed me to take a deeper look into "how" the youth came to make some of their decisions, prior to their involvement with the GC GVIP, as well as afterwards. The comparison assisted me in determining whether or not the GC GVIP was effective in its efforts to deter the youth form further "at-risk" behavior. The data also helped me provide evidence that most of the boys were somehow socially acquainted, even related in some instances. However, as discussed in chapter 6, *Pedagogy of the Suppressed*, these connections, which had been perceived as

negative, actually demonstrated a unique balance of youth perspectives and backgrounds. I used these unique set of perspectives as examples of the youths social capital and argue that this social capital acted more as a tool than a deficiency marker. As such, the youth's were able to demonstrate they were more "at-promise" than "at-risk" as initially classified through the school district and its officials.

Similar to other researchers that highlight the important role that “context and meaning research” play in researching classroom and school communities, I too, believe this to be true, particularly for under-represented and under-resourced urban populations, like that of the youth participants from this study.

Interviews

Prior research focused on specific individuals' characteristics that impacted broad social behavior, especially academic achievement. However, I believe that these studies were focused on defining “academic achievement” through a middle- and upper-class lens. For this particularly study I focused on the youth from the GVIP and their “academic achievement as an expression of social self-consciousness”. I asked the youth if the GVIP coordinator provided them with any helpful advice to allow them to access their “social self-consciousness”. Youth also responded to questions about their initial reactions to the GVIP, as well their current thoughts on the program. It was difficult to ascertain, with absolute assurance, the total accuracy of the statements provided by the youth interviewed, however, as an ethnographer I had to trust in the rapport that I created with them to secure their most accurate statements. Additionally, I also included triangulation methods to assist me with verifying / confirming youth accounts of events.

Of the hundreds of youths (over 200) that the GC GVIP has served directly I personally interviewed (focus groups and one-on-one) 34 youths on a rotating schedule over 5 years for

this research study. Of these 34 youths I have had the most access to, and extended cooperation from 8 youths (Cairo, Ruben, Mike, Nicholas, Julio, Vince, David and Chuy). Several of the aforementioned youth were also involved in an incident that resulted, as previously mentioned, in their high school going on "lock-down" with the youth reporting abuse and harassment as the main method of investigation and interrogation of the police that held them in custody. Chapter 4, *Smoking Guns,* describes that specific event more in depth.

Below I have included a list of questions that were used during the initial evaluation of the GC GVIP in 2009-10. The questions below were used more as a guide than a direct line-up. What I mean by that is that sometimes by asking one of the initial questions the participating youth could also answer (partially or in whole) another question from this same list. For instance, when I asked the youth, "*Who do you live with?*" they might reply, "*I live with both my parents, a brother, sister, etc.".* The youth has just answered the follow-up question, "*do you live with both of your parents?"* However, I should note that it was important to include the follow-up question on this list as some of the youth were not specific when answering the "*who do you live with?*" question. By following up with the direct question on parents it allowed for a smoother transition to the following questions related to their parents/family/relatives/caretakers:

Youth narrative

There were 8 youths I considered a leaders within the program (Mike, Nicholas, Chuy, David, Vince, Cairo, Ruben and Julio), as such I felt that getting to know them would help me to get to know others in their respective groups. The other four youths were also instrumental at the beginning of our evaluation, and after our evaluation period ended, in

providing me longitudinal context on the social landscape, from the youths participants' perspective. The youth will be introduced in greater detail in the following chapters.

I also used my interviews, observations and field notes that I had collected over the past half decade, specifically from these 8 youths, in order to record the accounts of their experiences as participants of the intervention program. By utilizing the youth perspectives, through interviews as well as day-to-day casual conversation, I also used Tara Yosso's concept of *counter-storytelling*. Dr. Tara Yosso suggests that "counter-storytelling" is the most effective tool for gathering said data, particularly as a means to construct stories (perspectives) that emerge from ethnographic studies. According to Dr. Yosso, majoritarian narratives oftentimes are full of coded racialized language lending towards the recreation of stereotypes as well as misrepresentations of poverty and criminality being more associated to Black and Brown communities and their schools. Yosso's research also proposed that majoritarian narratives are often used as a means to devalue and / or misrepresent people whom may present data negating majoritarian portrayals/depictions (Yosso, 2001). Therefore, by utilizing my interviews as means of employing counter-storytelling, it served the purpose of allowing the youth participants of the GC GVIP, a space, and vessel, to provide their personal accounts as well as a method to help promote the production of my research.

Furthermore, I believe that counter-storytelling is yet another tool to utilize in the construct of critical ethnographies. Prior research with the GC GVIP noted that participants' experiences were still not as accurately, or easily represented and validated through the collection and analysis of quantitative data. These researchers posited that although quantitative research methods serve a great purpose, the personification of a particular individual, or group of people, through the issuance of a number still does not offer a

holistic understanding of participating C hicana/o youth (Handbook of *Latinos in Education;* Irizarry & Nieto, 2010).

The following were the interview protocol's that were used to obtain information from the youth participants and the coordinator of the intervention program. The first protocol was used during the first year; the second was used in the second round of interviews, at the end of the third year of the research study. The last interview protocol was then used at the end of the fifth year, in the final round of interviews. Not all questions were asked in exact order, to every student rather, many of these questions would begin to be answered, or were fully addressed while students answered the other interview questions. Other times, some questions did not apply to all the students. For instance, when interviewing Richard, I did not ask him questions geared for students, and vice versa.

Interview Protocol #1

Questions to youth about parents/family/relatives/caretakers:

1. Who do you live with at home?
2. Do you live with both of your parents?
3. Where were your parents born?
4. Have you ever been to your parent's place of birth?
    a. If so, what did you think?
    b. If not, how come?
5. What do your parents do for work?
6. Could you try to describe your relationship with your parents?
7. Tell me what is it like when you get home on a typical day:
    a. Who is home to greet you when you arrive from school?
    b. Who do you talk to?
8. Do you speak to your parents about any of your issues or problems?
    a. If not, then who do you speak to when you have a problem? Why them?
9. How do your parents react when you share with them your troubles?

10. What do your parents say, or do, when you get in trouble at school?
11. In what ways do you think your parents understand you and in what ways do they not?
12. In what ways do you think that you are similar to your parents?
13. In what ways do you think you're different?

Questions to youth about their peers:

14. Do you have many friends to trust?
15. What is it like to have friends that you trust?
16. Is there a difference between what you do with your friends for fun while you're at school as opposed to when you are hanging out outside of school?
17. What types of things do you do with your friends when you hang out together?
18. How long would you say you have known most of your friends?
19. Are any of your friends under parole or probation supervision?
    a. Are you?
    b. If so, for what, if I may know of course.
20. Have you ever been pressured to do anything illegal?
    a. If so, what have your friends influenced to do?
    b. What did you think of that experience?
    c. Did anybody catch you in the act?
    i. If so, what happened once you were caught?
    d. Did you ever commit the same act again? If so, why?
21. Do you think you will remain close with your friends after graduating high school?
    a. Why or why not?

Questions to youth about school:

22. Tell me about friends and trust at school?
23. How do you deal with students at school who disrespect you?
24. What are your teachers like at school?
25. What do teachers do when you need support?
26. What don't teachers do when you need support?
27. Describe what a typical day at school is like?

28. What is like when you walk into class?

29. What do you think you can get out of school?

30. How is school connected to your future?

31. What benefits are there for staying in/doing well in school?

32. What do you want to do when you grow up?

33. What do you learn about your culture in school?

Questions to youth about *Richard* and the GC GVIP

34. Did you know anybody in your class before you were enrolled in the GC GVIP?

35. Do you think that Richard's class has assisted you with how you interact with your friends?

36. Does Richard help you with your school problems? If so, how?

37. Does Richard help you with any other issues outside of school-related ones? If so, how?

38. In addition to what you have shared that Richard already does for you, what could you suggest that Richard do to help you with your problems?

Questions to youth about community:

39. How do you like living in your community?

40. What's it like living in your neighborhood? Give me an example of a typical day for you.

41. Do you feel your community faces any problems?

a. If so, can you give me any examples?

b. What do you think can be done about them?

42. Have all of these problems always existed?

43. Do you know of anyone that is actively engaged with organizing in his or her community?

a. How do you feel about them and what they do?

b. Would you ever participate in any type of community activism? What types?

Below is a set of questions that were developed for the initial interview with the coordinator of the gang and violence intervention program. These questions were used as a

guide for making sure we discussed specific themes related to Richard and the youth participants of the Golden Coast Gang and Violence Intervention Program.

Questions to Richard about the GC GVIP:

1. How did you come across this job? What interested you to apply for it?
2. Describe what you do as part of your program with Richard?
3. Has the program changed since it began 5 years ago? What are some examples of those changes?
4. What kind of preparation, or life experience, did you have prior to working as the coordinator for the GC GVIP?
5. What have you struggled with the most in the GC GVIP? The least?
6. What do you feel is the most beneficial part/s of your program to most of your students?
7. How did you go about creating your curriculum for the GC GVIP? Was there a previous intervention program, or educational programs, from which you model yours after?
8. What are some areas you would like to improve on for the GC GVIP?
9. Do you feel you have a strong relationship with the community? Any examples?
10. Do you think that the youth are progressing from when you first began working with them?

Taking into consideration the previous answers, current context, as well as any immediate pressing issues, I later adapted the above set of questions for future interviews with the youths. Below are the adapted questions.

Questions to youth about parents/family/relatives/caretakers:

1. Do you still live with both of your parents?
2. Are your parents still working in the same place as last time we interviewed?
3. Could you try to describe any change in your relationship with your parents since we last interviewed?
4. Tell me, has anything changed for you, as far as when you get home on a typical day:

i. Is there anyone home to greet you when you arrive from school?
ii. Who do you talk to when you get home?

5. Do you feel you are you able to speak to your parents about any of your issues or problems?

i. If not, then whom do you speak to when you have a problem? Why them?

6. Have your parents changed how they react to you when you share with them your troubles?
7. Have your parents changed how they react to you when you get in trouble at school?
8. Do you think your parents attempt to understand you, or reach to you, and in what ways do they not?
9. In what ways do you think that you are similar to your parents now?
10. In what ways do you think you're different from your parents?

Questions to youth about their peers:

1. Do you have many friends to trust?
2. What is it like for you to have friends that you trust?
3. Since we last spoke has there been any change between what you do with your friends for fun while you're at school as opposed to when you are hanging out outside of school?
4. What types of things do you do with your friends when you hang out together?
5. How long would you say you have known most of your friends?
6. Since we last spoke, have any of your friends been placed under parole or probation supervision?
    i. What about you?
    ii. If so, for what, if I may know of course.
7. Have your friends pressured you to do anything illegal?
    i. If so, what have your friends influenced to do?
    ii. What did you think of that experience?
    iii. Did anybody catch you in the act?
    iv. If so, what happened once you were caught?
    v. Did you ever commit the same act again? If so, why?

8. Do you think you will remain close with this group of friends after graduating high school?
    i. Has anything happened since we last spoke to change your mind?

Questions to youth about school:

1. Tell me about friends and trust at school, has anything changed for you since we last spoke?
2. How do you deal with students at school who disrespect you? Has there been any change to your approach since we last met?
3. Any change on what your teachers are like at school?
4. Any changes on what teachers do when you need support?
5. Any changes on what teachers don't do when you need support?
6. Any change on what a typical day at school is like at school for you?
    i. What is like when you walk into class?
    ii. What do you think you can get out of school? Short or long term?
7. Any changes on how you see school connected to your future?
8. What do you think are some of the benefits for staying in/doing well in school?
9. Since we last spoke, any change on what you want to do when you grow up?
10. Since we last spoke, any change on what you learn about your culture in school?
    i. Would you like to learn more about your culture in your regular classrooms as you do with the GVI program?

Questions to youth about *Richard* and the GC GVIP

1. How do you feel about the other students you have met while enrolled in the GC GVIP?
2. Do you think that Richard's class has assisted you with how you interact with your friends?
3. Does Richard help you with your school problems? If so, how?
4. Does Richard help you with any other issues outside of school-related ones? If so, how?
5. After being a part of this program for a couple of years, what could you suggest that Richard do to help you with your problems?

Questions to youth about community:

1. How do you like living in your community?
2. What's it like living in your neighborhood? Give me an example of a typical day for you.
3. Do you feel your community faces any problems?
    i. If so, can you give me any examples?
    ii. What do you think can be done about them?
4. Have all of these problems always existed?
5. Do you know of anyone that is actively engaged with organizing in his or her community?
    i. How do you feel about them and what they do?
    ii. Would you ever participate in any type of community activism? What types?

Observations- School site, images and field notes

Methods for this study included taking field notes on observations of the youth interacting with the coordinator and the intervention program. Since I participated on the data collection for the initial evaluations of the GC GVIP I was granted continued access from the school district to conduct my research at the school site for this particular research project. I went back to the school district and met with the respective administrator in charge of granting me said access, and we also worked on a schedule with the intervention coordinator for collecting data. This included scheduling on-site observations of the youth interacting with the coordinator and his invited guests. I also collected field notes from excursions and other events related to the GC GVIP[2].

In planning what areas to observe I had to take several things into consideration. First and foremost I had to take access into consideration. Where would I have access to collect

[2] There are several local events organized by the youth and/or organizations they are affiliated to the GC GVIP. Some of their sponsored events include spoken word fundraisers

data? I began by reading my descriptive notes from the initial evaluation in order to remind myself of where I had been allowed to congregate with the youth participants of the program. Reading my notes helped me develop a more focused area for observation. The high schools and youth met regularly and had previously given me full access (Ocejo, 2013). Ultimately, I arrived at a more selective area for study: Pacific Coast (PCH) high school and the GC GVIP youth participants of Pacific Coast High, primarily for reasons previously mentioned that involved access and participation from the youth. As Spradley mentions *permissibleness* and *accessibility* are both key components to identifying and locating a social institution to conduct an ethnographic study. Since Pacific Coast High School would be considered a *limited entry* social institution, I had to continually ask for permission from new youth participants as they entered the GC GVIP, as well as seek yearly approval from the school site administration and coordinator of the intervention program (Spradley, 1980).

In addition to field notes/observations, I also took photos of the youth during their field trips. These photographs included the youth interacting with one another, participating in group circles, but overall, the pictures help to physically depict the youth as typical teenagers out on a school excursion. This was important as a tool to help combat the local narrative of these youth as gang members / criminals. Although the youth consented to pictures, they were not comfortable with being recorded on video. Even though some of the youth were prolific on social media and constantly recorded short videos for *Instagram, Facebook, SnapChat*, they preferred to not be recorded for this study. When pressed to provide me a reason for refusing to be recorded, the youths would typically respond that they felt video recorded by others, even myself, could possibly be manipulated to re-enforce negative stereotypes held against them.

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used to help raise funds for DREAM scholars amongst the youth participants of the GC

I will also note that all of the youth that participated in the intervention program gave informed consent to take their picture and to interview them. Students were read the consent form by me and if they had any questions I would answer them before they provided me with their consent. I also went through the same process with parents if the youth was under 18 years old. Human subjects informed consent clearly states that the participants of the study must have enough information, understanding of the information, and time, to think about whether they wish to participate in the study. Additionally, the parent/s or guardian/s of the youth participants must also be afforded the same information and time in order for them to provide us their consent for the process to be deemed just. The idea is to minimize the possibility of obtaining information through coercion. Pseudonyms were also developed for every youth participant or adult mentioned in this study. Pseudonyms are important in order to help give confidentiality to the participants of study without their feeling possible backlash for their participation in both the GC GVIP and this research project.

GVIP Evaluation Structure and Process

I first established contact by working on an evaluation team hired to assess the GVIP's efficiency. As an evaluator for the Golden Coast School District GVIP, I did not have to negotiate entreé to the schools, per se, however I did have to go through the front offices and ask for hall passes or visitor passes to legitimize my campus visits. I was able to conduct classroom observations to examine the students interactions with their peers as well as the gang intervention official from the school district. From the initial evaluation I wrote field notes, conducted interviews and administered the surveys for the youth to report on their GVIP. Although I participated in a mixed methods evaluation, this project specifically focuses on the qualitative portion of my subsequent study.

GVIP.

The first stage of the evaluation was for the research team to meet to establish the main component for analysis of the evaluation, the survey administered to all of the program youth participants. The survey was constructed using some pre-existing questions from Frank M. Weerman, et. al. *Euro Gang Manual*[ii]. When we, the researchers, in charge of organizing the survey began constructing the survey it was decided to focus on five (5) themes throughout the survey. After several meetings with the Golden Coast School District officials, including the Richard, GVIP specialist, we all agreed on chosen categories that would cover the broad scope the research evaluation was asked to undertake. As such, I tried to pick questions that best fit each of those categories to create a survey specific for the Golden Coast GVIP. I decided that due to a lack of time to conduct the evaluation, the next step of the evaluation would have to be to launch a qualitative investigation.

Subjects' / Youth Participants' Settings

The participants in this study started off as middle school and high school students between the ages of 12 and 18, and had all been labeled by their school as being prone to violence, truancy, or were gang-affiliated. Initially, I observed, interviewed, and surveyed these youth participants over the course of 9 months. I observed the youth in the GVIP classroom setting, on field trips excursions and even in their home communities, especially during interviews and on the drop-off after the field trips. Often times the youth lived in small apartments in small urban pockets conveniently hidden within the lower basin of the hillsides of the city of Sunny Coast. Many of the youth described living with another family, usually relatives, and how that shared living space often created some conflict for the younger children trying to find some room to grow. Some youths described living at the basin of the foothills where many of their parents worked, usually in some manual labor or domestic lsbor. The youth would sometimes go help their parents, usually during their

breaks from schools, and with the parents specific intent of keeping an eye on them and keeping the youth off the streets. The homes they described to me seemed like something out of the MTV show "Cribs" where celebrities and wealthy socialites show off their homes for the audience. They described feeling numb knowing that they would probably never own their own home in Sunny Coast, or if they did, it could never be like the homes they cleaned or took care of as children.

I felt at that point it was crucial to establish rapport with some of the youth participants by sharing with them my background as a first-generation Mexican-American, and I also shared with them some of the trials and tribulations of my own past. I attempted to share some common ground by showing the youth that I too had experienced similar situations in my lifetime and I was there to make sure that the evaluation was conducted accurately and efficiently. Once I established the common ground with some of the youth most admired by the rest, it was easier to reach some of the more introverted youth for discussion.

I conducted observations by shadowing the GVIP outreach worker, sometimes daily for a couple weeks at a time, but usually I would shadow the GVIP specialist to at least three school site visits a week. The GVIP was only present at each individual school once a week and usually for a full period. Every week the period in which the GVIP held session would be rotated, so as to not allow the youth to miss the same class every week. The hour in which the session was held also determined what kind of demeanor the youth held when they entered their class sessions. If it was early in the morning they were probably still waking up; if the class was right before or after lunch they were full of energy or tired, either from not eating, or from just eating; and if it was at the end of the day, it was more difficult to keep them focused on longer discussions because of their anxiousness to go back home. As such, we tried to strategize accordingly and offer the youth participants to come in as

normal for a weekly meeting to take their surveys, however if the research team had to introduce the surveys right before lunch or at the end of the day, the evaluators would purchase drinks, snacks and food for the youth after the survey was taken.

Often times it was difficult finding locations to interview the youth because they were restricted from entering certain establishments due to some of their probationary conditions; restaurants, parks, community centers were some locations difficult to attend at times. At times parents also wanted to be involved and listen to the interview of the youth; however, the evaluators made sure to explain that the study, although it asked for the parent's permission for the student to participate, would not allow the contents of the study to become public before the evaluation was completed. This was solely done to protect the youth participants by limiting access to the discussions and interviews of those involved in the program.

Coding the interviews

As previously mentioned, this research project included over 30 interviews; there were 24 individual interviews conducted between the youth participants and me as well as 6 additional group interviews. Those interviews were conducted on a bi-yearly basis, beginning the first year of their participating in the program, and culminating on the 5th year after their original interview. All in all, there were over 40 hours of recorded interviews with the youth. Most interviews ranged between 30 minutes and one hour, while a couple of interviews lasted a bit longer. This is important to note because not all youth were the same age, nor did they have the same amount of time exposed to the GVIP coordinator. As a result some of the youth had already graduated and formed families of their own by the time this study was done, while others were barely planning their own high school graduation.

In addition to the one-on-one interviews, I was also able to meet with the youth on 6 different occasions where the youth participants met with me in a group, rather than our usual one-on-one sessions. These interviews were usually done after school, in the same classroom that the group of youth had met in earlier in the day. This allowed for me to not only gain an idea for how well these youth interacted with one another, or other classmates, as well as it allowed for me to check for consistency in the students' accounts as well. If an inconsistency were to occur, the youth often corrected each other in an effort to keep the "conversation going."

For the purposes of this study I coded the interviews by reading the whole interview through the first time and making notes on at the end of the transcribed interview. I wrote notes about themes I noticed along the interview. I then re-read the interviews and looked through them in a more detailed manner, focusing on themes that I had written down at the end of my initial review, while also noting any additional themes that may have appeared on the successive reading. Thematic codes were used to label actions, activities, concepts, etc. I made it a point to note the frequency that themes occurred amongst the youth, both as individuals and a group, but I did not depend on frequency as a sole basis for coding, but rather I also relied on interpreting the transcriptions. By using both, one-on-one interviews, as well as group interviews, I was able to triangulate the youths original survey answers with their in-person interviews.

Initially, I read through the transcriptions looking for themes associated to the scope of the study. I would then highlight these themes using a color-coded system. For instance, as I read through the transcriptions if I came across a sentence related to a positive school experience I used the color green; for negative experiences I used the color red. These experiences were based off of the youth's experiences with school staff (administrators,

counselors, as well as teachers and other support units). I also used the color blue to identify any interactions with law enforcement, whether at school or not. The reason I chose to color code the youth's experiences from to school to law enforcement was to find a way to separate the student's personal experiences with the school district's employees from those experiences the youth had with law enforcement read through the transcribed interviews and looked for keywords closely associated to the word "attached". During my master's research we discovered that the youths responses showed a strong attachment to their parents as well as the coordinator for the intervention program. I then searched for words synonymous to the word" attachment" such as "relate," "close", "supporting," etc., to find any answers that may provide us with some specific examples from the youths interviews. I discovered that the youth mentioned, over and over again, how much they related to the intervention coordinator. They used examples of his background to discuss why they were able to relate with the coordinator. In one instance Ruben mentioned that the coordinator was very much instrumental in his turning his life around because Ruben saw the coordinator as an example of someone who had a history with gang involvement, but he also represented an example of somebody they could become. Ruben stated, *"Richard showed me that a college education is more than a degree, it's the "long-term" a hustle we need to learn. I can get a certificate or transfer. I just need to try. Because some college is always good for a better job. Plus, with the meditation, I learned Tai-chi. That stuff just makes me relax, and I get focused so I can do everything I need to do."* –Ruben

I went through all of the 8 youth participants' transcribed interviews and coded for categories that defined "attachment" for the GVIP youth. I found that students made statements regarding their "caretakers," whether parents or other family member / friend that, at the time of the study, they described as providing them with food, shelter, and that

the youth also described some emotional connection and respect towards, I labeled "caretaker." The same can be said of the other categories; for instance, the youth talked about people advising them, or offering them guidance in life or school. I labeled that category "mentor." There were several instances when the youth also described the importance of someone encouraging them to do better; I labeled the category "supportive." Friends and family were a more direct reference brought up by the youth, but as you can tell, it wasn't until the final round of interviews that all of the youth mentioned friend and family. The last category, "network," was created from youth references relating to having "connections" or "knowing people" that could be of service of assistance to the youth participants' personal development.

Trustworthiness

Initially, one of the benefits that I had towards gaining entrée with the youth participants was my own cultural background. I was brought up in a traditional first-generation Mexican immigrant household. That included being brought up under impoverished conditions, and learning how to be resourceful with the little resources around. Matter of fact, there were times when I would catch myself reminiscing / remembering my own teen years through the boys' stories. I believe that having a similar background & upbringing as the youth allowed me to draw upon their experiences / perspectives in a more intimate and effective manner.

For instance, understanding the youths language (English, Spanish, slang, or otherwise) was key. Once the boys realized I understood most of everything they were talking about it allowed me to have more frank conversations with them. They felt more comfortable going back and forth between languages, and even used slang terms or curse words to communicate themselves freely. This built a trust that later gave me access into other areas of their communities, it even granted me some contact with their families. I found that if the

students told their parents that I spoke Spanish, came from immigrant parents and was in college, most parents readily accepted me. One parent even mentioned their distrust for Mexican- Americans did not speak Spanish. They said they were glad I spoke Spanish because then I could speak Spanish in front of them so they could understand what their son and I were discussing. My being fluent in both English and Spanish had given me credibility with parents as well as others in the community. A worker at a Mexican restaurant the boys frequented asked me what the purpose of my meeting the youth so frequently was. When I explained to them the scope of the project they responded by telling me that the boys and I were welcome there any time.

There has been a growing area of ethnographic research referred to as the S*ociological Double-Consciousness* (Rios, Carney, Kelekay, 2017). *Sociological double-consciousness* builds upon W.E.B. DuBois' idea of *double-consciousness* for African-Americans and applies the ideology towards recent research with modern applications. Being able to provide more sound data, through a deeper socio-cultural understanding not only allows the researcher to represent the subject / participant in a more humane depiction, but also accounts for more effective policy interventions. Utilizing this *sociological double-consciousness* along with the aforementioned C. Wright Mills' S*ociological Imagination* (200) as the guide to my research lens allowed me to analyze, and triangulate, the many layers of development occurring with the youth, and their communities, while also signifying for nuances.

My own experiences as a first-generation college student, educated at the height of the 1990s zero-tolerance epidemic gave me insight to understanding how these boys were further marginalized through institutional practices than their own perceived criminal behavior. The *sociological double-consciousness* allowed me to have a more fine-grained

understanding for the issues the youths faced and how they reacted to them as a result. It also allowed me to more properly frame the youth as teenagers that were victimized by a hyper-punitive public-school system. Furthermore, this lens also allowed me to understand success at an individual level, as well as at a larger holistic level.

Chapter 4: The Youth Participants

At the beginning of observations I noticed that most of the youth participants were a bit confused as to why they had been selected to be a part of a "gang and violence" intervention program. The majority of the youths did not identify as being members of any neighborhood gang, or from any *barrio*[3], as they referred to it. Other youths had no prior history of any gang association, except they were related to people that local authorities and school officials had deemed as gang threats. For many of the initial youths of the GC GVIP, familial affiliation with local neighborhood gangs was their only association to a gang.

The youth participants of the program were primarily of Latino ethnicity: Mexican-American, Mexican-born, Central and South American, although there were also a few Black, Asian and white youth involved in the GC GVIP. The youths ranged in age from 13-18 years old and they were all enrolled in local middle schools and high schools. The youths came from working-class households. Many of the youths described their parents holding multiple jobs to help pay their bills and expenses. As such, by the time many of the youth entered middle school they arrived at the conclusion that once they were old enough they would get jobs to start helping out at home with the expenses. Even if it meant they were only meeting their personal expenditures, it was still less burdensome (financially) for their parents or care-takers. The difficult task of remaining patient until they were old enough to legally work was overwhelming for many reasons. Some of the youth described living in extreme poverty, often going days without a meal at home. They would resort to arriving early to campus for free cafeteria food or going over to their *homies'* houses to get something to eat from them. Others simply communicated to me that they wanted their

[3] *Barrio* is a Spanish slang word used to describe a person's home, neighborhood, gang, groups of friends, etc. In this case, the youth used *barrio* as a reference to neighborhood gang.

parents to rest some more. The students said they felt that by obtaining some employment they could help their parents with enough money for them to be able to quit their 2nd or 3rd job/shift at work. Some of the youth described their parents as looking a lot older than their age and they worried that they would die younger because they were working so hard. Obtaining employment was key to many of the youth participants and although they were always told to go to school to receive a formal education so they could earn a better living. Many of the youth did not see themselves graduating high school, much less attending a college.

Below is what I describe as "*mini-ographies*" about the youth participants of the Golden Coast gang and violence intervention program. The *mini-ographies* in this chapter also serve as a means for discussing the "pre" portion of the youths experiences / perspectives. By creating a pre-section to this study, I was able to document the youth most efficiently, especially given the longitudinal scope of the study. Additionally, chapter 7 serves as the "post" segment, complementing this chapter. The "post" chapter is intended to help provide the youths perspectives after prolonged exposure to the GC GVIP and its allies.

Ruben

Ruben is the 2nd from the youngest in his family,; and the youngest of his father's children with his mother. Ruben's family also has deep roots in a local neighborhood gang, three-generations deep, beginning with his grandfather. His mother and father separated when Ruben was very young. At the time that I met Ruben, he still held no official membership to the street gang, rather, due to his roots, it was almost accepted as though he was automatically a member of the neighborhood gang. Ruben's mother left her husband, Ruben's dad, and then re-married a few years later. A year after her marriage she gave birth to a baby girl. Ruben's younger sister was named Esperanza (Hope). Ruben said that after

his little sister's birth he began to think more about the consequences to his actions. He also began thinking about what type of influence he wanted to be to his little sister. As a 2nd generation Mexican-American, his family had yet to graduate anyone from high school, but Ruben felt inspired by his sister to become the first in his family to graduate from high school. He said that when his mother told him his sister's name he almost cried. He said he knew that his mother was also trying to send a message to the rest of her children.

Mario: What message do you think your mother was trying to deliver to you all?

Ruben: I think she was telling us that the future of our family has "Hope."

Mario: So, you took it to be literal?

Ruben: Yeah. My mom is not very good at talking to us directly, but she is pretty good about leaving little messages around for us?

Mario: Oh yeah? Do you mind giving me an example of what types of messages she leaves you?

Ruben: Yeah. She likes to play music with messages on them.

Mario: Like what, some Marvin Gaye?

Ruben: I wish. She plays them old Mexican *corridos or Norteñas*[4]. You know, the ones that has some sad ass dude singing a love song to his lady, or singing a sad song about his mother? (We both shared a brief laugh at this moment; acknowledging my understanding of his descriptions.)

Mario: Why do you think your mom chooses to play those songs, instead of telling you directly, as you mentioned?

[4] *Corridos* are a type of Mexican folkloric music. *Norteñas* are also a form of Mexican folkloric music, specifically associated with the Northern Mexican regions. Both genres include narrative about Mexican culture, history and even politics.

Ruben: I don't know. I think she just doesn't want to fight with us anymore. Maybe it's easier to just play some songs and hope that we are listening to them.

Mario: How would she "fight" with you before?

Ruben: Well, it wasn't really me, it's more my brother and sister. They were bad as teenagers. They would yell at her, throw things in the house and even ran away a bunch of times.

Mario: Did your brother and sister ever get physical with your mom?

Ruben: Naw. They would just grab things and throw them against the wall of break glasses on the floor. I think they just wanted to make a bigger mess for her to pick up cuz that's what she was always tripping on them about.

Mario: I got you. So, they never physically confronted her?

Ruben: Naw, we don't hit each other in the house. We just do a lot of yelling. And since my brother left the house things are quieter, and less messy (laughs).

Mario: Why did your brother leave the house?

Ruben: He just wanted his own pad (place). He's grown and he needed to go like 5 or 6 years ago (laughs).

Mario: Does your brother still see your family?

Ruben: Yeah. He's over there all the time. Probably right now, if he's on his lunch break. That fool can't cook, and he's cheap! He just goes over and eats; sometimes my mom helps him with laundry.

Mario: So, would you say things are better in your house since your brother moved out?

Ruben: Yeah, we all have more space, and nobody fights about picking up his mess. He don't fight with my moms either. It's like, once he left, he just cooled off. Probably misses being at home.

Mario: You ever ask him if he misses being at home, or around you guys?

Ruben: Naw, man. We men, we don't talk about them things in my house. We just go about our business. We only really talk about him getting me a job where he works. I don't know about that though.

Mario: What makes you hesitate about your brother hooking you up with a *jale*[5]?

Ruben: Man, I don't know about working with my brother. I feel we better at a distance. Plus, his job ain't all that.

Mario: His job "*ain't all that,"* huh? Where does your brother work?

Ruben: He washes cars at a dealership. I ain't trying to wash cars for no dealer.

Mario: What's wrong with washing cars at a dealership?

Ruben: Its like, messed up that I can't afford to buy a car from them, but they'll have me wash all them cars for them to sell to people with better jobs.

Ruben then began discussing that since he had joined the intervention program he had a new perspective on how money works. He explained that he "sees" how people in his family, or even his friends, get jobs to pay their bills, but that somehow, they never have enough to save up for anything. Ruben went on to tell me that he was working on getting an apprenticeship at a local airport so that he could learn how to get certified to work air traffic control. Ruben said that ultimately he would "love" to become a pilot, but he also thinks that working air traffic control would be good for him because he could be home on a regular

[5] *Jale* is a Spanish slang word, meant to imply job or employment.

basis. He seemed to be focusing on finding a career that would allow him to have a steady relationship with his future family.

Ruben became my guide through town. He would tell me about the different locations he and his friends hung out, then later he would invite me to hang with them. Most of the time I would end up interviewing his buddies as well. As I got to know Ruben through the years, I noticed that he never waivered from making his family his top priority. He would often remind me of one of his favorite movie lines from *The Great Debaters: "We do what we have to do, in order to do what we want to do."* When I asked Ruben what that meant to him, personally, he replied, "It means that you have to be a man and take care of your responsibilities. It also means that you have to put your family first. You can't be buying rims or getting high if your baby doesn't have any formula or diapers."

Ruben would also often begin to describe his relationship with his father as being rocky. When I would push for some additional answers he would usually just shrug me off and turn away while looking off into the distance. There was a time, shortly after Ruben was detained during a campus lockdown. He shared with me that his father went looking for him to make sure that he was not running with the local neighborhood gang. Ruben went on to tell me that it was "weird" for him to hear his dad give him advice or "act concerned" because of the strife his mother experienced after he left their family when Ruben was just 7 months old. Ruben would refer to his father by his first name, *Ramon*[6], rather than "dad." He mentioned how difficult it was for his mother to raise her 3 children by herself. His grandmother had actually disowned Ruben's mother when she divorced because she said their religious beliefs did not allow for divorce. Despite knowing the physical and

[6] *Ramon* is a pseudo-name used in order to protect the identity of *Ruben's* father.

psychological abuse her daughter went through while she was married to Ruben's father, she also felt really strongly about her cultural values.

It was pretty clear after a few minutes of interviewing Ruben that he held a strong attachment towards his younger sibling, however, it took him a couple of interviews before he mentioned his other siblings, with any other details outside of acknowledging their existence. When I asked him why he was more private when discussing his older siblings, he replied that he did not have such a good relationship with them since he decided to separate himself from the neighborhood. He said his siblings were still "caught up" in the street life and he did not see things the way they did anymore. He said he just wanted to graduate high school and get a job. He considered community college, but he said he ultimately wanted to attend the University of Southern California to obtain a degree in social work.

Cairo

Cairo was born to Central American parents. His family originates from Nicaragua, although he also has a half sister, from a separate father, who is Mexican-American. Through time I got to see Cairo go from rejecting Mexican culture as part of his family's culture, to not only accepting his sister's heritage, but also embracing it. By the time I finished interviewing Cairo for this project he had began dating a young woman from Jalisco, Mexico. He mentioned to me that participating in the GC GVIP allowed for him to get closer to his family because he was able to see how he was being, in his own words, "hard headed" about his family's culture.

During our second interview Cairo shared with me that his father had been killed, shortly after separating from his mother. He said that his father used to be a heavy cigarette smoker, about a pack a day. One night, as he remembers being told, his father went out to buy a pack of cigarettes at a liquor store around the corner from where he lived when he was gunned

down. His father was a victim of a drive by. Cairo explained to me that his father was not a target, but rather, his father had been hit by a stray bullet that had ricocheted off a light pole his father was standing nearby. I could not help but notice the pain in his voice, as he struggled to get through his story his voice would break, sometimes inaudible. Cairo told me he had resented his mother for a long time, but now realized that it was not her fault his father was dead. He said he began going to therapy with his mother shortly after his father's death but never really understood what therapy was for until he got older. He mentioned that being in the program helped him express himself better, without cussing or getting mad. "Once I got comfortable talking to people about stuff in here, it was easier for me to talk about other stuff with my moms. She's hard to talk to cuz she's usually busy working. But therapy is the only time we get to talk to each other, so now I take advantage of it. I'm planning on joining the military, so I don't know how much longer we can talk like this."

Cairo planned on enlisting in the Marines after graduating high school. However, shortly before graduation Cairo found out his girlfriend was pregnant with his child and he decided not to join the Marines. When I asked him about his decision this is what he responded:

Mario: Why did you choose not to join the military, you seemed so determined to join, even a couple of weeks ago, right?

Cairo: Hey man, something about knowing I'm about to be a dad made me change my mind. I didn't want to join the military and then go to war and be blasted. Then my baby would be left without a dad like I was. I don't want my little one to know what that's like.

Mario: So what's the plan now?

Cairo: I signed up for classes at the CC (community college) and I'm already working at my uncle's shop on the weekends. I gotta make some money to buy food,

clothes and diapers for my baby when it comes. I don't know if it's a boy or girl yet, but I'm hoping it's a little boy so I can hook him up with all the cool gear.

Mario: What if it's a girl?

Cairo: I guess I'll still lace her up; it just won't be the same because I don't know nothing about clothes for females (laughing softly).

I later found out that Cairo and his girlfriend had a little boy. They moved out of the state and both enrolled in college. The reason they moved out of state was because Cairo's girlfriend found a job that would help pay her tuition for school, and they even offered Cairo a job as well.

Vince

Vince was in junior high when I first met him. He was a part of the original program evaluation for the GC GVIP. When I met Vince he was 13 years old. Vince was the youngest of 4 born to immigrant parents from Mexico. He mentioned to me that his parents both worked at the local hospital, his mother as a nurse, and his father as a custodian. His older siblings were all unemployed, although he did mention that his sisters were enrolled at the local community college. Vince described his brother as "a homie from the neighborhood that he looked up to." When I asked him what he meant by that, he responded with the following, "I mean, my bro's the man! He got like all the females, he had a car hooked up on hydros (hydraulic air suspension), and he smokes out all the time!" I asked Vince if that was something he wanted for himself when he got older. He replied, "Naw, I want it all. My brother is the shit, but I wanna top him. I wanna have a pad on the hills where I can smoke out and look down on the city."

A few years later when I ran into him as a member of the Pacific Coast High GVI program I asked him if he would agree to interview with me again. Vince agreed to

interview, and almost immediately I noticed a difference in his demeanor. Vince seemed a little more distant. He had shaved his head, was wearing baggier clothes and was wearing *Locs*. As the interview went on Vince seemed to get more comfortable; he even took off his glasses for the last half or so of our interview. When I asked him about his change in appearance he just nodded and laughed softly. Yet, as the interview unfolded, Vince shared that he had been hanging out more often with guys from his *barrio*. When I asked him why, he mentioned that he had been jumped by some other guys outside of a grocery store, in front of his mom.

Vince: Those fools rolled up on me while I was with my mom and they just started swinging on me. After I realized who those fools were I knew what was up.

Mario: What do you mean?

Vince: Well, I recognized a couple of those fools because they are from a different 'hood. I was with some of my boys one day when they came up on these fools and hit them up. Then they started throwing down. Those fuckers probably recognized me and that's why they jumped me.

Mario: So, what happened? What did your mom say?

Vince: She was tripping hard on me for like a month. Then, after that she kicked back and it was all good.

Mario: Did you tell your mom you knew those guys?

Vince: No. She probably would have called the cops and then I would've been seen as a snitch, and I ain't no rat.

Vince valued how his friends saw him. He also understood that his social standing might change amongst them if he mishandled the situation. Richard had told me that Vince had been hanging with some of the older neighborhood boys and that he had changed, but

after hearing Vince describe the aforementioned incident, I now had a better understanding of why.

By the time this study ended Vince had been arrested a couple of times, suspended several more and had even been kicked out of his house by his mother. Unfortunately, Vince is one of the few youth that continued to struggle, even after they joined the GC GVIP. However, Vince was employed and had even taken the assessment test at the local community college. Although he seemed to be struggling to us, there were definitely some positive transformations occurring within Vince as well.

David

David is the youngest of 4 children born to immigrant parents. David told me that when they first met it was through their families. As recent immigrants, neither of his parents knew anyone beyond their relatives when they arrived to the U.S.

One day while I was on my way to conduct an interview, after having just finished one up on the other side of town, I was pulled over by a local police officer. At first I thought I had failed to signal, or perhaps improperly stopped, yet I never imagined the response that the officer would offer when I asked them what my driving infraction was? He replied, "Well, I've seen you drive through this neighborhood quite a bit recently and I was wondering what your business is with these kids you're meeting?" I was taken aback for a couple of reasons, at first because I didn't think that I was being observed during my research. Second, I do not believe that was reason enough for my to be pulled over. After I gathered my thoughts, I explained to the officer that I was a graduate student conducting interviews for my research. I also mentioned that I had recently interviewed the police chief for a related project, and that I was sure he could vouch for me if he got a hold of him. The officer then walked back towards their squad car and made a phone call. A little over 20

minutes went by before the officer returned with my license and registration. He told me to "watch myself" in that neighborhood, that it was no place for a "college kid."

As I turned my vehicle on and prepared myself to drive away, I noticed that David was waiting for me about a half a block away, in front of our usual meeting place, a local park. After parking my vehicle I approached David, who by this time had a huge grin on his face. His first words to me were, "See, I told you, those fools trip out on us for any little thing. Now they're going to start fucking with you too." He then went on to share that when he was 12 years old, an uncle came to visit from out of state. He said his uncle was driving from one of his sister's houses to another when he was pulled over and given a similar warning. David told me he thought it was more of a threat from the police, than a warning about the neighborhood gang / criminal activity. I took his words to heart, and reassured him it was just a bump in the road.

Through the years I watched David grow from a quiet, sometime shy, individual to one of the leaders of his program. David began sharing experiences in class and said he found it therapeutic to do so, so he just shared whenever he needed to "release or vent" his frustrations. Although David had no referrals, suspensions or arrests to his name he was frequently stopped by police, on and off campus. David once mentioned this to his classmates. As they were having a group discussion on a proposed gang injunction, David spoke out and mentioned that a gang injunction would only help label more kids as "*cholos*[7] or thugs" instead. He mentioned that he had no blemishes on his school record, yet he had been identified for this program. Although he said he enjoyed his group of friends and the workshops, field trips and all other class activities, he also said he wondered what it would be like to "just be one of the *normal* kids."

[7] *Cholo* is slang for a Latino gang member.

Mike

Mike is the younger brother of Nicholas, and one of four youth that were detained by sheriffs during a school lock-down. When I first met Mike he seemed like a very happy kid. He had a smile, from ear-to-ear, and had a certain air of confidence about him. Mike was one of the first youth that I interviewed, even before his older brother Nicholas. Mike was instrumental to this study because he would vouch for me wherever we met, with whomever we were meeting. For example, when I set up our first interview we were scheduled to meet up after school at a coffee shop across the street from his high school. When Mike arrived he had three other guys with him (Vince, Chuy and Julio). He told me he had been talking to them about helping me out with an interview. Somehow he convinced them to meet him at the coffee shop and agree to interview with me. At the time I had only interviewed 2 or 3 youth for this project. As a result of that meeting I ended up with 3 active youth participants, rather than one.

Mike was often described as being very energetic. He loved singing in class. He was also one of the few boys that were able to float around, from group to group, and interact with everybody, almost without any difficulty. One day while at a field trip I noticed that everywhere we went Mike was always at the front of the group. Mike would help keep track of his peers, and when the field trip ran a little later, he also offered his phone to a couple of them so they could call to check in with their probation officers.

It was interesting to me that Mike had been chosen for the GC GVIP since he did not seem to exhibit any anger issues, nor did he have a suspension record. When I asked Mike about this this is how our conversation went:

Mario: Why do you think you were chosen for this program?

Mike: I don't know. Probably because of my brother.

Mario: What do you mean?

Mike: Well, that fool used to get into trouble and I think that they think I'm going to wild out also.

Mario: So, do you think you're guilty by association?

Mike: Yeah, definitely. Otherwise, what do they have on me? Nothing. They trip on us for no reason.

Mario: How does that make you feel?

Mike: I don't know. I mean, at first, I was upset, but now, I don't really care. I actually really like being a part of this program. I guess it's one mistake I'm ok they made (smiles).

Similar to other youth involved, Mike described his initial frustration with being labeled as a gang member, or violent individual, and placed into the GC GVIP. However, like the other youth interviewed, they mainly saw the program as an opportunity to make better use of their resources, while allowing the youth a space to come together and express themselves by sharing their lived experiences, discussing current events, or even as a space for meditating.

Nicholas

Nicholas is the older brother to Mike, one of the four youth detained during an alleged gun on campus incident. Nicholas had a more hardened demeanor when I first met him. He walked around with a scowl on his forehead and would always wear his *Locs,* really dark-tinted glasses everywhere, whether we were indoors or outside. He gave us the impression that he was not accessible, nor did he want to be. He would often walk into class, without shaking anybody's hand and sit somewhere in a corner seat. Richard had a discussion one day with him and asked him to be a more integral part to his group. After a lengthy talk, and

several weeks of re-affirmation, Nicholas began participating more in class. Nicholas would ask questions when visitors came to present, he would set meetings with his vice principal when he felt he was being mistreated, he even helped form an informal after-school art club. The group was informal because the art they practiced was considered to be a form of "tagging" or graffiti. Yet, despite the negative connotation associated to their art form, several of the youth were able to find internships as a result. A couple students went on to become tattoo artists, two more went on to study art in a formal manner through college enrollment, and others just found peace in practicing their craft amongst friends.

Nicholas stood a little over 5 and a half feet tall when I first met him, yet by the time this study ended, Nicholas stood a solid 6 feet tall. Not only had he changed physically, but also coupled with his younger brother in the GVIP, Nicholas seemed more at ease amongst others. When I asked him about this during our last interview session he said, "having my *carnalito*[8]around made me more responsible. It's like I couldn't act all hard in front of him because I knew he would want to act the same way, and I didn't want him thinking he was some kind of a hard-core *cholo.*"

Mario: What did you want to show your brother?

Nicholas: I want my little bro to be able to do whatever he wants in life and be successful. He is a really good cook; I hope he does go on to study it more. I even went online and got him a bunch of stuff from different colleges.

Mario: Very cool. What was your brother's reaction when you gave him all the information?

Nicholas: (laughing) Yea, he tripped out, like, "what the fuck is this?" It was funny to him because he said he didn't know I knew how to use our printer.

Mario: That's funny. What did you guys do after the initial conversation?

Nicholas: I talk to him about it sometimes. I think I memorized the information before he did. But we both know what he needs to do to make it.

Mario: What about you bro? Ever give any thought to going to college?

Nicholas: Yeah, you know that's funny. I was just talking to my *carnal* about it the other day. I was looking at the community college that's nearby and I think I like some of their programs. I was especially interested in their auto program because me and the homies love our rides.

Mario: That's right, Cairo likes working on cars also, you ever mention this to him?

Nicholas: Yup. He's the homie, man. He can design the cars and me and the other guys can build them. I could probably do some painting or something, that's always interested me.

Mario: Sounds like you all have a plan.

Nicholas: Yeah, we do.

Mario: If you hadn't been in this program, do you think you and Cairo would have gotten to know each other as well, or made any future plans for a car customizing business?

Nicholas: Naw homie. We definitely wouldn't be as tight. I think we were lucky we were in this program. I wasn't feeling it at first, but after awhile Richard really put us on point and I enjoyed the class more.

Mario: Right on. What would you say Richard did, specifically, to help you with this transition?

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[8] *Carnalito* is slang for little brother, or sometimes, it is also used in reference to close

Nicholas: He just gave us a spot to chill, where we were able to meet all these other fools and talk about stuff that we don't usually get to talk about in class.

Mario: Did you ever have anyone provide you with that space before?

Nicholas: Yes. I had a teacher in elementary school that Richard reminds me of. They were really cool about hearing us out and hardly ever punished us for some of the shit we get into trouble for with *these* teachers.

Mario: Oh yeah? Like what, can you give me an example?

Nicholas: Yeah, we get into trouble for a lot of stuff. Like the other day, I was walking to class and some teacher tells me that I'm in violation of the dress code. I looked at them like they were crazy and kept walking. A couple of minutes later that teacher walked into my class and started yelling at me because I had walked away from them.

Mario: What ended up happening?

Nicholas: Nothing. She yelled at me, called the principal, and when he came nothing happened. He told me I wasn't in violation so I could stay in class.

Mario: Did the teacher apologize to you?

Nicholas: Hell no. She just got mad cuz she couldn't get me into trouble and said something under her breath.

Mario: How does that make you feel?

Nicholas: Like these teachers don't give a shit about me. I mean, we can't really do anything because if we get caught we get into bigger trouble than some of the other kids.

Mario: What kids?

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friends.

Nicholas: The white kids. Those fools get away with everything. They talk back, cuss at teachers, ditch, smoke weed in front of campus, and they never get sent to the office. That's just messed up. I see it, but they ain't going to do anything about it.

Mario: How does that make you feel?

Nicholas: Like whatever. I'm just counting the days until I graduate. I won't have to deal with them after, so I'm not tripping right now. I used to, but not anymore.

Chuy

Chuy is a popular abbreviation for Latinos named Jesus. I first met Chuy when he was a freshman at Pacific Coast High. Chuy was into sports, specifically, he loved talking about baseball and football. Chuy was tall and solidly built. He must have stood close to 6 feet tall, and weighed over 200 pounds when we first met. Chuy always had chips and a drink in his hand. Later on, he was also one of the first youth to get their license and begin driving to school.

Chuy was the only child born to his immigrant parents from Michoacán, Mexico. His parents had both finished elementary school, but neither had enrolled beyond. Chuy would be the first in his family to graduate high school. Chuy also had dreams of attending UCLA or USC. His ultimate goal was to become a "walk-on" athlete for either of the schools football team.

Chuy's parents own a small party rental business. They rent out, and deliver tables, chairs, jumpers, as well as other party equipment. Chuy would sometimes share about having to wake up early on a weekend to help his parents work. He also mentioned how much he enjoyed spending the time with his parents. He seemed very close to his parents. Being an only child, it seemed natural to me.

Chuy also had a girlfriend. He began dating this girl in 7th grade, and at the time this study ended, they were both in 12th grade and still going strong. Chuy was an openly affectionate boyfriend and did not mind holding his girlfriend's hand in public, nor kissing her either.

One afternoon, while I was interviewing Chuy I asked him about any initial effects the program may have had on him and the following was our exchange:

Mario: So, Chuy, would you say this program has benefitted you in any way?

Chuy: Yeah. I mean, Richard and all the boys have really helped me. Before this program, it was hard for me to have friends.

Mario: Why would you say that?

Chuy: Well, for one, I work all the time that I'm not at school, and a lot of my other friends don't get it. They don't understand that my parents need me to help them; it's not really my choice.

Mario: What about now?

Chuy: I definitely have more friends now. They even rent from us for their parties too. We hook them up with a discount, but you know.

Mario: How else would you say that this group of friends is different than your previous ones?

Chuy: Well, I don't know. They just get me, I guess. They don't all have to work, but they don't bug me about me having to work. That's cool because they don't pressure me.

Mario: You feel your other friends pressured you to hang with them?

Chuy: Yeah. I mean, I guess so. I mean, I still did what I wanted, but now I don't get a bunch of mean texts because I have to work.

Mario: Really? Your other friends would send you mean texts because you were going to work?

Chuy: Yup. Some of them are real assholes. Like the other day, one of them saw me walking with some other guys from this class and they started talking shit about how I thought I was all hard now, and just a bunch of other stuff. I mean, I felt bad for the homies, because they aren't gangsters, but a lot people call them that.

Mario: What did you do when they said those things to you?

Chuy: Honestly?

Mario: Yeah. Well, if you want to share, of course.

Chuy: I told them to kiss my ass! (laughing)

Mario: What did they do?

Chuy: Nothing, they just bounced. They're punks anyways. Always talking shit.

The above statements from Chuy were helpful with identifying collateral situations that are born out of the implementation of the GC GVIP. For instance, in this case, because of the initial naming of the program, the labeling caused some students to be misrepresented, as was Chuy by his other friends when they referred to him as thinking he was "hard." Other students also expressed their initial frustration with participating in the program because of its name. They later felt more threatened when a gang injunction was proposed in town. The youth thought that because they were a part of the GC GVIP they would be prime targets to land on the injunction list. As a result, attendance waivered for a few weeks until Richard found out what was going on and called a meeting to address the youths concerns. Chuy was helpful with carrying the discussion that day, He shared the same story he had shared with me. Chuy also suggested that they stick together and not fight with others. He suggested

they were all there to help support each other, not to make each other worse. After that meeting attendance went back to normal.

Julio

Julio was born in Michoacán, Mexico, and immigrated to the U.S. when he was three years old. Julio mentioned to me that his family initially arrived in Los Angeles and stayed with an aunt and her husband for a while, until his dad found the job he has now. His father works as a utility man for a local property management group. Julio mentioned that when they first moved to town, the three of them all shared a studio apartment, but after a couple years they had to get a bigger apartment because his mom got pregnant and they needed extra space.

Julio was the eldest of three, and the only one born outside of the U.S. Julio's father had been able to apply for their residency while Julio was still young. Even so, Julio looks forward towards becoming a full citizen someday in the future.

When I asked Julio how the program had affected him, positively or otherwise, the following dialogue ensued:

Mario: Do you think this program has had any positive, or negative, effects, on you since you joined?

Julio: It's been helpful. I mean, when I first started the program, I wasn't too happy I had been chosen. After a semester I think I was ok with being here. I mean, we went on field trips to USC, UCLA and even visited Homeboy Industries. I had seen them all on TV, but never thought I'd ever go to any of those places.

Mario: What did you feel when you were at those places?

Julio: I was excited. I mean, I love watching football, and UCLA and USC are my favorite teams.

Mario: You know they're rivals right?

Julio: Yeah, but I don't have to pick yet. Maybe in a couple years when I'm thinking about going there.

Mario: So, you planning on going to college?

Julio: Most def! I am at least going to a Cal State. I need to get paid, and if I don't go to college I can't make the money I will need for me and my family.

Mario: Have you thought about what you'd like to study?

Julio: Business. I don't know what type of business, but I know once I get there I will find something I like. Maybe a restaurant or a catering business.

Mario: Do you like to cook?

Julio: Yea. My mom is a really good cook and she taught me how to make my favorite foods ever since I was a kid.

Mario: Oh yeah? What kind of food can you make?

Julio: I make all sorts of food bro! I can make you breakfast, lunch or dinner.

Mario: That's cool Julio. Any specialties?

Julio: I make some bomb *chile rellenos*. I can also get down on some steak. I like to grill a lot, especially in the summer. I'm not that good on the stove, except for my *chiles*. I do get down on the grill though, one day I'ma show you Mario.

Mario: I look forward to it Julio, my mouth is already watering bro.

Julio: Wait 'til you try the food!

Although each of the 8 youth has different backgrounds, they were all able to join the GC GVIP. As a result, most of the youth were able to positively transform themselves while still in high school. Those that struggled to do so, still had a more positive outlook towards their future than had they not been participants of the program. All of the youth also

spoke of the importance of having a school official to relate to. They also mentioned the importance for them to have a space where they can vent and share their experiences without criticism or punishment. In subsequent chapters I will describe in more depth how the GC GVIP was able to provide this platform for its youth participants.

The following chapter will delve into a specific incident involving 4 of the youth participants from the GVIP. The youth were involved in a verbal altercation with some other Latino youth, across the street from their high school. The chapter will detail how these youth, were treated during a subsequent school lock-down. The youth perspectives in the following chapter provide an insider's take on how it is to be labelled a violent gang member. Ultimately, through the events that played out the day of the school lock-down, the youth felt as though they were being "*pushed out*" of their school environment. They felt rejected, dejected and marginalized by groups of adults that they had been told were in charge of their safety. Instead, they no longer felt safe around them. Subsequently, chapter 6, *Pedagogy of the Suppressed*, then serves as the alternative "*pulled in*" model of culturally relevant environment and curriculum.

Chapter 5: Smoking Guns or Smoke & Mirrors?:

Misunderstood & misrepresented marginalized youth

"The underrepresentation of Chicanos at each point in the educational and professional pipeline has resulted in both a talent loss to society and a loss of important role models for the next generation of Chicano students who aspire to educational and professional careers. (Solorzano & Solorzano, 1995, p. 293)"

-Daniel G. Solorzano and Ronald W. Solorzano

The youth of this study had long discussed in their weekly meetings, individual and group interviews, and as well as in general conversation, how they believed they were being mistreated by most school staff (teachers, counselors, and even administrators) they came into contact with. They described that through the treatment, and actions, of the school staff they were being *"pushed out"* of school. The youth control complex operates through the punitive collaboration of various institutions. We could break these establishments into two different categories: *socializing institutions* (schools, families community centers, etc.) and *social control institutions* (law enforcement (local and other), juvenile courts, etc.). Through their combined efforts these institutions develop into a network that effectively control their youth by stigmatizing, monitoring and punishing the youth, ultimately in an attempt to further control youth[9].

This chapter is a case study showing how the *youth control complex* operates for the intervention's program youth participants. The purpose of this chapter is not to simply expose any discriminatory institutional processes that collectively provide a "pushout" environment, but to also offer some perspective on possible solutions that could offer

positive change for all parties involved. The "pushout" phenomena exists through institutional practices, such as zero tolerance policies. "Pushout" refers to the atmosphere of exclusion created through punitive policies that express, to the youth participants of the GC GVIP, their school's discouragement of their pursuit of an education. By severely, or publicly punishing, the youth for minor offenses, or no offense at all (see *Smoking Guns*), the youth felt this discouragement. Through years of experiencing this reinforced system of exclusion, the youth were essentially speaking their experiences as victims of the American public education "pushout" phenomena.

One October morning in 2009 I was driving to a local high school where we were collecting field notes, surveys, and interviews for a larger research project following gang-associated youths across institutional settings,[47] he received a phone call from Richard,[48] the gang- intervention program coordinator for the youths whom we were studying. Richard asked Mario to meet him across the street in a supermarket parking lot, instead of the usual meeting place on campus. He exclaimed, “The campus has been placed on lockdown!” Upon arriving, Mario noticed that the shopping center parking lot, adjacent to the high school, was filled with dozens of middle-aged white adults, mostly females in mini-vans and a handful in luxury sedans. Two local television news vehicles were also at the scene. Most of the people in the parking lot looked distraught as they stared towards the school. One of the white women was crying hysterically as she talked on the phone. “I think there is a shooter in the school...I don’t know what to do!” She was the mother of one of the students at the school.

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[9] Parts of this chapter were previously published in the Association of Mexican-American Educators (AMAE) Journal ©2013, Volume 7, Issue 3 66; Title: *Smoking Guns or Smoke & Mirrors?: Schools and the Policing of Latino Boys*.

As I approached Richard, he overheard another mother addressing a news station reporter. She described witnessing an earlier incident involving a group of boys getting into an altercation outside of the supermarket. "He pulled something out that looked like a gun and pretended to shoot at the other boys, but I did not hear any gunshots. That's when I decided to tell the school." Richard explained to Mario that, shortly thereafter, the school was placed on lockdown and a group of about twenty local police and sheriffs scoured the campus for the boy involved in the incident. Richard pointed towards the school where a cluster of about eight SWAT team officers, all dressed in black and wearing helmets, moved in unison along the side of the school, and then went in, combing through hallways and classrooms. An hour into the incident, four sheriffs walked out of the school with a group of four Latino male boys, ages 15-16. The boys all had shaved heads or short buzz haircuts. They wore baggy pants or long shorts with extra-long white socks. Two of them wore Pendleton style dress shirts. All of them wore black and blue. The boys kept their heads down, apparently in shame, as they were escorted into patrol cars. Law enforcement officers cleared the school, allowing parents to pick up their children. As she returned to her vehicle, one of the white mothers blurted out, "I'm so glad they are taking those gangsters away. I hope they rot in jail!" The boys later reported that they were held for six hours, without food or water, when they were interrogated.

After the incident, I interviewed two of the four boys, Ruben and Vince, and then held a focus group with all four boys. After this, we informally interviewed other students that witnessed the event. From this data and media reports, we developed an account of the incident. The four youths, Ruben, Cairo, Mike, and Vince,[49] had been gathered across the street from their high school at a super market. They had all met up prior to the start of classes to purchase snacks and beverages for school that day. Shortly after purchasing their

soft drinks and potato chips, the boys were approached by two young men driving a vehicle.

They told us, "fuck you lames, we'll get out of the car and beat your asses to the ground." We all laughed. They got pissed off and then acted like they were gonna' get out of the car...That's when we grabbed whatever we could grab.

The white mother that witnessed the boys "grabbing whatever they could grab," panicked when she saw the boys in a conflict and apparently witnessed seeing a gun. She ran to the school to report the gun sighting to high school administrators. The school immediately reported the incident to local law enforcement and put the school's students, staff, and administrators on lockdown until the investigation was over. Shortly thereafter, all of the schools' entrances and exits were blocked by local law enforcement, as were the adjacent traffic intersections. As parents were escorted away from the school to the supermarket parking lot located across the street, other witnesses briefed them as to what had occurred to cause the lockdown. Most of the witnesses, who were informing other parents about the events that led to the trouble, had heard the story from someone else. The account escalated into a narrative of gun-slanging, gangbanging thugs who were ready to shoot at each other. Two parents were overheard talking, "...they were gang members, who got in a fight before school, that started this mess..." and the other parent replied, "...they all had guns and then ran towards the school..."

By the end of the day, after extensive investigation and interrogation, police announced to the school, parents, and the media that none of the boys involved in the incident ever displayed a gun. Parents had somehow confused a *water bottle* that one of the boys pulled out as a gun. Ruben explained, *"Nah man, it was me. I was scared and I had a water bottle in my pocket. So I pretended to have like a knife on me and reached in my*

pocket, and as the guys drove off, I pulled it out to make fun of them being scared of something as simple as a stupid water bottle."

This misinformation and hysteria delivered by parents to other parents, the school, media, and social media exemplifies how, in an era of mass incarceration, schools, law enforcement, and community members perceive and interact with young Black and Latino boys as culprits and suspects, even before any concrete evidence arises against them (Rios, 2011). We found, in this particular incident, and, in the larger four-year ethnographic project from which this case study was derived, Latino boys at this school were often labeled, stigmatized, and criminalized. We define criminalization as the process by which individuals are denied the opportunity to prove their innocence and legality, within a context where institutions such as law enforcement and schools exacerbate punishment in an attempt to regulate and control racialized and poor populations (Cacho, 2012; Rios, 2011). Criminalization exists within a process that Diego Vigil (2002) describes as "multiple marginality." Multiple Marginality theory examines the various micro-level, meso-level, and macro-level factors that create and construct youngsters as gang members. Vigil finds that constantly changing political, social, economic, and psychological processes in society must be accounted for in analytical approaches. Who is considered a gang member today might be different than a decade ago, and the social control imposed on gang-associated populations might also differ, depending on larger cultural and political economic forces. The criminalization of Latino boys as gang threats has become exacerbated during the current era of mass incarceration, "school-to-prison pipelines," and the increase of Latino immigrant populations throughout the United States. The xenophobia follows. Multiple marginality can help us explain how the boys in this study became constructed as criminal threats in the multiple contexts and institutions in which these boys navigated.

From Learning to Labor to Preparing for Prison

The United States has now reached a point where an average of 600 juveniles are arrested each day, and where every black boy born in 2001 has a one-in-three chance of going to prison, while a Latino boy, born in the same year, has a one-in-six chance of facing the same fate (Campaign, 2008). Research dating back to the work of David Tyack (1974) argues that mass education ultimately fails to provide working-class students with the credentials necessary to experience upward social mobility, and, instead, operates to reproduce the very class inequalities that it purports to ameliorate (Althusser, 1971; Anyon, 1981; Anyon, 1997; Anyon, 2005; Bourdieu & Nice, 1984; Freire, 2000; Willis, 1981)[10]. Thus, this body of work provides a critical framework for understanding the school as a site of stratified social reproduction. Yet, much of this research took for granted the terrain of public education in a redistributive state where manufacturing jobs were the next logical step for many of the youths they studied. However, as the prior bodies of work show, the redistributive state has been largely eradicated, (with public education being one of its remaining vestiges), in the aftermath of post- industrialization and deindustrialization manufacturing jobs, which working-class children were overtly and subtly prepared to do. The jobs no longer exist, and prisons have become the places where people left unemployed

[10] Paul Willis, in *Learning to Labour*, provides a thorough discussion of the literature on mass education. Willis begins his discussion with John Dewey, an American philosopher and an early major proponent of the social reform potential provided by mass education. John Dewey argued that education could serve as a means to provide "members of the underclasses, especially black and Hispanics" access to "better jobs and a higher standard of living" (Willis, 1981:127). However, implicit in Paul Willis's ethnography is his engagement with John Dewey and his vision of upward social mobility delivered through education. Willis duly notes, through his analysis of working-class, young British males, that this is a rhetoric that obfuscates the reality of a class-based society because "the whole nature of Western capitalism is also such that classes are structured and persistent so that even relatively high rates of individual mobility make no difference to the existence or

by deindustrialization will likely find themselves.

In light of capitalist globalization, many critical-education scholars and youth advocates use the term, "school-to-prison pipeline," in order to encapsulate the processes that continue to inequitably classify youth along racialized class lines through mass education, and then pipeline them into the growing prison-industrial complex. Literature on the punitive turn in public education helps us to identify watershed moments in history—such as the shifts in funding away from education and toward incarceration that occurred throughout the 1990s (Campaign, 2008; Connolly et al., 1996; Gold, 1995; Taqi-Eddin, Macallair, & Schiraldi, 1998), and the moral panics, through the mid-to-late 1990s, based on a string of violent school shootings at suburban and rural high schools (Binns & Markow, 1999; Brooks, Schiraldi, & Zeidenberg, 2000; Donohue et al., 1998; Dwyer, Osher, & Warger, 1998; Dycus, 2008; Mukherjee & Karpatkin, 2007) that facilitated punitive investments into public education. This research also helps to identify the specific "objective features" of these punitive investments —in the form of zero-tolerance polices, school-resources officers (SROs), surveillance technologies, and information- sharing linkages between the education system and the criminal justice system—as well as the impacts they have had on rising rates of suspensions and expulsions, drop-out (or "force-out") rates, and school-based arrests[11].

Finally, within academic literature, there has been a debate emerging in recent years

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position of the working class... no conceivable number of certificates among the working class will make for a class society" (Willis 1981:127).

[11] Allen et al., 2004; Ambrosio and Schiraldi, 1997; Bonczar, 2003; Bowditch, 1993; Brooks et al., 2000; Campaign, 2008; Cantu, 2000; Connolly et al., 1996; Dycus 2008; Ekstrom et al., 1986; Figlio, 2006; Fine, 1986; Harlow, 2003; Mukherjee and Karpatkin, 2007; Noguera, 1995; Noguera, 1994; Sanders, 2000; Skiba, 2000; Skiba and Rausch, 2006; Stoneman, 2002.

over the impacts of these punitive investments into schools, on these institutions themselves, and on the trajectories of students in mass education. The "convergence" camp asserts that the impulse to heavily invest punitive resources into schools has reached not only schools in poor communities but also in middle-class, suburban, and rural schools, so that all schools share the similar contours of a securitized terrain—which includes, for example, cameras; full-time, school-based police officers; zero-tolerance policies; and normalized law enforcement responses to otherwise non-criminal issues (Kupchik, 2009). This camp argues that the dissemination of this institutional surveillance regime will reproduce, on the one hand, a criminalized class that serves to justify the securitization of social trends, and, on the other hand, a compliant class accustomed to surveillance techniques and technologies; the presence of law enforcement personnel in daily life; and a law-enforcement response to non-criminal issues (Kupchik & Monahan, 2006).

Pointing to the class variation in the vehicles through which administrators and teachers manifest these punitive investments, (i.e., in middle-class schools with drug-sniffing dogs and school-based police officers, who see themselves as mentors first, and as officers second, and, in schools largely composed of working- class students of color, all of whom are subjected to humiliating and aggressive metal-detector programs and mandatory pat-downs by condescending police officers), Paul Hirschfield (2008) asserts that there are key differences in how poor schools are securitized, "[I]n short, the gated community may be a more apt metaphor to describe the security transformation of affluent schools, while the prison metaphor better suits that of inner- city schools" (2008b:84). In the latter form of school, administrators, educators, and SROs can label youths of color as "animals," "inmates," or "killers," and they can also project criminal futures onto their students, as well as lead their students to believe that their teachers don't support them or care about their

success (Blum & Woodlee, 2001; Ferguson, 2000; Fine et al., 2004; Noguera, 2003; Nolan & Anyon, 2004).

Policing the (Latino Youth) "Gang Crisis"

Working-class Latino youth commonly experience negative educational encounters, intensified by punitive school policies and adversarial treatment by teachers, which tend to lead some of these youngsters to being pushed out of school altogether (Conchas & Vigil, 2010). In our study, we found that the school played a significant role in facilitating the criminal-justice-system processing of many of the boys we studied. Many boys, in particular, were identified as gang threats by school officials and, as such, were reported to police officers. Parents were advised about the "gang crisis" by school officials; this, in turn, created paranoia among parents. Parents pushed law enforcement to crack down on (Latino) gang members. Law enforcement focused more of their resources on this targeted population. The ultimate outcome was a state of hyper-surveillance and hyper-criminalization where young Latino boys became scrutinized and punished for common adolescent behavior such as group bonding, loitering, arguing, and experimenting with rule-breaking. Discipline for these kinds of transgressions was now handed over to police by institutions—school, the family, and community programs—that, traditionally, would have intervened in the minor offenses. Since schools have the power to package, construct, label, and deem students as troublemakers and offenders, they often become a launching pad from which young people are catapulted into the criminal justice system. Schools have the power to determine the life-course outcomes of marginalized young people. When schools involve law enforcement to compensate for lack of solid discipline strategies, such as restorative approaches, they end up, often unintentionally, contributing to the systematic stripping of

dignity, the police mistreatment, and the incarceration of the students whom they serve.

While some young people might commit crime and deviance on the streets, it is in the schools, often for minor infractions, where officials, who then collaborate with law enforcement to further, amplify their deviance and defiance penalize students perceived to be at-risk or unruly. It is important to develop a framework for understanding how schools not only educate and socialize students, but also how they package and prepare certain students to be handed over to law enforcement. In other words, the school-to-prison pipeline should be understood as a mechanism by which schools are the initiators of the criminalization process. School personnel must acknowledge their participation in this process of criminalization, and take inventory of the school practices that prepare some children for prison.

The fact that the boys, in this particular instance, were already part of a criminalized class, produced hysteria in the school, as well as among police, parents, and the media. Latino boys who are criminalized often encounter a system of ubiquitous punitive social control that begins in school and spills over into the community, with police and adults reading their everyday behavioral practices as criminal. Ruben described his feelings regarding how white adults reacted to him in public:

> *"...If you go with your homies, they stare at you, baggy clothes make you look suspicious around here. If you're walking in a little group, people are all scared of you. If hueros [Spanish slang for whites] are coming towards you, they'll get off the sidewalk so you can pass by, they're scared as fuck. It's like we're gonna' give them a disease."*

In his interview, Ruben explained that the only guns he had ever been around were

those used when hunting with his family. He appeared perplexed that a water bottle would get him in so much trouble:

> *"I know that the teachers think I am some kind of trouble maker, but I never imagined that they would call the entire SWAT team to come hunt me down!... I've been taught that I should never carry a gun; I don't even know where my dad keeps his guns. I'm scared of guns. So how do you think I felt when those [police] guns got pointed at me?"*

In the focus group, the boys talked about their morning ritual. They went to the supermarket every morning, before making their way to campus for their first period. The boys talked about how the cafeteria food repulsed them. Some of their teachers encouraged healthy eating habits and even taught them lessons on eating nutritional food. However, the school did not provide them access to these kinds of foods. "It's like now we have a chance to eat a snack without getting into trouble in class, but some of us don't even bring snacks, and some of us don't get no lunch money," Vince explained. Vince was frustrated that, although they were being taught healthy eating habits, they were unable to partake in the routine because they did not have enough money to eat well. Ruben further explained, "It only makes it more obvious who's got money, because that's who brings snacks and stuff to school. The rest of us get hungrier just watching them eat." When we asked if anyone ever shared their snacks with the rest of the classroom, they all looked at each other, and one of the boys answered, "Nah. Why would they give us any of their food? Usually, it's the homies that offer each other to hook you up with some chips or something." In their search for affordable food options, the boys became exposed to potential victimization from older youths, who would drive by the school looking for rival gang members or younger people to

mess with. According to the boys' own accounts, if the school had been able to provide them with tasteful snacks, it would have prevented their altercation in the first place.

Soon after the water bottle incident, the boys returned to their classrooms. They quickly forgot about the altercation and moved about their regular school routine.

Ruben: The thing is, we didn't even know they [the police] were looking for us, we just knew the school had been locked down and the cops were searching for somebody who had a gun. Since I didn't have a gun, I never even thought they were after us for that argument.

Vince: Yeah, and when they came into the class they came in with guns and dogs. Then they got us, but were all rough with us. One cop tried turning my wrists and when I pulled away, he said he would break my arm, and not even hesitate. I was like, "You're hurting me. I didn't even do anything."

Ruben: Yeah, that was messed up. They had these big ol' rifles and were pointing them at us until they took us to some rooms. They put us in separate rooms for a long time, too. It was like at least six or seven hours. And, they didn't even want to tell my mom why I was still at school with the police. She heard the news from other neighbors at her job that there was a gun at the school. She got all worried and left work to see if I had been sent home. Then she found out I was being questioned by the cops. She got all mad and thought I had done something.

Mario: Did you tell her what really happened?

Ruben: Nah, she didn't care. I guess she was just all worried and stuff 'cus she thought the same thing that happened last time was going to happen again.

Mario: What happened last time?

Ruben: I was held at the police station like all night, because they thought I was involved with that one stabbing a couple years ago. They're just always messin' with me, though.

Vince: Yeah, they always mess with us. Like when they left us in those little rooms for like half the day. I even asked the cops that would check in on me if I was going to get lunch, and no one answered me. They just laughed at me and went away.

Ruben: I asked one of the cops for lunch and he told me to shut up. His partner, or whatever, stepped into the room with an open bag of chips and I thought he was going to be cool and share with me. Next thing I know, the cop throws a chip at me and says, "There's your food; eat that if you're hungry. If you're not hungry, shut up."

Vince: Yeah, and that wasn't even the worst part of all. The worst part came when they put us all in the same room.

Mario: So, what happened when you were all put in the same room?

Ruben: They were shady. That's all I can say.

Vince: They had us in that room together for like half an hour. We were all asking each other what the hell was going on. Plus, we were all like, "did any of you guys get any food?" We weren't even given food from the cafeteria and that's where they were getting their chips from.

Ruben: Yeah, then some police officer walks in and grabs one of the empty chairs in the room and puts it next to this cabinet. All of a sudden he stands on the chair and reaches into the box. The cop pulled out this recorder that was inside the box, then he looked at all of us and said, "We got you now. You should have cooperated earlier."

Many of the youth who participated in our study shared that they had had enough negative experiences to outweigh the few positive ones with police officers, community center workers, and school officials. Most of the boys we interviewed expressed the belief that they were experiencing what we call "a *youth control complex*...where various institutions were collaborating to form a system that degraded and criminalized them on an everyday basis" (Rios, 2011). The boys felt as though their schools and communities were working towards pipelining them into incarceration, particularly when they were being arrested in their respective schools, and, later, fined by the courts for minor infractions. These violations came in various forms, the most common being possession of small amounts of marijuana, truancy infractions, and other forms of "aggressive" behavior that might be deemed too violent for the classroom. These actions were common practice in our observations, and were even acknowledged by a campus counselor whom we interviewed:

These kids aren't thugs or killers. I think all kids need some guidance and discipline, but the way the cops treat the students isn't right either. They talk to the kids with little or no respect. Then they get angry at the students' response to their maltreatment. Usually, the kids talking back to the police officers, results in the police being extra rough on them physically. Some kids show up with bruises they claim were from being slammed to the floor by the police. For a simple "stop and search?" That ain't right, man. I think if you treat

the students like adults, they'll begin to act like one.

Ruben had encountered other major negative experiences with police. In early 2007, two groups of youths were involved in a fight that resulted in one of the youths being stabbed, and, eventually, dying. Local law enforcement agents began rounding up many suspected gang members and their relatives, or known affiliates, for questioning. One of the 25 youths brought in for questioning was Ruben. The police knew that Ruben was related to a known gang member. They had gathered this information from the high school when Ruben was a freshman. Upon arriving at school, for his first day of classes, Ruben was asked by the principal if he was related to James, a former student. He told the principal that James was his brother. According to Ruben, the principal relayed the information to the school resource officer who then tracked Ruben down and placed him in a gang database.

Ruben was a friend with the boy who was killed, and was in shock upon hearing of his friend's death:

> *"It was difficult to process what was going on. One minute I thought I was getting messed with for no reason, again. Then, all of a sudden, I found out this guy I knew was dead. They [the police] didn't even let me tell them where I was [when the killing happened]. They were all like in my face and yelling at me, telling me they knew I wasn't telling them what I knew.*

According to Ruben, he had been across town when the stabbing occurred, and he had explained to the officers that he had no prior knowledge of who could have been involved in the altercation or stabbing of the other youth. Ruben told me that after they interrogated him for several hours, they left him alone in a room for another couple of hours before they came back for him. When they confirmed Ruben's alibi, the police released him

without an apology or an explanation as to why they believed he was involved.

Juvenile Incarceration

While conducting our observations at this school, we observed dozens of citations and arrests of Latino boys. Most of the citing and arrests occurred outside of school, and were primarily for minor infractions. Some of the youth would hang out all day on street corners and parks during their school vacations, generally because many were too young for employment. However, while hanging out in their neighborhoods, especially in front of local establishments, the boys would receive police charges for loitering or disturbing the peace. Many times, the youths were trying to get out of the sun and cool off, because they didn't have air-conditioning at home. Other times, the youth shared with us, they were just quickly rushed through their purchases, and not allowed to "shop around" by merchants. The minor negative treatment and citations imposed on the boys, nearly on a daily basis, would later play a bigger role in further criminalizing them. One such example came a couple of years into this study, when the efforts of the local police department were directed towards having conversations with local civic and community leaders about creating a gang injunction. Twelve of the boys in our study were named in the injunction.

In addition to facing a continuum of school discipline, school-referrals to police, police harassment, gang injunctions, and labeling by adults in the community, some of the boys also faced being questioned by immigration enforcement officers about their citizenship status in the United States. Many of the boys' early memories are of their relatives being arrested and deported. Seven students remembered hiding from "immigration" even though they were born in California. They had to hide because their parents were undocumented or they had relatives from México living with them. One youth,

Julio, was undocumented. He remembered hiding in bushes, behind trees, flat on the ground, or in the bed of a pickup. He remembered hearing his parents speaking to him, in Spanish, and telling him, *"Mijo, escondete. Por que si te ve la policia van a encontrar a ti y a tu tio y se los van a llevar a Mexico. Calladito, ok?"* ("Son, hide. If the cops see you, they'll find you and your uncle, and then they're going to send both of you back to Mexico. Quiet, ok?"). This young man had been detained before by border patrol for looking suspicious and undocumented, and when Julio was nine, and he lived in Los Angeles, his home was raided by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency. Julio felt that it was harder for him, as an undocumented immigrant, to stay under the radar, even if he "followed all the rules," because he would always have to worry about both local law enforcement agencies and federal customs enforcement officials. Some young Latinos face layers of illegality, when the system has deemed them to be a criminal suspect group because of their racial and class status. Layers of illegality include being questioned and degraded for dressing in baggy clothes, being asked for citizenship status because they are brown, or being placed in a gang database because their friends or relatives are involved in gang activity.

Julio recalled being told by a school vice principal, "We know you are illegal and we want to help you, but don't push your luck, because we will start letting people know who you really are, and they will come here and take you away." The school officials made the boys feel as if they had the power to garner police and immigration resources on call. All four boys who were involved in the water bottle incident believed that the school had called the police about them to teach them a lesson, to discipline them for being the "bad guys" at the school.

Community Segregation and Marginalization

On another occasion, when we started conducting a focus group with all four of these boys, three pointed at their friend, Marcos. One of them instructed him to tell us his story. Marcos told us about an altercation that had occurred earlier in the day. There were several youth gathered at a local Boys and Girls Club, playing basketball and tossing a football around. Marcos and his friends decided it was too hot to stick around, and, instead, walked over to one of their houses to hang out, watching music videos in the air-conditioning.

After a few hours of hanging out at their friend's house, the boys became bored, and began walking back to the Boys and Girls Club, where they had been hanging out earlier in the day. This time, however, they were stopped at the entrance of the facility and were told that they were no longer allowed to be there because of the fight they had caused earlier in the day. Community center workers then threatened to call the police on these boys if they did not leave the premises immediately. The staff told the boys that the vice principal had told them of the trouble they were causing at school. "They told us that the vice principal said we were instigating fights, and that they should not let us hang out at the center." Here, again, the school, the police, and the community center collaborated to criminalize and punish young Latinos deemed as threats. This in turn created a system of exclusion from institutions originally intended for nurturing—such as schools and community centers—and inclusion in institutions intended for punishment and control—such as probation, juvenile facilities, and jails.

Negative encounters with police, schools, and community centers led the boys into the streets to seek out older boys, with whom they would feel that they were affirmed and protected. Vince reported being told by an older gang member in the neighborhood that if he

ever wanted to get the cops off his back, all he had to do was start hanging with the gang. We asked Vince, "Did any of your homeboys decide to take the older guys up on their offer?" Vince looked around for a little bit, and finally answered, "Yea, some of them decided to kick it with the older homies. I hardly see them anymore, though." In this instance, public humiliation by the authorities did not serve as a deterrent for the future, but rather added "street cred," or street celebrity, to these youth (Vigil, 2007). Being labeled or marked for minor transgressions would place the boys at the risk of being granted additional, more serious labels. In this case, the boys' risk factors were hanging out with the *veterano* homeboys from the neighborhood, and, possibly, turning into one of the "shot callers"[12] of the gang. In turn, some of the boys would eventually be coerced or compelled by older boys to prove themselves by committing a crime. These negative interactions with authority figures strain young peoples' ability to trust the system. In turn, the boys find an alternative institution to put their faith in, the gang, and, in particular, the older boys in the gang. Marcos explains, "I trust them [older boys]. Guys I trust and like, whenever I need anything, they are there. They are older guys, so when I need something, they are there."

We also noticed heavier policing in the boys' neighborhoods over the next few weeks after the water bottle incident. An example of heavier policing included the police driving up to where the youths were, getting out of their car, and then slamming the boys against walls, or against curbs. Some police officers would even go as far as handcuffing the youths in order to search them. The boys said they were embarrassed and humiliated by the cops and by the people from the community center. Some of their neighbors began calling the police about them. According to another youth, people in his neighborhood also began acting differently around him. The public humiliation brought on by the police officers and

[12] "Shot callers" is urban vernacular that refers to the gangs' leadership.

community center management was beginning to label the boys in new ways.

Historically, gang prevention or street-based programs have been organized by, or in conjunction with, churches and local organizations for youth delinquents. In this case, despite the youths' attempts to enter the community center, they were turned away. The community center staff members were unwilling to assist boys who had been labeled gang members, and the staff's actions created additional barriers for the boys to overcome.

Teacher and Administration Discrimination

Teachers were observed to be intolerant to any type of "attitude" from the boys involved in the incident. Students were constantly compared to their "well-mannered" peer counterparts, and were asked to invoke their "good-spirited nature" in order to succeed in life and in their academic studies. Ruben described his very first interaction with a teacher, shortly after the school had been locked down:

Ruben: "Hey."

Teacher: "Hey? Is that all you have to say for yourself?"

Ruben: "What do you mean, is that all I have to say?"

Teacher: "Yeah, I didn't think you had it in you. None of you ever apologize for the damage you cause. The school is the real victim here, not you."

The teacher was referring to the school being the victim of Ruben's and his friends' actions the previous day, which resulted in the high school being locked down. The teacher told Ruben that she was bothered that he was allowed back on campus without a suspension or alternative punishment. Ruben told us that the teacher made similar comments out loud in

front of the class. When Ruben asked the teacher to "back off" and "leave him alone," the teacher replied, "...if the school or local police can't change you, I will." As Ruben told us this story, his lips began to quiver and his eyes were slightly lubricated with what appeared to be rigidly held-back tears. We asked him, "Are you ok?"

Ruben: "Nah, I'm cool. Just tripping on how teachers don't really care about you." **Victor:** "Why do you say that they don't care about you?"

Ruben: "It's like they never really liked me because they knew my family [his older brother and cousins had dropped out of school] and were just waiting for me to slip."

Victor: "What makes you think they were waiting for you to slip?"

Ruben: "Like, the minute they find any little thing on you, they want to call the pigs to come and arrest you. I mean, that's messed up. I'm not even from nowhere and they want to treat me like I'm a criminal."

Hyping the label

Schools have tremendous positive power over the lives of students—the power to teach them academics; the power to socialize them to be engaged citizens; the power to transform their lives in positive ways—but schools also have negative power: the power to mark a student with a discipline record; the power to force a student out of school; and the power to catapult students into the school-to-prison pipeline. The multiple marginality that many working-class Latino students face in hyper-criminalized schools stems from a societal, racialized fear of immigrant populations, and a macro-economic transformation in which de-industrialization and post-industrialization have created the conditions for

education systems to restructure themselves more punitively. Ergo, some marginalized Latino youths are no longer "learning to labor" but rather "preparing for prison" in their school settings. The multiple marginality that young working-class Latinos face today is one of a punitive society that treats and manages them, across institutional settings, as a suspect criminal class which is immersed in layers of illegality.

One key instrument for reversing the school-to-prison pipeline could be the implementation of restorative- justice approaches. Richard has assisted the school studied here to implement a restorative-justice process by facilitating conversations with students who are finding it difficult to learn conflict resolution skills and to share issues at home and at school with each other. Often, in this process, the youths address each other and discuss how they could treat each other on and off campus. Sometimes Richard guides the conversations, and, at other times, professionals from the local community take hold of the lessons. The youth find common ground, and, eventually, learn to respect each other and socialize in less confrontational and aggressive manners.

In addition to culturally competent outreach workers, culturally responsive teachers (Ladson-Billings, 1995) might help to ameliorate this school-to-prison pipeline. When educators fear young people because of the way they dress, where they come from, or where they live, they have little capacity to educate them, and, instead, have to rely on discipline as the key system for managing their pupils. There is a greater opportunity for equitable schools when classrooms are "responsive to the social and cultural diversity of the communities that they serve" (Cairney, 2000, p.10). Cairney cites researcher Jim Cummins' work that "identified four structural elements of schooling," which, Cummins argued, "influence the extent to which students from minority backgrounds are empowered or

disadvantaged." These elements include: incorporating minority students' culture and language; including minority communities in the education of their children, pedagogical practices operating in the classroom, and the assessment of minority students (Cairney, 2000, p. 6).

In addition, culturally responsive teaching recognizes certain cultural features of Latinos, and incorporates those aspects into the curriculum (Waxman & Pardon, 2002). For example, a teacher who understands that Latinos place great importance on family and community would incorporate those aspects into their lessons (Waxman & Pardon, 2002). Teachers can also create a cooperative-learning environment where students work in small groups, which has been found to decrease student anxiety and improve English proficiency and social, academic, and communication skills (Calderon, 1991; Chrisitan, 1995; Rivera & Zehler, 1991). Also, teachers who provide opportunities for extended dialogue are especially effective in teaching Latino students, because students are able to develop language skills and higher-level thinking skills (Tharp, 1995; August & Hakuta, 1998; Duran, Dugan, & Weffer, 1997).

While school officials can claim to have their hands tied due to larger economic, political, or policy forces, there are some pragmatic steps that educators may take to begin to reverse at least some of the effects of the school-to-prison pipeline on Latino youths. Schools have the potential to change the pipeline because factors within schools may be controlled and transformed, such as improving relationships with teachers and implementing restorative-justice practices and policies. As such, school factors may influence student engagement as well as their personal characteristics, and these may play a role in providing protective factors that rival the protective factors provided by the gang (Sharkey, 2011).

When high schools adopt a more empathic role with at- risk youth, and provide services like counseling, mentoring, and tutoring, research shows that violence and gang membership reports decrease. While educators don't have the resources to reverse the effects of structural forces that impact their students' lives, they do have the ability to change their interactional practices with students, become more culturally relevant, and implement restorative approaches. These major changes might help to begin the process of eliminating the school-to-prison pipeline and create a cradle-to-college staircase instead.

Pulled In

For instance, in the next chapter I explore several key concepts used by the GVIP coordinator, Richard, to help teach his students about understanding themselves, their surroundings as well as what a future might look like for them if they choose to alter some of their behavior. Rather than take a suppressive model, such as sending a student out of the classroom, or maybe assigning a detention to a student for unruly/disruptive behavior, the coordinator takes different approaches at communicating to the youth the consequences of their actions. The resulting effect was the creation of a "*pulled in*" system where youth feel included, and as owners and participants of their own education/s. This "*pulled in*" effect was the result of implementing, and modelling, an *inclusive* and *corrective* curriculum to these youth's educational environment.

Chapter 6: Pedagogy of the Suppressed

"*How is it possible for me to speak about risk if students discover that I never risked? …Education is, above all, testimony. If we are not able to give testimony of our action, of our love, we cannot help the students to be themselves*"

-Paolo Freire, 1993 (Wink, 2011).

Critical pedagogy as a theory, and educational model, acts a means to help describe, and also better understand the GC GVIP's youth development. Critical pedagogy, or Freirian theory, are theoretical models that I chose to help provide socio-historical context to these youths experiences. It should also be mentioned that although I used Freirian theory to explicate this research, neither the program itself, nor its curriculum, were specifically influenced by Freirian concepts. It was my theoretical belief that it was helpful to understand Paolo Freire's philosophy of emancipatory pedagogies. Freire believed that education served as a transformative agent for the oppressed (marginalized) to better understand themselves and begin their process of healing and overcoming adversity. Freire further states that in order for "revolutionary leaders" (i.e. educators, community organizers, parents, etc.) to lead correctly they must use conscious dialogue supported by lived experience to help achieve a means to their liberation (Freire, 1970). This chapter highlights how the GC GVIP employs most of the aforementioned qualities associated with education as transformation.

Additionally, I felt that by my using and applying Freirian theory to this study it would help cast a light to the lived situations that the youth of this study faced on a daily basis. Paolo Freire described the oppression that Brazilians experienced as multi-layered;

not just about education, or wealth distribution, or gender / racial discrimination, but rather, an amalgamation of all (Freire, 1970). Although one could argue that the educational experiences the youth of this study have encountered have led to their oppression, going one step further and suggest that these youth, living in an age of zero tolerance policies, are suffering from *suppressed* educational experiences.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines suppress as follows: *"1.) to end or stop (something) by force; 2.) to keep (something) secret; to not allow people to know about or see (something); 3.) to not allow yourself to feel, show, or be affected by (an emotion)"*. After careful analysis of youth interviews, discussions with staff closely associated to the program, in addition to my field notes, I came to understand that the youth of this study were *suppressed*. Their suppression came in the form of a teacher's classroom pedagogy; an administrator's policy on punishing certain groups of students; and to local police constantly detaining and / or arresting the youth for minor victimless crimes. The youth also mentioned that their parents were also sometimes as punitive as the other aforementioned groups, lots of times as a result of being influenced by the other adult authoritative figures from those groups. The combined institutional efforts lead the youth to an experience of suppressed living. This is a phenomenon most associated in recent decades with the shift from rehabilitative to punitive standards within the child and adolescent caring systems (i.e. schools and juvenile courts) (Mallett, 2015).

However, there are ways to utilize other institutional mechanisms to assist transition the youth from a state of suppression to a state of participation, investment, and involvement. This chapter will look to examine, both the institutional failure depicted through suppressive punishment models, as well as to provide insight on "what worked" to help re-engage the youth of the study with themselves, their communities, as well as their

education. The following are examples taken from field observations, as well as the one-on-one and group interviews that I conducted with the youth participants of the gang and violence intervention program during my five years with them.

Weekly meetings

First day in the field, Richard, the coordinator of the GC GVIP, briefed me on what his class agenda for the day would be so I knew what to expect. He also mentioned to me that part of my being allowed entrée into the group (as well as anyone else who came into their class) was contingent on my participating with their weekly check-ins, as well as any other group activity that would be planned for the youth. The weekly check-in consisted of all of the youth forming a circle, either inside of a pre-assigned classroom, or outside underneath the shade of the large trees that lay throughout the campus. After forming a circle Richard would assign a few questions to be answered during the check in to follow. Richard would begin by answering the questions himself, then he would choose, at random, which side of the circle to begin answering the questions as well. Typically, the youth introduced themselves (by name and class standing), then they answered the assigned questions (i.e. "how are you today?", "what plans do you have for this weekend/holiday/planned field excursion?", etc.) The check-in process usually lasted between 5- 15 minutes, depending on the questions, as well as the youths willingness to participate answering the questions.

In addition to the standard questions during check in, the youth also addressed guests from the local community during their weekly meetings. These community leaders then shared their knowledge by engaging the youth in a dialogue. Most times the community members present at these weekly gatherings were born and raised locally, so they could identify with the specific nature of the issues that the youth were dealing with. As such, they

were able to build rapport and establish a connection by using their personal experiences and expertise to help show the youth their options outside of the classroom. This would be another example of how cultural relevancy was beneficial to these youths' personal and professional development. The intent is to show the youth how to become aware of their surroundings in a manner other than knowing the physical landscape of their community.

Rather, I believe that the curriculum of the GC GVIP served as a vessel for the local organizations that choose to work with youth in the local community to distribute their information, network with the youth and get to know their future employees or community leaders. Often, community members come into the groups looking for youth leaders to help mentor into becoming their successors. However, if the youth were not engaging them, then there was no way that the youths would ever be made aware of such opportunities. Within the context of the GC GVIP there were plenty of opportunities for the youth to network with local outreach organizations, employment agencies, local community organizers as well as professionals from local colleges.

Strength of Network

One such example occurred the very first year I was in attendance with the GVIP. After the first couple of months of working at the school district, Richard realized that one of the biggest needs that his students had was employment. Although the youth ranged in age from 14 years to 18 years of age, they all had the same concern: contributing to their household. Some of the youth felt they had the obligation to try to find a way to chip in and pay bills in their respective homes. Some of the boys had been working summers doing odd jobs, ranging from mowing lawns to car tune-ups, were bussers/servers at local restaurants, to name a few of the jobs these youths mentioned having.

One day while Richard was in attendance of a local community meeting he overheard a couple of gentlemen mention that they were looking to offer some teenage youth paid internships to learn how to work a flight command tower, which was a program operated through a local airport. Richard spoke to the gentlemen and asked them for their contact information so that he could pass it along to some of his students he knew would be interested in such opportunities. As expected, the youth jumped on the opportunity and were soon learning everything there was to know about being an airport flight command specialist.

The youth that participated in the internship were Ruben and Vince. Vince did not last long in the program because his parents thought that he would be better suited working longer hours for Vince's uncle's construction company. Although Vince had worked with his uncle every summer since he was 12 (he was 15 at the time this occurred), he felt he wanted to explore a different career option. Unfortunately, the internship did not pay as much as his uncle did, and Vince ultimately decided to leave the flight command program to work with his uncle. In an interview shortly after Vince left the internship I asked him how he felt since leaving the airport job for his uncle's. Vince looked down at his feet for a while, then he looked over at a group of younger kids standing near us. He slowly lifted his left hand and pointed at the kids group. As he pointed to them I noticed his eyes well up with tears as he began to talk. He started saying, "I feel like." and his voice broke. As he began once again to speak, he took a deep breath, looked me straight in the eye and said, "I feel like I've been kicked in the nuts. I was having so much fun, and even learning a lot of new things, then I had to quit to go work with my *tio*. I don't know why, but I feel like even though I'm trying to do good with my life and make changes, I don't feel like I get to make my own decisions sometimes. Like if I didn't need to help bring in money, I would've

fought with (my parents) to stay in the flight program." I quickly realized that although Richard was offering these youth an opportunity for their futures, they still had some very real problems they needed to deal with in the present.

Ruben, on the other hand, stuck it out with the internship for a month and a half (the program lasted a total of 2 months every summer) before leaving for a different job himself. After leaving for his second job offer, I had a chance to sit down with Ruben and ask him about his experiences with the internship. Ruben mentioned that he liked the internship because he was able to learn about things he never discussed in high school. He also said he like working with different people, some he might not ever have the chance to work with given the tendency for local youth to work in the fast food, or service industries. Ruben said, "there were some cool people I got to work with. I even got to learn about some really interesting careers from them. They were nice to me and even offered to give me a ride home every once in a while. That was fun, I got to ride in some nice cars, like a (Mercedes) Benz, a (BMW) Beemer, and even a (Cadillac) Escalade! You should have seen the face on my parents when I showed up in those cars. They were like, "What?" all surprised and stuff."

In Ruben's case, being 16 years old at the start of this program, put him in a more pressured situation to participate in the opportunities offered through the GVIP. Ruben later mentioned that he took the opportunity because he felt he needed to. He was one of the older boys in the GVIP and knew that he needed to take the opportunities being offered to him at the time, otherwise he might not be able to benefit from participating in the GVIP. He also made an interesting point that many youths made at the beginning of their participation of the program. Ruben revealed to me that programs similar to the GVIP had existed before, mainly in the form of non-profits, and the programs usually lasted a couple of years; the

adults got what they needed and then left, never to return, or worse yet, they remained in the community, just no longer interacted with the youth through their services anymore. He thought it would be the same with the GVIP, so he decided to act early while the program was still funded.

In the cases of Vince and Ruben they had different outcomes to their internship experiences offered as participants of the GVIP. While Vince was unable to finish his internship, I got the impression that the little time he was exposed to the program left an impact on him in seeking other career options, beyond his uncle's business. After his summer internship experience Vince went on to get part-time employment at a local grocery store, mainly because he felt they were more flexible with high school students' schedules, and this would allow him to also focus on getting his grades up. Vince also thought he could save a little money throughout the year, instead of having to work long hours in the summer to save a big chunk to last him most of the year. He was definitely more motivated after the summer. Ruben also went on to find a part-time job. His employment was at a car dealership though. Ruben has approached an employee from a local car dealership and asked them if they were hiring. Ruben said he ended up having a conversation with this person for about a half hour, and through the course of their conversation Ruben became convinced he wanted to become a car salesman. This person ended up hiring Ruben as a car porter / car washer for weekends and some afternoons after class. Ruben said he felt a little down when he was offered the porter job because he did not want to be a manual laborer his whole life. The man at the dealership ended up explaining to him when he was a teenager there were not many Latinos working at dealerships, and that he had also started off parking and washing cars when he was a teenager, but now he owned and operated his own dealership. Ruben felt he could follow in his footsteps if he worked with him. To me, I understood it as Ruben

having found himself a new mentor. Someone he could apprentice under and learn about the car sales business.

Administrative experience

Over the course of the school year, the GC GVIP averaged 2-3 visitors per month; usually one visitor every week, with one week used to review guest presentations and to also discuss new events, personal, local, national, or a combination of. Most of the time the guest speakers were invited by the outreach coordinator, and sometimes there were planned guest speakers through administration. In most instances the youth of the program responded well with their guests, meaning that they allowed the speakers to speak and present on their knowledge and / or services.

The youth participants were also inquisitive, preparing questions for their speakers during their presentations. However, this was not always the case. It took the youth participants of the program about a year or so to get used to having people come in and speak with them. One of the youths, Mike, mentioned that he was only used to having adults coming into the classroom when he was in trouble, so it made him a bit anxious when the school principal or district administrator came to visit, especially when he had not committed any offense. He was only used to interacting with administrators through a "punitive" model. For example, Mike shared of an experience when he was in junior high, and then later sparked back up when he enrolled in high school. When he was in 7th grade he was sent to the administration's office because he has been heard cursing at another classmate by his math teacher. Mike mentioned that his friends had been teasing him all day because of a food stain on his t-shirt and by the time they got to 5th period that day he had become fed up with their comments. While in class one of his friends raised their hands to answer one of the math questions offered by their teacher. However, instead of making an

actual attempt towards answering the math question, his friend ended up writing, “Mike is on his period, look at his shirt” on the white marker board. Mike took exception to the answer and retorted with a few choice words of his own, directed at his friend. For his response Mike was sent to see an administrator.

Mike mentioned that he was approached by a community resource officer (CRO) when he first sat down to wait in the lobby of the administrative offices. Community resource officers are typically hired off-duty law enforcement officers brought onto campuses to help mediate peace and keep gangs, violence, and drugs from further permeating their respective high school campus they have been assigned to. However, what I also found out during my time with the GVIP was that the CRO’s were also used by administrators to dole out students punishments.

While this was a case for other student, in this instance the CRO was not there to mitigate his punishment, rather the CRO was simply making his daily campus visit and decided to dialogue with Mike while they waited in the lobby. According to Mike, after a few minutes of them conversing in the lobby one of the vice principals came out to greet the CRO and calls Mike into his office. Mike then stated that once the door closed and he was inside the vice principal asked him why he had been sent to the office. Mike then recounted the story to the vice principal, even going as far as showing him the stain on his t-shirt. Mike said that the vice principal told him he did not believe his story, despite the fact that there were over 30 other students, and 1 teacher, that could attest to the message written on the white board earlier that day.

The vice principal went as far as to suggest that the CRO had escorted Mike from the classroom and that was why he was waiting with Mike in the lobby. When Mike attempted to negate that statement by calling in the CRO, he was told that the CRO had already left.

Mike asked the vice principal to call the CRO and clarify the matter; the vice principal denied his offer. He said that at this point he really began to worry about how severe his punishment would be for cursing in class. Mike then stated that the vice principal began telling him about his punishment options, including suspension. After the vice principal told him of these options he asked Mike to go back into the lobby and wait for him. Mike ended up waiting the rest of the day; which ended up being about an hour and a half after he was sent out of the vice principal's office. Once the last bell rang for the day and everyone started exiting the building Mike began to look around for the vice principal and could not find him. Finally, after another 10 minutes after the bell rang, the vice principal came out of their room. Mike said he looked surprised to see him still in the lobby; he even asked him why he was still there. Mike replied that he was waiting for his punishment, to which the vice principal replied, “Okay, I’ll let you know in the morning.”

The following morning Mike went to the administration’s office to see the vice principal about his punishment. On his way there Mike ended up running into the CRO he had engaged in conversation with the previous afternoon. He explained to the CRO what happened after they parted ways in the lobby and asked him if he could help him out and tell the vice principal what actually happened the day before with their interaction (Mike’s and the CRO’s). The CRO agreed to speak to the vice principal on his behalf so Mike said he then felt a little alleviation regarding his possible penance. However, by the time Mike got to the front desk the vice principal had already filled out his paperwork and had decided to suspend Mike for three days. In the suspension record he even wrote that Mike had to be escorted by the CRO, which was untrue. Mike attempted to speak to someone over this matter, but he said he felt that he was given the “run around.” Finally, after serving his suspension, Mike saw the vice principal on his first day back and went up to him to ask him

for a meeting to discuss his punishment. Mike said that the vice principal denied his request for a follow-up meeting and he also failed to attend one that was set up through the school district through Mike's mother's efforts. While the suspension was later overturned, Mike never got back those two days he missed of school. Being suspended for his outburst also allowed other students to also make fun of Mike, in an effort to elicit the same reaction, and possibly cost him a second suspension. Mike told me that it was not only the students that began making fun of him, some of his other teachers also made comments about it to him in front of his classmates, which made Mike feel embarrassed and less inclined to participate in classroom activities afterwards.

Although Mike said that he was "haunted" by the circumstances surrounding this particular classroom outburst, and subsequent suspension, he said that he also had an opportunity to address the vice principal through the GC GVIP. A couple years later, while a student for the GC GVIP, Mike was present for one of the weekly meetings that included newly hired school administration. The new, and continuing, administrator's wanted to meet with the group, introduce themselves, and hear what the students had to say. Mike said that when he initially walked into the room it was only filled with his buddies, but once the bell rang Richard mentioned that they would have the new administrators dropping in to visit with them. When the coordinator was asked for their names, he paused inquisitively, trying to remember their names, but came up with a blank. A few minutes later the administrators showed up and one could immediately tell that several of the students felt differently about the new administrators. Mike immediately recognized the vice principal that had suspended him in 7th grade as one of the new administrators being presented to the group.

Although Mike had had a bad previous experience with this particular vice principal, he said he did not want to "mess things up for everybody else" by bringing up his

suspension that day. Though, Mike did decide that he would make an appointment to speak with him in private, which he did a few days later. Mike said he was greeted eagerly by the vice principal and asked into his office. After a few minutes of becoming acquainted Mike said that he told the vice principal that they had met before, and then went on to recount the story of his 7th grade suspension for his outburst in math class. Mike said that the vice principal seemed confused, and told Mike he did not remember such an incident. He also went on to suggest that because he had been an administrator for so long it would be difficult for him to remember every punishment he had handed out. Even though Mike felt the vice principal was being dishonest, Mike said he left that meeting that day and decided to move on and forget about the suspension. Mike said he had learned to "forgive and forget" others as a member of the GVIP. He also learned that "forgiving and forgetting" was more about helping him move on, than it was about just pardoning others for their transgressions.

Mike said that prior to his meeting with the vice principal he met with Richard and asked him for some advice on how to handle the meeting. He then said that Richard reminded him that he had taught them to meditate and think about their lives, past, present and future and try to find clarity in their lives by learning to deal with their issues. Richard then suggested to Mike that this would be a good test case for him on how to deal with a difficult situation. When I asked him if his meeting with Richard had helped him prepare for the vice principal, Mike smiled, looked me in eye and said, "I don't think I could have made it through the meeting without his advice. It was just me and the veer, who knows how it could have gone if I wouldn't have talked to Richard?"

Yearning to learn, seeking acceptance

Other youth also commented on their perceptions of classroom visitors. For instance, Cairo offered the following when asked about classroom guest speakers, "They're cool, I guess. I mean, they are like supposed to give us information on stuff we need right? I mean, most of the time people treat me like a criminal, except when I'm here. When I'm here, I feel like I can talk and be a part of what happens in the class. In my other classes, it's like, teachers don't really try to talk to me, or ask me if I need help or anything. I mean, isn't it their job to help us? I dunno, sometimes I wish I had this class everyday, that way I could learn about more stuff. Stuff that interests me, not just what the teacher wants to teach me." In this instance, Cairo is describing an instance where he feels he is not able to engage in dialogue with most of his other teachers. According to Freirian philosophy, it is important for people to feel as though they are participating in co-constructing knowledge; in other words it is important for the youth to feel as though they are involved in the discussion, not just being talked at/to (Freire, 1970). Often times, this is done through dialogue, a discussion that allows for the student to play the role of teacher as well.

Also, it is evident by Cairo's statement that he feels more comfortable within the GC GVIP. Freirian philosophy, also states that by showing "the oppressed[13]" how to reclaim their self-belief is essential for their survival (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1993). Richard uses critical praxis, which according to Freire, is important to explaining the specific mechanics for "how" youth can engage their teachers in a more effective manner. The following is an example provided by Cairo to further prove the efficacy of Richard's methods for communicating with the youth of the GVIP.

[13] In the case of my research, although I use the term "oppressed," the youth of my study, as I contend earlier in the chapter, are specifically suffering from *suppressive* punitive tactics.

Cairo remembered the first day that he showed up to the GVIP, he said he felt intimated walking into a classroom full of people that he did not really know. He knew some of the students in the program, but he was also a bit of a loner, by his own admission. As a result, Cairo said he had a tight knit group of friends. So, walking into a classroom full of 30 students, expecting to participate, he felt a bit intimated. Except, he said that after doing the check-in circle he felt more comfortable because he was able to hear who everybody was, as well as introduce himself to the group. He said he also liked that Richard and the other adults also introduced themselves. He thought that it made it seem like everybody was there to talk.

Cairo recalled that shortly into the class he felt compelled to speak in their conversation about a proposed gang injunction. Cairo said that he felt angry that people in town were trying to pass the injunction, but he also told the others in class that he was scared. He said he was scared of becoming a target by local police, even at school. Cairo said he was walking home with a friend from school one day when they were stopped, and approached by an officer that they were both familiar with, Officer Wilkes[14]. Officer Wilkes asked the boys where they were coming from to which they replied, "school." Cairo said that the officer then turned on his lights and pulled his car over completely to the side of the road. As the youth watched him park his vehicle near the curb Cairo said that he and his friend "assumed the position[15]" while the police patted them down. After being pat down, the youth said the officer engaged them in a conversation about the proposed injunction. He

[14] Officer Wilkes is a pseudonym for the actual police officer involved in this particular incident. As with others involved in this study, I have changed all of their names, as well as any specific indicators that may lead to their identification, in an effort to protect their identity.

[15] This is a reference to the youth pulling their hands over their heads, interlocking their fingertips, while pressing their bodies against the face of the nearest wall. The officer then

mentioned that they would be excellent candidates because Cairo and his buddy were both a part of the GVIP. Officer Wilkes went on to tell them that because the program was geared at violent gang members in schools, they would all be potentially added to the gang database[16]. This information scared Cairo and his friends. As a result they ended up missing a couple of the GVIP meetings in the subsequent weeks. When Richard approached the youth as to why they were missing their meetings, he was incredulous at the fact that Officer Wilkes would stoop so low as to threaten the youth with adding them to the gang database, when it was obvious that the youth were positively benefitting from being members of the GVIP. Most of the youth participants showed an increase in class attendance, their GPA's, and there were also less suspensions. Most of the youth, like Cairo, attributed their newfound focus and vigor for their studies on their participation in the program. Officer Wilkes was strictly operating using intimidation tactics with the youth.

After a while the local gang injunction was turned down in court. The youth had distanced themselves from the program, either a little or completely, began to attend their weekly GVIP meetings. It was in the first weeks thereafter that Richard said he made a valid effort to re-connect with those youth whom had become distant. In a discussion I had with Richard shortly after the injunction was rejected, Richard mentioned to me that he felt a little scared about the possibility of the injunction being approved. However, he also said that he was more concerned for the safety and well-being of the youth participants. Richard recounted being a teenager involved with a neighborhood gang in his hometown. Richard said he remembered when he was teenager and the city was proposing an injunction, and he remembered how things changed immediately after the injunction was passed in his town.

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padded the youth searching for weapons, drugs, or any other illegal objects or evidence thereof.

Richard said he recollected being stopped by police every once in a while, especially if he was out cruising with his friends. However, after the injunction was passed, Richard said he remembered being stopped by the police every day, sometimes several times a day. It got so bad that he would just stay indoors, or find ways of leaving town and going somewhere where he would feel less harassed. Richard feared that his students would have to face the same type of situation he experienced as a youth.

Richard said that because he remembered those incidents of his childhood, he was able to tap into his empathetic side and understand where the youth were coming from, instead of taking their absences as a sign of disrespect. Richard understood they were scared at the thought of what could occur to them if the injunction was passed. He did not want them to be scared. Richard said he wanted to let them know he was there for them, any time, night or day. Richard was willing to meet with Cairo's parents about the concerns they shared with his continued participation in the GVIP. Richard told Cairo's parents that he was there to help their son pass his class, graduate high school and to become a better man in the process. He told them it would be a difficult task, given he had over 100 other students to keep track of, but he also mentioned that if they invested in their children's development through the GVIP that he would make sure to do everything he could to provide Cairo, and his peers, with knowledge and opportunities none of them had thought possible before. Richard reassured Cairo's parents that he would advocate for their son, as well as the other youth of the GVIP. Richard did ask Cairo's parents to make an effort to support his academic interests as well as by providing Cairo with some positive feedback. Richard wanted Cairo's parents to make sure that he was willing to hold adults accountable for their actions, if they were detrimental to his students' progress, even if it was their parents.

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[16] The *gang database* the youth refer to is the CalGang database system used in

Edutainment

In *Expecting Excellence in Urban Schools,* Dr. Jelani Jabari argues for the notion of using a student's cultural capital as a means to assist their learning, rather than seeing their cultural capital as a deficit to their learning. Jebari argues that by using a model that emphasizes cultural capital as a means to access the student's intellectual strengths, teachers can assist the youth academically and push the boundaries for classroom instruction and curricula for economically disadvantaged students in poor neighborhoods by examining their cultural capital beyond its traditional "values" and "codes," and using the students' cultural capital as a means to help support classroom teaching, rather than seeing their cultural capital as a deficit. Javari's book is representative of the turn occurring right now in educational pedagogy where culture is taken seriously, brought front and center, and examined as a key component to youths success in the classroom. In addition, it provides clear guidelines for embracing young people's culture and desire to achieve in school. It calls on teachers to provide all young people an avenue for them to explore a new path towards their future success. Jabari also suggests incorporating the student's inherent abilities, and interests, into the curriculum to help students engage with their material (Jebari, 2013).

Additionally, Peter McLaren proposes that critical pedagogy can offer a space where both teacher and learner can engage and exchange knowledge, mutually. McLaren goes on to state that critical pedagogy helps "provide (a) historical, cultural, political and ethical direction for those in education who still dare to hope (p. 112)." Moreover, McLaren states that another major role for critical pedagogy is to disclose and challenge the role that schools play in our political and cultural life; not just as instructional sites but also as "cultural

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California to keep track of supposed gang members and associates.

arenas where a heterogeneity of ideological and social forms often collide in an unremitting struggle for dominance" (McLaren, 1998, p. 121). In the 5 years I spent observing the GC GVIP, and its advocates, I found several examples that demonstrate how this methodological and humane, approach can become useful towards creating what Henry Giroux describes as an, "educational movement, guided by passion and principle, to help students develop consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian tendencies, and connect knowledge to power and the ability to take constructive action" (Giroux, 2009, p. 4).

One such example came from Julio. Julio tended to be one of the quieter boys, whether by himself or in group. After a pair of health educators from a local Planned Parenthood presented to the youth about their services and mission, Julio went up to the educators and shook their hands while thanking them for being there. He later mentioned to me that he was really excited to have received some of the information from Planned Parenthood because he never knew what they really stood for. He said that he was now a "big supporter" for what they stand for, and what they do. When I asked him what it was that made him choose to support them, he replied:

"I don't know nothing about (vaginas), but I do know a little something about my stuff (penis). But, when the people came through and talked about all the things girls have to go through, I was like damn! I mean, it sucks, everything they have to go through. They have periods, they get pregnant, and then there's all these other things (diseases) that they gotta worry about, and I know I don't. I mean, shouldn't they be making their laws, not us? I don't know, if I was a girl, I'd be mad about them trying to close them (Planned Parenthood) down."

In this case, Julio had developed a new consciousness regarding *sex education* that allowed him to also understand the additional socio-political arguments attached to the

services provided by clinics such as Planned Parenthood. Julio was able to recognize a conservative argument was being used to misrepresent the mission of Planned Parenthood. Furthermore, Julio became a health advocate. Prior to the presentation Julio had admitted to rarely thinking about Planned Parenthood, mainly dismissing them as a "women's clinic." However, after receiving said information Julio was able to make a more direct connection to women's health rights. He was able to realize that a woman's health is just as important and complicated, if not more so, than a males. The educators allowed him to empathize and understand, two important components towards achieving total consciousness, or *conscientizao.*

Finally, Henry Giroux's research on hegemony builds upon Freirian theory, particularly on how it exists within educational institutions. Giroux states that curriculum is never just a neutral body, or a warehouse of knowledge. Rather, curriculum is a way of organizing knowledge, values, and relationships of social power (Giroux, 1988). Giroux goes on to further state that, "under the ruthless dynamics of predatory capitalism, there has been a shift away from the possibility of getting ahead economically and living a life of dignity toward the much more deadly task of struggling to stay alive. This new form of economic Darwinism is conditioned by a permanent state of class and racial exceptions in which, as Achille Mbembe asserts, "vast populations are subject to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of the living dead. These disposable populations are increasingly relegated to the frontier zones and removed from public view" (Giroux, 2011).

While observing the GVIP I witnessed Richard also practice a model for his class that accentuated students culture as a form of capital that they, both the students and Richard, could build off of. Richard would often refer to popular culture, both from the United States, as well as from other Latin American countries, in particular Mexico, since

that was his and most of the youths' ethnic background. Often times, during class meetings Richard would make reference to movies, TV shows, or even famous people, as a means to draw the students' attention, as well as to try to formulate some common ground between himself and the students.

For instance, Richard would use scenes from popular movies to attempt to get a conversation going. On one occasion Richard used a movie title *Warriors* to bring up a discussion about creating a culture of camaraderie amongst youth from a similar background, despite some minor differences (i.e. specific ethnic identity or social class). On another occasion he showed scenes from *Boyz N the Hood* to discuss issues of masculinity and growing up under dire circumstances, surrounded by violence and drugs, all themes that the youth of the program could relate to on some level. There were times that the youth used their weekly meetings as a time to vent/discuss some of their personal problems, in a space in which they felt comfortable and without judgment. As such, Richard took those moments to help him prepare which types of media he would bring to their following meeting.

Richard was also fond of using musical artists in class to help share about events from the past, and listen to other's current stories of struggle. While with the GVIP I observed Richard use multiple artists, ranging from hip hop and R&B to Mexican folkloric/*Norteño* music. For example, one week Richard came into the classroom and played *What's Going On* and discussed the history of violence and abuse in communities of color. This conversation became more important towards the back half of my tenure with the program, not necessarily because of any specific issues affecting his students, but also to help the youth of the GVIP understand other people's plight, and teach them how to empathize with others. This was important to Richard to teach his students as a lesson because, although his students were not inflicted with all those issues to the same extent,

many of them could relate to several of the issues discussed in the song, on different levels. In another instance, Richard used a couple of different meditation chants/songs to help demonstrate to the youth what it would sound like to meditate. Richard told the youth that he began meditating to take care of his stress and anxiety and also explained to them that it was an important routine to his current lifestyle.

By tapping into the youths knowledge of current popular culture, Richard sought to expand their knowledge of what they currently knew, while also showing how that knowledge could be used in a functional manner, outside of their personal entertainment. By tapping into their inherent cultural knowledge to begin dialogue and build lessons to educate his students on personal, academic and professional situations, Richard was teaching the youth how to better mediate those situations moving forward. By starting the conversation and allowing the youth a space to include their experiences and personal knowledge sets, Richard allowed the youth to participate in a classroom setting, something most of them were not accustomed to doing, at least not regularly, and especially not after being embarrassed in any of their classes. Moreover, Richard also gave value to the youths experiences, while offering them additional perspectives to begin understanding their lives in a more positive manner.

Suspending the "threat"

In Paul Willis' *Learning to Labor* he showed students as autonomous members in the resistance against the reproduction of social class, although sometimes the youths' actions sometimes also worked against them as cited in (Anderson-Levitt, 2006). For instance, in Victor Rios' study of black and Latino youth in Oakland, Rios reports that many of the youth participated in some of their deviance as a form of social resistance to punitive social control (Rios, 2011). Although some of the youth participants of the GC GVIP have

participated in acts of resistance[17] against law enforcement, teachers, schools, their communities, few of them had ever been arrested. Although few had been arrested, most of the youth identified for the GC GVIP had been described as having "tendencies towards violence, or violent behavior" by either teachers, staff or school administration.

What I discovered through my 5-year study was that the teachers, staff, etc. had chosen to inequitably define typical youth behavior amongst these Latino kids as "criminal," rather than as regular behavior, typical of most of their teenage peers. For instance, Nicholas and Mike shared with me about what they perceived as a difference in punishment across different groups on campus. Mike and Nicholas both shared that they had gotten into trouble for "carrying a little weed (marijuana)" on them while on campus. They said that while they were at PE class one of the PE teachers was told by another student that the brothers had marijuana on them. After a search of the locker room, the teacher found one other student in possession of marijuana, a white male. While in the principal's office awaiting their punishment they happen to catch the white student leaving the principal's office. As Mike and Nicholas watched the boy walk away, they heard him brag to one of his friends that he had gotten away with after-school detention for the "pot" they had found in his possession. After hearing this, both brothers became less nervous thinking they would receive a similar punishment, since neither of them had been in any kind of prior trouble before at school, not even a referral or suspension. However, when they were called into the principal's office, not only was the principal there, but so was a school resource officer (SRO). As previously

[17] Acts of resistance include refusing to address police officers questions without the presence of a lawyer, or at the least their parents. Additionally, youth also shared that they would begin asking the police "dumb" questions in order to "show them how it felt to be asked a bunch of dumb questions for no reason" (David, Interview conducted in 2011). Towards the end many of the youth began organizing against a locally proposed gang injunction.

stated, school resource officers are off-duty police officers hired to work on the high school campus and help mediate punishment.

After a brief conversation with the two brothers about different types of punishment the principal allowed the SRO to take the meeting over. The officer then informed the students they were being suspended for 3 days from school. The two boys then shared with me that when they walked out of the office they were scared that they might end up arrested in the near future as a result of their mistake. Both of them looked at me incredulously, while recounting the difference in punishment they received over the other student. They said that after a while, and speaking to some of their "homies," they came to the conclusion that what had been done to them had been considered common practice for SRO's in that high school, especially towards Latinos. Mike and Nicholas pointed out a discrepancy that many of the other youth in the GVIP also shared, one of being punished more severely than their male counterparts. When I asked them why they thought they were being treated differently, Mike replied, "They think we're *cholos* because we wear different clothes than them. They think we're going to like beat everybody up in the school cuz they think we're all some *cholos*. It's crazy because "herb[18]" don't even hype you up, it makes you mellow. But they (school officials and SRO's) still think we're getting high and then wanting to fight. Nah man, not with weed."

It should be noted that this account was recorded in the second year of the GC GVIP, and while there were plenty of stories similar to this one in the beginning of the program, much of this behavior and "culture of punishment" towards the youth decreased dramatically towards the end of my five years with the GVIP. I believe that there was an actual internal process that led all of the high school staff, teachers and administrators to re-

[18] The word "herb" is a slang reference to marijuana.

evaluate how they considered their Latina/o students. Examples range from simple day-to-day exchanges between the youth and the adult professional staff, to the implementation of "restorative justice" as well as cultural sensitivity training for all school professional staff. The school has definitely made efforts in recent years to change the campus culture to become more inclusive, while integrating new alternatives to punishment. One high school administrator, while visiting the youth of the GC GVIP, mentioned that it was in the school's best interest to teach to their students strengths, rather than continue to invest in the old "banking" model for education.

According to Freire, "oppressed (peoples) must participate in the revolutionary process with an increasingly critical awareness of their roles as *"subjects"* of the transformation." Furthermore, "manipulation, sloganizing, "depositing," regimentation, and prescription cannot be components of revolutionary praxis, precisely because they are components to the praxis of domination" (Freire, 1970, p. 88). Additionally, Peter McLaren has used the methodology of critical pedagogy to engage politics and democracy through education. He argues that education and politics go hand in hand, specifically the political economy (McLaren, 1998). According to McLaren, critical pedagogy allows us to identify, negotiate and change how we educate our children.

In the case of the GC GVIP, with several of the youth involved in localized efforts to inform residents on the state of the proposed gang injunction, many youth were able to coordinate efforts at schools, between schools. The youth used their knowledge of the juvenile justice and adult carceral systems to help convey their messages to their audiences. The students argued for more funding directed to their schools, rather than in creating alternative juvenile detention centers. The youth advocated for their peers' rights knowing that if they did not support their friends in their efforts, maybe the injunction would

someday target the youth of the GC GVIP. As a matter of fact, several students began missing their weekly meetings with the GC GVIP. At first the coordinator did not pay too much attention, but one week half of his students did not show up. The coordinator asked those present if they ha an idea as to why so many of their peer were missing. After a couple students raised their hands and offered their opinions, it became evident that those missing class were in fear. The youth were in fear of becoming targets to be added to the gang injunction list. They claimed to have overheard people having a discussion in which some of those people mentioned that they hoped all those "gang members" in the audience were added to the list so that they did not have to see them, or deal with their crimes, they just wanted them locked away. After that meeting some of the youth stopped attending the GC GVIP for fear of being identified and later having their name added to the injunction list. Once the coordinator found this out he actively pursued an official name change for the GC GVIP. After a couple of meetings with folks in the school district, the coordinator was able to arrange an official change in title to the program. The program would now be housed under a different department, allowing for such a change to occur. The last thing that the coordinator wanted to occur was for their years of hard work to be thwarted due to conservative community efforts. It should also be mentioned that although an effort was mounted in an attempt to incorporate a gang injunction locally, the gang injunction campaign ultimately lost its battle in the courts.

Humanistic Pedagogy- *Pedagogy of Love*

I believe that another important component to Freire's concepts on the *Pedagogy of Love* were also seen as a component to the GC GVIP. Freire connected his pedagogy of love to emancipatory politics. That is to say, that Freire believed that respectful and responsible

relationships amongst all people led to better understanding of how various people play a part in the co-construction of knowledge (Freire, 1970).

For example, Ruben provided me with the following account on one of our many meetings. Ruben and I were caught up on a Saturday morning catching up over the last week or two worth of events for each other when he brought up going out on a date earlier that week. When I asked him if that was his girlfriend, he blushed a little bit and looked away shaking his head no. He replied that they were just friends "chillin' together and stuff." He went on to say that he did want her to be his girlfriend but that he was not going to force it, he wanted her to love him for who he was. Ruben says, "It would be cool if we dated, and she was my girl, I mean girlfriend, but I ain't forcing it. If she don't like me for me then what am I wasting my time for. I need to find someone to love me back, sometimes it feels like my tank is empty bro." I began to hear what Ruben's message was at its root, he wanted to be/feel loved. He was saying that he knew he was capable of loving somebody else, but to me he was being cautious to protect himself from rejection; a typical human reaction, especially when it comes to dating or even marriage.

I went on to ask Ruben what he looked forward to the most as part of his relationship with this young lady to which he replied:

> R: "I'm just trying to have fun and chill. I ain't trying to get married, have babies or any of that drama. I already help raise my little brothers, I'm trying to do me. I think she's cool with that though. We talked a lot the other night, didn't even get to watch the show[19]. We didn't even have to do anything crazy to have fun."
>
> Mario: "What do you mean by crazy?"

[19] "Show" in this case, is used interchangeably to mean movie, not an actual television show.

R: “I mean, like we didn’t have to get high, or drunk to have fun. Man, usually when I’m trying to chill with a girl, it seems like we’re always partying.”

Mario: “When is the last time you had, you know, like a serious girlfriend?”

R: “Naw. Never really. I mean, I had a couple ladies and all when I was trying to be a pimp, but nothing like a someone I would say that I loved or nothing.”

Mario: “Have you ever told anyone, besides your family, that you love them?”

R: “No. Not really. The only time I remember telling a friend that I loved them was at one of their funerals. You know, you’re paying the homie his respects and all, so it’s alright to cry and say it. When was I going to see him again?”

Mario: “Do you ever go back and visit your friends grave? You know, after the burial and funeral services?”

R: “Naw. It hurts too much. Like I think about him almost every day, but it’s hard for me to go and not get all sad and stuff.”

Mario: “Do you think that being “sad” is a bad thing?”

R: “Well, I don’t know man. I mean, it just feels weird to be all sad and know that your boy won’t be coming back. We won’t be able to go to prom, or do any of that fun high school stuff we had thought of doing when we were in junior high.”

Mario: “Have you been able to find anything in the GVIP to help you deal with these feelings bro? I mean, are you talking to someone?

R: “Yeah, Richard has been a great help in showing me how to kind of focus on other things to keep my mind off of that. He also introduced me to a counselor on campus that I began going and seeing to talk to and stuff.”

Mario: “Cool. What about your friends? Do you think that your buddies form the program have somehow helped you also?”

R: “Yeah, those fools are crazy tho.”

Mario: “What do you mean?”

R: “Well, it’s like they’re always sharing their stories about girlfriends and stuff. Some of it I don’t believe, but most of the stuff I’m just like. (shakes his head incredulously) crazy. I mean, they act all tough but then I seen the notes they write their girls telling them “I love you” and everything, so I know they’re just tripping.”

I realized that Ruben had lost a dear friend a few years ago and was finding it hard to open up, emotionally, to others in the absence of his friend. He was still grieving the loss of his buddy and did not want to make himself any extra vulnerable in a relationship. He knew he was ready to open up to someone new, possibly a girlfriend, but he did not know how to without really putting himself out there. Ruben was struggling with these feelings, but he knew that by his continued attendance in the GVIP he would acquire the skills, and share his story enough, that he would eventually began the process of healing and moving forward from the grief of losing his friend. His friends and Richard provided Ruben with a space in which he could learn and share from his and their experiences, mutually. As young men that are constantly deciding how to negotiate their masculinity, Richard helps provide the youth opportunities for pushing themselves and their own personal development. In this case, by allowing the youth the space to discuss their personal matters, while also providing some advice and guidance, Richard was showing the students that it was ok to love, even if it came at with some struggle. Like life, love is a struggle, and these young men were beginning to learn how to negotiate their emotions with all the people they held relationships with.

Renaissance Youth

Cultural capital for the youth was something of a conundrum to them at first. They understood what culture meant to them at home, and as an extension, in their communities. Cultural capital is generally defined as the value (monetary, politically, socially, etc.) assigned to people, their arts, language/s, religion/s, etc. For instance, the youth understood that being Latina/o was valued was on holidays associated to them. For instance, during the town's annual celebration of "Spanish" culture there were also plenty of events that were of direct Mexican or local indigenous culture mixed into the weeklong celebration. The town will traditionally hosted various cultural events such as Mexican folkloric dancing (*Baile Folklorico*); *Mariachi* bands, as well as local and traditional Mexican food being sold at various foods stands that were specifically setup for this annual celebration. There were also many night celebrations that were also themed as being Mexican or Indigenous related.

With so much investment into this weeklong affair one would assume that there was a strong connection to the Latino community. However, what I found to be truer was that the relationship was pre-defined into labor ranks. What I mean is that most of the Latina/o community had long held most of the town's working-class / manual labor employment. Matter of fact, during this study one of the most commonly-used triggers to offend one of the GVIP participants was for their peers to threaten their parent's employment. As it was, there were some students parents who cleaned homes or were local gardeners, etc. Many of the boys whose parents held such type jobs would frequently comment about how they felt silenced in class because if they disagreed with some students that those students would threaten their parents' employment. They felt as though they could not disagree with their

peers, because although their heritage was honored during their annual weeklong celebrations, they felt devalued as local residents during the rest of the year. Their peers' treatment made them feel more like outsiders in their own town.

In Michel De Certaeu's, *Walking in the City,* mentions that folks seen as "walkers" or "common people," are often invisible to those with a more privileged and advantaged view of their city, such as wealthy people living in the hills of this town, or along coastal cities as well. De Certaeu argues that the "walkers" are the people that actually breathe life into their towns, and likewise, into spaces they populate. Therein, value is asserted into the lives of those living and walking in their town, as opposed to those that can observe the town from their own privileged spaces; as a result De Certaeu also assigns the role of "voyeur" to those in positions of privilege. Having a vantage point of overlooking the city gives the "voyeurs" a different understanding / perspective for where they live, compared to that of the "walkers," the everyday citizen that walks among the masses of others that inhabit, as well as construct the local work force. The argument for the "walkers" suggests that they have a different understanding because they interact with other folks that share similar lifestyles as well.

Similarly, the youth participants of the GVIP, at first, felt most comfortable interacting with Latina/o people. However, as time went on for the youth of the GVIP, they were introduced to other residents, resources and open spaces in their town by Richard. As time passed the youths network grew and their understanding of others lived experienes also changed as they were exposed to, and they listened to the people Richard was introducing them to. The youth began to understand their surroundings through the eyes of others, and as

such, they were not only more aware of their surroundings, but they were also more invested in their surroundings as a result. The investment came in the form of additional time to their studies; participating at local youth organization meetings in their community and participating in cleaning efforts for their community and also in local youth advocacy campaigns (i.e. local proposal for gang injunction) to name a few.

The youth had gone from feeling like outsiders and were more devoted to their personal growth, as well as that of their families and communities. I call this the *Batman / Superman complex.* Using the popular comic book characters to help me describe this idea helps me draw upon a narrative that most people are familiar with. *Batman* in his own right is an introvert, and depends upon the night, shadows and tall locations to gain access and monitor the residents of *Gotham City*. By contrast, *Superman* is able to camouflage himself in plain clothes and walk amongst the citizens of his hometown, *Metropolis.* Drawing from these characters' personalities, I posit that the youth of this study were able to navigate from living as outsiders or outcasts of their own town to being able to walk amongst other residents of Golden Coast without fear of judgment or punishment.

This came in large part from Richard's own advocacy and networking efforts. Richard was able to use his position as coordinator of this program to help form collaborative learning and living environments for the youth of the GVIP, and by extension their lived communities. Richard was also able to show the youth how to recover from disappointment (employment, school work, personal lives, etc.) and move towards recovery and planning for their future. Richard was also able to help resolve some minor disputes between community and the youth, as well as with their families.

Watering a garden full of seeds

The gang and violence intervention program initially began as a means to help alleviate a perceived increase in Latino youth gang participation, as well as a perceived increase in incidences of violent acts around town. Local law enforcement was almost immediately enacted in an effort to decrease the supposed increase of Latino youth violence. These efforts came in the form of suppressive tactics as a means to generate better social control amongst the target Latino youth. Suppression tactics usually included, but were not limited to: (1) conducting probation searches at home; (2) implementation of a night curfew for minors; (3) in- and out of- school suspensions; (4) implementing and enforcing terms of probation / parole; (5) being held from participating in school / community activities. The youth of this study discussed at length their experiences with these suppression tactics. Several of the youth shared instances of traumatic experiences between themselves and local police. The youth felt as though they were directly targeted by the police officers because of their racial and socio-economic background. The youth felt as though they were being punished for others' actions, and not given enough credit for their personal and academic progress. Richard showed the youth that they could once again trust in their school staff, teachers and administrators to continue to act in place as their advocates, rather than to view the youth as criminals-in-the-making.

Richard showed the youth to that he would be there for them consistently, week in and week out, regardless of their own participation, he would always show up for their scheduled meetings. Richard also went above and beyond to make sure that the youth and community established a stronger relationship as well. Richard understood the need to bring

all of the different institutions that were locally affiliated to the youth to come together. The collaborative efforts would aim to serve all residents, while also allowing the youth a second chance to reinvent themselves as positive contributing members of their own community. The concerted efforts also extended into the law enforcement community where Richard met with law enforcement officials in an attempt to begin the healing process between the youth and police. Through time, endless number of meetings and a cooperative mentality, Richard was instrumental in bringing the youth together with their local community and networks of resources.

Most of the youth of the study shared fascinating stories of personal growth and transformation. Some of the youth continued to struggle despite regular participation in the GVIP. However, pointing to the fact that they *struggled* also suggests that the youth cared enough about whatever it was they were working on to make sure that they worked at it, even if they failed or did not receive the outcomes they sought. The youth were investing in themselves through these exhaustive efforts of personal growth.

However, on a positive note, the school district went from having a perspective of seeing these young Latino males as threats, either to other students in physical ways or a threat to the school's reputation, to viewing these youths as members of their schools, and communities by extension, but more importantly, they recognized the necessity for creating additional support systems and networks, institutionally, to help bridge the youth to their community resources. The school district took the approach, as an institution within the youths community, to become proactive in their approach for dealing with these young males. The school district went from adopting what was originally labeled as a gang and

violence intervention program, into what is now considered an elective course for the youths personal development.

The school district has now taken an approach that directly invests in the youth by providing them a program with a curriculum that is focused on promoting healthy lifestyles, disseminating information and strategies to assist with students' academic success, and is also an integral component to integrating the youth to local community resources for employment and higher educational opportunities. The gang prevention worker mediates this investment. What this relationship does is that it creates an institutional advocate for the youth, where before there only existed a punitive model to "assist" with deterring the youth from additional truancy violations or school suspensions. Having an institutional advocate greatly assisted the youth in communicating more effectively with their peers, teachers, school and district administrators, as well as other members of their community as well as families. Through time this proved to be an essential component to the GC GVIP.

This research shows that the GC GVIP was successful in allowing the youth participants to mature and develop from a group of misunderstood, mislabeled and misrepresented youth, to young men with hopes, potential and a strong network in their futures. This program not only served as a change agent for the youth, but it was also effective with other members of the community as a form of public policy. The local residents, school staff, administrators, even the youth all had a say regarding how the program developed through time. Although the coordinator was tasked with organizing and developing the program's curriculum, input from the community was considered and taken into account as well.

Taken from *Invisible No More: Understanding the Disenfranchisement of Latino Men and Boys,* I have listed below 7 different ways in which the GVIP was effective as an intervention program and policy; both on an individual basis with the youth, as well as on an institutional level (Noguera, Hurtado & Fergus, 2011):

1. Educational interventions should be implemented early:
    - The GVIP was implemented shortly after a perceived upswing in youth violence.
2. Policy interventions should be holistic and integrated
    - The GVIP was able to transcend the GVIP and the school district was able implement some of the programs' strategies for successful stress management across all schools and all ages.
3. Policy intervention must be evaluated regularly and modified to insure effectiveness
    - The GC GVIP was evaluated annually over the course of its first four years. The initial evaluation, after testing and improving, was used as a model for future reports. The evaluation reports consisted of both quantitative and qualitative components.
4. Policy interventions should be sensitive to ethnic and racial differences among different groups of Latino men and boys.
    - The GC GVIP took into account the youths ethnic / racial backgrounds from the formation of the program, as well as throughout as the program evolved.
5. Policy interventions should be designed to construct environments that benefit multiple constituencies

- The GC GVIP program aimed to help build bridges between the youth and their school and local community. By creating partnerships with local businesses, organizations and individuals, Richard was able to establish a network of mutual accountability between the community and the GVIP youth.

6. Policy interventions should consider both individual and institutional / system levels of change
    - The GVIP looked at providing a platform to assist young men. The communal focus of the program, as well as the continued exposure allowed for changes to occur both within each student, as well as throughout their school and community.
7. Policy interventions must embrace social support that creates a context for intense interpersonal interaction.
    - The GVIP provided a means that allowed for more in-depth interaction between the youth and others. Whether it was interpersonal interaction with their peers, or other adults, the youth were supported by advocates to the GC GVIP. There were also restorative justice methods that were introduced, as a result of the GVIP, that assisted in this process.

I believe that because there is an overlap between the model of the GC GVIP, and the aforementioned list, that it further proves my assertion that the GC GVIP served as an influence to public policy intervention, at least at the school level. Although the GC GVIP began as an intervention program designed for the young male Latinos of GC high school,

the policy changes that have arrived since its implementation have also been changed in their design. For instance, rather than punitively "pushout" a student, the school took a more active role in supporting the youth in their personal development. Rather than double down on discipline, the GVIP provided an opportunity for others to learn alternative means in dealing with a more diverse demographic than they might be used to.

As a result of working with the GC GVIP I am also going to make the effort to move forward with my research agenda while looking into developing research in an effort to contribute to the field of education through public policy, more specifically, in researching how public policies, such as zero tolerance could continue to affect working-class Black and Latina/o students? Will policy change in name, or in action? In other words, will we continue to live in a "zero tolerance" society, while calling it something else?

Towards a Pedagogy for Youth Liberation

Another key component to the success of the program was culture. From the hiring of a coordinator to the GVIP, to the focus on the curriculum created by the coordinator, culture has been used as a strength to help reach out to these young men and offer them additional perspectives for them to formulate alternative paths to their respective futures. For example, student voices within the program demonstrated how institutional bridging and the beliefs and practices driving the work of the program, provided various opportunities to transform the youth participants' perceptions of despair to hope for a more promising future (Conchas & Rodriguez, 2009). This was also reinforced through the program's continual use of culture as a pool from which the youth continually could draw examples to the

discussions they were having in their classrooms. The youth of these "*funds of knowledge"* also assisted the youth's own personal understanding of their personal and family histories.

Moreover, despite operating differently than a conventional classroom setting, the outreach worker represents a friendly face within the educational system, and that is rare for these youth to find. Moreover, the outreach worker offers the youth opportunity for them to obtain a sense of personal liberation. The outreach worker uses Freirian ideology of liberation to help humanize the youth's existence, while showing them how to value their cultural capital as a means for personal development (Freire, 1979). The GVIP offered the youth these opportunities by providing them a venue to meet other people from similar backgrounds (economic, cultural, etc.) that have taken various paths to their personal success.

The networking skills the youth learned proved to offer them an opportunity to liberate themselves from a type of mental suppression by allowing them to dialogue with other people, from local community members, to complete strangers, about additional modes for interpreting the meaning to, and importance of, their education. The youth were being taught to understand how others viewed them, as well as why. They were also taught skills to help them begin to understand themselves better. By also considering how they (the youth participants) view others, the youth participants of the study were able to develop a mechanism for building empathy, through experiential knowledge.

The youth utilized their group time together to become comfortable with sharing some of their deepest concerns, secrets, and even dreams. Through time, most of the youth participants of the GC GVIP found it easier to express their emotions without overreacting. I

even saw their growth through our time in the classroom together, but more so during my individual and group interview sessions. I began to see how the interviews served as a cathartic release for the youth. Sometimes the youth laughed, sometimes they cried, but every time they got together they opened up with one another in a genuine manner that they had not been very well accustomed to prior to them joining the GC GVIP. The youth supported each other through their trials and tribulations, but they also came to a point where they were celebrating each other's accomplishments.

For instance, in June of 2011, the 1st senior cohort of the GC GVIP graduated 15% of its total senior group. However, in 2014 the GC GVIP senior cohort graduated 95% of of the GC GVIP seniors. Most impressive was that the overall number of seniors in 2011 was seven (7); in 2014 that total was twenty (20). That means that in 2011, one (1) out of seven (7) seniors graduated, while in 2014, one (1) of the twenty (20) seniors *did not* graduate. Many of the seniors mentioned the importance of their peer relationships, and the GC GVIP, as major contributors to them graduating high school. Another important fact associated to this accomplishment is the fact that most of the senior youth participants of the GC GVIP also tended to be the first in their families to graduate from high school, regardless of their citizenship status.

Finally, I believe that research in this area is most affected by the policy changes that it helps influence. As such, moving forward, I will focus my research to incorporate more public policy content and analysis. It is my understanding that the only real way to invest in the youth of the GVIP is to invest in the intervention program financially, long-term. The school district has already started the process by moving the intervention program and

coordinator to be a part of their own budget, rather than assist the coordinator with applying for private agency funding to help the GVIP operate. For the first five years the program was managed from private funding allocated through non-profit agencies, and sometimes donated from local residents as well. I believe that because there was such an investment from local entities, as well as such positive results showing form the youth participants of the program, the school district was able to negotiate for additional spending money to help sustain the program institutionally, long-term. In addition to an institutional investment in finances, the program has also been renamed from being a gang and violence intervention program, to being described as a cultural enrichment program. An issue that the program ran into early on was how the name of the program helped construct a label that surrounded these youths wherever they went around their community. Many of their neighbors knew of their enrollment / participation in the GVIP and the youth would often comment on how their neighbors would refer to them as *"cholos*[28]." However, after the program changed and was renamed their neighbors could not call them "gang members" anymore, they were forced to call them by their birth names. In some instances that took getting to know the youth to find out what their real names actually were. What might seem like a simple interaction between two people, an introduction, was a skill that both community and students had to learn and continue to work at in order to effectively communicate and move forward. Without the GC GVIP this simple interaction would have undoubtedly become more complicated for the young Latino males of the GVIP. By introducing a more humane representation of the youth, Richard was able to connect his youth to other areas of their own community they might have been excluded from. This was the beginning of how

Richard would help "pull in" the youth that felt marginalized by their educational experiences.

The youth were then able to, on their own, utilize their newly established networks to help mold them into productive members of their community. Through the exhaustive process of consistently meeting with the youth, exposing the youth to other communities and people through field trip excursions, Richard allowed the youth to better inform themselves of their personal and shared histories. Ultimately, through education and experience the youth participants of this study have learned ways in which to help liberate themselves from institutionalized practices that have left them "pushed out" of school. The GC GVIP provided the community an opportunity to re-invest in a group of youth that had been discounted and left marginalized. Rather than remain their course with upping punitive measures and policies in an effort to curb gang and violent activity, this school district chose to take a different approach, instead of seeking better results through the same approaches. I believe that the adaptive nature that the school district and local residents showed was also influential to the youth participants of the GVIP. If their community could change and adapt towards them, then it made it easier for the boys to re-engage.

In the following chapter I discuss the trajectories of the youths since the beginning of the study and provide a sense of what the youth have accomplished while a part of the GVIP. Moreover, the chapter also serves as a marker for showing the academic and personal progress of the youth in this study. These 8 young men went from young teenagers to young men during the course of the study; some even became fathers. It is important to note the efficacy of the GVIP both while the youth are active participants in the program, attending

weekly meetings. However, equally important is understanding the extent of the influence the GVIP has on the youth outside of the program, in their everyday lives.

"The greatest humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: To liberate themselves."

-Paulo Freire (1970)

Chapter 7: Youth Participants, Part II:

Liberation and Transformation Through Education

Through the course of a half decade I had the opportunity to witness young boys turn into young men. In the beginning, the youth participants were all invited, on a voluntary basis to become involved with the GC GVIP program; most chose to stay. Through the length of my study I was able to personally experience their changes. In essence, the youths oral histories / perspectives as members of the GC GVIP are highlighted in this chapter as part of the data collected in the "post" segment. The "post" portion of this research focused on the youths perspectives at the end of the 5-year study on the GC GVIP. The main goal of using a "post" section to this study was to help highlight some individual, group and institutional progress since the inception of the program. Most of the material used from this section is focused on the 5th year of the study, however, some information from in between interviews is also highlighted to attempt to measure for growth and development. These data also helped to contextualize some of the events that helped shape the youths lives as a result of their participation in the GC GVIP.

There were a few youths that went from being quiet and described as "loners" to becoming distinguished leaders within the GVIP. Others had more difficult obstacles that they had to deal with before reaching the next stage of their personal development. Yet still, there were many other situations that occurred for these youths that presented them with an opportunity to put into practice what they had been learning and discussing in the program.

The intent of this chapter is to provide examples of how the youth used their skills to help their own transformation from young teenage boys, to young men entering adult situations in the real world.

Ruben

Ruben was one of the most helpful student participants of this study. Ruben helped with initially recruiting youth to attend their weekly meetings. Although the meetings were voluntary, Ruben wanted to make sure that the other guys understood how important it was for all of them to "buy into" the GVIP. Ruben had grown up in a family that was generations deep in gang membership. Ruben had seen what violence and drugs had done to some of his relatives, his brother included, and he did not want to see any of his friends go through the same situation. The GVIP was different than the way the youth had initially thought it would be. He mentioned in class meetings that he wanted to make sure that his friends took advantage of the opportunity before them. He had seen other groups or organizations come into the schools or community in an effort to help them, but he said that this program just "felt" different to him than all the other programs. For instance, during one of our individual interview sessions I asked Ruben what made him decide to stay in the program after the first year. Ruben said, "You know, the program and Richard were different than any of them other people we had seen before. One time in junior high there was a big fight in the cafeteria and the next day they brought in some police officers to speak to a bunch of us. They said they would arrest everybody next time and started talking about some "*Scared Straight*[20]"- type of stuff. Man, the next people only came in, interviewed us and then bounced. Richard came in and he went and got us to come to his class. He made us feel

[20]*Scared Straight* is a show based on a program that takes teenagers they label as "at-risk" youth into prisons so that they can see what the carceral system is like. The program is designed to "scare" the youth into becoming

welcomed by talking to us about stuff we all knew about, and even showed us movies that were cool too. I felt like I was actually a part of this school. I never felt that before. He didn't even have to get crazy or threaten us, like them other people did in junior high."

Ruben was also one of the oldest boys that began the program; he was a sophomore going into his junior year when he joined the GVIP, while most of the other participants were incoming freshmen, or returning sophomores. I believe he definitely took to the leadership role he was assigned by Richard while he was a member of the group on campus; he even maintained in close contact, by calling and showing up to the class, after he graduated high school. Ruben became active in community activism shortly after his second year of the GVIP and by the time he graduated high school he was helping inform the younger students about a proposed gang injunction and the possible consequences it might bring to them if the injunction was passed.

After graduation Ruben also went onto enroll and take some general education courses at the local community college and began a full-time job working for parks and recreation. Shortly after, he got married to his high school sweetheart. Today they are now the parents of two children. Ruben and his family moved out of state and he is working for a large cellular phone company where he hopes to one day get into a management position.

Ruben's trajectory exemplifies resilience. Ruben, along with other youth in the program, had shown how a small amount of relevant conversation made a difference in at-promise students lives. These findings suggest that by attending the GVIP, and participating, for at least 1 hour a week provided Ruben a different trajectory than his friends. As a result of his participation in the GC GVIP Ruben went from being a part of "generational gang membership" to beginning a new lineage for a different future for his own wife and children.

Cairo

Cairo had been one of the boys that worked with Richard while in junior high and then transferred into the GVIP once they enrolled in high school. Early in the study Cairo showed signs of distancing himself from his family culture, specifically the Mexican side. Since Cairo was born to parents from Central America he felt his sister's step-father being Mexican did not mean that it would also be his culture. Cairo felt he had to stick to his own roots or else he might lose himself and then become some "*pocho*[21]". After a while Cairo met a young lady from Mexico and they began dating. By the time this study ended Cairo and the young lady had already broken up and moved on to new relationships. When I asked him about what had happened to them he replied, "we split up." When pushed for further explanation he just shook his head no and said it was a mutual agreement. "We decided to let it go. I got busy working at my step-dad's and she wanted me to spend more time with her. I wanted to but I also had to get money to help pay bills at the house. My mom had her hours cut back and you know..."

When I asked Cairo how his family life was going he mentioned that it was going well. Cairo had found out that he liked spending time with his little sister and said he enjoyed taking her to the park and hanging out with her at the beach. He said that he also took her to some dance lessons and helped her with her homework. He mentioned that Richard was influential in making him understand the importance of being supportive to his younger sibling. "I know that my little sister enjoys her dancing; she ain't no Selena but she's not even a teenager, so who knows, right? I mean, when I was small I loved playing little league but my mom couldn't come because she was either working or taking care of

[21] "Pocho" is a reference to someone that is born to Mexican parents but does not speak Spanish well. Sometimes, "pocho" is also used as reference to describe someone that does not practice their Mexican culture.

my sister. It just didn't seem as fun and then I outgrew it or something." Cairo had realized the importance of emotional support. Prior to being a part of the GVIP Cairo had not thought of "why" he had stopped doing some of the things he used to love to do, baseball for instance, yet, by participating in workshops and conversations through the group Cairo was able to trigger a sense of empathy towards his sister.

Additionally, Cairo had begun to take classes at a local community college so that he could become a certified mechanic. Cairo had shown to be a car enthusiast by attending several local car shows, helping out his father and his friend with their car projects on the weekends. Cairo had also recently purchased a 1987 Chevrolet pickup truck and was planning on having it customized with assistance from his dad and friends, "I helped them with their rides, I think it would be cool if they came through and helped me out with my *"troquita,"* right?" It seemed as though Cairo had definitely gained positive skills from participating in the GVIP. He was able to move on from a long-term relationship without holding any anger, as might have been expected before. He was also more patient and involved with his little sister and her activities. Cairo had taken on the role of being a brother more seriously. Cairo had graduated high school, and in the process became the first in his family to do so. By enrolling in the local community college to take those automotive training courses he also became the first in his family to attend a college. Cairo was breaking barriers, and also helping his younger sister overcome and navigate through her obstacles as well.

Cairo's trajectory also exemplifies resilience, as is the case with all the boys. He also is an example of transforming himself through his education. The more that Cairo learned and got involved with mechanical-type activities, or classes, the more that Cairo seemed to engage his studies. He had a natural inclination for making cars faster which also drove his

curiosity to learn how he could use that knowledge in his own personal life. Cairo then passed that knowledge along to his buddies who in turn used in amongst themselves as a growing community of car enthusiasts. Cairo had gone from the verge of becoming a social recluse due to his unique family dynamics, to a young productive member of his community with an ambition for a better future.

Mike

Mike went on to enlist in the Marines after graduating high school and he had a baby with his girlfriend shortly thereafter. Mike also worked full time in construction while serving as a reserve. He made pretty good salary to start as a manual laborer, but his ultimate goal was to become foreman, or possibly run his own company one day. He went on to attempt a few community college classes; chose not to continue unless it became necessary later in life; "too expensive, not as productive as making a paycheck."

Mike also became focused on his career in the military. He was enlisted as a reserve and working full-time in construction so it allowed for him to spend some extra time closer to his family. Mike said that he was happy being able to provide for his family, as well as for his mom and his older brother Nicholas, was having a harder time finding employment himself. Mikey shared that he had begun thinking about his future after high school his senior year, but by then he had missed out on taking the SAT's and applying to 4-year universities, so he chose to enlist instead. When asked about why he waited so long to consider his future after high school, he responded with the following:

> "Hey man, I didn't think I was gonna graduate. I was always getting into trouble for being too "hyped up" in class. Remember that time I got in trouble for singing a song at the beginning of my science class? Man, I didn't think they'd let me graduate. Then Richard made me realize that I had to make better choices to get off

their radar. I had control. I never thought I did before I met Rich. He taught me how to use my energy for better, so I decided to join the military. I think that being able to go through basic training and then coming back home made me think about what I really loved. I realized that I had to be a better man if I wanted to help make change in my community."

My last interview with Mike was after he had been enlisted in the military for two years, and it was also a couple of days before his first deployment overseas. Mike seemed a little more distant than any of our prior meetings, or interviews. Mike would get distracted and "zone out" in mid-conversation. When I asked him why he seemed distracted he mentioned that being deployed was becoming stressful for him because he was going to be away from his family and he was used to being there to help, or manage, day to day dealings.

"Man, I'm stressed out bro. I don't know what's going to happen once I'm gone. They told us we would probably be able to call home most days, but if we get into combat then that's not going to happen. I'm just stressing about how my fam is going to do without me. I know they'll be fine, but it's still making me trip out a lot. Maybe I'll start praying too. I mean, meditation is cool, but I think I need something else for when I'm away. I can't really meditate out there, you know."

Mike exhibited his adaptive skills from the beginning of the program to the end. From the time he took the role as "family leader" despite being the younger male, to his enlistment in the military as a means to help him provide for his family. Ultimately, his experience in the GVIP had taught Mike that he needed to adapt in order to survive, just as he had come to understand that he needed to pass his classes in order to graduate. Mike definitely had gone through a period of "*conscientization*" in which he began to understand,

and draw connections, where he had not before. Mike had begun to learn how to make himself into a better person by utilizing his resources and applying them to his academics and personal life. Even joining the military could be seen as a strategic means for him to have a steady way of providing for his entire family, as well as a way for him to expand his general knowledge on leadership skills that could be beneficial to him if he were ever able to open his own business. Moreover, Mike could serve as an example to other young men, maybe even officers, as to what a person is capable of achieving given the right set of circumstances and resources in their lives.

Nicholas

Nicholas moved out of his house before graduation. He had a live-in girlfriend and was working for the electric company as a part-time electrical technician. Same as his younger brother Mike, he also attempted a few community college classes but chose not to continue unless he deemed it necessary, later in life. He said that he thought community college was a "waste of time when he could be working helping contribute to my family's bills." Unfortunately, because he was a part-time electrician he did not have a consistent paycheck and often needed some financial assistance from his younger brother. Nicholas also had been cited and arrested a couple of times for minor infractions: possession of Marijuana and jay walking. In both cases Nicholas was with a larger group of boys when he was cited. The arrests came as a result of Nicholas arguing with the police officers about how he perceived the tickets to be unjust and unwarranted. Nicholas said he felt he had been targeted by the police because of who his friends were, and how he looked, not for what he had actually done.

These two arrests would often come up during job interviews, and even resulted in his being fired once for failing to mention it during the hiring process. Nicholas said, "I

knew that they wouldn't even give me an interview if I listed I did time, especially for some weed man. So I kept it off my application and then they found out cuz someone ratted me out from work." Nicholas had become so accustomed to his record keeping him from employment that he chose to keep it out and was subsequently hired. Unfortunately, because he omitted the information on his application he was later terminated, proving Nicholas original point.

Although it proved to be difficult to communicate with Nicholas at first, through time he opened up and became one of the group leaders. Although he struggled to find stable employment as an adult, Nicholas had foregone a street life and was attempting to right the wrongs of his past. I found Nicholas to have a lot of courage and patience in his development. He was not lashing out in violence, as others had suggested he would as an adult. Nicholas was not selling drugs or involved in any criminal activity, however, Nicholas did have a background that still hindered his employment. When I asked Nicholas if he was always this positive he replied, "Naw, I got that knowledge from Richard. He told us that most of the time when we get into trouble we get into trouble for overreacting to stuff. So I just stopped reacting. I started taking deep breaths at first, but now, shoot I just blink and walk away (laughs lightly)."

I had come to see that although Nicholas did not have as easy of an adulthood as he might have imagined, he was still willing to work towards having the best adulthood possible for him. His resilience as he strived to become a better person was making him consider taking alternative routes than he had previously chosen in life. His exposure to the GVIP had allowed Nicholas to become exposed to his community from a different perspective, as it also allowed the community to experience and perceive Nicholas differently through his engagement with the program, and later in community activities.

Nicholas was definitely committed to helping himself prepare for a more secure future. He knew it would require great work, focus and dedication on his behalf, but in his own word, "can't stop, won't stop, 'til the casket drops." He used this phrase throughout the years, often to denote his dedication or passion for something or someone.

Chuy

Chuy shared a story about how he felt that the school had begun taking him and his friends more seriously. Chuy mentioned that when he first started the program that most teachers and administrators would associate him as being a troublemaker. Chuy also mentioned that it was not just him. He brought up several instances where he had been punished for a minor offense, such as speaking in Spanish in class, yet he also noticed that there were some white students speaking German and French in class one day, and mentioned it to his teacher. The teacher's response was to send Chuy to the office for interrupting her class, although he raised his hand and waited his turn[22]. What Chuy said he experienced at that time was both sadness and anger. He was angry because he had been punished for an action he felt was not worthy of being sent to the administrative office. On the other hand, he also felt sad because he felt like he was only getting picked on because he's Latino. "It's like if I were white, they wouldn't be sending me to the office because they prefer those languages. You know, if ain't European, then you get in trouble if you speak another language in class."

When I asked Chuy how he reacted to that teacher treating him unfairly he said that he just learned to ignore her, through time. "Man, I used to trip on her all the time and cuss at her because I thought she was picking on me. Then Richard told me that I still had to

[22] The student's accounts were often checked by other's in the group, or Richard, in order to determine accuracy of anyone's statements. This helped provide more consistent analysis of the youth's interviews.

learn to speak to her more proper. He told me that when I got a job, if I didn't get along with my supervisor I would still have to meet and speak with them. So I guess I just tried practicing with her. Why not, maybe it's tougher later on in work?"

Chuy had shown that he was willing to learn different strategies for positive communication between him and his teachers. He understood that his differences with his teacher were far greater, and required an additional effort from him. Chuy had transformed from being passive aggressive with his teacher, to having conversations with them about holding them accountable. He was willing to move past the disagreement with his teacher because he understood that there were greater lessons to learn, beyond social conformity. Chuy had directly taken Richard's work place example into something he could use to understand how to move on from his differences with his teacher. He then applied this model, and in time he was able to deal with his teacher's attitude in a less defensive manner. But it took practice and insight, both of which the teacher he had an issue with was unwilling to give him. Rather, he received this information from the GVIP. Without the GVIP in place, Chuy may not have ever conceptualized his circumstances in such a manner that easily translated for him.

David

David was the youngest of the group of youth participants that I was able to get close to over 5 years. When I first met David he was in junior high and he also had aspirations of becoming a gang member, like most of the men in his family had been. He would continually mention hanging out with older boys and smoking marijuana in an effort to try to gain entrée into the neighborhood gang. Through the years he claimed his stance and even pulled back from hanging out with some of the older boys. David also grew his hair out and

started to wear what is considered to be skateboarder clothing. He definitely made an effort to change his physical appearance through his change in wardrobe, but one of the bigger changes he came as a direct result of the GC GVIP.

In one of our last meetings I asked David if he could share with me how the program had influenced his life. David shared with me the following account, "When I first met Richard I didn't really get the dude. He had glasses, *trensas,* and he kept talking about meditation. I didn't know what to think about him. I thought he was some crazy (Native American) that was going to do his voodoo, or whatever. So, I guess I didn't participate as much as I could have, at first. But then, once I figured out that he was a there to help us, then I started asking him questions to see if he could help me get a job or something."

David also said he asked Richard questions to get to know him. He was interested in finding out if Richard would stick around long-term, or leave after finding a better employment opportunity. David then shared with me a few instances where local people came in with their non-profit organizations and after a while they wouldn't see them again.

> "I felt like they used us to get information so that they could get money for them. It wasn't cool that they came in and talked a good game about being there for us, but the first chance they got they were gone and we never heard about them again. Richard wasn't like that. I mean, one time we were on a field trip and someone offered him a job to work for them. I thought he would take the job but he ended up staying with us. I'm glad he did because he shows us "what's up" and even tries to get us jobs in the summer so we can help out with our families. I don't know anyone else who does that for us, even now."

David when on to explain that since he was 13 when they first met there were not too many jobs he qualified for and the school district also had to approve his employment during

the school year, which he did not think would have been approved because of his grades and truancy record. However, after David transitioned into high school he became acquainted with a local mechanic who was able to help him get an apprentice position in his auto repair shop, and he also arranged it so that David would only go in to work on weekends. David said he and the mechanic became friends quickly because they shared a lot of things in common. However, after a few months someone broke into the auto repair shop and stole most of their tools. The shop owner blamed David, but since he had no evidence that David committed the crime, all he could do was release him from his apprenticeship. David was disappointed that the owner would think he would steal from them because David had become close with everyone in the shop, including some of their family members his same age. After he got fired from the shop no one would speak to him anymore, return his text messages or phone calls and even ignored him in public. I went on to ask him how he responded to the treatment from his former colleagues and he responded, "It's like that one movie Richard showed us about your homeboys that turn their back on you; you just gotta keep moving on and make more friends. If they don't want to be cool with me then that's on them. I don't feel bad about it; cuz I didn't steal anything. One day, when I have my own shop, I won't even think about these fools anymore."

The change in David is partially explained by how Richard utilized his job to become a community advocate to assist create networks for the youth. Richard was able to help broker broken relationships between the youth and some community members. Sometimes the youth had somehow defaced their property, business or maybe even personally insulted one of them. Whatever the offense, Richard used the program as a mechanism to help re-establish communication between the youth, business owners and local community residents; in an effort to incorporate some restorative justice methods

between youth and other community residents. Richard then was able to help the youth establish networks that would gain them access to employment, after school tutoring programs, volunteer positions for local community organizations, internships, just to name a few. In this instance Richard was unable to assist David with getting his job back, but he did help provide David with an alternate perspective on how to approach such a defeating moment.

Secondly, David had also definitely benefitted by the use of *edutainment* tools in the classroom. He mentioned going through an extreme moment of disappointment, yet he turned to his box of tools he developed from the program. The tool he used was a mainstream popular 1990s movie that had been shown in their class. The movie had been used to help complement an earlier lesson on friends and making better decisions in life. David then made the decision to move on from his former friends, although he felt sad. David said he knew he could not convince them of his innocence, so he chose to accept their decision and move forward. David was a much more mature young man and with his passion for learning he also planned on attending college after high school graduation. He went on to become the first person in his family to graduate from high school, although he was one of the youngest in his family and he was also able to get another job working for a business specializing in the customization of cars.

Vince

By the time this study ended Vince had been arrested a couple of times, suspended several more and had even been kicked out of his house by his mother. Unfortunately, Vince is one of the few youths that continued to struggle, even after they joined the GC GVIP. Vince had a strong family history of gang association and when I first met him, like some of the other boys, he looked up to these men in his family. Unfortunately for Vince, he became

close with several young men that got into trouble over a rumble between two groups of kids. One of the kids ended up hospitalized as a result of his injuries and Vince was arrested and taken into custody because he had been identified as the person who had injured the other boy. Vince went on to serve two months in a juvenile detention center and when he came out he had grown a little, gained some weight and even seemed to be a bit more social with the other boys in the GVIP. I asked Vince what his experience was like when he was in the detention center and he said the following, "It was alright. I knew a lot of the fools in there. They were either from the neighborhood or not, and you knew who to kick it with. I didn't trip because I had a cousin in there with me and we had each other's backs. I think he made it easier for me because he was older too. He reminded me a lot of Richard, except that we were locked up, so it wasn't the same, you know?"

I went on to ask Vince what he thought of his experience with the GVIP and he replied, "I liked Richard the most. He made me go to class and do my homework. Nobody could make me do that before. Sometimes I still don't do my homework but he makes me do it anyways and I turn it I late. Sometimes I get some points instead of nothing, so now I don't fail classes as much." I asked him if there was anything else he could share about how the program might have influenced him, to which Vince responded:

> "Yeah. I feel like I got a family now. Like, before all my cousins and even brothers were my only family, but now I got these other fools I can kick it with when I ain't trying to hang with my real family. I get along with them and we chill hard, but sometimes my family is too much. My homies that are like my family, they helped me get through when I was in juvie by sending me some pictures and stuff. Not even my family wrote me or sent me anything. That made me see things

different. Like Richard wasn't hustling us about being there for each other and acting like family. My boys actually came through and sent me stuff while I was away."

Vince also went on to share something very personal. Vince told me his mother had left him behind and had moved to Chicago. She told him a week before she had decided to leave so that he could begin looking for a new place to stay. She told Vince that she had met someone and was going to move with them to Chicago. When Vince asked her if he could go with her, his mom said, "No. The only reason I'm leaving is because you're old enough to take care of yourself. I need to live my life before I get old and die." Vince told me he was "crushed" and that he did not know what to do. Since Vince's mom paid for their rent and share in utilities Vince knew he was either going to have to find a job or move with someone who would take him rent-free. His first thought was to call Richard and ask him for his advice. He told Richard what was going on and Richard then decided to speak to Vince's mom to corroborate his account. She confirmed their conversation and then quickly hung up her phone and did not reply to any subsequent phone calls or messages from either Richard or Vince. Richard went on to help Vince with a few job interviews and Vince found a friend who offered to let Vince stay with him until he could find his own place.

I believe that although Vince experienced the juvenile correctional system, he was determined not to go back. Vince was a little immature and liked to play pranks on his friends, which was a far cry from the young man that had ambitions of becoming a gang member that I met at the beginning. However, through time Vince learned to use the lessons he had been taught as a GC GVIP participant and apply them to his own life. He came to trust in his friends and Richard, and even considered them pseudo family members.

He had grown attached to this group of people through shared experiences and space. He heard their stories, as they vented about their lives, and also shared his story and heard

their feedback. Vince had even gone on to get employed at a local grocery store as a cashier and had also taken the assessment test at the local community college. He planned on taking some general education courses, but did not rule out choosing a major, or picking an area for certification.

Vince definitely benefitted from the *culture of community* that the GVIP helped create for the youth participants. Vince learned to become more adaptive through time and to use his resilience to help him overcome obstacles. Vince had learned to better cope with his life by employing the tools he had acquired while a student member of the GVIP. Vince also used his experience with the GVIP to help guide him towards making more informed decisions in the future. Vince thought more about the punitive consequences to his actions, and because of his prior experience in juvenile hall, he chose to rise above his past. Vince also learned to trust his friends and ask them for help when he was in trouble, regardless of how he felt. Vince had to grow up fast, considering all the situations surrounding him. From his time in juvenile hall to his mother abandoning him for another man, Vince had come a long way in coping with his stress and management skills. His resilience and perseverance were influential to others, as Vince had gone from being labelled one of the "trouble makers" in the GVIP, to one of its leaders.

Julio

Julio was an immigrant student whom at the beginning of the study seemed conflicted about participating with the program because he was afraid of being reported to ICE, the Department of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Julio believed that once Richard found out about his immigrant status he would report him to the school district. Once he shared the following, "I didn't want to really be a part of this group at first because I thought I was going to get treated like a *cholo* even though I'm not. I just wanted to make

friends in high school but it seemed harder in my other classes too. Sometimes teachers would get mad at me because I spoke Spanish instead of English. One time, I even cried because a teacher told me I could never become a U.S. citizen if I didn't want to learn English." When I asked him why those comments made him cry he replied, "Well, it's like, I know English, but sometimes it's easier to speak Spanish to my friends. It helps me understand stuff in class when I don't understand the teacher, my friends translate for me. I don't know why the teacher was mean, but she was."

Julio was one of a handful of students in the GVIP that were first- or half-generation immigrants. Although I used Julio in this study mainly because of his willingness to participate and availability, the other students would often verify his accounts during group activity time. These youths in particular would experience criminalization similar to their peers when it came from local police, and even at school. However, Julio also mentioned having to think about his legal status much more so than many of his other peers because if he did commit any crime he would probably end up incarcerated, then deported. Julio was aware of his immigrant status and was very cautious about how he interacted with people as a result. Julio mentioned that when he was selected as someone that would benefit from the program, he did not understand why or how he had been identified for a "gang and violence intervention program" when he held no gang membership, nor did he have a history of school violence, or other violence. "It made me feel like they saw me as a criminal because I'm an immigrant. I mean, it is the only illegal thing I do. I try to work hard to make people understand that I'm still a good person, but sometimes they only think that immigrants like me are criminals because we are illegal."

Despite facing such instances of discrimination in the classroom Julio went on to graduate high school and enroll in a local culinary school. When we last spoke he mentioned

that he was planning on taking a couple of business courses to help him develop a business model for a restaurant he was hoping to open up with his mother. He had planned to open a family restaurant after saving up for a few years. He wanted to name the restaurant after his grandfather, and he wanted his family to come and work for him. He felt that if the business was successful enough, he could offer his family members a job, without them stressing out about being legal residents, or having proper paperwork to work legally in the United States. Despite their lack of paperwork, they had the skills needed to fulfill the jobs he would offer, and they could all work towards their legal residency and citizenship statuses with a more consistent form of income coming in.

Julio had been saving up some money to begin a catering business. One day his mom called him and told him that his grandmother had passed away; she was the last remaining grandparent Julio had. Julio's mother received an inheritance shortly after, and with that money she offered to open a restaurant, once Julio had his end of the money saved as well. Julio was working at two different restaurants, as a waiter at one and a host at another. He said he hoped to learn the ropes first-hand so it would help see what type of business he wanted to run. In the mean time, he would continue to save money as he looked for the right opportunity to invest into opening his own family restaurant. Julio had grown from being a shy and isolated young boy, to a confident young man with a bright future in the culinary industry. Julio had learned how to cope with being mislabeled and misunderstood by his peers and schools staff. He took Richard's lessons of establishing community and being involved to help himself graduate high school and begin working on his goal of becoming a small business owner.

Julio definitely showed that he had benefitted from his exposure to other locals and businesses because he was able to understand how he could best "fit in" by using the right

people as resources. He exuded a level of *conscientization* that few of the other young men of the GVIP did. I believe because of his immigrant status Julio was well aware of the consequences of him being detained for any minor, or major, criminal offense. By later being identified as a candidate for the GVIP Julio understood that despite how he acted on a daily basis, people would always see him as an "illegal" or at least involved in some sort of illegal activity as a result. The GC GVIP was able to provide Julio with a venue where he was able to learn from others' stories that they shared, as well as from his own personal experiences navigating his school. Although Julio was not yet a naturalized American citizen, it remained his ultimate goal. "I want to obtain my citizenship so that I can vote and make sure that my kids vote too. It's important for us to know about who we elect as our leaders. Richard taught us to ask questions and not be afraid to share our stories. I don't want to just become a citizen for the title; I want to be able to be a full citizen and use my rights to help others out."

Emergent Patterns Across Youth

Overall, the youth of this study showed tremendous positive growth, from year 1 to year 5. Most of the youth interviewed were well on their way to becoming the first people in their families to graduate from an American[23] high school. Some of the students even had plans for college. The youth had transcended their issues with their education and were at least willing to engage the next level of education. While the youth were not clear on a major, per se, they were certain that they wanted to work in an industry that was providing assistance or help to others. For example, Mikey wanted to become a military officer and realized that going to college could possibly be the easiest route to him accomplishing his

[23] Although many of the youth would go on to become the first in their families with an American high school diploma, they were not the first in their family with a high school

career goals. Nicholas planned on becoming an electrical line technician and he had been advised by a local electrician that taking a couple of college courses could help prepare him better for his future in the electrical industry. Taking their advice Nicholas' future did not seem as bleak as his current unemployed situation might have suggested. Cairo was also looking at receiving his automotive technician certificate from a local community college, while a couple of the other boys explored how college could possibly assist them in their future.

What this examples is that Richard's use of culture as a pivot point for the youth. From the creation of a safe space and place for these youth to convene, the coordinator of the intervention program built rapport with his students by appealing to them thru organizing culturally relevant workshops, class discussions and field trips, such as Homeboy Industries, USC and UCLA where they met with others from similar backgrounds. Hearing others share their lived experiences, while offering guidance to the students for their decisions moving forward, both as a high school students and in private lives, proved to be essential to the program's curriculum.

What this study then suggests is that by using a student's culture as a common ground the coordinator and youth create a cultural pivot. This pivot is actually a point of reference that allows youth to explore their cultural practices or "*funds of knowledge*," if you will, as a means for understanding new material in and outside the classroom (Moll, et al. 1992). The coordinator used the cultural pivot as a means to assist youths academic and personal success. Compared to zero tolerance policies, these practices are an example of an educational model that assists marginalized students, long-term, by institutionally bridging students and community resources, while interrupting the school-prison pipeline.

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degree. Most of the youth's parents had graduated from a Mexican high school, and later

Suppressed Spatial Imaginary

The youth participants of the study received information regarding their own personal histories; local city history as well as a larger discussion on national historical events that related to their lives, as well as a globalized context through weekly group discussions. For instance, the youth were able to learn about their family history by asking their parents and other friends and relatives. This was one of the early projects all student participants were expected to complete in order to later share with the rest of the group. The idea was to familiarize everyone with each other, outside of their school. Richard believed that by practicing these exercises, the youth could see and hear how much alike they were. Later on, the youth would go on excursions to local colleges where they learned information about their town that they had never known before. Some of the youth mentioned how shocked they were to have never heard some of the information presented to them. Other times, during guest presentations at their school site, the youth would actively engage their guests with questions. The students were burgeoning with curiosity and genuine interest for material they had previously dismissed as non-important. However, the youth were also encouraged to keep track of national news to help keep track of policies that might potentially affect them (i.e. college tuition fees, employment opportunities, laws, etc.). Students engaged these global and national issues using local examples, and sometimes even bringing in more personal experiences relating from their families.

The triangulation of the youth's personal histories, as well as their evolving political consciousness, led to the creation of what I refer to as the *Suppressed Spatial Imaginary.* The *Suppressed Spatial Imaginary* also acts as an example of *conscientization* coming to life for the youth. By combining youth's personal, and local community histories, as well as

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immigrated to the U.S. in search of better living and employment opportunities.

drawing comparisons across cultures and race, the *Suppressed Spatial Imaginary* acts a model for critical thinking that the youth can engage whenever they are confronted by any situation. By tapping into a longer history, the youth were able to engage in topics they had thought were not of any relevance to them personally. Personal investment, through knowledge acquisition, helped these youths make more informed, and less discriminatory, decisions.

Building upon George Lipsitz' theories of spatial entitlement; the Black and White Spatial Imaginaries[24], as well as C. Wright Mills' *Sociological Imagination,* I suggest that these young Latinos created a common space through their participation in the GC GVIP. The *Suppressed Spatial Imaginary* defines space for Latinas/os under socio-cultural terms by using history, location and people to define how their communities exist under suppressed terms. For example, many youth participants were of Mexican descent, and initially rejected the idea of having any genetic connection to African ancestry. However, there were guest presenters that used research, history and their personal stories to open their minds up to the possibility of them having African heritage, as well as Mayan and Aztec culture.

Through other presentations local activists and educators shared their work related to the American prison system. Many of those presenters traced the current prison industrial complex to the times of American slavery. From there students were also presented information to help them understand how similar of an experience Black and Brown students encounter. Through these presentations, as well as the development of the youths

[24] The *White Spatial Imaginary* views space primarily as one that generates value; a house will increase in value, and generationally be used as an asset / collateral, in order to access additional resources for financial profitability. The *Black Spatial Imaginary*, by contrast, views space as a place that generates public cooperation (i.e. Lamert Part, Harlem, etc.).

political consciousness, the youth gained a more comprehensive understanding of their histories as individuals and communities. What this led to was the creation of a consciousness that allows these young Latinos to interpret their role in American society. Rather than quarrel about property ownership, or value, these youth learned to understand space under different terms, similar to that of the *Black Spatial Imaginary* with the additional layer of epistemological Latino socio-cultural-political history. Space was valued for allowing youth to express themselves openly without judgment or critique. Space was seen as being necessary for survival, but not needing to be valued under financial terms. Under these conditions, the youth took a whole new appreciation for space and people, whether for studying, work, or exercise, space was seen as shared and collaborative.

"The dilemma faced by boys of color is not a Black problem, or a Latino problem, or some other community's problem. It is not even an American problem; it is a global problem. It will take political and personal will and the best efforts of all of us to overcome the challenges posed by this truly human dilemma."—Dr. Pedro Noguera, 2012 (Remarks delivered at Educating Black and Latino Boys: Striving for Educational Excellence and Equity.)

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Although the GC GVIP was implemented shortly after a series of events heightened attention to a possible community issue with youth violence, from the beginning there were collaborative efforts amongst the community to assist the GVIP. There were local educators, university experts, community activists as well as family members, all involved in an effort to assist the GC GVIP's program development. One of the main initial goals was in finding a solution to curb youth violence, both at school and in their local communities. However, what also came of these collaborative efforts amongst the community's institutional entities was that they were able to identify the need for more intensive efforts towards improving the youths educational support system.

This study on the GC GVIP took a two-level approach to generate this discussion. First, the GVIP analyzed and critiqued the youth's "traditional" schooling methods (banking model of education, zero tolerance policies, etc.); 2.) while also providing new opportunities for organizing the youth's public school experiences. After 5 years I have learned the following from the youth participants of the GC GVIP as they shared their personal experiences as teenage students at GC high school. First, the youth did experience some discriminatory behavior from school officials, as well as local law enforcement. Not only was there documentation filed through proper departments at the district level, through time

district staff showed remorse and apologized for some of their infractions. There were classroom visits by district, as well as school, administration where students shared their experiences and thoughts on how to make the campus a more supportive environment suitable to promote their learning. The administrators listened to the youth and even implemented some of their ideas. For instance, one year the youth took their school video and analyzed it for presentation to school administrators. The students found that although Latina/o students represent over half of their high school's population, the online school video only showed Latina/o students for seventeen (17) seconds, of the full eight (8) minute school video. The administrators brought the student's concerns to their student government peers and asked them to collaborate with the GC GVIP in order to make a more accurately representative school video to promote their school online.

Adult accountability

In this study I found that there were many instances in which law enforcement and school officials handled certain situations in manners that were much more escalated for the GC GVIP youth than the methods used to punish their peers. For example, in the chapter entitled *"Smoking Guns or Smoke & Mirrors…"* I example how 4 youth were treated as a result of an early morning dispute between themselves and a couple of other teenagers, across the street from their school. The school was put into lock down and the 4 youth are detained in the process of their investigation. The youth were then found in their classrooms and dragged out by cops in full military gear, even armed with assault rifles and dogs. The youth were divided into different rooms and then later released to their parents, after no evidence of a gun was found. The youth were not fed lunch, instead they had to watch the police officers eat in front of them while, literally, only offering the crumbs of their food. This watershed moment presents us with an example of how the youth experienced the

coupling of zero tolerance policies between educational and law enforcement institutions, which led the youth to feeling "pushed out" of school, rather than feeling welcomed into their school environs. Additionally, we discovered that this community, similar to many others across the country, had invested so heavily into zero tolerance policies that the "push out" effect was contributing to the "school-to-prison" pathways. This school district had essentially joined in a larger model of social organization, through the implementation of zero-tolerance policies used to target youth gang and violent behavior, that at the educational level was creating a shift from schools teaching young students of color how to "*learn to labor"* to *"preparing for prison" (*Rios & Galicia, 2013).

The youth in the study also provided additional examples where they felt they were also being mistreated because they were minors. If they did not stand out because of how they looked phenotypically, the youth felt as though some level of criminality would be developed through their status as minors. What they described was a double-standard used for imposing punishment on the youth, yet adults would forget to apply the same rules for themselves. For instance, in one of the class meeting two youths shared similar experiences regarding this topic. The first, Nick, shared with the group a story about getting into trouble with a vice principal (VP) over cussing at a school event. Nick mentioned he attended a football game for his high school last fall; this game in particular was against a cross-town rival, so many students were going out to support their respective schools. Nick says that during the game he got so excited by the tight score he yelled out a few cuss words out of frustration when his school did not manage to score points on an important possession late in the game. Nick said that at that point the VP reached over to him and tapped him on the shoulder, indicating to him he wanted to speak with him. Nick found it odd but conformed

because he genuinely did not believe he was in trouble for anything. After all, he had been at the game all night, and had a lot of witnesses that could attest to anything contrary.

Nick, however, then went on to tell us that once the two were out of the football stands the VP began to lecture Nick on the school's image and that as a student he was damaging his school's "brand" by behaving like a "caged animal" at a public event. This caught Nick by surprise because he definitely knew he was not the only one in his section making such comments, especially in the middle of a tight game. Nick then asked the VP why he was being singled out for this behavior when there were several other students acting the same. The VP replied that it was none of Nick's concern how he did his job. He went on to tell Nick that he would do well by following his advice and trying to cheer on his school in a more "respectable" manner.

Two weeks later Nick was on a restroom break when he overheard someone speaking loudly in the distance. Once Nick made it to the restroom he was able to make out the voice as that of the VP that had corrected his behavior at a previous football game. Yet, what caught Nick's attention was the fact that the VP was on his cell phone with someone else, and he was cussing, quite a bit. Nick went on to use the restroom and when he came out he walked by the VP and handed him a note. When he was asked about what was written on the note, Nick said he simply wrote, "You represent this school everywhere you go, and the way you are acting right now is damaging the school's brand. I know you're a better role model than that. Try acting in a more "respectable manner."

Another incident was shared at a different meeting, by a different student, Vince. Vince was in class and they were discussing some facts surrounding a recent documentary film about incarcerated children. The teacher, Mr. Butler, was discussing how the effects of high crime rates had resulted in high prison rates for minors, not just adults. Mr. Butler went

on to suggest that many of the children needed stronger "core family values" imposed at home, not only at school. Then they went a little further by suggesting that maybe a large number of the incarcerated youth came from single mother homes. Vince asked the teacher why they thought that was the case? Mr. Butler's response was, "Families with both parents are usually more fit to raise children. They teach them right from wrong and punish them when the other is not present. That's hard to do when only one parent is around, especially if it's a single mom." Vince asked Butler if had been made aware of another documentary about judges that incarcerated youth at extremely high rates, for moral crimes, because they had a contract with a private prison. Mr. Butler discounted the film as "liberal propaganda" and said that if it did happen, that it was an isolated incident. Vince then asked Mr. Butler if that made it OK for the judges to send kids off to jail? Vince was essentially asking Mr. Butler if he felt it was ok to send children off to jail for charges that would not normally carry a jail sentence, just to fulfill their contract's quota? The teacher replied no, but that again, it was probably an isolated incident. Vince had previously challenged this same teacher before so he knew he needed to have more information before continuing with the discussion.

As such, Vince went online and started looking up news articles that talked about similar incidents with judges sending kids to jail for money. After a couple days of searching online Vince had collected what he though was sufficient evidence to present to his teacher about how often judges go into contracts with private prisons in exchange for money. Vince recalled being excited to go to class and share his information with his teacher, but also show him that he was able to do good work as well. Once Vince arrived in class he walked up to his teacher and shared his newfound information. His teacher did not even let him finish before he interrupted him with his own statement. Vince said he felt the

teacher was only going to believe what they wanted to believe. "I went to the internet, Googled some news up, and brought it to class. I had never done that before. I didn't even want to fight with Butler, I just wanted to show him that there was more information out there. He started trippin' on me and I just shut up because I didn't want to end up in detention, or even like them kids from the movies." Although Vince was brushing off his teacher's actions with sarcasm, it seemed to strike a cord with him. When I pried a little further by asking him why he seemed bothered by his teacher's actions, he responded, "I wasn't feeling him. He always said we could talk about facts in class, but when he don't like them, he won't let us talk. That wasn't cool. I'm like "whatever" in his class now, I ain't going to put in more than I need to pass his class."

The students began their discussion in class and as the discussion progressed they naturally started discussing strategies to present their complaint to the proper staff member or high school administrator. The bell rang shortly thereafter, noting the end of the school day, and as such Richard suggested that they continue their discussion outside of class, near one of their favorite spots underneath a large pine tree near their classroom. The conversation developed into something larger that led the students to decide to meet up, independent of Richard, to discuss what they thought was misrepresented in the school video. They decided to meet up aside from Richard because they thought it would be best to get their thoughts together, and then they would approach Richard about moving forward with communicating their disappointment in Latino student representation to the school video to school administrators and others associated to the production of said video.

After a few weeks of after-school or lunch meetings, the youth decided to bring their thoughts to Richard for assistance. Richard decided to use one of their weekly meeting sessions to have the students come together to discuss the issues they had with their school

video. They mentioned all of their earlier sentiments, in addition to the fact that they felt most hurt by their school's initial reaction to their request to meet to discuss the video. The students mentioned going into to the administration building to ask to make an appointment to speak with a vice principal. Initially, the vice principal's assistant said that she would be able to schedule them an appointment, but as time passed and the vice principal's assistant became frustrated with the students presence and asked them to leave the office and return after school. The student's tried explaining to her that they had other commitments that kept them from doing so that day, but they could return the next day. The assistant then replied, "Well it must not be that big of an issue." The students left, without responding to the assistant's statement. They then went on to approach a counselor, but none were available. The only option they had was to return the next day. As such, the students all showed up half an hour before the start of first period and went to the vice principal's office to request an appointment, again. This time the vice principal was there and he actually asked them into his office. After he heard the students initial complaints the students said that he would look into it and then meet with them again. According to the students, the vice principal then set an appointment for later in the week and then instructed the students to go to their class before they could be marked tardy.

The students later said that when they met with the vice principal he had his personal laptop with the school video ready to play. According to him, he had met with the advisor to the student group in charge of creating and producing the school promotional video. The vice principal instructed them to go back and look at the video to make sure that they were appropriately representing their students through the video. He mentioned to them that there had already been a group of students that had taken the time to review the school video and they had noticed a lack of Latina/o student representation. After a brief discussion the

advisor and students agreed to go back and edit the video to be more inclusive of Latina/o students. The vice principal then went on to say that he had just received the updated video and wanted to share it with them to see what they thought. The students were surprised at how fast their complaint had been addressed and were eager to see the video for themselves. However, once the video started playing, the students noticed that there was additional footage of Latina/o students, but most of the students that the video used had graduated at least 2-3 years prior; conversely, the rest of the video showed current students, with current footage. The only difference was that the group went back and pulled older material in order to "fix the issue quickly," in the words of the group. Once the video ended the youth mentioned to the vice principal what they observed during the video, and although it had more footage (32 total seconds on edited video) of Latina/o students, they couldn't help to notice that they used old footage, and made no attempt to go out record current footage, using their current Latina/o students. The vice principal agreed and made another meeting with the group, this time however, it would be two weeks away. The additional time was to be used to help give the video production team enough time to meet and re-edit the video.

After a couple of weeks when the students showed up to their meeting with the vice principal he mentioned to them that the video production team had still not finished editing the video, but that they had promised to get it done within a week or two. The students, although disappointed, understood the delay and thanked the vice principal for his time and efforts to get the video fixed. According to the students, the vice principal also thanked them for bringing the video to his attention and promised to help the process move forward as smoothly as possible. The students left the meeting feeling better, but they knew they had to make sure they kept meeting with the vice principal to make sure that the video would actually be fixed. Although they said they trusted the vice principal, they also said they did

not trust the video production team because of their lack of effort with their initial video edits and their subsequent delays. After an additional two months of delays from the video production team and their advisor, the students had now gotten to the point where they felt like they needed Richard to help navigate them through their options.

Richard spoke with the students briefly, mainly giving them positive feedback for having shown enough dedication to something they truly believed in, but also for being respectful throughout the process. Often times, the initial complaint against students form the GVIP was their negative attitude towards authority figures (teachers, counselors, administrators, parents, even law enforcement). Richard had been trying to show the students of the GVIP how to harness their negative emotions and turn them into positive energy to help them communicate and get over their grievances. He said he was proud of them for having used their tools to help them that far along in their process, and for going to him for his advice once they felt they had exhausted their own options. He then told the students that he would help them set up a meeting with all those involved, the vice principal as well as the video production team. He would plan to have them come in during one of the GVIP's regularly scheduled meeting times, that way it would not interfere anymore with the students' personal time.

A month after the Richard said he would have the students meet with the VP and the video production team, they finally met. The video production team showed up with an edited copy of the school video to their meeting and was hoping to play it at the beginning of the meeting. The students, however, decided that they wanted to have a discussion before watching the video. The students wanted to ask the video production team about how they had gone through the process of creating the video and did not realize how little they had included Latina/o students. They were interested in knowing if the video production group

was racially / ethnically diverse, and if not, would the group be willing to accept any new members. The advisor mentioned that they could always add extra members to their team, at which point some of the students from the GVIP noted that they were interested in joining and shared their contact information to receive emails on their future meeting dates.

Next, the advisor said that they took full responsibility for the initial video, as well as the first edit, and he apologized if they had offended any of them; it was not the intent of the group to do so. Rather, he said he was trying to make amends as quickly as possible by including footage from some of the most awarded Latina/o students in recent years, while hoping to begin shooting footage for a later update during the year. Their intent had been good, although not well planned or executed. The students accepted the apology and asked that in return the club advisor consider adding some of their own classmates with interests in audio / visual technology. The students argument was that the deal would be mutually beneficial; the students would receive much needed mentorship and exposure to audio / visual technology in order to grow their own interests. The students would, in return, offer some cultural consultation in regards to the groups media projects. They would both learn invaluable skills and knowledge to help them, personally and professionally.

Next, the administration took responsibility for their inability to communicate with the youth about the institutional processes involved with developing school media. The vice principal sustained that there was no ill will, rather, like the advisor to the audio / visual group, the vice principal claimed to be on the students side and just wanted the issue addressed as quickly as possible. He said that in hindsight he probably should have communicated more transparently with the youth about the process, but that he wanted the group to know that his intention was only in trying to help them out. He also credited the youth with their determination, and professionalism, throughout the ordeal. In fact, the vice

principal said that he would be meeting with other staff and teachers to discuss how they can sign up to receive some type of cultural sensitivity training, in an effort to be more aware of the youths circumstances, and to learn how to respond better to their needs.

All in all, the discussion went well between the GVIP youth, vice principal and the advisor to the audio / visual club. Everyone involved was able to get their main points out to the other people in the discussion, and although there was seemed to be some initial tension between the youth and their guests, the tension eased away once everyone began explaining their side of the story. The adults were also behaving in a manner to which the GVIP youth had not been accustomed, altruistically, and the youth responded in kind. As the first two examples show, the youths experiences with adult authority figures has been compromised by some adults unwilling to accept their roles in situations that led to youth complaints, or in other cases, led to youth getting into trouble somehow (detention, referral, suspension, etc.). Rather, in this specific case, the youth saw adults that were genuinely concerned to right a wrong, while also attempting to include the youth in finding resolution. Although, initially, the administrator and club advisor chose to act swiftly, through the course of time both groups seemed more willing to listen to student input. This last point is what the students seemed to cling to when asked by Richard, after the meeting, how they felt about their gathering with the audio / visual advisor and vice principal. Most students were in agreement that they felt more valued and felt more a part of their campus simply by being given the space to discuss their grievance, but they felt that the school had also done a great job at making them feel respected. Respect, from both sides, was key to finding a resolve, as well as in creating a campus culture that allows the youth to feel advocated for, outside of the GVIP and a few other known allies.

The students were talking about the importance of them having institutional respect. One student said it best, “Even though they fixed the video and everything, it felt good that they didn’t just push us off to the side. It’s like sometimes they try to make us feel guilty, or bad about how we act, but then when it’s on them they act like they weren’t wrong or anything." This time it was different. This time, the response from the administration and club advisor both responded with a purpose to help resolve the youth’s complaints, and work towards addressing any future issues that may be similarly associated. The accountability shown from adults allowed the youth to respond similarly, rather than defensively, as had been the youth’s custom when met with criticism over their grievances regarding any ill treatment the youth felt directed to them from faculty or staff. Ruben mentioned that having faculty and staff show them respect made them feel like they were a part of their high school more than before:

> “It’s like when they treat us like the other students we feel like we can do just as good too. It’s cool to walk into class knowing the teacher won’t throw you out because they don’t like how you dress or look. Sometimes I even got into trouble for talking in Spanish in class. But when the VP came in and they were apologizing to us, it felt good. I mean, it was like we had respect from somebody you know? It made me think that they took us serious and that we had a right to be a part of the school video too. Before it was like we didn’t feel like they thought we existed because of the first video.”

Respect meant inclusion to the youth, and on that day they began to feel both, some of them for the first time.

Research Contributions:

The value and strength of conducting a longitudinal research study is multilayered. First, in order to gain repeated access to any site, for an extended amount of time is an incredibly delicate situation to maneuver. As a researcher I had to be accepted by the school community[iii], then I had to maintain their trust. This study may also serve, in the future, as a historical research documenting the beginning stages of the GC GVIP. Given current politics, this program may also serve to help influence future school discipline models.

Research questions

The following section aims at describing how the specific research questions were addressed through this study.

1. ***Did the youth change through time? If so, what was the role of the GC GVIP through their development?***

The youth from this study did change htrough time. Most of them changed for the better, while some students remained stuck in the same place they were in at the beginning of their participation. The majority of the youth still "stuck" tended to be the youth that rarely came to class meetings or attended field trips. The youth typically did not create social bonds with other members of their GVIP. The ironic thing is that for most of the youth that did change through time did so with the assistance, guidance or advice of their peers. They learned from their own mistakes, as well as from those around them. Through the constant exposure they would develop different tools for coping with difficult situations in their lives. Some took to meditation, others took to writing, and then there were some that were more visually artistic and they vented through their creations and discussions.

Providing the youth with a safe space, on a regular basis, to discuss difficult life situations for the youth was vital. Providing them this space was more than just a physical act. For some, it also meant creating that "safe space" through a phone conversation. Richard would often be called in the middle of the night when these youths were confronted with tough decisions. Richard would spend whatever time it took to walk them through their difficult time and then he would make sure to follow up with them the following day. There were times that he would do the same with parents whom would call him in the middle of the night as well. He built strong ties with these youths, and their families, that then allowed him to be trusted by the remaining members of the GVIP. One of the results of Richard's tireless efforts with the youth was the 90%+ graduation rate that the GC GVIP boasted of its graduating senior classes from 2012- 2015. Many of the graduates were also the first in their respective families to have earned their high school diplomas, or GED equivalent.

2. What was the impact of zero-tolerance policies on the youth?

The impact of zero-tolerance policies on the youth of the GC GVIP was negative. Although the idea of implementing zero-tolerance policies were followed by the belief that "law and order" would follow, rarely did the two exist together. The ways in which the zero-tolerance policies were interpreted and executed were described as being more punitive and discriminatory towards the GC GVIP boys, but also to students of color in general. There were incidents from speaking Spanish in class to the school lockdown that are evidence of how zero-tolerance policies were employed against the youth. In these examples the youth were punished through the school's administration, and in the case of the school lockdown, the youth were also criminalized by the local law enforcement and media. In both of these situations the youth were treated with harsh punishment for minor, or no infraction. In both

cases the youth remained vilified through the eyes of their teachers and peers, after the original incident had been resolved, regardless of proof of innocence.

I should also be note that both of these incidences occurred fairly early in the program, and by the end of the study there had been a big change in attitudes from the teachers / administrators towards the youth, and vice versa. We can look at how they managed to work with each other on editing a campus recruitment video as an example of *"institutional success,"* where both parties had learned to co-exist and work with each other, instead of seeing each other as opposition.

3. *Did the intervention program help young people develop resilience in the face of punitive school treatment?*

Yes. The intervention program allowed the youth a platform to learn and develop. The GVIP provided the youth with weekly meetings and guest workshops intended to assist the youth to build up their skills. The youth learned how to meditate, and grieve. The youth felt as though they were being profiled and misrepresented by school staff and local police. Initially, this would result in the youth acting out. After their involvement with the GVIP the youth described practicing their meditation during times of extreme stress. Meditating would help control their heightened emotions and bring them down to levels that the youth would be able to manage easier.

Although the youth were contextualized as having a tendency towards violence, there was also a side that people did not account for: the daily pain the youth felt as a result of all of their struggles. Through the sharing of stories, as well as motivational conversations, the youth were able to discover new ways of coping with their grief, beyond the conventional methods they had already experienced. Although the youth did experience

the grief of losing a family member, or friend, to death, the youth also showed signs of grieving over their school experiences. The youths perspectives of being mistreated by school staff and law enforcement also led to their grieving the existence of those negative relationships. The youth did not expect to feel as though they were not accepted, or even worse, as criminals, mainly because of the culture they represented. Although the youth acted up against authority figures they also expressed being hurt that they felt their teachers gave up on them.

4. ***Can a culturally relevant pedagogy assist youth participants connect themselves more intimately with their academics?***

Creating Institutional Empathy

The GC GVIP served as a means for the youth to better understand their surroundings, learn tools to help them overcome difficult situations, and also assist them in starting their personal networks (school, work, community, etc.). Richard mentioned that when he first began working for the GC GVIP that he noticed that the youth were disconnected from their communities. The youth described feeling targeted and marginalized by police, school staff, as well as other community members: business owners, potential employers, to name a few. Richard said he wanted to create a foundation for communicating to act as a bridge between the boys and the community.

Richard helped the youth understand the power of their actions and their words. He worked very hard with the youth to prepare them to engage other members of the community, besides their personal acquaintances or friends. Richard believed that if the youth developed, or refined, some of their skills they would be discriminated against less. Richard would talk to local business owners to try to set up the youth with internships or

employment. Once Richard was able to set up a conversation with various people across the town he informed the youth of his plans. The majority of the boys were on board with putting in some hard work to help themselves out. Those that put in the extra work, often found themselves working for people in great employment positions, such as working for any of the numerous departments at the local airport. Through time, the youth participants were able to make amends with their past mistakes by taking advantage of opportunities for their futures. The community responded by providing several different avenues for employing the youth. Some businesses also provided free catering to the program, helping provide the youth a meal they might not have received once home.

All in all, Richard's efforts for educating the youth, as well as helping create bonds with their local community proved to be helpful. These conversations helped provide the youth with a space for them to begin networking and working towards bettering their future living conditions. Richard was able to bring together the youth with their community. This was of great significance because at the beginning of this study that was one of the major issues the youth mentioned in their weekly meetings / discussions. Rather than use institutional collaboration to enforce punitive policies upon the youth, Richard was able to create institutional collaboration focused on educating and empowering the youth.

Importance of theoretical concepts

The importance of having selected critical theory, specifically Freirian theory for this study was for the purpose of providing a context sometimes not applied to today's youth. That context is a cultural one. As I mentioned in the methods chapter, C. Wright Mills' *Sociological Imagination* helps provide us with a framework to sociologically inform, analyze and apply our personal histories as a means for understanding how we behave, and why. The importance was not in educating the youth on their personal cultural histories, but

to hold them accountable for becoming interested in them. Freirian theory argues that by informing people, and entering discussion with them they will become better informed citizens capable of representing their own thoughts and ideas.

By observing the youth grow up right in front of me I was able to see the different stages of *conscientization* occur. The boys went from feeling as social pariahs to feeling as qualified members of their schools, as well as their extended community. By using this perspective it allowed for me to account for the youths and community's past history as an influence for their present state.

Next Step

I plan on expanding this research to include some of the emerging issues presented in this study, across communities. I would like to explore issues surrounding the "school-to-prison pipeline" as well as look for solutions to eradicate our juvenile justice system. With the United States of America leading the world in total prison population I believe it is time to try to roll back the over-imprisonment of youth of color. Statistics show that the earlier youth are exposed to any carceral system the more likely they are to become repeat offenders, thus becoming a part of the recidivist prison population (Cullen, Jonson & Nagin, 2011.)

I believe that promoting restorative justice as well as culturally relevant pedagogies will ultimately assist bridge the educational gap between students of color and their white counterparts. This may include exploring the expansion of schools curriculum to include more diverse examples of texts / material that are more culturally relevant. One such movement we see is a growing advocacy for ethnic studies courses in high school. Recently a federal judge overturned Arizona's (HB2281), a bill prohibiting the use of classes, or

material, that promote anti-American sentiment, nor resentment towards race or class of people, including works such as Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. The judge, A. Willis Tashima, ruled that the law was racially prejudicial and intended to promote a political agenda, capitalizing on race-based fearmongering (Depenbrock, 2017). Ethnic Studies programs have shown to prove to be effective with providing students with an agency to interact with information and attempt their own assessments while also incorporating their own experiences into their thought process (Sleeter, 2010). With Judge Tashima ruling in the favor of the Mexican American Studies program she created a precedent for allowing ethnic studies curricula in the classroom.

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i Cairo is a pseudonym used to help conceal the true identity of one of the intervention program's youth participant.

ii The Euro-gang Manual and Survey was a joint effort from many international researchers and gang prevention / intervention agencies, including representatives from the G.R.E.A.T. program (see above reference).

[iii] The school community here refers to the total environment surrounding the GC GVIP youth participants. This includes their home community, their school campus, the school office and instructional staff, as well as counselors and administrators.