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The (Good) Trouble with Black Boys: Investigating Black Transformative Agency and Political Meaning Making for Black Male Youth Activists in Los Angeles

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The (Good) Trouble with Black Boys: Investigating Black Transformative Agency and Political Meaning Making for Black Male Youth Activists in Los Angeles

By

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in

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Committee in Charge:

Professor Lisa Garcia Bedolla, Chair
Professor Travis Bristol
Professor Michael Omi

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Abstract

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Youth Organizing as a tool for social change has helped to not only change material conditions in some respects, but it has also equipped youth with the critical tools needed to engage in long term social movement building. As a result, youth activists and organizers have been able to increase investments in the highest needs communities, gain access to college, and even defund and abolish school police. This dissertation focuses on youth activism and the political engagement of Black young men and boys. More specifically, this study focuses on the experience of Black young men and boys in community-based programs that engage in racial justice-based activism and community organizing.

Drawing upon interviews from 22 Black male youth activists, 19 interviews with youth workers who engage Black male youth, and five years of field notes as a community organizer working with four community-based organizations in Los Angeles, this study elevates the political imaginaries that Black young men and boys adopt based on their political activism and how they were educated in community based organizations. In the political moment of COVID-19 and the global fight to address anti-Black racism, how have Black boys and young men engaged in the fight for their own lives? To them, what is agency and how do they use their agency to transform their conditions?

Building upon frameworks such as Transformational Resistance, Critical Civic Praxis, and Black Critical Theory, I chronicle how Black boys and young men engage in Black Transformative Agency, which I define as an axis of processes that Black boys and young men adopt to both politicize their peers and fight against anti-Black racism in their communities. How Black young men and boys imagine their agency, however, varies depending on how they were politicized and what forms of activism they engage in, which is deeply influenced by their understandings of gender, geography, class, and comparative race relations. This study provides insights and implications for social movement scholars, education scholars, and across the social sciences more broadly who are interested in the ways that youth produce meaning of social change.

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Dedication

For Kanarri (104th and 10th Ave, Bottomz Up) and all the Black boys and young men across the country who ain't carefree.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Navigating Black Male Life & Resistance in the Carceral State

In a *USA Today* article in June of 2020, over 30 Black male teenagers were highlighted in a piece titled, "The Black teens are turning 18 in Tamir Rice's America" (Fernando, 2020)[1]. In this article, the young people chronicled how it felt to be a Black boy in the resurgent movement for Black lives, what their hopes and dreams were, and how they see themselves post-graduation from high school. One of these young men in this story is Amir Casimir, a graduating senior from Augustus Hawkins High School. In his narrative, he emphasized how his entrance into the movement came during the deaths of Philando Castile and Alton Sterling in 2016, where at his home organization, the Social Justice Learning Institute, he was introduced to organizing for social change.

Figure 1
Amir Casimir

Note: Photo of Amir Casimir providing testimony in Sacramento during his freshman year in April of 2017. (Photo Credit: Turner, D.C., 2017)

Amir was highlighted in the article because of his history of organizing for racial justice. In the summer of 2016, I recruited Amir into a coalition called the Brothers, Sons, Selves Coalition - a coalition of organizations working to decriminalize communities of color and end the school to prison pipeline while I was a staff member at the Social Justice Learning Institute - a community based organization in Inglewood, California. In his first political engagement, Amir spoke to elected officials in California's state capitol about key reforms, including education

[1] In this article, Amir Casimir is highlighted. As I will elaborate later in the dissertation, I uplift the real stories, narratives, and identities of the youth to elevate their narratives into historical record. https://www.usatoday.com/in-depth/news/nation/2020/06/22/these-black-teens-turning-18-tamir-rices-america/5248634002/

justice and criminal justice initiatives. Amir went on to speak publicly in dozens of engagements, as well as work with his peers to develop organizing strategy and youth participatory action research projects. Amir began working with different organizations, including Brotherhood Crusade, the Youth Justice Coalition, Students Deserve, and he was a youth facilitator of the Sons and Brothers Camp - statewide initiatives for helping boys and men of color from across the state come together to heal and learn strategies to build power.

As Amir shined in the non-profit and organizing spaces, he still faced anti-Black racism, the brunt of the carceral regime, and urban dispossession. While in math class during his freshman year, a piece of the ceiling fell on his desk while he was working at the same time as the Rams Stadium was being built in his hometown of Inglewood, California. In spite of being a solid student and a productive member of the school campus, he was a regular target of school security and campus administrators for his activism. At one point, Amir was on the brink of being on voluntary probation - a program called WIC 236 which gave youth "access to probation services" and a probation officer - for a minor infraction (Soung et al., 2017). When he transferred school districts, he went from a school that was 45% Black to a school that was 13% Black. At his new school that was predominately Latinx (86%), he dealt with racial microaggressions, racial battle fatigue, and the school's over-reliance on carceral tools such as school police and random searches to manage student dissent and behavior issues. Amir was stuck in two places - on one hand, he was helping to transform policy and practice for schools, law enforcement, and communities all across the state, and on the other hand, he was still facing anti-Black racism and the carceral state in his own school.

In the week prior to the *USA Today* article's release, Amir was organizing with Students Deserve and the Brothers Sons Selves Coalition to defund Los Angeles Unified School District [LAUSD] School Police. Amir not only gave testimony about it to the LAUSD school board, but he also delivered passionate speeches at two of the three rallies outside connected to the organizing to defund school police. In his speech, Amir uplifted how he had been impacted by criminalization, and what he had to do in order to change it. He uplifted how police officers, rooted in their own legacies of anti-Black racism, targeted him and his peers in their classrooms and how police do not keep schools and communities safe - resources do. In his own abolitionist vision, Amir highlighted the problems with the ways that carceral control has overtaken American schooling, especially schools with high Black and Latinx student populations (Meiners, 2016; Rios, 2007, 2011); and he highlighted what needs to be done to address it. In spite of his conditions, his agency to transform those conditions has been vital to his development as an organizer and a leader.

As a programs manager and youth organizer with the Social Justice Learning Institute and as the manager of the Brothers, Sons, Selves Coalition - it was my job to help cultivate agency in young people like Amir. I would spend long nights and early mornings coaching youth for presentations and speeches, I would deliver social justice youth development-oriented curricula, and I would do my due diligence to politicize my youth to inspire them to take action against their conditions. I have worked with young people to build campaigns that brought millions of dollars to their school districts, to change statewide school discipline policies, challenge and strip police of their overreaching power, and even defund the police. On many occasions, my organizing was met with high regard by members of the community, with anecdotal comments such as, "it's good to see a young Black man working with our youth," or "I'm glad you're keeping them out of trouble." On the other hand, our organizing was met with incredible resistance - both from the systems that we were trying to change and members of the

community that refused to believe that boys and young men of color were worth any investment. In my work, we have had principals ask us how long it will take to "fix" their problem youth. I have encountered community members who responded to social justice apparel with the words, "Close Youth Prisons, Build Youth Leaders" with vitriol, claiming that we "need to lock up those monsters in jail," and I have sat in a room with parents who rationalized sending their children to jail - stating "it will be good for them, it's the only way they will learn." While Amir and I were apart of one incredible fight for racial justice, community uplift, and even Black liberation on one hand, we had to engage in this fight through the vehicle of the boys and men of color discourse, which is often times rooted in problematic assumptions of "fixing" Black boys and young men to be more productive members of society within a racialized patriarchy (Crenshaw, 2014; Dumas, 2016; Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Singh, 2019).

My work with Amir as a young person is at the center of two larger discourses - the work to uplift Boys and Men of Color through mentorship, intervention, and social empowerment programs such as the Social Justice Learning Institute and Brotherhood Crusade, and also the growing grassroots youth organizing networks for racial and gender justice here in California through the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color, the Brothers, Sons, Selves Coalition, Students Deserve, and others. Both of these types of forms of youth engagement continued to grow in the wake of the acquittal of George Zimmerman, the man who murdered Trayvon Martin. In the summer of 2013, 44th U.S. President Barack Obama gave two speeches regarding the case of Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old who was murdered by a 'self-appointed' neighborhood watchman named George Zimmerman in Sanford, Florida. In both his first and second address, Obama not only exhibited empathy for Trayvon and his family, but he directly implicated racism on an interpersonal level in his address, naming how he as a biracial man is treated and also naming common experiences for Black people in the United States. Obama relied on his experience as a Black male to highlight what some would call post-racial racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). He used this experience to put race on display, and the entire county was watching.

In the wake of the killing of Black male teenager Trayvon Martin, two larger movements emerged (My Brother's Keeper & Black Lives Matter Movement) that played a role in shaping race and gender discourse for the rest of the decade and into 2020 (Clark et al., 2018; Méndez, 2016). On one hand, the My Brother's Keeper (MBK) Initiative is a national, state-sponsored movement which helped to elevate the work of mentorship, the development of soft skills (the human capital needed engage in white collar work), and the infrastructure for wrap-around support systems that help Black boys and men navigate existing social structures (Bentley, 2018). This initiative has been largely critiqued as a tone-deaf state-sponsored response to the problems ailing Black communities, namely because critics of the MBK Initiative and organizations affiliated with it frame young Black boys as the primary targets of intervention and change, leaving systemic anti-Black racism unaddressed (Dumas, 2016; Mendez, 2016). This is in addition to the gendered response of the initiative, where community-based and academic critics alike have argued that MBK recycles culture of poverty narratives about absent fatherhood, missing male role models and that the MBK frame largely ignores the issues facing Black women, LGBTQ folks, and Black girls (Cox, 2015; Crenshaw, 2014; Singh, 2019; Sojoyner, 2016). However, in spite of the criticism, the MBK response to Trayvon Martin and the assault on Black boys has been able to move millions of dollars to organizations led by people of color through initiatives to improve the conditions for boys and men of color (e.g. the Campaign for Black Male Achievement, Executive Alliance for Boys and Men of Color). The Black Male Youth Academy, a program of the Social Justice Learning Institute, is one of many

programs supported by this infrastructure for Black male achievement and holistic supports. This is also in addition to supporting systems change efforts that seek to address racist policies and practices such as the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color and the National Youth Alliance for Boys and Men of Color, which grew under the increased attention to the needs of boys and men of color generated by MBK (Philpart & Bell, 2015).

On the other hand, the Black Lives Matter Movement (or Movement for Black Lives [M4BL]) is largely a grassroots response to ways that anti-Black state violence has impacted Black folks in every facet of social and civic life (Dumas, 2014; Mendez, 2016; Sojoyner, 2016; Taylor, 2016). Led largely by Black women, Black LGBTQ activists, and Black young people, the M4BL has been able to elevate a radical response to anti-Black violence with calls for accountability to the ways that state institutions have both divested from social supports in Black communities and invested in carceral systems of punishment and control (Ransby, 2018; Taylor, 2016; Turner III, 2018). M4BL organizers are critical of the current political establishment, particularly of Black politicians and others on the liberal left who have aligned with corporate interests and status quo politics instead of advancing policies that systemically transform the material conditions in Black communities.

There are critics of M4BL from various ideological perspectives, ranging from the law enforcement response as M4BL being an assault on policing (Hosko, 2018), to critics from within the movement who claim that lead M4BL organizations do not actually represent the interest and needs of working-class Black people (T-Dubb-O, 2015). Both the MBK and M4BL responses were built on the deaths of Black people, and largely popularized by the highly visible deaths of Black young men in particular - Trayvon Martin, Jordan Davis, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Laquan McDonald, and others who were victims of some of the most lethal and visible forms of state violence - state protected murder. Black male youth across both movements are presented as being in some state of crisis - a crisis that needs intervention either from community advocates or from the state to change outcomes of Black boys and Black communities. While these movements are happening both parallel to each other and sometimes in conjunction, what do Black male youth make of this moment? How do Black male youth, particularly those who are fighting back against anti-Black systems of control and dispossession, make meaning of their work? Why is it that Black boys and young men are presented in a way that strips them of their agency? Even though MBK and M4BL seem like two competing responses to Black male death and suffering, the experiences of those uniquely positioned to assess and critique both movements are largely missing from the analysis - the experiences like the young men like Amir who participated in social movement organizing and in Boys and Men of Color Programming. What do we make of the agency of Black male youth, if we make anything of agency at all?

Background for the Dissertation Study

In community-based educational spaces, youth organizing is heralded as one of the primary mechanisms to combat inequality. In California, popular nomenclatures such as “power to the youth,” and “#SchoolsNotPrisons” have become commonplace in a context where communities of color have directly responded to the lack of resources, overcriminalization, and state disinvestment. In these community-based educational spaces, young people are often educated in ways that are made to politicize them - they learn about inequality, they learn organizing, and they often learn about history (Kwon, 2013; Terriquez, 2015; Tuck & Yang, 2014). In this context, community-based organizations become critical in building movements for political power in communities of color, while also providing valuable alternatives to state-

ran public education. Community-based organizations often act as fugitive spaces - spaces where Black youth can plot, scheme, and work towards freedom - while still being connected to the neoliberal apparatus of non-profits and capitalism (Baldridge, 2014, 2019, 2020). Through several funder-driven initiatives such as the Building Healthy Communities Initiative from the California Endowment, the California Funders for Boys and Men of Color, the Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing, and other large initiatives, youth organizing groups have received the necessary infrastructure and resources needed to successfully launch and win campaigns for youth power, racial justice, and improved health outcomes (Pastor et al., 2018; Philpart & Bell, 2015). Community-based organizations [CBOs] who engage in social movement work continue to play a significant role in the lives of young Black people and youth of color across the nation (Baldridge, 2018, 2020; Baldridge et al., 2017; Ginwright, 2006; Ginwright, 2007). In addition, the Campaign for Black Male Achievement and the Executive Alliance for Boys and Men of Color have raised a combined 500 million dollars for boys and men of color initiatives around the country.

In spite of the scholarship about and the investment in youth activism and organizing, within education research, policy, and public discourse, Black male youth are often times presented as the objects of public policy - they are presented as half-beings that need to be "intervened in," "controlled," or "fixed" in some way through neoliberal interventions or adult-led advocacy (Cox, 2015; Dumas, 2016). The narratives of "fixing" and "control" are compounded by the racialized and gendered 'crisis' of Black masculinity, where racialized and gendered notions of Black maleness through an anti-Black lens inform superpredator mythology and hypercriminalization (Curry, 2017; Rios, 2011; Shabazz, 2015). Even though Black young men and boys continue to be targets of public policy, adult led advocacy, and large foundation initiatives, their direct experiences with these systems remains overlooked (Howard, 2014). In addition, scholars have not adequately theorized, imagined, or documented the specific ways that Black male youth actively attempt to reshape their relationships to social institutions by exerting their own agency through collective organizing and resistance. Furthermore, education scholars in particular continue to overlook the ways that Black youth experience, learn from, and engage each other in community based organizational spaces.

Purpose/objective/research question/focus of study

While there is a political economy built around the identity development of Black male youth in programs designed to build their skills for self and even collective efficacy, there is little empirical research about how Black male youth make meaning of their racialized experiences in youth-based programs (Dumas & Nelson, 2016), especially for Black male youth who engage in civic-minded and youth organizing work. While there are few studies that engage the educative functions of community-based organizations in a comparative nature (Terriquez, 2015), these studies often place the meaning-making processes of the young people directly engaged in the work as secondary analyses or as evidence for the effectiveness of youth political engagement (Clark & Harris, 2005; Gordon, 2010; Mirra et al., 2013; Oakes et al., 2006; Watts et al., 2003; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Finally, while there has been research connected to raising the political consciousness of Black males, few studies have engaged their human agency - meaning what happens to Black boys and young men once they are aware of their conditions, and now want to transform those conditions systematically (Howard, 2014; Scorza, 2013; Scorza et al., 2013; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001; Watts et al., 1999). In this dissertation, I seek to add to a newer body of literature on the ways that Black young men and boys make sense of their

experiences as political actors - as actors who have the agency to transform structural context and challenge their multidimensional climates as Black masculine identifying youth. My primary research questions are:

- How do Black male youth make meaning of their own agency and youth organizing across variant racialized community-based context?
    - In what ways do Black male youth name and resist anti-Black racism and the carceral state in both their schools and communities?
    - How does organizational ideology shape how Black male youth produce meaning of their own agency, social movements, and their structural conditions?

Through my qualitative, multi-sited study of Black boys who engage in organizing in Los Angeles, I engage a process called *Black transformative agency.* Through Black transformative agency, Black boys and young men who have engaged in youth and community organizing learn how to navigate their sociopolitical context by first naming the conditions of anti-Black racism, anti-Black misandry, and urban dispossession, and second by using tools taught to them in community-based educational spaces to act upon those conditions. While academic literature, popular discourse, and public policy continued to situate the perspectives of Black boys within the context of structures "simply happening to them," this dissertation departs by centering human agency from the perspectives of the boys themselves. By illuminating the agency of these boys and young men to change their conditions, there are also vital lessons in understanding institutional hegemony, the carceral state, and the power of social movements to facilitate radical transformations of institutional conditions.

Defining Agency & Structure Within the Context of Black Maleness

Agency, or quite simply the human capacity to act, has evolved over time as an analytic for study. Emirbayer & Mische (1998) define agency as, - " the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments—the temporal-relational contexts of action—which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations" (p. 970). By situating agency as a temporal engagement, scholars can better understand what the actor [read, person enacting their agency] is responding to, what their present conditions are, and what it is they hope to achieve by acting in a given situation. While agency can be something mundane and simple such as deciding to wash the dishes or to clean a room, agency through a temporal lens can also help us distinguish why Los Angeles Eastside youth in 1968 decided to walk out of school to change their schooling conditions, or why young people like Barbara Johns in 1951 organized a walk-out connected to school segregation and the dispossession that Black schools faced in the south (Hosang, 2006; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001).

In most social science and social theory, agency has existed within, been defined against, and presupposes the understanding of structure, or institutions, norms, and practices that are created by human beings intentionally to serve the purpose of maintaining civil society (Giddens, 1984; Sewell, 1992). For Sewell (1992), structure as developed by human agents implies that, "those agents are capable of putting their structurally formed capacities to work in creative or innovative ways. And, if enough people or even a few people who are powerful enough act in innovative ways, their action may have the consequence of transforming the very structures that gave them the capacity to act" (p. 4). In this sense, Sewell is asserting that the social structures that make civil society are created by "agents" - individuals who have the will to act collectively - in order to set a particular outcome. As those agents continue to work collectively, their

collective work becomes institutionalized in ways that turns their collective work into a social structure. The creation of structures is deeply influenced by the social and political context of their times, as race, gender, class, sexuality, and other forms of identity are rendered uniquely vulnerable, based on how their identities interact with social structures, created by those with social, political, economic, and cultural power (see, e.g., Crenshaw, 1989; Hill-Collins, 2000). Education scholars have long considered how social structures create vulnerabilities, as schools themselves act as institutional vehicles with which to normalize hegemonic concepts (see, e.g., Sojoyner, 2013, 2016), stratify society (Oakes, 2005), and perpetuate oppressive inequities rooted in the political economy (Dumas, 2011; Oakes et al., 2006).

Structurally Reproductive and Structurally Transformative Agency

Sharon Hays (1994) argues that we have varying ways of looking at structure and agency, and that culture complicates our understandings of both. Hays argues that to some extent, scholars give too much power to structures, as if they are undirected by individuals making decisions. Even though social structures exist, and they inform our everyday decisions, social structures are run by human beings and can become particularly malleable contingent on the proper context. On the contrary, Hays suggests that others who may talk about structure and agency seem as if agency and individual autonomy operates outside of structural forces, which does not allow for any type of structural analysis. However, when the two are theorized, particularly agency, we find that the ways agency operates may not be the ways that are commonly discussed in academic discourse. While agency is commonly referred to as a point of interaction process where the interactions inform the creation, maintenance, or dismantling of social structures, *the type of agency* is not always articulated. If we take a closer look at Hays' definitions of agency, then we shall see how agency does not always combat inequality, it may reproduce it.

Structurally Reproductive Agency

Hays argues that structurally reproductive agency, "Makes sure that human beings remain present in the conceptualization, and it points to the processual nature of structures" (p. 63). In other words, structurally reproductive agency is a process in which the agency of human beings reifies social structures or does not challenge their power over the oppressed. For example, in Smith's (2007) study of Black communities looking for work, the "workers center" that Black unemployed folks were referred to helped to facilitate connecting people to job opportunities. However, within the center, there were messages and employee actions that further crystallized the undercurrents of individualism and meritocracy, specifically like the posters on the wall with individualistic messages or the employees of the job center who refused to help people with multiple barriers to retaining employment, such as not have reliable transportation and having a criminal record. Even if one were to persist through all of these barriers and obtain a job, them obtaining a job would do nothing to change the structure of inequity that led to this complication, even though it would be defined as the capacity for human agency for a Black man to be able to make it through these challenges. This is where power comes in, where social actors who have both the literal capital (read, finances), as well as the social, political, economic, and cultural capital will be able to exert agency in ways that keeps social and institutional structures intact for their purpose to maintain a specific social order.

Structurally Transformative Agency

As opposed to structurally reproductive agency, structurally transformative agency seeks to change human behavior or human interaction by, either intentionally or unintentionally, changing the social structures that influence behavior. Structurally transformative agency, then, becomes the vehicle for concentrated social change. Hays further defines structurally transformative agency as a process made possible under particular historical circumstances - when portions of what were once deeper social structures become particularly malleable and provide an opportunity for significant collective refashioning" (p. 64). For example, Morrell and Rogers (2011) highlight the college for all campaign in Los Angeles. The youth in InnerCity Struggle [ICS], and Community Coalition [CoCo], community-based organizations East Los Angeles and South Central Los Angeles, conducted research on the importance of college access. They found that youth across LAUSD did not have access to college preparatory curriculum, and this impacted the proportion of students who could qualify for college. By organizing community groups to apply pressure to politicians and galvanize youth across Los Angeles, they were able to get college prep curriculum mandated in all LAUSD schools beginning in the 2008-2009 school year. The young people of CoCo and ICS enacted an agency that was structurally transformative, in that they forced a school district that was built on sustaining social stratification to provide them access to college-prep courses, thus disrupting those patterns of social stratification.

For Black boys and young men, the symbiotic relationship between social and institutional structure, agency, and individual choice has continued to be a conversation rooted in Black male pathology. For example, the Moynihan report asserts that Black men themselves are not strong patriarchal figures, and because of the "pathology" that is the Black family, Black men cannot lead households and thus create harm in Black communities (Geary, 2015). For Khalil Girard Muhammad (2010), Douglas Flowe (2020) and Tommy J. Curry (2017), the ideological construction of Black maleness through cultural, political, and social means as inherently criminal, violent, and in need of punishment has led to the development of research agendas, policy and practice that continues to structure Black boys and young men's relationship to civil society as antagonistic and hostile. For scholars like Rashad Shabazz (2015), Carla Shedd (2011, 2015), and Ann Ferguson (2001), the prison regime plays a role in the making of Black masculinity as an identity, wherein Black men are targets of institutional actors like police, teachers, school administrators, and other civil agents to suppress and control them.

For sociologists who investigate labor and relationships to the political economy, for Black young men and boys, the ways that Black men and boys are ideologically framed in civil society plays a role in the projected outcomes of Black male life. For example, William Julius Wilson (2009, 2011, 2012) highlights how working class and poor Black men experience the political economy. Experiencing extreme amounts of urban dispossession - meaning the intentional deprivation of resources from urban communities, Black men have had to navigate a harsh environment rooted in social disorganization and dangerous opportunities in the underground illegal economy. The process of even finding work is an isolating one, and Smith (2007) points out how job seekers are often weary of leveraging their own networks to get other jobs, in that the job seekers may ruin the current employees reputation if they do not have the material means to be a reliable employee. These challenges persist when we consider how the carceral state plays a role, where the mark of a criminal record (or even the assumption of criminality) can mean that white men with criminal records have better opportunities of getting jobs than Black men without records (Pager, 2003). Structures of anti-Blackness have facilitated these conditions, where Blackness is the least admissible to the multicultural imagination,

according to Dumas and ross (2016). Speaking specifically about anti-Blackness, being the least admissible to the multicultural imagination means that Black people and Black community issues are relegated to the margins of racial justice in some cases, which includes diversity initiatives, and coalition politics, even though Black social movements helped to initiate national discussions about diversity in the first place (Hooker, 2009; Rhoads, 1998). For others, the dispossession of the urban Black enclaves throughout the country has contributed to what some scholars would call social isolation - meaning the lack of access to networks for Black men and boys to participate in the political economy and civic engagement. These social and political forces are not omnipotent however, as Black men and boys still retain their agency to act in given social conditions. The climate of anti-Blackness and how Black communities respond is central to our understanding of Black people, boys and young men in particular, learning to assert their own agency.

Agency and Structure as Capital and Reproduction

Perhaps one of the most consistent forms of articulating human agency and decision making in sociological literature comes from the study of social and cultural capital. Rooted in Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) engagement of agency is an analysis of Pierre Bourdieu (1972, 1984, 1986, 1990) and his articulations of capital, habitus, and political fields. Pierre Bourdieu is centrally concerned with power dynamics as they relate to class. He sees a relationship between class standings and taste, with the ability to define what makes one tasteful as power and an act of violence as it contributes to social inequality.

In order to substantiate his position, Bourdieu (1984) defines critical terms that explicate the power dynamics of class and its relationship to social inequality. Bourdieu defines habitus as "the space of social positions [that] is retranslated into a space of position-takings through the mediation of the space of dispositions" (p. 462). Habitus works through culture. For example, one has a favorable habitus if they are socialized in a culture that utilizes aspects of upper-class life, like knowing the difference in silverware and how to drink tea. In order to utilize your habitus, one needs to have capital. Bourdieu stresses that capital helps to "determine position in social space" (p. 462). Other critical terms are social world and social space. Bourdieu emphasizes the importance of social spaces, asserting that social spaces are places, or "fields", where one can exert their habitus. For instance, in the education field, if one is a teacher in a low-income community and that teacher has been educated and raised with a middle-class habitus, they take that habitus to the schools they teach at and exert their class status over them. Teacher's exerting their habitus on students then makes the student feel inferior.

Bourdieu (1968) also describes the habitus of poor people. Using art culture and ethnocentrism, he describes the perspective of the poor people, or "least sophisticated," stating:

> The least sophisticated are in a position identical with that of ethnologists who find themselves in a foreign society and present, for instance, at a ritual to which they do not hold the key. The disorientation and cultural blindness of the less-educated beholders are an objective reminder of the objective truth hat art perception is a mediate deciphering operation. Since the information presented by the works exhibited exceeds the deciphering capabilities of the beholder, he perceives them as devoid of signification – or, to be more precise, of structuration and organization – because he cannot "decode" them, i.e. reduce them to an intelligible form. (p. 474).

Bourdieu (1968) juxtaposes the dichotomous images of the sophisticated and least sophisticated in this quote. He uses the least sophisticated as an example of the poor, suggesting

that the least sophisticated do not have the culture to analyze art in the way that the sophisticated do. In this articulation, and as a larger complication of Bourdiean scholarship, social class facilitates behavior, in which someone's social standing can then determine how they maneuver through a given field.

Other studies of social reproduction, resistance, agency, and capital have worked to address some of these questions. Whether we're discussing the "lads" as articulated by Paul Willis (1981), and the ways that they resisted capitalist hegemony to ultimately end up in working class jobs, or the ways that schools produce various behaviors and cultivates social capital (Anyon, 1980; Lareau, 2011; Oakes, 2005), education scholars engaged the work of identity, capital, and social reproduction. Even within social movements, scholars have become critical of the ways that youth organizing and youth resistance is framed, specifically as youth resistance is now being framed as a youth development strategy to limit young people's resistance to their oppressive contexts and political imaginations (Clay & Turner III, 2021; Kwon, 2013; Tuck & Yang, 2014).

Agency and Structure in Social Movements - Contention and Change

Contentious politics, which are the political conflicts between claimants and polities, sit at the intersection of contention (conflict), politics (state/governing action) and collective action (the collective behavior of individuals) (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015). In their articulation of contentious politics, they outline how contentious campaigns, contentious performances, and contentious repertoires all combine to establish a pattern of tools and displays to win claims. As Tilly and Tarrow dive deeper into the nuances of contention, they compare various moments of political contention across the world to highlight how patterns of contentious activity (such as, for example, violent uprisings in response to police killings) can spur various responses from the state. While Tilly and Tarrow make no claims to the study of success or failure for social movements, they do highlight how political regimes make sense of, and respond to, conflict, based on certain allowable performances and repertoires.

In Doug McAdam's (1999) work, *The Political Processes and Development of Black Insurgency,* he outlines the variables, mechanisms and social forces that made civil society in the United States particularly malleable for collective refashioning in the middle of the 20th century. By focusing on Black insurgency and collective resistance, McAdam argues that the political climate of post-war America, the overt resource asymmetry between Black and White people, and a host of other factors from favorable political candidates to the frequency of protests changed American society forever, which he calls "political opportunity structures." These structures, which constitute a model called the political process model, consider the ways that external factors, such as group resources, the opportunities and favorable conditions for social change, and the institutions that can facilitate change, all work in tandem to generate a social movement. One particular piece of McAdam's main arguments centers on a concept he calls "cognitive liberation," in which the people define their context for themselves, and then a "transformation of consciousness [takes place] within a significant segment of the aggrieved population" (p. 51). This transformation of consciousness is a result of "shifting political conditions [that] supply the 'cognitive cues' capable of triggering the process of cognitive liberation while existent organizations afford insurgents the stable group settings within which that process is most likely to occur" (p. 51). Cognitive liberation, in this sense, becomes a unique avenue for political participation since these cognitive cues are essential to evoking a sense of belonging to a social movement and its aims/goals.

Through a comparative analysis of Afro-Latinx organizing in Colombia and Brazil, Tianna Paschel (2016) investigates the transformation of racial meaning in her text, Becoming Black political subjects. Interviewing 109 activists and political actors, Paschel asserts that Black activists were able to leverage a global political field of racial meaning in order to secure race-specific rights in polities that did not have racial politics like the US or South Africa. The process of "subject making" for Paschel was not an educational signifying process, but it was more of a framing alignment that worked to link Black struggle and suffering globally to what was happening locally for Afro Colombians and Brazilians. While there was indeed political mobilization and coordinated movements to impact both states, Paschel also notes that there was no "mass mobilization" in either context with regards to securing rights and the transformation of racial meaning. In this sense, collective identity was cultivated and framed, without the need for a massive outcry from those impacted by state meanings of racialization.

For scholars studying youth movements, racialized identity plays a central role for how movements take shape and achieve victories. For Sekou Franklin (2014), he maps the trajectory of Black youth social movement organizing. By tracing the trends of social movement organizing through time, Franklin asserts that young Black activists and organizers were able to maneuver through the constraints of limited resources and a lack of access to institutional leveraging through creative organizing strategies, which are the various ways that Black youth organizations and their peers worked to frame issues, build coalitions, and leverage modest resources to engage in transformational movement work. For Lisa Garcia Bedolla (2005), she asserts that despite being influenced by the same protest movement, their political and racial identities varied greatly by class, gender, region, and their connections to the issue of immigration. Their political orientations were deeply impacted by their multiple identities, even though they belonged to the "same racial group." Garcia Bedolla asserts a framework for "mobilizing identity, which is, "a sense of identity that includes a particular ideology plus a sense of personal agency." Both Franklin and Garcia Bedolla provide frameworks for the ways that understandings of racial identity, class, and social location can play a role in social movements. However, what is the process of getting people to act in social movements? How have organizations been able to mobilize people to act on their own behalf to advance campaigns?

Cultivating Human Agency in Social Movements

Undoubtedly, Paulo Freire has largely shaped the discourse around education for social justice and teaching freedom. The impact of his work around critical consciousness and dialogical education are paramount to social justice work in and out of schools. Before articulating the purpose of dialogical education, Freire (1993) outlines the ways in which the oppressed are oppressed. Freire articulates the conditions of the oppressed and the oppressor, borrowing from postcolonial and Marxist literature to make such claims. Citing Fanon, for example, Freire discusses how the oppressed, like the colonized, see the ultimate form of humanity in their oppressor. To the oppressed, being human is being the oppressor, and being the oppressor is the ability to have. Freire argues that oppressors are defined by their material possessions, causing them to lose humanity in their material positions. The oppressed and the oppressors only know the world by what they can own, not what they can transform. From this definition of oppressed people, Freire outlines how oppressed people can be free throughout the rest of the book, and he emphasizes a particular mode of thinking that is necessary for freedom: critical consciousness.

In order to develop critical consciousness, according to Freire (1993), an educator must "problem-pose." Problem-posing education fundamentally challenges the processes of oppression by breaking the dichotomy of students and teachers. Since the process of learning within the world in order to transform that world are dialogical, the necessary action of the educator is to humble themselves and become a student to the students, while the students become teachers to the teacher. Problem-posing education helps people to, "develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation" (Freire, 1993, p. 83). By engaging in revolutionary dialogue about the conditions of the oppressed with the oppressed, the teacher-student and the student-teachers then find ways to work together to transform their world and their material conditions. Critical consciousness, then, is developed from this engaging dialogue, that is a step which leads to social transformation. As dialogue about one's conditions is one way to illuminate the cleavages in oppressive context, critical literacy is another fundamental proponent of Freirean critical pedagogy. Focusing on reading, "the word and the world," Freire highlights how developing critical consciousness is fundamental to transforming one's material conditions. Developing critical consciousness is a central project of critical pedagogy.

As Cho (2010) highlights, within the field of education, critical pedagogy provided a "language of possibility" - meaning that the political project of critical pedagogy was to raise the consciousness of oppressed communities to begin working towards transforming their collective conditions (Giroux, 1988). While much of the language on critical pedagogy was rooted in practice and experience, the scholarship has taken a turn that under-analyzes the empirical. While some the scholarship on critical pedagogy definitely does look at real applications, it is typically historical and also not in real-time. However, we can look to some work to help provide a language for critical pedagogy in social movements. For example, Tarlau (2014) asserts that there needs to be a stronger connection between the work of critical social theory in education, namely critical pedagogy, and social movement research in the social sciences. More specifically, Tarlau highlights how scholars should take more seriously the role of educational projects in social movements, namely - 1) the role of social movements as pedagogical spaces; 2) the role of informal educational projects facilitating the emergence and strength of social movements; and 3) how schools become a site of contestation in the organizing for social justice. While this dissertation does investigate youth workers and community-based organizations who engage in critical pedagogy to politicize their base, this project is concerned with what Black boys and young men make of their politicization.

As a larger project of critical pedagogy, Black education for liberation, and of social movement organizations working to build a base, education has long been used as a project to cultivate human agency and build people's capacities for social change and transformation (Givens, 2021; Payne, 2007a, 2007b; Perlstein, 2005; Shor & Freire, 1987; Watson, 2012). The political project of cultivating human agency to act on social conditions has received many names, including cognitive liberation, sociopolitical development, political education, social justice youth development, critical civic praxis, and others (Diemer & Li, 2011; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007; Ginwright & James, 2002; Hope & Jagers, 2014; McAdam, 1999; Stovall, 2006; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Central to the project of using education as a vehicle to cultivate human agency in the racialized context of the United States has been educators and critical pedagogues helping potential actors understand their sociopolitical conditions by making

inequality and oppression blatant and apparent, and then providing an opportunity to act on that inequality (Pulido, 2006).

For example, Ransby (2003) highlights how organizers like Ella Baker were central to both the development of Black youth organizations and the cultivation of their critical consciousness. Ella Baker, a long-time civil rights activist and organizer who contributed directly to the organizing strategy of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee [SNCC], is referred by Ransby as a critical pedagogue and an organic intellectual. Ransby worked with SNCC to develop their deep grassroots organizing strategy, and this strategy is what led to the development of Freedom Schools and their voter engagement programs (Hale, 2011, 2016; Payne, 2007). While Black liberation has always been more expansive than public policy, the educative functions of Black organizations to achieve liberation have been central to growth of the broader movement towards using education as a vehicle for social change (Bloom & Martin, 2013; Pulido, 2006).

In summation, the literature connected to agency, structure, and cultivating human agency provides three key insights that are central to this dissertation, as well as exposes certain gaps that I hope to fill. First, the literature on agency and its functions provides us with a vocabulary to describe the individual and collective actions of social groups, and the structural context that those actions correspond to, such as systemic racism, poverty, or pay equality. Second, the literature specifically connected to Black men and boys, and the way they experience social institutions (structures), provides us with the language to more precisely name how social institutions play a role in the everyday maintenance of social oppression. Finally, the literature on critical pedagogy and its role in social movements helps to ground understandings of education as a vehicle for social change, especially rooted in the larger political project of Black liberation. These insights are key, however, while we learn about agency and the ways that institutions harm Black men and boys, we do not know enough about what Black men and boys are doing about it. In other words - there is a robust literature about how Black men and boys are impacted by social systems, but what do Black men and boys do back to social systems? How do Black men and boys enact agency to transform their own conditions? What does Black male agency actually look like? This dissertation will explore some of these key considerations, and I seek to provide a vocabulary of Black male agency through this work.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 of this dissertation takes a broad assessment of the literature connected to social movements, community-based organizations, Black education, and Black male identity. From this literature, two major points are highlighted - the first being the structures that Black communities have been forced to navigate and the second being their resistance to white supremacy and anti-Blackness. Chapter 3 of this dissertation focuses on the methodology used to collect and analyze my data. In this multi-sited qualitative study, I examine Black male youth activists and participants in community-based programs and spaces across two organizational types: Black specific organizations, and organizations more broadly structured for all youth of color. Specifically, I interviewed 41 youth and adults. For the young people, I interviewed them twice, amending Seidman's (2006) method of multiple interviews, totaling 43 interviews with 22 youth and 19 interviews from youth workers and adult organizers who work with Black male youth. This study spans four organizations: two organizations whose explicit missions and programs are to serve Black youth and communities, and two organizations who work more broadly with youth of color, namely Black and Latinx youth. I do not anonymize the

organizations in this study, the young people, and the adult allies, as I seek to help make real connections and write this labor into history[2] (Ransby, 2018; Turner, 2020).

Chapter 4 of this dissertation contextualizes the challenges in Los Angeles to build a sustainable future for Black communities specifically and communities of color more broadly. Taking a similar approach to engaging agency and structure, I review the history of organizing in Los Angeles, alongside political, social, and economic conditions that have structured anti-Blackness and anti-Black misandry. I highlight significant organizing victories and losses, and I accomplish while also describing the multi-sites in this study: Brotherhood Crusade (founded 1968), Community Coalition (founded 1990), Youth Justice Coalition (founded 2003) and the Social Justice Learning Institute (founded 2008). The chapter concludes with a short breakdown of California's youth justice movement for boys and young men of color, and the dual strategies of developing services in lieu of carceral technologies of control and the organizing to build those systems out.

Chapter 5 looks at the day-to-day lives of Black male activists in the carceral state. Namely, the chapter helps to paint a picture of the sociopolitical critiques that Black boys and young men develop as a result of their participation in community-based educational spaces. Through a process I call the "normalcy of carcerality," I build upon the frameworks laid by scholars such as Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2007), Khalil Gibran Muhammad (2010), Victor Rios (2011), Carla Shedd (2015) and Damien Sojoyner (2016) to highlight how Black male youth come into consistent contact with the carceral state and its representatives, across civic institutions such as schools, police officers, community-based organizations, their families, and even their own neighborhoods. Black boys navigate this landscape of punishment and urban abandonment by 1) learning how to name their experiences with anti-Blackness and gendered social isolation, and 2), by learning how to identify power dynamics in their community. In chapter 6, I build on the critical scholarship of Sharon Hays' Structurally Transformative Agency (1994), Solorzano & Bernal's Transformational Resistance, (2001), Ginwright and Cammarota's Critical Civic Praxis (2007), Lisa Garcia Bedolla's Mobilizing Identity, and Dumas and Ross' Black Critical Theory (2016) to explicate a process that I name "Black Transformative Agency." Through Black transformative agency, Black male youth fight back against the normalcy of carcerality through an axis of processes that Black boys and young men take to transform relationships of power in their communities. The ways that Black boys and young men learn to fight back, and how they manage to embrace their political identities, varies deeply by the ways that they enter into political organizing through their various community-based organizations and the movement catalysts which first drove their participation.

Chapter 7 concludes the dissertation with both a critical reflection and a call to action for educators, policymakers, and others who impact the lives of Black boys and young men. I overview my approach to the study, outline some key insights from my dissertation, and overview study limitations. I begin by providing two anecdotes of my own experiences as a youth worker in public schools across Los Angeles, then I situate a troubling of "crisis" within the larger discourse connected to Black male youth. In other words, returning to the title of this

[2] First, as my own political project, I have worked to elevate youth voice and experiences throughout my time as a community organizer. The young people in this study are highly visible figures in the Los Angeles and California non-profit landscape, who already have public critiques of their schools, policing, corporate power, and elected officials. Given their profiles, and the youth's desire to have their stories elevated, this dissertation departs from traditional social science methodological by making the names, organizations, and campaigns that the youth worked on known, and written into history (Turner, 2020).

dissertation, the (Good) Trouble with Black Boys, to allude to both Pedro Noguera and John Lewis, what is this notion of "trouble" that seems to follow Black boys and young men? How are Black boys discussed, imagined, and presented in various academic, public, cultural, and ideological terrains? In what ways do Black boys and young men speak for themselves, and how do they fight for their own right to live, to be? In this dissertation, I explore these concepts, hoping to amplify the voices and experiences of those already engaged in the work.

Chapter 2 - Review of Relevant Literature

Introduction

With both definitive caricatures and sophisticated nuance, there is no shortage of literature investigating the lives and experiences of Black males in the United States. Whether its Black masculinity and hip hop (Hooks, 2004; Neal, 2013), Black men and the criminal justice system (Davis, 2017; Jones, 2018; Pager, 2003), or Black boys experiences in school (Ferguson, 2001; Howard, 2014), Black boys and men are under a constant empirical, literary, and analytical microscope. While the social, cultural, economic, and historical choices of Black men and boys have come under an empirical microscope, it raises certain questions as to why the political lives of Black young men and boys have not received the same level of engagement. In order to understand political life for Black boys and young men, this review will highlight some of the critical contours connected to social movements, political identity, social movement participation, and Black male experiences with civic and political agency. Beyond more conventional forms of civic engagement such as voting behavior, or an investigation of widely accepted social movement leaders who were men, this review takes a deeper dive into the everyday meanings of political life for Black boys and young men, specifically in the latter half of the 20th century to the present.

In order to accomplish this, this literature review takes a holistic, interdisciplinary look into the ways that Black youth, Black males specifically, experience in social institutions around them and the ways that Black communities have struggled to achieve their collective refashioning. Within this, I overview the history of Black education, and its evolution from antebellum to the 21st century. With this overview, I focus on both the schooling experiences of Black youth and the ways that Black youth are educated outside of schools in community-based organizations. The conceptualization of Black education in this is central, as Black education has been a primary mechanism for raising political consciousness to engage in social change. This literature is key to the central concept of agency in this dissertation, as Black communities have used education as the vehicle to drive Black communities to act upon their structural conditions and build movements for social change. This review leads me to a historicization of community-based organizations. More specifically, the review of community-based organizations helps to contextualize the ways that communities of color, Black communities specifically, have worked to build institutions that both facilitate advocacy and serve the needs of Black communities. Afterwards, I review the relevant literature connected to youth organizing and social movement activism. Specifically, I focus on the ways that community and movement organizations become breeding grounds for activists. Next, I overview the literature on social movement participation. In this review, I aim to highlight how people become connected to social movements, and what it means for them. Finally, I overview relevant literature connected to Black men and boys. In this sense, I highlight how Black young men and boys are thought about and imagined in social science discourse, focusing on Black male youth.

By bringing together the discourses of youth political identity, Black male subjectivity, and the legacies of Black education and community-based organizations, I make two primary claims. First, I highlight the various ways that the political lives of Black youth were always critical in their education, whether in schools or out of schools. Through this point, I situate the foundations of youth and community organizing in Los Angeles within a larger narrative of communities of color actively working to resist white supremacy through organizing and helping to cultivate critical consciousness. Second, given the absence of focus on Black young men and

boys as political beings within social movements and education literature post-civil rights, I work to situate Black male youth within a larger discourse of Black youth engaging in the labor of social and political change.

Historical Context: Black Education Across the United States

Black educational projects, both for freedom and for social control, are key to the story of mapping a racialized and gendered network of institutional violence. As some spaces for Black educational and schooling practice have sought to control the minds of Black people to preserve white supremacist interests, other spaces have served has liberatory spaces where Black people not only critique their social conditions, they use the space as a laboratory to learn how to transform said conditions. Indeed, the story of Black educational justice in the United States has been twofold – one side attempting to break free from the confines of white supremacist rule and control, and the other attempting to gain access and/or leverage material resources from/to white controlled educational institutions. Riddled with contradictions, Black education has been an important site of contention for both Black Americans and American society writ large. While I cannot hope to cover the rich history of Black education in this brief overview, I will attempt to highlight: 1) The mechanisms of control that have shaped, constrained, and/or distorted Black consciousness through education and 2) the ways that Black people have resisted control through either subversion or creating their own educational projects for liberation. For the purposes of this dissertation, education as a vehicle for both uplift and containment is vital. Therefore, before any other context is foregrounded, this history must be included.

Education and Slavery

One of the most prevalent aspects of white supremacy has been the need to exercise control over Black people and control their actions in order to serve the material interests of the white ruling class (Watkins, 2001). To adopt Gramscian terms, the need to control Black people has taken the form of both coercion (through brute force and violence) and consent (by making people agree to a set of pre-determined norms and terms) once the first slave ships arrived to the shores of Jamestown Virginia in 1619 (Gramsci, 1995; Pinkney, 2000). Through moral reasoning, Christianity became the primary educative technology used to quell the resistance of African slaves, indoctrinating Africans with the idea that their enslavement was a byproduct of their inherent inferiority and sub-humanness, which can be "blamed" on Noah's African son (Mills, 1997; Woodson, 1919). The main institutions where enslaved Africans received any form of education were through churches.

Even though the official position of the state was to minimize the resistance of enslaved Africans, through certain forms of cultural retention and by adopting new techniques, enslaved Africans found ways to resist the enclosure of their consciousness. By retaining certain forms of dance, encoding hidden meanings in songs and spirituals, and through free schools, people of African descent began educating themselves, and our education in the context of western settler colonialism has always had roots in challenging white supremacy. Frederick Douglass, an abolitionist and orator, tricked white male youth into teaching him letters and numbers after his head-mistress was forbidden from continuing to teach him how to read and write. His desire for learning, and his slave-master's anxiety around teaching him to read is rooted in him becoming resistant once he learned of his conditions (Woodson, 1919). After the Nat Turner Rebellion of 1839, reading and writing were specifically outlawed throughout the south. In fact, reading and writing were capital offenses for enslaved Africans, punishable by death of both themselves and

their families. White supremacist enclosures on Black consciousness were key to maintaining racial order.[3] The connections to enslavement are central for understanding today's context, specifically with engaging community-based organizations. First, schools operate in the afterlife of slavery, meaning how Black people receive a "negative inheritance," being "skewed life chances, limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration, and impoverishment" (Hartman, 2007, p. 6). One of the effects of this afterlife is the seemingly intentional attack on banning Black radical consciousness from schools (Sojoyner, 2013), where community based organizations like the Social Justice Learning Institute, Community Coalition, and the Youth Justice Coalition have been restricted from some school campuses for politicizing and organizing students.

Pre-Civil Rights Educational Projects

After the abolition of state-sponsored slavery outside of incarceration, and prior to abolition in the "Free" North, the first institutions that newly freed Black people began to establish were schools. These schools, composed of both young people and adults who had never learned to read, were the primary places where Black education took place (Moss, 2009). Simultaneously, public educational discourse began to take place across the country, both for youth and for adults in college. Through the Morrill act of 1863, land grant institutions of higher education began to spring up across the country (Thelin, 2011). Public schools and schooling models, which largely began in Massachusetts, began to spread throughout the country, with the aims of generating both a workforce and subjects to participate in democracy. With this particular model, the new subject position of Black Americans became complicated. On one hand, there were specific labor needs that Black people still needed to occupy in order to maintain the country's political economy (Moss, 2009). On the other hand, Blacks were still relegated to a second-class citizenship, and were denied the right to fully participate in settler society as they were still considered less-than-human. White supremacist interests where still invested in containing the consciousness of Black folks, as white industrialists and philanthropists were directly invested in building Negro universities and colleges that emphasized technical skill and work habits, and not political autonomy or civic participation (Watkins, 2001).

Black educational organizing and practice has historically sought to, 1) create autonomous educational spaces that redefine humanity for Black people and/or 2) to gain access to educational institutions, spaces, and resources previously denied to Black people. First personified in the Du Bois versus Washington debates on what to do with free Blacks and their education, the first two highly contested routes for Negro education were liberal arts education or technical education to build an economic base (Du Bois, 1903; Gilmore, 1991). Even though both positions had their merits, scholar Carter G. Woodson questioned the underlying assumption in both positions, arguing that both types of education are not rooted in Blackness or a Black lens. The Miseducation of the Negro (1933) became a Negro American manifesto to define what is not, and what should be, learned by other Negroes and in what context. Givens

[3] Black communities across the United States, especially in the antebellum period, experienced a great deal of violence and suffering when seeking to develop an educated class. For example, Hilary Moss (2009) highlights how Northern cities such as Boston and New Haven would violently oppose the development of Black public schools, at the same time that the national discourse around the need for public education was beginning to take place. In addition, Black people in slave-holding Baltimore subsidized a public education for white children that they themselves could not yet access. The work to provide Black communities with the tools and resources for education are nuanced, and do not exist solely in enslaved-enslaver dynamics.

(2021) explores the intellectual reach of Carter G. Woodson. Givens asserts that Carter G. Woodson left an impressionable footprint on Negro education through both his grassroots efforts and his textbook writings that re-asserted the humanity of Negroes. In this sense, educational projects in the pre-civil rights era laid the foundation for mass political insurrection. For the organizations in this study, one of their central functions (as will be explored later in chapter 6) is to provide youth with the critical education necessary to change conditions. The Black educational tradition pre-civil rights laid the foundation for what these organizations engage in during the 21st century.

Civil Rights and Black Power Educational Projects

As the political agitation of Black folks developed over the course of the 20th century, so did the educational involvement of people. Black public schools were dilapidated but radical spaces to imagine a world beyond the current Black position, some of which idolized freedom fighters such as Nat Turner (Givens, 2016). Liberatory educational spaces such as the Highlander Institute in Tennessee or the Freedom schools, established by members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, began to adopt freedom pedagogies and teaching as a tool to mobilize the masses and to train organizers (Hale, 2011, 2016). Other educational spaces, such as the Black Panthers' free breakfast program, or the independent schools established to become radical Pan African spaces, began to educate Black children to condemn and organize against the imperialist agenda of the United States while also providing a strong sense of Black, oppositional positionality to white supremacy (Bloom & Martin, 2013; Perlstein, 2005; Rickford, 2016).

Black education for liberation also existed in the university realm. Black students at San Francisco State College (now San Francisco State University) led a four month strike against the university to begin the country's first Black studies department, in coalition with Chicano and Asian students to build the first and only college of ethnic studies, which was then named the Third World College (Biondi, 2012; Rogers, 2012; Rooks, 2006). Black students took the energy of the Black power movement and established over 300 Black studies programs across the country, even adopting extreme tactics such as bringing guns or holding hostages to establish Black studies departments (Rojas, 2006, 2007). Indeed, the radicalism of the 1960s and early 70s played a large role in using Black educational projects to cultivate a critical Black counter-consciousness for self-determination. The community-based organizations in this study are directly connected to this tradition, specifically with the ways they provide critical education to their youth leaders.

Black Educational Projects in the Neoliberal Era

As time progressed and as social movement infrastructure began to shift more towards non-profits, so did the mechanisms for critical Black education (Franklin, 2014). As Piven and Cloward (1979) notes, as social movements begin to institutionalize, they can lose their potency to be productive in changing material conditions and lose sight of their original missions. This has particular importance for Black Americans, as the growth of the non-profit structure and its subsequent relations to philanthropy and capital, alongside the de-radicalization of Black intellectual thought, have at times subverted the radical potential of Black led social and intellectual movements (Franklin, 2014; Kohl-Arenas, 2016; Rodriguez, 2007; Rooks, 2006). For example, debates about African cultural practices dominated discourse about teaching Black history in schools detached from material struggle (Rickford, 2016), school-based interventions and social workers began to adopt Afrocentric models of schooling and learning to engage youth,

without embracing their hip-hop culture or youth identity (Ginwright, 2004), and more specifically, radical educational spaces began to funnel the energy of radical political organizing into youth oriented non-profits who engaged in acceptable forms of activism to the state (Kwon, 2013). The promise of radical Black education became diluted in the ivory tower too, as research agendas and funding for Black studies favored projects that de-emphasized material struggle and radicalism for more intellectually safe projects that did not directly challenge the material realities of working-class Black people (Burden-Stelly, 2016; Rooks, 2006). As Rooks (2006) notes, much of the scholarship at one point was focused on the conditions of working-class Black communities and the effects of what Allen (1992) calls domestic colonialism and broader decolonial projects, which were deeply intertwined with the politics of their day (see, e.g., Biondi, 2012; Claybrook, 2016).

Changes to Black education and its radical potential were also reflected in community spaces as well. For example, Bloom and Martin (2013) highlight how organizations like the Black panther party used political education in their breakfast programs to educate youth and meet the material needs of the people. Dylan Rodriguez (2007) and Soo Ah Kwon (2013) trace the impact of the Free Breakfast Program, noting how it played a direct role in the development of the non-profit apparatus, which Rodriguez (2007), Gilmore (2007), and Kwon (2013) assert uses radical language and borrows from affirming the identities of working-class communities of color to maintain inequality, not address it. Indeed, much like the conflation of Black power and Black capitalism by the white corporate elite (Allen, 1992), Black education (in schools, universities, and community-based educational spaces) became conflated with Black cultural practices and behavioral change that minimally impacted the status quo. Black educational projects, at this juncture between the war on drugs and the growth of mass incarceration into the 21st century, had been absorbed by the larger neoliberal project of making culturally competent workers (Rickford, 2016). For the youth organizations in this study, in particular Brotherhood Crusade and the Social Justice Learning Institute, they must navigate the landscape of being interventions for Black male youth that provide social services in some ways act as behavioral interventions in schools, while also being organizations that build the leadership of young people to participate in a social movement. The challenges of navigating the neoliberal landscape are in their own right a significant shift.

Neoliberalism, broadly defined, is a set of policies, cultural ideologies, and practices which are influenced and governed by the free market - meaning that an individual's free will to engage in entrepreneurship, business, trade, and economic self-determination is central to the functioning of an advanced capitalist society (Harvey, 2005). Neoliberalism plays a central role in the racial politics, as the logics of one's ability to participate in the free market are often directly linked to the racialized interventions that punish those who do not adopt neoliberal frames and identities (see, e.g., Camp, 2016; Dumas, 2016; Singh, 2019; Soss et al., 2011; Wacquant, 2009). For those who are punished for not participating in neoliberal logics and interventions, the carceral regime (meaning the network and logics, of courts, prisons, policing, and harsh institutional discipline) is poised and ready to absorb what Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2007) refers to as the "surplus" population, meaning those who were not able to fit into the neoliberal order. One of the primary mechanisms for stopping and eliminating Black radicalism was the carceral regime. For example, some scholars point to the carceral regime as the tool to facilitate the silencing of Black dissent to white supremacist rule (see, e.g., Camp, 2016; Rodriguez, 2007). Attempting to shift the narrative of the "School to Prison Pipeline," Damien Sojoyner (2016) conducts both critical ethnography and policy analyses of the ways that

schooling itself becomes a site of "enclosure" on Black youth. One example of enclosures and the way they function within schools is the presence of "in-school suspensions." Sojoyner documents one time as a substitute teacher in County High School in Los Angeles when he was the temporary substitute for the "In House Suspension Class" (IHSC), which was void of contact with the outside world. As students began to share their stories with him on why they ended up in a prison-like classroom, he began to notice a pattern: that the logics of carceral control had already been normalized for them, and that administration at the school represented the state (Sojoyner, 2016, p. 110-115). This shift in carceral technologies of control exerted in schools began as a tactic to push radical organizing out of schools, and to restrict Black political autonomy (Sojoyner 2013, 2016). Indeed, the growth of security guards, the implementation of zero tolerance policies, and the expansion of the prison regime in schools was a direct attack on Black communities, and more specifically, in response to Black moral panics (Cohen, 2010).

These ideological enclosures also put into place ways to delegitimize Black organizing and radical consciousness and criminalize it in order to minimize resistance. Local schools and governments played a direct role in limiting Black radicalism and the potential promise of Black education as well. For example, Sojoyner (2013, 2016) highlights how programs such as the "Police Role in Government" program in LAUSD and city policies that explicitly named how youth programs should prevent youth from interacting with Black radicals. Given the presence of Black organizations such as the Black Panther Party, the US Organization, and others in Los Angeles specifically who were working on building their bases, and even the community-based organizations in this study, schools had to root out Black and other radical organizations. In order for educational institutions to succeed in reproducing racial, economic, and gendered order, Black radicalism had to be stopped in order to maintain a racialized status quo.

Even though this is not a comprehensive history of Black educational projects, organizing or practice, nor is it a total breakdown of the critical points in history, I hope it begins to paint a picture of the climate in which community-based educational projects such as the Social Justice Learning Institute, Community Coalition, the Youth Justice Coalition, and Brotherhood Crusade were both created and implemented. In response to the rampant growth of the carceral state, these interventions were meant to give youth the tools and means to change community conditions while at the same time also serving as an alternative to schooling and carceral control. While these organizations have grown and built their base of youth, they are not exempt from the logics of the carceral regime and the larger discourses that suggest Black youth need to be controlled for their own sake (Baldridge, 2014). This context matters, not only for the organization being studied, but for the ways that Black education has become a byproduct of the larger social, economic, cultural, and political forces of the times.

Community-Based Organizations - A Brief Overview

The growth of community-based organizations in the United States, especially those that engage in any form of organizing or advocacy, have their roots in the Negro associations that worked specifically to provide direct support for Negro communities (Pinkney, 2000). For example, large, national organizations like the NAACP, the Urban league, and the Congress of Racial Equality [CORE] sought to provide direct, material support to Black communities in addition to serving as a vehicle for social change. Common amongst researchers are the changes in political climate (Gillion, 2013), a nation-wide agenda of anti-racism, and an increased amount of insurgency among Black people in the United States (McAdam, 1999). These factors did not happen in a vacuum, or independent of one another, they actually informed each other.

For example, the liberal (progressive) turn in American politics happened around the New Deal[4] as White Americans experienced exclusive access to home loans, jobs, and schools (Harris, 1993; Lipsitz, 2005). Resource asymmetry was most apparent between the end of the New Deal Era and into the post-war 1950s, as white communities nationally continued to enjoy racially restrictive access to state facilitated resources while Black Americans and other groups (Latinx communities, Asian communities, etc.) were left out of the equation. In spite of overt racially restrictive policies, African Americans continued to build on mass movements to retaliate against a fundamentally racist and inequitable system. The momentum of shock value events such as the Virginia high school walk outs in 1951 (Ginwright et al., 2006, Hosang, 2006) and the killing of Emmett Till in 1955, after the passage of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 (Joseph, 2003) forced thousands to begin organizing for social change. This was during a period when non-white people all across the globe, but particularly in the United States, were beginning to challenge white domination and racial order in decolonial struggles (Blackwell, 2011; Kohl-Arenas, 2016; Omi & Winant, 2015; Pulido, 2006).

In the urban towns of the north, midwest, and west coast, however, did not see the same impact. Racial tensions boiled over in several cities, causing rebellions birthed from frustrations with exclusion and marginalization experienced by racialized groups (Camp, 2016; Carmichael, 1968; Pastor, 2013; Pulido, 2006; Wright, 1967). A radical, leftist politic was born from these frustrations, which gave rise to the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, the Black Liberation Army, and other groups such as the Brown Berets, Yellow Peril, and the Third World Liberation Front (Pulido, 2006). The development of the Third World Liberation Front, or as others would call the Third World Left (Biondi, 2012; Bloom & Martin, 2013; Pulido, 2006), played a critical role in advancing racialized political ideologies of self-determination, centering working class politics, and advancing a community driven agenda rooted in political education material struggle. Scholars point to these groups as being central to the development of Ethnic Studies (Rooks, 2006). With militant tactics and a large base of working class and poor youth, these groups sought to create collective efficacy by providing explicit political education and providing services which eventually led to new forms of Black nationalism. As government infiltration grew and the Black power movement deflated, the service model of the Black Panther party was adopted in a new wave of community-based organizations as not-for-profit organizations, largely funded by government or philanthropic actors (Pastor, 2014; Pulido, 2006).

This new model of community-based organizations (CBOs) as non-profits seeks to alleviate issues of inequality through targeted services and structural advocacy, not just through direct action (Kohl-Arenas, 2016). As Kwon (2013) and Kohl-Arenas (2016) articulate, the interests of large foundations at all levels (local, state, and national) have contributed directly to sustaining these organizations, and in a large part, determining the direction of these organizations as well. CBOs address issues related to crime prevention, education, public health, wellbeing, drug abuse, job training, and so many other target areas ranging from food justice to college access. Many of these organizations are products of the larger federal programs to support communities in the wake of the war on poverty through community development block grants (Hinton, 2016), however, a number of these programs continued to grow spite of the

[4] The New Deal, which was federal legislation that was passed between 1933 and 1939, created anti-poverty programs designed to address the needs of the American population during the great depression under the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidency. However, new deal policies and practices were often times racially exclusive, and only uplifted white Americans (Katznelson, 2005).

community disinvestment at the federal, state, and local levels of government that would begin as public resources shifted towards tools of policing and punishment (Soss et al., 2011; Spence, 2013; Wacquant, 2009). Some CBOs operate as advocacy organizations, with goals of impacting policy development. Organizations that are service providers generally seek to reduce the impacts of structural inequality through targeted services and programs. These vary in shape, ranging from after-school youth programs to services that provide job training to formerly incarcerated men trying to re-enter society. CBOs that engage in Civic and/or Community Engagement, on the other hand, are some of the most fluid types of organizations, meaning that they are the most dynamic in their programming and practice. These organizations can be youth intervention programs, organizations that seek to create alliances and truce between gangs, political organizations that attempt to rally the community behind a particular cause. As a specific function of community-based organizations or educational spaces moving into the 21st century, many of them work to advance the critical consciousness of youth and communities of color by engaging them in systems and policy change (Baldridge et al., 2017; Ginwright, 2007). The Social Justice Learning Institute and Community Coalition operate as 'hybrid' organizations - where they provide direct services for young people in lieu of state disinvestment (feeding youth, academic intervention and support, etc.), and they work to build networks of advocacy and collective efficacy through their organizing work. Organizations like the Brotherhood Crusade are currently structured to be more of the service-based organizations, and while organizations like the Youth Justice Coalition are more structured to be advocacy/organizing based.

Critical Consciousness

In spite of the explicit anti-Black climate that Black youth experience, Black youth and Black communities are both aware of these conditions and seek to change these conditions. In Doug McAdam's (1999) work, *The Political Processes and Development of Black Insurgency,* he outlines the variables, mechanisms and social forces that made civil society in the United States particularly malleable for collective refashioning in the middle of the 20th century. By focusing on Black insurgency and collective resistance, McAdam argues that the political climate of post-war America, the overt resource asymmetry between Black and White people, and a host of other factors from favorable political candidates to the frequency of protests changed American society forever. One of McAdam's arguments centers on a concept he calls "cognitive liberation," in which the people define their context for themselves, and then a "transformation of consciousness [takes place] within a significant segment of the aggrieved population" (p. 51). This transformation of consciousness is a result of "shifting political conditions [that] supply the 'cognitive cues' capable of triggering the process of cognitive liberation while existent organizations afford insurgents the stable group settings within which that process is most likely to occur" (p. 51). The cognitive liberation, or in the Freirean terms, the development of critical consciousness (1998), happens because of social movements, and the political climates they generate.

For educators and scholars who are interested in political projects that bring youth into movements for social justice, cognitive liberation, or critical consciousness, is a critical factor in cultivating youth political agency. Paulo Freire's work is essential here (Freire, 1993). Scholars have taken Freire's work and developed it into different models for how other activists and youth come into political agency. For example, Laura Pulido (2006) highlights how radical activists came into consciousness in Los Angeles. Student activists, who were politicized through a two-

step process of exposure to unequal contexts and an opportunity to do something about it, seized the opportunity in the creation of Ethnic studies departments across Los Angeles. Political agency, in this sense, was predicated on one's prior experiences of inequality, and the opportunity to do something about it.

Over the course of the 20th and 21st centuries, scholars have continued to develop the vocabulary of critical consciousness and ways that critical consciousness can be understood or studied. Some scholars have examined the role of critical pedagogy in cultivating critical consciousness, drawing upon Freirean terms of educational praxis to help liberate the young minds of oppressed and "othered" subjects (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Freire, 1993, 1998; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007; Mirra et al., 2013; Scorza et al., 2013; Shor & Freire, 1987). In addition, scholars have investigated the processes for cultivating critical consciousness, namely, how critical consciousness is built and can be built for certain groups (Ginwright, 2006; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007; Oakes & Rogers, 2006; Watts et al., 1999). As critical consciousness has continued to develop, Cho (2008), Corrigal-Brown (2012) & Pulido (2006) have all asserted in some way that consciousness alone is not sufficient in getting young people and others to act in resisting oppressive conditions. For social movement participation and the development of political agency, especially over time, some sort of opportunity must be present, or some sort of community-led institution is typically present to fully actualize the political agency of participants (McAdam 1999; Morris 1984). For many youths, these institutions are community-based organizations and community-based educational spaces, where they (CBOs) function as, "space[s] for young people to imagine beyond the borders of neoliberalism, standards-based assessment, and zero-tolerance policies" (Baldridge et al., 2017, p. 388). These CBO spaces become incubators for social movement participation. Through coalitions, their own campaign projects, and participation in the broader socio-political landscape, Community Coalition, the Social Justice Learning Institute, the Youth Justice Coalition, and the Brotherhood Crusade create opportunities for their youth to get engaged.

Social Movement Participation

Political participation is understood in two ways - through "insider" political engagement, or more formal and traditional forms of political participation, and "outsider" political engagement, meaning more contentious forms of political participation and engagement. Traditional political participation, meaning the types of political participation that are both institutionally sanctioned and operate under specific rules of institutional navigation, represent one way to participate in a western, democratic state (Fisher, 2012; Nicotera et al., 2013). Traditional political participation primarily involves voting, writing letters to public officials, participating in town halls and governing spaces, and even running for political office. All of these things are ways that a democratic polity allows its citizens to participate in the political system. However, traditional political participation, or as some would call strictly insider engagement alone, oftentimes does not make space for impacted communities to drive their own political strategies. Some groups, especially in the United States, have not had the access to participate in the political sphere (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). Another major type of political participation, the one that this study focuses on, is contentious politics, or largely "outsider" political engagement. McAdam et al. (2001) define contentious politics as episodic periods of collective political struggle, particularly where one party (the claimant) is the object or the target, and the group making the claims seeks to have their interests met. Sometimes, the interests of both the claimant and the group making the claims converge, other times, the interest of one

group diverges from the other group, causing contention. The group making the claim, at that point, then attempts to make their grievances explicit through various forms of political participation, sometimes including such as protests, civil disobedience, strikes, boycotts, and other forms of protest activity. It is important to note that both "insider" and "outsider" versions of political engagement and participation are not mutually exclusive - in fact, they can sometimes feed off each other. Community based organizations like Community Coalition, for example, refer to this as an "inside-outside" organizing strategy, where one can leverage political relationships within decision making bodies, while also using nontraditional forms of political engagement like protests and civil disobedience to meet political goals and demands (see, e.g., Mann, 2011; Community Coalition, 2012).

Social movements, in this sense, become episodic waves of collective political struggle where groups work to transform their conditions, or to get their interests met. Participation in contentious forms of politics happen either through social movement organizations (SMOs), through loose networks of organizers, and/or through the internet (Castells, 2012). Social movement participation is premised on several critical factors, namely: identity, emotions, networks and social ties, and connection to the social issues. Most of these factors are deeply personal, and they draw on disciplines such as social psychology for explanations.

Networks and Social Ties

Bert Klandermans and Dirk Oegema (1987) analyze four major links that help to explain social movement participation: networks, potentials, motivations, and barriers. Using a combination of telephone and in-person interviews that were approximately 15 minutes, Klandermans and Oegema focus on the ways that mobilizing participants varies contingent on the four links. One major finding was the strong relationship between ideological and social incentives in their research. The way that all three movements in the study mobilized activists was through some sort of ideological connection to their life's experiences, which also suggest that movement potentials could be reached if they feel some sort of connection to the issue at hand. A lot of this is done through social ties to other movement participants. McAdam and Paulsen (1993) seek to determine which social ties have the most causal impact on participation and the ways that competing ties affect whether or not to participate in social movement organizing. In order to assess this, McAdam and Paulsen analyze the applications of participants in the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer project. 1,062 applications were analyzed to find trends of social ties and their relationship to social movement participation. One major finding is that those who participated in the MFS movement were more likely to have support from their parents and project peers. The four preset conditions for participation in this movement are as follows: 1) the occurrence of a specific recruiting attempt, 2) the successful linkage of movement and existing identity, 3) support for that linkage from persons who normally serve to sustain the identity in question, and 4), the absence of strong opposition from others on whom other salient identities depend. Community Based Organizations like the Social Justice Learning Institute, Community Coalition, the Youth Justice Coalition, and Brotherhood Crusade are unique in the sense that they have unique access to a large base of youth that they can actively recruit through schools, and they can help to cultivate the linkage between the movement and the identities of the youth. These organizations, even though they are not explicitly 'movement organizations,' play a direct role in advancing local and statewide movements for youth justice and community investment.

Passy and Giugni (2001) distinguish among three primary functions of social networks within movements: structurally connecting prospective participants to an opportunity to participate, socializing them to a protest issue, and shaping their decision to become involved. The last function helps to shape the overall decision to become involved in social movement work. Passy and Giugni test two hypotheses: the first being that the higher the protest issue is on the priority list of a participant, the more likely they are to get involved. The second hypothesis is that prior engagement with the protest issue leads to more intense protest participation. To test these hypotheses, they work with a representative sample from the Bern Declaration, where 646 respondents sent back surveys. The authors have several major findings. The first is that individual perceptions have a substantial impact on the intensity of involvement in social movements. Second, being deeply involved in social networks has an equally relevant impact on individual engagement. Both intentional and structural factors are important to understanding differential participation in social movements. For the Black youth involved in the organizations in this study, participation is largely driven not only by the issues, but also by the accessibility of the programs. Programs like Brotherhood Crusade, the Social Justice Learning Institute, and Community Coalition recruit directly from schools, while the Youth Justice Coalition operates a school of their own. For these youth, participation in key issues is driven because youth are getting material needs met, departing from social movement literature.

Identity and Participation

Dixon and Roseigno (2003) work to include both participants and nonparticipants in their analysis to suggest that there are unique ways that workers participate in social movement activism, mainly through association and social attachment. The authors pull data from the Communications Workers of America strike in the year 2000, with a total population of 1,681 members. One major finding was that marginalized group members, particularly low wage African Americans and Latinxs, were more likely to strike than their white peers. Second, workplace networks, particularly people who share similar class backgrounds and work conditions, were crucial to strike participation. This is a good demonstration of the ways that social position and the claimant's connection to that social position can lead to social movement participation. Social position, racialized identity, and how people connect to those identities plays an enormous role in social movement participation, particularly when it comes to solidarity and coalitions. Juliet Hooker (2009) articulates the tension described in Dixon and Roseigno, stating:

> Indeed, race, more than almost any other factor, delineates the boundaries of political obligation and empathy. Thus, while much has been said in recent years about growing residential segregation in the United States, the fact that this spatial distance reflects a kind of moral distance is less often noted. The fact of the matter is that whites in the United States are not often called upon to directly confront the pain and suffering of Blacks. The physical distance between Black and white bodies thus mirrors the ethical and affective gap in solidarity (Hooker, 2009, p.7).

In summation, Hooker (2009) highlights a critical tension with some forms of movement participation, particularly as it relates to race. If some people are not connected to it, then they will not engage it, either in acts of solidarity or allyship. The critical juncture here is empathy, and some groups have not developed empathy for others and their causes. Blacks and Latinxs, who live in close proximity and have similar material conditions, sometimes work in solidarity for social change, which has yielded some good results (Pastor, 2013; Rogers & Morrell, 2011).

Community Coalition and the Youth Justice Coalition, for example, are two of those organizations that have been rather successful in helping to build Black and Brown solidarity.

In some cases, social movement participants can be mobilized, but not retained in social movements. This draws an important distinction here, where certain terms need to be defined. A "participant" is someone who attends a political event and may come to events where social movement events are happening. An activist is an official member of an organization or of some organization related to the cause. They regularly attend events and work towards their goal. Political/Social movement actors, or in this case, organizers, help to shape and frame movements. They are the ones who create and sustain organizations engaged in contentious activities, and they work to mobilize, recruit, and retain membership (Corrigall-Brown, 2012; Dyke & Dixon, 2013; Suh, 2014). While some organizations and movements do well with mobilizing participants, others bring participants in other ways.

Caren et al. (2011) highlights the significance of social movement retention and trends over a generational cohort. Focusing on a generation of protest attendees that was tracked from 1973 to 2008, Caren et al. found that protest attendance was not the most favorable form of engagement, which according to their study was petition signing. Social movement activities were still not the most common form of civic engagement. Corrigall-Brown (2012) took a different approach. Interested in the retention of activists and participants over a large period of time, with an estimated two-thirds of respondents in her study participating in some form of protest activity, Corrigall-Brown found that people who engage in social movement activities do so in ways that are deeply connected to their cause and their identities. For example, petitioning may be employed by a group with greater economic and political access, while protesting and civil disobedience may be adopted by groups without said access. Each type of political engagement, and the organizations that foster them, are largely connected to social ties, which supports participants who disengage and then re-engage later on in life. Saunders et al. (2012) highlight the role of consistency in engagement, and what effect it has on their continued participation. They found that both structural (biographically availability) and agential (political and psychological engagement) factors were responsible for sustained participation, with little concrete evidence based on the frequency of protest attendance.

Agential factors are significant for social movement participation, which can be understood as cognitive factors. Stürmer & Simon (2009) argues that anger and group-based feelings about social phenomena helps to drive social movement participation. Study one was focused on group-based anger about student fees in Germany, using a sample of 201 students at the University of Kiel. Sociodemographic analyses are not included in findings. The second study was experimental, focusing on crude jokes and associations with anger in these messages. One major finding is that politicization about the student movement was the most significant factor in protest participation. Anger also had a positive correlation with participation and group identification. Even though anger can get people to protest, since protest attendance is costly and may not potentially be effective, many people turn to nonpolitical means of expressing anger, suggesting that emotions may be a limiting factor for galvanizing social movement participation. Since community-based organizations in California (Los Angeles specifically) act as a conduit for social movement participation, emotion helps youth connect with organizations, but it is not a driving factor in why they stay, or how they got involved in the first place (Terriquez, 2015). Social movements literature on emotion and social movement participation should investigate how Black youth and other youth of color get involved in community organizing and social movements.

Participation and the Internet

One critical factor in contemporary social movement work is the role of the internet. Davis (2015) focuses on the role of the Dream Defenders in social movement organizing for college students in Florida. Examining social movement repertories, or the ways that social movement actors attempt to politically engage and recruit members into movement organizations, Davis found that the pedagogical and political significance of social media influenced the degree and extent of one's participation. Manuel Castells (2012) also sought to understand the impact of the internet on social movement organizing and participation. Mapping the impact of the white-led Occupy movement, Castells is able to demonstrate that the impact of online based organizing drastically increased social movement participation. With loosely coordinated actions communicated through the internet, the occupy movement was able to flatten traditionally hierarchical structures, and in a sense democratize social movement participation. Anyone who had access to the internet was able to participate, which showed the power of online organizing that would later be the foundation for the Movement for Black Lives (Alberici & Milesi, 2008; Romanos, 2015; Taylor, 2016).

The impact of the internet on social movement participation plays a large role in how we understand social movements, and it is helping to create new theoretical perspectives about movements writ large. Dolata and Schrape (2016) identify several types of internet collectives that work to guide collective action. Among the list, loosely networked movements and decentralized collectives are among the most prominently used amongst young social movement actors. Both types of internet collectives, primarily driven through the use of social media, work to build social cohesion and social control, and they both use web-based structures already in existence to mobilize and bring in participants. Given the participatory nature of such communication, any person can willingly participate in online conversations, thus adding to a larger, organic network that can bring new participants into the fold (Bunnage, 2014). The study of internet-based social movements is growing, and internet-based social movements can present new ways of engaging participants. For the youth in this study and the organizations, the internet acts as a tactic and a specific tool to engage their peers - a tool in the repertoire (Davis, 2015), not necessarily where or how they were recruited. For youth involved in community-based organizations who end up participating in social movements, face-to-face interactions still remain a key factor in movement recruitment. However, with larger social movements happening like the movement for Black lives impacting how Black youth are making sense of the political moment, the internet is playing a key role in continuing to reinforce the politicization that youth are experiencing in their organizations.

Politicizing Movement Participants - Social Movement Pedagogies

For the youth and organizations in this dissertation, education for social change is one of the primary ways that youth learn how to name the inequities they experience, and then act on them through campaigns that are connected to their organizations. In the context of social movement literature within ethnic studies, Laura Pulido (2006) pulls together a tricky yet necessary intervention in the ways we understand racialized political activism. Focusing on what she calls the "Third World Left," Pulido highlights how Chicanx/Latinx, African Americans, and Asian/Japanese Americans responded to and interacted with each other in the turbulent 1960s and 70s. Focusing on what she terms as "differential racialization," Pulido seeks to highlight how different racial groups respond to their own racialized contexts, and how they respond to others

in relation to their own context. There are several parts of the book that I thoroughly enjoyed, and I appreciate a take on social movements from the perspective of someone whose own material circumstances are directly implicated in their analysis. Student activists, who were politicized through a two-step process of exposure to unequal context and an opportunity to do something about it, seized the opportunity in the creation of Ethnic studies departments across Los Angeles. Social movement participation, in this sense, was predicated on one's prior experiences with inequality, and the opportunity to do something about it.

In a theoretically rich historical narrative, Maylei Blackwell (2011) dives into the political, cultural, and social significance of Chicana feminism in her work titled, "Chicana Power! Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano movement." With a primary focus on the Hijas de Cuahtemoc, a feminist organization that produced newspapers, organized trainings, and led the feminist contingent of the MEChA movement in Long Beach, Blackwell seeks to shed light on the gendered and sexual politics of the movement, while also re-centering women's narratives. Primarily using oral histories and archival research in her analysis, her intersectional feminist take on historiography seeks to decenter traditional notions of knowledge and knowledge production. Her use of retrofitted memory, which seeks to provide counter memory to the constant reconstruction of knowledge that disappears women's work and problems. Understanding the importance of historical knowledge, Blackwell provides a critical intervention in the literature on the Chicano movement more generally, and specifically, she gives a platform to women who were not supposed to be remembered. With regards to social movement studies, Blackwell employs the language of "repertoire" to highlight the practices, strategies, and tactics of contestation that activists from Hijas de Cuahtemoc adopted to combat the interlocking layers of oppression that they experience.

Focusing on the students of the Freedom Schools, Jon Hale (2016) investigates the impact and nuances of the Mississippi Freedom Schools. Through historiography, Hale provides a corrective in the literature by uplifting the narratives of the youth who were primarily involved in both the critical educational project of Freedom schools and the mobilizations in the state of Mississippi, sometimes well before they were 18. Hale highlights how the primacy of education in the Black educational tradition, and the construction of citizenship undergirded the education for liberation with the youth. Hale discusses how young people were able to develop rich critiques of power in the Jim Crow south, how they were able to develop leadership and organizing skills, and how they came to navigate the world as adults after participating in the Freedom School Project. On a more critical note, Hale also highlights the tensions that arose between identity and ideology in the SNCC movement in Mississippi. As the "political revolution" never came, questions around the necessity of integration, Black nationalism, and ultimately, the role of white assistance in the movement for Black freedom rose to the forefront. In spite of the ultimate dissolution of the Freedom Schools, Hale highlights how new political and educational projects such as the Dream Defenders in Florida or the Algebra Project in Baltimore rely on the foundation of using education as a means to politicize, which was foregrounded on a mass scale by the Freedom Schools. While both SNCC and Hijas de Cuahtemoc are but two examples of youth of color organizations engaging in education for social change work, they help to lay the foundation for the ways that youth of color groups evolved to become a cornerstone of social movement work, specifically leading into the 21st century.

Youth of Color and Social Movement Activism

Focusing on the development of the discipline of Black studies, Fabio Rojas (2007) investigates social movement outcomes in his book *From Black Power to Black Studies*. Rojas takes a macro approach to the "study of Black studies," where he narrows in on the process of "social movement outcomes." Social movement scholars, Rojas asserts, pay a great deal of attention to social movement tactics, frames, repression, and tools, but the literature for outcomes is underdeveloped. Rojas traces the ways that political contention within an already tumultuous time (1968-1972) was leveraged to build Black studies departments, focusing on the adoption of "multicultural" framing and Black power framing to carve space in the American academy. Throughout the book, Rojas asserts that through the continued professionalization of Black studies as a traditional academic discipline, the pressures of maintenance from colleges and universities depoliticized the origins of Black studies contentious founding, thus moving it away from the material critique it originally had to an educational project accepted in the American academy.

Employing both in-depth interviews, archival analysis, and discourse analysis, Sekou Franklin (2014) maps the trajectory of Black youth social movement organizing. By tracing the trends of social movement organizing through time, Franklin asserts that young Black activists and organizers were able to maneuver through the constraints of limited resources and a lack of access to institutional leveraging through creative organizing strategies, which are the various ways that Black youth organizations and their peers worked to frame issues, build coalitions, and leverage modest resources to engage in transformational movement work. Franklin asserts that transformational movements are movements that "involve high risks strategies and tactics that have a sustained impact on political culture...and at times they disrupt or effect the implementation of public policies" (p.17). Franklin traces four movements as case studies - the Southern Negro youth Congress, the Student Organization for Black Unity, the Black Student Leadership network, SNCC, and local organizations from the Juvenile Justice Reform Movement.

In a memoir with Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, Pedro Noguera (2013) recounts his personal connections to youth resistance and activism. Through a critical reflection of youth studies and his own growth as an activist, Noguera recalls how he learned to organize, the methods used to organize, the campaigns he either launched or took part in, and the state of youth resistance studies now. Noguera warns young scholars not to conflate all forms of opposition with "resistance," or what Solorzano and Bernal (2001) will call "self-defeating resistance." Noguera suggests that agency should not be that, "My school is bad, so I'm going to cut school," Noguera asserts that if we are to think about resistance as a precursor to building social movements and as agency, it should be a student, "organizing a walk out." The tension point, in this case, is *what we actually count as agency,* and what should be defined as resistance.

Through an engagement with two youth-based organizations, Daniel HoSang (2006) argues for a collective reimagining of youth resistance and political identity. HoSang starts the chapter with an epithet about Barbara Johns, a 16-year-old activist who organized her peers to walk out in response to the dire conditions of her school in rural Virginia in 1951. Through her organizing, her school was one of the six schools included in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case that ordered the desegregation of schools across the country. HoSang goes on to highlight how the current imagining of youth and youth culture, fifty years after the Brown case, has primarily been one of deficit and failure. Relying almost solely on culture of poverty logics to

describe the seeming perpetual failure of youth in schools and civil society. By analyzing the organizing work of two youth organizations - InnerCity Struggle and FIERCE!, HoSang is able to demonstrate that young people are not only aware of social oppression, but that they actively fight against it in multifaceted ways. HoSang suggests that in order for us to understand youth political life, we have to turn our gaze to youth activists, who for generations have been at the forefront of sociopolitical change.

Solorzano and Bernal (2001), found that transformative resistance, or someone being motivated by social justice and having a critique of social oppression provides a foundational framework for understanding how young Chicano activists fought for educational rights and transformational changes. Solorzano and Bernal questioned whether or not resistance studies were moving towards transformation, or if they were reproducing oppression. They argue that in order to understand resistance, looking at the example of Chicano youth can provide a framework for transformational change. They name four types of resistance as a framework for analyzing individual resistance in youth: Self-defeating resistance, reactionary behavior, conformist resistance, and transformative resistance. Reactionary behavior is a form of resistance that is reacting to its environment and the environment's attempt to make the youth conform, but the youth resisting may not have a critique of social conditions, nor are they motivated by social justice to change the collective condition. In the "conformist resistance" quadrant, a young person may be motivated by social justice to change the collective condition, but they do not have a critique of social oppression. They might seek to start tutoring programs in their school or neighborhood, or mentoring ones, and they do not question why those programs are necessary. A young person who falls in "self-defeating resistance" has a critique of social oppression, but their behavior is not motivated by social justice to change the collective condition. For example, they may drop out of school, or opt out of going to a particular class, because the teacher does not care about them, or they know that schools are not good for them anyway. Finally, transformative resistance is both a critique of social oppression, and is motivated by social justice to transform that condition. For example, a young person might identify that their school does not have resources, or that they do not have college classes, so they organize their peers to advocate for these resources through a walk-out. In this sense, their critique of social oppression led them to act to transform those conditions, and not just opt out of them or try to alleviate them through service-based projects that did not change conditions or relationships of oppression.

Critiques of Youth Focused Activism

In Soo Ah Kwon's (2013) *Uncivil Youth* she highlights the limitations of youth of color organizing and oppositional politics within the current non-profit structure. Using an ethnography conducted in the early 2000s that captured the organizing of AYPAL, a Pan-Asian youth organizing group in Oakland, California, Kwon highlights how youth organizing, and the non-profit apparatus in general, has become a part of what Victor Rios (2011) calls the "Youth Control Complex," which seeks to govern the youth. Coining the phrase, "affirmative governmentality," Kwon argues that non-profit organizations, regardless of how oppositional their political posture is, have to negotiate the capitalist landscape of reproducing civil society, which suggests that non-profits become the primary managers of youth deviance and political resistance. Kwon further argues, "the expansion of non-profits in the latter half of the 20th century is tied to the steady incorporation and professionalization of activism, evidenced in the legal restrictions of political activities allowed under non-profit status along with the state's post-civil rights affirmation and transformation of race and racial identities into categories of resource

administration" (p. 5). Here, Kwon specifically highlights how the barriers of professional activism inhibit the potential to organize, along with state-specific ways of managing and distributing resources to racialized non-white communities.

In a volume dedicated to youth resistance and social change, Tuck and Yang (2013) highlight the nuances and contradictions of studying youth resistance in their work, "youth resistance research and theories of change." Focusing on the transformation of youth resistance theories from Paul Willis' "Learning to Labor" and onward, Tuck and Yang highlight how the changes in the study of youth resistance have been deeply informed by 1), who we imagine to be a resistor, 2) what resistance looks like, and 3) why resistance is being calcified and domesticated. To go further, Tuck and Yang assert that the lexicon of social change and resistance was adapted by the youth development apparatus, which led to the co-opting of youth resistance into, "...'empowerment' within the circuits of conventional political participation, and the rubrics of self-discipline and self-governance. Thus, youth voice and visibility coincide with sounding and looking like good citizens" (p. 9). Tuck and Yang argue that in order to challenge the neoliberal construction of youth resistance/development for engaged citizenship, then scholars and youth workers must abandon the need to funnel youth resistance into something that is always "productive," because youth resistance can be both transformational and contradictory.

Critical youth studies scholars have also provided a critique of youth-based interventions and programs (Kohl - Arenas, 2016; Gordon, 2010; Kwon, 2013; Tuck & Yang, 2013). Tuck & Yang (2013) argue that youth development models have co-opted the nature of youth organizing and resistance, essentially domesticating youth organizing to a neoliberal form of civic participation. Kwon (2013) suggests that youth organizing models that were masked as interventions are used to affirm youth in their pursuit of social transformation, but they were not meant to truly transform their material conditions. Kwon calls this affirmative governmentality, which she defines as a governing strategy to control the activism of youth of color who experience material dispossession. With an intersectional feminist lens, Gordon (2010) asserts that the construction of youth as "citizens in the making" is a neoliberal political project that renders youth as unimaginable in the public sphere of politics and only imaginable as "citizens to be." This is specifically complicated for youth of color, who are simultaneously adultified and pushed out of the realm of political decision making. Framing the problems under the guise of neoliberal governance, Tilton (2010) addresses an inherent contradiction in racial liberalism - increased racial disparities with a growing Black political class. As the Black political and middle class grew, so did anxieties about Black and Latinx male youth, mainly Black male youth, and because of these anxieties, discourses about disciplining Black boys and men dominated public consciousness. Tilton argues that in spite of the politically progressive multiracial make-up of Oakland, the contradictory constructions of both youth vulnerability and youth hyperviolence reveal the inner workings of American politics - that some youths are unimaginable of being redeemed.

Foundations play a big role in youth work, and Kohl - Arenas (2016) argues that philanthropy, which also acts as the "shadow" hand of the state (Gilmore, 2017), does not help in providing youth of color or people of color led organizations the tools they need to enact the systems change necessary to alter material dispossession. Dylan Rodriguez (2007) traces the political logics of the non-profits alongside the growth of mass incarceration and documents their simultaneous expansion. As a buffer for the shrinking of state-based intervention programs, non-profits have taken the place of the state in alleviating portions of material circumstances of the poor. In the beginning, Rodriguez lays a framework for analyzing the connections between the

punitive state and the liberal state, suggesting that the same fear that governs the carceral apparatus also governs the non-profit industrial complex. Next, Rodriguez connects philanthropy and the privatization of citizenship to the limitations of social movement activism, asserting that nonprofits function to penalize radical social movements by funneling their activism into professional bureaucracies that are limited both in scope and political imagination. While there is a growing economy for non-profit and youth work the critical youth studies and philanthropy studies scholarship helps to provide a language for critique for youth of color focused work. However, this language of critique still does not engage the imaginations, understandings, or actions of the youth themselves, which present an incomplete analysis of the landscape and the specific ways that young people even critique neoliberalism.

Black Young Men and Boys - The Ontological Crisis in Social Science Literature

Black male identity within social science and humanities literature has been rife with an ontological crisis of being "problem based" - meaning that the majority of scholarship is rooted in Black male deficits, harm that Black men and boys commit, and more generally what Black men and boys do not have or lack (see, e.g., Brown, 2011; Curry 2017; Harper & Associates, 2012, 2014). Specifically for Black male youth and young men, research studies, community-based organizations, school initiatives, philanthropic initiatives, and the like have all sought to address the Black male "problem." This is not to say that Black male youth do not face extreme and hyper visible forms of anti-Black racism, because they indeed do. For example, Black male youth are 3.6 times more likely to be suspended in the state of California (Wood et al., 2018) and Black male youth made up over 24% of LAUSD school arrests, even though Black students in general only account for 8% of the LAUSD population (Terry et al., 2018). Many studies have shown how Black male youth experience unique forms of criminalization, social labeling, and school push-out (Ferguson, 2001; Howard, 2014; Rios, 2006, 2011; Scorza, 2013; Shabazz, 2015; Sojoyner 2013, 2016, 2017). The disproportionate amount of harm and punishment that Black males experience at the hands of civic and social institutions led to the growth of Black male initiatives and programs that work to change these conditions, many of them proliferating in the 1980s through today (Brown & Donnor, 2011; Fultz & Brown, 2008; Hopkins, 1997; Oeur, 2016, 2018).

Anthony Brown (2011) has interrogated the construction of Black male identity over time. Focusing on the ways that Black males show up in academic literature, Brown argues that narratives of deficit, absence, and conflict in education and social science literature from the 1930s to the 2000s reproduces an archetype image of Black maleness and its essence. The common-sense narrative about Black males becomes, 'Black males are in crisis, and we need to intervene in THEM.' This discourse allows no room for the diverse needs of Black males and creates an essential narrative about individual Black male failure. These narratives carry political currency for institutions that benefit from Black male crises such as prisons, and contribute directly to Black male fungibility when Black boys and men are killed by police officers or other forms of law enforcement (Curry, 2017; Smiley & Fakunle, 2016). These narratives are pervasive throughout national discourse, as many programs for Black men and boys are then rooted in the same deficit and damage as the academic literature about them (Baldridge 2014, 2017; Sojoyner, 2016).

Even though popular narratives suggest that all Black boys (oftentimes excluding their sexual, class, and regional identities) have a great amount of need, the anxiety and fear around the Black male crises and masculinity positions Black male issues as the primary issues of Black

political advocacy and protection (Cohen, 1999). Some scholars have argued that uplifting Black boys and intervening in their educational experiences at the expense of Black girls solidifies and reproduces patriarchy (Butler, 2013; Cox, 2015; Dumas, 2016). While the logic of these interventions and educational projects centers the experiences of boys, scholarship either about Black male interventions, on Black male interventions, or interventions designed with Black males as the primary recipients seldom question the logic that is at the root of most interventions - correcting behavior for the sake of participating in civil society and not challenging race, class, gender, and sexual hierarchies.

Scholars have critically engaged both the theoretical and practical implications of Black youth interventions, primarily targeted towards male youth (Baldridge, 2014; Butler, 2013; Dumas, 2016; Dumas & Nelson, 2015; Ginwright, 2004; McCready, 2010; Noguera, 1996). In summary, scholars have critiqued the overall function and use of Black male programs and projects (Noguera, 1996; Dumas, 2016), the gender politics and heteronormativity of Black male interventions (Butler, 2013; McCready, 2010) and the cultural and political implications of doing "youth work" and how the youth perceive its usefulness (Ginwright, 2004; Baldridge, 2014). Aimee Meredith Cox (2015) highlights the "gendered" aspect of Black-male-focused programs and logics in her introduction, focusing on former President Barack Obama's My Brother's Keeper [MBK] initiative. Cox argues that the initiative, even in its claims to fix damaged Black male youth, reinforces patriarchy in the ways it prescribed a particular type of masculine identity onto Black boys, and in its funding visibility. Damien Sojoyner (2012, 2016) makes a similar argument, calling these types of interventions "gendered enclosures," where a specific type of masculinity is valued to not only reinforce heteropatriarchy, but also to create a climate necessary to criminalize "deviant" Black males and perpetuate violence against Black women. Many of the programs rest on specific logics of male leadership and mentorship, which Bianca Baldridge (2017) terms the "super negro" narrative that positions Black men as the all-encompassing teachers and mentors that Black male youth need to control their behavior in classrooms (Bristol & Mentor, 2018). These academic ventures help to provide a "language of critique" which helps to highlight the various ways that Black male youth are moved, segregated and governed. Academic and societal discourse about Black young men and boys has largely fueled a community response to the "crisis" narratives of Black male youth, and organizations like Community Coalition, the Brotherhood Crusade, the Youth Justice Coalition, and the Social Justice Learning Institute are connected to these networks of community-based advocacy and push-back against anti-Black narratives.

Guiding Analytical Frameworks: Mobilizing Identity and Black Critical Theory

Mobilizing Identity

As one of two central analytical frameworks for this dissertation, I find Garcia Bedolla's (2005) framework of mobilizing identity to be quite useful. Garcia Bedolla defines mobilizing identity as, "an identity that includes a particular ideology plus a sense of personal agency" (p. 6). For Garcia Bedolla, ideology and shared analysis alone are not sufficient for incubating change. Instead, she goes on to suggest that mobilizing identity, "is different from an ideology in that it includes not only a particular outlook on the world but also a sense of having the ability to have an impact on that world" (p. 6). Mobilizing identity, then, is deeply connected to personal agency and an inherent belief that a social actor can change their context.

Mobilizing identity is connected to a larger discourse within social movement literature about collective identity and identity claims. Tilly and Tarrow (2015) argue that understanding identity within the context of social movements and contentious politics has four primary claims. First, they assert that identities present a social boundary that separates the "us" from the "them." Second and third, Tilly and Tarrow argue that identity also sets relationships within *and* across the boundary. Finally, identity is also meant to prove shared understandings of the boundary and its relations. This central grounding in identity helps to further explain the role of collective identity, where Alberto Melucci (1995) defines collective identity as, "an interactive and shared definition produced by several individuals (or groups at a more complex level) and concerned with orientations of action and the field of opportunities and constraints in which the action takes place (p. 44)." Given the idea of "shared definition," collective identity helps organizers and other collective actors come to terms with who they are, and why they make the various claims that they make. Corrigall-Brown (2012) highlights the ways that collective identity is defined through social movement organization participation. Focusing on a Catholic women's organization and the United Farm Workers, Corrigall-Brown discusses the ways that activist activities (such as petitioning, protesting, letter writing, etc.) did not result in sustain social movement participation – organizers working together to cultivate identity did. Corrigall-Brown suggests that social movement participants who develop deep identities that connect to their cause are much more likely to continue with social movement activism, such as MEChA members who organized in college and went on to organize in the UFW when they graduated (p. 109).

Most social movement scholars in some sense agree with the significance of collective identity to social movements. However, they differ on the ways that collective identity plays a role in deciding outcomes for social movements, or of long-term participation. While some scholars argue that emotions and personal ties lead to collective identity (Hunt & Benford, 2004), others argue that meaning-making processes between social movement actors are critical to the development of collective identity (Holland et al., 2008). Collective identity is complex, and as Fominaya (2010) points out, debates about collective identity oftentimes do not examine the role of multiple collective identities, or changes over time. For the Black male youth activists in this study, they sit at the intersection of two large national discourses, and they also actively participate in local and state-based organizing and advocacy work that seeks to transform their relationship to civic society. However, how is it that they make sense of their identities, given this context? How do they produce meaning of their political work and agency? In addition, how do they interpret their Black experiences? Even though the youth in this study all share similar socioeconomic, racial, and geographical locations, their collective experiences can differ.

Mobilizing identity as a framework can prove to be useful for this study for two primary reasons. First, as a framework that seeks to make sense of agency, the ways that Black male youth come to see themselves as agents of social change is critical to their understandings of social movement work. Education scholars Solorzano and Bernal (2001) might call this transformative resistance, where a young person has both a critique of social oppression and is motivated by social justice to act in a collective manner. As they work to make sense of their world, they are also working to transform it. Second, as Garcia Bedolla (2005) highlights in her study, a shared understanding of the issues or policies that impact a certain social group may not always lead to agency to then attempt to change those conditions. In this study, I am looking to describe how Black male youth make sense of their agency across four organizational types. The ways that Black male youth make meaning of certain phenomena given their proximity to the

issues and the organizations that helped to incubate their understandings of these issues will have important implications for how they make meaning of their agency. In this way, organizations that serve different populations and have unique histories represent a key characteristic which needs to be further explored to add to the literature on community-based organizations, youth organizing, and social movements.

Black Critical Theory - Theorizing AntiBlackness

The second guiding framework for this dissertation will be BlackCrit, or Black critical theory as articulated by Dumas and Ross (2016). In their article, Michael Dumas and Kihana Ross propose a new "critical race analytic" for critiquing anti-Blackness in education. To Dumas and Ross, BlackCrit is rooted in both Critical Race Theory [CRT] and Afro-pessimism, which are both political and intellectual projects that seek to unsettle the ways that we understand race, policy, power, and subjectivity (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Hartman, 1997; Wilderson III, 2003). As Dumas and Ross suggest, even though some of the most prominent articles within Critical Race Theory use examples of Black racialized subjection, they are not specifically theorizing Blackness, they are using Black examples to theorize race more broadly. The discourse around CRT then led to the proliferation of "Black/White Binary" discourse, which posits that the ways we understand race and racism are only situated within a framework of white-Black relations which fail to include other racialized experiences.

Throughout the article, Dumas and Ross (2016) directly engage the proliferation of "crits" (being LatCrit, TribalCrit, AsianCrit, etc.) as types of racialized critiques within critical race theory. Dumas and Ross provide an intervention in the literature to suggest that the proliferation of these crits, while each crit articulated the specificity of their racialized experiences, did so under the guise of a "Black-White" Binary, which sometimes positioned Blackness as having a position of power in racialized discourse while almost decontextualizing the centrality of anti-Black racism. Dumas and Ross go on to provide the corrective, suggesting that an analysis of anti-Blackness in education is rooted primarily in three major themes:

- Anti-Blackness is central to how we make sense of the social, economic, historical and political worlds.
- Blackness is the least admissible to, and least compatible with, the neoliberal multicultural imagination.
- Black liberatory/liberation fantasies, which seek to cause disorder and inspire uncivility in a world where civility for everyone is rooted in Black dispossession and oppression. In order to subvert racial hierarchy, disorder is necessary.

Dumas and Ross conclude the article by highlighting how BlackCrit can be applied to two different types of educational discourses: school desegregation and school discipline, both arenas where Black students, families and communities figure quite prominently. The application of Blackcrit is more of a demonstration, as opposed to a critique itself, of how Blackcrit can find utility when discussing Black-specific lived experiences.

The three themes Dumas and Ross (2016) highlight have important implications for this study. For the first theme related to how anti-Blackness is used to make sense of the world, Black youth in this study engage the everydayness of anti-Black violence from their schools and communities as normal - in other words, they interpret the everyday presence, engagement, and impact of carceral tools of the state and their manifestations in schools and their communities as being routine. Second, while all of the Black youth in this study have engaged in coalition-based politics, they were highly aware of anti-Blackness, and how anti-Blackness operated in the

schools and communities they lived in. They highlighted how Black youth were particularly targeted, kicked out of class more, and harassed differently than their non-Black peers, speaking to that Dumas and ross highlight as being the least admissible to the multicultural imagination. Finally, the youth in this study have dreams - dreams of liberation, dreams of police-free schools and communities, and dreams of life beyond anti-Black violence. What adds to the vocabulary of Dumas and ross, and what I hope to demonstrate in the pages to come, is that the youth in the study are actively working to make their liberatory fantasies a reality. They are striving to abolish police forces, they are working to redistribute wealth, and they have built campaigns for racial justice. Black critical theory provides useful insights into the ways that Black boys and young men work to use their agency to create social transformation.

Even though they represent two different sides of the political spectrum, both M4BL and MBK are in some ways responding to the lasting effects of anti-Black racism in the United States. In both their understandings of the issues and in their analyses of their own agency, anti-Blackness plays a role in the lives of Black male youth in how they experience the world, and make sense of their ability to change the world. BlackCrit, then, serves as a useful analytic for two reasons. First, as young activists, Black male youth may have really poignant and sharp critiques of anti-Blackness, which can help to further clarify how the youth make meaning of themselves and their experiences. Second, with a BlackCrit analysis, I'll be better able to situate the ways that the young people I interview and the organizations they work with are situated within the larger, multiracial landscape of Los Angeles. With a BlackCrit framework, I'll be able to make sense of the ways that Black youth experience antiBlackness, even though they often attend schools and live in communities where mostly other people of color primarily attend and live (Busey, 2017).

Intersection of Mobilizing Identity and BlackCrit

While both of these theoretical perspectives sit in different schools of thought, they can work together to serve this project in three major ways. First, as a study of Black male youth in an urban setting, some of whom have personally and directly experienced anti-Blackness, both theoretical perspectives can help to more precisely name how Black male youth make sense of their "linked fate" (Bedolla, 2005). Second, both perspectives can help to assess how the subjects of the study, Black males, are socio-politically situated in larger discourses of racial uplift, agency, and social change. Finally, with a BlackCrit lens, I can contribute to the ways that Black youth mobilize understandings of Blackness and Black identity in order to create change.

While these theories will work together well in this dissertation, I do want to caution against a racial essentialism. As Paschel (2016) suggests in her study of Black social movements in Colombia and Brazil, there is no "one way" to raise Black consciousness and mobilize a Black identity. Intersectional feminists scholars have argued the ways that people experience connection of their identities (immigrant, race, sexuality, gender, class, etc.) plays a role in how they will understand and experience both subjugation and power.

Even though the youth I interview will share similar geographical and racial identities, their sexual identities, their class background, their immigrant status, and their proximity to the prison regime (having been arrested, incarcerated, on probation or parole, etc.) will play a role in how they make sense of their experiences. Even though the youth will undoubtedly be diverse in both identities and thought, how they make sense of their experiences, both individually and collectively, will be the primary focus of this dissertation.

Discussion

Educational projects in Los Angeles that do both the work of traditional youth development organizations and the work of youth organizing present unique laboratories which are both exemplary and indicative of the symbiotic relationship between 21st-century educational projects for social movement incubation and mechanisms of youth control and containment. On one hand, Black/POC-led political engagement and autonomy are key functions of these organizations, along with the development of a political consciousness that critiques social hierarchy in the hopes of inspiring political action, a vision of many Black educational organizations at the height of Black contentious activity (Bloom & Martin, 2013; Hale, 2016; Payne, 2007, 2008; Perlstein, 2005). This is evident in the role of critical consciousness in youth programs designed for youth of color. On the contrary, the youth development models that these organizations oftentimes rely on reflect neoliberal models of youth organizing which funnel the righteous anger of young people into damage-centered models of organizing where Black youth rely on frameworks of personal pain and transformation in order to appeal to the emotions of the very people who are complicit in their suffering (Clay, 2019; Clay & Turner III, 2021; Kohl-Arenas, 2016; Kwon, 2013; Tuck & Yang, 2014). The four organizations I plan to investigate are in a dilemma - work to transform their communities while also navigating the neoliberal landscape of youth control and containment. The organizations that I seek to study, then, have to navigate a complex tension of grassroots social movement work and using acceptable forms of political organizing (such as petitions, lawsuits, discrete campaigns, etc.) in order to secure victories and change the conditions of communities of color both in the state of California and in Los Angeles specifically. In addition, the organizations that house the youth I plan to investigate are heterogeneous in nature - meaning that they each have unique histories and responses to youth development that warrant comparative investigation.

The scholars above help to paint a critical picture of Black male projects and discourse, critical consciousness, community-based organizations, youth work, and non-profit work that is critical to our understanding of Black male identity development. However, as Howard (2014) suggests, we seldom center the experiences of young Black males in our theorization and our organizing. Even as scholars have brought the experiences of Black male youth to the table, many studies represent narratives about academic achievement (Harper & Williams Jr, 2013), traditional student leadership and achievement (Harper, 2012; Warren & Howard, 2014; Whiting, 2009), or counter-narratives about how Black male youth challenge *ideas of racialized oppression*, not *conditions of racialized oppression* (Howard, 2014). In addition, different organizations have different organizational ideologies, which each impact the pedagogical practices that organizations adopt, the types of youth they retain, and the ways in which youth take the lessons of these organizations into their lives as young adults. This is where my project can fill a critical gap in the literature by investigating how Black male youth themselves make meaning of both their role and political agents and larger social movements that impact their lives directly.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

In this qualitative study, I examine Black male youth activists and participants in community-based programs and spaces across two types of community-based organizations: groups that engage Black male youth exclusively (they have some sort of Boys of Color programming) and groups that engage Black male youth, but with a heterogeneous demographic make-up (groups that also engage girls, Latinx youth, and others). Specifically, I use a grounded theory approach (Creswell, 2009) for my research strategy. By using grounded theory, I allow the experiences, ideas, and meanings from the youth to inform my themes and understandings of Black male youth political agency (Bernard, 2013; Creswell, 2009). Specifically, I collected 43 semi-structured interviews from 22 Black male youth participants in these programs. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes; each youth interviewee was interviewed twice in order to best understand their complex and rich narratives of social movement participation and political identity (Seidman, 2006). This thematic order is informed by the interview guide, which was developed under a specific set of criteria. I also interviewed 19 staff members across four organizations and two movement networks, to help triangulate my findings. Adult/staff interviews lasted approximately 70 minutes.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the processes and tools used to conduct this dissertation study. First, I outline the setting and sample, specifically naming the unique racialized context of Los Angeles and of the organizations under study. Next, I provide an overview of the design of the study, spelling out the sequential nature of the data collection. Afterwards, I introduce my processes for data analyses and coding, rooted in both validity checking and sequential analyses. Finally, I conclude with my researcher subjectivity. As a firm "insider" in the Los Angeles organizing landscape, I am afforded both unique trust and access that many researchers will not be able to achieve without years of engagement. With this level of trust, it is imperative and ethical as a scholar that I produce research that is both insightful and useful to the movement, while also presenting unique insights that can help organizations further grow and maneuver against the backdrop of neoliberal market-driven logics that frame Black male youth and Black youth more broadly within a deficit lens (see, e.g., Baldridge 2014, 2019; Clay, 2019; Dumas, 2016).

Setting & Sample

Setting - Black Male Youth in Los Angeles

Los Angeles California is home to both the second largest school district in the country, and the largest county jail system in the country (Hernández, 2017; Rogers & Morrell, 2011). Given LA's unique racial history, racialized bodies in the city of Angels have been subjected to unique forms of state violence, segregation, racialized violence and urban uprisings (Gooding-Williams, 1993; Gottlieb et al., 2006; Hooker, 2016; Lipsitz, 2005). Because Los Angeles is a site of international cultural production, and its public visibility, Black community politics, particularly issues of crime, violence, and deviance are given an international platform, with young Black males at the center of analysis.

Organizations that work with Black male youth have to engage with the larger popular discourse that Black male youth are in a constant state of crisis (Brown, 2011). Whether this crisis is derived from the violence enacted on Black males by other Black males, from the neoliberal and heteropatriarchal discourse of not having fathers in the home (Dumas, 2016) or if

the crisis is a creation of white supremacy to destroy the Black community from within (Jones, 2004), Black male youth always find themselves in crisis. While the goal of these organizations has historically been to address this "crisis" through different forms of youth engagement, they are also implicated in the ways that young people are treated, framed and imagined in popular discourse. Los Angeles, as a city with a high concentration of non-profits and its network of youth of color-serving organizations, make it a critical laboratory for investigation.

Black male youth are uniquely vulnerable to the punishing aspects of schools, policing, and the overall universal carceral apparatus (see, e.g., Rios, 2011; Shedd, 2015). In Los Angeles County, Black male youth are only 7.5% of the total population, but they are 20.5% of all school suspensions (California Department of Education Dataquest, 2019). In addition to suspensions, Black males are uniquely vulnerable to arrests and incarceration. Black males (both juvenile and adult) are 1 in 5 (20.8%) of all arrests, both male and female, across racial identities, and 1 in 4 of all male arrests in Los Angeles County (California Department of Justice, 2021). After nearly two decades of advocacy and organizing to decriminalize communities of color, and the creation of intervention programs specifically designed to fight to "intervene" in ways that Black boys and young men are impacted by systems - Black boys are perceived to be in *crisis.* Indeed, systems of control and punishment deeply affect Black male youth and their life chances. According to the Safety and Youth Justice Survey, a youth driven survey conducted by the Brothers, Sons, Selves Coalition in Los Angeles County (2019) (N = 3,378), Black male youth who took the survey (n = 250) accounted for 21% of all youth who were harmed by law enforcement, in spite of only being 7% of the total survey population. In addition, Black male youth accounted for 1 out of 5 off campus suspensions. In the zip-codes with the highest concentrations of Black youth (90044, 90008, 90047, 90003, 90043), Black male youth were twice as likely to have reported being arrested, on probation, incarcerated, and having more frequent police contact than their other male counterparts. Indeed, systems of control and punishment deeply affect Black male youth and their life chances.

In the specific context of South central Los Angeles, a popular undercurrent of youth programs and educational projects is that they are created specifically to respond to gang violence, the negative outcomes that systems have on Black communities, and alternatives to gang involvement. With Los Angeles being the home of widely known Black gangs such as the Bloods and the Crips, and with a large underground economy that attracts Black male youth who otherwise were a part of a surplus labor population (Gilmore, 2007), Black male youth became the primary targets of intervention through the development of programs, initiatives, and foundation-led drives to support Black male youth (see, e.g., Dumas, 2016; Philpart & Bell, 2015). The disinvestment in state-funded programming for Black youth and youth of color (see, e.g., Hinton, 2016; Sojoyner, 2016), in conjunction with the proliferation of the non-profit sector and philanthropic interest in solving the Black male "problem," became the political context in which youth programs that work with Black male youth were both justified and implemented across both school and community-based contexts (Sloan, 2005). The Black boys and young men in this study are living and organizing in the aforementioned context, where Black males are overrepresented in statistical categories rooted in punishment and control. This context is crucial for understanding the sample.

Sample

This study focuses on Black male youth who participate in four community-based educational spaces in the County of Los Angeles, Brotherhood Crusade (founded 1968),

Community Coalition (founded 1990), the Youth Justice Coalition (founded 2003), and the Social Justice Learning Institute (founded 2008). For Black communities, community based educational spaces exist, "in fugitive space - always fighting for the right to exist within the oppressive structures of anti-Blackness" (Baldridge, 2019, p. 5). For many young people, particularly in the state of California, CBES has played a significant role in helping to politicize youth (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007), helping youth to heal from systemic oppression and trauma (Ginwright, 2010), and keeping youth politically engaged, even beyond their years with their respective organizations (Terriquez, 2015). For Black male youth, participating in CBES not only improves their academic outcomes, but it also encourages Black male youth to examine the ways they might have an impact on society (Baldridge et al., 2011; Scorza, 2013; Watts et al., 2003). While we may know about the ways Black youth experience CBES through a sociopolitical lens or a lens of academic and health outcomes, we have yet to deeply investigate how similar populations of youth experience youth programs from a comparative lens. This study draws on two different types of community-based educational spaces that work with youth - programs that work explicitly with Black youth, and programs that work more broadly with all youth of color.

In this study, I focus on four organizations that serve young people in Los Angeles, primarily in South Los Angeles - all of them in some ways focused on building leadership and power with young people. Brotherhood Crusade operates a program called BLOOM (Building Lifelong Opportunities and Options for Men), which is connected to their Boys and Young Men of Color Programs area. This program primarily operates through schools, where youth are primarily recommended through counselors. For Community Coalition, their primary youth organizing program is titled South Central Youth Empowered Through Action, which uses schools in South LA as the primary place to base-build and recruit youth. For the Youth Justice Coalition, I interviewed youth from the LOBOS (Leading our Brothers and Sisters out the System) program, where youth are recruited from a high school that they run called FREE LA High School. At the Social Justice Learning Institute, youth are recruited through a program called the Urban Scholars program, which operates as a class in South LA, Inglewood, and Compton schools.

Table 1

Organization Characteristics

Organization	Demographic Focus	Total Estimated Youth Served	Total Youth Engaged in Year-Long Targeted Programming
Brotherhood Crusade [BHC] (1968)	Black youth	500 and above	350
Community Coalition [CoCo] (1990)	Youth of Color (Black & Brown)	500 and above	200
Youth Justice Coalition [YJC] (2003)	Youth of Color (Black & Brown)	200-400	40
Social Justice Learning Institute [SJLI] (2008)	Black youth	500 and above	300

These organizations largely reflect their youth and student populations, with the majority of staff members, senior leadership, and board members mostly being people of color. The staff interviewed (n = 19) are directly connected to the program areas of these organizations and are listed in Appendix E. The youth (n = 22) interviewed for this project are in Appendix F. Some of them have already completed the program and have moved on to join other organizations or may have left social justice work altogether. All but one of the youth completed two interviews.

Study Design and Interviews

For this study, I define Black male youth as participants who identify themselves as both Black and male (both cis gender and masculine self-identified youth) between the ages of 14 - 25 (Orelus, 2010). In addition, I interview staff members from each organization, including at least one person in organizational leadership (such as the executive director or president), one lead organizer or a person in mid-level management (a program manager or program director), and a frontline staff member (program coordinator, youth organizer, etc.). Understanding youth programming and how each program defines key issues as they relate to Black communities connects to the larger questions of how meaning is produced and defined across community contexts. Staff members and senior organizational leadership demonstrated a nuanced understanding of the contexts of their various programs and how certain youth have developed politically over time, which make their specific insights important and necessary. To triangulate my findings, I collected public records of the youth engaging elected officials and public bodies, organizational archives, and forms of social media posts, along with the staff interviews.

In this study, I adopt semi-structured interviews as my primary method of data gathering in this dissertation project. For social movement work, especially the intersection of social movements such as the state-sponsored movement of MBK and the grassroots movement of M4BL, semi-structured interviews help to illuminate the human agency of social movement actors, and the ways that social movement actors collectively make sense of social movement processes (Blee & Taylor, 2002). I make sense of these experiences based on both my academic training as a social scientist and as an active participant in community-based spaces. (Lichterman, 2002). For my semi-structured interviews, I developed two interview guides (to see full interview guides, please see appendix A) - one for program participants (both current participants and alumni) and one for adults. Both interview guides include themes and probes to ensure that youth and adults can feel comfortable speaking about these issues.

To develop the interview protocol, I synthesized variables used in Franklin's (2014) study of Black Youth Social Movement Participation and the Black Youth Project Study from Cohen (2010). These variables will be framed using a modified version of Garcia Bedolla's (2005) interview protocol on Latinx Politics and meaning making processes for Latinxs who engaged in political activism during the Proposition 187 Campaign in California to eliminate access to public services for undocumented immigrants. These interviews will help me to answer the central research question of the ways that Black male youth understand their role in such organizations and movements. To see the complete code list and count, see Appendix G.

Data Collection

There were three phases to this study for data collection. The first phase is the organizational archive phase. I worked with the organizational staff and organizational executives to identify key archives and materials that were relevant to my research questions. I

developed a brief timeline of campaigns that the youth participated in order to understand the scope of youth political engagement. This helped me paint accurate historical context when youth answered interview questions about which campaigns they participated in, and what was happening in the political landscape during that time. This allowed me to accumulate public speeches done by youth (located in LA County, LA City, LAUSD, and California State Legislature databases), all social media posts referencing the youth from the official organizational pages, and media archives that are publicly available via Youtube and the LA Times.

The second phase of this study focused on the first round of interviews with staff and youth. The youth and staff will be recruited primarily through the recommendations of other youth, alumni, and program staff using the snowball method of sampling (Babbie, 2020). Through this method, I engaged youth members in all four organizations who may have varying degrees of participation. Since I currently work with some of the potential youth in this study via the BSS coalition, I worked to mitigate coercion by ensuring that the youth know that the study is completely voluntary and that not participating will not affect their status with BSS, or with the program, in any way. The first round of interviews with program participants helped to inform the second round of interviews, where I was able to ask follow-up questions, specifics about key campaigns they participated in, and how they produced meaning of their work. The second round of interviews was the third and final phase of data collection.

Data Analysis

Data will be coded using a four-staged grounded theory approach, rooted in a constant comparative method. These stages include - comparing incidents applicable in each category, integrating category and their properties, delimiting theory, and writing theory (Babbie, 2020). Rooting my analysis in inductive reasoning, as opposed to deductive reasoning, allows researchers to move more broadly from specific life experiences to more general understandings, helping to identify patterns that present some form of order to the given events and experiences recounted by study participants (Babbie, 2020). In order to remain committed to the methodological approach, I adopt a sequential method to code the data - first utilizing an open coding, then axial coding (Babbie, 2020). Open coding, broadly defined, is the classification and labeling of concepts that are generally connected to qualitative data analysis. Using opening coding allowed me to highlight some of the general trends in the data, specifically looking for trends related to the initial variables used to craft the sequenced interview guide. Next, I adopt axial coding, focusing on the core concepts of the study (Babbie, 2020). When conducting open and then axial coding, it allows a researcher to more effectively construct a concept map that helps to construct relationships between key concepts and codes. These are used to develop a theoretical axis that helps to further describe the agency of Black boys and young men.

Data will be coded and analyzed in the digital mixed methods software called "DeDoose." DeDoose allows users to create codes, run frequency analyses, and even weight codes for significance and rigorous analysis. Using DeDoose, I created parent codes in the axial phase of coding and analysis, which supported the grounded theory method. More importantly, I used DeDoose to group my codes in a way that best serves the needs of the study and helps me to answer my research question. Within the dataset for program participants, there were a total of 2,072 code applications to 43 interviews, and 49 total codes (Appendix G). I quantified the codes applied to each interview, and aggregated the codes based on each program participant's home organization (the organization that the young person was recruited to initially). Using code

counts, or frequency analysis, I was able to visualize how many codes were applied per organization, allowing me to create a comparative analysis of how youth from different organizations responded to different questions. I used the built-in normalization feature, which takes nominal variables (such as the home organization of the youth) and renders them comparable to each other. This allows me to make comparisons across organizations, even though there is no parody with how many interviewees participated across organizations.

To effectively guard against validity and authenticity threats, I adopt member-checking as a mode of data validation. For qualitative research, member-checking is important because research participants are given a chance to read and review their transcripts and quotes within the given manuscript for accuracy and adequate interpretation of their words. Participants can be, and often do, clarify, edit, and in some cases even delete their own words (Carlson, 2010). In this sense, I sent the interviewees a copy of their transcripts, and a copy of where they are cited in the text to ensure an accurate interpretation of their words and work. Creswell (2009) asserts that member-checking is best done with polished transcripts, alongside interpretations to help study participants see how you will use their data in an honest way.

Researcher Subjectivity

As the manager of the Brothers, Sons, Selves Coalition, a community-based coalition of nine organizations in Los Angeles that work to end the school-to-prison pipeline for all students, I have unique and unprecedented access to the youth programs under study. Being connected to these organizations gives me an important perspective for two reasons. First, as a colleague and an active facilitator of boys and men of color political spaces, I am in a unique position to illuminate some of the nuances, such as power dynamics, views of the prison regime, and understandings of adult allies that can go unnoticed in academic discourse. I do not make claims to neutrality or objectivity in this scholarship, and with an interpretive approach (Yanow, 2013), I am awarded trust and insight with activists that typical researchers may not be able to cultivate.

Second, my participation in these spaces includes political goals that are both intellectual and deeply personal. I am interested, and actively work towards, the transformation of Black communities and the collective struggle for Black freedom. While this positionality has its limits, it has advantages as well. With limitations to this approach, I understand that I may be missing key insights from those who are not as embedded in community-based spaces as myself or my interviewees. Also, as an active participant, I may miss critical insights that a researcher who is more removed from the everyday spaces of community organizing can see, particularly as they relate to tensions and movement factions (Blee & Taylor, 2002). However, the ultimate goal of this research is to find meaning from organizers who are interested in social transformation, which requires a level of proximity that my unique positionality as an organizer and a scholar is able to provide. To guard against bias, the member checking used in the aforementioned section helped to clarify key roles, meanings, and interpretations, while also guarding against validity threats.

This study is rooted in an activist scholarship epistemological frame. First, activist scholarship is interested in using scholarship as a vehicle with which to intervene in the sociopolitical realities of marginalized and historically excluded populations (see, e.g., Davis et al., 2019; Hale, 2008). For me, I am not just interested in the work of organizing Black boys for its own sake: I am deeply invested in the practice of building political identities among youth of color, specifically Black youth. Second, having explicit political and personal commitments can grant one access to spaces that an objective researcher will not be able to have access to (Hale,

2008; Vargas & Hale, 2008). Community organizing spaces are actively guarded, as organizations may be dealing with state infiltration, conflicts between movement factions, and other realities that can destabilize their movement work (Bloom & Martin, 2013; Vargas & Hale, 2008). By maintaining an explicit commitment to the political goals of the organization under study, one has a better chance of engaging in social movement work. These personal and political commitments come with accountability and reciprocity (Gilmore, 2008; Pulido, 2008). Accountability, as an activist scholar, means that one is in a reciprocal relationship with communities and their struggles for freedom. It is not enough to merely "study" them - you and your particular skill set have to be of value to the community at hand. As both an organizer and scholar, I have been granted an enormous amount of trust that must not be taken lightly.

Chapter 4 - Fighting Youth Dispossession in Carceral Los Angeles

Introduction

On June 23rd, 2020, Black youth from all across Los Angeles descended upon the headquarters of the Los Angeles Unified School District [LAUSD] with one primary demand - defunding the school district's police department. Board member Monica Garcia had introduced a motion titled, "Reimagining School Safety and Investing in our Highest Need Students" (050-19/20 Garcia), and in this motion, Garcia called for an aggressive reduction in the school police budget, ultimately cutting it by 90% in three years. Black youth gave their testimony to both the school board and the rally outside, with hundreds of attendees, recounting their direct experiences with school police and being treated like criminals on campus. One of these students, Jose "Zae" Ortiz, an Afro-Latinx young man, spoke about his experiences with school police in the neighboring Compton Unified School District. He highlighted how CUSD police had him in custody for nearly 9 hours before informing his parents, and that he and his peers were targeted for no apparent reason. While his experience was egregious, it was not unique, and dozens of students took the mic to share their stories connected to policing.

Figure 2
Jose "Zae" Ortiz

Note: Jose "Zae" Ortiz at the Defund LAPSD rally, June 23rd, 2020. (Brothers, Sons, Selves Coalition, 2020).

For Black young people and other youth of color in Los Angeles, they are often prepared to make speeches such as these by trained community organizers. Through a method called, "story of self," youth learn how to couch their lived experiences in both data connected to their

issues and a bold call-to-action for both the public and decision makers. What makes Zae's story important is that he highlighted the experiences he had in front of thousands of people. Oftentimes, when stories are told about Black young men and boys, they are told as anecdotes, or as characters in a family members or a peer's story. In the community organizing landscape, young men like Zae are not often the protagonists in their own stories.

So how did this come about? For Black masculine-identified youth here in Los Angeles, how did we get to school police officers keeping youth for 9 hours without parental engagement or informing them at all, and a board resolution to cut the school police budget by 90%? In this chapter, I seek to accomplish two things. First, I seek to highlight how the social and political landscape of Los Angeles shaped Black politics and communities over time, specifically after the civil rights movement. Second, I seek to highlight how communities of color, Black communities specifically, have responded to the social and political landscape, focusing on organizations working in South Central Los Angeles. To accomplish this, I contextualize both the political context and resistance to it on a timeline from 1965-2020. While I cannot possibly provide all of the rich and dynamic history of political organizing in Los Angeles in one dissertation, let alone a dissertation chapter, I hope to outline a social, political, and spatial analytic for how Black boys and young men make sense of their environment. The scene for youth organizing in Los Angeles is connected to a backdrop of dispossession from public systems and divestment in Black communities, coupled with the growth of both carceral logics and control. The work of community and youth organizers have been to force the state to equitably distribute resources as well as reduce the carceral footprint on the community. For boys and men of color, Black boys in particular, this is complicated, as they are both the targets of social interventions and carceral ones that situate them as problematic. Youth organizing provides an alternative space for them to both reconcile their trauma and address the systems that harm them.

Historical Perspective

Los Angeles at a Turning Point - the rise of the California's Carceral Regime in the Wake of Black Migrations (1900-1965)

In April of 1927, a young man by the name of Samuel Faulkner was killed by Los Angeles police officers in a liquor raid by two officers named Maceo Bruce Sheffield and Frank Randolph (Hernández, 2017). The killing of Faulkner led to large protests, not only because of his death, but because of the excessive policing experienced by Black Americans in what is now known as historic South Central. Hernández notes that both officers combined accounted for nearly 3000 arrests from 1925-1927. While the Black community in Los Angeles continued to grow between the 1920s and 1960s, with families looking for work and an escape from the white racial terrorism of the Jim Crow south, what they found was much more of the same - a white-run regime intent on maintaining racial order in the city. This order was maintained by police officers and laid the foundation for the ways that Black communities would work to fight back against racial apartheid in the city of Los Angeles.

Prior to World War II and the growth of the industrial economy in Los Angeles, the primary access to jobs in the growing urban landscape was in the retail and service sectors (Robinson, 2010). In 1920, there were roughly 11,341 salesmen working in retail, 28% of whom were Black. The patterns of discrimination did not stop there, as Black people in Los Angeles came under regular attack by law enforcement. Historian Kelly Lytle Hernández (2017) cites the aggressive attacks of Black nightlife on Central Avenue, which laid the foundation for police extortion and vice raids that added fuel to the local conflicts between state representatives and

law enforcement. In addition to the violence inflicted on Black communities through means of force, redlining contributed to the cities demographic makeup and restricted where Black families were allowed to live (Lipsitz, 2006; Massey et al., 2009; Pinkney, 2000; Sides, 2004; Vargas, 2006).

As time progressed, the Black community grew even more during the war and post-war economies. Black families, fleeing the south, came to Los Angeles for the opportunities of work and home ownership. Along the Alameda corridor, thousands of Black men and women found working class, blue color jobs that contributed to the growth of a solid Black middle class. However, access to these jobs was not an automatic thing - they were the result of direct organizing and advocacy. Chronicling how Black Angelenos had to gain access to jobs while navigating a housing shortage, Paul Robinson (2010), states:

> Throughout the 1940s and into the 1950s, most black Angelenos were forced to crowd into the established black zones of the city and denied opportunities in wartime employment and housing. In response to this discrimination, leaders within the black community rallied around the employment issue and battled against injustice. One such crusader was Charlotta Bass, co-founder of the California Eagle. Increasingly, Los Angeles-area labor leaders joined with national labor leaders to fight for the opening up of nonmenial employment to blacks. A. Philip Randolph's March on Washington resulted in Executive Order 8802 in 1941, which made it illegal for government contractors to discriminate in hiring during World War II. In the wake of Executive Order 8802, hundreds of thousands of blacks migrated to Los Angeles to work in the newly opened defense industries. Subsequent overcrowding in Los Angeles's "Black Belts" caused the housing crisis to become the number-one issue facing Los Angeles's black community during this time (p. 40).

As the housing crisis continued, so did the organizing to begin expanding the boundaries of Black Los Angeles and other Black neighborhoods throughout California. Ultimately, the supreme court decision in 1948 of *Shelley v. Kraemer* made it illegal to use racially restrictive covenants in selling and renting property: opening up racially restricted neighborhoods to Black home ownership (Robinson, 2010). Black families, especially those with stable access to employment, were able to move west into neighborhoods like Vermont Knolls, and into cities like Inglewood, Compton, and Gardena (Robinson, 2010; Sloan, 2005). Many Black families did not venture west of Figueroa Avenue until well into the 1950s, as restrictive housing covenants and the development of white gangs acted as figurative and literal barriers to prevent Black families from establishing roots on the west side of South Central, west of Central Avenue. As the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and the LA County Sheriffs were no longer able to enforce racially restrictive covenants, white terrorism grew as the boundaries of the Black community grew. This is personified in the bombing of William Bailey's house in 1952, which nearly destroyed his entire property and was felt across a 12-block radius. The LAPD and the LA County Sheriffs never investigated that bombing or other acts of terrorism towards Black communities, and regularly committed acts of violence of their own against racialized communities in Los Angeles (Robinson, 2010; Sides, 2004; Sloan, 2005).

For middle class Black families on the westside of South Central at the time, the police represented a passive entity that did nothing to keep them safe from white terrorism. On the eastside of South Central in Watts and other areas, the police were the occupying army that would often terrorize residents with brute uses of force and killings that fueled the antagonism between law enforcement and Black communities. These sentiments were common across the

entire Black community of Los Angeles. In the wake of the horrors of the Jewish Holocaust abroad, Black organizers and advocates in the United States attempted to borrow the framing of "genocide" as an analytic frame to describe the continued dehumanization of Black Americans. Organizations such as the Civil Rights Congress [CRC] and the NAACP took the lead on these efforts, uplifting disheartening stories of police violence in Black communities across LA. One such story was that of Herman Burns, who was killed by police through vicious attacks to his head and neck in a raid in 1948 (Hernandez, 2017).

While the poor and working-class neighborhoods along Central Ave on the eastside of South Central were the most susceptible to police violence, no parts of the Black community were exempt from police violence. The nation of Islam, Black churches all across South Central, and even Black businesses were regular targets of police misconduct. Even though Black families, organizations, and entire communities applied a tremendous amount of political pressure to the political establishment to do something, their calls fell upon indifferent ears. Sam Yorty, the mayor at the time (1961-1973) went as far to suggest that calls against police brutality were "inventions of communists" (Hernandez, 2017, p. 192). The near complete abandonment by the political establishment, the achievement of civil rights victories that were largely felt in the south and not the urban centers of the country, and consistent police harassment, created the conditions that led to the Watts uprisings in 1965.

Black Power and Repression in Los Angeles (1965 - 1975)

On August 11th, 1965, Marquette Frye was stopped for a routine traffic stop just outside of Watts, California. As Frye was taking a sobriety test, his brother ran home to go retrieve his mother, in the event that Marquette would be arrested, and they needed someone to take the car home. When they returned, there was a growing crowd of hundreds of Black Watts residents, watching what was happening. The crowd, already frustrated with the ways they were treated by police, were now becoming hostile, ultimately creating a situation where Marquette began to resist arrest. The police ultimately were able to make the arrest and they sped off, leaving the anger in the crowd to manifest into one of the largest Black urban uprisings of the decade. In a poll conducted by UCLA after the rebellion, it was found that 71.3% of Black men felt that police were not respectful, and 65% of Black men believed that police used excessive force when they had Black people in custody. The anti-establishment political consciousness was present in the Black community (Hooker, 2016). With over 30 Black people killed (largely by police), 4,000 arrests, and millions of dollars in property damage, the Watts Rebellion opened the political door for the growing Black power movement in Los Angeles.

Organizers like Ron Wilkins from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee [SNCC] were already mobilizing Black youth during this time, and played a large role in helping to coordinate efforts during and after the Watts rebellion in 1965. In the following year, two organizations emerged as the primary vessels for Black political consciousness - the LA Chapter of The Black Panther Party for Self Defense and the US organization. The Black Panther Party, led by organizers Alprentice "Bunchy" Carter and John Huggins, played a large role in introducing revolutionary nationalism to Black teenagers throughout South Central's Black communities. Many of the Panthers were previously connected to neighborhood protection groups such as the "Slausons" or the Businessmen," which began to emerge as a protection gang for Black folks to push back white gangs such as the "Spookhunters." The same can be said for the US organization, founded by Ron Kargena (now Maulana Karenga and founder of Kwanzaa) whose mission was rooted in cultural nationalism - in other words, helping to root U.S. Black

identity in African cultural values (see, e.g., Bloom and Martin, 2013; Brown, 2003; Claybrook, 2016).

While both groups experienced heightened conflict due to state infiltration, both organizations, the US organization and the Black Panther Party, recruited members from the ranks of Black poor and working-class communities. It has been identified that the average age of a Panther was around 17 years old, and many members of BPP leadership were in their early to mid-20s. For leaders like Bunchy Carter, his charismatic appeal to Black working class young men and his commitment to working class struggle helped to both recruit members of the party, and target those who were already connected to street organizations like the Slausons. Carter, who was recruited into the party by Eldridge Cleaver, was known by others as the "Mayor of the Ghetto." Carter's leadership within the Slausons Street Organization helped him to transfer the hundreds of members from the gang into the party (Bloom & Martin, 2013; Sloan, 2005).

On August 5th 1968, at an event to commemorate the 3rd anniversary of the Watts Rebellion, three Black Panthers were involved in a shootout with police - Stephen Kenna Bartholomew (21 years old), Robert Lawerence (22 years old), and Thomas Melvin Lewis (18 years old). As the story broke across the city of Los Angeles, it actually led to increased recruitment of rank-in-file members of the Black Panther Party. Separate from their Civil Rights counterparts, the appeal of self-defense and dignity drove membership through the roof, as Black youth who experienced the brute force of police violence did not want to submit to the status quo (Bloom & Martin, 2013).

In 1968, Black youth (with the support of the Black Panther Party) took over Manual Arts High School, near Vermont and King Boulevards. In their takeover, they demanded better education: increased resources for their schools, higher quality education, more Black teachers, and African American studies. Less than 10 miles away, Chicano students in East Los Angeles led walkouts with very similar demands: demanding access to education that wasn't tracking them into vocational career paths, Chicano studies, and more teachers to support them with overcrowding. With some adult support, young people in Los Angeles sought to build the power that they needed to redefine their relationships to the social institutions around them (Davies, 2017). The impact of the Black Panther party, Black power politics, and community control[5] was experienced both in the streets and on school campuses, as high schools and universities began pushing for community control over education, Black Studies, more Black teacher representation, and better access to educational resources (Davies, 2017).

The demands of the Black radicals at the time were not embraced by public institutions- in fact, there were active attempts to keep Black radicals away from local high schools in particular. Citing a memorandum from the Welfare Planning Council in 1961, Damien Sojoyner (2013) highlights how "Negro Hate Groups" were targeted as a way to limit and control forms of Black radical organizing. Sojoyner goes on to describe how programs such as the "Police Role in Government" were created specifically in Black neighborhoods to purposefully dissuade Black youth from joining movements for Black liberation and struggle. In addition, schools began to build their apparatus of control and suppression over Black youth during this time, largely by introducing police in more systemic ways to campuses (Felker-Kantor, 2018). As Black movements grew Los Angeles, so did state suppression, and the most insidious forms of state

[5] For Black communities, community control is broadly defined as the collective determination of the direction, management, and oversight of public institutions by everyday community members (Davies, 2017). As one of the central demands for Black power, community control and oversight of institutions played a large role in local organizing.

suppression happened in ways that were largely unseen and seemingly benign, primarily by normalizing the presence of police and the socialization of prisons through public schooling (Sojoyner, 2016).

State intervention and repression played a large role in the growth of surveillance and carceral technologies used to damage Black communities. At the local level, the shootout between the Black Panther Party and the Los Angeles Police Department at the office on 41st and Central created the law enforcement demand for more tactical teams, which led to the development of SWAT [Special Weapons and Tactics Team]. With federal intervention from the FBI's COINTELPRO [Counter Intelligence Program], the federal government fueled already existing conflicts between the US organization and the Black Panther Party, culminating in the killing of Bunchy Carter and John Huggins on the UCLA campus in January of 1969 (Bloom & Martin, 2013). The more the BPP grew, the more state repression it received, including an anti-gun campaign targeted at the Panthers.

Against the backdrop of the rise and fall of Black power, the industrial jobs that Black communities had fought for began to disappear. Organizers like the Labor Community Strategy Center's Eric Mann helped to organize to keep factories like General Motors open in a time when U.S. automotive manufacturing began to disappear from Los Angeles (Mann, 1986). As jobs in the community left and the Black organizing infrastructure began to dissipate, Black male youth continued to organize among themselves, without the guidance of the rigorous political analyses of their Black power predecessors. Black street gangs such as the Bloods and Crips grew from the ashes of the Black power movement and their earlier predecessors like the Slausons, Businessmen, and Gladiators, who had protected the neighborhood from white terrorism (Sloan, 2005). While members of different Crip and Blood organizations had political influence and wanted to remain active in the community, the introduction of drugs and the development of the underground economy of crack cocaine further plunged Black Los Angeles into turmoil. There were new murders every day, schools received little to no funding, and the carceral state began to expand its reach in order to control the new "Black Male Crisis" - Gang members. This crisis represented the types of masculinities that Shabazz (2015) describes, highlighting Black male pathology for the sake of expanding the carceral power of the state to restrict Black autonomy (Muhammad, 2010).

The Carceral Regime in LA and Responding to Mass Disinvestment (1975-1992)

In May of 1988, Robert Reinhold published a full-length feature article in the New York Times titled "In the Middle of LA's Gang Warfare." In this article, Reinhold detailed gang culture and gang intervention efforts in Black and Latinx communities, hoping to tell a balanced picture of what was happening in Los Angeles. In his attempt to paint a complex, yet still racially hostile picture of the impact of gangs in South Central, his article worked to further pathologize gang life and culture. In this depiction, you can see photos of Black and Latinx young men and boys throwing up gang signs, pictures of Black gang intervention workers, and a narrative that all too well paints an image for what Black and Brown communities intimately knew - gangs were an issue, but there were community members working to actively change this issue.

Both the City and County of Los Angeles invested in a program called Community Youth Gang Services, which deployed nearly 60 gang intervention workers to hot spots across Los Angeles to engage in preventative work and curb gang violence. While this organization did have a positive impact, it failed in comparison to the ways that both LA County and the City of Los Angeles invested in carceral infrastructure to attempt to control the gang "problem." There

was an explosion of policing that happened during this period, equipping law enforcement with new technologies of control to terrorize gang neighborhoods (Felker-Kantor, 2018). For example, the LAPD developed the CRASH [Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums] unit, formerly known as the TRASH UNIT [Total Resources Against Street Hoodlums] in response to juvenile gangs and threats. Through Mayor Tom Bradley's investments into "smart" policing, the department began to acquire new, militarized equipment such as batarams (large tanks used to break down doors into houses), high powered automatic weapons, and more helicopters to better surveil Black and Brown communities, and the development of gang-based responses that fostered more fear and harassment than actual protection for Black Angelenos (Felker-Kantor, 2018).

During this boom, there were two simultaneous onslaughts - the first was the passing of local, county, and state policies that worked to further criminalize youth and communities of color in gang neighborhoods (Sojoyner, 2016), the second was the systemic disinvestment in programs like Community Youth Gang Services (see, e.g., Felker-Kantor, 2018; Sojoyner, 2016). Law enforcement needed more funding to carry out operations like Operation Hammer (an initiative of the Los Angeles Police Department to conduct gang sweeps and incarcerate as many people as they can justify), and the state needed more funding to warehouse the additional people they continuously incarcerated. With the shift in funding away from prevention and social services, state and local funding priorities were shifted to invest in a more punishment-based responses, thus causing an imbalance in the types of support that Black communities received, and the types of state-sanctioned punishment that communities were subjected to in the long run, creating service gaps in the community and resource vacuums that further exacerbated already inequitable conditions (Felker-Kantor, 2018; Gilmore, 2007).

The Growth of Carceral Control and State Dispossession in Black Los Angeles

In March of 1982, James Mincey Jr., was killed using a carotid chokehold by the LAPD in his mother's driveway. He was one of 16 people killed by police using that particular chokehold in 7 years, 12 of whom were Black (Ridley, 2017). From 1974-1979, 584 people were shot by LAPD officers, 55% of whom were Black (Felker-Kantor, 2018). Black communities not only received the most violent end of the carceral state, but they were subjected to the carceral state's overbearing reach as well. In 1974, the Los Angeles Unified School District worked with the LAPD to create the first gang database known as "Alpha file" to track Black youth, especially in all Black schools at the time like Crenshaw, Fremont, and Manual Arts High School (Feltor Kantor, 2018). In addition, through their presence in the schools, police presence in the community also increased. Through failed reforms such as the Basic Car Plan (having police officers walk the beat of the neighborhood), LAPD officers found themselves on public transit, in shopping areas, and places with the greatest foot traffic in an attempt to build better trust between the community and law enforcement (Felker-Kantor, 2018). The program was ineffective among Black and Latinx residents, not only because they did not have trust, but also because Black and Latinx residents were, as a result, frequent targets for minor arrests.

In addition to the development of community programs by LAPD and other forms of the carceral state, the development of suppression programs like CRASH and other gang intervention units also led to the growth of the carceral regime and the prison boom. Between 1977-1988, the prison population jumped from 19,623 people incarcerated to 76,171 people incarcerated - largely due to drug offenses, gang involvement, and small, petty crimes (Gilmore,

2007). In 1988, the California legislature passed SB 1555, otherwise known as the STEP [Street Terrorism and Prevention] act, which animated a process called "gang enhancements," where prosecutors can add more time to a prison sentence if the person has known gang ties. This process is increasingly complicated by the fact that members of LAPD would routinely add individuals to gang databases for no apparent reason. For example, in 1981, before the STEP act was passed, the CRASH unit of LAPD added over 3,000 individuals to gang intelligence files, and it was virtually impossible to take your name off of gang databases without legal recourse (Felker-Kantor, 2018; Youth Justice Coalition, 2012). Indeed - the carceral regime had placed a literal and figurative stranglehold over the Black community in Los Angeles.

With the level of police presence in South Central, the common assumption would be that crime, violence, and the pain felt by the height of the crack epidemic would be suppressed. However, that was not the case. Members of the Black community felt that their plight was being ignored by the city, especially in the midst of economic growth and prosperity brought by the 1984 Olympics. For example, many members of the Black community felt ignored about the plight they faced connected to gang violence. Karen Toshima, a young Japanese woman who was caught in the middle of a crossfire in Westwood sparked a media frenzy about gang violence spilling into the more affluent, suburban, and white streets of Los Angeles. Her death not only inspired policies such as the STEP act, but it also pushed LAPD to double down on their policing efforts in South Central and other Black communities in Los Angeles (Ridley, 2017).

In 1991, two high profile cases shifted the tide for race relations and Black communities in Los Angeles - the cases of Rodney King and Latasha Harlins. Both cases exemplified anti-Blackness in Los Angeles, and pushed Black Angelenos over the edge, yet again. In the case of Latasha Harlins, a 15-year-old Westchester High School student, Harlins went to a liquor store near her house to purchase a bottle of orange juice. The wife of the store owner, Soon Ja Du, would confront and eventually assault Harlins, believing that she attempted to steal the orange juice even though she had the money in her hands. After a brief altercation, Harlins turned to leave the store, where she was shot in the back of the head and killed by Du. Later on that year, judge Joyce Karlin would convict Soon Ja Du, but instead of giving her the maximum sentence, or any jail time for that matter, she was sentenced to five years of probation and 400 hours of community service. Black community leaders such as Danny Bakewell from Brotherhood Crusade spoke out against the shooting, leading a demonstration in front of the courtroom to call for Judge Karlin's resignation, among other demands (Francis, 2020; Malnic, 1991; Ridley, 2017). Above other factors, this case demonstrated to an already frustrated Black Los Angeles that their lives were not respected and valued by any part of civil society, including the judicial system that refused to see them as victims (Francis, 2020; Malnic, 1991; Ridley, 2017; Stevenson, 2013).

In the same month as the Latasha Harlins murder, motorist Rodney King was viciously beaten by four members of the LAPD's Foothill Division. With the incident being caught on camera, news stations around the county were able to highlight what organizations such as the Coalition Against Police Abuse [CAPA] had been saying all along - that the police were an occupying force that exacerbated anti-Black racism and served as an occupying force in Black and Brown communities (Gooding-Williams, 1993; Ridley, 2017). During the criminal trial in 1992, the case was transferred to an all-white court in Simi Valley, where the four officers responsible for beating King would be cleared of all charges, under the guise that they acted within the letter of law and were lawful in their use of force to apprehend King. Since this case was nationally televised and garnered international media attention, the entire world watched as

Black life continued to be devalued by local officials, law enforcement, and civic institutions, which caused the 1992 LA Uprising. During this period of violence and turmoil, over a billion dollars of damage was done to the city of Los Angeles, dozens of lives were lost, and all of Los Angeles felt the pain of the Black community, who had continued to experience dispossession and urban abandonment.

Even after the riots and into the 21st century, Black communities in Los Angeles and other parts of Southern California were not immune to the residual effects of carceral policies, practices, and logics in their communities. Columnists, scholars, political pundits, educators, and a host of other parties all contributed to public discourse connected to a larger "Black male problem" in urban areas, specifically in Los Angeles. Gang violence continued well into the 21st century in spite of efforts to mass incarcerate entire communities. Both through popular culture and popular political discourse, Black youth were continuously looked upon as animals, beasts, and super predators that needed to be controlled (Aubry, 2009; Jones, 2004; Rios, 2011; Sexton, 2017; Shabazz, 2015).

LA's Movement Against (Youth) Dispossession - Communities of Color Fighting Back

Whether we are discussing the role of labor organizing to secure or create jobs for Black and Brown communities, the push to make public transportation more accessible and affordable, the closure of liquor stores, consent decrees against the LAPD, or forcing school districts to give resources to students of color - communities of color in Los Angeles, and Black communities specifically, have continually fought back against dispossession and carceral violence. In the wake of Black power and radical leftist movements in the 1960s, community organizations began to take a different approach to building community power. There were three primary themes with which community organizations strategically focused their efforts - 1) combatting racialized violence; 2) expanding access to resources, and 3) advocating for community control and power. While I do not intend to overview the exhaustive movement history in Los Angeles, I'll highlight some key battles, frames, and concepts that have shaped the landscape for Los Angeles post Rodney King.

Combatting Racialized Violence - Resistance to the Carceral State

The contributions of the Coalition Against Police Abuse [CAPA] could not be understated. Founded by Michael Zinzun, a former Black Panther, CAPA played a significant role in elevating the narratives of police violence in post-industrial Los Angeles. Through a specific Black-Brown organizing strategy, CAPA worked to build power amongst Black and Latinx communities that were both subjected to police abuse. CAPA's primary objective was to both develop mechanisms to hold police accountable, as well as gain community control of the police. Scholars have documented how difficult it was to align Black communities across class lines on gaining community control over the police, particularly because middle class Black communities saw the police as a necessary force for protection amongst the growing crack epidemic (Vargas, 2006). However, both working class and middle-class Black communities were able to align on the need to address police abuse and over-arrests (Felker-Kantor, 2018; Vargas, 2006).

Among other efforts for transparency, political education, and increased accountability, one major campaign victory was the consent decree filed against the LAPD after the Rampart Scandal. In the 1990s, the Rampart division of LAPD were found to have participated in gang activities, including murder, stealing and selling drugs and weapons, and facilitating Gang

violence. There are community accounts of police impounding the cars of known gang members and committing attempted murder in their cars, hoping to re-ignite gang violence in the post 1992 gang truce between the Bloods and Crips after Rodney King. Through diligent organizing and the support of the ACLU, CAPA was able to secure federal oversight of the LAPD, and ultimately push the department to more publicly confront their racist past (Felker-Kantor, 2018). Black and Brown-led organizations like Community Coalition, the Bus Riders Union, Concerned Citizens for South Central Los Angeles, and others, were big advocates for alternatives to law enforcement. They held political education townhalls, door-to-door canvassing campaigns, and produced literature about the need to build out alternatives to law enforcement that responded to the root causes for public safety (Mann, 2011; Rosas, 2019).

Advocating for Community Control and Power

Another key organization in the Los Angeles landscape was AGENDA [Action for Grassroots Empowerment and Neighborhood Development Alternatives], which is currently known as SCOPE [Strategic Concepts in Organizing & Policy Education]. Also founded by a former Black Panther, Anthony Thigpenn, AGENDA's primary objective was to take a more surgical and specific approach to organizing, developing new methods and tools to effectively build campaigns. Thigpenn and AGENDA are most famously known for developing a tool called the Power Structure Analysis (more commonly known as a power map) a tool in community organizing that is used to assess the organizing landscape and identify who has the power to make political decisions. The power map tool is now used by community organizers worldwide. Another strategy of AGENDA was to begin getting more involved in electoral politics. The organization began to support civic engagement efforts for electoral campaigns, leading to the election of California politicians such as Mark Ridley-Thomas, Karen Bass, and others such as Antonio Villagrosa (Pastor et al., 2018, 2021).

The Labor/Community Strategy Center has continued to play a vital role in LA's progressive landscape. Founded by lifelong activist and former CORE [Congress of Racial Equality] member Eric Mann, the Strategy Center's politics have been to center those who have experienced the harsh realities of racial capitalism in order to fight back against urban dispossession. Through their campaign, "Fight for the Soul of Cities," the Strategy Center focuses on establishing public transportation rights and eliminating the carceral footprint of police presence in Los Angeles. One of their marquee campaigns through the Bus Riders Union was to ensure that public transportation remained affordable and pushed to expand MTA bus services. In addition, Mann's own background as a labor organizer, trained by Black union leaders in Detroit and other rust-belt cities, led to General Motors staying open 10 years longer than any other industrial plant in Los Angeles. When it comes to jobs and employment, organizations like the LA Black Workers Center, Unite Here Local 11, SEIU 2015, and others have been at the forefront of the intersection of labor and racial justice (Pastor, 2018; Pastor et al., 2012, 2018, 2021).

From the uprisings, an apparatus of community-based organizations grew (both individually and collectively in coalitions with one another) to address the needs of the community. It is in this context that organizations such as Community Coalition, Brotherhood Crusade, the Social Justice Learning Institute, the Youth Justice Coalition, and so many others were born and continued to grow. Schools in or adjacent to South Central Los Angeles were crumbling down, the streets were overrun with police and violence, and communities continued to face the seemingly blunt message that they were disposable. While these four organizations

were certainly not the only organizations to combat youth and community dispossession, they are four organizations that used a public health lens, made an explicit commitment to politicizing young people to become agents of social change, and situated youth as leaders to transform their communities. Indeed, their birth and subsequent growth are indicative of the ways that communities of color, and Black communities specifically, have worked to build infrastructure to combat anti-Black racism and carceral control.

Black Community Control and Self Help in the Wake of Black Power - Brotherhood Crusade

In 1968, Walter Bremond formed the Los Angeles Brotherhood Crusade. In 1971, Walter Bremond and his longtime partner Danny J. Bakewell Sr. formed the National Black United Fund, which would ultimately work out of the same building. Already working in philanthropy as a program officer for the Cummins Engine Foundation, the Los Angeles Brotherhood Crusade promoted the concept of "Black people doing for ourselves" as opposed to relying solely on white philanthropy (Allen, 1992). Brotherhood Crusade would begin to engage in decades of Black community building through youth programming, community development, and advocacy, serving roughly 100,000 Black Angelenos annually (see, e.g., Bakewell, 1976)

The role of the Black United Fund was to organize fundraising efforts. One of the first major campaigns of the Brotherhood Crusade was to include options for union workers to donate to foundations outside of the United Way. With this victory, the Black United Fund side of Brotherhood Crusade was able to support other local chapters across the nation in cities like Los Angeles in order to build community infrastructure (Bakewell, 1976; Walters, 1994). In addition to their work to expand the resources going to Black communities, Bakewell and Bremond were business-savvy partners who worked to expand Black-owned businesses and LA's Black middle-class. The two were known for incubating Black businesses, helping others to start restaurant chains, and even investing in other community-based organizations. Their commitment to building a strong Black middle-class did not deter them from oppositional politics. Danny Bakewell led demonstrations against the city of Los Angeles in relation to police abuse, workplace discrimination, and most notably, against the murder Latasha Harlins and the subsequent underwhelming punishment of her assailant, Soon Ja Du (Freer, 2019; Malnic, 1991; Ramos & Lee, 1991). Indeed, the Brotherhood Crusade played a critical role in supporting Black life in Los Angeles.

As the new millennium turned and the conditions in Los Angeles began to change, so did the needs of the organization. In 2005, Charisse Bremond Weaver, daughter of Walter Bremond, took the reins of the organization and began to further expand its reach into the Black business community. Adopting a public health approach to youth development, Bremond Weaver was able to successfully expand the scope of the organization to cultivate youth leadership and reduce recidivism for Black young men. The success of the organization does not come without challenges, as Brotherhood Crusade has had to navigate the landscape of leading and participating in progressive social change, while being connected to individuals in the business community in Los Angeles. Brotherhood Crusade youth, staff members, and even executive leadership have taken bold stances on political issues connected to Black Los Angeles, from defunding the same law enforcement entities they have to partner with to pushing the local school board they partner with to changing its draconian school discipline policies such as willful defiance school suspensions. Indeed, while Brotherhood Crusade has established firm roots as a pillar of Black community life in Los Angeles, they have had to navigate a delicate balance of

advocating for social justice issues while partnering with public systems to reach the most marginalized youth.

The program where youth leaders from this organization were interviewed is called BLOOM - Building Lifelong Opportunities and Options for Men. Founded in 2012 as an initiative of the California Community Foundation - BLOOM has worked to support systems impacted Black boys and help them graduate from high school, rooted in a "Life Course" framework that seeks to provide multiple options for young men. The BLOOM initiative is connected to Brotherhood Crusade's Boys and Young Men of Color [BYMOC] programs area, where they have multiple staff (most of whom are Black men) who work with local schools to facilitate a curriculum rooted in socioemotional well-being and Afrocentric community principles. The BLOOM program operates as a part of schools, so they meet with their students daily during homeroom period, especially for middle and high school grades. Youth leaders from the BLOOM initiative within the BYMOC programs area, staff, and Brotherhood Crusade executive leadership were interviewed for this dissertation project.

Centering Health - Community Coalition and the Fight against Dispossession

Founded during the height of the crack cocaine epidemic in South Central Los Angeles, Community Coalition [CoCo] was established to provide a community organizing response to the public health crisis in Black and Latinx communities in Los Angeles. At its core, Community Coalition is interested in building community power by giving local residents the tools to fight back against the systemic divestment in Black and Brown communities. Community Coalition has an explicit commitment to inter-racial solidarity. Founded by now U.S. Congresswoman Karen Bass (who are the time was a medical care worker as a physician's assistant and clinical instructor) Community Coalition has engaged in campaigns to improve the health and viability of these communities through training and mass mobilization.

Two early campaigns in the history of CoCo have helped to define its legacy: the closure of liquor stores and the acquisition of school resources through measure BB (better buildings). Being deeply influenced as a medical care professional in an East LA hospital, Karen Bass knew that we needed a public health approach to the crack epidemic, not a carceral approach. She worked to help establish violence prevention programs in Los Angeles, while also ensuring that new liquor stores were not rebuilt after the LA uprisings of 1992. In their youth organizing strategy, CoCo wanted to counter the narrative that young people (specifically Gen X) youth were a "lost generation." They countered youth dispossession by working across south central high schools to train them on tactics for community organizing. In measure BB, youth worked to elevate how poor their facilities were in comparison to white and affluent schools outside of the LAUSD. They surveyed their student population, and they were able paint a public narrative that schools needed high levels of investment. After turning out voters to vote yes on the measure, the youth and partners at CoCo later found out that the funds were being used to enhance more affluent schools in LAUSD, so they proceeded to apply pressure to the district so that way poor and working-class students in the districts most vulnerable neighborhoods received support, totaling in $153 million in new projects. As an organization, their primary focus in recent years has been three-fold: a focus on the political economy and resource allocation (demanding our dollars), shifting the narrative from punishment and discipline to care (Generating Justice), and transforming the built environment around them (Building Thriving Communities).

Their marquee youth program, SCEYA [South Central Youth Empowered Through Action] is a co-ed program that seeks to develop the leadership of Black and Latinx youth across

six high schools in South Central. Their primary focus is educational justice work, however, they have also engaged in campaigns to decriminalize youth of color, to improve health conditions for their communities, and to increase investments in youth development. The program operates as a focused effort to cultivate the leadership skills and organizing development of youth, rooted in a social justice curriculum that further develops young people's critique of white supremacy, capitalism, patriarchy, and anti-Blackness. SCYEA youth are taught what Community Coalition calls, "the art and science of organizing," which refers to the strategic tools and skills used by organizers to build and cultivate a base. Through an entity called HSOCs [High School Organizing Committees], SCYEA youth, under the mentorship of their youth organizer staff members, help to organize their peers on their high school campuses around key issues that youth face.

Building a new generation of Leadership - the Social Justice Learning Institute

Beginning as an undergraduate research project for the Ronald E. McNair scholars program at a highly selective research university in southern California, the Black Male Youth Academy was conceptualized by Dr. D'Artagnan Scorza, an African American man from Inglewood, California, and the organization's executive director. Dr. Scorza developed a curriculum that was meant to develop the critical literacy of young Black males, which sought to provide a counter to the typical "middle class respectable" masculinist frames of other Black male educational programs (Sojoyner, 2016) and help them become critical of their environment in order to become agents of change within it (Scorza, 2013; Howard, 2014). The BMYA first began at a high school in the South Los Angeles area during the 2006-2007 school year, working with a group of Black males and teaching them how to conduct research for change through Youth Participatory Action Research. As the program that was originally academic research grew increasingly successful, and the scope of the issues it addressed grew, the BMYA became the leading program of the Social Justice Learning Institute in 2008. The Social Justice Learning Institute also addresses issues of public health and access to healthy food, making it a dynamic organization that tackles several levels of inequity like Community Coalition.

Since 2008, youth from the BMYA began using youth participatory action research as a vehicle for social change, starting with a projects about access to PSAT testing and access to healthy foods and gardens in Inglewood (Scorza, 2013). In the 2011-2012 academic year, SJLI established itself as a legitimate community organizing body. Using a youth participatory action research project, the youth at Morningside High School worked to highlight how their school district received subpar resources, in direct violation to *Williams v. State of California*. The students used photovoice (a style of youth participatory action research that allows youth to document their surroundings in photos and images) and youth-created surveys to demonstrate that they needed adequate resources in order to compete with other school districts. In addition to that, the youth collected data from public sources such as the California Department of Education in order to prove their point about the lack of funding. Using their research, the youth and their director, Dr. Scorza, were able to get an initiative put on the 2012 general election ballot titled Measure GG. Measure GG would effectively increase the property taxes to funnel more public dollars into facilities in Inglewood Unified School District. Through their organizing, the youth of SJLI, their Black Male Youth Academy program, got 87% of Inglewood voters to vote yes to an additional tax. This campaign solidified SJLI as a group that can take a youth participatory action research project and turn it into a legitimate policy win.

Under the leadership of Dr. Scorza, the organization's youth program, called the Black Male Youth Academy (now officially known as the Urban Scholars Program), operates in over six cities and two states across the country. Also connected to the BLOOM initiative from the California Community Foundation, Urban Scholars youth are selected to participate in the program by school counselors and recruited by other youth. The class is a part of the school day, so it is listed in many school districts as a leadership class. Students engage a curriculum rooted in "Social Justice Youth Development," which elevates a young person's sociopolitical critique of their environment while also developing their leadership and interpersonal skills. Youth leaders from SJLI all complete a youth participatory action research project as a part of their curriculum, where they identify a problem in their community, research it, and then provide policy recommendations on how the situation can improve to systems leaders. Through this process, SJLI youth learn about systems change and confronting power.

Abolition, NOW! Dismantling the Carceral State and the Youth Justice Coalition

Founded in 2003 through the direct narratives and political imaginations of 62 young people and adults in Los Angeles who were directly impacted by the juvenile justice system, the Youth Justice Coalition's primary focus has been the abolition of the juvenile and criminal justice systems. As its foundation, YJC is interested in working with the people most directly affected by the harms of the carceral state, meaning those who have personally experienced arrests, incarceration, deportation, probation, police violence, or their families. Given their proximity to those who are connected to gangs and the underground economy, YJC operates on a transformative justice model - meaning that they personally address all issues of accountability in-house. This is commonly referred to as a "no cop zone" by organizers and youth. In fact, they do not allow law enforcement of any kind into their building, especially with weapons. YJC prioritizes community-based alternatives to public safety, with positions such as peacebuilders on site who actively facilitate transformative justice circles among youth. The Chuco's Justice Center (the name of the building that houses YJC) also houses several community based initiatives, including 2nd Call, a widely known gang intervention and peace keeping organization led by Skipp Townsend.

There are few organizations in the country that have YJC's track record of policy victories to help transform the carceral state's relationship to Black and Latinx communities. Some of the most notable victories include changing California's use of force policy for police officers through AB 392, establishing a minimum age for youth arrests (SB 439), passing the racial profiling act (AB 953), ending the use of voluntary probation in California (AB 901) and LA County's schools, pushing the city of Los Angeles to end the use of gang databases by the LAPD, and closing juvenile courts and facilities. As of April 2019, the Youth Justice Coalition has operated out of the old Kenyon Juvenile Court building that they worked to close in 2013, personifying what it means to tear down harmful systems of incarceration and control in a community and build up systems of support and care. YJC operates a Youthbuild Charter School called FREE LA High School, a school focused specifically on educating those pushed out of the traditional school system. YJC uplifts impacted leadership, and a large number of the teachers, staff, and adults who work at FREE LA High and/or YJC have been impacted by the carceral state in some way.

Their youth organizing body is called LOBOS [Leading our Brothers and Sisters out the System]. They recruit for their organizing team from their school, including youth and young adults from the surrounding communities. LOBOS youth are trained in direct action organizing

and legislative advocacy, learning about how to best leverage public systems for the purpose of changing them. What distinguishes the LOBOS organizing team from other youth organizing bodies is that LOBOS are placed on a career-building track – meaning that they are paid by the organization as either part time or full time staff members. LOBOS youth receive political education directly connected to their campaigns, they develop campaigns by listening specifically to those who are closest to the issues, and they engage in roughly six statewide campaigns and seven local policy initiatives a year undergirded in their principles of abolition - 1) developing strong oversight and accountability for law enforcement agencies, 2) taking away policing and carceral power and infrastructure, and 3) building new systems of youth development, care, and wellbeing.

Conclusion

All four of these organizations are members of the Brothers, Sons, Selves Coalition - a strategic alliance of nine community-based organizations who work collaboratively to dismantle the school to prison pipeline and decriminalize communities of color. The Brothers, Sons, Selves Coalition is a part of a larger network of organizations and initiatives in Los Angeles who work with boys and young men of color in some capacity, whether that is through service delivery and violence prevention like Brotherhood Crusade, youth participatory action research like SJLI, youth base-building like Community Coalition or direct action organizing like YJC. While also being connected as youth-serving organizations, all four of these organizations are connected to a larger apparatus of organizations that work with Boys and Young Men of Color. For example, LA is one of the 12 cities to be selected for the My Brother's Keeper challenge grant by the Barack Obama foundation, and LA is home to one of the largest networks of philanthropic foundations in California. All of these organizations are connected to that network, alongside other networks of racial justice organizing for boys and young men of color such as the Brothers, Sons, Selves Coalition, the California Funders for Boys and Young Men of Color, and the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color. These organizations sit at a unique intersection - on one hand serving unique populations all within the same geographic region of South Central Los Angeles and its surrounding communities, and on the other hand youth-serving organizations that engage in youth and community organizing for social change. That makes these specific organizations and the Black male youth that they serve important for investigation.

In the following two chapters, I will be presenting data from this dissertation project, focusing on the voices and experiences of the youth. In chapter five, I focus on the sociopolitical critiques that the youth I interviewed have of their daily environments and society. Borrowing from the frameworks of the Universal Carceral Apparatus (Shedd, 2015), Architectures of Confinement (Shabazz, 2015), and the youth control complex (Rios, 2011), I name a process called the Normalcy of Carcerality, where Black boys and young men describe the day-to-day processes and practices of being disposed of by the social institutions with which they interact. In chapter 6, I focus on agency and the ways that Black youth make sense of their own agency through participation in youth programs.

Chapter 5 Navigating Carcerality and Dispossession in Los Angeles

Introduction

Wearing an all-white outfit to contrast his dark brown skin, Jacob "Blacc" Jackson spoke to the crowd outside of the Defund School Police rally outside of LAUSD on June 23rd, 2020. Blacc discussed his relationship with school police and school pushout, highlighting how he was regularly targeted and antagonized by adults at the high school he attended before FREE LA high school. He ultimately ended up being incarcerated in the juvenile justice system, representing a pattern of systems involvement and incarceration in his community of the Crenshaw district. In his region on the westside of South Central Los Angeles, the Million Dollar Hoods team at UCLA[6] found that over 93 million dollars had been spent on incarcerating people in his region, specifically between 2012-2017, and over 60% of those people were Black or African American. In a community-led survey by the Brothers, Sons, Selves Coalition (2019), one out of every eight youth who have been impacted by arrests lived in the zip codes surrounding Blacc's neighborhood in an overall survey sample of over 3,000 youth (N = 3,378).

Figure 3
Jacob "Blacc" Jackson

Note: Jacob "Blacc" Jackson speaking at the Defund LASPD Rally, June 23rd, 2020 (Brothers, Sons, Selves Coalition, 2020)

Blacc was rather forthcoming in his interview about the nature of incarceration and his family. His older brother, James Willis Poe Jackson, was killed by police in 1994 before Blacc was born, and he stated, "all of my uncles, cousins, brothers, nephews, all of us have done been

[6] The Million Dollar Hoods project at UCLA maps the human cost of incarceration by calculating the total expenditures used to arrest and incarcerate individuals. They were a part of a lawsuit to gain access to police documents that have helped to illuminate the far-reaching impact of carceral violence on communities of color across Los Angeles County. See https://milliondollarhoods.pre.ss.ucla.edu/about-us/

through the system." Blacc would describe how he would need to constantly be vigilant of police presence and try to avoid any altercations with police officers. Still, that was not enough. There are several occasions he named where he would be pushed up against the wall and searched, followed home, and even apprehended while simply walking out of his own home, well after he had begun organizing with YJC. Indeed, Blacc referred to how "normal" it felt to be a constant target of policing, surveillance and punishment, naming how others would assume that he was in a crisis - not that the systems attempting to control him were. Other interviewees cited overzealous security guards, normal instances of police violence, and school climates that prioritized controlling students over educating them. For some interviewees, they also cited how their communities did not have adequate (or in some cases, any) resources, how they attended dilapidated schools, and the full-blown experience of urban abandonment. The youth I interviewed had sophisticated sociological critiques of their environment, and it helps to fuel their activism.

Through sociopolitical development, young people learn how to approximately assess their own status in society, and then from their critique of their social conditions, move to act on them (Watts et al., 2003). For Black boys and young men, sociopolitical development would help them begin to assess their own status in society, and specifically the ways that anti-Blackness and carceral systems of control are embedded in the fabric of every social institution they encounter. From the interviews, there are two primary trends which are key factors in my dissertation. One finding, which I call the "normalcy of carcerality" - builds upon the frameworks laid by scholars such as Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2007), Khalil Gibran Muhammad (2010), Victor Rios (2011), Carla Shedd (2015) and Damien Sojoyner (2016) to highlight how Black male youth come into consistent contact with the carceral state and it's representatives, across civic institutions such as schools, police officers, community-based organizations, their families, and even their own neighborhoods. Black boys navigate this landscape of punishment and urban abandonment by 1) learning how to name their experiences with anti-Blackness and gendered social isolation, and 2) by learning how to identify power dynamics in their community.

Defining Carceral Power

Perhaps the most cited on critical perspectives of prisons and punishment, Michel Foucault (1975) traces the genealogy of punishment and human science in his seminal text, "Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison." In this text, Foucault traces the change in punishment tactics and technologies, focusing on the epistemic shifts in how the western world saw punishment. At first, punishment was meant to be violent, where the punishment of an individual would be physically inscribed on their body through torture and even violent death, largely based on some sort of defect with that person's soul. On the role of punishment, Foucault states,

> It was as if the punishment was thought to equal, if not to exceed, in savagery the crime itself, to accustom the spectators to a ferocity from which one wished to divert them, to show them the frequency of crime, to make the executioner resemble a criminal, judges murderers, to reverse roles at the last moment, to make the tortured criminal an object of pity or admiration. (p. 9).

Here, Foucault illustrates the punishment spectacle that existed in pre-enlightenment Europe. As the perpetrator would be sentenced to, and subsequently publicly punished for their crimes, the extreme violence they would endure could range from public burnings to literally having

prisoners "cut into pieces" after failed attempts of dismembering people via horses. The use of violence in this regard, as a tool to inscribe punishment on the body, was the primary way that states disciplined and controlled their population. Ever present in this use of punishment, however, was the need to discipline one's soul.

After the enlightenment era and the growth of science, the methods and technologies of punishment shifted from religious vengeance to judicial procedure, applying law and new methods of "analysis" to cases to determine how to discipline people for their actions. The soul, in other words, a person's essence and character, were also on display for public scrutiny and punishment. In reference to one's soul, Foucault (1975) argues,

> 'The criminal's soul is not referred to in the trial merely to explain his crime and as a factor in the juridical apportioning of responsibility; if it is brought before the court, with such pomp and circumstance, such concern to understand and such 'scientific' application, it is because it too, as well as the crime itself, is to be judged and to share in the punishment. Throughout the penal ritual, from the preliminary investigation to the sentence and the final effects of the penalty, a domain has been penetrated by objects that not only duplicate, but also dissociate the juridically defined and coded objects. (p. 18).

The need to judge one's soul, both from the times of hyper visible torture to the current times of the carceral state, remained a staple in the ways that punishment was conceived. For example, two people could both kill another human being. But the determining factor is not the fact that another human has lost their life, the determining factor is 'motive.' What was guiding this person's decision to commit such a crime? Was it premeditated? What circumstances would drive someone to kill? These questions, while they may seem like commonsense, are more about an individual's intent as opposed to the act itself. The logic of behavior and choices undergirds the need to put one's soul, or their "character" on display, in order to correctly weigh what type of punishment the person deserves for their actions.

Even though the growth of the prison and the transition from torture to procedure marked the end of inscribing punishment on the person's body, building a "carceral state" around them to control one's behavior has become the new discipline. In this way, punishment and discipline would no longer be about publicly inflicting violence on a person, but now, discipline would be ever-present in a world where the behavior of people was always in question. By focusing now strictly on behavior, Foucault (1975) states,

> As a result, a certain significant generality moved between the least irregularity and the greatest crime; it was no longer the offence, the attack on the common interest, it was the departure from the norm, the anomaly; it was this that haunted the school, the court, the asylum or the prison. It generalized in the sphere of meaning the function that the carceral generalized in the sphere of tactics. Replacing the adversary of the sovereign, the social enemy was transformed into a deviant, who brought with him the multiple danger of disorder, crime and madness. The carceral network linked, through innumerable relations, the two long, multiple series of the punitive and the abnormal. (p. 298).

The growth of the carceral signified the focus on behavior as a metric by which to judge someone as deviant or delinquent. If one were to deviate from whatever the social "norm" is, they would be considered a problem that demanded immediate reprimanding, and they were worthy of punishment in that moment. Carceral power, then, creates a social precedent where various social and political institutions punish people, focusing on their behavior that deviates from the expected hegemonic norms implicated by day-to-day actions (Gramsci, 1995). Carceral power scaffolds the previous sentiment of punishing souls, because now, if the person is not

behaving accordingly, their abnormal behavior is now juxtaposed with their inherent character based on subjective assessments of intent and will. In an advanced capitalist society like the United States, the logics of American capitalism within institutions like schooling are premised on creating behavior within students that conforms to capitalist logics of producing good workers (Anyon, 1980; Oakes, 2005). The logics of the carceral state connect to the logics of the capitalist state in how punishment is determined, because those who operate outside of the capitalist regime are not only frowned upon, they are punished for it, and their actions (read souls in the Foucauldian sense) are judged for not participating in the larger capitalist order. This underlying schema lays the foundation for the repression of behaviors that do not follow capitalist logics of reproduction (Anyon, 1980; Bowles & Gintis, 2011; Oakes, 2005; Willis, 1981).

Racialized Perspectives of Carceral Power

While Foucault remains a central figure in carceral studies, scholars who study race in the American context have continued to build on the ways that carceral power impacts the lives of Black Americans. Dennis Childs (2015) asserts that chattel enslavement provided key technological and architectural designs to the development of the modern day carceral state. Childs argues that the "middle passage carceral model" represents the "barracoons, maroon Despositos, coffles, slave holds, and plantations of the middle passage and plantation slavery as central to the Euro American imperialist project – as spatial, ideological, ontological, and economic analogues of modern punishment that haunted their way into the present by way of the formations of spatial violence..." (p. 28). The ways that enslaved Africans were controlled through enslavement laid the bedrock for carceral power. Shabazz (2015), Wacquant (2009), and Meiners (2016) make similar arguments, suggesting that the built environment of low-income housing, poor Black communities, and even schools normalize prisons as both an ideological and material reality.

Carceral power is not just the ways that discipline and punishment are enacted on the body, they also represent the multifaceted ways that control is enacted on Black communities. Surveillance is another key aspect of carceral power. Simone Browne (2015) highlights how methods of surveillance and control, such as wanted posters, branding, and specific government intervention, all played a role in policing Black life and regulating Blackness - meaning an attempt to subvert and enclose Black culture, life, and political resistance to white supremacy (Sojoyner, 2016). Victor Rios (2011) argues that Black and Latinx males experience an inverted "panopticon," which is a surveillance technology of a prison to always watch prisoners. Rios suggests that through community institutions such as community-based organizations, schools, businesses, and through mechanisms like probation, young men are the ones in the panopticon, and they are constantly being watched by everyone around them. Studies have shown the impact of carceral control on the psyche and the finances of Black communities, highlighting how both legal debt and paranoia play a role in regulating the behavior of communities (Goffman, 2009; Harris et al., 2010).

Finally, carceral power is a way to prevent Black communal organizing and resistance. Dylan Rodriguez (2007), Damien Sojoyner (2013, 2016), and Jordan Camp (2016) assert that carceral power was a response to Black communal organizing and uncivil resistance such as riots, building takeovers, and other activities not condoned by the state as legitimate forms of resistance. Nonviolent Black activists such as SNCC pre-1966 and the Southern Christian Leadership Council purposefully used the act of being incarcerated as a way to indict southern

segregation and American apartheid (Corrigan, 2016). While the state was criminalizing the efforts of nonviolent activists, it did the same with activists who sought self-determination and community control under the concept of Black power (Berger, 2014; Bloom & Martin, 2013; Sojoyner, 2013). Carceral power was used to question the morals of Black power activists who did not align with the moral hygiene of the non-violent civil rights movement, and the carceral state acted as a neutralizing tool to incarcerate activists who dared to question the state's monopoly on violence (Corrigan, 2016).

Articulating the Normalcy of Carcerality - The Presence of Punishment

Drawing upon a range of literary, archival, and public policy sources, Rashad Shabazz (2015) provides an interdisciplinary analysis of the impact of carceral power on the development of Black masculinity in his work titled "Spatializing Blackness." Through what he calls "architectures of confinement," Shabazz asserts that the built infrastructure of Chicago's Black ghetto - the rooms, the policies that restricted Black travel, and the customs that limited Black male sexuality, all contributed to carceral control. Shabazz adds to the racialized literature on carceral power through his assessment of identity development as a result of carceral control, in which he argues that masculine performances are birthed by the antagonistic relationship of Blackness to (white) civil society. Carla Shedd (2015), also in Chicago, asserts that the universal carceral apparatus represents the myriad ways that prison infrastructure (police presence, security culture, surveillance, cameras, metal detectors, etc) are used as mechanisms to regulate the behavior of Black and Latinx youth. More broadly, the universal carceral apparatus is connected to the broader socioeconomic dispossession of Black and Latinx working class communities in Chicago, as the communities needed to be "policed" in order to be controlled. Gilmore (2007) and Davis (2011) articulate how prisons and the "prison solution" became the primary vehicles with which to address social problems. Through processes of disappearance and incapacitation, local, state, and federal levels of government began to use prisons to incarcerate communities of color at a grand scale, and through the prison boom, the political infrastructure to actively discriminate against Black communities was rebuilt (Alexander, 2010; Wilson, 2007)

One of the central factors that contribute to the climate of carcerality is the omnipresence of punishment, both inside and outside of the penal system. Using policies, historical analysis, and statistical data, Wacquant (2009) seeks to highlight the ideological shift in time that placed the subproletariat in a perpetual state of management. More specifically, Wacquant focuses on how both European and American states used the penal system and welfare (which he terms, "workfare" and "prisonfare") to punish their poor, as a means simultaneously control them and use them as a tool to perpetuate a neoliberal capitalist economy. Synthesizing both material and symbolic forms of oppression, Wacquant suggests that increases in underpaid labor, commodifying public goods, dismantling social protection programs and ideas, and reinforcing the punitive apparatus through public consciousness created the neoliberal punishment system that is the state today. His understandings of the kinship between prison and the ghetto are particularly useful from a structural functionalist standpoint, emphasizing that each form of legal discrimination led to another, which created the conditions necessary for mass incarceration and the overly punitive penal system.

At the intersection of the architectures of confinement, the universal carceral apparatus, and the ways that prisons were used to disappear social problems, is the ways that Black boys and young men experience discipline, punishment, and anti-Blackness in their gendered bodies specifically. Scholars have long described the ways that criminality has been assigned to Black

men and masculinity (Bristol & Mentor, 2018; Crenshaw, 2014; Curry, 2017; Ferguson, 2001; Flowe, 2020; Muhammad, 2010; Suddler, 2020). Muhammad (2010) and Curry (2017) assert that for Black boys and men, academic scholarship played direct role in the development of criminal caricatures. Both Dumas (2016) and Crenshaw (2014) assert that the development of Obama's My Brother's Keeper project was in some ways informed by the inherent need to control and contain Black boys and young men within the confines of a respectable masculinity. Sojoyner (2016) further advances these arguments, suggesting that the "masculinity solution" was introduced to schools as a way to push Black boys and young men to steer away from criminality, while specifically infusing them with ideas of respectable masculinity rooted in the neoliberal economy, especially in their schools (Oeur, 2018). At the center of this logic is the notion of crisis - that Black boys and young men are in a crisis that needs to be solved.

In this study, I define the normalcy of carcerality as the everydayness of carceral power and control enacted on the bodies of Black children, specifically Black boys and young men. The racialized, gendered, and socioeconomic schemas of urban landscapes like Los Angeles bring young people into consistent contact with law enforcement and carceral logics rooted in punishment, control, and disposability - which is the way that communities can be punished and discarded if they do not fit within the neoliberal economy (Lamont Hill, 2016; Spence, 2015; Taylor, 2016). For Black boys, the normalcy of carcerality is rooted both in the omnipresence of the schemas of discipline they experience, and the almost nonchalant nature at which they encounter it. The normalcy of carcerality is not just at the direct hands of the carceral state itself - it is also rooted in the schools and the carceral nature of schooling (see, e.g., Allen & White-Smith, 2014; Curtis, 2014; Rios, 2011; Rocque & Paternoster, 2011; Sojoyner, 2013). The schools that the young men attended in this study facilitated school climates and cultures rooted fundamentally in correction, punishment, and discipline. Teachers, school administrators, staff, and others are all capable, and in the case of these youth, have carried out the actions that undergird the normalcy of carcerality. While the literature is rich with studies that highlight how Black boys experience school discipline (Ferguson, 2001; Howard 2014; Meiners, 2016), what often is not shared is the experiences of Black boys themselves, especially ones that are trained as activists. In this next section, I weave field notes and reflections directly from organizers in Los Angeles in with the narratives of the youth interviewed in this study to highlight how Black boys experience the everyday nature of carceral control in their schools and communities.

Schooling as a Site of Black (Male) Suffering

While working at the Social Justice Learning Institute, one of the things that was taught to the youth there was that they had a voice, and they should speak up if they feel that something wrong is happening. One thing that at least I did not account for, would be the retaliation that Black boys would experience for challenging their conditions. One day while preparing to go to our Black male youth academy class at one of our Inglewood Unified School District sites, I see one of our youth in tears, riding on the back of a security golf cart on the way to the principal's office. At this time, I was an academic support coordinator, so I followed the golf cart to learn more about the situation. When I arrived, campus security had told me that our student, Robert [a pseudonym] had been detained for refusing to leave his class when his substitute teacher kicked him out. The assistant principal, who was an ally to the Black Male Youth Academy program, assured me that Robert would be fine and will be sent to his BMYA class, so I could meet him there. I proceeded to our class across the campus, and in about 10 minutes, Robert was dropped off at the class by the campus security guards. When class began, word had gotten out about

what happened to Robert, and we all began to inquire as to what happened. Robert told us that he was kicked out of class because he challenged the teacher, suggesting that what they were learning was, "bullshit."

> Robert- [to another student in the class] You wrong for even addressing somebody that way. I got sent outta class, they called three fuckin types of people: teachers, security, school police just because I wanted to learn something…I was told because of my past, my actions before, is the reason why I won't be able to have a voice and speak up on whats wrong. I'm still getting in trouble for nothin'!! Just because I told that bitch {the teacher} I wanna learn something? They had to get school police and tell me "oh they are gonna arrest you if you don't get up out your seat". But, it's not 9:40 [when the period ends]. I told them I'd rather sit here and not get this education that this teacher is supposed to give me, until 9:40. 'Cause my parents are wastin' they money, sending me to school when I'm not learning nothin'. It's wrong, it's fucked up. I go talk to the assistant principal about it, and she tell me I'm not wrong, but I'm not in the right, , because she is supposed to defend her colleagues. That's bullshit that's what it is. They don't want us to fail, they don't. *They think they actually helping us, but it's not, this shit is hurtin' us, down to the bone. All they do is stress us out*…. I asked Ms Red today, what's the difference between learning something and knowledge? You know what she told me? 'I don't know, but when you take this test you are supposed to remember everything that you was taught… Am I wrong for speaking up on the education that were not getting?!

At this point in the program, Robert had been exposed to critical theories such as the Banking Concept of Education by Paulo Freire, Transformative Resistance by Solorzano & Bernal, and the Miseducation of the Negro by Carter G. Woodson. As Robert began to internalize the content he learned, he began to challenge some of his teachers and the content he was taught. In these moments, he asserted his agency to confront agency and power in order to change his conditions. However, the school was not structured to take critical feedback from students or even engage their suggestions, it was structured to socialize them.

As a key component in Robert's explanation of what happened in class that is the line, "they think they actually helping us, but it's not, this shit is hurtin' us, down to the bone. All they do is stress us out." Michael Dumas (2014) refers to this as Black suffering. In his discussion of the ways that community leaders, parents, and everyday alumni imagined the ramification of school desegregation, Dumas focuses on the ways that suffering for Black people in schools was an "ordinary" or mundane" thing that just happened, everyday. Dumas states, "…black suffering in schools signifies the loss or cultural devaluation of [Black] humanity, and the loss of the material resources that allow black subjects to be regarded (and educated) as human beings" (p. 21). What makes this point particularly potent, is that the loss of humanity for Robert was rooted in his silencing, in his inability to even raise questions about the type of education he was receiving, and the activation of the schools' carceral apparatus (school police and campus security) to silence him. For Black boys who learned about their conditions and learned to challenge them, this type of treatment was normal - punishing them for daring to question adult authority. What made this even more challenging, is that everyone in this situation was Black - the teachers, the staff, the administrators, and even the school police and security guards. It affirms Bristol and Mentor (2018) in the ways that Black men specifically on campuses are used as tools to be representatives of the universal carceral apparatus, and it is a slight departure from Dumas (2014) in that this school had been majority Black and Brown since the 1970s.

More aligned with Dumas (2014) study about school desegregation and Black suffering are the various ways that Black boys continued to experience suffering at integrated schools. Prior to transferring to a majority Black school in the mid-city LA area, Christian Wimberly attended Fairfax high school in the Hollywood area of Los Angeles, even though he lived in South Central. Even though Christian took several buses to get to school, it did not matter to his teachers and other adults on campus, as he was a regular target for harassment as a Black boy who did not engage in school sports. In one interview for KCET, Christian highlights how he was sent to the principal's office for having drugs on his person during his Physical Education class (Griffin, 2020). The drugs turned out to be his inhaler. Describing the environment, Christian states:

> As a matter of fact, I'll give you a story to tell you exactly... I've battled with depression before. I used to go into class with my hoodie on and put my head down the whole class, in all my classes in Fairfax. Their teachers would always say, "Oh my god. You keep doing that, you're not going to pass my class." But they wouldn't really ask me what's wrong. They didn't really care what was wrong with me. They just assumed they knew what was wrong with me. That's just what all teenagers do. It wasn't because of nothing at home or anything like that. It was just like I told you, like these distractions, I'm not used to it… I don't know what I'm supposed to be doing, because am I going to [engage in unproductive activities] or be the smart one? And if I be smart, they're going to make fun of me. You know how high school is. So it's going through that thing. Then teachers just like, "Yo, he's a "nerd" or a "weirdo." I'm the one black kid in the class, too. There's not a lot of kids being bused out. I'm the one black kid in the class and I got my head down, so I guess I'd be the stereotypical, but at the same time, it was just too much for me. I'm just going to be honest. Some people got a hold of it and made it through, and I'm proud of them. But for me personally, it was one of those things where I couldn't deal with it. And I walk in the class late and the teacher goes, "Oh, Christian's back at it again." Everybody started laughing. He had no idea how much that broke me inside. He had no idea how much... I had cried, literally, after that class period. I didn't even go to sixth period. I just started crying. That hurt me, because it's like, who does that? You know what I mean? It's like, what? You know what I mean? It's like, what is really... I don't know how to explain it, but just that moment right there, I just felt like, "Okay, that's what you think. That's what you want. I'm that guy." Instead of asking the counselor, Christian needs help, or trying to call... Even if they called, I don't know how to explain it. But it was just one of those things where like, "Okay, I'm going to continue to keep doing this since they already want me to do it." You know what I mean?

As Christian Wimberly is alluding to in this extended excerpt, Black boys in his school were not given the benefit of the doubt or grace. By experiencing the social isolation of being the only Black kid in class, Christian had to navigate racial battle fatigue from both his peers and the instructor. In this sense, Christian was led down a path that was not particularly productive, and this would not change until he became a member of Brotherhood Crusades' Bloom program and a student at his new school in mid-city.

Schools "giving up" on youth has been explored in education literature as a function of social reproduction, especially in working class and poor schools (Noguera, 2003). The act of "giving up" on a young person is deeply connected to the logics of inequity in schooling, in which Oakes and Rogers (2006) assert undergird the ways that policy makers, educators, and the elite prevent the flow of resources to urban education specifically, and public education more

broadly. Also highlighting what is feels like experience a school "giving up" on a youth, Lequan asserts:

> Okay. It's kinda like 50/50, like it was definitely male students who they did empower or like they did really like rally behind and try to support them the best way they could. And it will also some students, some black male students that day just like give up on and you could tell that they had given up on them because like all the resources and everything that they had tried in the beginning, you know, they just wouldn't even do it anymore. Like it was one dude in particular. He was in 9th when I was in twelfth and he would get in trouble like everyday at these little like tutoring things are like these little leader things were we took ninth grader under our wing and stuff. And he was mines and you could just tell like the school gave up on him, didn't really forced them to do nothing. You know? They made him comfortable to where he wanted, you know, if he didn't want to do no work, if he didn't want to come to class, they'll just let them walk around the school. It was kind of like that. No, no one, no accountability, no real like. Nobody making him do work. Like oh go do your work bro. After a certain while they didn't make him go to the detention, didn't make him get his work done. And his grades, his grades in fact got worse after

As Lequan describes above, students at his high school were paired with youth in the freshman class as a way to try and develop a peer-based mentor/mentee relationship. For many educational institutions, they attempt to build mentorship programs, especially for Black and Latinx boys (Harper & Williams Jr, 2013; Singh, 2019; Sojoyner, 2016). However, as Sojoyner (2016) notes, the masculinity solution of developing mentorship programs haphazardly without considering race, class, gender, power, and identity only further exacerbates issues, and replicates already problematic notions of masculinity (Oeur, 2018). In addition, the abandonment that students feel is connected to the ways that discipline and punishment are connected to the logics of capitalism. As Wacquant (2009) notes, with the political economy being structured to facilitate contact with the penal systems, it is no surprise that schools would function in a way that creates the conditions for suffering, despair, and abandonment.

Carceral Presence on Campus

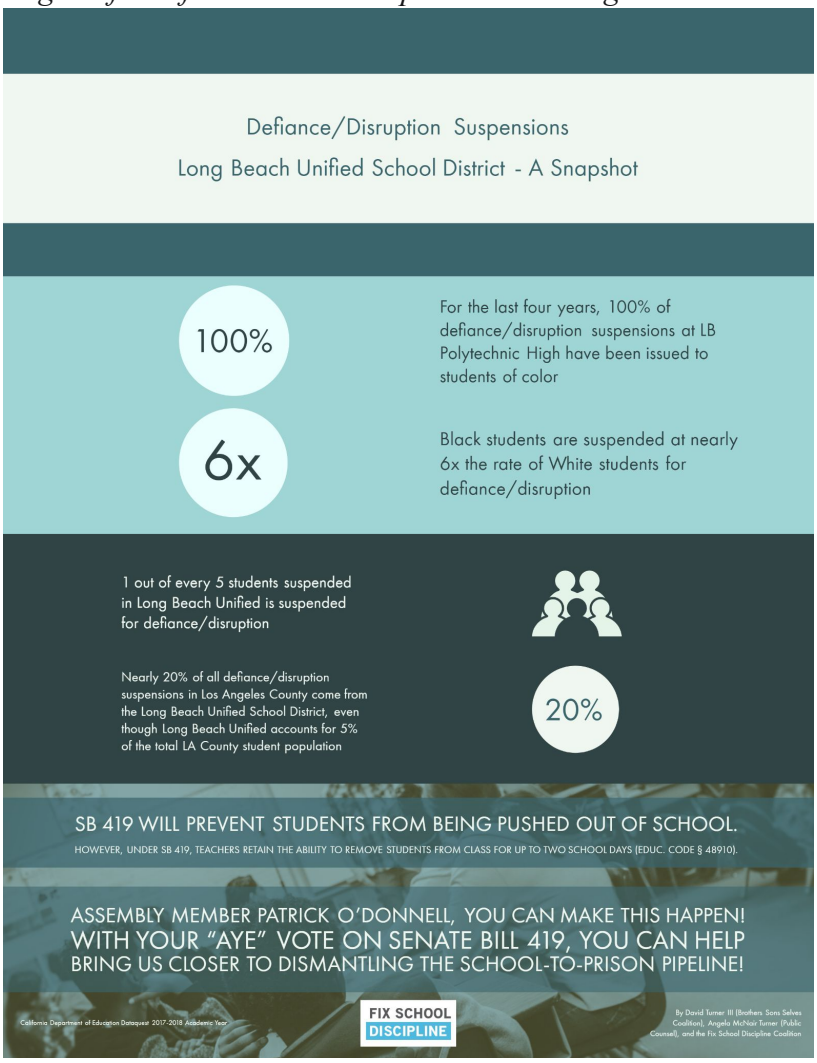
While working at a school in the Long Beach Unified School District with SJLI, we would oftentimes have to support our youth with court cases, write them character letters, and do our due diligence to ensure that youth in our programs did not recidivate. I walked into the George Deukmejian Courthouse in Long Beach and was immediately taken aback at how new and fresh the facility was compared to other court buildings in LA county. I met with one of my students, Samuel, and his father upstairs with my character letter in hand, in hopes that it would have an impact on his case. Samuel identified as Samoan and had ties to our program through his family that also worked for the organization. When we met with the judge, he read the student's reason for suspension out loud, and he had been suspended for *breaking up a fight.* The judge chuckled under his breath and said, "wow, they really suspend kids for anything these days." Samuel had to appear in court because being suspended was a violation to his probation. However, his grades that semester were stellar, and he was a leader in our class. His large, athletic build and reddish-brown skin made him appear much older than he actually was at the time, as he still had the face of a young teenager at 15 years old.

What happened to Samuel was a common occurrence - students being disciplined and suspended for mundane things. Much like carceral power in communities, carceral power in

schools also looks like students being disproportionately punished for reasons that would otherwise be excused if they were white children. As the manager of the Brothers, Sons, Selves coalition, our coalition co-sponsored state legislation to end willful defiance school suspensions - meaning the types of school suspensions where students can be suspended for simply defying adult figures on campus (Rivera, 2019). This includes wearing hats, headphones, or having your head down in class. In our advocacy, we found that in Long Beach, the school district Samuel attended, willful defiance suspensions were the worst in LA county, where Black students were six times more likely to be suspended than white students, and at one school, 100% of the students to be suspended for any offense were students of color. We were able to pass SB 419 (Skinner), to end the practice of those suspensions for grades K-8, but we ran into pushback for the high school grades, as white state legislatures were averse to the idea that Black and Brown children, particularly boys, could defy authority.

Figure 4

Infographic detailing willful defiance school suspensions in Long Beach



Note: Infographic Created by David C. Turner & Angela McNair Turner, 2019

The need to control Black boys on campus lends itself to the entrenchment of carceral presence and logics on campus. Erica Meiners (2016) asserts that interventions like restorative justice that are being implemented in schools across the country, and in her case in Chicago, still tend to rely on problematic assumptions of who the youth are, and how they need some form of discipline and accountability in lieu of resources, investment, and delicate care. For many Black boys, that means consistent run-ins with campus security, campus police, and overzealous educators who seek to discipline youth before understanding them.

For Jathan Melendez, an alumnus of the SCYEA program from Community Coalition, the culture of the school reminded him of a prison. Jathan states,

> We had a lot of students in each classroom and it was as if staff members on campus treated the youth as if they were automatic like bad students. It was like a prison yard. To be honest, if you really think about it like the food that they fed us, the way that the school was gated, the way that the staff members treated us, it was like they were always on the defense. They were always ready for something to happen and even when I think about the way that the classrooms were, it was more so just why we're going to get in here, get that education and get out but it was like I also had to ask myself was it even education because I remember a lot of times where I was just confused about the content in the classroom. It didn't feel like the teachers put in as much effort to teach the students.

In this instance, Jathan is describing how the school facilitated a prison-like culture and climate. Standing out in this assertion is the very questioning of education itself. For Jathan, he questioned why the school put more of an emphasis on controlling youth than educating them. As he recalled the random search policy, Jathan stated,

> There was times like with the Black staff members I felt like they were targeting us the most from the time that we came into school. I remember seeing... we had a line outside of the school where you had to make sure that your uniforms are on before you came into campus. We had a teacher, well, I wouldn't call him a teacher, I think he might be a dean now but... this guy named Mr. Harris he used to stand at the door and he'll randomly select students to show their uniform shirt and I felt like he was always choosing on the Black folks. Not only that but we also had random searches too. He'll pick like one to show their uniform shirt, let a couple students pass by and he'll choose another one to check their backpacks and then he'll let a couple folks roll by and it was just weird. Just the environment itself... It was like by the time I got to a damn classroom, like I don't even want to be here, I feel like I went through a whole jail check in before I even got to the classroom. I'm still appalled that I'm sitting in this classroom right now literally two minutes after my backpack got randomly searched for no reason, no reason at all. Or that I could have possibly been sent home because my mom wasn't able to wash my uniform shirt. Like I said, as far as our family's income go, we were poor, so I only had two uniform shirts…

In Los Angeles, both the random search policy in schools and the implementation of uniforms were tools used by the district to curb gang violence and to act as a deterrent to school shootings. However, both policies, particularly the random search policy, were used to further criminalize students and violate their rights to privacy and personal autonomy. LA based organization Students Deserve played a central role in the #StudentsNotSuspects coalition to challenge the use of the policy, and pushed the issue into mainstream consciousness (Kohli, 2019). As Jathan stated above, and as hours of testimony demonstrated, the random searches were not all that "random," as students recounted patterns of discrimination against Black students in particular.

The climate of security guards, school police, and adults who worked to criminalize students played a role on most high school campuses with any number of Black students, but especially those with high concentrations of Black students. Kevin Miles, an alumnus of Washington Preparatory High School, recalls his experience with school security, stating:

> The security, they believed in enforcing... Security [is just like] LAPD. I'm going to be honest with you. At Washington, security [is just like] LAPD. We ain't trust them. Because they was doing random searches. They stopped doing random searches probably like 11th, 12th grade. But they was doing random searches. And they knew who to "search". They knew who to search. They was like, "Oh yeah, he might, he might. Oh yeah, I see him hang out with this person. Oh yeah, you all come out in the hall. We finna dump you all backpacks." They was ruthless like that. I'm going to be honest with you. Thinking about it, they was ruthless like that for the first two years. It was the one security I will never forget. It was a fight. And in my opinion as the security... I was once a security guard for a grocery store, so I kind of got the experience as a security guard. But my experience, as a security guard, you should not stop a fight by slamming a student. You feel me? You shouldn't be like, "I'm going to end this fight by taking down one of the kids so I only have one to worry about." You a grown man. And at the end of the day, I understand how some high school kids may seem as far as we grew up in rough situations. So we ain't scared of them. You feel me? We not going to be... We not finna be like, "Oh, stop? All right. Oh, we scared." We going to still talk our stuff, but we going to still respect authority if you handle it right. But don't come in it just body slamming kids. That's how the security was…

As Kevin articulates, the manner in which campus security treats students is parallel to how law enforcement treats people. While campus security at some schools are distinct from school police, they often acted like the police to control and suppress students.

For many schools, police officers and probation officers acted as staff members at schools alongside often exhausted and overworked staff and faculty. In a report highlighting the WIC 236 program, a program that was used to expand the reach of the juvenile probation department and give "pre-probation" youth access to probation services, schools often repurposed their probation officers to be coaches, instructors, and even mentors for youth (Soung et al., 2017). As organizers from the Youth Justice Coalition, Anti-Recidivism Coalition, Children's Defense Fund and Urban Peace Institute (who would later form the LA Youth Uprising Coalition) referred to this process as "net widening" and publicized the reach of the probation department into LA County schools, some schools worked diligently to defend their school-based probation officers.

School police officers, on the other hand, were a creation of districts themselves. Felker Kantor (2018) highlights the changes to LAUSD that led them down the path to starting their own police department, namely in their collaborations with the LAPD to track potential gang members on campus. In 1984, the Los Angeles Unified School Board voted to create their own police department, independent of municipal police, to serve their needs. As time progressed, the school police budget in LAUSD eclipsed most municipal police budgets in LA county, becoming at one point one of the five largest police departments in the county. Local researchers helped to elevate some of the issues with school police, so that way organizers on the ground can have more ammunition to address issues of criminalization. Edwards et al. (2020) of the Black Male Institute at UCLA found that the LA School Police department saw a 48% budget increase, even as enrollments in the school district were dropping. Allen et al. (2018) of the Million Dollar

Hoods project at UCLA found that Black students comprised 25% of all school police arrests, in spite of only being 8% of the total LAUSD population. In addition, Allen et al. also found that boys of color comprised 76% of all LASPD involvement.

As school police conducted their jobs on campus, they worked to suppress, not solve, student conflict. Recalling how the school police dealt with fights, Aidan Flores from CoCo states,

> Aidan: I would say everything is smooth from teachers to the principal until you get to like school police, because like nobody likes it they're on campus
>
> David T.: so, so you said nobody likes that they're on campus. Why not? What do they do?
>
> Aidan: Um, mostly I think is because of the way they make, make us feel because the school grounds and you're here just walking around looking, looking at random kids and staring them down. For some reason, it just leaves tension in the air…It was [one time] in ninth grade and there was a fight at school afterschool. And instead of breaking up the fight like a regular person, would they just put the police just pepper spray in the air and it got in a whole bunch of people eyes.

In this excerpt, Aidan is highlighting how school police became enforcers and suppressors as opposed to adults trained in conflict resolution. On the Community Coalition social media page, SCYEA youth from Fremont high school highlighted how school police also used pepper spray to suppress fights, as opposed to just breaking up the fights and using the district-mandated restorative justice model to address conflict on campus.

While working at SJLI, the organization served students in continuation schools, which are schools where students can attend to make up credits and still work to complete high school. On many occasions, students at continuation schools were segregated from general population students on isolated campuses or in separate sections of main campuses, and they were policed and treated differently. In my interviews with staff from SJLI, they highlighted how egregiously continuation students were treated compared to other students. Speaking about his experiences at a continuation school before he attended FREE LA high school with the Youth Justice Coalition, Jared “Jaybo” O’Brien states:

> Every school is different, that's for sure, but I would say continuation schools is more free. It's not that strict. The continuation school I went to, the CRCD Academy, that was on Trade Tech's campus. So, the strictest thing about that was that the sheriffs was on campus. So, anytime there was a fight or any type of miscommunication or anything like that, the sheriffs would be the ones to resolve that situation or be the person to show up… [In my experience] I [would] definitely see black students get arrested more, because I could remember right here in LA when I was going to CRCD, it was five of us who was hanging out. And we walked across the street from Trade Tech by the McDonald's and stuff to go and eat, and we're coming back, and we're standing in front of the school, and the cops, the sheriffs pulled up. And they searched all of us. The homies both had [narcotics on them, both legal, but one had weed.] And they ended up taking the homie that had the weed, because they said his attitude was bad, but he was black, and the other homie was a Latinx dude. And they left him. They just took away the pills, and they

didn't arrest him. He ended up didn't come out of jail till a year later, because he had caught in fights in there and stuff like that too….

As Jaybo highlights, the disproportionate ways that drugs were enforced played a role in who was taken by police, and who was not taken by police. In addition, the LA County Sheriffs, often cited as the most infamous police department in Los Angeles County, used to have contracts with local community colleges and continuation schools like the school Jaybo attended. As the normalcy of carcerality helps us to understand, educational institutions make the prison regime normal. Sojoyner (2016) reminds us that schools themselves play the largest role in making the carceral regime normal. Providing a counter to the logic of the "school to prison pipeline," which is considered to be the racialized policies and practices that undergird disproportionate school discipline, Sojoyner argues that "public education has been at the forefront of ushering in the prison regime as a mechanism of ideological enclosure" (p. 35). He goes on to contextualize how various aspects of the prison regime in schools were not by any stretch of the imagination normal for schools, and that the inherent fear mongering created against Black communities made the presence and use of carceral tools and logics normal. The normalcy of carcerality, in this sense, demonstrates the everydayness of carceral tools and logics.

In some instances, campus security, teachers, school police, and the probation apparatus all conspire to expand their reach and control Black youth, particularly boys. Speaking about his experience in Inglewood Unified, Amir Casimir of SJLI asserted:

> so I had one encounter, uh, a school where I was going to Inglewood, uh, were school police. They came up, uh, well the school campus, uh, like counselor kind of the counselor, not really a counselor, but you know, one of the teachers that had been at the school for a really long time and doesn't want to teach no more. So they do something because they got tenure and it's hard to fire, uh, was up there. And she's basically saw me walking to class for a lunch break and I had my backpack with me. And so she thought it looked suspicious. So she took me in the office and… they had the school police search me first, and that's when they found it. And the school police were telling me that I was going to have to be put on, uh, "voluntary probation." Basically, I had to go on probation or get expelled, um, because you can't have a lighter on campus. And so she gives me this paper to sign and, um, I'm thinking, you know, police are in there, and then he got a gun on him. I'm, I'm like, alright, I guess like, I, I don't want to get expelled. Uh, so I start to sign the paper and my mom's on the way at this point because they call my parents. She gets there and much, like I said earlier, she advocated for me... She read the paper? Cause I didn't read it. I was intimidated, but she read the paper cause she wasn't having it, cause she's a thug like that. And she read the paper and she was like, "why would you put them on voluntary probation? Like, that literally just puts him at a higher risk to go into the juvenile justice system." And basically she just refused to sign and left.

At this juncture, Amir was presented with two options - either sign the paper and become a WIC 236 youth or leave the school district all together. At breakfast with his mother and Amir to go over their options for transfer, Amir's mom confessed that she felt as if she was "sacrificing her first born son" to the school system. She described her frustrations with public schools, and she wanted to make sure that Amir attended a school with resources, not over-policing. Having to be honest with her, I had to let her know that for public schools in Los Angeles County that have double-digit percentages of Black students, that did not exist. She sighed in frustration, and we went over all of the different schools SJLI served. He ultimately attended Augustus Hawkins High School, where he would graduate in 2020. The normalcy of carcerality means that there is

not a space anywhere in the county at a public school where Black students could escape carceral control.

Carceral Presence in the Community

The presence of mass incarceration in Los Angeles is magnified by the disproportionate amounts of public spending that cities, counties, and state governments spend on law enforcement. In most instances, municipal forms of law enforcement eat up between 40-60% of all city budgets, a large number of which goes to support pensions and retirement funds, as well as overtime and salary costs (The People's Budget Coalition, 2021; Vitale, 2017). On the Eastside and Westside of Los Angeles, the LA County Sheriffs and LAPD spent over $179 million dollars incarcerating individuals over a five-year span; nearly half of those individuals were Black (Million Dollar Hoods Project, 2018). Because of this over-reliance on the carceral state, many individuals are incarcerated or come into contact with police for mundane reasons. Describing how his own mom was caught in this web of policing and mass incarceration, Amir states,

> So pretty much all everybody in my family went to jail behind some traffic tickets, uh, very varying lengths of time. Right? If you, if you look at it and as always on their stuff, they might've gotten pulled you over one time and does put through... where if you don't want to really do be a little, little bit off sometimes might not miss every, every beat might've been in jail for about a year, even behind them, traffic tickets, letting them pile up, you know? Uh, so I would say that mass incarceration definitely, it does impact. It definitely does impact me. Right? Like even at, uh, at like six or seven, my mom would, I saw my mom taking to jail beyond some traffic tickets, like on the way home from my grandma's, I was like less than a mile. Uh, so it's just like, you know, it's kind of something that you see, you know, it impacts you because we see how, how readily, how readily they are, how ready they are to take a black person to jail.

In the excerpt above, Amir is highlighting how traffic enforcement specifically targets communities for minor infractions that escalate into full-blown seizures of cars and even arrests. Bryan, et al. (2019), found that almost a third of all arrests of the LAPD's metro division were because of either a failure to appear in court, or driving with a suspended or expired license. In LA, I worked with organizations such as Community Coalition, Black Lives Matter, Brotherhood Crusade, the Social Justice Learning Institute, the Labor Community Strategy Center, CHIRLA, CDF, and others to establish the PUSH LA [Promoting Unity, Safety, and Health in Los Angeles] coalition, which works to remove LAPD from traffic stops. After two *Los Angeles Times* reports, our coalition met in in front of LAPD to publicly criticize them for what we already knew but was codified in a report - Black people were stopped at nearly five times the rate of white passengers, even though white passengers were statistically more likely to have illegal contraband on them while driving. The over policing of our communities further signifies the normalcy of carcerality, as it illuminates the ways how Black communities imagine police presence to be "normal."

For a young person like Blacc, who was a regular target of school police, municipal police, and carceral control, he articulates how these issues were, "normal" - in other words, a regular part of the socialization that youth experience to uncritically examine the power of the state. In his interview, Blacc asserts,

> To me, it kind of feels normal because it happened daily. You feel me? But I guess to a person that's not like me, or a person that hasn't been affected a lot, they take that to

> assume, man, I was really in crisis. You feel me? To me, it's just like the police are always watching you every single day. They're always like, "Get on him. Get on him." They try to put you in bubbles that you know you're not in. So to me as a Black youth, it makes me feel like I have to dodge a lot of situations. I have to really be careful how I walk, how I move because I don't know how the police could be setting me up right now, just me walking outside.

In this sense, Blacc is highlighting what it feels like to be a consistent target of policing, in and out of schools. The "bubbles" that they try to put youth in refer to the same social labeling practices that Ferguson (2001) highlights in her study of Black masculinity in Bay Area schools. As a point of departure, Blacc is suggesting that one must be careful about how they interact with everyone, how they engage with other people, and most importantly, how they speak to law enforcement in order to survive. Since young people at YJC are consistently coming into contact with police officers, the organization printed information cards for youth and community members, which helps youth better navigate interactions with law enforcement.

For the young men in this study, and arguably all Black people, interactions with police can turn violent, or even deadly, in an instant. For the 22 young men I interviewed for this project, 17 of them have either had guns pointed at them by law enforcement or have been physically harmed by law enforcement in some way. Three of the youth interviewed for this project have family members who were killed by law enforcement, and 19 out of 22 of the youth have had someone in their immediate or extended family be incarcerated. For young men like Amarion Martin from the Social Justice Learning Institute, survival is a matter of street smarts, environmental awareness, and navigation. Recalling the conversations between him and his grandpa, Amarion states,

> Honestly I'd say probably my mom was on me as far as the type of clothes that I wore and what color it was. You know, my moms was on me about that, but my grandpa actually was the one who told me about when I was a bit younger on how dangerous it is to be a black man and living in America and stuff like that. At a young age, I didn't understand what he was talking about, but now that I've reached this point I see exactly what he was talking about. It's crazy, you know? He would say like from what he experienced, just always basically being identified or mistaken for someone else or just based off your experience. It's dangerous to dress certain ways because the police will assume you this type of way or this is who you are. So just in ways like that, that's how he would say it. The way I carry myself like that and present myself.

In this portion of his interview, Amarion recalls a conversation that many Black boys experience in childhood - the racial socialization process that prepares them for the racial discrimination that they will at one point experience. As we progressed through the interview on Zoom, Amarion was sitting outside of his apartment building in Compton in his car, so that way he can hear me, and I can hear him without too many distractions. At several points during the interview, Amarion informed me that the police had shined their light into his car, surveilling him. Even as he was telling me about his experiences of the hyper vigilance of police and how to navigate interactions with them, he was experiencing those same issues on the call, almost representing the type of hyper-awareness that Black boys and young men have to develop that the police create.

For many youth, a central issue with the carceral presence in their communities is the threat of violence. For some youth, because of their proximity to others, this threat of violence is

a lot more real than for other youth. Take for example Kawika Smith, a youth leader from Community Coalition, who outlines his experiences with law enforcement,

> I've been traumatized by law enforcement throughout my whole entire life. I've been stopped by my law enforcement. I've had my house raided by law enforcement. Yeah, my family is impacted by the carceral system. My mom's ex-husband, they were targeting him because of his affiliation. And so that's how our house got raided with no warrant or no reasoning behind it. So yeah, I've literally had guns... I was about, I think nine, I was in probably third, fourth grade. I had guns drawn on me by police officers. I had to crawl out of my house at night with a helicopter over. My mom was falsely arrested on another occasion, had guns drawn on me when I was asleep both times. And I've been stopped while running in my neighborhood by police officers.

In the above excerpt, Kawika is naming how even as early as nine years old, for Black youth, their experiences with the carceral state are littered with violence. The same type of raid that killed 26-year-old Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Kentucky in March of 2020 was enacted in this case, and it traumatized Kawika and his family. Youth leader from YJC Jaybo highlights his experiences as well, stating,

> I would say the most recent one just reminded me, and it wasn't even with me getting arrested, but it was with me involved. It was a little situation that happened at my house that could have been dealt with differently. And I was sleeping. I had to get up for work. I went to sleep late. I did a whole 14-hour day. I get up to the sound of my door beating down. My room door though, not my house door downstairs. My room door. So, I opened my door, and I saw four sheriffs there. I'm in my boxers. I'm sleeping, everything. And when I look down the aisle, I say, "Is my mom okay? Why are y'all here? Do you have a warrant?" They was like, "No, we don't know about no mom. Please come downstairs," whatever, whatever, whatever… Or I could even remember the time when I got arrested as a teenager. I could remember being homeless and not having no money, no food, none of these kind of stuff, and turning to the streets to try to find a way. And I'm talking to teachers. I'm talking to friends. I'm trying to tell them, "I don't know nobody in this country. I'm homeless, and nothing happening for me," and nobody looked to help me. But the moment I'd done something wrong, they're spending, I don't know, $10,000 in one night just to arrest one person, because it's a lot of cops, I'm telling you. That time, when that happened, it was at least 15 to 20 police cars, SWAT team, everything, everybody up in there.

In her study of Black men in San Francisco, Nikki Jones (2018) highlights the two ways that the 21st century policing of Black men took place in a liberal city - through the physical presence of law enforcement within the community to engage in surveillance, and through the expansion of bureaucracy through the implementation of gang injunctions and other forms of gang suppression to keep violence down. In both of these strategies, additional resources are poured into police departments to do violence prevention work, as opposed to community-based organizations in what she calls the crime fighting community. Jaybo is alluding to the misappropriation of resources in the above quote, especially as tactical teams are sent to his house to arrest his brother.

Race, Gender, Sociopolitical Development, and Naming the Normalcy of Carcerality

In his infamous 'Pound Cake' speech, defamed actor Bill Cosby painted a picture of a young man who was stealing a piece of pound cake who was shot by some actor enforcing the

law, ideologically constructing this actor to be a member of law enforcement. Cosby, in a mocking tone, suggested that we should not be looking for justice for the young man who was shot, we should instead be questioning why he had the pound cake in his hand in the first place (Cohen, 2010; HoSang, 2004). At the center of normalcy of carcerality is the "everydayness" of carceral presence, violence, and power in Black communities, particularly in Los Angeles. The development of carceral infrastructure to make control so normal was rooted in the moral panics connected to Black youth crime, gang violence, and masculinity. Cathy Cohen (2010) defines moral panics for Black youth as, "an overreaction by an often vocal minority to rule-breaking by a suspect and relatively powerless group whose actions negatively impact a sympathetic and respectable victim" (p. 36). For example, Black young men were portrayed in popular discourse as being particularly violent beyond reproach - they were cast to be irredeemable beasts who had to be controlled for their inabilities to be educated and participate in the political economy.

For the young men in this study, their abilities to define the issues came from them bearing witness to, or directly experiencing the iron arm of the state through discipline, control, and dispossession. Whether Black youth were the direct or secondary targets, they understood what it meant to grow up in South Central Los Angeles. For many of these youth, the ways that they felt inequity, anti-Blackness, and carceral violence played a vital role in capitulating them into organizing. Some of the youth cited how they always had an inclination of the harm that their communities were experiencing, but they did not know how to name it, nor did they notice how it could be systemic. With young people like Blacc, who noticed how his entire family had "been through the system" or like Kawika, who had to watch as adults in his family were targets of LA's anti-gang war, their direct experiences played a role in helping them to understand state-sanctioned harm. The boys and young men in this study learned how to name the systemic issues they experience through a process called sociopolitical development. Watts et al. (2003) assert that sociopolitical development is a five-stage process that helps individuals connect their life experiences with oppression to broader historical processes that facilitate harm in their communities. In sociopolitical development theory, they identify five stages as the sociopolitical development: acritical stage, adaptive stage, precritical stage, critical stage, and the liberation stage. In the acritical and adaptive stages, a student undergoing the intervention does not understand resource asymmetry, draws no or little relationships to power dynamics, and adapt maladaptive strategies (accommodation, antisocial, etc.) to get by in the intervention space. In the precritical phase, students now have an awareness of social inequality, and they reject the notion of adapting to unjust lives. In the critical stage, there is an explicit desire to learn more about inequality, and the idea of change is needed. Finally, in the liberation stage, students become fully aware of oppression and seek to incite social change (Watts et al., 2003, p. 263).

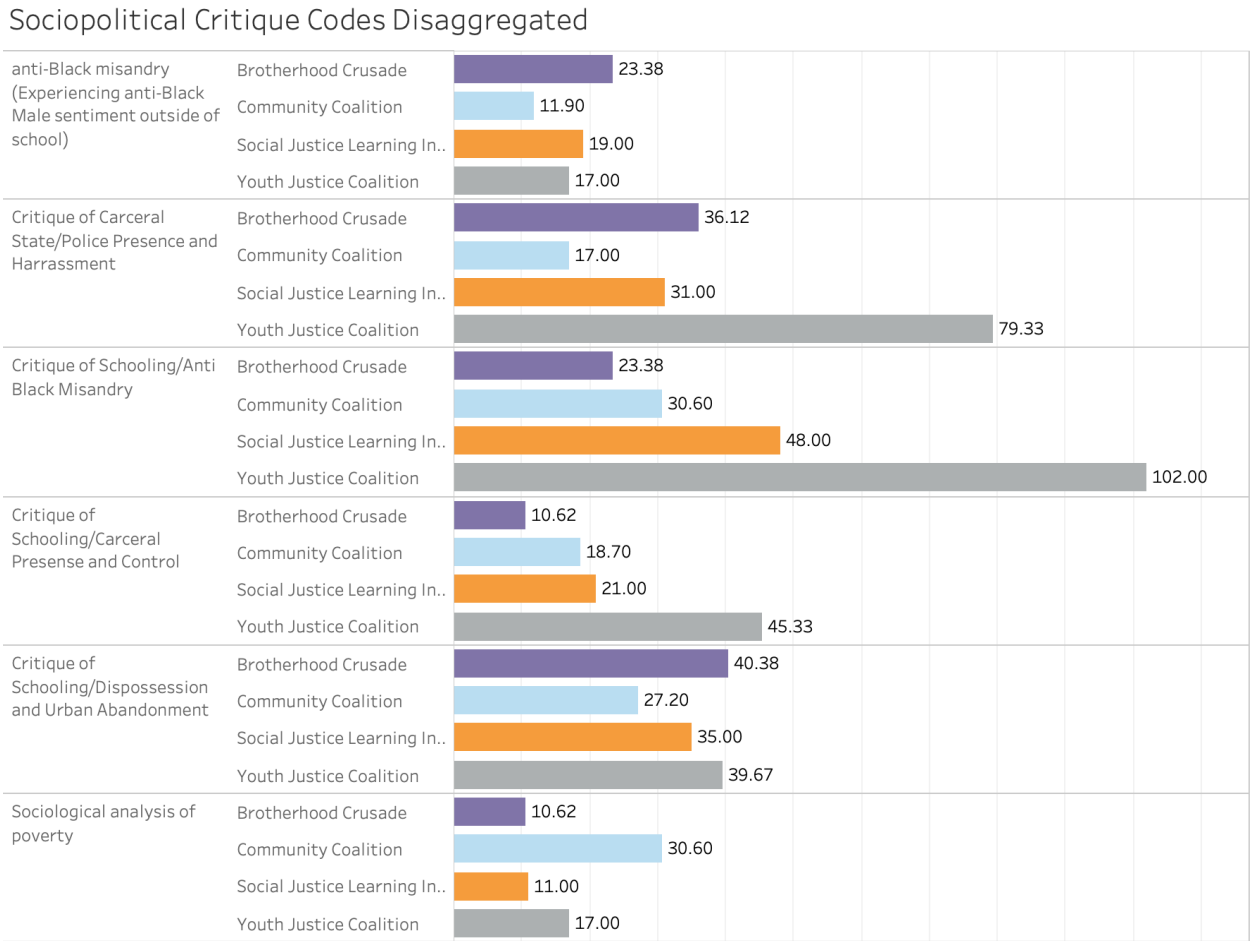
With this defined form of sociopolitical development, Watts et al. (1999) engaged community youth. Many cognitive factors, such as the ability to identify social injustice, play a critical role in social movement participation. As those being politicized are better able to name the harm that happened to them, they are then compelled to act. Highlighting one of the critical interventions, Watts et al. (2003) state:

> An emerging critical consciousness also moves SPD for- ward here. One begins to look beyond facile explanations for events and an emphasis on their immediate causes. Injustice begins to be understood in historical context, and as SPD proceeds, the developing individual acquires a more systemic perspective on his or her life circumstances and current events (p. 188).

Through SPD, Black youth gain a systemic perspective of how oppression manifests in their everyday interactions with adults, state actors such as teachers and school employees, and representatives of the carceral regime. Education scholars and community psychologists refer to this process as the development of critical consciousness (Christens et al., 2016; Diemer & Li, 2011; Freire, 1993; Murray & Milner, 2015; Watts & Flanagan, 2007), and social movement scholars refer to the process as cognitive liberation (McAdam, 1999). As Laura Pulido (2006) asserts in the politicization of the Third World Left, she synthesizes the approaches taken by the likes of Paulo Freire and Doug McAdam, stating that politicizing activists is both helping them understand inequity and providing an opportunity to do something about it. What is consistent about the young men in this study with the literature is that they were all introduced to activism ways that allowed them to act upon the systems that harmed them, consistent with Pulido.

Figure 5

Sociopolitical Critiques Disaggregated



What distinguishes the young men in this study from other studies, are the *types* of critiques that they develop. While all of these young men have experienced carceral violence, anti-Black racism in schools, dispossession, violence, and abandonment, many of them had much sharper critiques of different phenomena. For example, youth from Community Coalition had much stronger critiques of the sociological factors that contributed to poverty, and youth from the Youth Justice Coalition had much stronger critiques of civic institutions, specifically the

presence of the carceral state. These critiques happened more frequently and were more apparent in their interviews. For instance, at the Youth Justice Coalition, as an abolitionist organization, they engage in a lot more discussion of the carceral state and its impact on daily life on a regular basis. This type of regular engagement informs how youth like Blacc and Jaybo had so many critiques of carceral systems and their impact on everyday life. For codes like "Sociological analysis of poverty", Community Coalition youth had stronger analyses of these issues (meaning violence between community members, factors that drive crime and drug use, etc.), because of the public health lens that SCYEA organizers engage youth with. For example, (as discussed in chapter 6), SCYEA engages in a political education tactic called "South LA tours," where youth are given politicized comparative tours of West Los Angeles and South Central Los Angeles. In these tours, youth have to count how many community resources, grocery stores, liquor stores, and police cars they see in one side of Los Angeles versus another. With this type of political education, SCYEA youth are better able to provide explanations for crime, violence, and poverty because of their unique sociopolitical development.

For organizations like the Social Justice Learning Institute and Brotherhood Crusade, Blackness and schools are central to how their programs are structured, and thus, youth form these organizations had sharper critiques and analyses of these issues. For example, youth from the Brotherhood Crusade are often times introduced to business moguls and have access to high-rise offices all across Los Angeles. A common phrase that Brotherhood Crusade staff impart on the young people is, "If you're not at the table, you're on the menu," meaning that if you do not have access to decision makers and those with power, you will be consumed by those with power. Being able to witness and experience these spaces with a Black nationalist lens helps Brotherhood Crusade youth make comparisons to the types of infrastructure they have in their communities compared to the areas where they have internships or business-related programming, which is why Brotherhood Crusade youth have sharp critiques of urban abandonment and dispossession. For the Social Justice Learning Institute, youth have strong critiques of anti-Black misandry in school because of their proximity to schools and the formation for their program. To point to an example, the Black Male Youth Academy, a central Urban Scholars Program of the Social Justice Learning Institute, is composed of Black male youth from across the campus. In Robert's case, the youth in the Black male youth academy were politicized, and as they became more politicized, they began to challenge their teachers more, thus leading to more targeted mistreatment. Youth from the Social Justice Learning Institute were able to identify these issues more readily compared to youth from Brotherhood Crusade and Community Coalition. Youth from the Youth Justice Coalition, who have already experienced school pushout, had the sharpest critiques of anti-Black misandry in schooling.

While the presence of these critiques alone is important, how the young people in the study reacted to them through their assertion of agency and organizing is vital. In the next chapter, I overview a process called Black transformative agency. This builds upon the sociopolitical critiques that the youth develop by identifying how young men who are both politicized and have an opportunity to act engage in what they define as activism and community change.

Chapter 6 The (Good) Trouble with Black Boys - Naming Black Transformative Agency in Los Angeles

Introduction

"Why we need school police? If the kids fighting the police igniting, you get sent to juvie now you a parolee, but all you needed was some counselin,
This the closest thing to Blasphemy, Imma start fighting back casualties,
They just harassing me they is not saving me why we need school police they need vacationing
Why we need school police? Matter of fact, ABOLISHMENT, we know what time it is.
Tired of following orders, some youth got disorders, but the cops do not know us
Especially imporvished communities solider, they don't "need training" we don't need their forces
They is not helping so we gon' ignore em, you heard em, we told em,
Just listen to youth Abolish their forces" - Christian Wimberly, Rapper Name DASHAXN, Brotherhood Crusade

On June 22, 2020, I got a text message from one of our youth leaders, Christian Wimberly, about a new song he just finished for tomorrow's rally. He has sent me a SoundCloud link (an internet platform where artists can showcase their music), and after the first listen, I was electrified. He asked if he could perform the song at tomorrow's rally, since he was already slated to speak. I eagerly encouraged him to perform it and began to text the song to the other youth leaders and organizers. The song quickly became an anthem for us during the summer 2020 uprisings, as we blasted it through our speakers to confront supporters of the LA school police. On June 23rd, Christian performed a song he wrote for a rally to defund the Los Angeles School Police Department. In his song titled, "Why We Need School Police?" he raised questions about the prison-like nature of schools. He pointed to the austerity that schools often experience from budget cuts and not having access to nurses or counselors, and he asserted that the abolition of the school police is the only route towards justice. When Christian Wimberly performed his song, he reimagines school safety in the song and explicitly states, "matter of fact, abolishment, we know what time it is." Not only did Wimberly perform, but he worked with his peers to provide testimony to the board on why school police need to be abolished. Black girls and young women from the Black-led Students Deserve organized the rally, in which young people like Wimberly attended.

Figure 6
Christian Wimberly

Note: Brotherhood Crusade Youth leader Christian Wimberly performing "Why We Need School Police?" (Brothers, Sons, Selves Coalition, 2020)

Christian was no stranger to the ways that school discipline and broader schooling practices themselves are inherently anti-Black, given an incident on his own campus where he was escorted to the office by campus police and security for having his inhaler on him during his physical education class (Griffin, 2020). The organization that Christian is connected to, Brotherhood Crusade, is a part of a youth organizing coalition for boys and young men of color called the Brothers, Sons, Selves Coalition [BSS], a coalition of nine community-based organizations that work to decriminalize communities of color. As Wimberly got connected to BSS, he learned more about community organizing and empowerment, and he cites it as a place where he learned to use his voice for change.

The day before the rally on June 22nd, 2020, we held a virtual press conference through Zoom to get people to support our Monica Garcia's motion "Reimagining School Safety and Investing in our Highest Need Students" (050-19/20 Garcia)] that would reallocate 90% of the school police budget to LA's highest need schools after three academic years. Working alongside Joseph Williams, the organizing and campaigns director from Students Deserve, I worked in my capacity as the manager of the Brothers, Sons, Selves Coalition to collectively build a mass movement to support this motion. In a broad coalition with partners such as United Teachers Los Angeles, SEIU Local 99, InnerCity Struggle, Community Coalition, Black Lives Matter Los Angeles, the Labor Community Strategy Center, the entire Brothers, Sons, Selves Coalition, other landscape partners like the ACLU, Public Counsel, and more, we leveraged the existing education justice infrastructure and relationships to pull together a massive campaign in six days. We worked together to unite dozens of organizations around our cause. Collectively, we gathered 15,000 petition signatures that each triggered unique emails to the LAUSD board members, we met with every school board member, and we got nearly 70 organizations across

California to sign onto our letter. We rallied academics and grassroots activists, parents and youth, charter advocates and union representatives, and all kinds of organizations, to support this cause. Our youth leaders like Christian were at the center of this push, driving both the strategy and the public narrative with their powerful testimonies and lived experience.

The organizations that participated in this action all were not "activist" organizations. Some of the organizations were service-based, meaning that they primarily worked to give young people tools to navigate through life and forms of social and cultural capital to better move through institutions (Woodland et al., 2009). Some of the organizations had explicit organizing foci, working alongside young people to drive political strategies and campaigns rooted in social change (Kirshner & Ginwright, 2012; J. Rogers et al., 2012). Of the four primary organizations in this study, organizations like the Social Justice Learning Institute and Brotherhood Crusade lean more towards the service-based work, where they help to support Black male youth through high school graduation and on to postsecondary and career pathways, rooted in a framework to intervene in their engagements with the carceral state. For organizations like Community Coalition and the Youth Justice Coalition, they are explicit youth power building organizations, where their goals are to train youth in the tools, strategies, and tactics of organizing to lead campaigns on their own behalf. While these organizations are distinct in nature, they work collaboratively in coalitions like the Brothers, Sons, Selves Coalition or alliances like the BLOOM Alliance to develop youth like Amir Casimir, who was featured in USA Today, or like Christian Wimberly, who made a song about police abolition. Even though each organization has their own niche in how they work with youth, they also have their own tools, resources, and methods for helping to cultivate agency in youth, specifically in Black males. While all of these organizations work to develop Black male youth and their agency, how the young people engage in agency looks different, based on their home organization's political orientation.

Naming a framework I refer to as Black Transformative Agency, which I define as a multi-faceted process in which Black boys and young men enact their agency both to combat social isolation and challenge state power and hegemony, I document the experiences of Black boys and young men based both on my experiences as a practitioner working with Black boys and young men for the last decade in California's youth organizing and social justice landscape, as well as the interviews collected from the youth themselves. More specifically, I focus on the ways that Black male youth enact their agency to transform their relationships with their peers and social institutions around them, combating anti-Blackness and the social isolation that comes with urban poverty. Through Black transformative agency, we can learn a great deal from the ways that Black boys learn how to engage and navigate through social systems. What is distinct, is how the type of agency shows up for Black boys who enter social movement work through differing organizations.

Youth Organizing and Agency: Building Youth Power

In addition to more general and unstructured forms of youth activism such as attending protests or participating in online activism, youth organizing is the sustained effort of working with young people in communities to build social and political power by helping youth think and act strategically about systemic, practice-based, and cultural changes that they want to see in their communities (Ginwright, 2007; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007; Ginwright et al., 2005; Hosang, 2006; Oakes et al., 2006). As youth become politically and socially engaged, scholars have documented how they are better able to process trauma that they have experienced (Ginwright, 2010), improve their academic performance (Scorza et al., 2013), develop new

literacy skills (Andrade & Morrell, 2008), and even change policies that have impacted them (Rogers & Morrell, 2011; Serrano et al., 2021; Stovall, 2006; Stovall & Ayers, 2005). In some instances, youth organizing is seen as the primary gateway in which young people become and remain politically activated (Corrigall-Brown, 2011; Terriquez, 2015). In other instances, scholars have documented how youth organizing can even be seen as a management strategy to try and control youth through market-driven, neoliberal interventions that are only meant to change young people's behavior, and marginally transform their conditions (Kwon, 2013; Tuck & Yang, 2014). While there have been concerted efforts to drive out radical organizing, both from schools and institutions where young people frequent (Sojoyner, 2013, 2016), there has been a steady increase in the ways that community-based organizations have become creative in both accessing and politicizing youth to become involved in social change.

Solorzano & Bernal (2001) spell out a framework called transformational resistance, where young people who both have a critique of social oppression, and are motivated by social justice, learn that their primary option for changing relationships of power comes directly from their organizing challenges to power. Pedro Noguera (2014) spells out this experience, stating:

> If a student is angry at unjust policies at their school, and they decide, "I'm going to cuss out the principal," that may be a form of agency, but it may not be an act of resistance. But if that same student decides, "you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to organize other students to have a boycott of school," that is clearly a higher level of resistance (p. 79).

Above, Noguera is highlighting the distinctions between what Solorzano & Bernal call self-defeating resistance and transformative resistance. With self-defeating resistance, a student may understand that a social situation is unjust and needs to be challenged, however, the way they go about challenging their social oppression may negatively impact them and hurt their own life chances. In other words, one can engage in acts of oppositional behavior, but as Willis (1981) and Fine (1991) have documented, these acts of oppositional behavior to the status quo and oppressive systems alone do not change the life chances of a young person. However, through transformational resistance, which is fueled by both a critique of social oppression and a motivation to engage in social justice, one can then work to close juvenile justice facilities in their area that overcriminalize youth, (Kwon, 2006, 2013), promote college access (Morrell & Rogers, 2011), or defund school police.

So, What About Black Boys? Spelling Out Black Transformative Agency

While scholarship has long documented the various ways that Black boys are impacted by social and political systems (Ferguson, 2001; Sojoyner, 2013, 2016; Howard, 2014), in what ways do Black boys and young men fight back? What do Black boys then do with that agency once they become politicized? How are they able to transform their material conditions as they begin to combat their own oppression and dispossession? This is where I spell out a process called Black Transformative Agency, which is cultivated in young people by youth workers and community-based organizations who seek to combat the unique dispossession that Black boys and young men experience by both challenging social isolation and institutional power/hegemony, and it manifests in both individual and collective ways. This process is spelled out in four types of agencies: navigational agency, relational agency, movement building agency, and structurally transformative agency, which I define below.

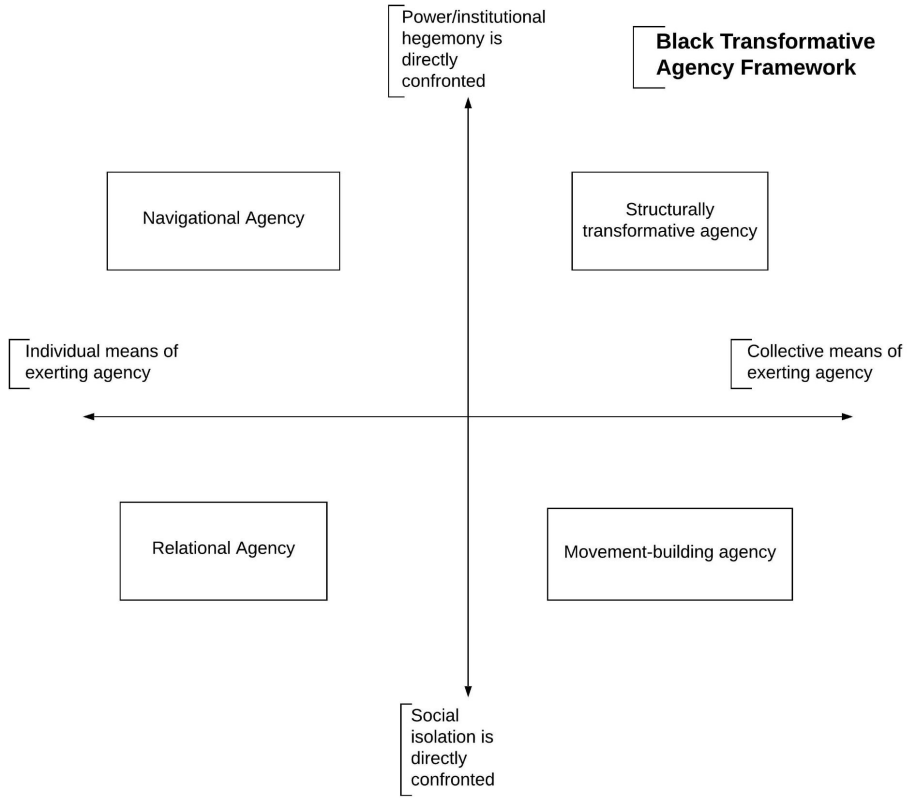
Challenging Power and Social Isolation through Individual and Collective Means

Black men and boys, as demonstrated in earlier chapters, experience some of the most negative effects of racialized and oftentimes criminalizing social policies. For example, 15 out of 22 of the youth I interviewed had been suspended for "willful defiance" - a specific type of school suspension in California's educational code that suggests you can suspend a student for not following adult directions, regardless of the adult having to repeat themselves or engage that student multiple times (Wood et al., 2018). When it comes to addressing power & institutional hegemony, one of the ways that Black boys learn how to exert their agency is by challenging the use of institutional power wielded against them. For Black boys, this can be done individually, where a singular person defies or challenges a figure attempting to use policy and institutional norms against Black male youth and their peers. Challenging power can also be done collectively in the form of organizing their peers to develop a group response to the systems, policies, and practices that wield institutional power over their lives. Sociologists have referred to this as self and collective efficacy, where marginalized groups work to assert their own agency to address neighborhood and other types of social conditions (Sampson, 1998).

In addition to challenging power, another key intervention for Black transformative agency is challenging social isolation. Sociologists such as William Julius Wilson (2009, 2011, 2012) and Sandra Smith (2007) have highlighted how social isolation plays a role in the lives of the Black poor. For example, Wilson describes how the process of integration isolated working class and poor Black communities from middle class Black communities as middle-class Black communities began to integrate with white neighborhoods, schools and institutions, thus reducing the social networks that working class and poor Black folks had access too. While the effectiveness of integration for the mobility and social inclusion of middle-class Black communities has been challenged (Clifton, 1994; Glasker, 1994; Kharem & Hayes, 2005), the physical removal of middle class Black folks from hyper segregated urban centers played a role in creating social isolation. This also holds true for access to employment and job opportunities as Smith (2007) articulates, especially among the urban poor. Social isolation specifically affects Black men and boys, as they experience the brunt of social policy to remove resources from their communities, they also experience direct targeting by the state (see chapter 5).

To confront social isolation, Black boys and young men in this study have worked tirelessly to educate their peers, build social networks, and cultivate what Robert Sampson (Morenoff et al., 2001; Sampson, 2011; Sampson et al., 1997) refers to as collective efficacy, which he asserts is a multivariate process that works to confront the types of social isolation and disorganization by building networks with peers across proximity, organizations, and other local social institutions such as churches, schools, and the like. While Sampson is largely focused on social cohesion in response to crime and other forms of social disorganization, in this study, Black boys and young men explicitly work to confront social isolation with their peers in order to build networks for political power and social movements. This process differs from Sampson's approach, as youth and organizations in this study are not merely interested in maintaining social control, they are interested in building and cultivating neighborhood and community power to better determine their own life chances, build intracommunal relationships, and transform relationships of power (see Figure 7).

Figure 7
Black Transformative Agency Framework



Navigational Agency

For Black boys who are politicized, they understand that being able to advocate for themselves and on their own behalf is critical for their survival. This politicization happens as a result of sociopolitical development (see, e.g., Hope & Jagers, 2014; Serrano et al., 2021; Watts et al., 2003), where young people become aware of how their identities are made vulnerable or impacted by social institutions, and they then work to change their positioning through an exertion of agency. Tara Yosso (2005) would call this navigational capital, in other words, the ability to "maneuver through social institutions not created with communities of color in mind" (p. 80). So in order to adopt navigational agency, Black boys who have embarked on social movement organizing are able to individually assert their agency to directly confront power and institutional hegemony. The organizations in this study each take different routes, but they all in some ways work to cultivate navigational agency, which is facilitated by the youth workers at their various organizations. Take for example the young men who learn about the lack of college access. Rogers & Morrell (2011) document LA's community-led movement to fight for the widespread availability of A-G courses, which are the required courses one would need to qualify for admission to a California State University, or University of California school. In the Los Angeles Unified School District, these courses were not widely available, especially in schools in South Central, East Los Angeles, and LA's South Bay. Through youth participatory action research and community-driven campaign building from lead organizations like the Latinx-led InnerCity Struggle and Community Coalition, young people fought for these courses

to be available to everyone, winning the campaign in 2005, with a promise of full implementation in the coming years.

As community-based organizations understood that there have been concerted attempts to prevent Black and Brown communities from having college access, these organizations, alongside scholars and other organizers, have made a conscious effort to ensure that their students both had access to college and were able to navigate the college-going process. While I was a staff member at the Social Justice Learning Institute, we would hold entire retreats to walk students through the application process, teach Black youth how to ask for the materials they need for college (SAT fee waivers, counselor recommendations, etc.) and some would even drive their students hundreds of miles to their college destinations once they had been accepted and confirmed their enrollment the following fall. By teaching Black boys how to better navigate interactions with state actors who have the power to provide or withdraw resources, the young people learn navigational agency, to advocate for themselves to get the resources that they need for college. We also made it clear to them how there were concentrated attempts to deny Black people and other communities of color the right to an education and helped them to see how the denial of college access was happening to them. In many instances, the Black boys we worked with were initially denied access to these resources, however, they were able to use both their understandings of racial justice and their newly found navigational agency to ultimately gain the resources that they needed. Our young people would go through different channels, seek adult advocates, call their counselors out on their implicit or explicit biases against them, or even seek out alternative counselors on their campuses to get the materials they needed. In some instances, young people asserting their own agency would be an active assertion of what critical race theorists and political theorists would call a counter story or counter-narrative (see, e.g., Blaisdell, 2021; Crenshaw et al., 1996; Dawson, 2003; Dawson et al., 1994; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Reynolds & Mayweather, 2017)

Navigational agency is a vital component to Black transformative agency, in that it helps young people understand how to navigate social interactions with institutional actors, they learn how to identify power relationships, and they learn how to directly challenge power. Take for example Kevin Miles, in his interaction with a police officer;

> Okay. So the first time that I was ever in a political situation was at the Crenshaw Mall when we were talking to the police. They were just trying to pretty much inform us on where they're coming from as law enforcement and how we can pretty much work together to make the streets "safer" to make the communities better. They started to go over some of the... No, they didn't start going over it. When we got to the Q&A, that's when they really started…. . I watch a lot of videos and I hear a lot of things, like on news and I read a lot of articles about police pulling up their weapon, their gun, and shooting first. But I'm hearing you all say you all got these levels. How come you all don't use these levels before going to the lethal weapon? The reason why I wanted to kind of use this one is because they gave a political answer. They did not answer the question, they worked themselves around it…That was like the first political answer that I got that made me really sit there and realize people are not going to really answer. When they come to politics they're going to tell you what they're supposed to say. Then when you hit them with a real question, they got to find a way to dance around that for the media or for whatever the case may be…That I still feel like got danced around and that's kind of why I [don't rock with] police now. But that one, I was to ask the question, I was able to have value in that space, even with me not even knowing much.

In this excerpt, Kevin articulates how he was able to assess the ways that police officers would provide political neutral answers in order to avoid accountability. Through social media, Kevin had access to counter stories told by activists and other social media users with regards to police violence, both before being involved in Brotherhood Crusade and throughout his tenure there. As Taylor (2016), Ransby (2018, and Davis (2015) suggests, young organizers use social media as a way to frame Black social movement activity, as well as providing counternarratives to anti-Black accounts of police violence (Clark et al., 2018). Having access to this information, Kevin was able to directly address police officers, to attempt to hold them accountable for their collective actions he witnessed via social media and in his community. While some may assess the process of having a dialogue with police as inherently bad and connected to the larger carceral regimes tactics of normalizing police in Black communities, what this interaction did, is that it became instructive for Kevin as to why he could not trust police in the first place.

In interviews with staff members from Brotherhood Crusade, they regularly teach youth how to engage adults of "influence and affluence," understanding how to look for commitments in responses, how to engage decision makers on policy, and most importantly, how to navigate interactions with those who can wield institutional power over them. Through this process, Black youth like Kevin learn how to identify when police officers or other public officials are attempting to avoid accountability by not providing straightforward answers. This is connected to navigational agency, as Kevin in this sense is learning how to exert his individual agency to challenge state power and institutional hegemony, specifically the ways that the state has a monopoly on the use of force and violence.

For young people like Aidan Flores from Community Coalition, navigational agency can also look like learning how to wield social movement victories that have turned into institutional policy over institutional actors. Speaking about the School Climate Bill of Rights, I had this exchange with Aidan, stating:

David: So as a young person from CoCo, what's one of your biggest take aways?

Aidan: From being a part of CoCo, right?

David: Like, so if there was one thing about being involved in SCYEA, right. That [has] helped to change who you are or help to make you who you are. Right? Like what, what has it been?

Aidan: I'd say knowing my rights as a student and as a young black male, because before I was completely clueless about all that.

David: That's real. So, so, um, you said you were completely clueless about like, you know, just rights and policy and stuff. Um, what is it that, that like, that you've learned in this program that has stuck with you? So is there, are there any like key lessons, right. You know, that you've learned, um, that where you're just like, yeah, I'm definitely going to use this later on in life.

Aidan: Probably the, uh, the school climate bill of rights, because before that, just, I just get kicked out of class for no apparent reason. And can't I say nothing because that's a, you know, it's the teacher can't do nothing.

In this excerpt of our interview, Aidan is articulating that one of the key concepts he learned from Community Coalition is that he had rights to begin with. Three of the four organizations in this dissertation study played a key role as members of the Brothers, Sons, Selves Coalition in helping the School Climate Bill of Rights get passed in 2013 (Griffin, 2020). The school climate bill of rights, while it listed a host of key structural shifts for schools in LAUSD, two of the main interventions it listed were the development and implementation of restorative justice as a alternative to traditional school discipline, and an end to willful defiance school suspensions (both in school and out of school) for grades K-12. As Aidan makes note of, the school climate bill of rights has helped him be able to avoid getting kicked out of class, specifically for a defiance disruption, since he's been a member at CoCo. Since the passing of the school climate bill of rights, school suspensions have gone down from 17,595 in 2012 to 2,315 in 2019, and they have continued to go down (California Department of Education, 2021).

In addition to challenging power, another critical aspect of navigational agency is having young people learn new skills, tools, and coping strategies to advance through life and make sense of their everyday reality. For many of these youth, activism was the first time that their opinions on issues actually mattered to adults. For other youth, learning how to challenge power was healing. Take for example Amir Casimir of SJLI, who states:

> And, uh, like I said, it's just being able to be vocal about your community and engage in that, you know, engage in different social, active aspects too. what am I trying to say, make your voice, making your voice heard is not about just speaking. It's also about being able to create tangible change. That's why a lot of like, there's a lot of hobbies that involve making, making things and building things. And for me personally, also like being able to build things and see a tangible change, it's really therapeutic and that's, you know, it feeds into the human, like, what's good for you.

In this quote, Amir is speaking of the healing nature of organizing and engaging in the labor of social change. Amir refers to organizing as "therapeutic," as a way of stating that there are healing components to learning how to challenge systems and fight systemic oppression. Shawn Ginwright (2010) calls this process radical healing, where he argues that,

> Radical healing involves building the capacity of young people to act upon their environment in order to create the type of communities in which they want to live. By integrating issues of power, history, self-identity, and the possibility of collective agency and struggle, radical healing rebuilds communities to foster hope and political possibilities for young people…By rebuilding collective identities (racial, gendered, youth), exposing youth to critical thinking about social conditions, and building activism, Black youth heal by removing self-blame and act to confront pressing school and community problems (p. 12).

Here, Ginwright is articulating the meaning of radical healing. Central to this definition is both the development and growth of political possibilities, and youth unlearning the blame that systems put on them for the oppressive conditions they live in. Youth can learn how to assess and combat culture of poverty narratives, they can work to transform their communities, and most importantly, they are better able to articulate how they are impacted by those conditions. For youth like Amir, the therapeutic side of organizing comes when youth can feel relief in knowing that the conditions that impact them in their communities are not happening to them and them alone - they are a part of a system that the youth are actively working to destroy.

With regard to the new skills that young people learn, they learn research skills, how to navigate public policy, and how to engage decision makers. Take for example youth like Blacc, who learned about different social processes to change policy. Here, Blacc states,

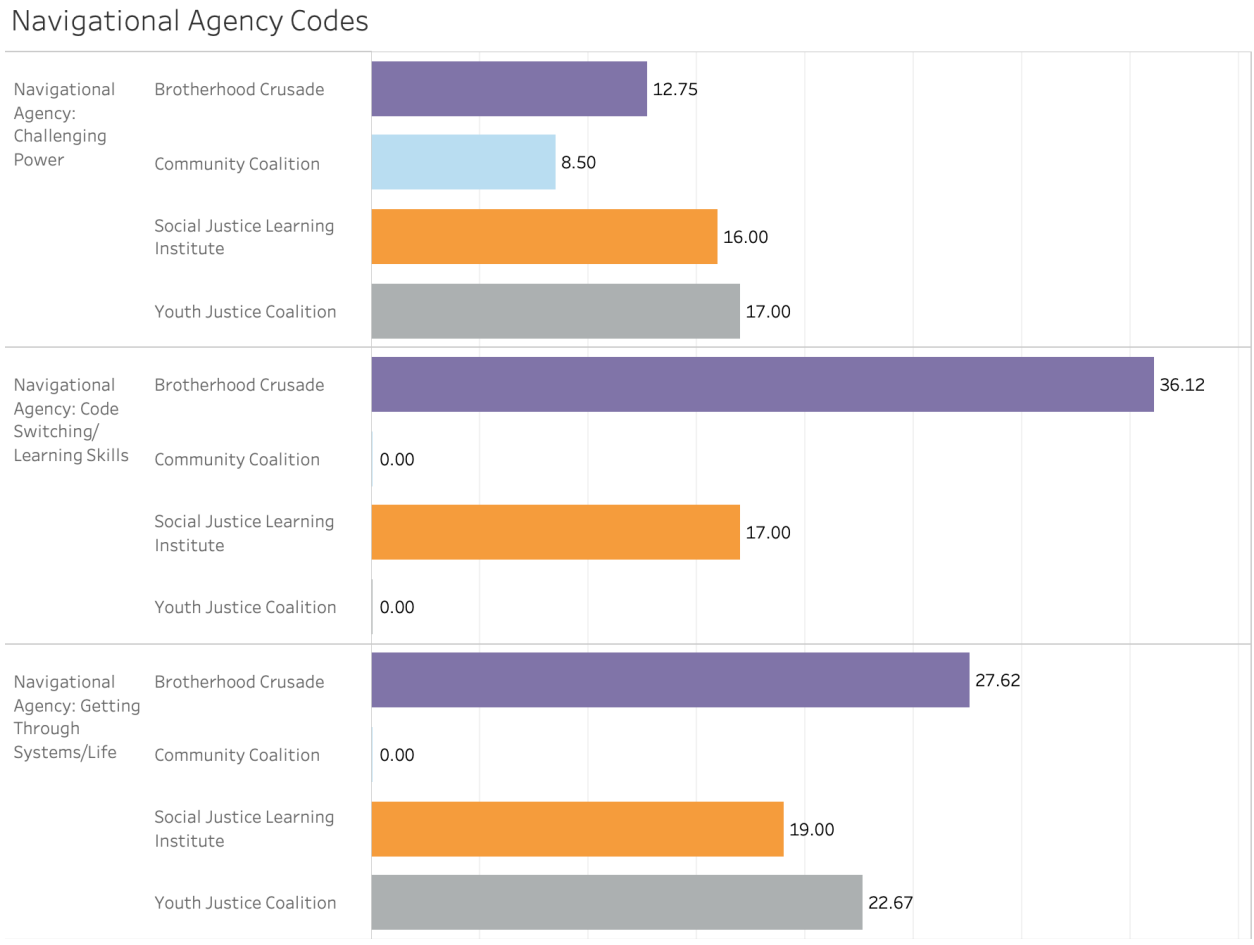
> Just learning more about policy work, bills, about a legal clinic. Just learning more about all of this. Assembly members, board supervisors. Street university, what that is and what that can be helpful for, for us. Men circles, women circles, how to [read] people's energies. I've been through a whole lot of activities, programs, workshops. I have my PRA request. I learned a lot, a lot of things I would've never gotten from the world, not from the school, not from nowhere.

In this quote, Blacc is articulating how he would not have learned the skills to assess policy, read body language, or submit Public Records act requests from anywhere but his organization at the Youth Justice Coalition. He referred to it as a 'Street University,' which for him signifies a community-driven place where transformative learning can take place. Shawn Ginwright (2007) refers to this development as critical social capital, which he defines as, "connections to small community-based organizations in Black communities that foster political consciousness and prepare Black youth to address issues in their communities" (p. 404). In this sense, navigational agency is connected to learning how to challenge power, the skills to effectively challenge power, and the benefits of challenging power as absorbed and retained by young people.

In a comparative nature, youth from Brotherhood Crusade and the Social Justice Learning Institute had the most responses that were coded as navigational agency. Navigational agency was sub coded in three categories: Challenging Power, Code Switching, and Getting Through Systems. Brotherhood Crusade facilitates programs specifically designed to help their youth learn how to code switch and maneuver through certain environments, as one of their primary functions is helping Black youth successfully enter the workforce. This is connected to their Black nationalist roots, specifically with building a base of Black people with skills who can economically sustain themselves (Bakewell, 1976). Organizations like the Social Justice Learning Institute and the Youth Justice Coalition have programming that helps youth to develop skills to navigate these systems, along with Community Coalition. However, these skills were cited as being important for Brotherhood Crusade youth, while youth from the other three organizations pointed to other key experiences as being important to them.

Figure 8

Navigational Agency Codes



Relational Agency

For many Black boys who are activists, their peer influences in these programs are vital to both their ongoing social movement participation and their personal growth. It takes a step beyond social capital, which Yosso (2005) defines as, "peer and other social contacts [that] can provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society's institutions" (p. 79). For relational agency, the social isolation that Black boys experience at the hands of anti-Black institutions is directly confronted by young people developing peer networks that help to sharpen their analyses of social and political issues, motivate them to advocate for their communities, and serve as emotional support for them in times of hardship in the face of anti-Black racism. For example, Ginwright (2010) highlights how care is essential to politicized Black communities, stating:

> Care within the Black community is as much a political act as it is a personal gesture: it requires that personal relationships prepare Black youth to confront racism and view their personal trauma as a result of systemic social problems (p. 57).

As Ginwright articulates, and as a motto with one LA based organization Brotherhood Crusade, *no one cares how much you know until they know how much you care.* As young people participate in these spaces meant to cultivate their political agency, caring relationships (which are relationships rooted in demonstrating a desire and proven track record of supporting students)

both with their peers and adult allies are essential to developing relational agency. When Black boys and young men are able to develop relational agency, they are then better able to 1) help each other grow, 2) challenge behaviors and hold each other accountable, 3) deepen their commitments to social justice long-term, and 4) cultivate lifelong relationships. Speaking about developing those lifelong relationships, Ahmir Bates of SJLI states:

> So, um, I, I, um, deemed me and my two brothers, we were the big three and I just said that just, you know, put a little badge of assertiveness on, on the work that we did. It was me, it was the little homie Amir Casimir. And it was big homie Shaquan, Joaquin Granger. We was at everything. We would, that then was my brothers. That was not from any ties of my family, but Ooh, I felt like I spent more time with them than my own family. Like when I say go waking up at eight o'clock in the morning, seven o'clock in the morning to drive down to the LA USD building, still running over note cards, still running over speeches and little stuff, you know, going out just to play basketball and, you know, going out to eat and then going, you know, doing research projects, um, projects, putting in data, you know, them brothers right there, them family for life I don't care what, I don't care what arguments we got, if there's disagreements, whether we agree or something or whatever, man, we done been through a lot. We done all went. We all put in work together. We all was. We all family, like I helped them boys move into their new places like them, them forever, family. Um, what's it called? Christian Taylor. I consider him my little brother. I still call, call him almost every other day. Check up on him. This man goes, um, goes to college in Florida now. And he has a 3.2 GPA and he had been continued to be working extra hard. I called just to encourage that brother. Cause he don't even got no family out there. That's family for life. I even had my own blood little brother go run through that program and he family for life just off rip.

For Ahmir Bates, the connections to other youth in his program had blossomed into lifelong peer networks and relationships. By learning how to build power together, address public policy, facilitate workshops, and learn from their peers across other programs at SJLI, they were able to cultivate a bond that is immediately recognizable when you see the three of them together. As their primary organizer, we shared many car rides going to and from meetings where we discussed our lives, how we interpreted things in the landscape that were happening, and most importantly, how we were going to change it. We shared music, tears, and laughter as we worked to build deep relationships rooted in trust and care. The relationships that the young people were able to build as a result of being a part of this program is connected to ending the social isolation that Black boys and young men experience.

For some youth organizers, like Jared “Jaybo” O’Brien at the Youth Justice Coalition, relationship building has become the bedrock for how he has developed, expanding his peer network, and how he learned about gender, sexism and patriarchy. This looks like teaching his relatives and close friends about race, gender, and patriarchy, exhibiting progressive gender traits taught to him by the activist women in his proximity. Jaybo developed close relationships with his organizing peers, which have since helped him to learn about gender. Speaking first about his experience with other organizers he works with, Jaybo states,

> I feel like the relationships are definitely important. I feel like, since I've been at YJC, this year we have probably one of the strongest and most solid teams. We're moving forward as a unit, as an organization throughout the thick and the thin. I feel like the relationships is probably one of the biggest reasons why I wouldn't leave YJC immediately if a better opportunity comes up, because it's a huge part of why I want to be

there. They keep me motivated. It's like a family. If I need something, they're going to be there. If they need something, I'm going to be there. And it's kind of something like that, like a support system. Even though we're not perfect, the structure and stuff like that of our relationships isn't where it's supposed to be, but I feel like we do a pretty good job at staying connected, having proper communication, and helping each other out and trying our best to be inclusive of everyone.

Because Jaybo has gone through the deep relationship building, trust building and cultivating friendships within his network at YJC, he is better able to be inclusive of others and communicate with his peers. This was not always the case, as Jaybo has had to work diligently to learn about progressive gender politics and change some of his behaviors. Speaking about his experiences with learning about masculinity, Jaybo states,

> Yeah. Yeah, I have been checked, and that's how I learned the most, because when I first came in I was told that I practice toxic masculinity. I was checked by Ellie and a couple of them there. I was constantly getting checked and I was like, yo, I'm not ready for this. Then I started taking a look back and started doing my own research and learning my own stuff, and learning my own processes. I feel like that's been helpful too, because I feel like even though I personally learned about all that stuff, patriarchy, sexism, all of that stuff, the reality I live and people I'm surrounded by doesn't support all that stuff. Not support it, but isn't as informed as me. I would still have people in surroundings believe in law enforcement and patriarchy and all that stuff, so learning that to move forward and as black people we're going to have to be inclusive of everybody and learn how to agree to disagree. I feel like that's a topic that everybody has been scared to have, that as black people, if we're going to say we want to move forward, we all don't got to be on the same page. We just all got to have a common goal

In this quote, Jaybo is acknowledging that his immediate peers outside of organizing may not have the critical consciousness to understand terms like patriarchy, homophobia, and sexism, however, he learned these terms through critical self-reflection and 'being checked' by his femme counterparts at YJC and in organizing spaces. In many activist spaces, feminist politics, especially intersectional feminist politics, are vital to the functioning of organizing spaces in California, especially abolitionist spaces working to reimagine public safety (Carruthers, 2018; Cullors, 2018; Ransby, 2018; Ritchie, 2017; Taylor, 2016). For Jaybo, having to learn both the language and unlearn what he calls traits of toxic masculinity has helped him to develop what some scholars call progressive masculinity, which is broadly defined as men (specifically cis-gender, heterosexual men) who adopt interpersonal and political practices rooted in gender equity, intersectional feminism, and queer liberation (see, e.g., Gayles, 2018; Orelus, 2010; Ramaswamy, 2010). Even though Jaybo has learned about issues connected to gender and patriarchy, he has worked to educate his peers. Discussing what peer-to-peer education looks like for him, Jaybo states,

> It feels good. It feels like I'm fulfilling a duty. But I ain't going to lie. I'm not going to lie like it's perfect, having to step up and have them man to man talks and let your little brother or your little homie or people know what the deal is. Those talks aren't easy. People talk about it, but the people that really talk about it don't really live the reality that we live. They're not really dealing with young gang bangers and stuff, and just having me, someone that I'm determined to do it regardless, and I'm going to teach, that's ... It's not as easy as people make it sound, having to have those talks, especially with all the young black men that came from that same reality I had. I don't want to check them like

> how I got checked, and the way how that happened. I want to communicate, not because somebody doesn't have the proper knowledge or education on a topic that you will have, that you means you should be angry with them. I feel like you should educate them and teach them instead of checking them and telling them, bam bam, and getting on they heads… Being able to answer those questions when I get them too, and even though I don't know everything, looking up to people like you and other men in this space that have been leading for a while, and try to keep that in the back of my head and say, I wonder what would they think? What would they say when someone ask them this question? Because it's not an easy job to be an organizer, and it's not an easy job to be advocating for equity and change, and for the prison system to be gone, the juvenile justice system to be gone. It's not an easy thing to be advocating for that, knowing that there's black people who don't agree that there shouldn't be no juvenile hall, kids shouldn't be locked up in a cage, and stuff like that.

Here, Jaybo is highlighting how he connects with his peers who may still be connected to the streets. He articulates that he wants to "educate" his peers on issues such as patriarchy, sexism, and gender, in ways that help to move them closer towards having progressive masculinities. In addition, he also overviews the challenges of shifting political consciousness about abolition in his community, admitting that it is difficult to teach other Black people about reimagining a world without prisons, jails, or police. However, Jaybo has committed himself to this struggle, and is committed to building authentic relationships to address critical issues in his community.

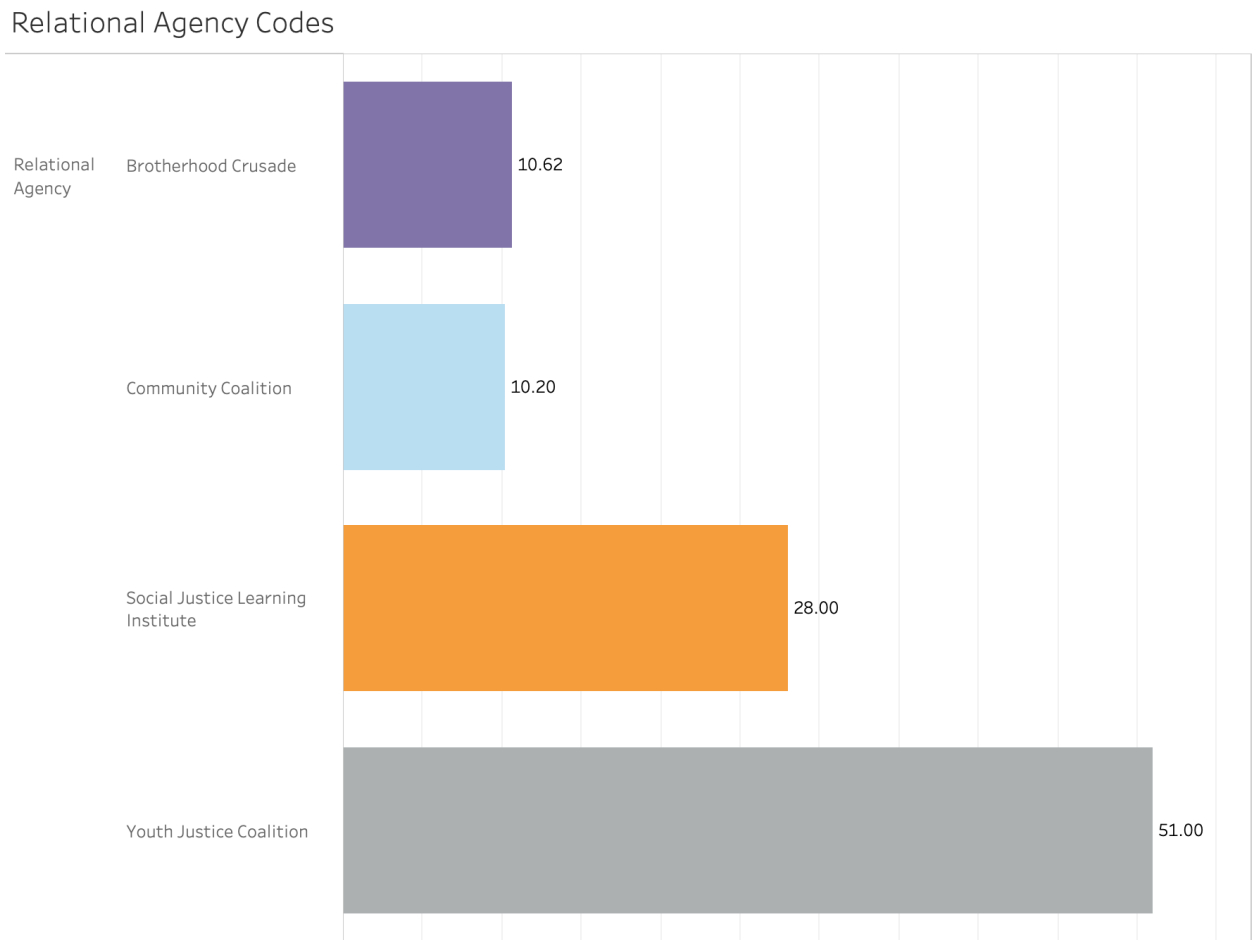
On a similar note, Amir Casimir has worked to educate his peers on critical issues such as voting and political engagement. Speaking about the 2020 presidential election and the importance of raising your voice, Amir asserts,

> For me doing political work as a black male, it's interesting because being involved with SJLI and BSS for a long time, I didn't have a lot of perspective on what political work looked like, uh, for black men. Right. And it, it kind of shielded me from a lot of perspective, but also kept me engaging. Right. It kept me trying to engage other black men and in political work, for example, like that was that conversation I had with my friend was about trying to engage him in. Like, I don't know if I would have been, if I would have felt it necessary, right. To him to introduce him if I had been in a space, um, that wasn't, that wasn't primarily for black men… So I feel like one time I was able to do that was when I, I had an actual conversation with my friends about it. I pretty much explained policy in a different way. And it made me feel like I really was able to make a difference. My friend was saying that there's basically no point to vote. Um, because you know, a lot of my particular class, a high school they've come in with Donald Trump and we had to have, have a kind of different perspective on the importance of voting. And so just being able to speak to that to him per se, particularly was saying like, well, we didn't vote in the last one. And so our voices weren't heard, imagine if they were, and you know, that, that made me that, you know, he opened it that opened his mind up and it made him feel like, you know, you're right. Like I didn't, I didn't get to say so maybe if I do have a say this time more, more will happen, or maybe I can change my, uh, maybe I can change my lived conditions because I see you, you're out here doing BSS every, every week, every month, you know? Uh, and that there's being able to change his mind in that way, made me feel like that's, that's what makes it important to do the work? You know, it's all about being able to articulate, to talk to everybody and change, just make people want to make people want to engage.

Above, Amir is speaking about the importance of engaging Black men around sociopolitical issues. For example, Montoya (2020) found that in the 2016 election, Black men had lower voter turnout then Black women, consistent with other literature on Black men's voter turnout (Ansolabehere & Hersh, 2011; Bañales et al., 2019; Cohen, 2010; Dawson, 2003; Rosenfeld et al., 2011). Since Amir has been organizing with boys and men of color, and Black boys and men specifically, he knew how to approach the situation to convince his friend to vote and participate in the political process, especially since they were turning 18 in 2020 and had the ability to vote for the first time. Through relational agency, Amir was not only able to educate his peers on the importance of voting, he was able to support voter turnout.

Figure 9

Relational Agency Codes



For relational agency, youth from the Youth Justice Coalition and the Social Justice Learning Institute had the most significant and consistent responses. For the LOBOS [Leading Our Brothers and Sisters Out the System] youth organizing program at YJC, youth are connected to this program, and often stay, because of the deep relationship building that takes place. The relationship building is primarily rooted in a peer-to-peer style relationship, where LOBOS members drive the organizing strategy, the recruiting, retention, and campaigns for the organization. Older LOBO members and adult allies support youth, however, active LOBOS facilitate the organizing. There is no specific start and end time to be a LOBO (in comparison to

SCYEA, BLOOM, or the Urban Scholars Program that are structured around the academic calendar year), so a young person can hypothetically be a LOBO until they are no longer considered a "youth" by YJC standards (age 25). For the Social Justice Learning Institute, youth leaders partake in leadership retreats, intentional curricular relationship building, and programmatic activities designed to build relationships. SJLI, during the interviews, was also the only organization to have designated, yearlong programming for alumni (former program participants), which meant that they were able to sustain relationships over time. These factors contribute to SJLI and YJC having higher code counts.

Movement Building Agency

For the Black boys and young men in this study, the relationships that they cultivate within community-based organizations entrenched in social movement work ultimately leads to their continued engagement with social movement organizing. Through their peer-to-peer networks, young people are able to engage in learning exchanges, grow their socio-political identities, and most importantly, connect their peers and families who are not involved in social movement organizing to new movement-based networks. Through political education, which social movement scholars refer to as cognitive liberation and education scholars refer to as critical pedagogy (McAdam, 1999; Pulido, 2006), young people are able to politicize their peers, families, and communities to help build a base in the struggle for liberation in their communities. For many young people, this is larger than just correcting forms of oppressive behavior that their peers may exhibit as one may see with relational agency (such as cat-calling women on the streets or making comments rooted in anti-Black sentiment), movement building agency is about the intentional practice of growing their communities political consciousness so they can join struggles for liberation.

Political consciousness, critical consciousness, sociopolitical development, leadership development, critical pedagogy, liberatory pedagogy, and all of the other names consciousness raising goes by serves a fundamental purpose - raising awareness of oppressive and unequal conditions to drive political change (Cho, 2010; Diemer & Li, 2011; Diemer & Rapa, 2016; Freire, 1993; Scorza, 2013; Tarlau, 2014; Watts et al., 2003). For communities of color, Black communities specifically, this type of teaching for social movements has historical precedent. Jon Hale (2016) highlights this speaking about Freedom Schools, stating,

> Freedom School was physically held outside that system, in church sanctuaries and basements, in local community homes, in storefronts, and in "Freedom Houses" built by civil rights activists. Students studied a humanities-based curriculum that taught political efficacy, social critique, and the organizing strategies employed in the civil rights movement. They discussed the U.S. Constitution and questioned why their parents were not allowed to vote. Students worked in the community, marched on the picket lines, organized boycotts, and desegregated libraries, parks, and schools for the first time in the history of their home communities. Young people were not marginal players in the civil rights struggle. They played an instrumental role during that era and in post-segregated society. Attending Freedom School translated into protest and community-organizing skills; which students applied in the fall of 1964 to demand better resources in their own schools, to protest unjust expulsions, suspensions, and other racially motivated disciplinary actions; and to organize long-term school boycotts. The legacy of the Freedom Schools suggests that despite the best efforts of the architects of the Jim Crow system, community-based efforts taught students to act as historic change agents (p. 5).

The legacy of Freedom schools, as Hale articulates, is undergirded by the ability to mobilize young people to participate deeply in the civil rights struggle. One critical factor about this version of movement building is that it happened 'outside' of the schooling apparatus - it happened in basements, church sanctuaries, storefronts, and the like. The four organizations in this study, while navigating the landscape of nonprofits, services for boys and men of color, and youth organizing, connected their recruitment, political education, and program facilitation to schools. In this sense, they are able to gain access to Black boys and young men, while also maintaining their autonomy to teach a curriculum that they fundamentally control.

Young people like Amir Casimir benefited tremendously from movement building agency, specifically as a project of raising his sociopolitical consciousness about political issues. Speaking about critical consciousness, Amir asserts,

> …critical consciousness is being able to identify it, like being able to be aware of the world that you live in. Like not only being able to take information at face value, but being able to analyze that information and, uh, reconcile that with your own research and understanding of the world. Um, so being able to, for example, look at systems like policing, right? That had been around since you, as long as you can remember, as long as, you know, and imagine them as being something else that's being critically conscious because you're aware of what the system currently is. And you're stepping outside of that to imagine something completely different outside of your constant and being critical of what could change within your reality.

For youth like Amir, critical consciousness helped to cultivate what Robin Kelley (2002) would call his Black radical imagination, or in other words, his ability to imagine a different world outside of the oppressive context that he lived in. Having a direct hand in his politicization, I got the opportunity to watch as Amir turned into an abolitionist who could imagine a world without prisons or police. Amir's articulation of critical consciousness is directly connected to the movement building agency, and more specifically the leadership development, that organizations go through as they walk in a similar tradition as the Freedom Schools.

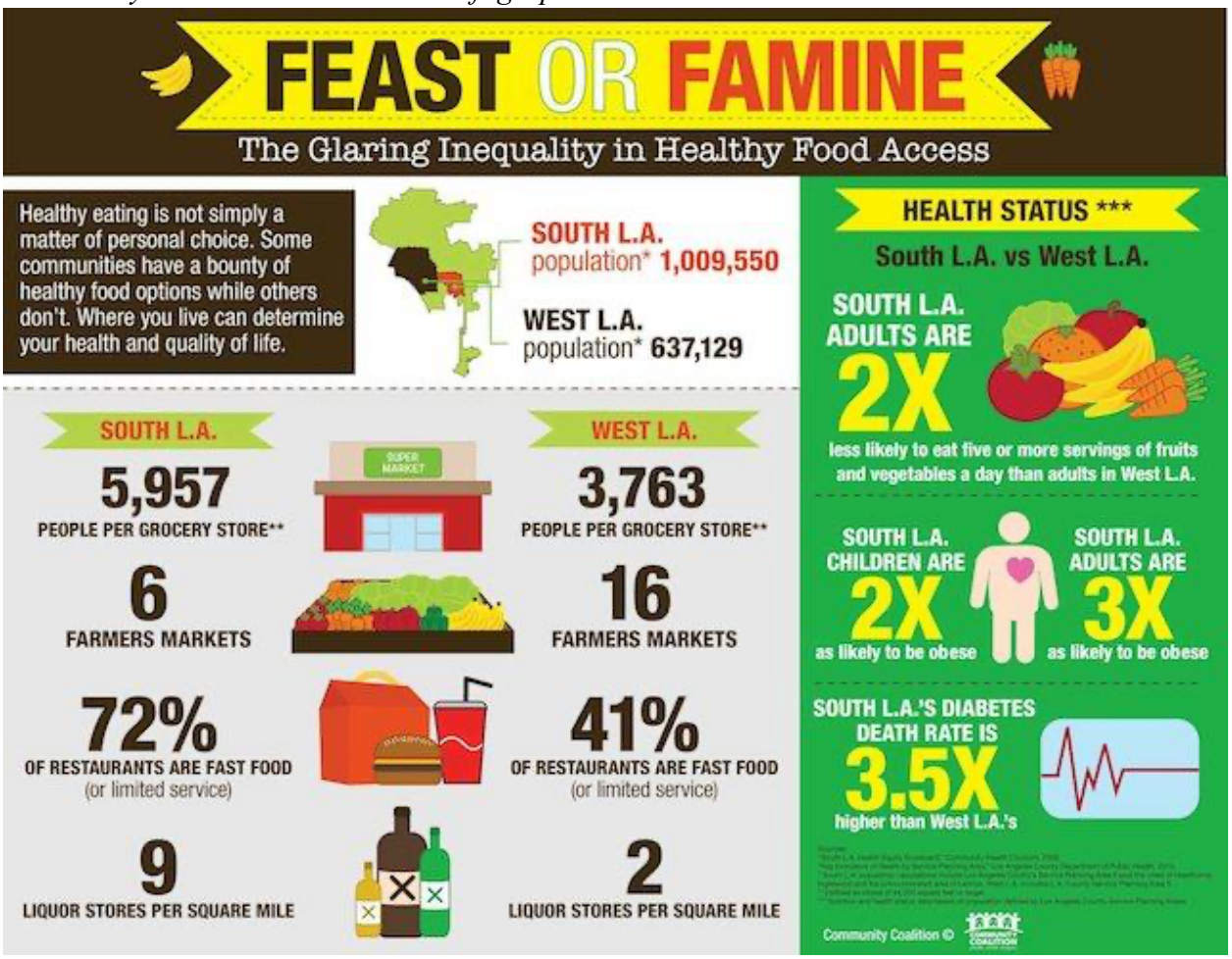
For youth like Jathan Melendez from Community Coalition, geography was used as the primary tool to build critical consciousness. Speaking about his experience on Community Coalition's 'South LA vs. West LA tour, Jathan states,

> I know at the time we were going through those conversations. Not only that, but we also had a component where we would take a South LA versus West LA tour… That just gave us a opportunity to see how many liquor stores were at our community versus West LA, how many hospitals…It's like visiting a whole nother foreign environment and just being like, "Damn. What would life be like if I was a student here? What would life be like if I was living in this community?

As a pedagogical tactic, the organizers from CoCo take the youth on specific community tours to highlight the various levels of resource asymmetry - specifically, the lack of healthy food options, health resources, and the lack of harmful resources that lead to substance abuse in the two communities. As Jathan articulates (and seen in Figure 10), the juxtaposition of the two communities represented an explicit politicizing and movement building tactic to highlight inequality and structural disinvestment in the racialized geography of South Central. Under this type of public health approach, youth leaders like Jathan are able to visibly 'see' the inequity, which helps to drive their long-term social movement participation. Jathan has returned to CoCo as a full-time staff member, and he cites this specific political education activity as one of the contributing factors to his long-term commitment to social change.

Figure 10

Community Coalition Food Access Infographic



For youth like Sean Jones from the Social Justice Learning Institute, movement building agency was cultivated during his first youth participatory action research project about the Banking Concept of Education - an education theory that speaks broadly to the ways that schools facilitate a dichotomous relationship between students and teachers that prevents students from learning about inequity and critically examining the world - as articulated by Paulo Freire (1993). Sean recalls,

> For me, the best thing that stuck with me the most in BMYA was definitely the banking concept. I didn't know nothing about that. It's not like I knew nothing about it, [but I always] knew how they were treating us, how they [were] treating us like they don't care about us, [always] kicking us out of class.

In this instance, Sean is highlighting the impact that learning about the Banking Concept of Education had on him. More specifically, Sean names that the banking concept of education gave him a vocabulary to identify the types of school push-out and discipline that he has both seen and experienced as a Black boy in south central Los Angeles. At his high school, Black students made up 70% of out of school suspensions, even though Black students were less than 15% of the population in the year Sean engaged in his first YPAR study. Put plainly, Youth

participatory action research is a methodology where youth and a researcher work collaboratively to identify a topic that the youth would like to transform in their communities, and they work to address it through a collective means of gathering information from their peers and communities about the topic and then building a campaign around it. These students were able to deduce that harsh school discipline was a direct result of students not accepting the socialization of the Banking Concept of Education, which led them to other educational scholars such as Jean Anyon (1980) and Jeannie Oakes (2005), to help them make sense of their environments.

As stated earlier, Sean developed a lexicon of critique because of this YPAR project. Highlighting that these experiences meant for him, Sean states,

> Oh, it made me feel knowledgeable. It made me feel like I had more knowledge. We going to spread the word about this literally, like showing them this will be working on, this will be researching on, check this out, see how y'all feel about this. Literally, some students, they knew what was going on. You know how some students, they just be hating on their teacher. I'm like no, you got to feel like how the teacher's being unfair, being unreasonable...As soon as we came up with the concept, with the survey, collecting data, presenting it, it was just... That's when I knew we going to have to get in with this. We got to win that first part. I believe that's my favorite YPAR project out of all of them, because it's like I didn't know much about it until I researched it and then we was talking about it and got into heated conversations about it. We going to have to get in with this.

In this quote, Sean is highlighting how he was able to "read the world" differently and see how student critiques of teaching practices were not simply grounded in student's inability to succeed in school, they were in fact connected to the students' critiques of the education system itself. As a YPAR project, Sean and his peers surveyed 250 youth across the three small schools that made up his high school, and they interviewed roughly 16 youth to corroborate their survey data. What they found, was that Black students in particular had much sharper critiques of the classroom structure than Latinx students, helping to demonstrate the presence of anti-Black racism and bias. The youth were ultimately able to use this research in connection to other projects that the BMYA class had accomplished to support school climate changes by having youth begin to facilitate parts of classroom discussion, and they used it more broadly across the district for increased investments in restorative justice initiatives. For the movement building component, Sean and his peers learned that they were not alone in their critiques of the school, which helped them combat social isolation by lifting up the voices of youth who were also feeling silenced by school staff and representatives.

In addition to cultivating the political consciousness of youth, movement building agency is also about recruiting youth into organizing for social change. The relationship between Marcus Pickens and LeQuan Muhammad from the Social Justice Learning Institute best illustrate movement building agency. As LeQuan was facing consistent school push-out, Marcus took notice, and recruited him to the Black Male Youth Academy program that SJLI operated at his old high school. Marcus recalled his experience, stating,

> So LeQuan Mohammed was a student that he was a friend of a friend's but they were like related and so, LeQuan Mohammed, I pretty much advocated for him to get into the program because he's a little bit younger than me and I knew his background. I already knew from Watts, his folk... I already knew his folk. I am not going to put his business out there but I knew his situation. I knew his folks but I also saw potential in him and so as I was advocating for him to get in the class, he got into the class and now like

> LeQuan... LeQuan is some work. , work, like the non violent marijuana charges, his pops got out, Obama responded to him in a letter, there's some stuff that had happened and so those two were defining moments for me as a student.

Above, Marcus recalls what it felt like to advocate for LeQuan to get into the program. By recruiting LeQuan into the Black male youth academy, LeQuan was exposed to social justice ideals, adult mentors who were invested in his well-being, and a different way of life. As LeQuan became more involved, he began to understand how the school push-out he was experiencing was a direct result of the carceral state's entrenchment in Black communities, and in his own life. Through being recruited by Marcus, LeQuan was exposed to new ideas that led him to working on a ballot measure in the state of California called Prop 47, which turned non-violent drug offenses from felonies to misdemeanors. Working on this campaign shortened the jail sentence of his own father, who was able to return home. Speaking emotionally about what this experience meant for him, LeQuan states,

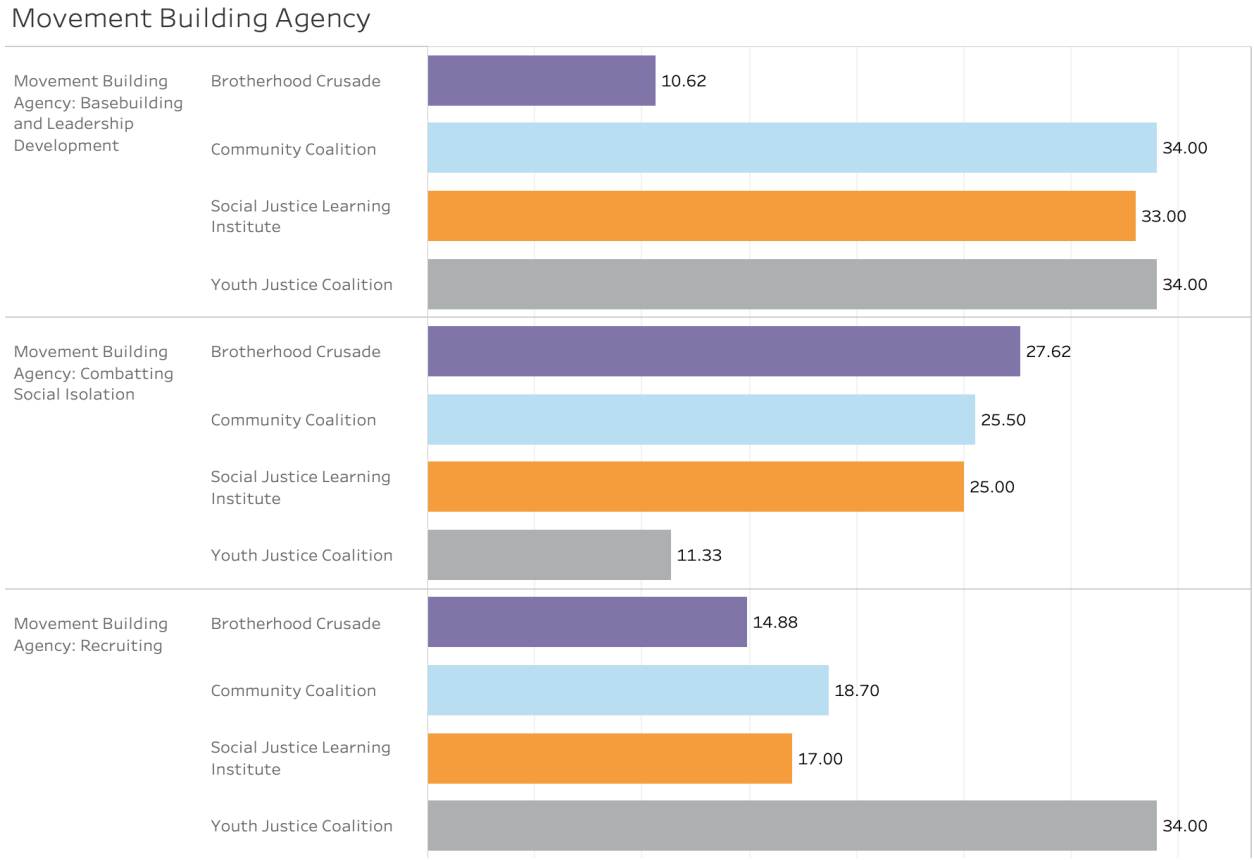
> Yea his case was a drug case or my dad. So like his little case, it got a 30 mandatory minimum and all this type of stuff, you know? And then they had like the Super Predator thing. So he got like a lot of years off the rip. You know he really got a lot of time for that, you know, so I was just like, I'll always been like in need for a dad, you know, like it was some male figure's that came into my life. But it ain't nothing like having your dad like for real. Like this is no lie. Like my uncles and stuff was cool because but like, I can't like, you know, like yall my uncle, you know, there's only so much time yall can give, you feel me so its like, it is what it is. I really took effect too it. It really like set with me. Like I had to do this. Like I need to get my dad back home. Like this shit is like all that's on my mind. Like I remember even talking about it was like the teachers at my school and like I'm bout to get my daddy back. Everybody else, I couldn't really care about, you know, look bro, like I ain't never had a daddy my whole life bro. Like, and I use to hate when people will be like, oh I hate my dad, and this and that and I use to be like you sucka ass boy!, like come on man I dont even got a da. So prop 47 when they told me it helped all not violent felonies to come home, you know, so just doing it like and getting behind it and it gives you life. But it was just like damn, like I gotta bring my dad home. Like I can't really say like, oh I wanted to do it like this because then I'll be lying to you about how honest and open I am. I've got to get my dad home you know, like other people too but like my dad gotta he got to be here…

As a part of the Prop 47 campaign, LeQuan and Dr. D'Artagnan Scorza of SJLI began to canvass to get Prop 47 passed. Both of them would be reunited with their family members as a direct result of their advocacy, and California's larger movement to support the Ballot Proposition. For LeQuan, this had two major effects. First, he learned about the legitimate power of community organizing, as he was directly impacted by bringing his father home. Second, bringing his father home legitimized him as a community organizer across the social justice landscape. LeQuan was invited to give a keynote speech at the Liberty Hill Foundation, during a main event of Obama's My Brother's Keeper Conference, and he has been able to recruit youth to participate more intentionally in organizing as a part of it. In addition, in popular discourse, there is a lot of rhetoric about absent Black men and absent fathers in Black communities, rooted in culture of poverty narratives about Black manhood. While research has long debunked these claims, what is rarely explored are the efforts of Black boys and men to fight back against the systems that took their fathers in the first place - working to reunite families and break cycles of broken homes. Through movement-building agency, social isolation is directly confronted by bringing

newcomers into movement building through politicization and the cultivation of networks who are at least sympathetic, and at most deeply committed, to social change. This is pivotal for Black boys and young men, as they work to address the traumas they experience at the hands of the state.

Figure 11

Movement Building Agency Codes



The results for movement building agency vary across organizations. For example, with base building and leadership, youth from Community Coalition, the Social Justice Learning Institute, and the Youth Justice Coalition all cited these experiences as critical to their development. Speaking generally, base building and leadership development is functionally rooted in leaders within a given organizing base developing leadership and growing their base by bringing in new members. For instance, with Community Coalition, youth were in charge of facilitating their High School Organizing Committees [HSOC], and they work to build youth power at their schools to change conditions both at their school site and across the school district. For youth at the Social Justice Learning Institute, they often cited the leadership development (i.e., their political education) as a critical factor in their development, and their leadership development led them to recruit their peers into the program. The results for combatting social isolation and recruiting were not anticipated, as I expected results from both sub-categories to be more closely aligned. For combatting social isolation, Brotherhood Crusade, Community Coalition, and the Social Justice Learning Institute had higher scores, while for recruiting YJC, boast the highest code count, consistent with the relational agency portion of the Black

transformative agency quadrant. Comparatively speaking, YJC is the only program that does not have a systemic, year after year version of curriculum that they engage in with their LOBOS, however, they operate their own school where they can facilitate political education. For the other programs (SJLI, CoCo, BHC), they operate year-long programs with systemic political education, which creates the conditions that led to the different code counts.

Structurally Transformative Agency

Structurally transformative agency, which is distinct from movement building agency, is a process in which Black boys and young men work collaboratively with their peers, adult allies, and others to confront the state and change some form of policy, practice, or cultural norm. Structurally transformative agency, then, is rooted in what Sekou Franklin (2014) would define as transformational movements, being "diffuse and involve high-risk strategies and tactics that have a sustained impact on political culture; their goals are adopted by a diverse group of movement networks; occasionally, they influence the emergence of new mobilizing structures; and at times they disrupt or effect the implementation of public policies" (p. 17). As Black boys and young men begin to embrace the identities of organizers or activists, they begin to see how social and political systems have directly impacted their lives, and what they need to do in order to transform them. The political imaginations of these young people, many of whom are deeply influenced by Black feminists and abolitionist politics, dream of worlds where police and prisons do not exists, Black communities have the resources that they need, and racial harmony is present only in the absence (and eradication) of white domination and power (Dumas and Ross, 2016). Through structurally transformative agency, Black young people took to the streets in the summer of 2020 to call for the defunding of police, the reimagination of public safety, and justifiably lit righteous fires to bring abolition into the national forefront as the primary public safety reform strategy. Some of these youth were involved in organizations that allowed them to turn their righteous anger into public policy, which they all have accomplished through various campaigns and initiatives across the last decade.

Youth who are engaged in structurally transformative agency understand that their efforts are only as important as their broader contributions to movements for educational justice, criminal justice, and environmental justice efforts. They learn in their organizing spaces that their contributions are connected to collective efforts, and very early on, learn a sense of selflessness in order to contribute to the greater good. For youth like Aidan Flores, he does not refer to himself as an activist or an organizer - he instead refers to himself as someone who is doing what needs to be done for the greater good. Highlighting what he calls the "dirty work" of organizing, Aidan asserts,

> David: So you don't consider yourself to be an activist?
> Aidan: I just consider myself as a person to do what needs to be done.
> David T.: Mm Hmm. And why is that?
> Aidan: Because, um, I feel like if you see something wrong going, not like wrong, but if you realize something other people don't see and you feel like you can do something to fix it, you shouldn't want a label for it. You shouldn't need a label for doing what's right…Cause like not everything you do, you don't get praised for. *Sometimes you have to do the dirty work. You know, phone calls, surveys, door knocking, and all of that.* It's like, think of it like a big football team or basketball team. Not everybody can get the notoriety that they feel like they deserve somebody gotta do the dirty work, like the offensive linemen, or the center and power forward. They don't usually get known unless

> they're putting up big points. People don't notice the little things they do. And some people actually are wrapped up with [getting noticed].., It all comes down to if you're alright with [not getting noticed] or not. That's what I would say. Everybody wants to be known for doing something. Nobody wants to be known for doing the dirty work, the stuff that has to be done for something that works successfully.

Above, Aidan is relying on sports analogies to articulate what he means by "dirty work." Like in sports, there are many things that athletes do that go unnoticed, as most popular consumption of sports is focused on the highlights. Organizing is no different - where most people would focus on the large policy victories, the mass mobilizations, and the eloquent speeches, Aidan points to the deep levels of grassroots movement building as the primary assessment for what being politically engaged means to him. This specific process of phone banking and engaging their peers is largely youth-led, where youth learn how to define certain issues, they learn how these issues connect to their communities, and then they write a calling script they use to engage their peers. This type of response is consistent across organizational types. In a similar response, Blacc states,

> Damn. To be honest, I'd say it takes a lot of backend work too, but it takes a lot of support from families. Going up to the capitol, lobbying, being right there in front of them, telling them your story, being at the stage of it all. Going to your county board of supervisor meetings, being at any type of committee meetings you hear about that are host to a bunch of communities. To me, to change a policy you have to go up there. Try to get people on your side.

In this quote, Blacc is highlighting the importance of being "there" - of being directly in front of decision makers and representatives of the state in order to push specific policies. Young people from the Youth Justice Coalition engage in organizing across every level of government - with the state, the city, the county, and sometimes even federal advocacy. For young people like Blacc and Jaybo, they are often in close proximity to those who have been the most impacted by state violence like themselves - those who have also had their loved ones killed by police, those who have been incarcerated, and those who have also experienced school push out. They share long bus rides to the capitol together, meals, and in some cases even live together to alleviate the stress of social isolation. This is a part of the labor of structurally transformative agency, and what distinguishes it from navigational agency - being in deep community with others and doing the "dirty work" as Aidan would call it - and connecting that work to broader structural change and building community power.

Both Blacc and Jaybo played key roles in other key justice movements in the state of California such as passing Assembly Bill 392, which created stricter guidelines for the use of force from law enforcement. These young men also engage in these types of efforts alongside other abolitionist projects in Los Angeles. Blacc and Jaybo helped to lead the efforts of the Youth Justice Reimagined initiative - which is a 5-year plan to phase out youth probation and reinvest that funding into a county-wide youth development department that is rooted in social justice. Jaybo and Blacc point to the Youth Justice Reimagined initiative as their biggest organizing victory. Talking about what Youth Justice Reimagined meant to them, Jaybo states,

> So, we was walking out because we was demanding that we divest 5% of law enforcement budget into a youth development department. And you know what's crazy is that we just ended up divesting money from the sheriffs into things like youth development and alternatives to incarceration. So, something we've been fighting for for

> almost 10 years as YJC, and I've been fighting for it for almost five years, it's finally happening now in 2020.

Similarly, Blacc highlights the impact of the process to establish Youth Justice Reimagined. Pointing to the initial passing of the county motion to study the issue and provide recommendations, to the actual passing of the county motion to officially move $75 million out of probation, Blacc states,

> My biggest win was to be able to pass the first win for the LA county motion of studying the motion. Moving youth out of probation into youth development centers, to reinvest into that. I feel like that, because that was a step, it was a stepping stool for all that. It took it to, what? Just a week ago probation? Now what we said six months ago is putting into actual place. The YDD, the Youth Justice Work Group. So I feel like I'm proud when the first step happens. So that was one of my first biggest wins. That's what made me like, "Oh yeah. I really enjoy this space." You know?

The Youth Justice Reimagined motion went through a three-step process. First, youth and advocates from the Los Angeles Youth Uprising Coalition pushed forward a motion to move the county's youth on probation out of the probation department and into a youth development department - which would effectively render the probation department obsolete. Second, they engaged in a nine-month long community-driven process through the COVID-19 pandemic that brought hundreds of community and county stakeholders to the table to discuss the issues and develop recommendations. Finally, a report was developed, detailing what was needed to officially make the spirit of the first motion a reality by moving systems-involved youth out of the hands of probation. The motion passed at the county board of supervisors overwhelmingly and was then set to be implemented in the 2021-2022 fiscal year. For youth like Jaybo and Blacc, this moment represents Black transformative agency, as they worked on an abolitionist initiative to transform how youth are treated. Young people from YJC who are directly impacted by the justice system engage in a month-long strategic planning process, where they determine organizational priorities and campaigns. They invite other youth and community members who have been impacted by the carceral state, which forces the conversation to be youth and community driven.

Youth have worked in so many ways to combat the dispossession, urban abandonment, and lack of resources that their communities had. For some of the young men in this study, the Measure GG campaign in Inglewood represented their response to the dilapidated schooling conditions they had to experience. Speaking about the Measure GG campaign, Tykeem "TK" Brown of the Social Justice Learning Institute states,

> I've done a couple of school board meetings, you know, we personally got to speak to the board, the mayor talking about what we feel was unfair injustice right? To our community, right? To the students. To what we needed, how we were being heard, right. And that the school system is still based off years ago when we're in a new whole decade, you know, basically whole new century and they're still using textbooks, textbooks in there… Were we were talking about students being able to use technology in school and that plays a big key for us because at the time a cell phones was smartphones was being used more, right. You can pull up history like in, in like10 seconds on your phone and they talking about open the textbook and we like he everything, he just read in 30 minutes. [We compared] our schools to other schools, like Culver City, Inglewood High, and even Beverly Hills. We've been to these campuses and their lavish, they're beautiful,

> right? They have the technology, they have laptops in almost every class they have iPads and everything…

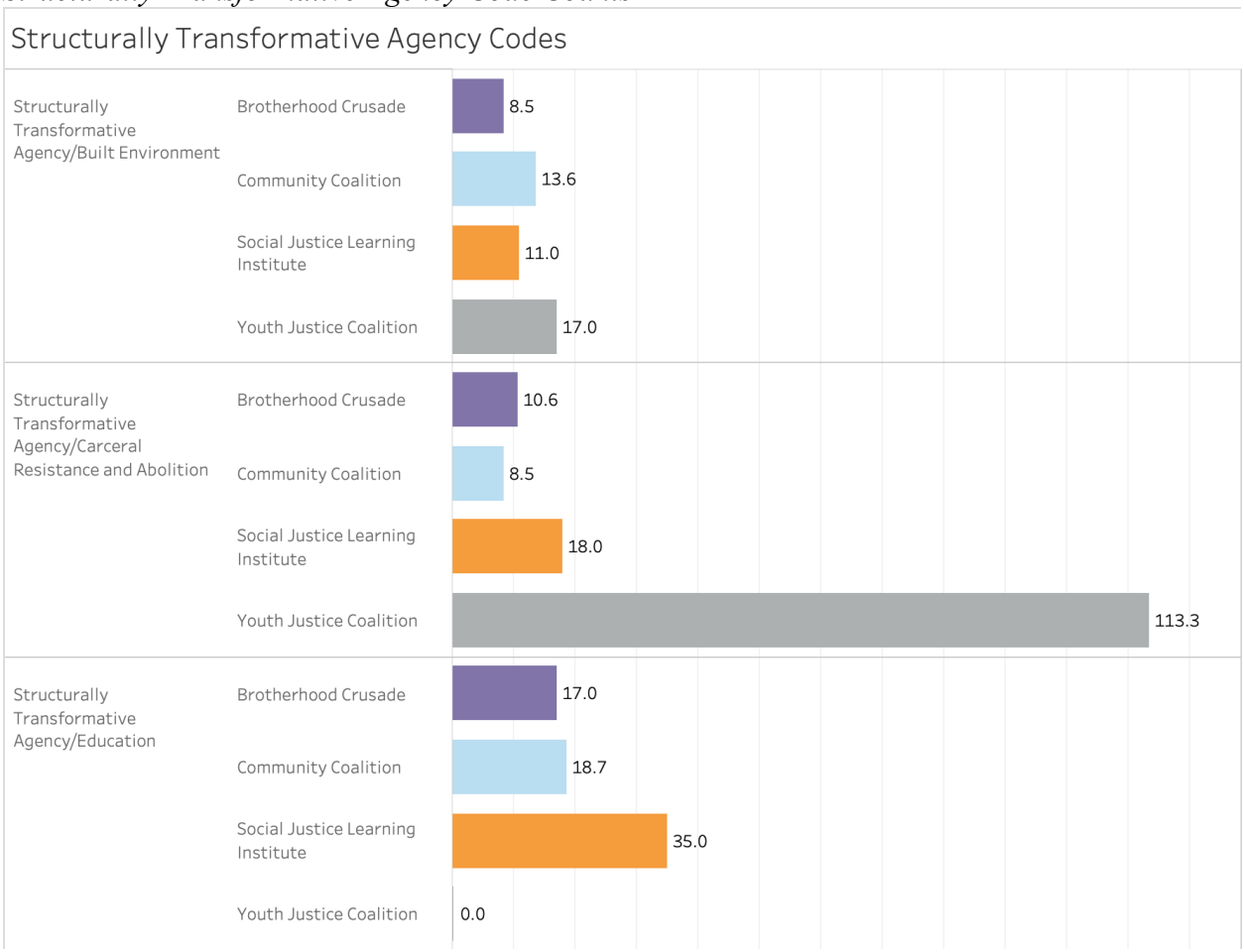
Throughout his time in the BMYA, TK learned about using youth participatory action research as a vehicle for social change. For TK and the youth at SJLI, this was his second major campaign. They ultimately were able to take the research they conducted and get a bond measure put on the 2012 election ballot called Measure GG, which was a bond measure that would bring $90 million to Inglewood public schools to update the technology, facilities, and overall built infrastructure of the schools they attended. For TK, being a part of a movement to transform his school's infrastructure, and doing it with his peers, meant a great deal to him. Recalling this emotional experience, TK states,

> Going to a school board meeting or a city council meeting or whatever while we attended because we'd done it all, was empowering, you know, we walked in with our black male youth academy shirts so everybody knew who we were. We came in and strong, you know, we, we weren't leaving until our voice was heard, right? Uh, I remember one day we gave a speech and they gave us a standing ovation. They were talking about, I'm about to cry right now, they were talking about how they never seen a group of our backgrounds come together and be able to share what we really think. And it wasn't nothing, Scorza wrote, you know, it wasn't no fake script or nothing like that. It was like, we care, you get me and its touching because I'm like, I was part of that movement, you know?

Reflecting on his younger experiences, TK got emotional in this part of his interview, highlighting how it was the first time for him and for many of the people receiving the presentation that a group of all Black male students were organizing for social change in their community. For TK, being a part of this movement in an authentic way, not in a way that was scripted by adults, made the matter even that much more important to him. In Clay and Turner (2021), we highlight how in youth participatory action research spaces, well-meaning adults can, and often do, become roadblocks to radical social change and the radical imaginations of young people. In this instance, the opposite happened - young people got the opportunity to realize not only their most radical potential, but they got the opportunity to do so in their own authentic voices. This represents structurally transformative agency, as Black male youth are able to mobilize both their identities and raise their collective voices to bring $90 million to a school district where they were still using science equipment in their schools from the 1970s in the 21st century.

Figure 12

Structurally Transformative Agency Code Counts



While all of the youth interviewed had experiences with engaging in systems change, speaking to policy makers, leading campaigns, and driving social change, youth from the Youth Justice Coalition had a disproportionately high number of code applications that were interpreted as structurally transformative agency, specifically in carceral resistance. This makes sense, as the primary function of their youth organizing program is driven by policy change, and their engagement in campaigns across all levels of government. For youth in SJLI, BHC, and CoCo, the highest amount of code counts were in educational change - speaking specifically about changing schools and institutions of education. While YJC does indeed engage in education justice based organizing, their primary focus is its intersection with the carceral state, which explains their code applications.

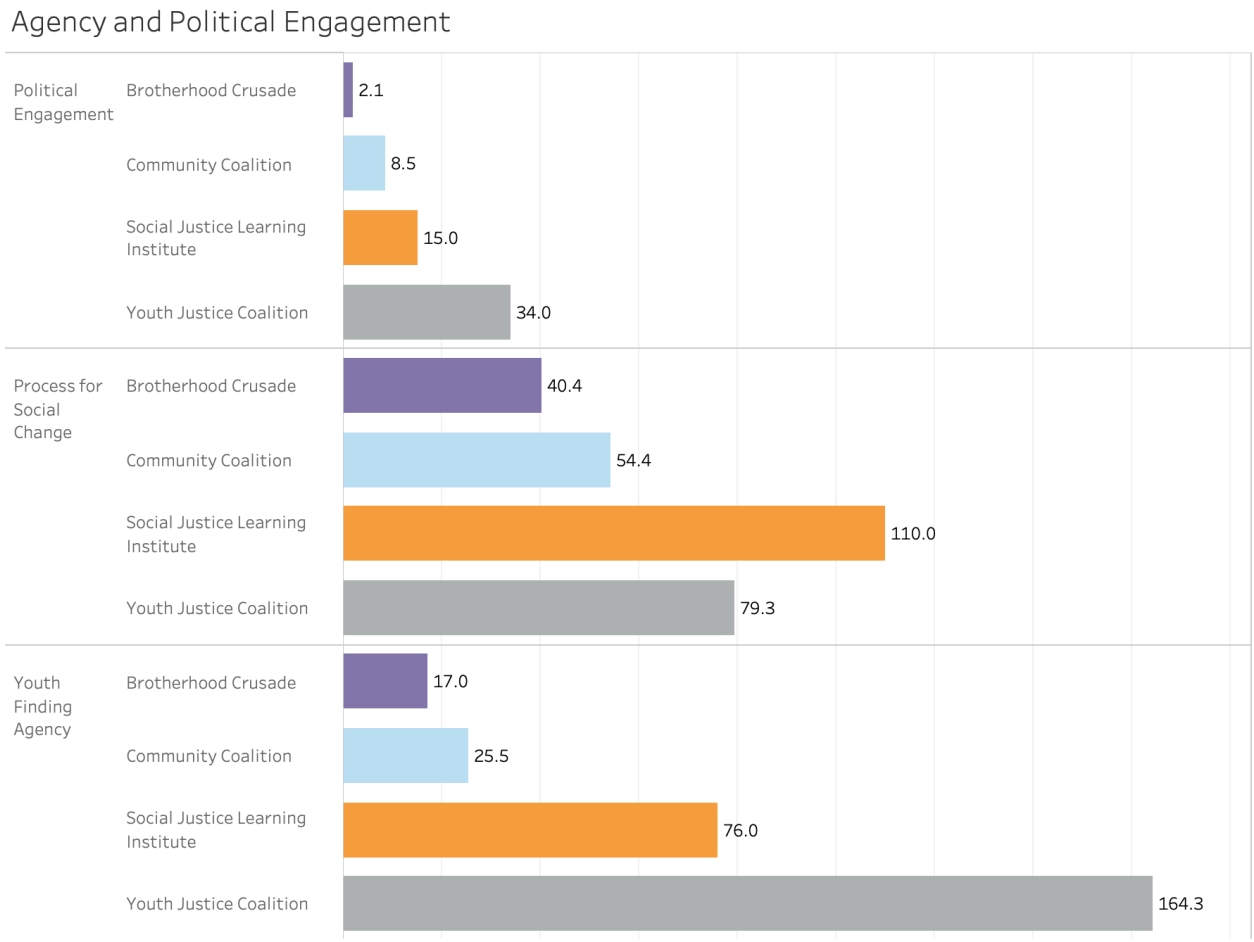
Towards an Understanding of Black Transformative Agency

Through their collective organizing, Black boys and young men exhibit Black transformative agency to shift the ability for state power to harm communities and builds the capacity for Black boys and young men to both participate in, and lead, movements. This is manifested in the skills that Black male youth learn in navigating movement spaces, the ways

they are able to interpret and engage public discourse, the methods they adopt to change their communities, the ways that movement spaces create opportunities to develop authentic relationships, and the ways that youth are able to transform their community context through collective organizing and resistance. For Black boys and young men, Black transformative agency has specific benefits that are unique to their identities and positionalities.

Figure 13

Agency and Political Engagement Codes



While all of the youth in this study had varying degrees with which they were able to engage decision makers and lead campaigns, youth from the Youth Justice Coalition led in the category of political engagement. With regards to explaining how social change happens and describing how they were transformed by the process itself, SJLI youth consistently cited examples of both 1) how social change happens and 2) how they were personally impacted by being a part of campaigns for social change. This is significant, because while all of the young people were able to explain what campaigns they were a part of and why those campaigns mattered to them, they did not go further and explain how those campaigns materialized and other processes for making them happen. Finally, YJC youth specifically named how finding agency impacted their lives. For YJC youth, all of whom have been impacted by the carceral state in some way, finding agency was critical in that they learned they could use their newfound skills to not only better advocate for themselves, but avoid recidivism as well (returning to jail).

Throughout this chapter, I highlighted the interviews of Black boys and young men who recounted their experiences as organizers, activists, and those who facilitate social change to demonstrate why an agency-centered approach is important to the study of Black boys and young men. For the youth in this study, no parts of what they experienced in their programs are solely unique for Black boys and young men, as other youth of color across genders experience many of the same tactics, teachings, campaign victories, and strategies employed to create change (see, e.g., Hosang 2006; Kwon, 2006; 2013; Oakes & Rogers, 2006; Rogers & Morrell, 2011). However, what is often overlooked is the specific meaning of *agency for* Black boys and young men. As articulated in chapter 5, Black boys and young men experience the carceral state, dispossession, and abandonment in ways that are similar to other youth, and in ways that are unique to their gender identity and expression (see, e.g., Ferguson, 2001; Rios, 2011). Agency, or the human capacity to enact their own will for Black boys in this sense meant not succumbing to oppressive conditions, it meant fighting back. Now, agency in this instance is not to be conflated with Black neoliberal notions of resilience, as Clay (2019) defines as the "normalization and the valorization of exercising human capital in relation to 'overcoming' or enduring structural racism" (p. 82). This is not an individualist project. Black Transformative Agency is a project where Black boys and young men, who have a specific critique of structural oppression, work to transform their conditions by specifically challenging structural racism at every turn, and all of its residual effects. This means challenging the social isolation created by structural racism, abject poverty, and neoliberal policies and practices that work to isolate the urban poor. This means confronting institutional power and hegemony by directly challenging their ability to wield state-sanctioned authority over non-state actors. And most importantly, Black transformative agency is a meaning-making process of Black youth working with homogeneous and heterogeneous groups to make structural changes in their communities.

Black transformative agency provides two critical interventions for the study of Black boys and young men. First, Black transformative agency both assumes and explicates a process that resists the more dominant analysis of social structure on the lives of Black boys and young men. The young people in this study are not merely receiving what is happening to them, they are actively responding to it both individually and collectively. We see this in Aidan's responses to how he challenged the authority of his teachers to kick him out of class, and we see this in how young people like Kevin interpret the non-answers of police officers when questioned about their abilities to use state violence with impunity. In addition, we see this in TK's response about measure GG, where he worked to transform school investments and was a part of a movement to turn out 87% of Inglewood voters to support the initiative, in spite of what academic literature says about Black men and civic engagement. Second, Black transformative agency takes into account the learning processes that Black youth experience to cultivate their agency. For example, the critical literacy and research skills that Sean Jones learned in his YPAR project about the Banking concept of education, or the critical policy analysis that Blacc learned in order to effectively contribute to policy discussions, are also apart of Black transformative agency, as they work to develop tools, methods, and strategies to resist structural oppression on every front. Black transformative agency allows researchers, practitioners, and the like to see that Black boys do not have to only exist in crisis, they can be agents of change in their own communities.

Chapter 7 - Discussion and Implications for Policy and Practice

Anecdotal Evidence

Anecdote #1 - Youth Research in Action

In January of 2015, Black male youth from the BLOOM Black Male Youth Academy [BMYA] presented a research project to a group of youth at the Action Civics Conference, located at the Los Angeles Public Library. Young people from across the city were invited to participate and learn from their peers who engaged in activism in their communities across the LA region: some focused on community organizing, and others focused on other project-based learning tools focused on some sort of social justice issue. When the BMYA walked onto the stage to give their presentation, all of them dressed in slacks and Black polos with, "Black Male Youth Academy" written on their chest inside a picture of Africa. The boys gave a research presentation about the inherent prejudice in relationships between police and communities of color in South Los Angeles. The youth, who attended Animo Watts, a small charter school connected to Locke High School in Watts, surveyed over 300 classmates to answer one question: how does prejudice influence relationships between police and youth of color in south Los Angeles?

In their presentation, they demonstrated their experimental survey design, using generic faces of a racially diverse group of people on a scale of approachability, asking their peers if that particular person was approachable or not, based on them being in and out of police uniform. What they found was that Black males did not see police as approachable, and everyone else that they surveyed did not find Black males approachable at all, both in and out of police uniform. The youth proceed to contextualize this information with database research on crime, race, and social psychology theories to help explain this behavior. The students then discussed how they advocated for change with their research, both by presenting this same research to police officers and by connecting this research to larger campaigns for social justice, specifically the LAUSD School Climate Bill of Rights advocacy and the passage of Proposition 47, which turned non-violent drug felonies into misdemeanors and reduced prison sentences for those incarcerated behind said offenses. The students received a grand round-of-applause from the crowd, and they left the stage, proud of the work they accomplished to both educate their peers and advocate for change in their community. This research happened during a period in U.S. political discourse when Black male youth were at the center of national dialogue about police violence through the Movement for Black Lives, or as it is popularly known, the Black Lives Matter movement. The movement for Black lives is a grassroots movement largely led by Black women and LGBTQ identified Black folks in order to challenge state-sanctioned violence against Black communities (Taylor, 2016; Ransby, 2018).

Anecdote #2 - Navigating Politicizing and Tokenizing

On October 5th, 2016, I facilitated a class on educational inequality to a racially mixed group of boys at a continuation school in Long Beach, California. I showed videos about the school-to-prison pipeline, the inequitable funding models for urban schools, and the ways that racial bias impacts policing. There were no white students in the room, and the class was made up of students of color. When we began talking about school funding and school lunch, one student stated, "yea, the food here [at the continuation school] is just like that nasty ass food at LP. Mr. Turner, is that kinda like the school to prison pipeline? Both of them giving us trash ass food?" The main classroom teacher, an older Cambodian man and former Long Beach gang

member, interrupted and said, “what do y’all kids know about LP?” LP, which is an acronym for Los Padrinos Juvenile Detention center, is one of the primary youth prisons that young people in Los Angeles County are sent to. When I asked the class of 37 students who had been to LP, 12 of them raised their hands. I then asked the class how many of them personally know someone who is locked up? Every single student raised their hand. As we continued the conversation about the role of the carceral state and their lives, one student said, “If it costs so much to lock us up, then why don’t they just give schools that money? Isn’t that cheaper? Shit, lets press some politicians to run their pockets for good things like this [Male Academy program that they are in].” I reminded the students of a Boys and Men of Color Townhall that was taking place that same week, and I told them that they should be in attendance so they can remind the two politicians that were going to be there, Speaker Anthony Rendon and Assembly Member Reginald Jones Sawyer, to “run their pockets” - in other words, to stop withholding state resources and to distribute those resources back to the schools and communities with which they represent. I purposefully was attempting to cultivate a political consciousness and agency in the students there, and they were not only receptive to the information, but they wanted to know when I was coming back to lead another class. *They wanted to be political, they wanted to fight for social transformation, they wanted to make something happen.*

All across the state of California, the lives of Boys and Men of color are governed constantly by the looming threat of American carceral technologies of control. In Los Angeles, young boys and men of color are uniquely vulnerable to the punishment apparatus (schools, carceral state, etc) where they experience some of the harshest punishments for minor infractions, gendered dimensions of punishment (such as the physical harassment by police officers), and they are susceptible to fatal intra-communal violence, at a higher rate than any other group. These conditions have led to the growth of a social movement led by community-based organizations and by boys and men of color from different constituency groups across the greater Los Angeles area to begin organizing for racial and educational justice in their schools and communities. My facilitation of the class that day, and our presence on that campus, is indicative of the results of decades of youth organizing and adult-led advocacy for boys and young men.

However, my presence in that classroom represents a real tension in the movement for boys and men of color. When our team at the Social Justice Learning Institute met with the principal of the school we partnered with, we informed him of our curriculum, our organizing and leadership efforts, and the academic outcomes of our organization. He was incredibly impressed with our efforts, and he said that he “looked forward to us supporting his boys.” As time went on and we had engagements with the principal, he began to make comments about his reasons for keeping us at the school. He would say things to us like, “have you turned them into gems yet?” and “how’s the cleanup crew doing with the riff raff?” Coded within the sentiments of his comments were both expectations of us to “fix” the boys, as well as the positioning of our program within the larger schooling apparatus to be a site of control for the youth. The principal’s comments highlighted an internal struggle we had - were we a part of the problem? On some occasions, our program at SJLI would be welcomed to schools, as there were social justice-oriented educators and administrators who wanted to see change and combat anti-Black racism. On the other hand, our programs ran into regular challenges with school personnel because our youth became politicized and began to challenge authority. Some of these challenges were welcome sites to administrators and teachers who believed in our students, and to others, it represented a change to the status quo that was not welcome on campus. We did not behave like a traditional Black male intervention program, and because of that, we would receive pushback.

We were not the only program to experience this. Youth workers from the Brotherhood Crusade, even though they were often praised for their outcomes, faced regular criticisms from some school administrations for, “showing up too much for their students.” At one point in the Equity is Justice campaign, Community Coalition staff members and affiliates were officially barred from entering LAUSD campuses, because CoCo was actively attempting to hold the district accountable for how it spent funds. Members of the Youth Justice Coalition had to literally build their own school because their youth were being pushed out of the schools they were attending at such an alarming rate. While critical scholars have elevated the ways that neoliberal governmentality operates in non-profit youth programs, even those that do political work with youth (see, e.g., Baldridge, 2019; Clay 2019; Kwon, 2013), the state also works diligently to prevent these youth from gaining access to oppositional forces. While this is predictable (Sojoyner, 2013), it speaks to the implications of how state actors, who often rely on community organizations for a number of reasons, continue to limit the impact that community-based organizations can have on public education more broadly.

Resisting the Crisis

In a PBS documentary titled, "All the Difference," two young men from Chicago's all Black male school called the Urban Prep Academy, Kishaun and Robert, were followed along their journey from their high school through college. Throughout the film, members of the audience got to witness some of the hardships and struggles that both of the young men went through, ranging from family members being killed in Chicago to being placed on academic probation. Both young men were able to graduate from college (after acquiring a large amount of student debt), and they both worked in education post-graduation. While their lives were at the center of the analysis, an underlying theme throughout the movie was the lessons and the morals instilled in them that they learned from the Urban Prep Academy. These morals, morals of 'hard work' and of 'distinction,' were assumed to make Urban Prep youth different from their peers who also grew up in Chicago. The Black males in Chicago are presented as being constantly in crisis, and the Urban Prep Academy is presented as the necessary intervention in the crisis to prevent the boys from "going the wrong way" and to correct their "expectations" for both school and life (Moore et al., 2016).

The Urban Prep Academy is but one of hundreds of interventions that have been developed for Black young men and boys over the last 40 years. These interventions are primarily rooted in this idea of 'crisis,' where young Black males (typically ages 14-24) are in need of some sort of program to prevent their inherent criminality which places them at risk. The ideological construction of crisis drives policy makers, educators, activists, and even corporate and philanthropic leaders to organize resources focusing on this "crisis" that is ontologically Black male youth, as opposed to the social structures that impact Black male youth. While structural conditions such as underfunded schools, overpoliced neighborhoods, and concentrated poverty are typically acknowledged, the sole purpose of these interventions is rooted in changing the behavior of the young men to adapt to and move within these structures, and rarely to challenge them (Watts et al., 1999). On one hand, the evidence presented in this dissertation is deeply connected to these types of “crises” - the crisis of masculinity, of race, and of the uncontrollable problem of gangs and problematic Black boys. On the other hand, this dissertation provides a necessary counter to problematic ideas that undergird crisis-based interventions for youth.

Academic studies of Black boys and their schooling experiences, their experiences with the carceral state, and their experiences navigating the everydayness of anti-Black racism have been written and well documented. In addition, literature connected to youth organizing, social movements led by young people, and the importance of Black social movements has also been well documented. Even though both of those primary discourses exist, what has yet to be fully explored are the multifaceted ways that Black boys and young men interact with and transform systems, especially once they have already been politicized. What I hope to have demonstrated in this dissertation is that expanding beyond narratives of crises for Black boys and young men can help to provide critical insights to both how Black boys and young men experience anti-Black racism, and how they are trained, engaged, and take action to actively work against it. The next section will outline various connections that this dissertation has covered.

Black Male Youth Meaning Making

My primary research question was, "How do Black male youth make meaning of their own agency and youth organizing across variant racialized community-based context?" As I hope to have demonstrated in this dissertation, Black youth make meaning of their own agency and organizing through a process I name as Black Transformative Agency, which I define as a multi-axis process for the ways that Black boys and young men exhibit individual and collective agency that they learn in their programs to both combat social isolation and challenge institutional actors, hegemony, and power. Through Black transformative agency, Black boys and young men are able to actively resist anti-Black racism, what Tommy Curry (2017) calls anti-Black misandry, and political and economic dispossession in their communities. As a framework for understanding agency, Black Transformative Agency can be a helpful way to understand the actions Black boys and young men take to challenge their conditions.

This finding is significant for two primary reasons. First, for Black boys and young men, the representation of 'the omnipresence of social structure' in their lives by both academic literature, adult advocates, and popular discourse presents an incomplete picture of the ways that Black boys and young men are able to actively transform their conditions. For young men like LeQuan Muhammad, who worked to change state policy to bring his father home from prison, or for young men like Christian Taylor and Aidan Flores, who were both able to leverage organizing victories like the school climate bill of rights in LAUSD schools to challenge their teachers and prevent themselves and others from being kicked out of classrooms, having a direct impact on institutions and those who wield institutional power helps to illustrate the ebb and flow of community power and disenfranchised communities have access to for change. Situated across the historical backdrop of Black resistance to white supremacy, the findings of this dissertation add to the literature of how Black communities have both always resisted oppressive conditions.

Second, for Black Transformative Agency as a framework, two critical insights are the meaning of organizing victories for on-the ground activists and organizers, and the impact that those victories have on their material conditions. First, for the meaning produced by organizing Greta de Jong (2016) highlights how the impact of the civil rights movement, while it helped to shift national racial discourse and public policy, did not have a significant effect on the day-to-day conditions of Black southerners in the wake of Black awakening and mass mobilization. De Jong highlights how social class continued to be a determining factor in Black lives, and the ways that Black activists responded to backlash and built economic cooperatives to combat material dispossession and joblessness. For the young people in this study, they led campaigns

that took in some sense a material resources (meaning an approach used primarily to shift the flow of public dollars) approach to their organizing, whether they were advocating for increased resources in schools or to reallocate law-enforcement dollars for Black student achievement. Second, what these victories mean for these young people is critical. For youth like Emmanuel "Manny" Karunwi for example, from the Social Justice Learning Institute, participating in the statewide campaign to end willful defiance school suspensions and the local campaign to defund school police showed him that he did not have to wait to get involved in politics, and only through the medium of voting. For Manny, learning about organizing and social justice allowed him to change how he saw political activity, as well as have conversations with his Nigerian parents about American race relations in ways that are sophisticated and grounded.

Naming and Resisting Anti-Black Racism

Working to understand how Black boys who are also activists experience institutions such as schools, policing, and other social services, the second research was "In what ways do Black boys and young men both name and resist anti-Black racism in their communities?" For many of these young men, they named the carceral state specifically, and the other practices of carceral logics of punishment more broadly that impacted their lives. This process, which I named as the normalcy of carcerality, highlighted the everydayness of state-led dispossession, punishment, and urban abandonment. Youth in this study named how they experienced police interactions, harsh school discipline practices, and the ways that their communities were not allocated resources. These experiences, coupled with rigorous political education, played a significant role in what eventually drove these young people to action, and more specifically, how they interpreted these events once they were politicized.

For youth like Ahmir Bates, for example, he began to take these lessons about the overreaching of the carceral state into his life and his school to heart. As a project in his Black Male Youth Academy class, he had to practice the art of taking field notes, where he learned how to accurately document his surroundings and experiences as an observer, and to do so using systematic methods. He decided to focus on the presence of school police in comparison to counselors. He took a tally for every time he saw a school police officer for an entire school week in comparison to an officer, and he ended with a score of 44 (officer sightings) to 1 (counselor sightings). For Ahmir, this illustrated both the overreaching nature of policing in urban schools, as Shedd (2015) would call the universal carceral apparatus, and it represents how young people gain vocabulary and tools to better assess their sociopolitical positionalities.

There is a robust literature connected to the development of critically conscious youth, meaning young people who have an awareness of how sociopolitical conditions work to drive inequality (Diemer & Rapa, 2016; Scorza, 2013; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). As scholars have named what politicization looks like, and its processes, how youth interpret phenomena after they have been politicized, and what they continue to do with their politicization, has yet to be fully explored. Several of the young men who participated in this study initially started out as youth leaders, finished the youth portion of the program, and have since returned to the organization to work full time. Others who were recent alumni of the program began to organize in college, with other organizations, or have taken up different issues, which has tremendous implications for continued political engagement and social movement retention (Terriquez, 2015). More research is needed in this area specifically to highlight how Black youth, and Black boys in particular, continue to resist anti-Black racism over their life course and in different

scenarios across work, their personal relationships, and if they remain connected to social movement work.

Organizational Impact on Youth

For my third and final research question, I asked, "How does organizational ideology shape how Black male youth produce meaning of their own agency, social movements, and their structural conditions?" This study provided some significant shifts in how youth understood their own agency and structural conditions, however, these findings presented different interpretations than initially anticipated. Going into the study, I initially anticipated that organizational ideology, and how organizations approached their politicizing curriculum would have a significant impact on how Black boys and young men developed their own political imaginations. What I found was highly varied - the different organizational activities that organizations would conduct represented varied ideological differences in how to cultivate change, however, the results of these activities often led to young people coming to similar conclusions and taking similar stances on issues. For example, for young people like Christian Taylor, Christian Wimberly, and Kevin Miles from the Brotherhood Crusade, they have all participated in youth-police dialogues that are normally meant to placate youth and normalize both the existence and violence of police departments in their communities (see, e.g., Felker-Kantor, 2018; Sojoyner, 2013). However, the youth ended up adopting more abolitionist stances, because they were able to deduce that police refuse systems level accountability. For youth like Blacc and Jaybo from the Youth Justice Coalition, they adopted abolitionist stances by being in such close proximity to how systems impacted people, including themselves, on an everyday basis. This close proximity helped to keep them grounded in the need for alternative forms of community safety, because their friends, family members, and co-workers were all experiencing violence at the hand of the carceral state. Even though the organizations had different approaches, the youth ultimately arrived at the same result. Some of this is connected to the young people's life experiences, while other parts of it is connected to the proximity and cross-fertilization that youth from different programs have with each other. More research is needed on movement networks and cross-organizational collaboration specifically to elaborate on this specific point, especially as youth-based networks gain popularity across California (Pastor et al., 2018; Serrano et al., 2021; Terriquez, 2015).

Second, while the youth did often times take very similar stances on political issues, what differed was how they acted upon changing them, and how they adopted their organizational lenses to interpret phenomena. For example, for coded content such as "sociological analysis of poverty" with the parent code "sociopolitical critique," youth from Community Coalition were overrepresented in this code. For the code "carceral presence in the community," youth from the Youth Justice Coalition were overrepresented in this code. The four areas of Black transformative agency (Navigational Agency, Relational Agency, Movement Building Agency, Structurally Transformative Agency), youth were evenly distributed across organizations and the different points of agency for the most part. Where there were differences, on the other hand, was in the types of agencies and the focus of the agency that was confronted. For example, for navigational agency broken down into child codes 'getting thorough systems' and 'challenging power,' Brotherhood Crusade and Social Justice Learning Institute youth were overrepresented in these categories. This is largely due to the fact that they operate school-based programs that also double as a social service. For codes such as "movement building agency," community coalition youth were overrepresented in this category, because of CoCos commitment to organizing training. For "Structurally Transformative Agency," all of the youth were represented

there, even though it differed by their target. With child codes such as “target - carceral state, target - built environment, and target-education system,” SJLI & CoCo youth were overrepresented in-built environment and education system organizing, while YJC was overrepresented in carceral state organizing.

In spite of the ideological differences and social locations of each of the organizations, they are all working in some respects to challenge racial capitalism - namely, the various ways that the political economy is structured to facilitate Black suffering and dispossession. Whether its fighting back against the carceral state’s economic stranglehold on the community, the various ways that schools work as training grounds for preparing low wage workers, the denial of social capital for Black men and boys to navigate living wage work, or the economic deprivation of urban communities in post-industrial Los Angeles, the community based organizations in this dissertation all work to combat socioeconomic dispossession. While their approaches and access to capital may be different, at its core, each one of these organizations flourishes by cultivating young’ people’s agency to transform the racialized political economy of carceral Los Angeles, and through a geographic focus on South Central and the Black-specific regions of LA, they have been able to build enough community power to secure transformational victories that have fundamentally disrupted the status quo. More research is needed to assess how these types of organizations build movement ecosystems to address structural conditions.

Implications for Policy and Practice

In Pedro Noguera’s (2003, 2009) “The Trouble with Black Boys,” both the book and the article, he outlines some of the ways that educational institutions, youth service providers, and others can work to improve the academic achievement of African American boys. As Noguera has highlighted elsewhere (see, e.g., Noguera, 2007, 2014), and what I have hoped to demonstrate here, is that young people can, and should, be the driving force of the changes we hope to see, in and out of schools. Black boys are often on the receiving end of the prison-like nature of our schools - whether it is through over policing, disproportionate rates of suspension, and contentious relationships with adults on campus. At many schools, Black boys are always, “in trouble.” However, what if this trouble brought about the divestment of $25 million from school police, and reinvested that money into Black student achievement like Christian and the girls from Students Deserve? What if that trouble includes taking over the office of the speaker of the house in the California legislature, so that way law enforcement can think twice about pulling the trigger like Jacob and Jared did? What if the trouble that Black boys get into is the “good trouble” that John Lewis spoke of, that necessary trouble to change their schools and communities? Can schools ever even distinguish between good and bad trouble? Do we want them to? Maybe if we as adults moved out the way and created those opportunities, then the good trouble our Black boys could get into may actually transform schools and communities.

In a speech at The Martin Luther King Jr. Freedom Center's Barbara Lee and Elihu Harris Lecture series in Oakland, the late Congressman John Lewis (2012) gave a lecture about the need to “get in the way.” In his speech, Lewis recalled how his elders at the time knew the ways of Jim Crow, but out of the fear of white violence, there were no mass movements to address it. He was told how he needed to, “get out of the way” and “stay out of trouble.” As Lewis first began to learn about the beginnings of the Civil Rights movement from the Montgomery Bus Boycott, he understood that, “getting in the way” was not only noble, it was indeed the only way that Black communities will ever see change. He proclaimed, “we have to get into Good Trouble, Necessary Trouble” in order to make things right - in order to change the status quo. Below I

outline some recommendations for educational policy makers, practitioners, and administrators, who do not mind a little good trouble:

1. **Get [out] the way and open the door (Policy Makers).** One thing that Oakes and Rogers (2006) outline is that technical reforms led exclusively by policy experts and bureaucrats are largely ineffective in transforming both the fundamental logics that undergird educational inequality and schooling conditions themselves. Organizers have been central to some of the most significant changes to educational policy that have improved outcomes for Black boys, like the passing of the School Climate Bill of Rights (SCBR) by the Brothers, Sons, Selves Coalition in the LAUSD in 2013. With the SCBR, willful defiance school suspensions ended, and both attendance and graduation increased in LAUSD as a direct result of not pushing students out. By trusting organizers and those most impacted by certain systems, community groups and systems leaders can make a significant impact.
2. **Get in the way (Community-based educators and teachers).** In Los Angeles, the second largest teacher's union in the country, United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA), took a controversial stance in joining the Black Lives Matter movement's demand to have police-free schools, splintering from more conservative positions that they have taken in the past on school discipline and racial justice issues. Teachers from all across the union supported the Black student leaders who took to the streets to transform their schools and communities and reimagine school safety. Their position deeply influenced the decision to cut the school police budget. Community-based organizations like the Labor Community Strategy Center in LA have already worked to demilitarize the school police, and this movement built on this momentum. Organizations like LCSC operate "Taking Action" clubs at local high schools to politicize young people, and these young people then drive the campaigns to facilitate change in their schools. It's important to "get in the way," and for community-based organizations and teachers to also fight against the status quo.
3. **Get into Good Trouble, Necessary Trouble (Educational administrators).** Many principals (most of them principals of color) that I've worked with pursued careers in education because they care, and because they understand the broader systemic inequities that schools support. Administrators can play a key role in facilitating good trouble. Administrators can open the doors of the school to community-based organizations that work to organize students, teachers, and parents. Administrators can secure resources for programs that engage in social justice related work. While I was working with SJLI, I worked with a principal that paid for a bus for our class, so that way our students could engage in a youth participatory action research project and survey other students at continuation schools throughout the school district about their needs. That survey led to systemic changes at the district level to the relationships that continuation campuses had with their host campus. When administrators reject complacency, local school boards exhibit courageous leadership in supporting them, and work with community members to change their schools, good things can happen.

Study Limitations and Future Considerations

As is true of all research, this study has limitations. With this in mind, there are some critical gaps in this study that I did not get to fill. While I interviewed youth workers and executives to triangulate my findings for the youth, the data from those interviews is largely

absent, even though they deeply informed how I made sense of the findings I did report. As Baldridge (2014, 2019) suggests, the perspectives of youth workers are vital to broader understandings of race, education, and the facilitation of community-based educational spaces. Future research will look to incorporate youth worker voices more directly. Second, this study's focus is on Black boys and young men. Black queer and trans youth, Black girls and young women, and youth of color of all genders also engage in organizing work, and their experiences merit their own studies. While I can adequately write about these experiences, I am not able to write about the experiences of all youth at all times. Future research should attempt to take some key concepts in this study, and apply them in other contexts to highlight similarities and differences between Black male populations and other populations. By triangulating our experiences with systemic oppression, we can better build coalitions to address them.

Furthermore, given the limited timeframe and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was not able to collect data in the ways I initially intended. I wanted to engage in participant observations, however, I was unable to because of social distancing guidelines. Finally, as a limitation, I was not able to interview all of the staff members I wanted. There are other organizations and key figures in the landscape that are not in this study, that I will look to include as I progress as a scholar. Future studies should 1) transport these ideas across racialized and gendered contexts; incorporate multiple methodologies, and 3) investigate deeper meanings among young people and youth workers long term. These will provide critical insights into the ways that communities of color have worked diligently to resist oppressive conditions.

Final Thoughts - Centering Youth Agency in Boys and Men of Color Work

As stated elsewhere in this dissertation, LeQuan Muhammad and Dr. Scorza both helped their families to get out of prison because of proposition 47. Both LeQuan and Dr. Scroza attended the MBK summit in Oakland in 2019, as well as their organization the Social Justice Learning Institute, a sub-grantee of the MBK community challenge in Los Angeles. Even though the conference was primarily centered on improving the lives of young men of color, the panel that highlighted the experiences of young men of color was saved until the very end of the conference, after the likes of nationally recognized activists Alicia Garza (co-founder of Black Lives Matter) and other celebrities already came and left the stage. The youth spoke to an auditorium that was less than half its maximum capacity, as conference attendees made their way back to their respective airports to leave Oakland. Even though this was the sentiment, the youth gave important testimony about their experiences, and what it means to be engaged in work about social change.

As a movement, we can no longer prop up young men and call for investment, advocacy, and the like, without giving them voice, without centering their experiences and agency, without rooting our analyses in their most radical political imaginations. Cathy Cohen (2010) argues that "Given the insight of young Black people, their centrality to some of the most important issues facing the country, and their often early and consistent engagement with the state, it is ironic that they should feel so tangential to the operation of American Democracy" (p. 114). The young men, at a conference that was primarily about their lives, were treated by conference attendees as the least important part of the main event. In my dissertation, I have worked to correct that de-prioritization of young people, their political imaginations, and their agency, by centering the experiences of Black male youth, situated in organizational and historical context.

Community-based organizations led by people of color in the state of California and in various regions throughout the county have uplifted youth organizing and youth political agency

in their attempts to rectify anti-Black racism, systemic oppression, and the lasting impact of white settler colonial society on communities of color. In my dissertation, I give voice to the political imaginations, and experiences, and the meaning making processes of Black male youth. This research has implications for social movement scholars, educators, and activists alike who are interested in transforming conditions for communities of color, Black communities specifically. But most importantly, I hope that this research and all that comes from it leads to a broader shift - a shift where we can move to embrace Black boys while they are alive, love them while they are alive, and give them the tools, skills, and space they need to create the changes they want to see. Another world is possible, we just have to be willing to unmake the current one.

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Appendix A: Youth-based interview guide

Interview #1 - Life History and Organizational Context

1. Demographic Questions

- 1.1. What is your name?
- 1.2. Where do you currently live?
- 1.3. What high school do you attend?
- 1.4. What year will you graduate?
- 1.5. How do you racially identify?
- 1.6. How do you gender identify?
- 1.7. If you feel comfortable answering, how do you sexually identify?
- 1.8. Would you consider your economic background to be working class? Poor? Or middle class? Why?

2. Life History - Institutional Relationships and Community

- 2.1. What type of school do you attend? Was it a public school? Charter school?
- 2.2. What is the campus climate like at your high school?
  - 2.2.1. PROBE: Are adults at the school welcoming?
  - 2.2.2. PROBE: Describe a typical lunch time. What is that like?
  - 2.2.3. PROBE: How is the relationship between you and your peers, campus security, and campus police? Do you ever experience or witness good/bad interactions with them?
- 2.3. Do you feel that Black students, Black males in particular, on your campus are valued and treated with dignity? If so, why? If not, why not?
  - 2.3.1. PROBE: Describe a day at your high school. How were students treated?
  - 2.3.2. PROBE: How do school staff, teachers, and administrators interact with Black students?
  - 2.3.3. PROBE: What are some differences in way that Black boys are treated compared to girls? Or other racial groups on your campus?
- 2.4. What are your teachers like? How do they interact with you?
- 2.5. How would you characterize your parents involvement in your education?
  - 2.5.1. PROBE: Do your parents ever participate in PTA or go on field trips with you?
  - 2.5.2. PROBE: Did/do you parents ever have to advocate for you to receive resources and/or if you were ever in trouble?
- 2.6. What were conversations with your parents like about race and politics? Any conversations that immediately come to mind?
- 2.7. Have you had any personal encounters with law enforcement? If so, what was that like?
- 2.8. Have any of your close friends or family members ever had encounters with law enforcement? If so, what was that like?
- 2.9. Have you ever been arrested or been in trouble with the law? What was that like for you?

2.10. Walk me through a day in your community. What are some things you see on a daily basis? What's it like?

3. Organizational Context - Experiences in a Political Organization

3.1. What is your, "[INSERT YOUTH ORGANIZATION]" story? In other words, how did you first get involved in [INSERT YOUTH ORGANIZATION] programming?

3.1.1. PROBE: When did you first get involved?

3.1.2. PROBE How did you first get involved? Who introduced you this organization and their/our programming?

3.2. As a student in their programming, what was one of your biggest take-aways from participating in the programming?

3.2.1. PROBE: What message has really stuck with you since being involved in their programming?

3.3. What's one campaign or project (youth research, civic campaign) that you remember the most from your organization? Explain the project that you've conducted so far while being a student in the program. What was it about?

3.3.1. PROBE: What was it like to do address a social issue? What did it mean for you?

3.3.2. PROBE: How did you and your peers advance the project forward? Did you end up doing anything with your project?

3.4. At any point while being a student at [INSERT YOUTH ORGANIZATION], have you ever participated in any civic action (school board meetings, city hall meetings, county board of supervisor meetings, Sacramento visits, etc.)? What was that like?

3.4.1. How did it feel to advocate for your community?

3.4.2. What did you learn by advocating for your community

3.5. Describe a typical day in the program. What is it like?

3.5.1. Walk me through a typical day in [INSERT PROGRAM]. What happens first? What are some of the things you all would do?

3.6. How are your relationships with your peers in this program?

3.7. What are some things that made/makes this organization different from being in school?

3.8. What are some things that made/makes this organization similar to school?

3.9. What are your top three favorite things about being in this organization?

3.10. What are some ways that the organization can improve their activities?

3.10.1. PROBE: What were some things that the organization did well? What about were some areas where the organization can improve? What are some things that they don't do so well?

3.11. Share a time that you used information that you learned from the program in your daily life.

3.12. How have your understandings of race, power, and identity changed since being in this program?

3.13. Before we wrap up part one of our interview, do you have any questions for me?

Interview # 2 Politics and meaning making

4. **Political Participation**
    - 4.1. When was the first time you attended a "political" event (such as a planning meeting, a protest, or the office of a public servant, etc.)? What was that like?
        - 4.1.1. MP: what was it like presenting to police about police research?
    - 4.2. What does the process for social change look like?
    - 4.3. Is there a particular policy or practice that you were trying to change? If so, were you successful? (all of the probes are campaign and student specific)
        - 4.3.1. Talk about your advocacy for investment in students and youth
        - 4.3.2. Talk about your advocacy for police practice reform
        - 4.3.3. Talk about your advocacy for changing teacher practices
        - 4.3.4. Talk about your advocacy for restorative justice
        - 4.3.5. Talk about your advocacy for School discipline reform
        - 4.3.6. Talk about your advocacy for juvenile justice reform
    - 4.4. What did it feel like to be politically active?
        - 4.4.1. PROBE: What did it feel like to advocate for policy and practice?
        - 4.4.2. PROBE: How does it feel to fight for social change?
        - 4.4.3. PROBE: what did it mean for you to fight for policies you were effected by?
    - 4.5. Because of your participation with [INSERT YOUTH ORGANIZATION], are you still politically active? (for ALUMNI only)
        - 4.5.1. PROBE: Do you still engage in political activity? If so, what is it?
        - 4.5.2. PROBE: Have you been to a political event since leaving
5. **Sense of political efficacy**
    - 5.1. What does the phrase, "activist" mean to you? Do you consider yourself an activist?
        - 5.1.1. Can you describe a time in the program where you really fit your idea of an "activist?"
    - 5.2. If you can remember, what did you think about politics and the way that the world works before you entered [INSERT YOUTH ORGANIZATION] programming?
    - 5.3. Based on your participation, what do you think about politics now?
    - 5.4. What does it mean for you to do political work as a Black male?
        - 5.4.1. PROBE: How does it feel to do political work with other Black males?
        - 5.4.2. PROBE: Why is it important for Black males to do political work
    - 5.5. Sometimes, some people don't want Black people to speak up about what we go through. Why is it important to speak up and fight back?
        - 5.5.1. PROBE: Can you think of a time you spoke up for yourself or someone? What was it like?
6. **Critical Consciousness**
    - 6.1. What did you learn about race, gender, and identity in your youth program?
        - 6.1.1. PROBE: What's one thing you learned about race AND/OR gender AND/OR identity being in [INSERT YOUTH ORGANIZATION] programming?
    - 6.2. What does the word "racism" mean to you?
        - 6.2.1. PROBE: How did you learn this?
        - 6.2.2. PROBE: When was the first time you actively talked about this term in your program?

6.3. What does the word “oppression” mean to you?
    6.3.1. PROBE: How did you learn this?
    6.3.2. PROBE: When was the first time you actively talked about this term in your program?
6.4. What does the word “sexism” mean to you?
    6.4.1. PROBE: How did you learn this?
    6.4.2. PROBE: When was the first time you actively talked about this term in your program?
6.5. What does the word “patriarchy” mean to you?
    6.5.1. PROBE: How did you learn this?
    6.5.2. PROBE: When was the first time you actively talked about this term in your program?
6.6. What does the term, “mass incarceration” mean to you?
    6.6.1. PROBE: Have you ever been impacted by incarceration? Either you or your close friends and family?
    6.6.2. PROBE: What makes mass incarceration wrong?
6.7. What makes discussions about race and power important?
6.8. When you think about the My Brother’s Keeper initiative, what comes to mind?
    6.8.1. PROBE: Are you affected by the my brothers keeper initiative? If so, how?
    6.8.2. PROBE: Did you participate in the my brothers keeper initiative at all? If so, what was it like?
6.9. Have you ever participated in all-boys youth spaces? What are they like?
6.10. How old were you when Michael Brown and Trayvon Martin were killed? Do you remember anything about it?
    6.10.1. PROBE: If you feel comfortable sharing, what do those type of incidents mean for you?
6.11. When you think about the Black Lives Matter Movement, what comes to mind?
    6.11.1. PROBE: Are you affected by the Black lives matter movement? If so, how?
    6.11.2. PROBE: Did you participate in any Black lives matter movement activities like protests or advocating for policy? If so, what was it like?
6.12. In your opinion, is there anything that makes Black lives matter similar to My Brothers Keeper? Anything that makes them different?
6.13. To you, what are some of the biggest problems facing the Black community in LA?

7. **Final questions**
7.1. Would you recommend this program to your friends and family? Why or why not?
7.2. If you can give your freshman self one piece of advice, what would it be and why?
7.3. Do you have any questions for me?
    7.3.1. What does it mean to be a man? - EK SJLI
7.4. Are there any questions that I did not ask that you wish that I would have asked?

END INTERVIEW

Based on Garcia Bedolla, 2005; Cohen, 2010; Franklin, 2014

Appendix B: Youth Worker/Program Staff Interview Guide

Based on dissertations from Baldridge 2012; Bristol 2014

1. Youth Worker Biography

- 1.1. Tell me a little bit about yourself. What was your journey to get to SJLI/CoCo?
  - 1.1.1. PROBE: Where are you from?
  - 1.1.2. PROBE: What is your educational background?
- 1.2. Do you think your background is responsible for your transition into youth work?
- 1.3. What role does your identity play in why you are committed to this work?
- 1.4. FOR EXECUTIVES/SENIOR LEADERSHIP - How much of your personal identity is tied to this organization?

2. Organizational Role

- 2.1. What is your role here with this organization?
  - 2.1.1. PROBE: How long have you worked with this organization?
  - 2.1.2. PROBE: What are your specific responsibilities? On paper and the other things you do?
- 2.2. What are some of the best things about working with this organization?
- 2.3. What are some challenges you've experienced working with this organization?
- 2.4. What is one of the most memorable experiences you have working with youth in this organization?
- 2.5. FOR EXECUTIVES/SENIOR LEADERSHIP - How have you seen the organization/program evolve over time?

3. Youth Program Structure

- 3.1. Can you explain to me what your program model is?
- 3.2. What is your relationship with schools?
  - 3.2.1. PROBE: Can schools be adversarial or hesitant to work with you all?
  - 3.2.2. PROBE: Do you think race plays a role in how you all are treated by schools?
- 3.3. How do you recruit youth into your organization?
- 3.4. Can you explain what a day-to-day in your program is like?
- 3.5. What is this purpose and mission of your program?
  - 3.5.1. Can you give me an example of a young person you think really embodies this mission?

4. **Pedagogy and Curricular Content**

- 4.1. Does your program run on some sort of curriculum? If so, what does it generally look like?
- 4.2. If at all, How do you teach your youth about social and political issues?
- 4.3. What are some of the lessons you teach your youth about race, class, gender, and power?
  - 4.3.1. PROBE: What do these lessons look like?
  - 4.3.2. PROBE: How do you think youth receive these lessons?

5. Campaigns and Organizing

- **5.1.** If you could list 1-3 campaigns that you were apart of that made you proud, what would they be?
  - 5.1.1. What did those campaigns feel like?

5.1.2. Can you describe the emotions you had when you won/lost the campaign?

6. **Black Male Youth Role in Your Organization**
   - 6.1. Does your organization try to target Black male youth? If so, how? If not, why not?
   - 6.2. In your opinion, what makes working with Black males different than working with other youth of other identities?
   - 6.3. FOR SJLI - What makes the all Black male space special and different?
     - 6.3.1. WHat are some things that come out about Blackness that come out in a group of Black male youth that wouldn't come out in a conversation with all youth color
     - 6.3.2. PROBE: What are some benefits to working with Black males in this type of space?
     - 6.3.3. PROBE: What are some challenges to working with all Black males in this type of space?
   - 6.4. FOR CoCo - What makes the all youth of color space special and different?
     - 6.4.1. PROBE: What are some benefits to working with Black males in this type of space?
     - 6.4.2. PROBE: What are some challenges to working with Black males in a youth of color type of space?

7. Final Questions
   - **7.1.** What are some ways that the organization can improve their activities?
     - **7.1.1.** PROBE: What were some things that the organization does well? What about were some areas where the organization can improve? What are some things that they don't do so well?
   - 7.2. Would you recommend this program to your friends and family? Why or why not?
   - 7.3. If at all, is there anything that makes this program different than what you learned in school? If so, what is it?
   - **7.4.** Do you have any questions for me?
   - **7.5.** Are there any questions that I did not ask that you wish that I would have asked?

END INTERVIEW

Based on dissertations from Baldridge, 2012; Bristol, 2014

Appendix C: Landscape Leader Interview Guide

8. Youth Worker Biography

8.1. Tell me a little bit about yourself. What was your journey to get to your leadership role with [INSERT ORGANIZATION]?

8.1.1. PROBE: Where are you from?

8.1.2. PROBE: What is your educational background?

8.2. Do you think your background is responsible for your transition into your role?

8.3. What role does your identity play in why you are committed to this work?

8.4. FOR EXECUTIVES/SENIOR LEADERSHIP - How much of your personal identity is tied to this organization?

9. Organizational Role

9.1. What is your role here with this organization?

9.1.1. PROBE: How long have you worked with this organization?

9.1.2. PROBE: What are your specific responsibilities? On paper and the other things you do?

9.2. What are some of the best things about working within the movement?

9.3. What are some challenges you've experienced working within the movement

9.4. What is one of the most memorable experiences you have working within the movement?

9.5. FOR EXECUTIVES/SENIOR LEADERSHIP - How have you seen the organization/program evolve over time?

10. Campaigns and Organizing

10.1. If you could list 1-3 campaigns that you were apart of that made you proud, what would they be?

10.1.1. What did those campaigns feel like?

10.1.2. Can you describe the emotions you had when you won/lost the campaign?

11. **Pedagogy and Curricular Content**

11.1. Does your program/organization run on some sort of curriculum? If so, what does it generally look like?

11.2. If at all, How do you teach the community about social and political issues?

11.3. What are some of the lessons you teach about race, class, gender, and power?

11.3.1. PROBE: What do these lessons look like?

11.3.2. PROBE: How do you think the community receive these lessons?

12. **Black Men and Boys in Community Organizing**

12.1. For you, what does it mean to be a Black man involved in community organizing and social change?

12.1.1. Have there ever been moments where you had peers in a space?

12.1.2. Have there ever been moments where you were the only Black masculine identified person in a space?

12.2. In your opinion, what makes working with Black males different than working with other peers of other identities?

12.3. Have you ever had to navigate tensions in organizing spaces because of your race and/or gender identity. If so, what was it like?

12.4. Why is it important for Black men and boys to be involved in community organizing?

13. **Final Questions**

13.1. What are some ways that the movement for social change for Black communities can improve?

13.2. If at all, is there anything that makes organizing different than other forms of community engagement?

13.3. Do you have any questions for me?

13.4. Are there any questions that I did not ask that you wish that I would have asked?

Appendix D: Cross-Walk Table Showing the Alignment of Data Points and Concepts to Research Questions

Research Question	Concept	Data collection Instrument
How do Black male youth and young adults make meaning of youth organizing and political agency across different community-based context? How does organizational ideology shape how Black male youth produce meaning of social movements and political agency?	Institutional and community relationships Organizational context Political Participation and Movement activity	Youth Interview Guide Interview #1 Sections 2-3 Questions *2.1-2.10, 3.1-3.10* Youth Interview Guide Interview #2 Section 4 *Questions 4.1-4.5* Staff Interview Guide Sections 3-5 *Questions 3.1-3.6, 4.1-4.3, 5.1-5.4*
In what ways do Black male youth individually and collectively resist anti-Black racism in their schools and communities? How do Black male youth make meaning of movements that they are adjacent to, such as MBK and M4BL?	Identity and meaning making Critical consciousness Definitions of anti-Black racism Gender-Based Education State Violence	Youth Interview Guide #1 Section 3 Questions *3.1-3.14* Youth Interview Guide #2 Sections 4,5,6 Questions *4.1-4.5, 5.1-5.6, 6.1-6.14* Staff Interview Guide Sections 3,4,5 Questions *3.4-3.6, 4.1-4.3, 5.1-5.4*

Appendix E: Adults Consulted & Interviewed

Name	Affiliation	Organization
D'Artagnan Scorza	Executive Director	Social Justice Learning Institute
Emilio Lacques Zapien	Lead Organizer	Youth Justice Coalition
Alberto Retana	President and CEO	Community Coalition
Charisse Bremond Weaver	President and CEO	Brotherhood Crusade
George Weaver	Vice President of Special Projects	Brotherhood Crusade
Jelani Hendrix	Policy and Advocacy Director	Social Justice Learning Institute
Joseph Williams	Director of Organizing and Campaigns	Students Deserve
Miguel Dominguez	Director of Youth Programs	Community Coalition
Corey Matthews	Chief Operating Officer	Community Coalition
Isaac Bryan	Founding Director (Black Policy Project)	Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies - Million Dollar Hoods Project
Marc Philpart	Managing Director	PolicyLink - Alliance for Boys and Men of Color
Mykol Lewis	BLOOM Program Director	Brotherhood Crusade
Victor Pacheco	Youth Organizer	Community Coalition
Christian Flagg	Brothers, Sons, Selves Program Coordinator	Community Coalition
Olatunde Kosoko	Regional Programs Manager	Social Justice Learning Institute
Marquel Reid	Youth Organizing Coordinator	Brotherhood Crusade
Jeffery Hines	Lead Youth Advocate	Brotherhood Crusade
Altagracia Alvarado	Youth Organizer	Community Coalition
Melissa Echeverry	Academic Services Program Manager	Social Justice Learning Institute
Mauricio Trejo	Youth Organizer	Students Deserve

Appendix F: Youth Interviewed

Name	Affiliation	Organization
Christian Wimberly	Youth Leader	Brotherhood Crusade
Kevin Miles	Youth Leader	Brotherhood Crusade
Aidan Flores	Youth Leader	Community Coalition
Emmanuel Karunwi	Youth Leader	Social Justice Learning Institute
Name	**Affiliation**	**Organization**
Amir Casimir	Youth Leader	Social Justice Learning Institute
Sean Jones	Youth Leader	Social Justice Learning Institute
Jared O'Brien	Youth Leader	Youth Justice Coalition
Jacob Jackson	Youth Leader	Youth Justice Coalition
Christian Taylor	Youth Alumni	Brotherhood Crusade
Hakim Johnson	Youth Alumni	Community Coalition
Kawika Smith	Youth Alumni	Community Coalition
Jathan Melendez	Youth Alumni	Community Coalition
Ahmir Bates	Youth Alumni	Social Justice Learning Institute
Kenny Willis	Youth Alumni	Social Justice Learning Institute
Joaquin Granger	Youth Alumni	Social Justice Learning Institute
Amarion Martin	Youth Alumni	Social Justice Learning Institute
LeQuan Muhammad	Youth Alumni	Social Justice Learning Institute
TK Brown	Youth Alumni	Social Justice Learning Institute
Osirus Fulton	Youth Alumni	Social Justice Learning Institute
Shawn Hill	Youth Alumni	Social Justice Learning Institute
Sherman Stacey	Youth Alumni	Social Justice Learning Institute
Marcus Pickens	Youth Alumni	Social Justice Learning Institute

Appendix G: Relevant Interview Codes

Title	Description
Black Transformative Agency	A multi-axis process for the ways that Black boys and young men exhibit individual and collective agency that they learn in their programs to both combat social isolation and challenge institutional actors, hegemony, and power.
Movement Building Agency: Basebuilding and Leadership Development	Any mention of youth programming that is meant to politicize youth, along with any mention of youth programming that is meant to sharpen their leadership and recruitment skills
Movement Building Agency: Combatting Social Isolation	Any mention of youth actively working to fight social isolation, loneliness, and feelings of defeat and despair
Movement Building Agency: Recruiting	Any mention of youth either being recruited to, or actively recruiting, other youth
Navigational Agency: Challenging Power	Any mention of youth challenging institutional actors for an individualized means (i.e. a teacher, police officer, counselor, etc.)
Navigational Agency: Code Switching/Learning Skills	Any mention of youth learning how to change their language, posture, and approach in order to navigate a social setting
Navigational Agency: Getting Through Systems/Life	Any mention of youth using lessons of programming in their real lives
Relational Agency	Any mention of youth working to cultivate relationships with one another to combat social isolation
Structurally Transformative Agency/Built Environment	Any mention of campaign work that is specifically meant to change the built environment in the youth's local community
Structurally Transformative Agency/Carceral Resistance and Abolition	Any mention of campaign work that is specifically meant to change youth's relationship with the carceral state
Structurally Transformative Agency/Education	Any mention of campaign work that is specifically meant to change youth's relationship with schools and institutions of education
Process for Social Change	Youth defining social change, along with elaborating on what the meaning of social change is for them
Black lives matter	any mention of the phrase, "Black lives matter;" protest activity connected to or organized by Black Lives Matter, or the names of those killed by state sanctioned violence that have been championed by BLM in some capacity

Title	Description
Boys and Men of Color (MBK)	Any mention of BMOC programming specifically, along with any mention of the MBK initiative or its events
Political Engagement	Any mention of youth directly engaging decision makers
Sociopolitical Critique	When youth raise critiques of their relationships to civil society and their sociopolitical positioning
Critique of Carceral State/Police Presence and Harassment	Any mention of police presence, harassment, or incarceration more broadly
Critique of Community - Sociological analysis of poverty	any analysis of poverty and intracommunal dynamics that's rooted in an analysis of systems
Critique of Schooling/Anti Black Misandry	Any specific mentions of race and gender as it relates to Black males and schools
Critique of Schooling/Carceral Presence and Control	Any specific mentions of the use of carceral tools (security, school police, suspensions, etc.) in schooling environments
Critique of Schooling/Curriculum	Any specific mentions of schooling curriculum (especially in relation to ineffectiveness or not being connected to)
Critique of Schooling/Dispossession and Urban Abandonment	Any specific mention of a schools lack of resources or treatment by teachers and adult staff as not being worthy of investment
Youth Finding Agency	Any mention of the meaning of agency to the youth, and why agency matters for Black males