

**Breaking the Habit:  
Lessons from a High-Incarceration Neighborhood**

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THESIS

Submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Urban Planning and Policy  
in the Graduate College of the  
University of Illinois at Chicago, 2015

Chicago, Illinois

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Behind every good sentence is a clear thought. My thinking has been immensely clarified by the guidance of my advisor, Nik Theodore, who taught me to put the analytical horse before the ethnographic cart. Additionally, I am grateful to Nik for teaching me to build my arguments brick-by-brick, for grounding me in the methods of critical realism, and for modeling what it means to be a scientist-practitioner.

My dissertation has also benefited greatly from the insights and investments of my committee. I am indebted to Beth Richie for encouraging me to focus on the institutional logics that propel mass incarceration. It was a task that I gave my all, though I fear I may still have fallen short. Janet Smith, your suggestion to focus on the criminalization of space gave me a clear theoretical target throughout the project. Moreover, your prompting to directly link the work to the field of community development was essential (though I may need your help to see that effort all the way through). Rachel Weber, thank you for advising me to develop a 'why' question, urging me to bridge the gap between macro forces and micro processes, and helping me expand my framework beyond urban systems. Jamie Peck, your belief in this project was a great boon, as were your examples of how to pursue a research question in ways that advance the literature.

Without the wind, there can be no kite. I am forever beholden to my wife Michelle for her wisdom, humor, and caretaking amidst the long writing process. An immense thanks also goes to my parents, siblings and daughter. As with all things in life, your constant support has enabled me to stay the course.

RLH

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ACEs – Adverse Childhood Experiences

ACT – Austin Coming Together

ACYJ –Austin Coalition for Youth Justice

ADD – Attention Deficit Disorder

CCJTDC – Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center

CPD – Chicago Police Department

CSA – Criminal Sexual Assault

CTA – Chicago Transit Authority

DEA – Drug Enforcement Agency

DMC – Disproportionate Minority Confinement

DUI – Driving Under the Influence

FBI – Federal Bureau of Investigations

GIS – Geographic Information Systems

IDJJ – “Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice”

IDOC – “Illinois Department of Corrections”

NA – Narcotics Anonymous

PCP – Phencyclidine

US – United States

WHA – Westside Health Authority

## SUMMARY

This dissertation decodes some of the unanswered questions about the ascent and persistence of concentrated incarceration, augmenting current theories of how the phenomenon is made, and remade, over time. At the core of this study is an awareness that crime levels are not purely responsible for local incarceration rates and that within places of concentrated incarceration, human trajectories are routinely shaped by conditions and events that are outside the control of individual actors. Whereas existing studies of concentrated incarceration describe it as the result of a generic cycle of disadvantage, crime, and imprisonment, I offer a qualitative examination of how local incarceration rates unfold in the context of specific policy logics and institutional actions. Through this examination, I argue that concentrated incarceration's historical staying power results from a series of entrenched policy-neighborhood interactions that emerge due to structural deficiencies within the labor market and public safety system, as well as other vital urban domains. Furthermore, I demonstrate that these policy-neighborhood interactions produce what Ruth Wilson Gilmore calls the 'availability of carceral objects,' whereby prison repopulation is ensured through severely constricted routes for human development and punitive stakes for those who cannot access those routes. It is through this punitive alchemy that neighborhood subjects are transformed into objects in the Illinois prison system, so that loved ones and neighbors become little more than managerial units in the eyes of the prison.

## Chapter One – Introduction

My dissertation seeks to understand the driving forces behind concentrated incarceration on Chicago's West Side. As will be discussed in the next section, concentrated incarceration is defined as the persistent aggregation of excessive levels of imprisonment within a designated geography. In high-incarceration areas, residents are removed from their homes and blocks in extraordinary numbers, with rates of incarceration that would have been unimaginable even as recently as the middle of the twentieth century (Sampson, 2013, p.103).<sup>1</sup> These areas are typically sending and receiving communities for prisons, creating what has been called a "revolving door" effect in certain parts of certain cities (Travis, 2005, p.23). This penal targeting has led to the emergence of what I call a 'high-incarceration neighborhood,' an urban terrain whose human development pathways are actively policed through the punitive reach of the criminal justice system.

Through an in-depth qualitative study, I explore three main research questions — *Why is the phenomenon of geographically concentrated incarceration so durable? What are the on-the-ground and institutional mechanisms that perpetuate this durability? How exactly do these mechanisms work and what entrenched patterns have they formed over time?* I address these questions by studying the interactions between neighborhood residents and those urban domains directly linked to the penal state, most notably the juvenile and adult justice systems, and the illicit drug

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<sup>1</sup> Using incarceration data from 1990 to 2005, Sampson asserts that in Chicago's low-incarceration areas "the incarceration rate ranges from nearly zero to less than 500 per 100,000 adult residents. By contrast, there is a dense and spatially contiguous cluster of areas in near-west and south-central Chicago that have rates of incarceration some eight times higher (or more)".

economy. In answering these questions, I distinguish between those factors that were essential for the origination of mass incarceration, and those that are necessary for sustaining the phenomenon over time. As I will argue, concentrated incarceration is the result of multiple institutional logics that became mutually reinforcing over time.

While creating a more detailed and comprehensive explanation of concentrated incarceration, I also use the neighborhood lens to revisit and extend the broader literature on mass incarceration. This work is done in three analysis chapters. First, I explore the *originating factors* for mass incarceration. These factors include the high-incarceration neighborhood's shrunken jobs base, illegal drug market, and containment-oriented policing practices. Through an analysis of on-the-ground mechanisms at play in Chicago's Austin neighborhood, I show how these factors positioned marginalized urban areas to be disproportionately impacted by regressive sentencing reforms. In so doing, I argue that the broader literature on sentencing policy must be considered alongside those neighborhood conditions which have shaped the uneven application of such policies.

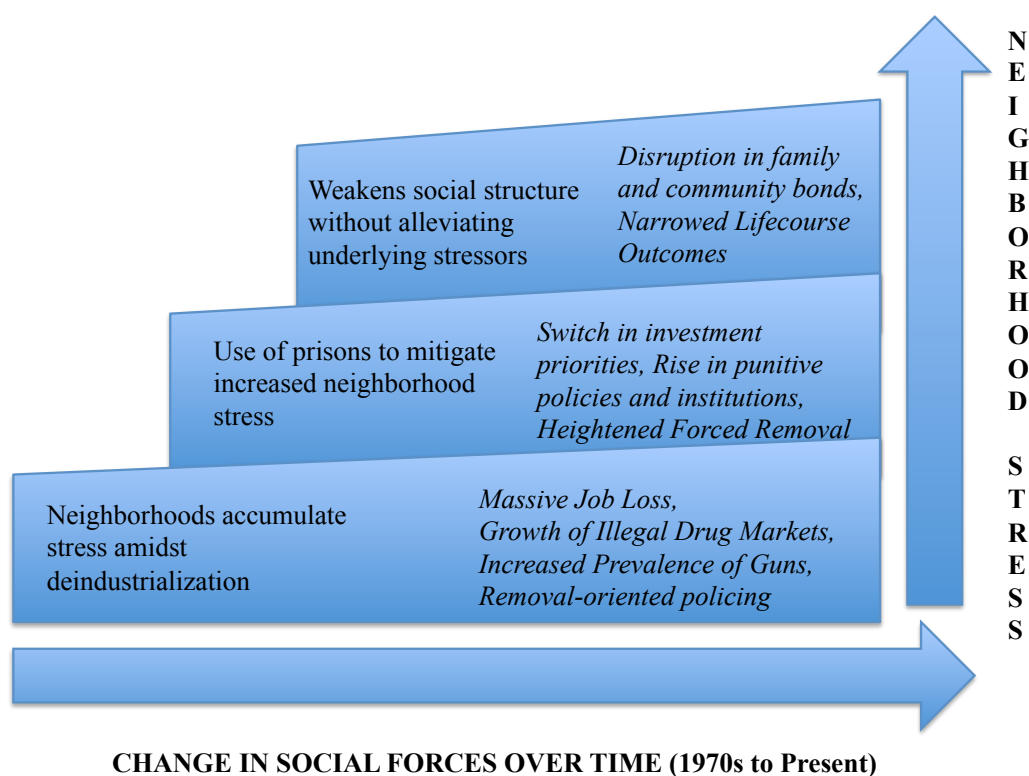
Second, I identify three *sustaining factors* for mass incarceration, patterns that expand our understanding of the phenomenon's collateral consequences. The first of these patterns is the switch in whose investment priorities from social reproduction to social control. As this switch occurred, a carceral web was created in marginalized neighborhoods like Austin, as enforced through multiple punitive systems and their respective institutional logics. Thirdly, high incarceration rates led to the production of concentrated absence, a pattern that has become self-



reinforcing across generations. As explained in Figure 1, each of these sustaining factors is profoundly interwoven with the others.

Finally, tracing the implication of the aforementioned mechanisms and patterns, I articulate a theory of the ‘criminalization of space’ wherein criminalization is defined as the proactive punishment of neighborhood disadvantage. This section builds upon existing theories of the carceral state and works to articulate the role of race in the state’s decisions to invest, divest and/or mis-invest in urban areas. In each of these sections, I suggest that the ‘high-incarceration neighborhood’ is a convergence point for the broader literature on mass incarceration, a place where the current theories take root, intersect and, with the work of scholars, can evolve over time.

*Figure 1: Path of a High-Incarceration Neighborhood*



## Defining Terms

As used throughout this dissertation, mass incarceration refers to the societal practice of high-volume imprisonment, with a current count of more than two million people in United States prisons at any given time (Liptak, 2008). Under this umbrella, concentrated incarceration refers to the spatial aggregation within already marginalized areas of individuals' imprisonment, indicating how the broader phenomenon of mass incarceration disproportionately impacts particular neighborhoods and urban sub-regions. Finally, the term hyper-incarceration refers to the disproportionate rate at which people in particular areas and social groups are imprisoned, illuminating vast differences in the frequency of imprisonment across places and groups (Wacquant, 2001). Mass, concentrated, and hyper-incarceration each describe unique aspects of the state's differential management of the American population, respectively describing incarceration's volume, spatial aggregation, and rate. As discussed in Chapter 3, hyper-incarceration is an essential feature of concentrated incarceration. However, because hyper-incarceration takes root in particular places, it is impossible to study differential rates in isolation from local dynamics. For this reason, my study is primarily concerned with concentrated incarceration, marked by unusually high imprisonment rates that result from intensive carceral policies applied to specific areas of concentrated disadvantage.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> As a technical term, "concentrated disadvantage" serves as a marker of relative marginality across neighborhoods and is taken as a composite variable of "welfare receipt, poverty, unemployment, female-headed households, racial composition...and density of children." (Sampson, 2013, p.100).

While ‘mass incarceration’ and ‘concentrated incarceration’ may be considered to be two sides of the same punitive coin, the latter of these phenomena has received considerably less scholarly attention. Despite a growing literature about the lasting impact of mass incarceration on broader patterns of inequality, there has been scant research on how the phenomenon has impacted specific urban neighborhoods and the possibilities of human and community development within those neighborhoods (Sampson & Loeffler, 2010). Whereas analyses of incarceration’s ‘mass’ are largely focused on the nation-state scale, by analyzing incarceration’s ‘concentrations’ we can reveal those policy-neighborhood interactions that help explain how today’s punitive patterns have contributed to the regressive transformation of disadvantaged urban areas. As will be described, concentrated incarceration is not an intrinsic aspect of neighborhoods, even those with strong features of concentrated disadvantage. Rather it is an extrinsic factor that results from residents’ everyday interactions with the punitive logics of key urban institutions. I demonstrate how these institutional logics can perversely alter neighborhood trajectories, and argue that better understanding these alterations is vital to comprehending mass incarceration’s persistence over time.

### **Significance for Planning**

Although public safety is an essential concern for any city, it has been largely ignored by urban planners, left instead to the realms of criminologists and lawyers. One implication of this oversight is that neighborhood safety has routinely been seen through the lens of individual-level problems (e.g. offenders, victims), rather

than community-level dynamics (e.g. disinvestment, deindustrialization). A notable exception to this is Jane Jacobs, whose discussion of “eyes on the street” went a long way toward promoting the link between safety and the strength of local social fabrics (Jacobs, 1961). Yet much has changed in American cities since Jacobs wrote, especially in the realm of public safety. And planners have largely failed to keep up.

Of all the blind spots in urban planning, perhaps none is bigger than our failure to understand the implications of mass incarceration for the practice of community economic development in marginalized neighborhoods. Mass incarceration’s rise has occurred unevenly across the urban terrain, primarily impacting African-American communities with other indicators of concentrated disadvantage. As a result of this path dependency, a disproportionate percentage of urban residents with felony convictions come from a relatively small number of community areas. In Chicago, this has meant that the areas with the highest incarceration rates are concentrated on the city’s West and South sides, a spatial pattern that has held constant for more than two decades (Sampson & Loeffler, 2010). Consequently, as the Illinois incarceration rate has risen, neighborhoods like Austin have experienced levels of concentrated imprisonment that are without precedent in human history. These neighborhoods, which can cluster together to form sub-regions of cities, are distinct for both their rates of incarceration (which are dramatically greater than other neighborhoods within the same city), and their

actual numbers of residents sent to prison (where a single high-arrest zip code can rival the admissions numbers of several small low-crime countries combined).<sup>3</sup>

During one five-year period, more than a billion dollars was committed by the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) on imprisoning residents of Chicago's Austin neighborhood. As shown in Figure 2, the funding formulas for neighborhood development efforts have fundamentally shifted since Jacob's era, with punishment and incapacitation taking ever greater shares of government dollars invested in neighborhoods. More than housing, job creation, public transportation, youth development, or any other vital planning concern, imprisonment has been the fastest growing and ultimately the largest of all public investments in cities.<sup>4</sup> These shifts in neighborhood investment patterns, whose foundations were laid during the Nixon years, came under the pretense of sentencing reforms that curtailed the ability of judges to judge, and a "War on Drugs" that failed to recognize addiction as a primary target. Meanwhile, students of community and economic development were being trained to redesign residential space, work for affordable housing, and advocate for living wage jobs without being asked to consider the how urban neighborhoods are impacted by police, prisons, or other components of the criminal justice system. This may be acceptable in some areas of major US cities, where police cars are primarily seen driving down commercial corridors, and where residents' fates are not typically bound up with probation or parole officers. Yet in

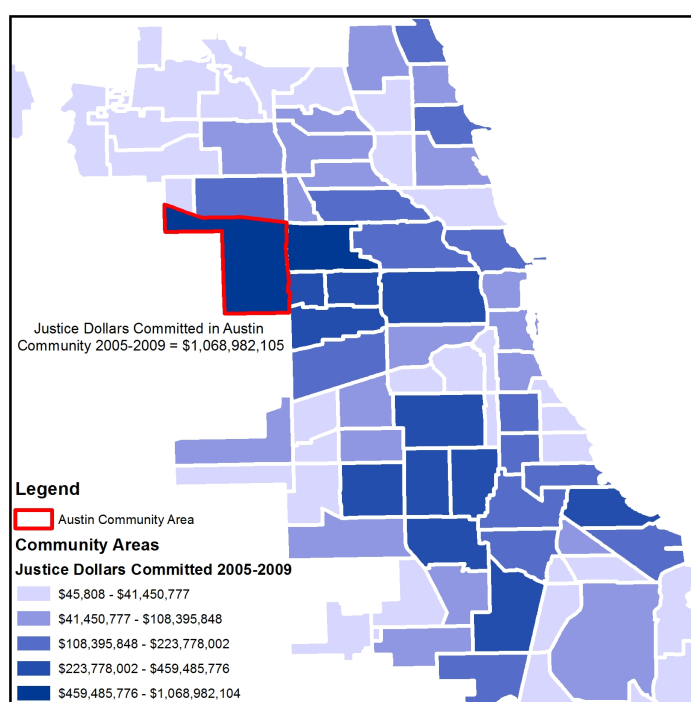
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<sup>3</sup> For example, in 2002 Austin's 60644 zip code had 919 *new* prison admissions, whereas Iceland had 104 total prisoners, Luxembourg had 341 total prisoners, and the Gambia had 450 total prisoners. Sourced from "The Eighth United Nations Survey on Crime Trends and the Operations of Criminal Justice Systems" (2002).

<sup>4</sup> Based on comparisons between IDOC expenditures and a multitude of public investments that pass through the City of Chicago, the majority of which are Community Development Block Grant funds.

high-incarceration areas, the roles of juvenile and criminal justice officials have been dramatically expanded. In these neighborhoods and subregions, flashing cameras often accompany major intersections, police can frequently be seen making arrests in front of homes, and it is common to know someone who regularly reports to their probation or parole officer.

*Figure 2: Incarceration Dollars Committed to Austin from 2005-2009 (IDOC Only)<sup>5</sup>*



Without question, the state's investments in concentrated incarceration have reinforced existing inequities and dramatically narrowed the opportunity structures for residents of high-poverty areas, indicating significant racial and spatial

<sup>5</sup> Map was created with the assistance of Daniel Cooper, using sentencing data from IDOC. Expenditure analysis is based on the full term of the sentence.

selectivity in its applications of punitive policies (Western, 2007).<sup>6</sup> White men across the country are six times less likely to be imprisoned than black men, and of black men born between 1965 and 1969, twenty percent have been imprisoned before reaching their early thirties (Pettit & Western, 2004). These numbers are even more disturbing when analyzing an area of concentrated incarceration. In parts of Chicago's West Side, nearly 70 percent of men between ages 18 and 54 are likely to have been subject to the criminal justice system (McKean & Raphael, 2002). Crucially, concentrated incarceration also has a devastating impact on women, from the ways that it disrupts households, to the parallel increases in the incarceration rates for women in these areas, to how it drains resources that could otherwise be used to support survivors of domestic violence (Richie, 2001, 2012; Sokoloff, Pratt, & Richie, 2005). As a result of this destructive over-reliance on punishment, each year roughly 12 percent of the Illinois prison population comes from three neighborhoods on Chicago's West Side (Austin, North Lawndale, and Garfield Park), yet these same neighborhoods account for less than 3 percent of Illinois' total population. Meanwhile, public recognition of mass incarceration's adverse consequences has grown to the point where even police officials frequently use the phrase "we can't arrest our way out of the problem," and point to the limits of

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<sup>6</sup> The term spatial selectivity is adapted from Martin Jones' article "Spatial selectivity of the state? The regulationist enigma and local struggles over economic governance," which examines the dynamics behind "geographical privileging." Featured in *Environment and Planning*, 1997 volume 29, pages 831 – 864.

suppression strategies in eradicating the complex challenges faced by many residents in urban neighborhoods.

### **Mass Incarceration Studies**

As mass incarceration has expanded and become more entrenched in American life, scholars have made significant headway in understanding its characteristics and implications for society. For more than two decades now, theorists and researchers outside of planning have published clear and incisive studies about the United States' imprisonment policies, creating what may rightfully be considered a field of 'mass incarceration studies.' Within this field, which consists of dozens of books and hundreds of academic and policy articles, there are four defining points of consensus, areas where scholars have achieved a level of conclusive agreement. As described in the Table 1, these points of consensus assert that: 1) regressive sentencing reforms are a primary driver of mass incarceration, 2) widespread imprisonment patterns have huge social and economic implications for children and families, 3) the rise of mass incarceration is an expression of larger transformations in the nature of contemporary governance, and 4) the risks and impacts of incarceration are heavily weighted toward particular places.



*Table 1: Areas of Agreement Within Mass Incarceration Studies*

<b>Field Area</b>	<b>Basic Agreement</b>	<b>Sample Authors</b>	<b>Limits of Agreement</b>	<b>Role of Race</b>
Shifts in Sentencing	Sentencing reforms, like mandatory minimums, drove the rise in prison admissions.	Mauer, Stoll, Rapheal, Olson, Stemen, Auerhahn	Sentencing is one of many policy mechanisms essential for mass incarceration.	Clear agreement; Regressive sentencing policies disproportionately target African-Americans and Latinos.
Collateral Consequences	Mass incarceration adversely impacts children and families.	Wakefield, Wildeman, Comfort, Richie, Patillo, Weiman, Western, Travis, Chesney Lind, Braman.	No strong disagreements, but only some authors connect collateral consequences to larger patterns of inequality.	Clear agreement; Children and families impacted are disproportionately African-American and Latino.
Transformations in Governance	The pattern of widespread imprisonment is tied to parallel changes in the State.	Garland, Simon, Wilson, Peck, Wacquant, Clear.	The role of race in broader state transformations is inconsistent across authors.	Not all analyzes indicate structural racism as an underlying factor; Narratives range from hyper-incarceration as racial control to general analysis of deindustrialization.
Spatial Concentration	Mass incarceration disproportionately effects particular places.	Clear, Sampson, Loeffler.	Differences over how concentrated incarceration is sustained over time.	Agreement that communities impacted are disproportionately African-American and Latino.

In the first consensus area, scholars contend that widespread imprisonment has been facilitated by dramatic changes to US sentencing policy. This relationship between a new sentencing paradigm and the expansion of the penal system is well-established and has been made visible in US policy discussions through the efforts of organizations like The Sentencing Project (Mauer, 2006). These punitive sentencing

reforms started in the 1980s and have continued steadily in the decades that followed. As demonstrated by Stoll and Raphael, the causal relationship between a new American sentencing paradigm and the expansion of the American penal system is undeniable (Raphael & Stoll, 2013). During this time, the “War on Drugs” and “tough on crime” politics facilitated key legislative changes, accompanied by shifts in prosecutorial power and policing practices. As will be discussed, Illinois has become a central site for these policy regressions.

Secondly, there is now widespread agreement that mass incarceration has serious collateral consequences for individuals and families, extending the impact of any prison sentence well beyond the temporary period in which a person is removed from society (Braman, 2007; Chesney-Lind & Mauer, 2003; Murray & Farrington, 2008; Travis & Waul, 2004; Weiman, 2004). Upon a person’s release from prison their ability to create a viable economic future is greatly constricted, as securing even basic employment becomes an extraordinary task (Peck & Theodore, 2008). In many states, former prisoners also have a reduced ability to participate in civic life through the removal of fundamental rights like voting, sometimes throughout their parole period and sometimes indefinitely (Manza & Uggen, 2008). Meanwhile, for the loved ones of the incarcerated, imprisonment has also been shown to have longstanding effects, often permanently altering the trajectories of their children and partners through substantial reductions in both income and caregiving capacity (Comfort, 2008; Wakefield, 2013).

Thirdly, as indicated by the first area of consensus, the emergence of mass incarceration has been inseparably linked to the rise of a more punitively oriented

US government (Clear, 2013). Among carceral state theorists, there is clear agreement that American policy making took dramatic turns at the close of the twentieth century (Wacquant, 2001; Garland, 2002; Gilmore, 2007; Simon, 2009). Though they do not always use the same terms to describe these changes, these theorists all identify two central shifts: 1) the withdrawal of the welfare state and, 2) the creation of a more paternalistic mode of governance. Building on the contributions of Garland, Gilmore, Simon and Wacquant, I argue that concentrated incarceration functions as the proactive punishment of disadvantage, such that the very nature and function of the law has shifted within affected areas.

Finally, there is mounting research on how mass incarceration concentrates in marginalized urban areas (Clear, 2007; Clear, Cadora, Bryer, & Swartz, 2003; Sampson & Loeffler, 2010). As these studies show, imprisonment patterns are unevenly located across space, disproportionately impacting certain places with other accumulated disadvantages. Though there is an emerging consensus about the spatial concentration of the phenomenon, I submit that this area of the field is still underdeveloped, and I work to demonstrate the centrality of a ‘concentrated criminalization’ lens moving forward. Additionally, I argue that neighborhoods function as meeting grounds where essential elements of the field’s literature converge, and can begin to more deeply inform one another. This is a domain of mass incarceration studies that has particular relevance to urban planners and community development practitioners.

Though well-established domains of the field, each of these consensus areas has limits that will be explored in subsequent chapters. In the case of ‘sentencing as

primary driver,' today's tough-on-crime paradigm cannot fully explain our penal system expansion. Regressive reforms have indeed been a prerequisite, actively extending parameters for prosecutable offenses and extended prison sentences after conviction. However, these reforms must be analyzed alongside the community-level conditions and dynamics leading up to the point of arrest, conditions which actively produce neighborhood vulnerability and thereby widen the net of residents who may be susceptible to the state's punitive logics. Meanwhile, the literature on collateral consequences is only sporadically linked to larger patterns of racial inequality, with many authors discussing the economic, emotional, and political impacts of incarceration in isolation, rather than as elements of a more unified societal pattern. Finally, while it is an empirical fact that the American criminal justice system disproportionately impacts low-income people of color more than their white and/or moderate- and high-income counterparts, existing theories of the carceral state vary greatly in their analysis of both race and structural racism.<sup>7</sup>

Through my analysis of the Austin neighborhood, I revisit each of these consensus areas, and work to refine the prevailing theories within each while also illuminating the relationships between them. Thus, while the entire dissertation is designed to further enhance our understanding of the fourth consensus area — spatial concentration — I also use each main chapter of the dissertation to advance one of the other consensus areas in the field's literature. As I argue, a stronger

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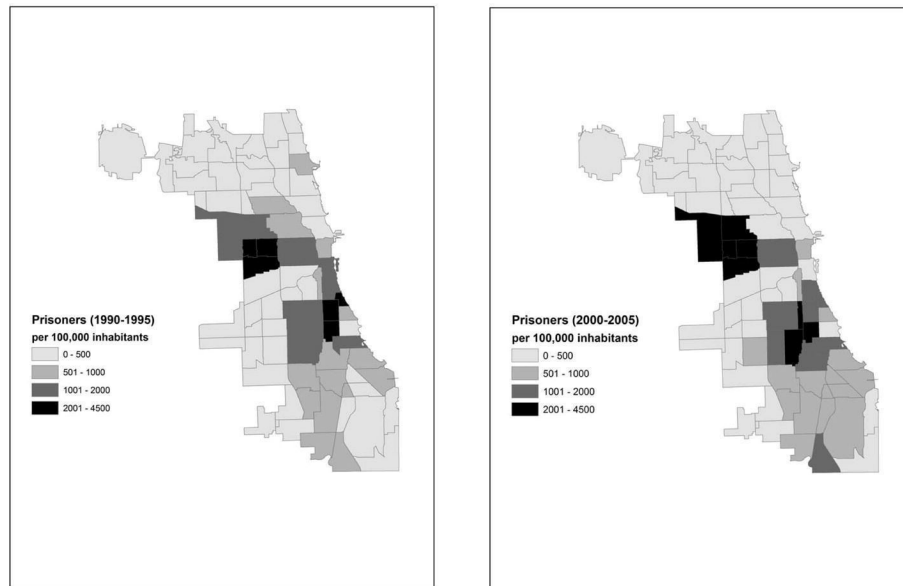
<sup>7</sup> Among the state theorists in the field, numerous and distinct names have developed for understanding mass incarceration's place amidst large societal shifts. These names range from the "carceral state," to the "penal welfare state," to the "racial state," each of which represents a different lens for viewing the broader role and function of intensive imprisonment. In my own analysis I privilege the term 'carceral state.'

understanding of the spatially selective nature of incarceration is essential for the continued development of the field of mass incarceration studies.

### **Spatial Concentration**

Starting with the identification of “million-dollar blocks” in the early 2000s, scholars have demonstrated the need to identify “hot spots” for mass incarceration (Gonnerman, 2004). From this analysis, a scholarly consensus has developed on the phenomenon’s uneven spatial emergence, to the point where the *Oxford Bibliographies* definition of mass incarceration now describes “the concentration of imprisonment among young, African American men living in neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage” as an essential feature (Wildeman, 2012). Key thinkers in this field have included cartographer Eric Cadora, criminologists Dina Rose, Todd Clear, and Charles Loeffler, and sociologist Robert Sampson. As shown in Figures 3 and 4, Chicago has been no exception to this national pattern of concentrated incarceration. Not only are incarceration patterns unevenly distributed in the city’s far west and central south regions, but that spatial unevenness has proven highly durable over time (Sampson & Loeffler, 2010).

*Figures 3 and 4: Chicago Imprisonment Patterns, 1990-1995 and 2000-2005*



Source: Sampson and Loeffler, 2010

In this section, contributions from Clear, Sampson and Loeffler are explored in depth, as their respective works represent the two prevailing scholarly explanations of the place-based persistence of mass incarceration. The first of these, posited by Clear, is that concentrated incarceration creates an overreliance on state-led social controls that ultimately leads to the breakdown of family- and community-led social controls, whereby the more that residents are removed from a community, the more dependent that community becomes on imprisonment to respond to crime and conflict in the future. The second, presented jointly by Sampson and Loeffler, is that crime, incarceration, and socioeconomic disadvantage become mutually reinforcing within neighborhoods, and lead to negative feedback loops that maintain entrenched patterns of imprisonment. Each of these theories represent major advances in the field, and provide a powerful starting place for

studying “the way that incarceration shapes and is shaped by local communities” (Sampson & Loeffler, 2010, p. 28)

Clear’s explanation of this spatial durability provides the best available qualitative scholarship to date on how high-incarceration rates impact families and local social networks (Clear, 2007). In particular, Clear demonstrates that “the generation-long growth in the U.S. prison population has occurred by removing large concentrations of people from poor places,” and uses this framework to explore the interplay between large population removals and neighborhood trajectories (Clear, 2007, p. 4). Through his analysis of dozens of qualitative interviews in Tallahassee, Florida, Clear’s work has helped to develop scholarly understandings of incarceration as a neighborhood-level problem. Central to his thesis is the argument that prisons have serious collateral costs that actually reduce neighborhood safety over time. Building on existing theories of neighborhood social organization, he posits that effective crime suppression within neighborhoods requires a balance of informal, parochial, and state-led social controls. Yet, as Clear asserts, when an area’s incarceration rate rises, over time the social influence of families and neighbors diminishes. Concentrated incarceration therefore marks a shift in the balance among social controls, whereby state-led controls begin to displace parochial and informal social controls. Consequently, arrest and imprisonment become the primary tools for resolving conflict and responding to disorder. Over time, this can lead to an incapacitation of informal and parochial social controls, rather than a simple incapacitation of offenders as conventional criminal justice logics suggest (Clear, 2007; Clear et al., 2014; Rose & Clear, 2002).

Clear's pivotal contribution is the recognition that prisons are not efficient crime suppressors. An overreliance on prisons within any area ultimately weakens the social bonds of that community, which in turn can make the area even more reliant on state-led safety strategies. For this reason, Clear explains that "[i]mprisonment has grown to the point that it now produces the very social problems on which it feeds," amplifying the likelihood that the experience of imprisonment will continue across generations of neighborhood residents (Clear, 2007). His research thereby suggests that although incarceration does have some positive effects on street-level safety, by overusing the tactic in already marginalized areas, criminal justice officials are actually fueling patterns of social reproduction that push crime deeper into the social fabric. As a result of this overuse, young men are left cycling between the prison system and their neighborhoods, all but ensuring that families will have to do without sons, uncles, brothers, and fathers for some stretch of time (Clear et al., 2014).

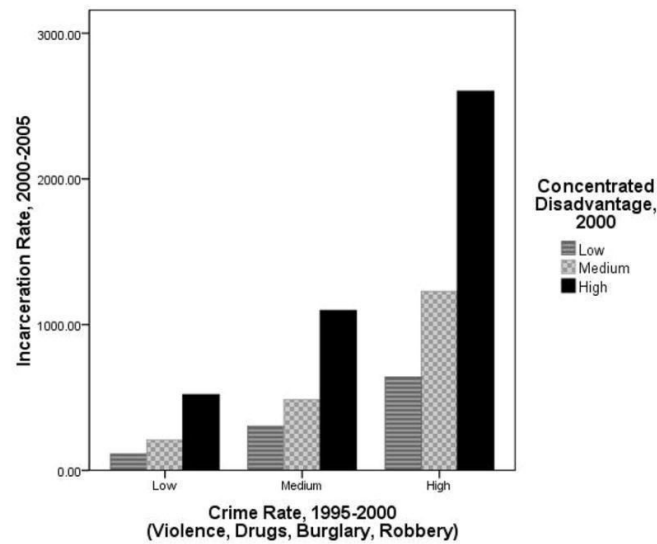
Sampson and Loeffler offer another possible explanation of incarceration's place-based persistence, one that builds upon the recognition of two simultaneous feedback loops. In the first loop, community vulnerability and incarceration are reciprocally involved, so that "[d]isadvantaged communities are more likely to be highly incarcerated communities, which increases their likelihood of becoming even more disadvantaged in the future" (Sampson & Loeffler, 2010, p. 29). As a result, the more socioeconomic disadvantage a community has to begin with, the harder it becomes to create positive future outcomes for residents of that area. This is partially explained by the second negative feedback loop in which high-



incarceration communities both “disproportionately produce prisoners” and “disproportionately draw them back upon release” (Sampson & Loeffler, 2010, p. 29). Thus, in Sampson and Loeffler’s conceptual model, path-dependent prisoner flows intersect a nexus of disadvantage, crime and incarceration to stabilize and/or intensify high levels of imprisonment in communities.

Whereas Clear emphasizes the breakdown in the social fabric over time, Sampson and Loeffler suggest that concentrated incarceration is remade through the magnifying impact of neighborhood disadvantage. Using a definition of disadvantage that incorporates poverty, age, employment and race , they demonstrate that “communities that experienced high disadvantage experienced incarceration rates *more than three times higher* than communities with a similar crime rate” (Sampson & Loeffler, 2010, p. 27). As Figure 5 illustrates, neighborhood disadvantage heavily mediates the relationship between crime and incarceration, even in areas with comparable levels of crime (Sampson & Loeffler, 2010).

*Figure 5: Incarceration by Concentrated Disadvantage and Crime*



Source: Sampson and Loeffler, 2010

As established by their work, the level of incarceration in an area is co-determined by the level of neighborhood disadvantage, independent of actual crime rates. When areas have both high crime and high disadvantage, extraordinary levels of incarceration develop that further intensify “the spatial concentration of disadvantage.” Though in the short-term incarceration still reduces crime levels through incapacitation, it has farther reaching “net effects” that, according to Sampson and Loeffler, are “difficult, if not impossible, to estimate” (Sampson & Loeffler, 2010, p. 27). Throughout this dissertation, I work to further unpack the crime-disadvantage-incarceration nexus, with special attention to the factors that link high-incarceration rates and concentrated disadvantage. While the net effects of this nexus may indeed be difficult to estimate, I argue that concentrated incarceration is an undeniable expression of the punishment of disadvantage, intensifying the underlying stressors behind neighborhood crime rates through a

series of counterproductive logics that permeate multiple urban systems and domains.

In so doing, my dissertation advances the work of Clear, Sampson and Loefer by studying how variables like second-generation incarceration, juvenile justice system contact, and long-term unemployment aggregate at the neighborhood-level, thereby shaping the available parameters for human development.<sup>8</sup> When studied in concert, these variables can help guide us to a more comprehensive picture of the mechanisms and patterns that explain the durability of concentrated incarceration. Like other far west neighborhoods, the Austin community area has had a disproportionately high rate of incarceration for more than twenty years and has many longstanding features of concentrated disadvantage, making it a pertinent location for my inquiry. As with any qualitative study, my research does not produce knowledge that can neatly apply across marginalized urban contexts. However, my study does provide a series of analytical tools that can help guide and advance future work on concentrated incarceration, while also refining our understanding of how the broader problem of mass incarceration takes root.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Chief among these variables are long-term unemployment; leaving school before graduation; contact with the juvenile justice system; and second generation incarceration, factors that contemporary scholars such as Bruce Western have identified as driving forces behind the persistence of intensive imprisonment patterns (Pettit & Western, 2004; Western, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> To this point, neighborhoods are not the sole geographic container for understanding differentiated incarceration rates. These rates also vary greatly by state, ranging “from a high of more than 1,100 per 100,000 people in Louisiana to a low of approximately 300 per 100,000 in Maine” (Gottschalk, 2011).

### **Analytical Overview**

Mass incarceration has been accurately called the most enduring social phenomenon to have emerged in the United States since the 1970s. Todd Clear (2009, p. 4) has asserted that “[t]hrough all the experiences that have occurred in the United States since the depths of the Vietnam War, our prison populations have grown. It is the only constant of the post-Civil Rights generation.” Meanwhile, the forces responsible for this endurance have been understudied, an oversight that is consistent with a larger pattern within the social sciences: historical continuities receive significantly less attention than perceived historical changes (Patterson, 2010). Towards this end, Marie Gottschalk (2011, p.487; See also Lynch, 2011) outlines the need for an analysis of both the emergence and the perpetuation of mass incarceration, asserting that “[t]he factors that created the carceral state are not identical to the ones that sustain it today.”

As I argue, distinguishing between mass incarceration’s ‘originating factors’ and ‘maintenance factors’ requires moving beyond a simple analysis of sentencing policy reform. Instead, we must pursue a deeper investigation of the broader shifts in criminal justice policy and practice, and explore the parallel conditions in neighborhoods where these policies and practices have taken root. By better understanding concentrated incarceration — namely, the ways that mass incarceration affects and interacts with neighborhood dynamics — we can illuminate the phenomenon’s driving forces, and improve our vantage point for appropriate interventions. Doing so requires moving beyond our dominant, yet limited, explanations of how crime and punishment intersect in the urban United

States. Rather, we must begin to recognize the ways that processes of criminalization have shaped not just neighborhood residents, but neighborhoods themselves, enabling and justifying the proactive punishment of disadvantage at the community-level. Without this level of analysis we will continue to have only a generic comprehension of mass incarceration, one that is insufficient for guiding corrective action.

Beyond tough-on-crime policies, there have been numerous community-level changes that were essential for the initial and continued incarceration of so many millions of Americans. These changes have been key to the development of what Ruth Wilson Gilmore calls the massive availability of carceral objects, whereby everyday subjects become units for punishment in the eyes of the state (Gilmore, 2007, p. 130). Existing scholarship on such changes has primarily described shifts in systems rather than neighborhoods themselves, thereby ignoring how the problem of mass incarceration is lodged in community life. Pivotal systems-level changes have included: increasingly aggressive policing and parole practices, failing juvenile justice systems, and a broken indigent defense system (Aizer & Doyle, 2013; Chesney-Lind & Mauer, 2003; Travis, 2005). As reinforced by my own qualitative findings, each of these developments has expanded the number of people likely to be convicted of a felony and treated as a felon long past the completion of their sentences. However, when not analyzed in concert with community-level forces, an exclusive focus on criminal justice systems blinds us to the on-the-ground conditions in which concentrated incarceration has emerged, thereby predetermining our vision of meaningful, transformative interventions. In contrast,

by examining ground-level mechanisms such as deindustrialization and the rise in illicit drug markets, it is possible to illuminate some of the underlying forces beneath mass incarceration's concentration and to envision a future where disadvantage is addressed rather than suppressed and, consequently, amplified.

This work is divided into three main analysis chapters, each of which enhances our understanding of concentrated incarceration and augments the broader literature on mass incarceration. Focusing on a single Chicago neighborhood, I examine three core dimensions of concentrated incarceration: its driving forces, its collateral consequences, and its implications for state theory. Each chapter begins with a concise review of the relevant literature within mass incarceration studies, thereby putting the literature in more direct conversation with the lives of impacted community residents, their loved ones, and leaders in their community. This multi-stakeholder investigation deploys the extended case method of research, which is designed to revisit and revise prevailing theories by testing their sustained relevance to ground-level phenomenon (Burawoy, 2009).

Chapter Three, which focuses on *originating factors* for concentrated incarceration, responds to the scholarly consensus that the primary facilitator for mass incarceration has been a more punitive US sentencing policy. Regressive sentencing reforms were so devastating precisely because they interacted with on-the-ground mechanisms like disappearing factory jobs, the heightened visibility of illegal markets, and the increased prevalence of firearms, as well as major changes in the nature of policing and parole practices. Each of these forces has been a necessary precondition for concentrated incarceration's persistence over time.

Working concurrently, these forces have dramatically increased the vulnerability of Austin residents to punitive logics and, when accompanied by tough-on-crime policies, have fundamentally changed the ways that marginalized subjects – and their stressors – are treated by the state.

Chapter Four identifies *maintenance factors* for mass incarceration, enlarging the current discussion on the phenomenon's collateral consequences. In this chapter, I examine four fundamental patterns in depth: the accumulation of neighborhood stressors, the switch in investment priorities from social reproduction to social control, the web of suppression created through intersecting punitive systems, and the disruption of family and community bonds. Among other connections, I explore the ways that the juvenile justice system contributes to adult incarceration, how sending communities *to* prison become receiving communities *from* prison, how the rise in mass incarceration has coincided with a reduced public investment in low-income urban communities and disinvestments in actual human capacity, and how concentrated incarceration has fueled concentrated absence. Each of these sustaining factors helps to explain why higher levels of neighborhood disadvantage contribute to higher levels of imprisonment.

Chapter Five, my conclusion, is focused on refining prevailing theories of the contemporary US state, with a special focus on the criminalization of space. I argue that concentrated incarceration represents the proactive punishment of disadvantage, which I take as the very essence of criminalization. By stacking the additional disadvantages of imprisonment onto the existing disadvantages of living in a neighborhood with features like a weak labor market and failing school system,

concentrated incarceration has further marginalized individuals, families and communities that can least afford additional setbacks. Crucially, this compounding of disadvantage counteracts the crime prevention benefits that are the presumed justifications for elevated incarceration rates (Clear et al., 2014). By reflecting on the role of contemporary processes of criminalization in the larger operations of the contemporary state, I aim to better incorporate the punishment-disadvantage relationship into existing frameworks for state theory. As I argue, our conceptions of the contemporary state must account for the ways in which race and residential address codetermine one's lifetime likelihood of spending years behind bars.



## **Chapter Two – Research Design and Methods**

Combining both an anthropological grounding in ethnographic methods and the place-based analysis of an urban planner, my extended case approach is designed to better understand the durability of concentrated incarceration, and to refine the existing literature on mass incarceration. This chapter explains the analytical framework that guides my inquiry and introduces my disciplinary grounding. The chapter also reviews lessons from other qualitative studies addressing issues of crime and incarceration in US cities, explains the selection of Chicago's Austin neighborhood as my case, and presents my intensive and extensive approach to data collection and analysis. Finally, the chapter also reviews my fieldwork experience and offer details about how key challenges were navigated.

While I speak to trends affecting hundreds of American cities, my analysis is focused on Chicago, with data coming from both the City of Chicago and the State of Illinois. Whereas Sampson and Loeffler have mapped imprisonment patterns in Chicago using data from the Circuit Court of Cook County (1990 to 2005), I have used more recent Circuit Court data as well as incarceration data is from the IDOC as shared by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (2000 to 2011). Across analyses of these data sources, the picture of incarceration patterns across Chicago appears to be highly consistent. While I do not analyze data impacting areas beyond Illinois, I maintain that my case can be instructive to other large municipalities and states impacted by mass incarceration. While the Illinois prison population rose over 500 percent during the last 35 years, a vast disparity developed between Illinois' general incarceration rate and the rate for African-Americans. Whereas in

2010 the general Illinois incarceration rate was 373 per 100,000, the incarceration rate for African-Americans was 2,128 per 100,000 in the same year (National Institute of Corrections, 2010; Prison Policy Initiative, 2010). This gap explains how “at the turn of the millennium Illinois was locking up Black men for drug offenses at a rate greater than any other state” despite having a statewide incarceration rate below the national average (Metropolis 2020, 2006).

Though they provide breakthrough contributions, the existing theories on concentrated incarceration also leave much to be explained. Through carefully tailored mixed-methods research in Chicago’s Austin neighborhood, I will advance our understanding of the community context in which mass incarceration is situated. I will accomplish this through in-depth interviews with directly impacted individuals and their family members, in concert with interviews with community-level professionals working in juvenile and adult criminal legal systems, and the workforce development system. Additionally, I will use data from participant observations in the community and secondary data sets from the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center (CCJTDC), the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ), and IDOC.

### **Disciplinary Grounding**

How does one study the durability of a disproportionately distributed phenomenon? If using ethnographic methods, doing so requires conducting in-depth research in a place where the phenomenon is overly active, and has been so for a sustained period of time. In my case, this means conducting research in a site of

concentrated incarceration, a place where the processes and mechanisms that enable mass incarceration are in full effect. Accordingly, my study is focused on Chicago's Austin neighborhood, the community area with the highest total number of admissions to IDOC from 2000-2010 (ICJIA, 2011).

My study is rooted in two distinct, yet complementary, disciplinary backgrounds. As an urban anthropologist, I am concerned with understanding the processes of everyday life, as well as the meanings, beliefs, and affiliations that give force and momentum to those processes (Hannerz, 1983). As an urban planner, I pay attention to the structural elements that provide parameters for everyday life, maintaining and/or shifting dominant patterns of human interaction, community development, and broader urban change (Forester, 1988). These two disciplines offer complementary approaches to understanding the urban world, revealing one another's blind spots and reinforcing one another's strengths. In planning, our analytical frameworks often operate through a future-oriented analysis of resource distribution across urban space (Fainstein & Campbell, 2011). These frameworks are powerful tools for interrogating the current ordering of the city and often for devising more enlightened alternatives. This is the discipline's great strength. Unfortunately, urban planners frequently attempt to restructure the future without a sufficient understanding of how individuals, families, and communities are living in the present. They attempt to drive society towards new horizons without a real conception of how people use, navigate, and experience their existing landscapes, thereby leaving the driving beliefs and common experiences of human communities largely unexplored. Meanwhile, anthropology is designed to advance exactly this

exploration, illuminating people's everyday ways of working, being, and making meaning in their lives. It does this through the ethnographic techniques of participant-observation, in-depth interviews, and focus groups, techniques that help reveal the processes that animate the practices and behaviors of city dwellers.

When combined, these two disciplinary frameworks enable a holistic approach to urban studies, accounting for not only the micro and macro dimensions of urban life, but also the multidimensional nature of urban futures and the ways they are seeded and nurtured in the present moment. Bringing together a planning framework, an anthropological lens, and a set of ethnographic techniques, my dissertation analyzes fundamental challenges to neighborhood safety on Chicago's West Side, and strives to offer guidance for people wishing to simultaneously reduce mass incarceration and urban crime. As I argue, any such study of neighborhood safety requires looking at the interplay of individual behavior, community conditions, and state actions, each of which has its own trajectories and its own logics, yet is also profoundly impacted by the others. Importantly, unlike the disciplines of criminology and law, neither planning nor anthropology attempts to study individual actions outside of their broader social ecology.

Though best known for its ethnographic methods, anthropology is much more than a set of techniques for qualitative data collection. At its best, the discipline helps to explain social phenomena which were once obscure, while also raising pressing questions about events and interactions that may seem all too familiar (Bennett, 1997). With this ambition in mind, John Comaroff has articulated five key components of anthropology's theoretical methods. Comaroff names these

components as: 'critical estrangement,' 'being and becoming,' 'the counter-intuitive,' 'situating events,' and 'grounded theory,' each of which is presented as an essential element of contemporary anthropological practice (Comaroff, 2010). Chief among these components is critical estrangement, where the analyst distances himself/herself from dominant concepts of the society in which they are embedded. In the case of concentrated incarceration, the work of critical estrangement requires the analyst to challenge many of their basic social assumptions about how safety and/or danger is produced in everyday urban life. Accordingly, critical estrangement invites an interrogation of the practice of forced removal, which is used as the pillar of contemporary safety efforts in disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Following critical estrangement, Comaroff names 'being and becoming' as a core anthropological concern, emphasizing the importance of observing how things come to be understood and experienced through social processes. Within this process observation, identifying counter-intuitive phenomena allows the analyst to find places of rupture and contradiction within the social fabric. When analyzed, these ruptures can illuminate otherwise obscure societal patterns and to reveal opportunities for the formation of new patterns. Relatedly, Comaroff also calls on the anthropologist to place events within a broader temporal and spatial context, understanding their larger historical trajectories and multi-scalar spatial dimensions. Finally, Comaroff advocates for a grounded theory approach, whereby the anthropological observer allows their observations to drive much of their theorizing. These five epistemic operations are shown in Table 2, alongside a column showing how each operation has informed my own study and ultimately

shaped my argument that punishment perpetuates neighborhood insecurity, that it created counterproductive logics across urban systems, and that these logics have changed the ground on which neighborhood subjectivities unfold.

*Table 2: Anthropological Modes of Analysis*

<b>Comaroff's' Five Epistemic Operations</b>	<b>Analytical Mode Required by Each Operation</b>	<b>My Analytical Approach</b>	<b>Findings from Fieldwork</b>
Critical Estrangement	Detachment from folk concepts.	Interrogating neighborhood safety practices.	Recognition of punishment as a force that escalates neighborhood insecurity.
Being and Becoming	Attention to social process.	Fieldwork across neighborhood social positions.	Shared conception of social processes across social positions; Diverging conceptions of subjectivities.
The Counter-Intuitive	Attention to paradox.	Attention to systemic contradictions.	Visibility of counterproductive logics across urban systems.
Situating Events	Attention to past & space.	Larger geographical analysis.	Awareness of policy interventions within life stories; Hyper-incarceration disrupts resident experiences of time.
Grounded Theory	Track emerging ideas.	Structured starting place; Data informs guiding theories.	Identification of patterns contributing to concentrated criminalization.

As the above table shows, my own study draws from each of these epistemic operations, with two substantive departures. First, my approach is rooted in the extended case method, in place of grounded theory (Burawoy, 2009). Placing the

expansion and refinement of the literature on mass incarceration as a top priority of my research, I add to a crucial and longstanding discussion about the United States' standing as the world's leading prison guard while addressing how we might effectively turn in a new direction. While I strongly believe that direct observations can, and often *must*, inform the process for creating new theories, I do not believe that the process of theorizing should be construed as unfolding in a vacuum, or without structured reference to other bodies of thought on the issue under study. Second, unlike Comaroff's purely analytical operations, I am firmly committed to the larger project of planning, whereby interventions are guided by normative stances on what types of neighborhood trajectories are both attainable and beneficial to local and regional stakeholders. Yet, as the history of planning has taught us, normative positioning can be dangerous business, with whole neighborhoods wiped out under the guise of 'urban improvement' (Yiftachel, 1998). Indeed, progress itself can be a ruse for advancing narrow political, economic, and/or ideological agendas (Adorno, 2006). As I argue, it is precisely these dangers that the epistemic operations named by Comaroff can expose, thereby reducing the power of dominant assumptions by illuminating the driving forces behind present-day tensions and constructions of truth.

### **The Four Extensions**

My project provides an in-depth study of one of Chicago's highest incarceration areas, drawing from both secondary data sources on Austin's neighborhood dynamics over time and, most importantly for my contribution,

qualitative interviews with former prisoners, community residents, and institutional stakeholders in local government, the criminal justice arena, and the social service sector. Built on the extended case method, this research is a highly focused case study that examines pre-existing theory to improve our conceptions of how mass incarceration is embedded and remade in neighborhoods over time. As is the hallmark of the extended case method, the study moves from an understanding of macrostructural clarity and predictive social characteristics to a place of deep process understanding. It is this refinement that movement that enables the refinement of existing theory (Burawoy, 2009).

How exactly does the research move from macrostructural clarity and predictive social characteristics to deep process understanding? We know that mass incarceration in Illinois is disproportionately concentrated on Chicago's West Side (Sampson & Loeffler, 2010; Street, 2002). We also know that incarceration has strong feedback loops with phenomenon like neighborhood unemployment, juvenile justice contact, parental absence, and high-school drop-out and push-out rates (Aizer & Doyle, 2013; Beckett & Western, 2001; Pettit & Western, 2004; Wakefield, 2013). However, we do not yet have a clear picture of how the 'macro-structural truths' and 'predictive characteristics' named above are manifested within neighborhood life. Using a place-based and cross-systems qualitative research design, I explore these dynamics in detail, examining the interactions between systems and neighborhood that have made concentrated incarceration such an entrenched reality. In so doing, I augment our current understanding of



concentrated incarceration's causal mechanisms, revisiting and extending our current understanding of these forces.

My approach consciously deploys what Burawoy (2009) has dubbed "the four extensions" of social science. These are "the extension of the observer into the life of the participants under study," "the extension of observations over time and space," "the extension from microprocesses to macroforces," and lastly "the extension of theory." He stresses that the extension of theory is the most important of these, for it is theory that guides each of the other extensions (Burawoy, 2009). For Burawoy, it is through the testing and rebuilding of social theory over time that the micro and macro can be connected. Through regular study and reexamination, theoretical traditions are adapted over time, ever changing in accordance with the material conditions encountered by the social scientists that wield them, continually being reconstructed by "[t]aking the flaws of existing theory as points of departure" (Burawoy et al., 1991, p. 7).

Burawoy calls on us to see each of the four extensions in the extended case method as a form of dialogue. After we have entered the lives of our research subjects, we speak with and learn from them. Once we have engaged with various social situations over time, we put them in communication with one another to identify patterns. Having witnessed the living dialectic between research subjects and the forces that shape their daily lives, we narrate the conversation between them. And finally, once we place the analytical theories we bring to the field in relationship with the folk theories we learn in the field, we synthesize them with

one another and with the writings of other influential “participants in a scientific community” (Burawoy, 2009, p. 43).

In this sense, my study will be putting the ideas of other scholars of mass incarceration into dialogue with a diverse set of neighborhood actors, ranging from probation officers, police officers, and judges, to former prisoners and their fellow community residents. By speaking to actors and groups across scales of power and situational perspectives, I have sought to create a more complete picture of neighborhood life, giving weight to various voices, even, and perhaps especially, when these voices are disconnected from one another in everyday life. Rather than determining the ‘relative weight’ of these voices, my approach has been to honor them all, to give them space to support, contradict, and challenge one another. This 360-degree perspective might be understood as a different take on what Burawoy (2009) calls the ‘extension of observations’ across space and time. By placing neighborhood perspectives in dialogue with one another, even if only in the context of written pages, they can begin to reflect, lift up, and push back on one another’s worldviews, working towards a more complete picture, one belief, insight, and experience at a time.

As each of the actors interviewed has helped to shed light on the working of deep urban patterns, this quilting of perspectives helps to move my limited ethnographic study of Austin to an analysis of neighborhood life as a whole, creating a more robust understanding than any one institutional actor or social group could allow. From the quilting of these narrative voices, each possessing its own unique strength, perspective and validity, we can then move into the third extension,

making the journey from ground-level processes to broader social structural realities. It is here where causal mechanisms can be identified and re-examined. For example, by placing the perspectives of the police officer alongside that of the formerly incarcerated resident, we can begin to illuminate the patterns that feed cycles of arrest and incarceration, of crime and the pursuit of safety. Inherently, by expanding the voices we are willing to hear, we must also be willing to challenge our comfortable, and/or long-held notions of truth, wherein we may realize that one person's pursuit of safety involves the routine breaking of the law, just as one officer's pursuit of security involves the routine separation of family members.

In addition to in-depth interviews, I have also compiled, transcribed and analyzed dozens of participant observations during my time in Austin, the goal of which has been to join "participants in their rhythm of life, in their space and time" (Burawoy, 2009, p. 17). Providing necessary context to my interview data, these observations portray group activities and organizing efforts across my fieldwork sites, ranging from prayer vigils, to marches and community meetings, to residents hanging out in local parks and gardens. Importantly, as Buroway asserts, each research technique has its own ways of distorting the reality it seeks to comprehend. Whereas interviews isolate a subject who is otherwise embedded in social reality, observations typically portray an event without real knowledge of the tensions or challenges within its unfolding, and quantitative datasets often objectify and flatten experiences that are otherwise profoundly nuanced and layered. Yet when informing one another, these data types can work together to place the

“preconstituted theories and concepts of participants” within the environment through which they were shaped and produced (Burawoy et al., 1991, p. 4).

### **Studying the Street**

In this section I review a series of major qualitative urban research projects that — with varying degrees of focus — deal with questions of crime, violence, and incarceration. The works reviewed include *Code of the Street*, *Pockets of Crime*, *Policing Space*, and *Imprisoning Communities*, all published between 1999 and 2012, when the United States prison population was already well over 2 million. These studies range greatly in their chosen geography, guiding theory, and driving questions, but all share a commitment to the ethnographic study of contemporary US cities, including Philadelphia, Chicago, Tallahassee, and Los Angeles. With the exception of *Policing Space*, these studies explore the lifeworlds of low-income African-Americans, often focusing on how the trajectories of the individuals being studied shape and are shaped by various neighborhood forces. Though the subjects of each research project have strong demographic overlaps, their driving questions vary widely, ranging from issues of morality, to social disorganization and criminal opportunity, to social reproduction and punitive governance.

In “Pockets of Crime: Broken Windows, Collective Efficacy, and the Criminal Point of View” (2007), Peter K.B. St. Jean seeks to create a more sophisticated understanding of high-crime neighborhoods, asking why crime is more likely to occur in some places than others. He frames this as a theory of ecological advantage and disadvantage, whereby the “ecological position a block occupies in the larger

structure of the community plays a direct role in determining its criminal advantage, regardless of the actions of residents or what appears to a middle-class eye to be disorder” (St. Jean, 2007, p. xii). Seeking to refine pre-existing theories of neighborhood disorder and collective efficacy through an in-depth examination of Chicago police beats and qualitative interviews with criminal offenders, St. Jean uses the extended case method to better understand how offenders commit crimes, why they commit the crimes they do, and how well the actions and reasoning of offenders is accounted for by well-established theoretical frameworks. Like myself, he starts with a theoretical literature that he seeks to enhance through new observations, ultimately arguing that the spatial position of certain locations has been underemphasized in recent sociological explanations of crime, bringing space to bear on questions of criminal tendencies, resident vulnerability and community cohesiveness (St. Jean, 2007).

Though empirically rigorous, St. Jean’s study leaves much to be desired theoretically. As Robert Sampson explains in the foreword to the book, St. Jean is “part of a new wave of urban research that is seeking to make sense of the proximate social mechanisms, interactions, and ecological structures that help explain crime” (St. Jean, 2007, p. xiii). While valuable, my concern is that St. Jean sees proximate causes entirely as local causes, avoiding the examination of forces beyond the police beat that may have bearing on behavioral patterns therein. While he convincingly advances our understanding of urban ecologies, the ecology he presents is constrained by his narrow conception of the driving motivations for criminal behaviors. St. Jean presents what amounts to a more sophisticated version

of the opportunity theory of crime, yet does so without incorporating the findings of recent research on the effect of disadvantage on future decision-making (Thompson, 2013). Moreover, despite having interviewed dozens of residents who have been impacted by the prison system, St. Jean offers little critical analysis of incarceration as the dominant response to criminal behavior, never exploring the mechanisms or institutional structures that might help to explain the high incarceration rates in the very same South Side neighborhoods that he studies.

In *Policing Space* (1997), Stephen Herbert presents what he calls an “analytic ethnography,” which hinges on the development of a framework for explicating social action. Through interviews and in-depth participant observations, like ride-alongs in squad cars, he studies the Los Angeles Police Department, which he describes as a social agency with the power to use lethal force. Whereas St. Jean analyzes the ways that space is made and marked by criminal offenders, Herbert asks parallel questions about police officers, exploring how and why they exercise what he calls ‘territoriality.’ Central to everyday police behavior, territorial action is defined as “a spatial strategy to affect, influence, or control resources and people by controlling territory.” Perhaps not surprisingly, he finds that police officers maneuver and clear space to exercise social control over a place and/or situation (Herbert, 1997, p. 168).

Yet what exactly guides this action? Herbert’s argument is built around six normative orders that shape the meaning of routine police decision-making, each of which provides “a set of rules and practices centered on a primary value” that is central to police organizations (Herbert, 1997, pp. 3-4). These orders can work

together or against one another to structure police behavior, and thus guide how officers make and mark space. The normative orders he identifies include: law, administration, adventure, safety, competence, and morality. Depending on the officers, external dynamics and other individuals involved, any or all of these normative orders can guide the officers as they navigate the scenarios they encounter. Importantly, Herbert finds that “racial considerations shape which normative orders officers mobilize to interpret and enact a situation,” so that the guiding motivations behind any police action are often activated and influenced by race, perhaps determining whether their leading drive is pure enforcement of the law, the removal of perceived threats, and/or the handling of needed paperwork (Herbert, 1997, p. 5). By showing the channels through which decisions are made and intentions are guided, Herbert does an exemplary job of illuminating police behaviors without essentializing officers themselves, reducing neither their individual agency nor their collective complexity.

Elijah Anderson’s *Code of the Street* (2000) is a popular urban ethnography set on the streets, sidewalks, and porches of Philadelphia. Whereas St. Jean clearly builds his study on a body of preexisting theory and Herbert develops a clear framework for the interpretation of his data, Anderson advances grounded theory that seeks to illuminate the interpersonal practices and agreements that accompany profound social and economic isolation. Driving Anderson’s study is a concern with “why it is that so many inner-city young people are inclined to commit aggression and violence toward one another” (Anderson, 2000, p. 9). His hypothesis is that in economically depressed urban areas, where drugs and crime are rampant, a ‘code of

the street' has emerged that fills in the vacuum left by weakened civil laws. Fueling this code is "a desperate search for respect that governs public social relations, especially violence, among so many residents, particularly young men and women" (Anderson, 2000, p. 9). Importantly, though he frequently acknowledges social determinants in his narrative, Anderson's theoretical and empirical focus is almost exclusively about personal subjectivities and interpersonal relations. In his terms, he deals with "a sociology of interpersonal public behavior" as well as the "changing roles of the inner-city grandmother and the 'decent daddy,' the interplay of decent and street families of the neighborhood, and the tragedy of the drug culture" (Anderson, 2000, p. 10).

Based on his chosen foci, Anderson largely takes the public realm to mean outdoors, or anything within a neighborhood that does not happen behind closed doors. He names social forces like widespread joblessness and the resultant alienation as root causes for young men's search for respect, yet these macro forces are not explicitly linked to his theoretical constructs nor his ethnographic case. He hardly mentions the state or larger systems or institutions at all. The same is true for urban history, which is almost entirely missing from his commentary. Nor does Anderson account for brain science, psychology, or any other scientific field dedicated to understanding patterns of human behavior. It is in this vacuum that Anderson's language of culture arises, a culture based largely on the idea of conscious individuals engaged in a series of personal choices amidst peer and individual influences. At the center of this neighborhood-level culture, Anderson's text relies heavily on the bifurcation of African-American families into two morally



opposed categories, taking special note of their perceptions, decision-making, and behavioral outcomes. These two categories or 'orientations,' described as 'decent' and 'street,' are said to organize the community socially, whereby families with competing orientations must learn to coexist. In addition to portraying orientations within a single community, Anderson also describes competing orientations among adjacent communities along 'Germantown Avenue,' where there is said to be "a natural continuum characterized largely by a code of civility at one end and a code of conduct regulated by the threat of violence – the code of the street – at the other" (Anderson, 2000, p. 15-16).

In the absence of history, broader social forces, or cognitive science, Anderson's cultural explanation perpetuates simplistic causal explanations for why violence occurs (Wacquant, 2002). Though ethnographic, Anderson's work lacks the anthropological commitments to 'critical estrangement' described by Comaroff, leaving far too many questions unasked, let alone answered. Is the weakening of civil law a necessary outcome of economic marginalization? Is the street/decent bifurcation really about those who orient their values in relation to the state and those who do not? Or, perhaps relatedly, is it about social exclusion? To what extent does social and/or economic marginalization influence attitudes towards the state? What is the impact of violence on human and community development? Is there anything about the effects of violence that may explain why 'street families' act the way they do? By ignoring these types of inquiries, Anderson limits his possible contributions to our understanding of violence and aggression, leaving the reader with little grounding for any possible explanation for violence other than his 'code'

hypothesis (Wacquant, 2002). His theory lacks any linkage to other possible explanations of social events, focusing on generalized moral laws rather than the concrete impacts of forces beyond the interpersonal. The problem is not that larger social forces are not acknowledged, but that they are omitted from Anderson's final analysis, used as context rather than a pillar in the work's theoretical structure.

Furthermore, as an ethnographer Anderson does not situate himself in his study, offering the reader no footholds on how or exactly where he is gathering his information. Instead he adopts an authoritative voice, taking liberties to speak not just as a social scientist but also as a concerned tour guide, with passages like, "[h]ere it is prudent to be wary – not everyone on the street recognizes and respects the rule of law, the law that is encoded in the criminal statutes and enforced by the police" (Anderson, 2000, p. 20). One danger of Anderson's authoritative narration is that it helps to conceal the influence of actual authorities in the areas he studies, making invisible those people who have more than personal power to wield; these are the same individuals who might otherwise bear some responsibility for the social and economic isolation that Anderson uses more as a backdrop for a portrait than a starting place for investigation. This danger is clearly present in his depiction of men in the community. He asserts that "[w]hen present at all, men appear most often in the roles of nephew, cousin, son, but seldom as husband" (Anderson, 2000, p. 28). Moreover, this absence of men is said to have intergenerational impacts as "[m]any of these young men have had limited or no personal experience with a decent daddy and have little to model themselves on" (Anderson, 2000, p. 185). However, Anderson offers no sociological explanation of where these missing men

have gone, leaving the reader largely at the mercy of their own moral imagination. Crucially for my own work, Anderson provides no systemic analysis of a Philadelphia jail system; in 1999, the year that *Code of the Street* was published, this system had an average daily population of 6,578, largely from areas like the one Anderson was studying (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2011). Only by limiting his gaze is Anderson able to advance the 'code of the street' as a satisfactory explanation of violence, falsely separating the interpersonal realm from other domains of inquiry.

In stark contrast to Anderson, Todd Clear explores how the US penal system creates what might be seen as a 'code of the state,' imprisoning urban residents en masse and severely disrupting individual, household, and community futures. In his book *Imprisoning Communities* (2009), Clear studies the impacts of "concentrated incarceration," examining how public policies and practices of confinement impact life at the local level. Finding that prisons are highly inefficient suppressors of crimes, he asserts that "[i]mprisonment has grown to the point that it now produces the very social problems on which it feeds" (Clear, 2007, p. 3). Drawing from more than 100 interviews in Tallahassee Florida, Clear presents data from dozens of residents who view incarceration as a problem in and of itself, with many collateral costs that can ultimately lead to increased crime.

Unlike many aspatial studies of criminal justice in American, Clear examines the prison system's impact particular areas, observing how it alters the trajectory of certain places while leaving many other places relatively unaffected. He is concerned with how "the generation-long growth in the U.S. prison population has occurred by removing large concentrations of people from poor places," a concern

that he argues has much to tell us about the spatial nature of racial injustice and social inequality more broadly (Clear, 2007, p. xii). Importantly, Clear posits that “[t]he growth in imprisonment has been concentrated among poor, minority males who live in impoverished neighborhoods,” the same type of disadvantaged neighborhoods where Anderson struggled to articulate why so many men were missing (Clear, 2007, p. 5). Pointing to a societal pattern bearing down on local life, Clear explains how concentrated incarceration has “broken families, weakened the social-control capacity of parents, eroded economic strength, soured attitudes toward society, and distorted politics” (Clear, 2007, p. 5). By taking state actions rather than individual behaviors as the main object of his analysis, Clear makes a vital departure from the Americanist tradition of studying the black family in isolation from broader societal forces.

In my own study, I apply key lessons from each of these works. Anderson’s text shows how even the most compelling urban ethnographic prose will be constrained by uncritically inheriting concepts from one’s research subjects and broader societal environment. From *Pockets of Crime*, I draw from St. Jean’s disciplined positioning of his research within two distinct but related theoretical strands, seeking to make a reliable and meaningful contribution to contemporary debates. Additionally, I have learned from the way Herbert presents an ethnographic treatment of a vast urban institution, studying the making of space at large rather than any singular place. His model has informed my own interviews with police officers in this study. More than any of these works, *Imprisoning Communities* is the most analytically similar to my own, and I have used Clear’s

presentation of concentrated incarceration as a starting place for my research, drawing from his place-based approach to criminal justice policy analysis.

### **Worldview, Positionality and Theoretical Grounding**

No matter their discipline or research design, all social scientists must ask two fundamental questions: how does my worldview influence my study, and how does my position in society influence how my analysis is interpreted? Addressing both questions requires that the scientist interrogate their own personal perceptions of the world, as well as the implications of the ways s/he is perceived by the world. Though the former inquiry has historically received the most attention by social scientists, there is a strong tradition of feminist methodology addressing the latter (Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2003; Minh-Ha, 2009; Richie, 1995; Sprague, 2005). While dealing briefly with the question of personal bias, in this section I focus primarily on issues associated with positionality.

My own perceptions shape how I ask questions, interpret facts, value voices, calculate findings, and more. Within social science, this is the realm of knowledge production traditionally associated with issues of objectivity and bias. The degree of freedom a scholar can claim from their personal worldview is thought to have substantial bearing on the scientific value of their statements. Within the positivist tradition, this requires claiming one's own neutrality as an observer, avoiding — in theory at least — the pitfalls of engagement that might adversely influence one's interpretation of social data. Beyond positivism, where neutrality is recognized and revealed as myth, claims of analytical accuracy no longer rely on “the separation of the intellectual product from its process of production” (Buroway et al., 1991, p. 8).

Representing the opposite end the spectrum, participatory action research has gone so far as to claim that in order to understand something, you must first try to change it (Whyte, 1991). In between these two poles, where my study is situated, accuracy requires establishing a research design that structurally prohibits undue personal influence on one's own general conclusions, as well as a self-conscious use of social science theory that places one's analysis within a larger orbit of academic inquiry.

While fully ridding one's analysis of the influence of one's worldview is likely an unachievable goal, the disciplined striving towards this goal provides the foundation for the legitimacy of much of the world's scholarship. For many, it is this striving that distinguishes the scholar from the gifted and critical lay observer. In my own study, as explained throughout this chapter, I deploy an extended case method approach that synthesizes qualitative and quantitative data to contribute to the larger academic sub-field of mass incarceration studies. Through a triangulated approach that includes diverse subject positions and field observations, extensive secondary datasets, and contrasting scholarly texts, the undue influence of my own worldview is limited. For example, as a critic of mass incarceration, I am aware that the bias I took into the field may lead me to obscure or underemphasize the temporary crime prevention benefits that incarceration can and frequently does produce. Working from this awareness, I distinguish between the cumulative adverse impacts of mass incarceration as a public safety strategy, from the isolated and often short-term gains in safety that can be gained when individuals are removed from a community.

Though a powerful and relevant concern, the influence of my personal worldview as an observer and analyst is a well-known problem in academia, one that can be explicitly addressed through research design and methods. Meanwhile, much less attention has been placed on issues of positionality, on how the meaning of my words as an observer are influenced by a broader social context, often independently of their original intentions or connotation. While applicable to quantitative studies as well, positionality can be especially troublesome for qualitative inquiries. In *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* Trinh Minh-ha (2009, pp. 64-65) asserts that anthropology, and by extension ethnography, is mainly “a conversation of us' with us' about them'... In which them' is silenced.” In other words, the subject of our inquiry is excluded from the very dialogue that presumes to illuminate the nature of that subject and the context in which that dialogue is formed. Crucially, this deeply embedded scholarly tendency is shaped by larger patterns of power. As Linda Alcoff explains, “[p]ersons from dominant groups who speak for others are often treated as authenticating presences that confer legitimacy and credibility on the demands of subjugated speakers; such speaking for others does nothing to disrupt the discursive hierarchies that operate in public spaces” (Alcoff, 1995, p. 231). Alcoff contends, by extension, that the social location of the speaker heavily determines how their ideas will be received and perceived by society.

Presumably, the scholar can do little to change this dynamic. Due to Alcoff's claim that “social identity is epistemically salient,” the practice of speaking for others can automatically re-authorize the voice of the privileged and de-authorize

the voices of less privileged persons (Alcoff 1995, p. 231). In other words, the social identity of the speaker has great influence over the social impact of the speech. When written from a position of privilege, even an incredibly empathetic and detailed account of the structural drivers of other people's pain may not shift society's fundamental beliefs about the people enduring that pain. Alcoff suggests that changes in society's beliefs are influenced more by the social location of the narrator than the actual narrative itself. Consequently, at the end of the narration, a privileged author's text does little to challenge the reader's ideas of who possesses a voice worth hearing. Thus Minh-ha and Alcoff present a connection between authorship and authority, whereby the latter cannot be expanded so long as the former maintains its traditional confines. This authorship-authority connection resonates across feminist methodology in the social sciences, whereby the representations of subjects are always mediated by discourse, power, and location.

Both Alcoff and Minh-ha's insights are built upon an analysis of the social production and reproduction of power, whereby the ultimate impact of a knowledge producer's efforts are determined well beyond their own individual intentions or contributions. As Alcoff (1995) asserts, "the practice of privileged persons speaking for or on behalf of less privileged persons has often resulted in increasing or reinforcing the oppression of the group spoken for." Acknowledging this pattern requires recognizing the existence of oppression, an elusive concept within most schools of social science. While the concept of poverty is routinely used, it typically refers to a social condition without assigning responsibility for the origins of that condition. In contrast, oppression automatically implies human agency and thus



human culpability for social conditions, establishing a field of material relations wherein certain identifiable people and forces shape the social reality of others.

A parallel implication of feminist methods is that all narration — be it theory or detailed ethnographic account — occurs in a political context and has concrete real-world effects. This raises many questions for scholars, especially those of us concerned with societal distributions of power. Is it ever beneficial for the privileged scholar to speak for individuals and/or groups from less privileged social positions? Should people only speak for groups they are members of? Relatedly, is it possible to distinguish between speaking for others and speaking about others?

As a scholar born into historically dominant positions vis-a-vis race, class, gender, citizenship status, physical ability, and sexual orientation, the tradition of feminist methodology invites sustained reflection on the purpose and possible impacts of my research, both inclusive and exclusive of the actual content of the work. Though, as Michael Burroway (1991 et al., p. 5) asserts, “[B]eing sensitive to power inequality doesn’t remove it,” such sensitivity is a prerequisite for fully understanding the institutional contexts that shape and ultimately distort the lifeworlds of those studies. In mass incarceration studies, an awareness of larger power dynamics is needed to move beyond the current confines of the mainstream discussion, such as the dominant focus on prisoner reentry that accepts continued institutional channeling, and/or the false separation of safety outcomes like violence prevention from policy outcomes like the reinvestment of corrections dollars into the capacity of high-violence neighborhoods.

Given the need to keep advancing the frameworks through which mass incarceration is analyzed, I take the position that my own retreat from social critique would leave unjust power relations to continue unchecked, even as I recognize the central importance of anticipating the political implications of my own work. However, as you will read in the following two empirical chapters, I also take every effort to directly incorporate the voices of my research subjects, minimizing my own narrative influence in order to lift up their original words and voices. Though I help the reader to interpret and contextualize their words, I refrain from reducing their statements and life histories into mere summaries. Compared to the other ethnographies discussed above, my writing allows for an unusual amount of first voice perspective within the final analysis, drawing influence from the methods of portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 2002). Throughout this approach, I strive to offer analysis about the experiences of Austin residents without presuming to speak for them.

While I work to address Minh-ha's core insights, I also recognize that many of her concerns are inherent to ethnographic practice. The foundation of ethnography is the ability to cross social distance, to create a dialogue where there was none before, to connect with social positions other than your own and to translate across the chasm of inequity that now defines so much of contemporary life. These projects require the crossing of some boundary, whether marked by nation-state lines or physical properties such as boulevards and parks. It is by visiting the other side of these boundaries that ethnographers gain their legitimacy in the mind of readers. In so doing, the researcher assumes the role of someone who can influence the readers

thoughts and projections with verifiable facts and rigorous interpretations, swapping imagined images for substantive social science.

More often than not, the ethnographer himself/herself hails from the same side of the border as the reader, an overlap that enhances their legitimacy as translator and conceptual guide. What exactly does this reader/ethnographer overlap include? Social position. Subconscious assumptions. Generalized beliefs. All of this, and more. Amidst this shared background, the ethnographer is authorized by their willingness to cross the boundary and keep crossing, to return until their curiosity, degree requirements and/or funding runs out. Ideally, this gives them ample ammunition to push the reader's perceptions of the people they have studied, wherein the ethnographer functions as surrogate, proactively performing the work of challenging those subconscious assumptions and generalized beliefs.

Yet, just as the ethnographer's capacity to speak for their subjects is constrained by larger power relations, so too is their capacity to function as a surrogate investigator for their audience. There are three interrelated reasons for this: 1) ethnographies are not widely read, 2) those ethnographies that do become popular are the most likely to reinforce rather than challenge readers' subconscious assumptions, and 3) most ethnographies do not investigate the power relations in which both the reader and the research subject are embedded. As shown in Table 3, this trend becomes visible when looking at inverse relationship between an ethnographer's analysis of the state and their sales ranking for books sold.

*Table 3: Ethnographies of Urban America with a Strong Male Lead: 1997-Present*

<b>Ethnographer</b>	<b>Book</b>	<b>Border Crossed</b>	<b>Subjects Studied</b>	<b>Larger Analysis of State Actions</b>	<b>Amazon Sales Ranking</b>
Sudhir Venkatesh	Gang Leader for a Day	Into public housing projects.	Crack dealer	Peripheal	6,860
Elijah Anderson	Code of the Street	Into a lower-income neighborhood.	Roles in contrasting family types	Peripheal	56,284
Mitchell Duneier	Sidewalk	Onto the sidewalk as business and residence.	Sidewalk Entrepreneurs	Peripheal	59,031
Loic Wacquant	Body and Soul	Into a gym in a lower-income neighborhood.	Urban Boxers	Central	196,170
Peter K.B. St. Jean	Pockets of Crime	Into opportunity areas for crime.	Street Criminals	Peripheal	411,576
Steve Herbert	Policing Space	Into police cars.	Police Officers	Peripheal	598,111
Robert Fairbanks	How Things Work	Into recovery homes.	Recovering addicts; Recovery operators	Central	631,344

Whereas Venkatesh's popularity is linked to an extreme crossing of social distance – presumably inhabiting the role of gang leader – both Anderson and Duneier's appeal is premised on the study of morality among the urban poor. Like many similar studies, both *Code of the Street* and *Sidewalk* reinforce false categories for understanding low-income people of color living in major East Coast cities. Moreover, both are silent on the broader structural inequalities that create the conditions for social stratification, and on the shaping influence of race, class, and gender in the city. Wacquant (2002) helps to explain this silence through a critique of the works of Anderson, Dunneir and another of their peers, Katherine Newman.

He warns of the dangers of “diagnostic ethnography;” wherein the research subject is ill, the researcher is healthy, and society at large is basically not on the radar.

Posing an alternative, Wacquant calls on ethnographers to talk to people in ways that diagnose society. He argues that the ‘who’ or ‘what’ under examination is established through the ethnographer’s relationships to theory, their line of inquiry, the concepts they deploy, and the level of consciousness they bring to this deployment (Wacquant, 2002). Notably, his position is well-aligned with Burawoy’s presentation of the extended case method (Burawoy, 2009).

Fairbanks, in contrast to Anderson and Dunneier, wrote an ethnography that is grounded in theory through an analysis of devolution, re-regulation, and market-based public policy. He uses these mid-level theories as his bridge between the ethnographic terrain and state transformations and “calls for ethnographic attention to the threads of state-level, street-level, and self-level strategies of urban policy restructure” (Fairbanks, 2009, p. 264). This use of mid-level theories, which break larger structural systems into their component parts, offers a promising strategy for ethnographers wishing to link their studies of urban life to broader shifts in the social order. However, as shown in Table 3, the extra work of investigating state-level strategies does little to help book sales.

The necessity for ethnographic practice is created by a society that feeds on social distance, where the borders between success and failure are increasingly militarized, where inequity grows as the national morale declines, and where voting patterns can be mapped onto zip codes (Beckett & Western, 2001; Bishop, 2009).

Despite decades of urban research seeking to span these gaps, the distance itself

only appears to be growing (Stiglitz, 2013). Based on this awareness, I argue that it is essential for urban ethnographers to comment on more than just the lives and conditions of their subjects. They must advance analyses that help to restructure those conditions, illuminating the very forces that preserve the social distance enabling ethnography in the first place. As Buroway and Wacquant suggest, achieving this goal requires the conscious use of theory in one's work (Michael Burawoy, 2009; Wacquant, 2002).

Ethnographic critique of social conditions also requires navigating a wide range of pitfalls. Theoretically invested fieldworkers must be mindful of: the origins of the categories they deploy; the balance between description, prescription, and explanation; the draw to write for popular audiences and its potentially problematic influences on theory construction; the danger of erasing human agency by examining only the consequences of regressive policies; the twin danger of reinforcing regressive policies by celebrating marginality; and the researcher's own role in the unfolding social realities which they alter simply by attempting to place them under their microscope. All of these dynamics pose real dilemmas, difficult decisions that the ethnographer must learn to address in conscious and concrete ways. In my own study, I have consciously located human narratives within a clear theoretical structure that can help illuminate oppressive state actions without erasing the agents affected by those actions. In so doing, I am responding to concerns about my positionality through an intentional focus on the reconstruction of theory. My goal has not been to humanize my research subjects through rich

description, but to challenge and rethink the categorical orders through which these subjects are understood by society at large.

### **Site Selection: Choosing a High-Incarceration Area**

In choosing any research site, one must establish clear boundaries for inclusion and exclusion and, in so doing, begin to address the question of scale. As Sampson and Loeffler have demonstrated, incarceration is typically concentrated in neighborhood clusters, with multiple adjoining neighborhoods sharing very similar numbers for prison admissions and exits (Sampson & Loeffler, 2010). It is also a phenomenon that is heavily mediated by urban policing strategies, thereby giving substantial weight to the importance of police geographies, such as beats, sectors, districts, and areas. And like all social patterns within the city, concentrated incarceration can be influenced by neighborhoods themselves, as they provide the terrain where organizational and residential identities are often formed (Sampson, 2013, pp. 102-103).

While each of these scales – and their associated boundaries – is of crucial importance to my study, the overall frame for my case is the neighborhood-level. Why a neighborhood? Though imperfect, the geographical unit of the neighborhood offers ways for framing the history of a place. It is simultaneously small enough to account for the intricacies of local placemaking and large enough to analyze meaningful urban patterns. I have selected the Austin neighborhood as the site for my study, officially known as Chicago Community Area number 25. While firmly a part of broader West Side carceral patterns, the Austin neighborhood also has its

own unique history and identity within the city, as well as its own organizational landscape. Its housing stock, politicians, schools, parks, churches, and nonprofits are all very much its own, though they are certainly interwoven with the subregion of the West Side and Chicago at large. Moreover, as was shown in Figure 2, Austin had the highest imprisonment costs of any Chicago neighborhood from the 2005 to 2009 time period, with a price tag of more than a billion dollars.

Importantly, my study contends that neighborhoods themselves do not produce concentrated incarceration. Rather, I explore how the rise of the United States prison population in the last four decades has impacted already disadvantaged areas of US cities, thereby further compounding the marginalization of certain neighborhoods. In the last four decades, widespread punitive policies and patterns of policing have become deeply embedded in particular places, reshaping their households, residents, businesses, and local organizations, eroding much of their individual potential and unique possibilities for development. Thus Austin, as both a part of the West Side neighborhood cluster and its own well-defined community area, allows me to explore how the penal state influences community life and how national patterns are expressed at a very local scale.

### **Two Systems and a Market**

In order to examine the underlying structure of my chosen site, I focus on the neighborhood-level interactions between the juvenile system, Austin labor market, and adult criminal legal system, with secondary attention to the education and mental health systems. By examining the interactions of these domains, each of



which has major implications for both individual- and community-level human development outcomes, the study aims to unlock some of the unanswered questions about the ascent and persistence of high-incarceration areas, and to augment current theories about the reproduction of mass incarceration. My hypothesis is that hyper-incarceration is all but ensured through structural deficiencies within these systems, deficiencies which thereby help to transform concentrated disadvantage into high incarceration rates. By limiting the routes available for successful human development and raising the stakes for those who cannot access those routes, the juvenile system, adult system, and Austin labor market, all but ensure patterns of carceral reproduction and prison repopulation.

Though many of their rules and regulations are distinct, the juvenile and the adult criminal justice systems are highly punitive, rooted in the shared practice of incapacitation, a tactic that removes and confines suspected offenders in order to prevent them from committing harm. These two systems are governed by many of the same actors, social roles, and processes, each depending upon agents of policing, removal, processing, prosecution, detention, and confinement. As such, both are the employers of police officers, judges, states attorneys, public defenders, jail guards, prison guards, parole officers, probation officers, and a vast array of associated systems administrators.<sup>10</sup> While many of these people are not a visible part of neighborhood life (with the exception of the police), they have huge collateral effects. As a whole, these individuals are the forces *and* the symbols of widespread removal, simultaneously changing dynamics across blocks and within living rooms

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<sup>10</sup> While the technical name for some of these roles may vary, as in the case of aftercare specialists and parole officers, their essential functions nevertheless mirror one another.

by expelling those who have been deemed sufficiently threatening. It is this production of absence that is often the great legacy of both systems within neighborhood life. Meanwhile, within the labor market of high-incarceration areas, the lack of living-wage jobs in the formal economy reinforces the strength of illegal neighborhood economies. These street-level markets make little distinction between juveniles and adults, never asking for ID or enforcing strict age requirements for participation. When participation in these economies is discovered by the police and proven in the courts, then future prospects within the legal economy become even more challenging, just as a return to illegal economies becomes even riskier (Peck & Theodore, 2008; Western, 2001).

While serious scholarship has been done in each of these fields – juvenile justice, adult criminal justice, and neighborhood labor markets – we know far too little about their cumulative affects within high-incarceration areas. With rates of recidivism that are routinely above fifty percent, the juvenile and adult systems typically fail to prepare those they confine for a life beyond illegal criminal activities. Neither the juvenile nor adult systems typically associate their success with the attainment of meaningful human development goals (Fagan, 2010). Moreover, the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems also drain resources that might otherwise be used to help build the community capacity required for alternatives to confinement (Austin, Dedel Johnson, & Weitzer, 2005). I suggest that, taken together, these failures dramatically increase the likelihood that future generations will enter the ‘revolving door’ between prison and community.

### **Intensive and Extensive Methods**

Importantly, human voices and perspectives are not the only source of information for this study. Neighborhoods are large and complex territories. Their patterns can be difficult to accurately identify based only on the experience of a small percentage of individual actors. Without the assistance of secondary data sets, accumulating diverse human perspectives is not enough to guarantee macrostructural clarity, or to create a full picture of any one phenomenon as expressed within the lives of a broad cross section of people. A solely qualitative study of mass incarceration at the neighborhood-level may fail to capture the severity of the issue, privileging individual experiences at the expense of a more complete picture. Conversely, when viewed only from datasets and statistical calculations, it is easy to miss the incredibly personal impacts of mass incarceration, grasping objective effects without an in-depth understanding of the implications for subjects and the larger process of subject formation (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1992).

With this dilemma in mind, Andrew Sayer (1992) has called for a combination of extensive and intensive research, where extensive research allows us to ask salient questions of the social world and intensive research enables deep responses to those questions. He asserts that both types of research are needed to distinguish between essential relationships in the field and incidental ones, between those processes and phenomena that are necessary for one another's existence and those that are coincidental. When considering how areas of concentrated disadvantage develop and sustain patterns of hyper-incarceration, this distinction between essential and incidental relationships is valuable. Without extensive and

intensive modes of research, I would not be able to unpack the complex interplays between criminalization and neighborhood effects, or analyze the impacts of multiple urban systems on individuals' lives. Importantly, by synthesizing both intensive and extensive methods, I seek to address what Buroway has called sociology's 'uncertainty principle,' whereby, "the closer you get to measurement on some dimensions — intensity and depth — the further you recede on others — objectivity and validity" (Burawoy et al., 1991, p. 2).

By extensive data, I mean information that places my research of concentrated incarceration into broader focus, and documents the phenomenon under study as it relates to macro patterns and trends in our social world. By and large, this refers to the quantitative dimension of my research, including administrative histories from government systems, GIS mapping of those histories, as well as exploration of trends the American Community Survey and the US Census. By intensive data collection, I mean those modes of investigation that allow me to explore the depths of concentrated incarceration, and better understand its many nuances and particularities. This refers to my ethnographic fieldwork, my qualitative interviews and participant observations with local neighborhood actors, from police officers, to social service program managers, to families whose fortunes have been forever altered by the prison system. These are the conversations that give meaning and nuance to the numbers obtained from government datasets, and it is these meanings and nuances which ultimately help me to make sense of the enduring phenomenon of concentrated incarceration.

With both intensive and extensive needs in mind, my project draws from a wide range of data sources. As outlined in Table 4, these sources help to guide my ‘extension of theory,’ offering anchoring points for engaging with the relevant literatures in the field of mass incarceration studies and providing critical windows into the structure of urban reality.

*Table 4: Intensive and Extensive Data Sources*

<b>Intensive Data Sources</b>	<b>Extensive Data Sources</b>	<b>Extensive Data Types</b>
<b>LABOR MARKET</b>		
Job seekers, drug dealers, drug users, job developers	Where Workers Work – Illinois Department of Economic Security	Parallel studies: Peck and Theodore (2008)
<b>JUVENILE SYSTEM</b>		
Police officers,	Chicago Police Department	Crime data by district, community area
Probation supervisor, probation officer, juvenile court judge	CCJTDC, IDJJ	CCJTDC admissions data by Zip Code (3 years), IDJJ Release Data
<b>ADULT SYSTEM</b>		
Police officers	Chicago Police Department	Crime data by district, community area
Former prisoners, impacted community residents	Cook County Jail, IDOC	IDOC admissions and exit data by zip code (11 years)

### **Intensive Methods**

Throughout my qualitative fieldwork, I have asked basic questions about everyday life in Austin that align with the project’s overarching focus on the driving forces behind concentrated incarceration, and I have sought to understand how underlying social forces surface in the life trajectories of residents, leaders, and

systems officials in the area. This broad spectrum of interviewees, shown in Table 5, helps to provide a 360-degree perspective on the neighborhood dynamics and institutional logics under study.

*Table 5: Research Participants*

Formerly Incarcerated Residents of Austin	13
Austin Residents without Prison Background	10
Austin Service Providers	15
Justice Systems Officials & Administrators	5
Police Officers	4
Local Politicians	2
Suburban Drug User	1
TOTAL	50

#### *Former Prisoners and Community Perspectives*

My interviews with former prisoners focused on the drivers behind individual incarceration experiences, the amount and quality of time spent in prison, their labor market history and status, and the impacts on their prison time on life course outcomes. Meanwhile, my interviews with Austin residents without a history of incarceration revealed how other community members perceive the patterns of crime and incarceration, as well as the ways these patterns shape their daily lives. The primary challenge was creating sufficient trust with the participants to engender open and honest sharing about their life journeys, which was my primary motivation for recruiting residents through well-respected community agencies, and conducting the interviews in safe, well-known spaces.

*Austin Service Providers*

Among social service providers, I have attempted to understand how community-level professionals invested in positive neighborhood change present and perceive their own efforts, especially as it pertains to ideas and practices of safety, community violence, and workforce development. How do they deal with youth who return, again and again, to the juvenile justice system? What concrete steps do they take to support individuals and families impacted by prison? How are they responding to high levels of neighborhood unemployment? Are they making efforts to end concentrated incarceration? Across each of these lines of inquiry, I have sought to hone in on service providers' awareness of the forces and factors that drive the high incarceration rates in Austin, as well as their visions for positive neighborhood changes that are possible in the foreseeable future.

*Systems Professionals*

When interviewing systems professionals, I have explored the ways they understand their jobs, the challenges they face and patterns they observe, how they respond to those challenges, the criteria they use for day-to-day decisions, as well as the resources and relationships they regularly rely on to do their jobs. These paths of inquiry were consistent across both punitive systems under study, though the practical and institutional contexts of these systems varied considerably. Throughout these interviews, I have sought to understand the roles that police officers, systems administrators, judges, and probation officers play in

neighborhood life and the shaping of individual and community trajectories, seeking to identify the logics and concrete practices through which they perform their work.

### **Extensive Methods**

My extensive methods draw from a number of secondary datasets, with sources including IDOC, CCJTDC, IDJJ and the Chicago Police Department. While my study requires an in-depth focus on one neighborhood, these data sources enable me to position people's stories across time and space, offering a population-level context for the individual and community journeys I describe. As a result of this larger picture, I am able to show how people's stories connect, or fail to connect, to the larger events going on around them. When a beat cop talks about her perceptions of shootings in the neighborhood, or when a resident talks about the year after he returned from prison, their comments serve as one part of a broader Austin narrative. At the same time, these datasets help me analyze the trajectory of the Austin neighborhood alongside trends in the West Side, the City of Chicago, Cook County, and the State of Illinois.<sup>11</sup> This dialogue between scales is vital, simultaneously helping to explain the importance of the selected case, revealing the possibilities for generalization across urban contexts, and placing my study in the framework of larger trends (like urban restructuring) that relate to my research yet are not the primary subject of concern.

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<sup>11</sup> The interplays across scales can be partially understood through what Robert Sampson calls 'spatial interdependence,' a term used to describe the way that a neighborhood is affected by the fates of its surrounding neighborhoods. (Sampson, 2013, p. 28)



Of my extensive data sources, none is more important than the information on prison admissions and exits released IDOC. This development enables researchers to take a more geographically precise view of incarceration trends, a precision that is especially valuable in Cook County, where different zones of the county are marked by radically different income structures, arrest patterns, and – as the IDOC and Circuit Court of Cook County data affirms— incarceration levels. Additionally, IDJJ tracks their parole releases at the zip code level, enabling a geographical analysis of youth incarceration across Illinois. A zip code level dataset also exists through CCJTDC, which gives us a picture of how detention commitments vary across Cook County. As with adult trends, the IDJJ and CCJTDC commitment numbers vary greatly from place to place, with distinct sub-regions forming in the West, Southwest and South sides of the city, and with the Far West side remaining the greatest contributor by far (Peck & Theodore, 2008; Sampson & Loeffler, 2010; Street, 2002).

The incredible level of overlap between juvenile detention and adult prison commitments points to a broader trend of concentrated state control that disproportionately impacts low-income communities of color. As will be shown in Chapter 4, this overlap can be most clearly represented through GIS mapping, which enables a visual representation of the IDOC, CCJTDC and IDJJ datasets to compare adult incarceration, juvenile detention and juvenile parole rates across zones of the city, thereby indicating the roles of the criminal and juvenile justice systems in broader spatial patterns of urban inequality. As will be discussed in the final

chapter, these rates reflect historical issues of community divestment followed by intensive investment in widespread resident removal (Richie, 2012).

### **Fieldwork Timeline**

As shown in Table 6, my data collection period spanned nearly three years, starting in the Spring of 2011 and continuing until the Fall of 2013. Fieldwork began in the summer of 2011, as part of an ethnographic team studying the Austin community area, which was approved and monitored by the Field Museum's Institutional Review Board. This team was run by the division of Environment, Culture, and Conservation at the Field Museum, where I worked as an Urban Anthropologist. My role on the team was to conduct in-depth interviews with major community stakeholders, ranging from state-level politicians to program managers to directors of neighborhood coalitions. This task gave me a clear introduction to the area's organizational landscape, with an eye towards how the neighborhood's social service sector has evolved over the last three decades. In addition to these in-depth interviews, I completed a series of participant observations at community meetings on issues ranging from organizational collaboration, improving local schools, to ending the War on Drugs.

*Table 6: Stages of Qualitative Data Collection*

<i>2011 Fieldwork</i>	<i>2012 Fieldwork</i>	<i>2013 Fieldwork</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial entry</li> <li>• Preliminary interviews</li> <li>• Community overview</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationship building</li> <li>• Secondary data collection</li> <li>• Immersion in community work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focused interviews</li> <li>• Secondary data analysis</li> <li>• Continued involvement in community</li> </ul>

This first year of fieldwork served as an introductory period to the Austin neighborhood, allowing me to build relationships with leaders within Austin's social service sector. The most important of these relationships was a network of social service providers called Austin Coming Together (ACT), whose stated mission is to create 'community development systems' within the neighborhood. Their work is dedicated to building effective multi-agency working committees in core sectors of concern, such as education and workforce development, and using these committees as vehicles to bring greater coherence across the work of Austin organizations in those sectors. Through a previous relationship with the Project Director at ACT, I was able to build an open, mutually supportive connection with this organization which, in turn, provided me with crucial guidance as I navigated other aspects of the neighborhood landscape.

During this same period, I also connected to a coalition of youth-serving organizations called the Austin Coalition for Youth Justice (ACYJ). This coalition was created in 2008 in order to advocate for a more fair and empowering juvenile justice system for the area. By sharing together in the labor of ACT and ACYJ, from data analysis and meeting facilitation to community project planning, I became involved in the direction of their organization and helped to forge a closer partnership between the two organizations. In addition to my time, skills and energy, I was able to leverage significant relationships with the juvenile court. Throughout this shared work, the assumption was that it would be easier for me to build trust in the neighborhood as a collaborator than simply as a researcher, and that meaningful labor was the best avenue to gain respect among community leaders and

irreplaceable access that comes with it.<sup>12</sup> Importantly, ACT also served as my introduction to the West Side Health Authority, an organization that proved invaluable to my research.

In November of 2012, after receiving IRB approval to begin my study, I conducted interviews with staff from ACT as well as police officers from the 15<sup>th</sup> District. This period of data collection built up slowly throughout the Winter of 2012 and 2013, then intensified greatly during the Spring and Summer of 2013, before ultimately concluding later that year. It was during this period that the majority of key stakeholders were interviewed, including justice system officials, youth workers, community residents, church leaders, former drug sellers, and a suburban heroin user who had frequented the Austin neighborhood for years. These interviews examined the formal policies and the informal practices of the institutions under study, with an eye towards long-established patterns and newly emerging possibilities for change. Among the formerly incarcerated individuals studied, I sought to understand the impact of incarceration on their lives, and the multiple forces and factors leading to their imprisonment.

Throughout the fieldwork process my role as an outsider came with advantages and disadvantages. I often found that I was met with more curiosity than suspicion, a representative of a well-known institution that was deemed unthreatening, though not particularly relevant. Throughout the project, I found it easy to contact social service professionals and community leaders, based largely on support from ACT. In turn, those organizational relationships facilitated my access

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<sup>12</sup> Building on Buroway, this could be understood as a fifth extension, namely, ‘the extension of the research project into collaborative community life.’

to neighborhood residents, including those who had been formerly incarcerated. I was also helped by strong institutional networks beyond the neighborhood. In particular, previous work with the police department and juvenile justice system helped me secure interviews with justice system officials and administrators.

While I secured dozens of interviews across a range of local actors, the type of people interviewed was limited by my role as an outsider. Securing peer referrals from police officers was very difficult work. Similarly, requesting interviews with family members and loved ones of former prisoners yielded no results. As these challenges show, though my study attained qualitative breadth it was still constrained by my outsider status. Moreover, participants had no direct incentive to participate in the study, so there was no significant material advantage to overcoming whatever distrust was present. Given these constraints, there were multiple times throughout the interviewing process when it seemed a participant was debating what personal narrative to advance, occasionally taking the more protective stance in the conversation. However, many of the people I interviewed displayed none of these signs of guardedness, and trusted me because of my irrelevance to their lives or because they were driven by a more fundamental desire to share their truth. Additionally, I was able to build sustained, meaningful relationships with people I interviewed, and as I got to know them with the tape recorder off, more reciprocal relationships were built. In many of these cases, the stories that I heard were richer and more illuminating.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> My approach also aligns with the core components that Creswell associates with qualitative inquiry: researcher as key instrument, natural setting, inductive data analysis, multiple sources of data, emergent design, theoretical lens, holistic/complex account, and interpretive nature (Creswell, 2008).

### **Chapter Three – The Rise of Concentrated Incarceration**

Without question, mass incarceration policies and practices have expanded in Illinois over the last 30 years. In 1984, the first year that admissions data is available for IDOC, 10,598 people were admitted to IDOC, and 6,454 came from Cook County. By 2010 there were 36,909 people sent to IDOC, 18,902 of whom originated in Cook County. During this period, Illinois' incarcerated population more than tripled (ICJIA, 2012).

What explains this historic rise? Within the field of mass incarceration studies, one clear consensus among scholars is that widespread imprisonment has been facilitated by state and federal changes to sentencing policy. As in other states across the country, Illinois' prison populations rose because of concrete societal decisions rooted in “qualitative, normative assumptions” about human behaviors (Zimring and Hawkins, 1993). In turn, these decisions materialized as policies and laws. As reviewed in this section, a range of researchers, including Michael Stoll, Steven Raphael, David Olson, Donald Stemen, and Kathleen Auerhahn developed consensus about the role of sentencing reforms in the historic rise of incarceration rates. This literature describes how an era of ‘Tough on Crime’ politics fueled the launch and maintenance of the ‘War on Drugs,’ in which punitive sentencing reforms were primary weapons. These reforms paved the way for more felony convictions, longer sentences for those convicted and, consequently, the construction of more prison cells.

Though sentencing reform is indeed an essential part of mass incarceration's rise, it is only one element in a broader societal story. In contrast to narrow

sentencing reform analyses, more fundamental explanations of mass incarceration also articulate how mandatory minimums and punitive politics were functionally linked to underlying social and economic dynamics during this period (Gilmore, 2007; Simon, 2009; Wacquant, 2009). In the existing literature, examples of such fundamental explanations suggest that the prison boom supplied a new way to manage disadvantaged populations. In these constructions, mass incarceration has been alternatively presented as a consequence of losing hundreds of thousands of industrial jobs, a reaction to the Civil Rights movement, and/or a pathway to major disinvestment in social welfare. In each of these cases, mass incarceration is presented as a geographically uneven incapacitation strategy that replaces other forms of coordinated local intervention.

By studying the on-the-ground mechanisms at play in Austin, I show how regressive sentencing reforms disproportionately impacted already disadvantaged areas. Following a short overview of the key policy changes contributing to incarceration's rise in Illinois,' this chapter examines the neighborhood conditions that have interacted with the state's increasingly punitive laws. As I argue, a policy-only analysis of mass incarceration is not enough. We must also look at the forces of marginalization that made African-American neighborhoods vulnerable to the spread of punitive institutional logics. By illuminating the broader context in which regressive sentencing reforms took place, we are able to understand the underlying mechanisms for mass incarceration and to lay the foundation for a more equitable and effective public safety paradigm. However, while each of the mechanisms discussed in this chapter has been a necessary precondition for mass incarceration's

rise, individually they are not able to fully account for mass incarceration's persistence.

### **Sentencing as Driving Force**

Punitive sentencing reforms began in the early 1980s, and have continued steadily in the decades that followed. Perhaps more than any other policy organization in the United States, The Sentencing Project has successfully worked to document this rise and to raise awareness about its broader effects. In its 2013 report to the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations, The Sentencing Project outlined the role of sentencing in racial disparities within the United States. Focusing on the "War on Drugs," the report authors describe how "[s]ince its official beginning in 1982, the number of Americans incarcerated for drug offenses has skyrocketed from 41,000 in 1980 to nearly a half-million in 2007," a rise that they primarily attribute to more aggressive sentencing laws that extend the punishments given to drug offenders, such as mandatory minimums (Sentencing Project, 2013, p. 14). The legislative changes they discuss led to dramatic shifts in the frequency and duration of criminal sentences. Whereas a drug offender released from federal prison in 1986 had spent, on average, twenty-two months behind bars, a drug offender released from federal prison in 2004 was "expected to serve almost three times that length: sixty-two months in prison" (Sentencing Project, 2013, p. 14).

Illinois has been no exception to this national trend. Olson and Stemen identify what they see as the driving forces responsible for the rise in the Illinois prison population. They explain why "[d]espite dramatic reductions in reported



crime in Illinois from the early 1990s through 2008, correctional populations — including probationers, prison inmates and those on mandatory supervised release — increased from fewer than 60,000 in 1985 to more than 120,000 since 1998” (Olson and Stemen, 2011, p. 2). They attribute this rise to “[l]onger lengths of stay in prison for more serious felony class offenses” and an “increasing number of crimes that were misdemeanors that are now felony-level offenses” (Olson and Stemen, 2011, pp. 11-12). As they describe, Illinois saw a sustained spike in “the number of arrests for felony-level drug offenses;” a “doubling in the number of felony cases filed, convicted and sentenced between the 1980s and 2000s;” a “steady increase in the proportion of convicted felons sentenced to prison” and a far greater “number of crimes that carry mandatory prison sentences,” and a “growing proportion of prison admissions accounted for by probationable offenses” (Olson and Stemen, 2011, pp. 5-6). In sum, across these decades, more felonies were given to more people for more reasons, these felonies carried more time, and they were enforced (and reinforced) with more vigor.

While Illinois was undergoing the above changes, similar shifts towards punitive sentencing were happening across the country. Through the Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984, federal criminal codes underwent their first comprehensive revisions since the early 1900s. Among the provisions was the creation of the United States Sentencing Commission, which led to major punitive changes to the federal sentencing guidelines and had significant influence on sentencing in state courts (American Bar Association, 1998). Remarkably, the act explicitly cited a disbelief in rehabilitation, openly critiquing the “outmoded 19th

century rehabilitative theory that has proved to be so faulty that it is no longer followed by the criminal justice system.” As belief in the rehabilitative ideal was declining in the United States, retributive justice was gaining popularity. No longer confident in the ability of institutions to help people redirect their lives, institutions redirected themselves towards punishing people for their failure to do so on their own accord. Meanwhile, as this shift in focus occurred, the educational and workforce development investments that had originally helped these prisons earn titles as ‘correctional centers’ were reduced or eliminated altogether.

Rather than rehabilitation, the United States’ new sentencing regime marked a turn towards selective incapacitation, a policy framework that seeks to confine people based on the future harm they may cause society, rather than just punishing them for their past offense (Auerhahn, 2003). Selective incapacitation differs from ‘collective’ or ‘general’ incapacitation, which asserts that perpetrators of similar crimes deserve similar treatment, without regard to their presumed future risk to society. In the history of the United States’ prison expansion, selective incapacitation served as the foundation for policies like mandatory minimums for repeat offenses, which were designed to increase the duration of imprisonment for a certain class of drug offenders who were most likely to commit crimes again.<sup>14</sup>

As policy makers lost faith in rehabilitation, they were becoming increasingly preoccupied with their ability to predict the likelihood of future wrongdoing. Yet rather than making imprisonment more selective, the policies that grew out of

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<sup>14</sup> In Washington and California, “three strikes and you’re out” laws passed in 1993 and 1994 respectively, formed the basis of a radically more aggressive penal code (Auerhahn, 2003). Within a decade, this type of law for “habitual offenders” had spread to more than 24 other states and influenced federal sentencing guidelines.

selective incapacitation dramatically expanded the reach of the prison system, adding years to many thousands of sentences that may have otherwise resulted in little to no prison time. In Illinois, there were 14 specific policy changes between 1984 and 2002 that substantially changed the ways drug offenders would be charged and sentenced (Illinois Consortium on Drug Policy, 2007). As shown in the chart below, half of the policy changes during this period were geographically targeted, establishing “drug free zones” around common locations that are essential to neighborhood life. Through these zones, drug penalties were dramatically increased within 1,000 feet of schools, parks, buses and bus stops, places of worship, nursing homes, public housing, and truck and rest stops. Of these locations, only truck and rest stops are not found in concentrated form in urban neighborhoods. Illinois became one of 31 states that established “drug free zones” beyond just school areas (Sentencing Project, 2013). Moreover, there were 13 enhanced drug laws enacted from 2000 through 2011, influencing approximately 5,761 sentences from Cook County alone (Caputo, 2013). One example is mandatory prison time for anyone selling over 5 grams of heroin, a threshold that was later lowered to just 3 grams. Consequently, by 2011 almost half of all prison sentences originating in Cook County were for drug possession or dealing and these sentences were, on average, 70 days longer than they were in 2000 (Caputo, 2013).

*Table 7: Factors Responsible for Felony Cases Filled, Convicted and Sentenced*

<b>Pathway to Prison</b>	<b>Historical Changes</b>
<i>Neighborhood Context</i>	<i>Increase in number of people vulnerable to felony arrest.</i>
Point of Arrest	Increase in felony-drug arrests.
Classification of Crime	Increasing number of crimes considered felonies. Decrease in number of crimes considered probationable.
Sentencing of Crime	Increased percentage of convicted felons sent to prison. Longer stays in prison for serious felonies.

As these numbers show, changes in sentencing policy and legislation have been an essential part of mass incarceration's rise in Illinois. Without question, the bounds of what constitutes a felony action and the consequences of that action have been dramatically expanded. However, throughout the rest of this chapter I will show why we must go beyond a sentencing-based analysis of mass incarceration. Though sentencing reform is indeed a domain of consensus, a policy-only lens overlooks the on-the-ground changes that have been necessary to enable the recent incarceration of so many millions of Americans (Davis, 2003; Western, 2007; Clear, 2007; Aizer and Doyle, 2013). As shown in Table 7, neighborhood conditions affect residents' level of vulnerability to broader policy shifts. By paying attention to the underlying conditions of those neighborhoods most impacted by these policies, we can make visible the ways in which policies magnify already existing vulnerabilities at the community level. As argued in this chapter, changes in sentencing policy had the greatest impact in places that were most devastated by deindustrialization, most

susceptible to the rise of a new drug-based economy, and most vulnerable to the intensification of local law enforcement strategies.

### **Mechanism One: Disappearing Jobs Base**

High-incarceration neighborhoods are, in part, a consequence of the disappearance of tens of thousands of jobs within industrial cities like Chicago. Devastating job losses marked the shift from the Fordist to post-Fordist mode of production, through which countless 21<sup>st</sup> century labor gains were lost and the manufacturing of actual “widgets” was replaced by financial products like mortgages as the widgets of the economy (Newman, 2009). In *Carceral Chicago*, Peck and Theodore (2008) argue that the economic devastation associated with this transition was unequally distributed across urban space and that areas like Chicago’s West Side were hit particularly hard. Similarly, David Garland and Loic Wacqaunt have asserted that mass incarceration developed in response to the heightened social and economic insecurities that arose in the ultimate decades of the century, serving as a strategy for managing poverty in an era of deindustrialization (Garland 2002, Wacquant 2009). As they assert, mass incarceration has been an attempt to manage rather than alleviate poverty. Building on their arguments, I present concentrated incarceration as the proactive punishment of disadvantage, through which the most marginalized members of society become criminalized.

At the heart of this criminalization is a profoundly counterproductive logic, whereby long-term unemployment is met with a stigma-amplifying experience and

the further narrowing of economic opportunity. Consequently, high-incarceration neighborhoods like Austin have been stripped of almost any economic basis for neighborhood recovery and advancement. This punishment of disadvantage works on two levels: 1) it reduces the individual capacity to survive through legal channels, and 2) it makes the environments that vulnerable individuals must navigate more treacherous. On the individual level, it is well established that punitive policies have a serious detrimental effect on a person's ability to find employment, systematically adding the stigma of a felony conviction onto populations who already carry the burden of race-based employer bias (Pager, 2007). Leading to substantial jail and/or prison time, these felony convictions have directly affected the economic destinies of thousands of individual trajectories within Austin.<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, on the environmental level, concentrated criminalization provides a cover for the structural racism that excludes Austin residents from legitimate opportunities, enabling society to avoid the real work of economic recovery on Chicago's West Side. Not only does the Illinois prison system create social stigma, institutional marginalization, and economic disenfranchisement for individuals (Peck & Theodore, 2008), it projects the specter of criminality onto a population whose fundamental need is not 'correction' but renewed opportunity.

In this chapter, I share the stories of a numerous Austin voices who have influenced and/or been influenced by the carceral state. By privileging the voice of

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<sup>15</sup> Devah Pager uses an experimental audit to observe the behavioral patterns of employers in real-life hiring processes while isolating the effect of a criminal record and testing for race effects. She found criminal records have a serious impact on employability, but this effect is especially pronounced for black people, as "even whites with criminal records received more favorable treatment (17 percent) than blacks without criminal records (14 percent)" (Pager, 2007).

my interview subjects and placing these voices in conversation with one another, I have attempted to create a 360-degree perspective on concentrated incarceration. Starting with the stories of a judge, police officer and community leader who were raised in the area and now oversee the public safety system, I show the extent to which the neighborhood's economic conditions have changed in recent decades. I then share the stories of job developers and formerly incarcerated residents from Austin, showing how prison time is facilitated by both the absence of strong labor market options and the presence of a robust illegal drug market. Importantly, this analysis goes beyond the existing findings that labor market options dramatically narrow after being convicted of a felony. Rather, the following neighborhood-level stories highlight how this dynamic of absence and presence is a precondition for their *entry* into prison, as well as their regular return. In so doing, these multi-stakeholder stories demonstrate the role of labor market exclusion in the creation of 'available carceral objects' for IDOC. Rather than subjects with obvious human needs and clear human capabilities, through the process of criminalization, thousands of Austin residents are dehumanized, becoming objects that receive little more than regular patrol, monitoring and bureaucratic management. Unless policymakers see residents of high-incarceration areas as full subjects rather than managed objects, then they will fail to uproot the underlying neighborhood conditions that enabled the rise of concentrated incarceration.

According to many local advocates, Austin is a forgotten area. Once known as a hub for manufacturing, Austin was heavily impacted by the waves of deindustrialization in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, during which time it was

“hemorrhaging manufacturing jobs.” Whereas West Side factories had a “combined workforce of 59,000” in 1972 by 2003 the combined “workforce had shrunk to just 12,000” (Peck & Theodore, 2008, p. 6). In these same decades, “West Side retail employment also plummeted, dropping from 35,000 to roughly 4,700” (Peck & Theodore, 2008, p. 6). The neighborhood lost even its most iconic employers, such as Brach’s Confection which opened in Austin in 1923 and closed in 2004. The quest for recovery has been far from successful. Though several community groups have visionary goals of turning the old Brach’s site into a hub for the green economy, these plans have failed to materialize.

As the jobs left and cornerstone companies closed, Austin changed. In the words of Adam, a local economic development advocate, “30 years ago it was a fairly middle class neighborhood but a critical number of them left, along with the strong manufacturing base.” Describing the jobs that do exist in Austin, he says “there’s still some manufacturing, there’s healthcare, hospitals, there’s Loretto Hospital, West Suburban Hospital, even though it’s in Oak Park it’s just across the border. There’s actually Shriner’s Children’s Hospital up in North Austin. There’s all these nursing homes around. Then there’s schools and non-profits, that’s a big chunk. But there are very few stable, established retail businesses.” However, Adam asserts, there is a lot of instability within many of these industries. This is especially true of schools and non-profits, which are in theory aimed at advancing local human development outcomes. Illustrating this point, he says, “You’ve got institutions like CPS that are extremely unstable and community-based organizations that are definitely financially unstable and they have a labor force that cycles through.”



Adam continues, “how can a community-level system create stability for residents if it’s not stable itself?” Further illustrating this point, Austin was home to a disproportionate share of Chicago’s 50 school closings in 2012 and 2013.

Meanwhile, at the far western edge of Chicago, Austin is bordered by the wealthy suburb of Oak Park, which has renowned public schools, low crime rates and vibrant commercial areas. Describing the landscape, a lifelong resident named Daniel says, “[t]his neighborhood has a couple different elements. It’s very torn, it’s one of those neighborhoods where you have this hint of affluency, you’re very close to affluent lifestyles. Being that close to Oak Park, seeing big cars, nice houses, that’s not far away for you. You are literally blocks away if you wanted to go and see that. You see fancy cars go through Chicago Avenue towards Oak Park, Harlem, wherever.” According to this resident, the proximity to wealth affects the ways that Austin residents experience the world, perpetuating a sense of hopelessness amidst their position at the bottom of the hierarchy. He says, “for the guys that grow up in this area, that has an underlying subconscious affect. Even in Austin, there are pockets where it is considered to be somewhat affluent, you can have little areas where it’s like ‘they’re not poor, they’re not living the way I’m living.’ But then a couple blocks away, they’re living like the worst of the worst.”

### *Judge J, Bert and the Disappearance of Factory Jobs*

Judge J grew up in Austin and now lives in a large house in one of the area’s wealthiest residential corridors. She is also the presiding juvenile court judge for Austin, a unique example of a judge who has deep personal connections to the

community whose justice she oversees. Recalling how times have changed since she was growing up, Judge J highlights the scarcity of available factory jobs. She says, “I tell kids all the time, when I was in high school a kid could quit going to school if he didn't want to go. Not that it happened very often but you could quit. You could walk up all and down Lake Street, Cicero, Laramie, North Avenue, there were factories and they had the big signs outside talking about ‘positions available’ and ‘go inside and get a job.’ And after you went inside and got you a job, you could find a furnished apartment, a one-room kitchenette that had the bed, and the tables, and the lamps and all of that stuff. And some of the better ones there were even plates and stuff in the cabinets.” As Judge J describes, factory work provided the young adults of her generation a launching pad for economic stability, serving as both an alternative to education and a pathway to personal independence. Summarizing the freedom that these jobs represented, she says “all you had to do was bring your clothes and then you work for six to eight weeks, three months, and you had your down payment for your little Ford or your Impala and there you were. You had a job, you had a place to live, and a way to get around.”

Bert, a lifelong Austin resident, remembers that era in a very similar way. Before becoming a police officer 19 years ago, he worked on the West Side as a factory worker. Recalling the dramatic shifts in manufacturing, he says “you go down a lot of these side streets from Augusta and Chicago Avenue, there are a lot of old factories, and those factories had jobs, now those jobs are gone. That’s one of the main reasons the west side and south side are so devastated. There are no jobs. In the 60s, 70s, early 80s, you can graduate, you can literally go down the street and

apply for a job in your own neighborhood and get a job. Now, jobs are maybe 10 or 12 miles outside of the city, you have to take a Pace bus there.”

The jobs that do still exist within Austin are fewer and lower paying. Madison Avenue, one of the most active commercial corridors in Austin, has convenience stores, clothing shops, salons and fast food restaurants, like JJ Fish Fry. Compared to the manufacturing jobs of years past, these businesses generate little new income within the community. Instead, as local service industries with no real export function, these businesses often cycle dollars outside of Austin. Thus, in addition to the disappearance of manufacturing jobs in Austin, residents of the neighborhood are both excluded from pathways to living wage work and disconnected from those remaining manufacturers that still have an export function for the region. These economic shifts have had severe consequences for psychological and social dynamics within the neighborhood, indicating how a weakened labor market can also erode community connection and collective efficacy.

### *Impacts on Youth and Community*

Wilma, another lifelong Austin resident, recalls how her family had been supported by Chicago’s industrial base. She explains, “[m]y grandfather was in the steel mills and my father worked for some machine company, I forget the name, he painted big huge machines.” Like thousands of similar African-American families, Wilma’s grandparents and parents were able to find economic security in Chicago and make a long-term home on the West Side. In Austin today, this rootedness is more exception than norm. Noting the rise in foreclosures over the last decade,

Wilma says, “we didn't have many [foreclosures] back in the eighties, even nineties. People stayed in their homes. You knew people from the block and they lived there forever. [There were people] you grew up with from kindergarten to high school because you stayed in your home. But people move a lot now... I used to know everybody, from all forty houses. Maybe one or two are still there.”

The rootedness of Wilma's family had many non-financial benefits as well, providing a foundation for positive community building. She explains, “[m]y mom was like the lady on the block who knows everything about everybody. She was a block club president. And my father was a worker. He was just the type of person who went to work, took care of the family, came in the house, may hang out with buddies after work but that's it.” Between her father and her mother, who worked for years at the Montgomery Ward department store, the family had two solid income streams that were able to provide for all their basic needs. As her mother's story shows, this income allowed her to give extra energy to building lasting relationships with neighbors, a fact that suggests a possible link between economic stability and collective efficacy. As a result, when Wilma was growing up on the block, she and her fellow youth had many positive role models and real relationships with those role models.

Today, youth development workers in Austin cite the absence of positive local role models as major detrimental factor for young people in the community today. When asked what it would take to keep young people in the neighborhoods away from selling drugs, Jonathan says, “They need more positive images in the community to gravitate to, they need something tangible they can grab. Not just

hearing, but people actually doing the work. They need to see that employment is there, they need to see that housing is there... They need a bridge. Not saying that everybody is going to cross the same bridge, but they do need a bridge.” His words point to the neighborhood destabilization that occurred in the wake of deindustrialization. Unlike Judge J, Bert and Wilma’s experiences growing up, many youth today lack the kind of hope that household stability makes possible.

Because they are routinely excluded from the labor market and the meeting of their basic needs is often in question, today’s Austin youth often feel compelled to find their own sources of income and self-esteem. Douglas, who mentors gang-involved youth in the neighborhood, talks about how his clients will both sell drugs on the street and attend school. He explains that “[t]hey hit the block everyday but they go to school too.” Speaking about their motivation to balance those commitments, he says, “[i]n high school, they are at the age where image is everything. So clothes, the way you dress, haircuts, there is a lot of peer pressure. And if you don't have anybody that can provide that for you, they go out and do what they see fit to try to get it.” Compared to the experiences of young people growing up in Judge J or Bert’s generation, today’s youth have no clear pathway to financial stability. They cannot simply drop out and go down the street for a living wage job. There are no legal employers connecting them to furnished apartments.

Rather, young people growing up in Austin must now navigate the dangers and exploitations of the street. Douglas regularly attempts to dissuade his clients from being active in the street economy, saying “[y]ou don't want to do something for the rest of your life where everyday you dread going to your job do you?” But

none of his clients are currently working legal jobs and he has few alternatives toward which to guide them.

Meanwhile, Douglas' clients often encounter a criminal justice system that pays no heed to their excluded status from the formal labor market. Sadly, these basic neighborhood needs are also largely ignored by criminal justice reformers who, at their best, seek to undo the current punitive policy paradigm but not to transform the difficult conditions that exist beneath it. As I argue, breaking the habit of mass incarceration requires a thorough response to the underlying need for new economic opportunities following deindustrialization, a response that may require a deeper integration of economic development projects and public safety aims. However, as shown in the following section, the capacity of current neighborhood organizations to meet that need is far outweighed by the level of demand.

### *Lottery for Jobs*

Living wage jobs are a rare find for Austin residents, especially those with a felony conviction in their past. In many ways, felony records help to obscure the ways that structural racism excludes low-income African-American neighborhoods from mainstream economic opportunities. The mark of the record provides a perverse justification for economic exclusion that could otherwise only be attributable to race (Peck & Theodore, 2008). Those who are structurally excluded from the labor market have little recourse beyond the scarce opportunities provided by social service programs. In the face of these challenges, social service agencies have only two strategies available: 1) connect people in the neighborhood to

segments of the labor market that would otherwise be out of reach, or 2) directly create employment opportunities.

Both of these strategies have profound limitations, as described in the following organizational cases. For labor market intermediaries like the West Side Health Authority, the sheer numbers of job seekers far outweighs the opportunities that can be identified. As described in the story below, even the most inspiring public attempts to make an impact fall exceedingly short, showing how social services agencies are unable to make up the jobs gap that is sustained by a limited and exclusionary labor market. Similarly, actual job creation is a peripheral activity in Austin. Rather than a mainstream policy focus or a major arena for public investment, job creation is often led by small non-profit organizations who require private grants to sustain their efforts. I highlight two examples of job creation at the margins, where community-based groups are generating employment opportunities as part of their portfolio of social service offerings. Though noble and necessary, these efforts pale in comparison with the level of neighborhood need. The very best programs cannot employ more than a handful of people and, as in the case of the property maintenance program described below, they often point back to broader instabilities in Austin. In the case of the Peace Corner career program, the organization can offer only a temporary stipend and solid internship experience.

### *260 Jobs and 500 Calls a Day*

Gerald works for one of the main non-profit organizations in Austin, helping to lead their employment programs. His department is focused on helping West Side

residents, many of whom have felony convictions on their records, to find gainful employment. His history of work in the neighborhood includes serving as an alderman on Chicago's City Council from 1986 through 1999. However, like thousands of other Austin residents, Gerald also lost years of his life to IDOC, serving 30 months from August of 2000 to March of 2003. He asserts that he has a longstanding passion for helping local residents find work, sharing that he "was founder of the West Side Business Improvement Association. I was president of that organization for about nine years before I became alderman, I made a commitment to create 2,000 jobs."

Today he says that the hardest part of his job is "to get businesses to want to hire." He continues, "[e]ven the businesses that want to help us just don't generate enough business to employ people for 40 hours a week. Often times they can't even work 30 hours a week." Gerald adds, "I guess the biggest frustration is to get manufacturing businesses. There's not a lot of manufacturing business here in the community. The ones in the suburbs, the ones that are doing well, they're not interested in any incentive program that we had offered them and they are not interested because they got so many peoples coming to them who want to work. There's frustration to get them to work with you. At least the local business, they do work with us and mean well." But, he says, "there's just not a lot of manufacturing in the neighborhood. There could be a couple business down on Lake Street that are still there but they're not doing a lot of hiring." Crucially, the problem is not just that Austin residents have few labor market options within their own community, but that they are often excluded from jobs all across the region.



In the absence of local manufacturing partners, Gerald says that his best business partners are “food service, moving companies, a janitorial services company, and you know we do have relationship with people like Freeman Seaton. We were able to refer peoples over there but we don’t have a contract relationship with them.” He adds, “Freeman Seaton just got a contract with CTA [Chicago Transit Authority] to do seats for like 100 buses. And so we know that they need welders so therefore when we get people who are certified welders, we send their resume over there to them. Sometimes they get called for interviews, sometimes they get hired. We work with other agencies like Manufacture Link. We do a lot, whenever they send their job orders, our job coaches, you know send resumes.” However, Gerald asserts that none of these employers come close to meeting the demand among local residents.

The agency’s most exciting potential employer right now is the CTA. He recalls that “a few years ago, the CTA did start a program, an apprenticeship program in which the unions allowed the formerly incarcerated to work. The program went for nine months and at the end of nine months that was pretty much it. The program was then revised where the apprenticeship program lasts longer and I want to say it now lasts like 21 months. After the program is over, the individual now has the right to actually apply to be hired as a regular employee and that’s been well promoted. It was on just about every news media you could think of, and even individuals who were just recently incarcerated, when they come home, they were being told about it by their probation officers.” The CTA example is exceptional because it counters the larger trend of systematically excluding those

with the most glaring economic need. Rather, for those who are able to access it, the program is based on a logic where need is met with actual, viable opportunity.

As a result of public promotion of the program, Gerald says “our office for the last three weeks has just been bombarded with calls. We have been bombarded every morning. We have lines, people coming to register in the program. And it shows you two things, one it shows you the number of individuals that in this community who are formerly incarcerated, and it shows you the magnitude and the desperation of these individuals looking for work.” Gerald explains exactly what he means when he says their office has been “bombarded.” He says, “for the first two months, for the first weeks in March, we were averaging I would say 400 to 500 calls per day. We literally could not take them. Every phone was jammed. We have like 12 staff that work here. Every phone line has been jammed. Even our telephones down at our corporate office has been busy.” When asked how many jobs the CTA actually has, Gerald explains, “CTA is going to hire for like 260 plus jobs this year and we get the opportunity to fill a portion of those.” He continues, “the 260 plus jobs are divided among eight organizations. We currently we have a waiting list of about five years. I don’t know how you decide because the CTA might say ‘send us five people.’” As Gerald’s perspective illustrates, barring much broader public investments in job creation, social services have a very limited ability to make a dent in Austin’s overwhelming need for employment opportunities.

### *Successful Job Creation and the Lucky Ones*

#### Austin Coming Together and the Friendship Community Development

Agency work together to run a jobs program that repairs and maintains foreclosed properties for banks. Heavily affected by the foreclosure crisis, Austin has hundreds of properties that could use these services. Daniel, who manages the day-to-day operations of the program, says that their goal is helping returning citizens have “something viable to go after when they come back to society, where they can train in education competencies, along with having hope for housing and an honest living.” He explains that “We’ve literally set it up where 30 properties equals 4 guys. Thirty properties is enough to keep 4 individuals working from April 1<sup>st</sup> to November 1<sup>st</sup> everyday. Because of the size of the properties and the maintenance that’s required, 4 guys could work 35-40 hours a week, every week throughout that time period.” Though the daily work itself is going well, he has been disappointed in the lack of a broader bank commitment to the program. He says, “[r]ight now we have 35 properties that we manage for this company. In the beginning there were talks of more, there was the idea that [a prominent bank] would turnover like 150 of their properties, which definitely would have kept us busy.” Yet without this deeper commitment to the program, it has struggled to really expand.

Compared to the few low-wage employment options that exist for men and women returning from prison, ACT’s program provides meaningful work in a safe and respectful environment. But the job itself is still not enough to ensure security. Daniel says, “[w]e’re actually paying guys \$10 per hour and there are other benefits we are working on, like wrap-around social services. We’ve talked to Phalynx Family services, who provide services to guys who are re-entering or just down on their luck. They will provide bus cards, food stamps, medical care. So you are not just

getting above-grade pay, you are also privy to these other programs and services.”

Harold is one of the core employees in the program, working daily to secure and maintain foreclosed properties. He says that the program is built to help alleviate some of the disenfranchisement that exists in Austin, explaining that it is for “guys standing constantly on the corner, back and forth from prison, who have nothing to do, who come out with no future.” Without question, Harold sees this type of work as the determining resource missing from these men’s lives. He explains, “I think even with the young guys if you gave them a steady job they'd be alright.” In his words, “I was the lucky one. One of the lucky ones.” Crucially, even the job program enabling Harold’s luck was the result of the broader financial sectors inability to provide security to low-income neighborhoods like Austin, where the best jobs that non-profits can secure for residents are found in the wake of a mortgage meltdown that neither the state nor the private sector has adequately corrected.

### **Mechanism Two: Heightened Visibility of Illegal Markets**

The illegal narcotics industry has become a staple of Chicago’s underground economy, employing an estimated 4,000 people in Cook County annually, and contributing to a fifteen-fold increase in arrest rates for drug violations between 1964 and 2012. Whereas the Chicago Police Department made 2,232 drug arrests in 1964, by 2012 this number was at 35,088 (Dumke, 2013). This increase is due to growth in the amount of drug addiction and distribution, as well as dramatic changes in narcotics enforcement. In the following section, I describe the dynamics of the Austin drug market from the perspective of former dealers, current police

officers, longtime local residents, and a recovering suburban addict who regularly came to the neighborhood to buy heroin. They describe everything from what gets sold, who buys it, and where it comes from, to, what life is like for front-line drug salesmen, and ongoing changes to distribution and sales patterns.

As I argue throughout this section, the War on Drugs advanced the false notion that drug use and trafficking were primarily a law enforcement responsibility. One finding that is clear from my research is that law enforcement alone will not uproot drug sales or drug use in Austin. In the words of one 15<sup>th</sup> District police officer, “there's limited resources. It is not going to happen.” Rather, he says, “it has got to happen from a different influence from society... A lot of people think it is our job to eliminate it. It is not our job. It is society's job.” Whether the drug in question is heroin, crack-cocaine, PCP [phencyclidine], ecstasy or weed, law enforcement “can only minimize it or take care of it for a small snippet of time.” Police officers cannot end addiction, they cannot provide work alternatives to street-level dealers, and they have disturbingly little influence over the global supply chain of drugs into Austin. Given this basic recognition, I argue that the War on Drugs represents profound societal work avoidance. As seen earlier with the labor market and social service agencies, in the case of addiction, drug sales and the police, society is displacing responsibility for dire neighborhood conditions onto a professional sector that is structurally incapable of having a transformative effect.

*Drugs Take Over*

Recalling the entry of drugs into the neighborhood, Daniel says, “after the 80s, everything changed. Drugs really became prevalent in Austin in the beginning of the 80s. I saw the effects first hand. It hit family members. And it really hit South Austin hard, it hit South Austin first. Then it went to Central Austin. It made its way to North Austin, it took 10 years, but it made its way to north Austin in the late 80s, early 90s. I had been living in North Austin since 81 and North Austin was literally no different than being in Oak Park. In the early 80s you couldn’t tell the difference. You could walk down the street, there were no problems, no crime like you see now. Purses weren’t being stolen, nobody’s trying to put you at gunpoint. There used to be a movie theater at Monitor and Division called the Rockney Theater with dollar shows. We used to go to the movies right there.”

In the above history of the neighborhood, Daniel discusses how drugs steadily spread across Austin, describing profound shifts within his family as well as the community at large. Drug trafficking and usage did not enter Austin all at once, but effected the southern part of the neighborhood first and then spread northward to what had once been the most socially and economically stable area. This migration, Daniel describes, happened as gangs became prevalent on each of Austin’s major commercial corridors. From Madison Street, to Chicago Avenue, to Division Avenue, the major corridors morphed into “hot crime areas because of drug trafficking.” An analysis of crime in the 15<sup>th</sup> District shows that robberies grew particularly fast, going from 1,232 in 1975 to 2,256 in 1990 (Chicago Police Department, 1973 to 2009). Through this transformation, legitimate retail business

declined at an even faster rate than what was already triggered by the loss of factories. As Daniel explains, the economic and social losses were closely interwoven, whereby drugs perversely reorganized family and resident networks at the same time that they were accelerating the erosion of the business landscape.

Daniel speaks clearly about the impact these transformations had on his own family. Many of his cousins had enormous potential that was never realized, at least partially because they were growing up on the wrong side of the neighborhood during the wrong years. In place of upward momentum, he describes how his cousins faltered and were drawn into the street economy. He says, "I left South Austin in 1981 and I remember it decreasing around 79. Right before the 80s it just fizzled away. You saw a lot of [positive] activity disappear. I still had family that lived over in the area and I saw the difference in my family members, in my cousins... We were all very athletic and creative, [my cousins] would draw and were artistic. But I saw nothing come of their talents. I saw them get involved in street activities, things that totally just led to them getting on drugs or things like that. There was no positive progression in their lives."

This 'loss of potential' is one of the main story lines of concentrated incarceration. Rather than positive progression, many of these cousins ended up spending time in Illinois prisons. Their potential was the victim of not just their environment, but also the policy decisions and institutional frameworks that responded to their environment. Rather than invest in the human capital of those areas hit hardest by job loss and drug trafficking, society's carceral response merely avoided the underlying problems and projected the responsibility onto young men

like Daniel's cousins. This approach did little to prevent the challenges first faced in South Austin from spreading across the neighborhood.

### *Heroin Highway*

Since the early 1980s, the Austin neighborhood, home to a significant section of the I-290 Eisenhower Expressway, has become known as the "heroin highway." Of all the heroin sold in the city, the Chicago Police Department once estimated that 60 percent was sold along the 290 expressway (Caputo, 2013). In the words of Beth, a 15<sup>th</sup> District Police Officer, "[t]his is the major distribution point for heroin. You really don't get heroin so much on the South Side, you get crack on the South Side. If you want heroin you come to the West Side." She explains that dealers in Austin sell both to other dealers and to individual users. Beth adds, "it's all male, and it's definitely late teens, all the way up to 40s and 50s." Describing the intensity of the Austin drug market, another local officer, named Samuel, says, "[i]t is pretty much all day. Seven in the morning through one or two in the morning."

Remembering the drug market in Austin, Michael, a former heroin addict from the suburbs, says "[i]t's basically addicted individuals looking to purchase, supply and demand. There's demand for heroin, marijuana, cocaine, what have you. It was an open market [happening outside]. It's not like it was a big set-up, a strategic set-up. You had people that would buy who would mention to other people, so it's a word of mouth thing." This word of mouth marketing enables a vast suburban customer base for Austin dealers. Sharing his views on suburban buyers in the 15<sup>th</sup> District, Samuel says, "people working in the suburbs and living in the



city detour a little bit, or the other way around, people working in the city but living out in the suburbs picking up their stuff.” He says, “that is one segment of the addict customer base. You’ve also got the more 24-hour based addicts that are already in the neighborhood.” There are a lot of both, he says, but “you probably see more from outside of the city, just during like rush hour. There are many working addicts.”

Though Austin is like “a Wal-Mart of drugs,” with many different options, it is especially well known for powder heroin. As Samuel explains, the city-suburb commuters are mostly buying powder heroin. In its powder form, heroin can be snorted rather than injected, a fact that appeals to new suburban users wary of the risk and inconvenience of needles. Describing this trend Gil Kerlikowske, the current head of US Customs and Border Protection, has said “[t]hey think if they snort or smoke it, they won’t end up injecting. Very quickly, they do” (Lippert, Cattán & Parker, 2013). Home to a long segment of the 290 expressway, Austin is an extremely convenient stop for these suburban users.

### *Migration to the Corners*

As Austin’s economy was collapsing, the new structure of the drug economy was taking root. This formation did not occur in a policy vacuum. Rather, as the following story shows, the logic of punishment and suppression played a direct role in the emergence of the neighborhood’s open-air drug market, a shift that led to a continued increase in Austin’s incarceration rate. Recalling these changes, Wilma explains the rise in outdoor sales. She says, “[w]hen I went off to college, I knew about drug sales and people sold drugs in homes and if you wanted to get some

drugs you go into the home. It was that drug house or whatever, it was sort of isolated. But then when I came home in 1994, and I would come home for breaks, I would see kids on the corner shouting. I was like twenty years old, twenty-one, and I had no idea what they were doing or what they were talking about.” For Wilma, Austin went from a place where she knew everyone on the block to an area where “people weren’t outside anymore because there were folks [selling] on the corners.”

Asked about the reasons for this turn to outdoor dealing, Wilma says, “people were outside because [the police] were seizing the homes. If you were caught selling then that home could be taken away from you. People just moved out to the street corner, so that their mothers and their grandmothers and people they loved, they did love them, their houses wouldn’t be taken away from them. So they migrated to the street corners.” The seizing of property in Austin was enabled by drug forfeiture laws originally passed by in 1970 by the US Congress through the “Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act.” In the 1980s, this act was expanded to include real property that could be said to facilitate illegal drug activity, even when the owners themselves were not convicted of a crime. Along with houses, cars, businesses, lands and bank accounts all became subject to seizure under federal law. According to one estimate, over 12 billion dollars worth of assets was seized by US Attorneys between 1989 and 2010 (Blumenson and Nilsen, 1998).

This law enforcement trend had a direct effect on Wilma’s own family. She recalls, “I had family who was selling in my grandfather’s basement. My grandfather, he was sixty at the time, and [the police] kicked him out of his house. He had to come and live with my mother. They boarded up the building until the selling stopped.

They had to see that my uncle was not even going to live there anymore... because he was selling drugs. The city boarded up all six units.” For families like Wilma’s, the seizure of homes could erase decades of family wealth building. She says, “all my parents’ life my grandfather owned property, came from Mississippi and owned a six unit property for the family. The entire family lived on one side of the six unit and he rented out the other side.” Wilma’s uncle, who was “in and out of jail” for selling drugs, was 40 years old when her grandfather had his building seized.

Through this seizing of private property, drug sales became a public affair. The corners were now full of young men, most of whom adopted a standard uniform. The dealers were “out there with white T-shirts for safety reasons, for their own safety. So if they ran they wouldn’t be identifiable, it was white T-shirts and jeans.” Explaining the function of the uniform, Wilma says, “[a resident might say], ‘He had this on!’ Well, there were about twenty of them that had the same thing on. It’s hard to catch them that way.” As Wilma’s story shows, the structure of the market shifted in direct response to new law enforcement strategies. White t-shirts were a part of that adaptation. As the work of dealing became more public, those doing the work now collectively shared the risk in ways that did not exist before.

### *Guns, Drugs and Turf*

When drug trafficking became an outdoor enterprise, questions of territory became central. Blocks and corners were now openly contested places of business. That shift required security measures that were unnecessary when drugs were primarily sold in private homes. Describing the new reality, one 15<sup>th</sup> District police

officer puts it simply, “[g]uns and drugs go together, you need a gun to protect your drug spot.” Explaining the role of violence in protecting and establishing drug turf, Harold, a former Austin dealer, describes the role that shooting plays. He says, “[e]verybody wants to make money. If you move in on a certain area of the neighborhood where I’m making money, you [may be] two blocks away but you are drawing some of my customers down there. That means I’m going down there to shoot at you and try to get you off your corner so I can sell most of my product.”

The logic of drug related violence is simple and largely financial in nature. However, there are also real disincentives to using guns to establish or protect sales territory. One basic disincentive is that competing dealers often carry guns as well. According to Harold, this is one of the dynamics that pushes people to work as a team. In his words, turf security “all depends on how much manpower [the other] guy got. You can go down there and shoot at him but what difference is it going to make if he’s got the same amount of guns as you?.. You all [are] just going to be shooting at each other all day until the police break it up.” Another strong disincentive is that violence scares away customers, a fact that effectively reduces the street value of drugs. One study has found that drug prices fell by as much as 30 percent during conflicts between gangs (Levitt and Venkatesh, 2000).

Though open air drug sales made gun use much more commonplace, the presence of guns increased in Austin even when drugs were primarily being sold indoors. Yet as the market intensified, the type and functions of guns changed. Explaining how guns entered neighborhood landscape, Douglas says the change became noticeable in “the early eighties. It is like someone opened up a big old

arsenal and just poured them out on the street, like somebody opened up an armory and just started passing out arms.” Over time, he says, “the guns have changed. It started out with the revolver and then semi-automatic and then fully automatic and then pistols and higher range.” He continues, the “[t]echnology has changed. The guns that these guys are shooting, they are assault weapons. These guns will shoot multiple times.” One key implication, according to Douglas, is that different guns can be used in different ways. In the past, he says, “they had a revolver. It was more walk up on a person and not shooting from across the street.”

Because many of the older style guns are still in circulation, the shifts in gun technology mean that Austin today is home to a wide range of firearms, though most are some form of handgun. When asked about the types of guns she encounters while policing Austin today, Beth says she sees “everything.” In her words, “it’s not like they’re going to the gun store and getting preferred weapons. It’s mostly big revolvers like 357’s, but it’s everything. We are seeing a lot of automatic weapons right now. Tech-9’s, it’s a short automatic weapon that has a magazine with maybe 30 round capacity. You even see an assault rifle that a military officer would carry.”

Austin’s gun landscape is part of a larger trend in the city, whereby Chicago police recover more illegal firearms annually than any other city in the country. On average, Chicago recovers seven times as many guns as New York City and twice as many as Los Angeles (City of Chicago, 2014). Describing this trend from the police perspective, Tamara says “I’ve never come across a gun that was registered properly in the city of Chicago. Ever. I’ve never had a gun that’s been registered in the City of Chicago. I’ve recovered a few long guns that could be registered in the City of

Chicago but they chose not to. Ninety-five percent are illegal handguns. Of that, we've come across a lot that have had the serial numbers scratched off, that have been reported as stolen – probably 20 or 30 percent, have been either stolen or their serial numbers have been defaced." In the context of the neighborhood's more than 20 percent unemployment rate and continued dependence on drug trafficking, this prevalence of illegal firearms has no real end in sight.

### *Douglas and the Rise to Power*

Today, more than twenty-five years after he started illegally selling prescription cough medicine, Douglas asserts, "the black market is a big part of economy, between thirty and forty percent. And that is mostly drugs." Douglas was fourteen when he got involved in a gang. Once involved, he "rose through the ranks pretty fast." He explains, "We were educated and it impressed the king and then I was pretty good at fighting and smart too so I rose quickly." Each time he moved up "it meant more power. More power to 'move men.' He says, "By the time I was fifteen I had Branch status. I could tell the guys within my branch what to do. By the time I was seventeen I had universal, so I could tell guys in any branch of Vice Lords what to do." At the age of eighteen he was third in command in the Conservative Insanes, giving him even more power. He says, "equate that to secretary of defense."

In this role, Douglas was responsible for the day-to-day operations. This was in 1978. "We had just started selling drugs but back then it was cough syrup. Yeah. Cough medicine. We were selling cough medicine. Put it in three ounce bottles. It was like a sleeping pill. 1978 was cough syrup and heroin and then about 1980, the

folks switched from that to cocaine. In seventy-eight, an ounce of cocaine cost twenty-two hundred dollars. In 1980, the price dropped to about a thousand. For some reason it just went from being hard to get to easy to find." That year, 1980, was the same year Douglas went to jail for two shootings.

### *Shifting Structure of the Drug Market*

Harold walks me through the structure of the Austin drug market today, from his perspective. In addition to the street-level sellers and the large quantity distributors, there are "middle guys." He says, "You got the middle guy who gets it from this guy to distribute to these guys." Each large distributor has a relationship with "a couple of the middle guys. The middle guys, they see a little money, they see more money than the street guys. So it is always a party of three. The big guy, the middle guy, and the ones that on the corner." Typically, he adds, "it is older guys who control and distribute the flow of drugs."

The "middle guy" position is significantly more lucrative than the street-level salesman. Harold says, "He is pulling in a nice amount. If he got what everybody wants than he is pulling in a nice amount." Meanwhile, the street-level seller is looking at minimum wage. In Harold's words, "he is basically deciding if he wants to stand on that corner or not, because he is taking a chance of going to jail. He really ain't seeing no money because he can't buy those shoes he wants, so he is contemplating: Do I really want to be out here? He might get shot at next week, ain't got time for that. So they make up their minds someway or the other."

Those that decide to push forward are often looking to move up to a more senior position in the distribution system. Harold says, "there might be three of them [selling directly] but you're going to have one or two of them that try to get where that [middle] guy is at." Asked how a person makes that leap, he says, "[e]liminating that guy. Dog eat dog world. Or sticking with him long enough to where he move you here." Whereas a single block may have up to 12 people selling on it, Harold estimates that each middle man may distribute to six blocks. Meanwhile, the large distributor may have around ten middle men. Harold explains, "You've got the west side, the south side, east side, north side. So he's got to cover four different areas." He adds, "and then sometimes you might have the middle guy whose got his own thing somewhere over here and he probably buying half of what he got just so he can supply there."

Harold's knowledge comes from direct lived experience. Because his uncle was a large distributor, he and his brother "didn't have to do the corners," moving quickly to the position of middlemen. Street level sales are for those without higher connections. Harold says, "you got to know somebody to actually be somewhere in the middle. If you don't really know nobody then you got to be on the corners." Meanwhile, the distributor's that support middlemen are often outside of the city or state. Harold says, "a lot of them don't want to be known. You the only one I can trust so we trying to distribute to four different areas of the world we got to try to keep it as small as possible. So that means you got to spread your range out and get to know people that need it but not get to know too many people, so that's why he going to hire a lot of these [middle] guys."



Tamara only occasionally sees what Harold called the middle guys. She says, “yesterday we did a search warrant and the guy was packaging [the drugs] in his house and just dropping it off to places. For him, he was the one who would actually cut the drugs. Then he had two runners who would actually run to the drug spots. And they all had guns. So right there – three guys, three guns.” When I ask where she thinks he got his distribution, she says, “That I don’t know. There’s different statistics saying where it comes from, like Mexico. I don’t think they have direct cartel relationships. I’ve never been a narcotics person so I can’t really say, that’s just what I’ve picked up on. I would imagine there’s a middle man before the Austin person.” Importantly, in all of her patrol work, she rarely encounters more than the entry-level positions.

### *Lawrence and the Open Air*

When I asked Lawrence about how he first got involved in the street life, he shared, “[m]e and my brother used to smoke weed. And then we had some other little friends that stayed around the corner that smoked weed. We just used to hang out.” Up to this point in the story, Lawrence’s involvement with banned substances is very much like my own and that of countless other adolescents who have older siblings or friends looking for new ways to experiment with life. The next part of Lawrence’s story is less universal.

For the average American teenager, even those who regularly use drugs, open-air drug markets are not a part of the daily, lived experience. In Lawrence’s world, he says, “I used to see the guys selling drugs, I always wondered, how much

money could I make off that?" Over time, Lawrence's curiosity deepened. "One of my friends, he was a gang chief. He asked me, did I want to join him? At first, I was like no. Cause I wanted to see what they was about. Then I see them making money, driving nice cars, hanging out, drinking, smoking. So I was like that's cool, I want to do stuff like that. I started hanging. Then one of my friends was like, 'hold this weed for me.' It was like 4 or 5 bags. He went to make a run. I was just sitting outside. Then somebody asked me, did I have weed? That was the first time I sold drugs."

Lawrence was 15 years old when that happened, when exposure and curiosity became participation in the West Side drug market. Over time, both his curiosity and his participation deepened, moving from street level to middle manager, as depicted in Table 8. He says, "I saw how much more money I could make by hanging out with the people who sold large quantities of hard narcotics." At this point, Lawrence decided and was able to move up in the occupational structure of the gang, using his friendships to distribute larger quantities than an entry-level seller. He continues, "So I started hanging with them, sold more drugs, and I got arrested my senior year with 175 blows of heroin. I didn't think much of it, started back selling drugs, got arrested again, started back selling drugs." Note that Lawrence did not experience his arrests as a deterrent against future sales. Rather, those arrests motivated him to become more entrepreneurial with his business.

*Table 8: Occupations Enabling the United States Drug Market*

<i>Position</i>	International Trafficker	Multi-Region Distributor	Regional Distributor	Area Chief or Independent Operator	Middle Manager with Sales Responsibility	Street Level Seller
<i>Requirement</i>	Access to production; Processing and global logistics capacity.	Connection to global organization; Cross-state logistics capacity.	Connection to global organization; Relationship with area chiefs or entrepreneurs.	Connection to distributor; Independent sales force.	Connection to Area Chief or Operator; Oversight of sales force.	Ability to show up to work.

After more fully recognizing the dangers involved in selling narcotics, Lawrence decided to increase his possible rewards, rather than reduce his risks. He says, "I began to think - Why should I go to jail for someone who is not going to come bond me out? I would rather go to jail for myself. I put my education and my skills into being somewhat corporate, instead of being low-level, I started selling drugs for myself, got arrested. Walked around with guns, got arrested." At this point, Lawrence moved from being a middle manager with direct sales responsibility, to being an independent operator. Throughout this journey, Lawrence's interactions with the criminal justice system did little to prevent his continued involvement in the illegal drug economy. Quite the contrary; his involvement only deepened after punitive sanctions.

Similar to Lawrence, Harold was able to make a quick ascent up the occupational structure based on his relationships. Explaining how he bypassed entry-level sales, he says, "I had an uncle who had a reputation in the neighborhood so it was kind of alright for us to sell what we wanted to sell. So, it wasn't a problem.

He provided protection and he had the money. He had the drugs, he had everything we needed. I didn't have to look to nobody else for it because it was right there for me." With this quick ascent, Harold ran into another major problem. Amidst the incredible availability of drugs in his social world, he started using heroin and cocaine at age 26. In his words, "I was around it so much that I wanted to try it." Despite the addiction, Harold's position in the gang took him into his thirties, which is "when the police broke up the drug ring."

All but one of Harold's later convictions were drug related. Explaining the total time served in his life, he shares, "my first [conviction] I had to do three [years], my second one I had to do six, my third one I had to do six, and my fourth one I had to do six." During his first two terms in prison, he continued to use drugs. On his third stint he "got clean, and has been clean ever since." Describing how he and other users get their drugs in prison, he explains, "the officers were bringing it in or the [inmates] got a way with their girlfriends sneaking it in. You know certain ways. They got their ways. But I was more getting it from other guys myself."

Harold got clean through the drug program in the Sheridan Correctional Center. "They had offered the inmates a drug program. And I signed up for the drug program about the second year of my [third] incarceration and they stuck me down there and that's where I ended up." Describing the program, he says, "It was alright. I had a counselor that evaluated me. Within six months he made me like a team leader to talk to the young guys when they come in and let them know what the drugs will do to you. He saw me more of a leader than a follower so he put me in the

forefront to be someone they can come talk to about it and see that ain't the path they need to take. So that's how I got clean.”

Ironically, Harold’s first prison time was also “in Sheridan. But Sheridan didn't have the drug program in place then.” It took more than 20 years of life, 15 years of prison time and well over \$300,000 taxpayer dollars for IDOC to respond to one of the major underlying drivers of Harold’s actions. His story highlights how our responses to crime often perpetuate rather treat the underlying drivers of human behavior, whereby basic mental and physical needs go unaddressed in “correctional” institutions.

### *Entry-Level Positions*

Not everyone has a friend or uncle who is a gang chief. Unlike Lawrence and Harold, most people enter the drug market as street level sellers and must struggle to work their way up, frequently failing along the way. Margie is one of the juvenile probation officers assigned to the Austin area. She routinely sees the youth she serves occupy the street-level sales position and face drug-related charges as a result. Speaking to the types of charges they face, she says, “most of it is possession. But they are selling so I don't know if they plea it down, none of them are using the type of drugs that they have been charged with.” Though, like Harold, some sellers develop serious addictions down the road, most youth workers in the drug market do not have that problem. In Margie’s words, “they have drug issues but typically it is marijuana as opposed to the heroin that they've been charged with.” Describing

the typical age range she sees for cases related to drug sales, Margie says “anywhere from twelve to seventeen.”

Tamara, a 15<sup>th</sup> District Police Officer, gives a description of the basic work arrangements for many of these youth when they are first starting out. They are typically given one ‘jab’ at a time, roughly 12 to 14 small packets of the substance being sold. She says, “you have your little zip lock, which is an individual serving, and that will be bundled in a sandwich bag. Ten of them go back to the dealer and then whoever is selling that jab gets to keep two, so you can either keep them for your personal use or you can sell them for the money. It’s 12-14 depending on how they are cut.” As she describes, each street-level salesperson usually works as part of a team. When asked how many people work a drug spot, Tamara says, “It can vary. It depends on what kind of drug area it is. If it’s an open air drug spot, on the corner, you are going to have more people. For that you can have three to ten. One guy’s holding the narcotics, another guy’s holding the money, you’re going to have a runner, you’re going to have security with a gun, and you’re going to have lookouts.”

With substantial dangers from competitors and police, as well as exposure to the elements, street-level sales is far from an ideal work environment. Beth asserts that, “the lower guys could probably make as much if they worked at McDonald’s. They just don’t realize that. They are out there sometimes from six o’clock in the morning until six o’clock at night, same guy, making minimum wage. Where if he worked at McDonald’s he could be more legit.” Citing some of the attractions of the position, Beth continues, “but at McDonald’s, he’s not hanging out with his friends, he’s not earning the street cred. So what are they really gaining by going to get a

legitimate job?” Beth’s observations are supported by research that finds earnings in gangs are typically equal to legitimate labor market alternatives, but come with significantly more risks (Levitt and Venkatesh, 2000).

Extending the literature, Beth also speaks to the absence of professional role models or clear career pathways in many of these young people’s lives. Referring to her own social world, she says, “[w]e see the positives [of legal employment], because in the long-run you build a resume, you build job experience, you can build on that experience. Maybe they’ll pay for you to go to school, they don’t see that. They see, ‘Ok, if I do this, I can get the new pair of shoes right away, I can get the nice things that I want right away.’ Though, Beth asserts, this drive for instant gratification exists “with kids across the board,” even those youth with working parents are typically exposed only to service positions with minimal upward mobility. Thus, the main models they have for expanding earning power over time are those who successfully move up the occupational structure of the drug market.

### *Suburban Customer Base*

Heroin is one of Austin’s primary exports. Unlike much of the neighborhood’s remaining businesses, which often move local dollars outside of Austin, the drug market is one of the few remaining sectors that brings outside dollars into the neighborhood. Describing the Heroin Highway’s customer base, a former addict named Michael says, “you just have these white people coming from everywhere. I drove 15 miles from where I used to live, at least once a day, sometimes two or three times.” As his words and personal experience suggest, there is a strong

regional market for the heroin sold in Austin. Moreover, it is a growing market, as heroin has become increasingly popular in the suburbs surrounding Chicago. From the years 1998 to 2007, though heroin-related hospital discharges for heroin use decreased 67 percent among Chicagoans ages 20 to 24, it “increased more than 200 percent in the Collar Counties” (Kane-Willis et al., 2011). Compared to other major US cities, Chicago’s metropolitan area “ranks highest in Emergency Department mentions in the nation for heroin and has the highest rates per 100,000 persons” (Kane-Willis and Schmitz-Bechteler, 2004). One study found that in 2010, more people were treated for heroin overdoses by hospitals in Chicago and surrounding suburbs than any other major city in the country (Kane-Willis et al., 2012).

Asked about the customer base for drugs sold in Austin, Harold confirms these numbers, “we’ve got a lot of them coming from the suburbs. They are coming from the west suburbs or the north suburbs, they come.” He continues, “this [290] expressway is the main highway. You can get whatever you want up and down this expressway right here. Wherever you get off you can actually get it, anywhere past Austin.” During Michael’s heavy usage years, he remembers regularly seeing working addicts from the suburbs come to Austin. He says, “I’ve seen a lot of white people in line on their own. One day I was sitting there waiting for my buddy and a car pulled up behind me and out got a nurse, she had her nurse’s scrubs on and she went to the spot and bought dope.” Enforcement tactics for these buyers have varied over the years, with one of the most extreme proposals being an attempt to “impound the cars of out-of-towners caught buying drugs on the West Side” (Caputo, 2013). Though suburban heroin users have never composed a significant



portion of the Illinois prison population, the risks of such an addiction are very real and Chicago regularly ranks among the very top metropolitan areas for opiate-related deaths.

### *Profile of a Suburban Addict*

Michael is life-long suburbanite who has had a long-term battle with drug addiction. After he started using heroin in 1993, his addiction brought him into Austin regularly, as the neighborhood was his primary destination for buying and often using heroin, his drug of choice. Though he has used very little in recent years, he says, “for a long time it was hard for me to drive down the Eisenhower, because I used to get off at Central and go buy my drugs. So for a long time just driving down the Eisenhower made me real nervous. It would just start spinning in my head, but when I crossed Central Avenue I’d be good. But now I’m good, I can do it.” Even years into his successful recovery, Michael explains that the underlying urge is still very present.

Michael’s substance abuse issues developed when he was 17. He says, “that’s when I started drinking everyday. And marijuana, of course, and a little acid, a little coke, then I got into crack. I didn’t start using heroin until I was 25, once I started that everything else went to the side. I didn’t want anything else.” He continues, “[heroin] makes you forget everything, you have no problems. But of course when I started I knew people would say, ‘oh its bad, you go through withdrawals.’ I didn’t care about any of that. When I started using it, within about two or three weeks of the daily use, I started going through withdrawals.”

That daily habit continued for eight years. Michael estimates that he has spent \$100,000 on drugs in Austin over the years. He says, "I had a \$100 a day habit. I couldn't go every day, but even if I went 300 days, that's \$30,000 right there." Michael continues, "I lived with my grandma for three years and she had a lot of money. I wouldn't steal it, I would give her, 'I've got to do this...' My grandma had to file bankruptcy because of what I did... I think she gave me \$25,000 over three years." Sharing other ways he supported his habit, Michael says, "[w]hen I got my first Social Security check, I was waiting over a year to get it, they pay you back pay. That was like \$12,000, I blew most of that down there. I was in an accident, I got a \$2,000 settlement. The day the check came I went to the Currency Exchange. They took \$37 to cash my \$2,000 check. I was down there for 30 hours, I came home with \$150 bucks. I spent \$1,800 in like 30 hours. Now, I had three of my buddies with me, and I got a hotel room, smoking rocks and drinking and snorting heroin. Yeah, it's a lot of money."

Along the way, Michael says, "I was in jail multiple times, you know nothing longer than 10 or 11 days. My license wound up getting revoked because I wouldn't go to court because I didn't want to spend the money at court and I wasn't feeling good. So every morning it was just like making a beeline and doing all the things you do to get money, scamming and stealing and shit. Until probably like 2001, I went to rehab again and I pretty much got off it. I would still drink occasionally." Today, Michael says, "it's been 20 years since I first started using heroin. It messed up my life, big time. Jail time, legal problems, health problems, overdoses. I got robbed several times at gunpoint [in Austin]."

Recalling his own history with work, Michael says, “when I was just drinking and smoking weed I could work, but not once I started the heroin.” Describing jobs he’s had, Michael says, “I worked at Sears on the dock, I worked at a couple restaurants, when I was younger, Barnes and Noble, I worked with my dad in construction, I worked with another friend doing appraisals on houses, I do the maps and draw out stuff. But I haven’t had a real job since ‘01 when I worked at the bookstore. I mean I worked at Dominick’s for five days. The thing is, I’m real good on a cash register. The first day I worked at Dominick’s, my drawer came up even, which is good. That was a Monday. Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, it came up short, because I was taking the money right out of the drawer. Friday I went into work – ‘You’re fired.’ So I worked there for five days, but I was stealing 100 bucks a shift. They were like, ‘you’re either stupid or you’re ripping us off, and we don’t think you’re stupid.’ I would steal from my jobs.” Today Michael is looking for a job. He says, “probably something in retail, dealing with the public. When I’m straight, I’m talkative, I’m pretty good at getting along with people. I’ll start at the bottom, which I’m going to have to do at this point. I’m 44, I worry, what am I doing?”

### *Recovery at Home*

Not all consumers in the Austin drug market are from outside the neighborhood. Of those coming from within the neighborhood, many are returning from prison and are thereby dealing with the twin challenge of re-entry and recovery. For several of the men I interviewed, having positive peers is an essential part of successfully navigating these challenges, especially in the absence of readily

available jobs. In the words of Charles, a resident of the Austin-based halfway center Willis House, “I try to get away from my bad habits, I be living with people who are doing good. I say to myself, ‘I am in the right place, I am around the right people.’” For precisely this reason, Charles much prefers Willis House to his previous halfway home, which was also in Austin. He now has a little more distance from illegal drug sales and activity. He says, “I have only been here three weeks and I haven’t even seen that many people out. It’s a nice area, better than the area I left from, because every corner had about 15 to 20 people, and I don’t see many police cars going by.”

Describing the differences between Willis House and his previous location, Charles says, there were about nine men staying at the other place and “half of them were doing the same thing, they were using, drinking. I had to get away from there. I felt that as long as I stayed there I would be drawn back into it. That was my main reason.” Frequent temptation is a common problem for recovering addicts living in Austin, making difficult addictions far more difficult to overcome. Describing these dynamics, Michael says, “[i]f I had someone standing on my front door every day yelling, ‘heroin, heroin, heroin,’ I would use it. That’s what these poor guys do. They walk down the street trying to be sober, every corner you got someone selling drugs, how can you stay sober in that situation? You have one bad day and you got a ten-dollar bill, there you go. And once you start again, you’re lost.”

### *Global Supply Chain*

As of 2010, Chicago was the only US metropolitan area that ranked in the top five for the four main categories of drugs. The area was deemed first for heroin

shipments, second for cocaine and marijuana and fifth for methamphetamine (McGahan, 2013). Moreover, despite billions spent on incarcerating neighborhood residents in the drug war, drug seizure data shows the city's preeminent illegal trade is stronger than ever. This fact has prompted Chicago's police superintendent to declare the War on Drugs a "wholesale failure" (McGahan, 2013).

With its robust regional consumer base and its ideal strategic positioning for distributing heroin to other parts of the country, the strength of Chicago's heroin marketplace has grown to the point where it supports a strong, diverse supply chain, with shipments originating "from Mexico, South America, Southeast Asia and Southwest Asia" (National Drug Threat Assessment, 2003). While Mexican organizations often control the shipments from South America, Nigerian organizations are often the distributors for heroin from Southeastern and Southwestern Asia. Thus, while most of Chicago's heroin is sold from West Side neighborhoods and much of it is purchased by suburban customers, the supply chain reaches around the globe. Describing this global supply, Harold says, there are "some Nigerians, some Africans, and a lot of Chinese. It is kind of mixed. It ain't just the Mexicans. Because everybody, even some Muslims, order from them and make money off what they got. They are selling too." Meanwhile, Harold adds, "Mexico does a lot of their work with Afghanistan, that's how they can get a lot of their tar."

Despite this diversity, Mexican cartels have long been the dominant players in Chicago's drug marketplace, with the leadership of Sinoloa occupying the top position. Between 1990 and 2008 former US Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald estimated that the Sinoloa cartel "imported and distributed nearly \$6 billion worth of illegal

narcotics mostly to the Chicago area” (McGahan, 2013). Another estimate from the Drug Enforcement Authority (DEA) asserts that Sinoloa moves \$3 billion dollars worth of drugs into the Chicago region each year (Lippert, Cattan & Parker, 2013).

As a large transportation hub with six interstate highways and six major railroads, as well as roughly “1.3 billion square feet of warehouse property,” the city has become an ideal US epicenter for cartels (McGahan, 2013). In the words of one DEA official, the Sinoloa cartel “chose Chicago for the same reasons Sears, Roebuck & Co. once centered catalog sales in the city: It’s a transportation hub where highways and rail lines converge and then fan across the Midwest.” Additionally, Chicago has established gang networks and a vast supply of jobless youth looking for any employment they can find. In the same official’s words, “[t]he disappearance of factory jobs and the struggle of public schools on the city’s South and West sides also give [them] tens of thousands of willing salesmen who are jobless and poorly educated” (Lippert, Cattan & Parker, 2013).

### *The Shifting Structure of Gangs*

While the occupational spectrum of the drug market — distributor, middle man, street seller — transcends gang lines, the gang structure in Chicago has substantially changed over the years. As the result of incarcerating many of the city’s older gang leaders, the lines of authority that once guided decision-making in the gangs disappeared. In Harold’s words, “[i]t is more of a renegade thing out here now.” While some of the longstanding West Side gangs still have a hierarchical structure, many do not. According to Harold, the “Travelers, New Breeds and the

Black Disciples, all the classics,” still exist, but now there are also non-hierarchical groups “out there doing their own thing. They ain't doing what the New Breed does, that's what you call renegades.”

Members of these less organized groups have little concern for other organizations' hierarchies, a fact that allows them to bypass conventional lines of authority. However, because of their lack of leadership, they also lack the experience that a cross-generational alliance can bring. Harold says, “it is easy for [renegades] to collapse. They never stand strong for long because they never had that leadership quality, where if you doing good with what you are doing you won't go shoot and all that.” He compares this to the gang structure he worked in, where if what you are doing is working, “you keep doing what you are doing and try to do it better... if they can hire more people over here to sell their drugs then it makes no sense to go over there [into someone's territory]. Because they are structured a little bit better, they going to stay right here.”

Speaking from the police perspective, Tamara has seen many of these same changes that Harold describes. She says, “when I started was the time when a lot of the higher ups in the gangs were catching conspiracy cases and going away for longer amounts of time. Now you don't have your big chiefs on the street anymore, running things. It's just kind of a hodge podge. There's definitely more gangs, every corner has their own faction of a gang now. So there's a lot more chaos in the gangs, there's not a mom and a dad to tell you how it is. It's just a bunch of kids playing gangs.” As Tamara describes, the loss of gang chiefs is akin to a loss of authority

figures, something that many “renegades” also experienced in their home lives as their parents were taken away from incarceration, violence and/or addiction.

Tamara associates the decrease in gang structure with an increase in violence, something she and Harold both attribute to increased risk taking. She says, “it seems like there has been more violence, it seems like there’s more shootings. I’ve been doing paperwork on more shootings this year than last year, each year it seems like we are definitely having more shootings. I don’t know if that’s because different areas are having less but in 15 we are definitely having more shootings, and it’s broad daylight. I was driving down the street the other day and I didn’t get from one stop sign to the next before they were literally shooting behind me. I wasn’t 400 feet away.”

Sharing his perspective on how the drug game has changed in Austin, Douglas says, “You had to be a major player back in the day to get a large amount or quantity of drugs. You had to be somebody. Now they got all these people in the way. They get in the game with a corner strip or talk about how they have weight. There’s too many people in the way.” As a result, he says, “[t]here’s no instruction in the gangs. A lot of outlaws. They don’t think they have to ask anybody.” Beth has also observed these changes during her time in the 15<sup>th</sup> District. Describing gangs on the east side of Austin, she says, “we have Conservative Vice Lords, Four Corner Hustlers, that’s pretty much what’s on the east end. It’s mostly business, I think right now the intra-gang conflicts are what the problem are. A lot of the higher up guys are incarcerated and they haven’t trained these young guys to stay in line. One young guy wants to run the corner that the other young guy is running, so instead of



doing it how they used to do it – ask permission, work up through the chain of command – they just go and kill them. So it's different than what it used to be.”

Pointing to a unique unanticipated consequence of incarceration, Beth continues, “I think that the breakdown of the higher ups is where the problem is with a lot of these street gangs. They're all in jail, or they've got their other things going now, they're not so much worried about leadership. You've got the main guys that run the spots, but it's just different.”

The decline in strong gang hierarchies may have real implications for the amount of money to be made selling. Describing the money in neighborhood drug sales today, Harold says “it is slow now. If you are not the one selling the big stuff, there ain't going to be no money. You just standing out there to get you a pair of shoes. You barely going to have enough in order to get that. It ain't like it was no more.” Harold continues, “back when I was in a gang, one person controls a certain area, a whole area, now you got people on every corner trying to sell the same thing. You got money splitting up like fifteen ways. It is like, everybody shooting at each other because they want to make all the money, but then the police going to shut you down then and you can't make no money. You block hop or you are getting shot at so you can't make no money. If you not the one that's selling the quantities of it, you ain't going to see no money.”

### *Beyond the Open Air*

Adapting to both the risks of violence and incarceration, as well as changes in technology, many dealers are starting to move their work back indoors. In addition

to open air markets, which she sees daily, Tamara says, “You’ll have people selling out of their house, out of cars. That’s one or two people [working a location]. It’s from the protection of your house. We will see a lot on second or third floors where they will drop down a bucket, you put your money in, they pull it up and then drop the drugs down. There you only need one person because they don’t really need security. I see it a lot with courtyard buildings.” Each of these spots, Tamara says, typically moves the same kinds of drugs as the outdoor markets.

Michael has also observed a rise in people selling from their homes. When I ask him if the way drugs are sold in Austin has changed since the early 1990s, he says the scene is “pretty much it’s the same. The only difference, now that I’ve talked to my buddy, is that a lot of guys get those cricket phones, a lot of dealers, and you call them and they meet you outside.” To clarify, I ask, “So dealers today are inside most of the time?” He says, “Yeah, yeah, somehow. This is just recently, but for years it was on the street.” Importantly, this move beyond the open air supports a more individual approach to sales that is less visible to outside scrutiny.

### **Mechanism Three: Policing Disadvantage**

Contemporary policing strategies are another major force creating the availability of “carceral objects.” In Bernard Harcourt book *Illusion of Order* (2001), he asserts that policing has undergone significant changes in the era of mass incarceration. According to Harcourt, the field now operates under a rubric of contemporary order-maintenance policing, a school of thought and practice that has spread across many US cities. Most commonly associated with the “broken windows

theory,” he describes order-maintenance policing as the “aggressive enforcement of misdemeanor laws against quality-of-life offenses” (Harcourt, 2001, p. 5). In theory, this approach leads to increased police-citizen contact, which is said to be key in the creation and maintenance of order, and thus the decrease in crime. He identifies the key thinkers behind the approach as James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling, but also points to policing scholar Wesley Skogan as an early proponent.<sup>16</sup>

Alongside the rise of mass incarceration, Harcourt asserts the proliferation of order-maintenance policing strategies was a key transformation in American criminal justice. Rather than functioning as an alternative to widespread imprisonment, a stance often taken, Harcourt shows that severe treatments for minor offenders and ordinary citizens are part of a larger regime that contributes to severe punishments for more major offenders. In his words, “order-maintenance crackdowns permeate our streets and police station houses while severe sentencing laws pack our prisons” (Harcourt, 2001, p. 6). In Chicago, order-maintenance ideas strongly contributed to the Chicago City Council passing the anti-gang loitering ordinance in 1992, which caused police to order dispersals from street corners on a regular basis. In the first three years of its enforcement, he documents, this ordinance led to 89,000 orders to disperse and 42,000 arrests.

In assessing the disordered thinking within the approach, Harcourt asserts “[t]he turn to norms and social meaning, I find, is a positive step in criminal justice;

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<sup>16</sup> In Wilson and Keller’s “Broken Windows” article, minor disorders are said to lead to neighborhood decline and to more serious crimes, a claim that is fundamentally meant to explore how law and social norms interact in ways that regulate human behavior. Where Wilson and Keller lay out this basic proposition, Skogan was said to establish “the causal links between disorder and serious crime” (Harcourt, 2001, p. 4).

but in the hands of order-maintenance proponents, it leads to an uncritical dichotomy between disorderly people and law abiders or, more generally, between order and disorder” (Harcourt, 2001, p. 7). This is a dangerous false binary, one that supports the widespread criminalization that undergirds high-incarceration rates, reinforcing the idea that certain people belong in certain urban spaces, and certain people do not. Without providing any real substance for those distinctions, old filters of interpretation are left to dominate. For Harcourt, “[t]hese categories mask the repressive nature of broken windows policing and overshadow significant costs, including increased complaints of police misconduct, racial bias in stops and frisks, and further stereotyping of black criminality” (Harcourt, 2001, p.7). Furthermore, Harcourt asserts, “Broken Windows policing shares the same conceptual framework as its alternative, mass incarceration and the theory of incapacitation,” each adhering to a rubric of state-enforced suppression of groups with designated behavioral traits (Harcourt, 2001, p.11).

Within this framework, communities are divided into lawbreakers and law abiders, between those who warrant the extended reach of the state, and those who necessitate little more than a continuous gaze. Lawbreakers, those with a propensity towards crime, are then subdivided into two categories: merely disorderly persons and habitual serious criminals. Whereas disorderly persons are handled through broken windows policing, more serious offenders are met with mass incarceration. Reinforcing critiques of selective incapacitation, Harcourt questions the state’s ability to distinguish between the disorderly and those who abide by the law, pointing out the difficulty of deciphering “between difference, eccentricity, disorder,

and criminality.” He argues that these categories do not have any real ontological basis. Outside of the punitive actions we take as society, the law abider and the law breaker “do not have a pre-existent fixed reality.” In his article “Making Up People,” contemporary philosopher Ian Hacking refers to such processes as dynamic nominalism, whereby the names we give to people create – rather than describe – their subjectivities (Hacking, 2006). In this case, the names that we give people justify the mobilization of policy mechanisms that can, in turn, produce criminal subjectivities, reinforcing a “thicker description of propensities.” Thus, from Harcourt we learn how to see the relationship between policing practices and the creation of contemporary subjectivities.

In the following section, I share perspectives from multiple participant-observers of law enforcement in the 15th district. Three are 15th district police officers: one of whom provides rapid response for the district, while the other two work as sector cars in the area with the most drug arrests and most felony convictions. Each of these perspectives adds depth and nuance to how we understand the actual practice of policing, with themes including: the limits of deterrence; the disconnect between police and other components of the criminal justice system; changes in police-community tensions amidst the War on Drugs; and, relatedly, the gradual cynicism that can develop among officers. Following these viewpoints, I highlight stories from several alternative perspectives from Austin. These include a law-abiding lifelong resident, a long-term drug addict who regularly came to the neighborhood to buy, and a lawyer dedicated to defending people at the point of arrest. Taken together, their stories show how it is not just the frequency of

police-resident contact that matters, but the type and quality of this contact. The stories also indicate the role of race in creating distance from and/or proximity to law enforcement, and the cynicism that can develop among residents regarding the ability of law enforcement to improve daily life in the neighborhood.

In the case of order-maintenance policing, I demonstrate how this shift in orientation corresponds with a widespread pressure to arrest, whereby officers have significant incentives to make regular arrests, even and often when they doubt the efficacy of their own actions. Furthermore, I suggest that arrest-based measurements of success ultimately weaken the authority of the law in community life, leading to disconnected attempts at accountability that are more likely to be dismissed in court and/or violate individuals' rights. As shown earlier in the chapter, patrol officers in Austin rarely encounter individuals who hold more than entry-level positions in drug distribution networks and, moreover, the head of CPD has publicly addressed the failure of War on Drugs enforcement strategies. Yet the pressure to arrest for small drug infractions continues. Meanwhile, thanks in part to CPD collaboration with the Drug Enforcement Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation in areas like Austin, roughly half of all prison sentences handed out in Cook County are still for the distribution or sale of drugs, and drug-related sentences have never been longer. These contradictions point to the staying power of failed punitive policies and practices, even when those failures are publicly acknowledged by those individuals with direct authority over changing them.

The habit of concentrated incarceration is a firm fixture of society's behavior, and we are not easily inclined to stop our underlying addictions. As seen nationally

in the social movement following the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner, law enforcement's persistent and discriminatory targeting of African-American communities has led to historic levels of distrust between law enforcement officers and neighborhood residents. Due to policing practices and policies supporting concentrated incarceration, even when officers operate fully within the threshold of the law, the cause for distrust in African-American communities is omnipresent. I argue that the only way to restore positive relations and close the trust gap is a renewed focus on successful human and community outcomes, whereby residents and law enforcement work together to create a more effective and equitable public safety paradigm. Any such effort would require the full commitment of police departments to the implementation of policies that enact the much touted phrase, "we cannot arrest our way out of the problem."

Additionally, I show how the district level pressure to produce arrests for minor offenses contributes to a greatly overburdened court system, weakening basic rights like due process along the way. With the incredible volume of the American criminal justice system, judges, public defenders, and states attorneys have become overwhelmed by the sheer number of cases they encounter, posing what amounts to a huge administrative problem. As Angela Davis asserts in *Incarceration and the Imbalance of Power*, this challenge is frequently bypassed by the plea bargaining process, which she explains "accounts for the disposition of more than ninety percent of all criminal cases" (Davis, 2003, p. 62). The fact that so many defendants are compelled to agree to plea bargains is the result of what Davis identifies as three changes in the roles of criminal justice officials. These include: "1)

a significant increase in prosecutorial power; 2) a minimization and weakening of the defense function; and 3) a decrease in judicial discretion and power” (Davis, 2003, p.62). As denoted by a plea bargaining process gone wild, these changes created a fundamental imbalance of power that has made adequate representation for low-income defendants a near impossibility in current courtroom conditions, thereby linking breakdowns of indigent defense to the continuation of mass incarceration over time (Davis, 2003). These systems level pressures to make deals occur on top of neighborhood conditions that normalize the plea bargaining process, so that defendants are both less able and less likely to fight the stigma of the felony.

### *Pressure to Arrest*

Although the officers that make up the 15<sup>th</sup> District are heterogeneous in many ways, the workplace expectations for how they implement policies are often singular. Speaking to the pressure to make arrests within the district, a patrol officer named Tamara says, “district commanders are telling the beat officer and the tactical officer to make arrests. Well, the easy arrests are your bullshit possession, one rock, two rock, which you know is going to get tossed out at the first court date. But we are being told to make that arrest and if I don’t make that arrest I am not going to get my management spot.”

In Tamara’s eyes, professional advancement as an officer is clearly linked to number of arrests. In her words, “it helps. It’s not the sole item but it is a considerable factor. But the courts don’t want to prosecute a one rock case so they’re going to toss it out. I don’t like to arrest people for narcotics because I don’t



feel like it makes a difference in the War on Drugs, in the big picture. If you have one crack rock on you, you are a user. Me arresting you isn't going to make you not use crack, it's not going to stop you from burglarizing someone's house for some scrap metal to get that crack rock. So why am I going to take time out of my day and be off the street from a domestic, or CSA [Criminal Sexual Assault] or some in progress call to arrest you? So you can go to court and it's tossed out. Let's not waste the State's Attorneys time."

She continues, "I don't prefer to do small narcotics arrests. Even the small dealers, they're not going to change. If I arrest somebody with one jab, they're going to be out." When asked if other officers share her dislike of arresting users and small dealers, she says, "Yeah, but at the same time it's a necessary evil if you are in management. If you are on a tactical team you just have to do it. Or I don't have the seniority to work on day [shifts], so I will make arrests that I don't always agree with or feel like is benefiting anybody.

This pressure to arrest, Tamara asserts, contributes to "a big circle of inefficiency" within the broader criminal justice system. Most notably, she says, it bogs down the court system to the point that the cases of the people she arrests for more serious offenses often get dismissed. Giving an example, she says, "[w]e had two anonymous calls and a physical description of a guy shooting off a gun who then went into a store. We went in there and recovered a 357 Magnum in a holster. He is a multiple time convicted felon, he has been convicted of gun charges, he was on parole. After being 'Mirandized' he stated that he had the gun for his drug spot, he

had the gun for protection, and the judge is going to toss it because we did not have probable cause to do a protective pat down when we talked to him.”

### *The Persistent Grass Gap*

The departmental expectations for arrests in West Side areas like Austin are clearly reflected in the differential ways that African-Americans are targeted for marijuana possession arrests. In 2010, Cook County had more arrests for marijuana possession than anywhere else in the country, with 33,068 such arrests in all. Meanwhile, across Illinois, whites are seven times less likely to be arrested for possession of marijuana than African-Americans. When comparing arrests across states, Illinois has the country’s third highest black to white racial disparity for possession of marijuana (Kane-Willis et al., 2014).

The disparities only intensify when analyzing the Chicago neighborhood level, as community areas like Austin with predominately African-American populations have been found to be highly predictive of misdemeanor arrests. As of 2011, African-Americans were arrested for marijuana 15 times more than whites (Dumke and Joravsky, 2011). After a City of Chicago ordinance was passed to give officers the option of issuing a ticket for marijuana possession rather than an arrest, geographic disparities for marijuana arrests only increased. Many West Side neighborhoods were found to have arrest rates that were seven time the city average and 150 times that of the lowest arrest neighborhoods which, revealingly, are often places known for being home to large numbers of police officers (Kane-Willis et al., 2014).

*Privilege in Action*

The following stories from Michael, a former suburban addict, highlight how class and race are determining forces at nearly every level of the adult criminal system, shaping how individuals may be treated by police and parole officers, and judges. His life journey shows how even when more affluent Caucasian users do get arrested for drug possession, their experiences later in the system often vary greatly from their low-income, African-American counterparts. Michael estimates that he has been arrested thirty times in his life. He says, “the first time I was arrested was 1986. I was with my friends, we had smoked pot, and we went to an Arby’s and my buddy sprayed the Arby’s sauce all over the freaking wall and I had a bag of reefer, and I had made a pipe out of a paper towel roll.” Michael continues, “Now, when they went to court they had lost the marijuana, so they dropped the marijuana charge. I had been working, so I paid for my own lawyer. My mom wasn’t going to, she was pissed. They dropped the marijuana charge and they actually dropped the DUI because my lawyer said, ‘It’s not like alcohol, where .08 you’re drunk.’ There’s no scale for marijuana and I could have smoked it two or three days before. So I kind of got off on a technicality.”

Speaking of other arrests, Michael shares that he faced charges “a couple of times for possession of cocaine.” As with the first case, he says, “I got off both of those, my grandma got me a lawyer and they threw it out for illegal search and seizure because they had no reason to stop me.” Whether through his own resources or his family’s, in each of these cases he was able to secure a private lawyer.

Summarizing these experiences, he says, “[i]f you go to court and you have a lawyer, you’re going to do way better than if you go in by yourself. I stole a car and got arrested once and had a public defender, then I got two years probation for that.”

Michael’s story illustrates the pivotal role of private attorneys in reducing people’s likelihood of prison time. It also reveals the significant discretion that many judges maintain, even in an era of mandatory minimums, and the ways that family security functions as a protective factor against imprisonment. Of his thirty arrests, Michael has made over 100 court appearances. He says, “I would get arrested for driving on a revoked [license], I would never go to court and then finally I would get to jail, then I would go to court from jail, they would let me out on an I-bond and say come back in three weeks. Well, I would never go back. So I would get arrested over and over for the same shit,” he said. “I’ve been in Cook County jail five times, I’ve been in DuPage County jail, I’ve been in Will County jail. When I stole the car I went up to Will County because I lived in Orland Park. I’ve been locked up in Lombard, Oak Brook Terrace, Elmhurst, in the city I don’t know how many times, in the precincts, I couldn’t even tell you. Orland Park I was in jail many times, Tinley Park.”

Despite his thirty arrests and 100 court appearances, with the help of private lawyers Michael never spent a day in prison. He walked away from decades of illegal behavior, often conducted in the Austin neighborhood, without a felony conviction. He says, “Cook County Jail, that’s as far as I went.” His ability to navigate the War on Drugs without any prison time is striking. Amidst all of this criminal justice contact, the most severe sanction Michael ever received was probation. A major reason Michael was able to walk away so often, he says, was because of his lawyers.

Describing one of these lawyers, he says, “For \$5,500, he knows everyone. Plus, if you have a lawyer, the judge knows you have put out some bucks.” Sometimes, Michael adds, “I was like damn, ‘They let me out on that?’

### *Race and the Multiplication of Wrongs*

Simon grew up in Austin and has seen many changes during his years in the neighborhood. He has also seen many things stay the same, including his own distrust of local law enforcement. Simon asserts that “out of the people that I know from Austin, about 60-70 percent of people have felony convictions. I know hundreds of people. Out of 300 people, probably about 180 would have felony convictions.” Though he has never been convicted of a felony, he has had his own life changing encounters with the law. In the following story he recounts one especially harrowing encounter he had with local police. He says, “I was at [a local college], just going to class, I was leaving home, it was in the daytime. It was probably around, 10, 10:30. I was driving my car, I had a test that day.”

He continues, “this Chicago police officer, he comes behind me. I had a taillight, it was cracked. I didn’t have money to get the car fixed, it still rolled so I’m driving it, the lights and stuff still worked. Anyway, he pulls me over, he says it’s because of the taillight. Mind you, I’m trying to get to school. I say, ‘ok, are you going to give me a ticket? I’m not speeding or anything but I’m in a hurry.’ I was very polite, I know the drill. He goes back to the car. Sits in the car literally for 20 minutes, 20 minutes he sat in the car... I’m sitting there, I’m very disgusted, trying to figure out why this is taking so long. But I’m patient. He comes back to the car, he

comes up to the vehicle, and he asks me to step out. When I get out of the car, he immediately grabs me, to put me on the car, he wants to arrest me. He didn't say anything, he just grabbed me. My first instinct is to pull away. I'm confused now. I've been waiting 20 minutes, gave you everything that I needed to give you, the next step should either be a ticket or an explanation. Not 'I'm going to grab you and put the handcuffs on you.'"

"He's ranting, raving, like 'get on the ground.' So I get on the ground, I'm surrendering. He put his cuffs on me, put me on the curb. Then he starts calling me all types of names, 'you nigger' and this and that. It was very demoralizing. How did I go from going to class to this scenario? He took my car keys, threw them in the grass. He's just going on and on. His partners get there and I swear to God, if there weren't 30 cops out there. 30 police officers for me, one guy. Paddy wagon, detectives, all these cars. We are in front of this church and the neighbors, they are starting to come out. I just can't wrap my mind around it, I can't believe this, 'I don't even jaywalk, this is crazy.'"

Explaining what happened when backup arrives, Simon says, "these guys get there and they're even worse, 'You black guys, you nigger, you think...' I'm just like sitting there corralled, not showing any emotions or anything. I'm like, 'hey whatever ya'll are going to do to me you're going to do, I don't know. But I'm not going to give you no reason.' They put me in the wagon and took me over to the station." Simon continues, "I'm in this holding cell and a white shirt [ranking officer] comes in there as soon as I get there. I'm in the cell but then there's this activity with the officer that arrested me and other officers. The white shirt comes in." Simon

continues. "The white shirt, he comes in there in the holding cell, and he starts to engage in a conversation with me. Now, this is where I wish I had been wiser. I shouldn't have said anything. I shouldn't have tried to plead my case, I shouldn't have talked to this guy at all. But I'm still thinking, maybe I can just walk out of here, this is a misunderstanding and it will be looked over, I can explain it to him and he'll see that this is an error, and say you're free to go." At this point in Simon's story, the police district had realized the depth of their officer's error, unlawfully arresting a man with no prior offenses. It was also at this point that, according to Simon, the truth of the encounter started to be buried. Explaining his precarious situation, Simon says, "The arrest was never explained but it doesn't matter, I had no witnesses. It's just me. Nobody's in the car with me... Long story short, they end up sending me to the county. I'm thinking I will end up in court, they will say I have a fraudulent insurance card, I'm going to prove that it was a real insurance card."

"I get to court, I'm thinking, 'ok cool, I can probably bond myself out.' I think I had a couple hundred bucks on me. Come to find out, they didn't send any of my stuff with me when I got transported. They told the officers that they couldn't find it. I had no ID, no nothing. That was the first thing I noticed, I was being set up to fail. Second thing is, I go before this judge, the State's Attorney steps up and she's like – 'This is ... .., he was pulled over in a traffic stop, he had a fraudulent insurance card judge, but he violently resisted arrest and assaulted the officer. And he tried to take the officer's gun.' I was floored."

"Sure enough, when she said I tried to take that officer's gun, I saw the look on the court officer's face go to like, 'You? I thought you were a good guy.' I am

looking like I saw a ghost, I couldn't believe she just said that. After she said all of that, she said 'oh and by the way, he has no priors.' But she said it like it doesn't matter. So the judge is like, 'Give him an \$80,000 bond.' They charged me with three felonies. Now, I have to fight a case for three, four years of my life. They were literally trying to give me eight years behind this, three felonies, Class E... I had to fight for my freedom." Simon ended up taking a plea bargain to win that freedom, but only after spending significant time in Cook County Jail. The false admission of guilt that came with that plea meant he could never file a suit for the behavior of the officer who pulled him over. In his words, "they made sure I could not walk away from this case totally vindicated because I could have sued them immediately."

### *False Confessions Capital*

Elizabeth works at an organization dedicated to providing free legal counsel to people arrested in Chicago neighborhoods like Austin. In her eyes, this work is essential for providing some level of accountability to the police. Quoting a recent 60 Minutes interview, Elizabeth says, "Chicago is the false confession capital of the nation, and so that means this police department has more innocent people actually saying they did it in that first 48 hours than any other police department in the country. And not only are we in first place, if we want to call it that, I guess last place, but it is twice as many false concessions out of Chicago than even the next runner up." She continues, "what happens without legal defense is people almost always waive their rights, I believe thinking they don't have a choice."



Her vision for change is that the police “would have to call us as soon as someone is taken into custody and let us know where they are at, what their name is, what their birthday is, and where they get picked up because then we could actually protect everybody’s rights when they are in custody because right now we need a phone call, like we need somebody to call us because we can’t just go in and be like, ‘Let me see my client!’ We have to be like, ‘Here’s the name of the person.’ Every single person who is charged with a felony has a State’s Attorney that shows up at the station and says, ‘Yes, police, we have enough evidence to charge them with a felony.’ But there’s no such thing for public offenders though.”

### *Professional Change and the Disconnected Psyche*

During his fifteen years on the force, Samuel says the job “has changed quite a bit.” Today “there is a more blatant, confrontational and disrespectful attitude towards police officers.” When he first started, “It wasn’t cooperative but there was a sense that people should refrain from being confrontational or challenging the police as much.” He feels that the dynamic started to change in “2000-2001, right around there.” When asked how the amount of police abuse today, compared to when he started, Samuel feels there is “way less. Let me put it this way, I saw more inappropriate stuff my first couple of years... And I have to struggle to think of something that shouldn’t have been done in the last twelve years.” According to Samuel this change in behavior results from of a more professional culture in the department. The fact that professional improvements coincide with increased

hostility is an indicator that residents are frustrated with the failed policies implemented by police, a frustration that is projected onto the officers themselves.

Samuel works on what is called the afternoon shift, from 5:30 pm to 2:30 am, which overlaps with the midnight shift. On Samuel's shift, he responds to many shootings, which "tend to be between 10 pm and 2 or 3 am." When asked how he processes those shootings, he says, "I don't. It is just a disconnected psyche. It is a mechanism, a mechanism to keep your sanity. To me, it is not that much different than going to a traffic accident. It is a disconnect. I don't know how you keep your sanity, you know. A lot of it has to do with the lifestyle of the victim. You know. If you see a true individual, a regular working guy that was victimized, but even then there is a disconnect. I mean, there are a few times you feel bad for seeing something, people dying, but most of the time there is a complete disconnect."

As he describes, the psychic disconnect between himself and those he polices helps him preserve his sanity amidst regular exposure to neighborhood violence. While in some instances he does experience an emotional connection with those he serves, most of what he sees falls outside the category of what he calls a "true individual." For the most part, this disconnect affects the ways he sees youth who are caught in entry-level drug sales positions and the violence that comes with it. He explains, "the victim [of a shooting] is between seventeen and thirty. And the shooter is usually the same age."

*Police Attitudes Towards Sexual Assault*

Vanessa is a supervisor with Rape Victim Advocates, a citywide organization with West Side office in Austin. Describing the “clients” they serve from the neighborhood, she says, they “have so many issues going on. I think the sexual violence that occurs tends to be secondary to, ‘I don’t have a job, I don’t have a place to live, I can’t feed my kid...’ you know, we very much end up dealing with a lot of those issues with our clients that come out of this area because it is like, ‘Who has the time to worry about the rape I underwent when I have two kids I can’t feed and I don’t have a job?’” As she describes, issues of subsistence and survival often prevent the women and men they see from seeking supports after surviving sexual assaults.

When speaking about police attitudes towards sexual violence, she says that they often doubt the authenticity of survivors’ stories, even those who have struggled intensely to come forward about their experiences. She says, “a lot of victims are scared nobody is going to believe them. If it is somebody that is known to you, depending on that relationship, you could be fearful, you could not want your friends to find out, think you could be alienated from your social circle, things like that.” Meanwhile, she continues, “I think law enforcement finds that very counterintuitive to what a real crime victim would do. This crime is unique in that sense because it so personal. We get survivors years later that finally get to a place where they want to report.” Amidst this dynamic, Vanessa explains, when police are conducting an investigation “more times than not it is the victim that is really being the one that’s kind of being torn apart or interrogated about what happened.”

The unreliability of law enforcement to adequately follow-up on reports of sexual assault has substantial implications for the violence that occurs on the streets, though this link is rarely if ever acknowledged by law enforcement. Because police officers often do not meet the needs of sexual assault survivors and their loved ones, residents will often seek justice on their own. Referring to the shootings occurring in Austin, Vanessa says, they often “have to do with domestic violence and that sort of domestic situation. They are not just these random attacks that they are made out to be.... Which again gets down to the issue of addressing the underlying issues with what is going on in homes, what's going on in the streets, the domestic and sexual violence that could be taking place.” This inability of law enforcement to support some residents in their most vulnerable moments points towards the need for other types of community care and accountability.

### *Strategy for Protection from Police*

Though private lawyers have successfully kept Michael out of prison, despite his decades of heroin addiction, they offered no protection from street-level police encounters. When asked about his experiences with police, Michael shares a key strategy for minimizing those interactions, a strategy that was also enabled by his relative financial privilege. He says, “You know what I did... I had buddies that lived in Austin, I picked them up. Say I had 50 dollars. One would go and get the 5 bags for me, I would give him one and I would keep my 4.” As he explains, “I had a guy that would go get [the drugs] for me, because I didn’t want to get ripped off or robbed or arrested.” Meanwhile, he describes, “I pull over to the side of the road while he goes

to the spot, I've got my visor down, making sure there are no cops, it's just crazy. You've got the undercover cops, you've got the cops in the blue and whites. You're constantly looking out." Though Michael did not always use this strategy and bought many times on his own, he says, "it was worth it for me to give up a dime bag to have someone else get out and get it for me. This way," he says, "there's a lot less risk... a white guy goes down there, they think you're a cop or they think you're a pushover."

On the occasions that Michael did interact with 15<sup>th</sup> District police officers, it was far from pleasant. He explains, "I was a scumbag to them. 'You're from Lombard? That's a nice town. You're white, why are you down here? What the hell? You're going to jail.' They don't like it, they know why I am there. If they pass me in the car, even if they don't turn around and stop me, they know," he said. "Not many white people live down there. You have this community that's falling apart, part of its on me, because I am coming down there and contributing to that." Michael continues, "I was with this guy once and this cop was following us, I swallowed the bags and he saw me, he knew what I was doing. He started punching me in the stomach... Trying to get me to puke up the dope, I wouldn't do it." Illustrating the depth of his addiction, he continues, "Then you know what I did after I got away. I drove to Harlem where there is a Thornton gas station, went into the gas station, locked the door, made myself throw up, then opened them and did them."

### *DMC Across the System*

The above stories and data show how a person's ability to navigate the criminal justice system varies greatly based on their access to resources such as an

adequate defense. As Michael's stories show, family wealth frequently serves as a determinant of that access. However, as shown by Simon's experience, class is not the only social determinant at play. Race can make someone a direct target of police action, even when they have done nothing wrong. Whereas Michael was able to escape roughly 100 court appearances without serving a single year in prison, the pressure to make arrests at CPD ensured that thousands of Austin residents in entry-level drug sales positions were cycling IDOC. Further describing the plea bargaining process that often fuels this cycling, Simon says that prosecutors will "use the leverage of time and their abundant resources and play on these people to get them to plea bargain. Where's the support for the defendants? No support for defendants against giants. How do you go against giants fairly, justly? There's no justice in the fight. There should be justice in the fight."

Paul, a senior administrator within Cook County's juvenile detention center, affirms that this same process is mirrored at the juvenile level. He works at an institution where, on average, ninety-seven percent of a 250 youth detainee population are African-American or Latino youth. System advocates call this phenomenon Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC), and it exists at every level of both the juvenile and the adult justice systems. I ask Paul why the level of disproportionate contact is so high. He replies, "if you look at the statistics, even when a white kid gets arrested there is a much more of a likelihood that there will be some kind of station adjustment that will happen at the police station. Whereas a kid of color, either a Latino or an African American, there is less of a chance of that happening," he said. Paul says, "the entities within the system think that if you have

economic power to buy treatment, to buy therapeutic intervention, social workers or that kind of thing, or you have insurance to pay for that, then” your case can be handled outside the formal system. He continues, “then there is also the whole issue of the public defenders. A person of means, who tend to be people who are not of color, are able to get legal representation that they paid for. And you all know that makes a tremendous difference. I'm not taking anything away from the public defenders. But when you have very large caseloads, that is very different than having them being a private attorney who has been retained. The private attorney has much more time and many more resources to be able to provide for an adequate defense.”

## Chapter Four – Sustaining Factors, Fundamental Explanation

In academic circles today there is a limited understanding of how the US prison population is remade over time. This is because, as Orlando Patterson has noted, social science is generally not concerned with historical continuity (Patterson, 2010). Perhaps due to this inattention, in the case of mass incarceration we often confuse the originating factors responsible for the phenomena with sustaining ones (Gottschalk, 2011). Studies to date have understood the *production* of widespread imprisonment through forces like labor market isolation, educational exclusion, targeted policing, institutional racism and a host of other socio-economic factors (Peck and Theodore, 2008; Meiners, 2007; James, 2002; Western, 2007; Richie, 2012). By using the extended case method to study the neighborhood as a meeting ground for these forces, in this chapter I work towards a theory of the social *reproduction* of mass incarceration, illuminating the role of concentrated incarceration in deepening the structural disadvantages of low-income African-American neighborhoods.

Showing how the mechanisms described in the previous chapter operate and intersect over time, I advance a theory of why concentrated disadvantage is so durable. Following the accumulation of stressors that emerged during deindustrialization and the rise of the illegal drug trade, neighborhoods like Austin saw a switch in public investment priorities, a rise in punitive institutions that disrupt positive social learning, and a profound rupture in family and community bonds. By social learning, I mean the ways that people are able and/or unable to



respond to stimuli within their social contexts (Bandura, 1977). Through the identification of these patterns, I push beyond the mainstream explanation of concentrated incarceration, whereby “Tough on Crime” politics and the “War on Drugs” increased both arrests and convictions which, accompanied by harsh sentencing reforms, led to the rates of hyper-incarceration we see today. Explored in the last chapter, this narrative provides a partial explanation of concentrated incarceration but does not fully illuminate how punitive policies acted on already disadvantaged places to create new social forces that are both counterproductive and potentially self-reproducing.

In contrast, the patterns examined in this chapter show how punitive policies act on already disadvantaged places, thereby shedding light on the place-based maintenance of the carceral state over time. Described in Table 9, I suggest that each of the patterns discussed is supported by dominant logics, acted out by specific institutions, and expressed through frameworks for state behavior. In effect, these patterns have closed off the available routes to human development for residents of high-incarceration areas, until there is almost nowhere where a troubled youth or disconnected adult can go to return to a stable place. From the shift in public investment priorities, to disruptions in how people learn from their environment, to the rupture in family and community bonds, each of these patterns further embeds and expands the reach of the carceral state, magnifying the stressors that accumulated in neighborhoods like Austin during the most intensive periods of deindustrialization.

*Table 9: Fundamental Explanation of Concentrated Incarceration*

<b>Cumulative Patterns</b>	<b>Dominant Logic</b>	<b>Institutions</b>	<b>Framework for State Behavior</b>
Switch in investment priorities.	Social Control	IDOC / IDHS	Carceral state drains money from vital human development programs.
Intersecting punitive systems disrupt social learning.	Population Management	Adult and Juvenile System, Education System, Labor Market.	Rise of institutional policies that exclude those most in need of supports.
Disruption of families and blocks	Extended Separation	Police, Courts, Prisons.	Intergenerational transmission of disadvantage.
<i>Intergenerational transmission of disadvantage.</i>	<i>Suppression as counterproductive strategy.</i>	<i>Rise of Regressive Rule Regimes across Systems.</i>	<i>Criminalization of Space.</i>

Recognizing these patterns requires a degree of critical estrangement from the present day conceptions of life in Austin, a type of inquiry that examines daily life with new and questioning eyes. It requires an interrogation of the fact that so many people have been convicted of so many felonies on Chicago's West Side for so long. This work of estrangement works in the exact opposite direction of criminalization, unpacking subjectivities rather than reifying them. By studying mass incarceration's extended logics in this way, I help to reveal the otherwise obscure relationships between neighborhood disadvantage, crime, and incarceration. As shown in the final row of the above chart, the three patterns I identify have the cumulative effect of ensuring the intergenerational transmission of

disadvantage through regressive institutional rules that promote the criminalization of neighborhood space.

### **Collateral Consequences**

In this section, I review existing scholarship on the profound civic, social and economic consequences that widespread incarceration has had on US society. As seen across the works of Beth Richie, Mary Patillo, David Weiman, Bruce Western, Jeremy Travis, Meda Chesney-Lind, Megan Comfort, Marie Gottschalk, Donald Braman, Chris Wakefield and Sarah Wildeman, there is a clear consensus that mass incarceration affects more than just the individual behind bars and that these effects far outlive the period of incarceration. Underlying each of these scholars' work is a concern with the punitive reach of government among already marginalized populations. As they contend, mass incarceration has long-term societal implications for these populations, forever altering the trajectories of individuals, families, communities and even entire generations.

In the civic arena, mass incarceration raises questions about the boundaries and conditions of American citizenship in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Decades of widespread imprisonment have done away with many "gains to African American citizenship hard won by the civil rights movement (Western, 2006, p. 191)." At the individual level, people with a past criminal conviction face long term stigmas and substantial barriers to full reintegration to society, to the point where "one's debt to society is never paid" (Travis, 2005, p. 73). These extended effects include the loss of basic

rights such as voting, as well as numerous occupational disqualifications (Manza & Uggen, 2008). Furthermore, these effects do not just impact current prison inmates, but the “more than 47 million Americans (or a quarter of the adult population) [who] have criminal records on file with federal or state criminal justice agencies” (Travis, 2005, p. 71).

Among the post-release punishments faced by people with criminal convictions, felony disenfranchisement in the electoral arena has the most immediate and obvious political implications. Felony disenfranchisement conflates “legitimate punishment objectives with the denial of constitutional rights,” a dangerous precedent that directly impacts the outcome of state and national elections (Mauer, 2003, p. 55). In addition to the forty-eight states that prevent prison inmates from voting and the thirty-two that bar the act among former inmates on parole, there are thirteen states where a felony conviction can result in permanent disenfranchisement, lasting decades after the end of one’s prison sentence. As a result of these laws, roughly four million Americans are forced to sit out of any given national election (Mauer, 2003). These are not a random four million Americans. Rather than the general populus they reflect the very same communities targeted by the War on Drugs, where nearly eighty percent of all drug offenders in state prisons are either African-American or Latino, despite the fact that white and suburban populations use illegal drugs at equal or greater rates (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2012).

The familial and social consequences of mass incarceration are no less staggering than the civic ones. For millions of families in America, mass

imprisonment has forever changed the trajectories of spouses, parents, and children, creating massive disruptions in family structures (Wildeman and Western, 2014; Clear, 2007). Although the long-term separation caused by mass incarceration has been directly linked to both non-residence among fathers and the black-white race gap in marriage rates, these impacts have rarely been taken into account by policy makers (Western, 2006). Relatedly, though nearly 90 percent of the prison population is male, mass incarceration has had incredible direct and indirect effects on women. The United States has about a third of the world's women prisoners, with a total of about 200,000 prisoners at any given time (Talvi, 2007). In addition to direct imprisonment, mass incarceration has been linked to the continuation of violence against women in the US, blindly punishing select offenders without ever uprooting the underlying drivers for many women's victimization, such as the persistent economic marginalization which magnifies household stress and makes women more dependent on unhealthy partner relationships (Richie, 2012).

Mass incarceration's impact on children is also profoundly disturbing. It has become a vehicle for "the intergenerational transmission of social inequality," effecting not just those sentenced to particular crimes, but their children for years after those sentences are served (Wakefield and Wildeman, 2013, p. 158). Children who have been made fatherless or motherless by incarceration "are not only more likely to be abused, live in poverty, and burden their extended family, but are also more likely to be involved in the criminal justice system themselves," a stark reality that contributes "to a cycle of abuse and neglect across generations" (Braman, 2007, p.93). As seen in the lives and testimonies of my interviewees, the cyclical nature of

intergenerational incarceration is pervasive in Austin. According to Wakefield and Wildeman, the effects of parental incarceration are so severe that “the prison boom might have long-term consequences for racial inequities even if the imprisonment rate were to return to its 1970s level today” (Wakefield and Wildeman, 2011. p.795). Throughout the rest of this chapter, I work to illuminate the neighborhood context in which these effects unfold, providing qualitative insights into the disruption of family bonds within a high-incarceration area.

### **Pattern 1: Switch in Investment Priorities**

Starting in the early 1980s, rather than dedicate our domestic policy efforts towards winning the War on Poverty by ending hunger or unemployment, the United States had prioritized a parallel war in high-poverty communities. The War on Drugs fundamentally shifted the ways in which we understood the problem of urban poverty. Rather than view poverty itself as the destructive force holding back many communities, the War on Drugs constructed the policy target as illegal narcotics, those who distribute them, and those who are addicted to them (Alexander, 2012). By 1996, the year in which the “War on Poverty” was originally projected to be won, 1 in every 3 black men was likely to spend some portion of his life behind bars (Mauer & Huling, 1995; Sentencing Project, 2013). Consequently, as shown in Figure 6, in every US presidential administration during this era, policies were advanced that led to dramatic increases in punitive investments in marginalized urban areas.

*Figure 6: Rise of Punitive Policies by Presidential Administration*

Major Criminal Justice Policies, Initiatives and Realities								
<b>Kennedy, Johnson:</b> Moynihan Report Omnibus Safe Streets and Crime Control Act of 1968.	<b>Nixon, Ford, Carter:</b> War on Drugs. Over 250,000 State & Federal Prisoners.	<b>Reagan, Bush</b> Sentencing Reforms Over 500,000 State & Prisoners.	<b>Clinton:</b> Crime Control/ Law Enforcement Act. Over 1,000,000 State & Federal Prisoners.	<b>W. Bush:</b> Prison Privatization Over 1,600,000 State & Federal Prisoners.	<b>Obama:</b> Maintenance of regressive policies. Over 1,500,000 State & Federal Prisoners.			
1960s	➡	1970s	➡	1980s	➡	1990s	➡	2000s

The rise of mass incarceration marked a heightened government commitment to crime suppression, often at the expense of preventative measures. Not surprisingly, this shift in domestic priorities has had huge implications for the types of resources available to urban areas. At all scales of government, American cities began to see punishment and incapacitation take an ever greater share of government dollars invested in neighborhoods (Peck and Theodore, 2008). More than housing, job creation, public transportation, youth development, or any other vital planning concern, incapacitation has been the fastest growing and ultimately the largest of all public investments in urban areas.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, as public investments in human development declined, the penalties for failing to reach one's human potential rose dramatically.

Jonathan Simon (2009, p. 6) describes this as “the vast reorienting of fiscal and administrative resources toward the criminal justice system at both the federal

<sup>17</sup> By far the biggest line item, in 2012 the Cook County budget for Public Safety was larger than the entire 1985 Cook County budget: \$1,178,878,129.00 versus \$987,100,000.

and state level,” and asserts that “it has resulted in a shift aptly described as a transformation from ‘welfare state’ to ‘penal state’.” Speaking to the regressive shift in investment priorities, from social reproduction to social control, Simon explains how the ‘get tough on crime’ era in US politics moved our primary focus away from poverty alleviation and towards crime management (Simon, 2009, pp. 7-8).

Highlighting one tragic implication of this shift, Richie observes that the current carceral response to domestic violence fails to foster greater economic independence for low-income women, expand appropriate social services, or securing much needed alternative housing resources (Richie, 2003). She asserts that “[a]gainst the backdrop of divestment of basic services in low-income neighborhoods and mass incarceration, women of color are now burdened in ways that have untold costs and consequences,” and that the situation further undermines “[w]omen’s caretaking roles [which] have historically been undervalued in most sectors of society” (Richie, 2003, p. 147). This is due, at least in part, to reductions in the amount of money available to fund proven preventative strategies like after-school programs and youth development, as well as services for survivors of domestic violence.

In this section I analyze the landscape of public investments in the Austin neighborhood, comparing spending on incarceration with available resources for community development and health efforts. In so doing, I build upon previous arguments that widespread imprisonment “merely exacerbates the diversion of resources from needed community-based services” (Richie, 2003, p.139). Whereas human development programs represent a long-term investment in human capital,



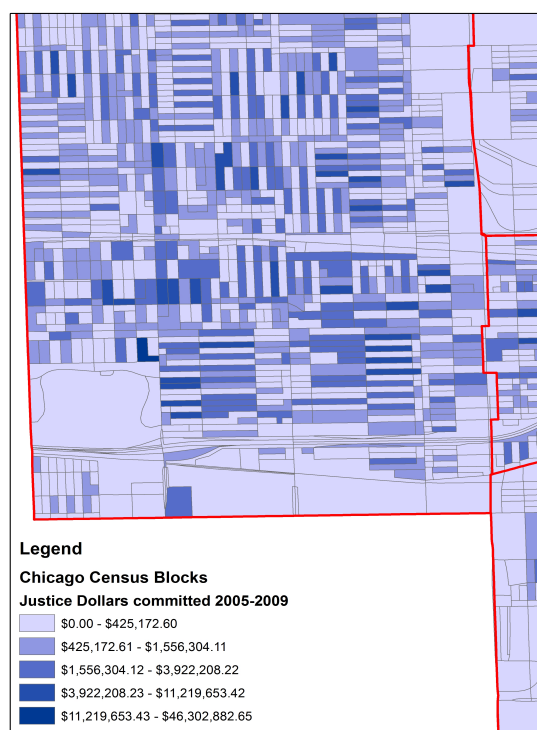
mass incarceration works only so long as massive investments in human incapacitation are being sustained, thereby hinging on the continued dedication of a substantial percentage of the social surplus towards the targeted removal of people from their communities.

This shift in priorities becomes clear when looking at Austin. As shown in Figure 5, the West Side has become a place where the government spends enormous amounts of money on corrections. Meanwhile, insufficient funds are used as an excuse to shutter public schools (Caputo, 2013). This trend has broad implications and reveals the problems that mass incarceration poses for those wishing to improve neighborhood futures. However, as concentrated incarceration has taken root on Chicago's West Side, students of community and economic development were being trained to redesign residential space, work for affordable housing, and advocate for living wage jobs without ever being asked to consider the roles that the criminal legal system plays in urban neighborhoods.<sup>18</sup> This may be permissible in some areas of major US cities, where police are primarily seen driving down commercial corridors and it is abnormal for the fate of residents to be bound with a probation or parole officer. Yet in neighborhoods like Austin, flashing cameras often adorn major intersections, police can frequently be seen making arrests in front of homes, and almost everyone knows someone who must regularly report to their probation or parole officer.

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<sup>18</sup> Most analyses of concentrated disadvantage fail to explore the roles played by urban systems, portraying neighborhoods as geographies that are isolated from broader urban institutions and interventions. This blind spot helps to perpetuate longstanding patterns of disinvestment by obscuring the possible entry points for such investment and by concealing the regressive (anti-development) nature of existing, ongoing investments.

*Figure 5: IDOC Dollars Committed in South Austin from 2005-2009*



As established in the previous chapter, society is relying on law enforcement to respond to economic issues like unemployment and medical issues like addiction that are far outside their scope of influence. In the words of one police officer, rather than invest in schools, jobs, or community health programs, “society wants police to solve their problems.” This approach is clearly failing children and youth, as well as long-term residents. The following quotes, stories and insights highlight the need for greater neighborhood investments, beyond strategies of suppression and control. I highlight three necessary areas for the reinvestment of justice dollars. The first two areas, schools and violence prevention, constitute the foundation of a ‘no-entry’

framework for neighborhoods. The third area, re-entry, is essential to support those residents who are already caught up in the vicious cycle of crime and incarceration.

### *The Education Hustle*

In 2013 the Chicago Board of Education closed 49 public elementary schools, 15 of which were on the far West Side. Of those closed, four schools were in the Austin community. An analysis of the Census tracts where each of the 49 schools closed found that, over a 12-year period, more than \$2.7 billion was committed in prison sentences. Meanwhile, the school closings are estimated to save the Chicago Public Schools \$43 million a year, each year, over the course of a decade (Caputo, 2013). This historic disinvestment in neighborhood-based public education is one powerful example of public spending patterns that prioritize control over human development gains.

Throughout my fieldwork, the fight to keep schools open was a frontline issue. Maya, a mother in the Austin neighborhood, was not active in this struggle, but was a keen observer. Asked what she would do to improve daily life in Austin, keeping schools open was at the top of her list. In her words, “[t]hat mayor, whatever his name is, he’s trying to close these schools, he should be trying to put everybody together, to fix that. If you take that education from the kids, that’s going to make them want to pick the guns up. They are going to be mad, they can’t go to [new schools], because some of the people in the neighborhood don’t have cars to go all the way out to other schools. So these kids are going to be sitting around.”

Indeed, in the two years since the closings, the total number of CPS students

declined by more than 6,000 (WBEZ, 2014). While many of these students transferred to private schools or moved out of the district, many students also just stopped going.

Even before the school closings, the needs of students and teachers were low on the public spending priority list. In the words of Oscar, a formerly incarcerated Austin resident, “[t]here’s a lot of stuff going on with these kids that better schools could help with. Classes are overcrowded, teachers underpaid, textbooks outdated... That’s not a nurturing learning environment. How can somebody be productive in these circumstances? I think that education with tax dollars should be a level playing field, it actually should be distributed equally no matter where you are from, that way we would not be the haves and the have not.” As Oscar’s quote shows, the current misinvestments in neighborhoods shape the environments in which human growth and development occur, reinforcing broader societal inequities. Under-resourced school environments increase the likelihood of both student failure and exclusionary responses to that failure. Thus, the unequal playing field described by Oscar has direct influence over which schools will send students to the juvenile justice system.

For students who were expelled or pushed out of their first assigned schools, alternative schools are often the only other option. These schools are a frequent stopping place for youth before getting drawn into the juvenile justice system, a common referral point for probation-involved youth, and also one of the few welcoming points of return for youth leaving the system. Despite being such an ideal potential intervention point, alternative schools must often operate with even fewer

resources than regular public schools and are typically run by private contractors. Speaking about this missed opportunity, Judge J says, “[i]ts like they got the worst of the worst in there and it is not like they have the best of the best in terms of personnel and services. That's a recipe for disaster. I had a kid [in court] once, he left school everyday right before lunch. They would ask him why and he says, ‘The lunch they serve us is this big chunk of bologna and a piece of bread.’ I said, everyday? He said, ‘Everyday.’ I turned and looked at the person who was there from the school and I said, ‘Is that what lunch is?’ They replied, ‘Yeah, pretty much. We are trying to do better.’ A chunk of bologna and a piece of bread! I wouldn't go to school everyday and eat a chunk of bologna and a piece of bread.” This story reflects a profound lack of concern for those youth who are most likely to spend many of their future decades cycling in and out of prisons. While the closing and perpetual underfunding of neighborhood public schools represents a general disinvestment in human development for neighborhoods like Austin, the daily bologna served at alternative schools shows an outright abandonment of those youth most in need of care and nurturing.

The disconcerting realities do not end there. In many ways, receiving a quality education becomes even harder after a person has gone through the criminal justice process. Talking about people already involved with the justice system, Judge J critiques the fact that having a felony conviction precludes people from receiving government financial assistance for education. She says, “[i]t makes no sense, you know. We want this person to turn their life around and education will help them do it! The entre into that is the money to pay for education and we say no!” Judge J can

only speak to one point of light. She says, “I think judges are beginning to see the problem. There are even some legislatures out there who are beginning to see the problem and it is costing the nation a fortune! So, I think the light bulb is starting to go off.” She continues, “I wish I could get every judge and legislature in the country to read The New Jim Crow. Not all the answers are there but that book opens the dialogue about what is it that we should be trying to do. We are pushing up on two million people incarcerated in this nation, that's crazy.”

### *Community-Based Prevention*

Though an essential pillar, schools are not the only places with the power to keep young people out of trouble with the law. Many residents in Austin talk about the need to get back to an “it takes a village to raise a child” approach in the neighborhood. As they observe, doing so would require more safe havens, more places that can help keep youth off the streets. Talking about the dearth of options of such options in the neighborhood, a lifelong resident named Bobby recalls, “when I went to school, we had social centers after school. You go home and do your homework for an hour, come back to school and you had a social center. And if you needed extra help with something the teachers would be there to help. But now there is nowhere for these kids to go.” Describing how the neighborhood landscape is different for what he had growing up, Bobby says, “It is more fragmented. Fewer resources. Fewer places for the kids to go.” This absence of outlets, in addition to economic need, drives many youth in the neighborhood to be involved in gangs.

Douglas is an outreach worker who supports gang-affiliated youth in Austin. He feels strongly that with more investment in the youth he serves, they would be able to get away from a life rooted in drugs and guns. He says, “[w]hatever it is these kids have a passion for, whatever they have interests in, you can nourish that with an after school program.” Without that nourishment, every year hundreds of Austin youth cycle in and out of the CCJTDC. In 2011, the CCJTDC had 249 admissions from Austin, at an approximate cost of \$2,833,310. These youth are often arrested many times each year, without any non-punitive, community-based intervention. Judge J talks about the youth she sees who are getting “arrested every six to eight weeks,” often for repeated, minor offenses. Despite the relatively low threat to public safety posed by youth like this, she often has nowhere to send them that will break the pattern of arrest. Probation officers will come into her courtroom to talk about how youth are “not going to school, not living in the home of their parents, testing positive for drugs,” or otherwise violating their probation. But she has few community-based resources to respond to these violations. The kinds of programs Douglas runs are an exception, and the expanded services that he calls for are often little more than a dream.

Though there is heightened awareness about the adverse effects of juvenile detention, Judge J does not see options for youth expanding at the community-level. She says, “increasingly, we are being asked not to send kids to the Department of Juvenile Justice. They are trying to come with all of these other ways to address the problems, but they are not putting a money into those [options] so it becomes a Band Aid.” Her words point to the limits of shrinking the carceral state without a

parallel buildup of community-based supports. Though keeping youth out of the justice system should always be top priority, doing so without creating new supports for troubled youth does little to address the underlying drivers for their misbehaviors. This is the danger of closing down facilities only as a cost saving measure. It does not lead to new human development pathways in neighborhoods.

Crucially, the need for community-based prevention also exists at the adult level. Jails and prisons are home to roughly 400,000 people in the US with mental illness (NAMI, 2004; TASC, 2014). More than 1.5 million people in US jails and prisons fit the medical criteria for addiction (CAS, 2010). Illness and addiction are issues that are ill fitted for punitive responses, as harsh environments can often aggravate both conditions. Meanwhile, with the right investments, both are conditions that can be treated in supportive community settings. Without that investment, both mental illness and addiction can fuel larger patterns of insecurity within neighborhood life. Speaking of mental health issues she sees on the job, a 15<sup>th</sup> District Officer named Beth says, “[t]hose can be some of the scariest jobs we go on. I think the mental health is declining in the city, a lot of places are closing, they don’t have the resources that they used to. There is a high population with mental health needs.” In her conversation with Austin residents with mental illness, Beth says, “a lot of these people are saying that they can’t afford their medications, that they haven’t seen their doctor, so they’re not taking their meds. They don’t know what to do when they get into a crisis mode, and the only outlet we have for them is taking them to Loretto [Hospital], where they can stay for a few days and then they’re right back out on the street.” She asks, “Who is going to follow up with that patient to



make sure that they get their prescription?” Beth’s story illustrates how society is asking law enforcement officials to respond to issues that fall well outside their purview. Both mental illness and addiction are core public health concerns. But when public health needs are neglected, they often become matters of public safety.

### *Reinvestment for Re-Entry*

Creating more available and better tailored mental health and addiction treatment centers would help to keep hundreds of thousands of individuals from entering the criminal legal system. It would also help break the pattern of detention and incarceration for hundreds of thousands who have already been imprisoned. Without proper interventions however, the unaddressed patterns of addiction and/or illness can continue for decades. Michael shares how he observed this pattern when commuting to Austin to buy heroin. He says, “I know a guy who has been in and out of prison 20 times for selling on the corner. When he gets out of prison he has nothing to do, he starts using again, he has to sell to support his habit.” From Michael’s perspective, this cycling is avoidable. He says, “there are just a lack of good treatment programs... I don’t think there are enough beds available, enough good quality places for them to go. I have heard horror stories about [some places]. Basically, you go in there, it’s a room full of people laying in bed, throwing up and going through withdrawal. After a day or two [the staff] come down and pick four or five people to go to the rehab and everyone else is kicked out on the street.” As Michael illustrates, the need for higher quality, more robust treatment options is

profound. When these options are created and adequately funded, they are incredibly cost efficient.<sup>19</sup>

The need for resources for people caught in the revolving door of prison and community is not just limited to the treatment of substance abuse treatment and/or mental illness. Housing, education and employment supports also play pivotal roles in successful re-entry stories. The stories of Oscar and Mashawn, both formerly incarcerated Austin residents, helps to illustrate this point. From age 19 to 40, Oscar served a total of 11 years in prison over four terms, at a cost of nearly a quarter million dollars. Describing how he broke the cycle of entry and return, he says, “I came to realize that there were resources available to help navigate me to become self-sufficient. That’s when I started volunteering with the West Side Health Authority re-entry department. I also enrolled in school at Harold Washington [College], then I became more interested, more concerned with my community. Now I am gainfully employed, a vital part of my community, and an asset to my family.” He continues, “I am in a position to help others who were also in that situation, to give people an insight that just because they made a mistake doesn’t mean that life ends.” Oscar’s success story was largely facilitated by the Westside Health Authority, a place where he began as a volunteer and worked his way up to an employee. In his words, “it gave me a sense of purpose, that’s where it all started out.”

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<sup>19</sup> TASC is arguably the leading substance abuse provider in Illinois, with programs all across Chicago neighborhoods, including Austin. In 2013, TASC served 6,389 adults in their Corrections and Community Re-entry programs. Their average success rate was 71 percent, notably higher than Illinois’ average of 60 percent (TASC, 2013).

The Westside Health Authority (WHA) is also where Oscar met Mashawn, and helped him to find supportive housing. While WHA has to turn away thousands of job seeking re-entrants every year due to lack of opportunities, Mashawn was one of the people who was also able to secure employment through the agency, working on house construction and remodeling. The job includes “everything except electrical” and he learned all of his skills on the job. Like Oscar, Mashawn now mentors other men returning to the community. In addition to the assistance, Mashawn shares that he has been supported by “just seeing other people who walked that walk, as far as incarceration, and now they were employed helping other people. That gave me an inspiration to do the same thing.” As their stories show, agencies like WHA have been able to create real community among those they serve. Providing more than just a roof over people’s heads, WHA offers Oscar and Mashawn the three things that have been shown to be fundamental human motivators – autonomy, mastery, and purpose (Pink, 2009). Rather than a large re-entry facility, he lives with a small group of respected peers where he is rarely monitored. On the job, he has regular work where he is gaining new skills. And, in his neighborhood, he has a role in an organization whose mission matters to him.

Speaking to what it would take for more people in the neighborhood to have the kind of support he’s had. Oscar says, “Well, number one, you need the resources. Not just training programs, but access to actual gainful employment. Employment empowers and makes a person feel connected, to family and to community. Also, there needs to be more understanding from society. To educate society on how we incorporate people who have faced incarceration back into the social fabric. We

can't exclude the incarcerated, they are a part of the votes, part of the education systems, part of raising children, part of community and business development."

Though an outsider to Austin, Michael observed this same need for public investment. He also raised critical questions about where the government's current priorities are. In his words, "[t]he city has to help. It's nice to have money in the loop, they've got flowers and trees and all that, but it's almost like its own little city down there. There is no help from anyone [for Austin]. They have to do something to improve that neighborhood, the people can't do it on their own." He continues, "It's almost like the city just forgot about that whole neighborhood."

While the education, economic and health needs of Austin have indeed been neglected, the amount of corrections dollars spent in the neighborhood show that it has not been forgotten. Rather, it has been subject to a failed investment strategy that precludes the achievement of human development goals while ensuring the perpetual cycling of residents through the criminal justice system. This constitutes more than just a transition from a welfare to penal state. It marks a much broader divestment in healthy social reproduction; a concentrated abandonment of human potential. While many Austin residents never receive the second chance that Oscar and Mashawn secured, experiences like those of Douglas' clients show that hundreds of youth never even get a first chance at success. Moving beyond this paradigm of suppression and control requires the reinvestment of justice dollars into a no-entry framework, one that publicly supports public schools, fully invests in afterschool programs, and ensures that conditions like addiction and mental illness are recognized and treated like the public health issues.

## **Pattern 2: Punishment and Social Learning**

Institutional logics reflect underlying ideologies about people, what they are capable of, and how they change. I argue that these logics can serve as forces for human development or de-humanization, either advancing one's potential in the world or further concealing it, even perhaps from the subject in question. When mapped onto specific institutions, logics can function as a decisive mediator between people's starting position in the world and people's outcomes in the world. Throughout this dissertation, I have shown how the carceral state operates through its own far-reaching chains of reasoning which guide the trajectory of diverse institutional decisions and responses. By studying the ways that these punitive logics operate across key urban domains, I have pointed to multiple counterproductive processes that intersect within neighborhoods like Austin. These processes are named in Table 10 and, when considered in concert, create a punitive web that counteracts the most paramount human need of all, namely healthy development over the life course. As the table shows, punitive logics in Austin are not limited to the juvenile and adult criminal legal systems; they penetrate schools, businesses, and mental health centers. Consequently, the spread of the carceral state must be considered beyond police stations and courthouses.

*Table 10: Counterproductive Logics, Urban Domains and the Punitive Web*

<b>Counterproductive Logic</b>	<b>Relevant Domain</b>
Widespread absence is met with parental removal.	<b>Adult Criminal justice System</b> <i>Breakdown of household controls.</i>
Long-term unemployment is met with a stigma-amplifying experience.	<b>Neighborhood Labor Market</b> <i>Narrowing of economic opportunity.</i>
Juvenile justice contact creates severing from possible supportive environments.	<b>Juvenile Justice System</b> <i>Increased likelihood of incarceration.</i>
Mental health and addiction needs go untreated in 'correctional' institutions.	<b>Mental Health and Treatment System</b> <i>Perpetuation of illness.</i>
Students struggling in classrooms are suspended and expelled from school.	<b>Education System</b> <i>Increased isolation of most isolated youth.</i>

Each of these domains enables the work of concentrated criminalization, whereby challenges like addiction and crises like unemployment are presented as criminal concerns, rather than matters of health or economics. Moreover, each domain points to the co-constitutive nature of systems and community life. Among young black residents disconnected from positive neighborhood pathways, the combined weight of these counterproductive logics reinforces the belief that obtaining a felony conviction is more rule than exception and that imprisonment is more of a likelihood than an outcome to be avoided at all costs (Cooper, 2013). In turn, this punitive web shapes the parameters for individual and group aspirations, influencing perceptions of the future and, ultimately, experiences of it.

Given that each felony conviction equates to a loss of years of freedom and mobility, accompanied by a further shrinking of life opportunity, I argue that the punitive web named above has great bearing over the social production of time. Put plainly, the presence or absence of the carceral state in one's community influences the ways that time is experienced by residents. For those directly impacted by

imprisonment, years that might have been used for education, income generation, and/or the formation of life relationships are instead spent behind bars. By disrupting schooling, parenting, and even peer relationships, carceral productions of time slow down and/or preclude people's experiences of normal life-course events. Imprisonment thereby prohibits a wide range of social learning that might be taken for granted by those living outside the context of a high-incarceration neighborhood.

Furthermore, I argue that each of the counterproductive logics named above represents a punitive response to accumulated stress, which can be driven by poverty, structural racism, exposure to trauma, or some combination of the three. Despite breakthroughs in the research on poverty and trauma, the effect of elevated stress levels on human development have not been incorporated into the formal logics of the law or dominant theories of public safety. Rather, the punishment of disadvantage has become an essential part of the reproduction of intergenerational poverty and incarceration. In this section's Austin stories, I show how the punitive web of the state actively prohibits social learning amidst high levels of accumulated stress. This effect is the result of key urban systems that operate differently in areas of concentrated disadvantage, responding to higher levels of poverty and trauma with more punitive sanctions on behavior, thereby fueling prison cycling (Clear, 2014). Through the accumulation of these institutional responses, the pain and struggle of thousands of individuals have been turned into criminalized status and, over time, many areas of concentrated disadvantage have become zones of heightened incarceration. This is how concentrated criminalization is created. Individuals within areas of concentrated disadvantage become coded by punitive

systems and marked by felonied pasts, a process that forever shapes the ways they are able to interact in the world. This series of regressive institutional actions blocks the fulfillment of the most basic human needs, whereby society attempts to punish signs of stress rather than uproot its driving forces.<sup>20</sup>

### **Toxic and Traumatic Stress**

In this section I define poverty as the absence of those resources needed to ensure survival and trauma as the disruption of healthy development through the experience of extreme adverse events (such as violence). Whereas poverty has been shown to create high levels of stress that increase cognitive burdens, trauma also dramatically increases stress levels and has been conclusively linked to disruptions in both neuro- and social- emotional development. To differentiate the proximate causes, I refer to the type of stress produced by poverty as toxic stress and the type of stress produced by trauma as traumatic stress.

Poverty elevates human stress levels in a manner that can impact both an individual's normal development processes and ability to create a buffer from major life stressors (Farah et al., 2010). Building on psychologists' recognition that cognition is a finite resource, the daily challenges associated with surviving poverty have been shown to consume high levels of people's available cognitive capacity, leaving minimal space left for activities associated with upward mobility, like

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<sup>20</sup> By ignoring underlying stress levels present in high-disadvantage neighborhoods, most current interventions also ignore the cyclical nature of harm, whereby extreme hardship, loss, and trauma frequently beget more hardship, loss, and trauma. Because these underlying drivers of violence are not addressed, children and youth in Chicago are exposed to chronic adversity that consistently threatens their health and wellbeing.



continued education (Mani et al., 2013). Moreover, poverty also impacts stress management and the regulation of emotions, whereby chronic stress provides a “toxic insult” to that maturation of the prefrontal cortex, disturbing the way that it is “molding and fine-tuning” during pivotal development years (Kim et al., 2013). As these tiers of impact indicate, poverty can significantly weaken people’s life outcomes in ways that make them more vulnerable to adverse outcomes like labor market isolation, drug addiction, and incarceration.

The literature on trauma has grown extensively in recent decades and has pointed to serious, sustained impacts on human stress levels (Resick, 2001). A cornerstone of this research is the landmark Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Study by Vince Felitti and Rob Anda. Drawing from a research sample of more than 17,000 Kaiser Permanente insurance policy holders, the ACEs study finds statistically sound correlations between the number of traumatic events a person faced in their childhood and negative life outcomes. The study’s Principle Investigators explain how painful childhood experiences, such as a missing parent and/or physical abuse, can lead to negative life outcomes, such as high-risk health behaviors like substance abuse and unusually high numbers of sexual partners, which, in turn, increase the likelihood of early death (Felitti et al., 1998).<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Crucially, the literature on trauma reveals that reacting violently is not anyone’s natural impulse, but that persistent traumas can shape inter-generational patterns of human behavior. This is largely because of the depth of damage that is possible from adverse events accumulated over time. When the underlying stressors in the lives of trauma survivors are never alleviated, then there is little opportunity for healing and recovery. As the ACEs research indicates, when persistent unresolved pain reaches a certain threshold in a person’s life, unhealthy outlets for that pain emerge. Crucially, not everyone who survives trauma becomes an aggressor. The vast majority do not. But violence is one established response; a possible result of unusually high stress loads combined with a trajectory of loss and powerlessness that goes tragically wrong (Perry & Szalavitz, 2010).

Importantly, a wide range of experiences can prompt traumatic responses in individuals. These include witnessing community violence, witnessing or being in a severe accident, unexpected loss of a loved one, experiencing neglect or physical and sexual abuse, and other unpredictable events where there is concern about an individual's safety (Cook et al., 2005). Each of these traumatic events can have profound effects on a survivor's development and functioning due, at least in part, to the changes that stress related to trauma has on the brain. Brain structures involved in regulating emotion, logic, and reasoning, as well as those that affect the ability to use logic and reasoning, can be impacted and harmed by exposure to trauma while the brain is developing (Cook et al., 2005). Trauma's impact on the brain thereby parallels poverty's impact, suggesting that individuals who grow up in communities where both are common face even greater challenges.

### **Punishing Poverty and Trauma**

The current paradigm of punishment responds to high-levels of accumulated stress in ways that amplify rather than mitigate existing challenges to the creation of safer neighborhoods. This punishment of stress becomes obvious when analyzing the juvenile justice system, which disproportionately involves youth with few family resources and high trauma exposure. A judge's assessment of juvenile poverty frequently drives harsh sentencing for relatively minor offenses (Birkhead, 2012). Simultaneously, the majority of youth who enter juvenile detention have survived

family and/or community violence (Wiig, Widom, & Tuell, 2003; Abram et al., 2004). Meanwhile, the anti-social environments of the juvenile system have been found to be a major contributor to adult incarceration. When comparing juvenile offenders with similar demographics and crimes, the decision to detain and/or incarcerate a juvenile in Chicago makes them “13 percent less likely to graduate from high school and 22 percent more likely” to be incarcerated as an adult (Aizer and Doyle, 2013).

While it is now common knowledge that the United States has more adult prisoners than anywhere else in the world, the parallel expansion of juvenile imprisonment has been largely understudied. Yet the juvenile corrections rate in the US has increased faster than those of adults and that rate is many times higher than any other country in the world (Aizer and Doyle, 2013). In the following Austin stories, I highlight insights and experiences from many of the neighborhood’s primary juvenile justice actors. My findings illuminate many of the ways that human development is disrupted by the punishment of stress, from detention, to probation, to arrest, to school expulsion. Through these stories, I bring together insights from a juvenile detention administrator, a juvenile judge, juvenile probation officer, and the juvenile probation supervisor for Austin, as well as a 15<sup>th</sup> District police officer, a service provider at a leading agency for systems-involved youth, an outreach worker at a street intervention program, and a long-time IDOC prisoner living at a halfway house in the Austin neighborhood.

*Disparity, Dysfunction and Churning at the CCJTDC*

There is a common saying among juvenile justice advocates in Chicago – “If you go into the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center, you might think there are no white youth in the County.” Of the 5,271 admissions to the facility in 2010, only 135 were white. That’s less than three percent in a county that was nearly 66 percent white in that same year. Over 82 percent were African-American and the remaining 14 percent were almost all Hispanic (Project Nia, 2010). Meanwhile, Austin’s 60644 zip code is routinely one of the top five contributors to the CCJTDC with 200 to 250 admissions a year (ICJIA, 2012). That means that more youth are sent to juvenile detention from Austin each year than from the entire white population of Cook County.

Paul is a leading administrator at the CCJTDC and has spent almost his whole professional life working in corrections. Sharing openly about the culture of the institution, he says “[i]t is a culture based on respect for length of service. Meaning that if you’ve been here for a long time, then you’ve survived, and hence you are respected. And if you are new you are very suspicious. That is a very, very correctional thing and happens in every correctional system that I’ve have worked in.” By rewarding survival rather than positive contributions to the detained youth residents, this dynamic makes it difficult to improve staff performance at the facility, or to build a culture around those staff who are most committed to positive youth outcomes. Paul makes clear that a longer service time does not necessarily improve a guard’s performance. He says, “There is this theory that the keeper becomes as dysfunctional as the client. So there is a certain level of dysfunction. Because the

clients or the residents who are here have a level of dysfunction, then the staff that work here have a level of dysfunction as well.” Making matters worse for youth in the facility, staff dysfunction is combined with high levels of sensory deprivation, with no outdoor green space.

These forces help to explain why youth often leave the facility in a worse position than when they entered and, in turn, why the CCJTDC has a recidivism rate of well over sixty percent. While there are some solid programming efforts in the facility, it is an environment largely designed for containment. In Paul’s words, “it is very well known that these facilities increase recidivism.” A major reason for this is the type of anti-social learning that happens in the facility, where youth with high levels of need are isolated from positive outside influences and surrounded by “keepers,” rather than mentors, tutors, coaches and guides.

### *Social Learning and Restorative Justice*

Wilma was raised in Austin and now serves as a community leader there, though she lives just outside of the neighborhood boundaries. Among her other commitments, she helps to lead the Austin Coalition for Youth Justice, which is a collaborative effort to create a more fair juvenile justice system for Austin. She also works for the service agency with the strongest juvenile diversion programs in the area, guiding their partnership with IDJJ. The youth she supports have juvenile justice system involvement. Her job is to help connect them to the resources needed to minimize the possibility of future contact.

Wilma asserts, “one thing I am interested in changing is some type of way that all crime is not so full penalties. Like, really? Do they really have to be locked up for that? It is like once they are in the system then that is it.” Illustrating the limits of penalties as corrective measure, she says, “we have one young man who at age seventeen has been locked up 27 times. I don’t see how its possible that a seventeen year old can be locked up twenty-seven times... I’m sure there could have been twenty-six other interventions that could have been done other than locking him up. It is like that is the easy thing to do and clearly it is not changing his mind.” Through the Austin Coalition for Youth Justice Wilma is working to build more enlightened alternatives. In partnership with other coalition members, she is helping lead an effort to create a restorative justice hub in the neighborhood, so that youth who commit harms can be kept out of the formal justice system.

A supporter of these efforts, Judge J agrees with the need for more widespread alternatives to detention. She says, “One of the things the justice system ought to be doing is helping people to change their lives. But we are not.” She continues, “[i]n some instances, given the nature of the crime and the person involved, I mean you are supposed to impose dramatic, sometimes draconian, penalties. But not all of the time. And when people are labeled felons now, it is a role that is difficult to reverse.” Speaking to both the juvenile and adult systems, Judge J says, “[i]t is insane, in my humble opinion, for people with non-violent drug offenses, to suffer all of the consequences that they suffer as a result of being convicted felons. It is quagmire for those people.”

Providing an alternative to the formal system, the restorative justice hub that Wilma is creating would provide avenues for holding youth accountable without removing them from the community. In practice, this hub would serve as community space that advances restorative justice, working to strengthen relationships between crime victims, young offenders and other impacted residents. By using restorative practices an Austin hub would provide a safe place where community allies help youth offenders to develop meaningful leadership roles and to create a life vision beyond the harms they may have created or wounds they may have suffered.

### *The Victim / Offender Overlap*

One of the central insights of restorative justice is that perpetrators of harm were typically at the receiving end of harm earlier in their lives. The insight is summed up in the catchphrase, “hurt people, hurt people.” This phrase is supported by the reality that violent victimization is one of the greatest predictors of future offense (OJJDP, 2002). It is also supported by qualitative data on Austin youth who are juvenile justice system involved.

At the time of our interview, Pamela had served in the Juvenile Probation Department for 23 years, with 10 of those years as a supervisor. Her probation unit is mainly dedicated to Austin, with boundaries of “Division to Roosevelt and Austin to Cicero.” Pamela says, “[w]hen you look on a map, geographically, it is one of the smallest geographical areas of assignment in probation, but along with Englewood and some of the other high crime areas, we have a very high juvenile crime for being

such a small geographical area. We keep busy.” She has six officers on her team, each of whom has a caseload of anywhere between 20 and 30 youth. They have a total of 120 to 180 cases at any time, with an average caseload of 150 per month. On average, the youth on her caseload have “between seven and eight” arrests. She adds, “I just had a kid who had never been placed on probation but he had fifteen arrests. It is very rare that we will get a first time arrest.

Of the 150 that might be on the caseload of Pamela’s team at any time, she estimates that more than half have diagnosed mental health issues. She says, “A lot of our kids are showing something, everything from bipolar, schizophrenia, just a lot of mental health issues. And they have been either undiagnosed or they have been diagnosed and unserved or uncared for.” Explaining how her department responds to these diagnoses, Pamela says, “[t]hat’s why we have clinical intervention here. We have supervisors that oversee our group work, everything from fatherhood programs to individual counseling, clinical intervention. I mean that’s big... we have officers who have been hired throughout the years that have had social work backgrounds, masters degrees, and with additional training they have been able to create these specialized units to provide these services.” As Pamela describes, the youth in the juvenile system have basic mental health needs that have gone unrecognized by their schools and communities, something she attributes the fact that too few administrators make the connection between trauma exposure and mental illness.

Douglas, an outreach worker with a local violence prevention agency, underscores this point. Talking about the gang-affiliated youth he serves in Austin,



he explains, “we got a lot of clients that might not have been diagnosed with it but deal with post-traumatic stress. From the household and the streets. You see your best friend or somebody shot or killed in front of you. Being in the street you are holding the best friend or friend of yours and he died in your arms.” Though he recognizes this underlying issue, Douglas is ill prepared to provide clinical supports for the youth he serves. That is something his youth rarely receive before being sent to probation.

### *When Judges and Principals Battle*

Rather than a place of refuge or support, school is often contested ground for probation-involved youth in Austin. Pamela makes clear that many of the youth they see face serious challenges from administrators in their local schools. She says, “my unit makes a lot of referrals to education advocacy. I would say the number one reason is a lot of our kids are special education kids. At some point throughout their school years they have been categorized with some kind of learning disability and unfortunately the Chicago Public School system has not fulfilled their responsibilities in servicing or updating individual educational plans for this child.” As she explains, the needs for educational advocacy and mental health support are closely linked. Officers on her team work with lawyers who “assist on how we treat each case and move forward so that this young person receives all the services and benefits that they are deserving of in public school.” Tragically, it is not until Austin youth repeatedly break the law that they have advocates fighting for their full educational rights. Even then, the fight is frequently lost.

Asked about how many of the youth on her caseload are disengaged from school, Pamela just says that the number is high and explains that the problem exists at “both the elementary and high school levels. It is just as bad at both levels.” She continues, “we have had kids that are out of regular school attendance for over a year. You know, even at the elementary level. The big question is why the school system hasn't really acted on that prior to us coming into the picture.”

A simple reason for this is that schools lack the time, training and/or drive required. Though I could not get permission from the Chicago Public Schools to conduct formal interviews, juvenile arrest data make clear that schools rely heavily on juvenile justice actors to address behavioral problems. In the 15<sup>th</sup> District alone, there were 253 arrests in school buildings and an additional 35 arrests on school grounds during the calendar years of 2010 and 2011 (Kaba & Nagao, 2012). In Judge J's eyes, some of the behavioral challenges that emerge in school can be traced back to unmet educational needs. Pointing to the problems of a young person not being able to read in school, she says, “This kid is going to be a cut up or a class clown, this kid is going to disrupt things to cover up the fact that ‘I'm illiterate and I can't read.’ Or, the kid is going to become a bully. Somebody laughs at him when he is trying to read and not doing very well and when that other kid laughs he gets up out of his seat and goes over there and knocks the hell out of him. Now the fight is on. And then the kid is suspended and they show up here.” Asked if she gets a lot of school-based cases, Judge J says, “oh yes. It is because schools are trying to get rid of their bad apples and push them into the court system, push them into these alternative schools and they think ‘now I got that bad apple out of my hair.’ There are some

days I spend all day trying to push kids back in school and there are principals and administrators at some schools that are trying to send those same kids right back. I walk the kid in the front door and the principle is putting them out the back door.”

Many police officers are critical of schools’ overreliance on arrests, recognizing that it fails to get to the root cause of the issue. Though she is not a designated school officer, Beth gets called regularly to schools from the beat she is patrolling. Speaking to her preferred mode of solving problems, she says, “if you can talk to the offender or the aggressor, they usually have some sort of crisis, some sort of breakdown, where they were picked on, they lashed out, they don’t have the conflict resolution skills. They don’t have any other option but to resort to violence. They just don’t have any other option.” Beth shares a story about this, highlighting her relationship with a local therapeutic organization for youth. She says, “there was a little boy not too long ago who had been to River’s Edge and they taught him some anger management skills. He was 13 so clearly he’s not going to master all of these skills that even adults struggle with, but he was trying. I misinterpreted it at first, he was balling up his fist and I thought he was angry, that’s what he was taught to do when he’s mad. Tighten your body because that will help you get rid of some of that extra energy. When he finally started to calm down he said, ‘this is what I was taught, this is what I was trying to do, this is what happened.’” From her perspective, “somebody gave him a resource and he was trying his best to use it. Yes he punched another boy and the other boy had a swollen eye and was a little bloody. Rather than arrest him, we took him back to River’s Edge and explained to the counselor, ‘Here’s the situation, here’s the resource he was given, here’s how he was trying to

implement it, but somewhere along the line it didn't all work out ideally.” As this story illustrates, teaching public safety professionals to recognize trauma can help them respond appropriately to behavioral outbursts. Though Beth's approach may not be standard protocol, it is a response that could become much more widespread.

### **Social Production of Time**

The punishment of unmet needs is also painfully clear in the adult criminal justice system. From 2000 to 2011, as shown in Table 11, IDOC had nearly 9,000 admissions from Austin's 60644 zip code. This number clearly indicates earlier failures in the juvenile justice, workforce development, mental health and education systems. It also points to tens of thousands of years lost by Austin residents as a result of concentrated incarceration, a phenomena that fundamentally shifts the ways that neighborhood residents experience time.

*Table 11: All IDOC Admissions reporting ZIP code 60644 from 2000-2011*

<b>State Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Number</b>
2000	754
2001	1155
2002	919
2003	732
2004	775
2005	1056
2006	914
2007	604
2008	525
2009	507
2010	508
2011	415
<b>Total</b>	<b>8864</b>

\*ICJIA analysis of IDOC data

*Lawrence and Social Learning*

Lawrence has a long history in Austin, a history that he has begun to channel into community-improvement efforts. In partnership with other friends impacted by the long reach of the criminal justice system, Lawrence helped to found a West Side advocacy and organizing group called Daddies with Shorties. The group is run by and for men who, like Lawrence, have been through the IDOC, though it is also open to men from the neighborhood who have not been incarcerated. Working together, the group's members share a goal of creating greater fairness, equity and connection for others who have had similar journeys to their own.

One wintry Sunday evening I went to Lawrence's greystone apartment building to conduct our first interview. We sat in his kitchen and talked through his life journey, a journey filled with tough lessons, extreme punishments, and non-stop persistence. Explaining his personal changes, Lawrence says, "[w]hen I got a little bit older, when I went and did my last bit in the penitentiary, I started to get a little wiser, and I started to get a little tired of going in and out of jail. My family wasn't there as much, so I was getting kind of lonely. I decided to pick up the bible. My perspective on myself changed." He adds, "I knew that I was no longer just taking up space. I knew that I had a greater purpose in life. I didn't know what that purpose was, but I knew that all my moves were pre-destined and divinely pre-ordained." Throughout the interview, it was striking how Lawrence's sense of predestination actually facilitated more agency in his life. When Lawrence became aware of a clear

purpose in the world, his actions really started to change. He was last released from prison in the spring of 2011 and has not been back since.

Without an average recidivism rate of roughly 50 percent, staying out of prison is more the exception than the norm. Talking about how his awareness has evolved over the years, Lawrence says, “[e]ventually, I just came to the realization - This is a problem. It’s not just a problem with myself, it is a problem with a lot of people in our community. Just steady going in that same revolving door and that cycle, going in and out of these penitentiaries, wasting time.” Lawrence realized that he and his neighbors were losing incredible amounts of time, mostly during the peak years of life. This loss was not just his own, it was a collective loss. With each year of life lost, his community’s relationship to time and to the future were being fundamentally shifted.

Speaking about this loss, Lawrence asserts, “[p]eople could possibly be doing something productive and constructive. My time on the street was just a waste of time, because I know I was an intelligent kid growing up. I was always an honor roll student. Always, every year. There hasn’t been a year when I wasn’t on honor roll, from 3rd grade to my senior year. Reflecting on that helped me change my whole mindset, trying to change myself and to bring out the best potential in others.” Lawrence was already in this new life stage when I met him, already leading his peers to change both their own lives and the systems around them on the West Side. As he described, the sad reality is that it took him so long to achieve that positive leadership role. From age 17 to 24, he explains, “I was going in and out of jail and prison. I went to prison four times” in that period. These experiences did little to

push him closer to realizing his potential. When his turn-around did happen, Lawrence asserts, it did not happen in isolation. The school in prison made an impact, if only as a place to connect with a positive community while inside. And his growing religious faith impacted the way he understood and approached his own path. But when he was released from his last sentence, it was community-based organizations that helped Lawrence have a breakthrough in his life.

### *Legacies of Lockdown*

Donald broke the trend of regular return only after many years of cycling in and out of Illinois prisons. Across four stints, he served more than 21 years behind bars, with no single term lasting more than 6 years. While the first three terms were all for drug cases, the last was a six year term for armed robbery. As with Lawrence, Donald cites his faith as a major resource in his escape of the crime-incarceration cycle. For both these men, faith provided an important reference point for understanding their lives outside of the dominant narratives of the street, pointing to a horizon that did not exist for many of their peers.

Since getting out, Donald says that he has been working to rebuild a relationship with his oldest son. He explains, “We get along. He comes by and sees me, we talk, and I try to stress to him about how important it is he get a job, you got five kids, you got to try to take care of them. Running out and getting aluminum and copper is not going to do it, that can't take care of you and the kids. It is not a future really.” Though his son may change for a short while after these conversations, “a month later he is doing the same thing.” Imprisoned for much of his son’s young life,

Donald finds that he has a limited ability to intervene in his son's current life trajectory. His years of addiction and absence all happened during key formative stages for his oldest son, a pattern that is at risk of repeating itself as his grandchildren now watch the struggles of their father. These intergenerational dynamics are, in many ways, a consequence of the delayed behavioral change that results from the punitive response to stress and struggle.

Yet given the predominance of prison in his own life, Donald sees prison as one of the few available learning mechanisms available to his son. I ask him what it would take for his son to have a breakthrough. He replies, "he has been to the penitentiary. He cried like a baby when he went there. He basically went through the same steps I did. I think it would take another incarceration for him to actually get out. Because if he keep doing what he doing then that's what is going to happen to him, he is going to get locked up." As this quote shows, Donald cites prison as a learning vehicle in large part because he knows it is a near inevitability for his son, but not because it has true corrective powers. Rather than an actual source of support or guidance, prison is the only reliable place his son has waiting for him.

When asked how the prison system has impacted his friends and others from his generation, Donald shares, "[i]t has impacted a lot of them real bad because it took a lot of time out of their lives. You know, me as well. I could've come out with a negative attitude toward the world if I wanted to. It wouldn't have done nothing but made me go right back in there. Some days I don't want to tolerate the fact that the world is not going to tolerate me. But you can either adjust and get with the program or you can just keep going through the same thing. So, I adjusted and know



that life has much more to offer than me just constantly going back to jail.” Amidst this prolonged journey towards desistance, Donald, whose schooling stopped “around the tenth grade,” regrets not having broken the pattern earlier.

Naming two things that would have helped him to adjust earlier in his life, Donald shares, “Work. And if I would've stayed in school.” He feels that if he had gotten a good job after his first prison term then he would never have returned. He elaborates, “I like working now and think it would have been the same then. More of a support system. You know, a lot of us get out and we don't have that support system behind us, so it can get to feeling like nobody care. If you feel like don't nobody cares, then I got to take care of myself and care about myself, so that's where a lot of it comes in. And if they get out and they got no support system behind them, they going to go back to the best thing they know. The only thing they know really. If it is stealing, it is stealing. If it is selling drugs then it is selling drugs. If it is stealing cars then it is stealing cars.” Crucially, his words illuminate the influence that widespread societal neglect has in individual patterns of crime.

### *Stealing Bikes and 23 Years*

Speaking about the link between the juvenile and adult systems, Judge J says, “the research says the earlier they go to jail the more likely it is that they are going to reoffend. That makes sense because now he has learned a bunch of stuff that he didn't know anything about before.” Her insight is reflected in the life history of Nick, a resident of Willis House who was first arrested at the age of nine for stealing bike. A few years later, at 14, Nick was sent to St. Charles Juvenile Prison for fighting.

Explaining his upbringing, Nick says, “my mother she raised all of us by herself, so there wasn’t no father figure there. I was the second to the oldest in my family. I’ve got 9 in my family. My brother is just one year older than me, the rest of them were younger. I was the person who took it upon myself to start providing for my younger brothers. I started stealing, just to have food on the table. Then it went to fighting in school.”

Sharing his life journey through 23 years of imprisonment, Nick says, “I have been inside since 73’, when I was 19. I’ve been inside prison about 6 times [and jail] about 18 times.” Just his adult prison time came at an approximate cost of \$506,000 to the State of Illinois, based on current dollar figures. Though he has been on parole before, he says, “this is the first time they ever sent me to a transitional home or a halfway house.” In earlier parole experiences, he shares, “I lived on the streets, basically, after my mother passed in 1991. From then on I was going from shelter to shelter. I was still homeless.” Unlike previous shelters where Nick has stayed, Willis House provides structure and stability. However his favorite perk is that, “during the winter time if it is really cold out then you aren’t kicked out.” Nick’s story reveals how, without sufficient supportive interventions, a child’s efforts to provide for his siblings led to life of profound struggle and prison cycling, one where the only real lesson from the system was not to give up.

### **Concentrated Criminalization**

In the absence of an inclusive job market or robust human development pathways, incarceration has become a strategy for controlling disadvantaged

populations. The question becomes: What exactly have we been attempting to control? The seemingly obvious answer – crime – is not satisfactory. As described earlier, areas of concentrated disadvantage have three times the incarceration rate as less disadvantaged areas with parallel crime rates (Sampson and Loeffler, 2010). In this section, I have argued that concentrated incarceration is an attempt to control high-degrees of accumulated stress within areas of concentrated disadvantage. Neighborhoods like Austin have become low-opportunity environments that have high levels of toxic stress and a deeply embedded portfolio of counter-productive responses. Combined with the lack of necessary community-level supports, the punitive response to these stress levels has a dramatic impact on social learning and people's inability to adapt to changing life circumstances.

To summarize, my argument is that concentrated criminalization actively creates marginal identities that are, in turn, subject to further marginalization and management. Thus, criminal identities can be seen as an accumulation of markers of race, trauma, poverty, and choice, put through a regressive alchemy by the American criminal legal system.<sup>22</sup> Criminalization is the process by which these markers are legitimized and projected onto individuals, most often in places where toxic and traumatic stress are allowed to build up without positive interventions and where the state response aggravates rather than alleviates the underlying drivers of that stress. Without such positive interventions, these markers are frequently transferred across generations. Importantly, this analysis goes beyond a simple

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<sup>22</sup> Through this lens we might see the term of “underclass” as a misguided descriptor for people with unusually high stress loads and unusually low access to resources.

racial bias critique of the American criminal justice system. Enabled by both poverty and the high levels of interpersonal trauma that occur in areas of concentrated poverty, mass incarceration has helped to normalize our depiction of millions of people as criminals, producing social meanings that fail to convey the root causes of illegal human behaviors.

### **Pattern 3: Disruption of Household and Community Bonds**

Existing scholarship on parental incarceration challenges narrow conclusions about the true costs of imprisonment, revealing the long-term social harm of mass incarceration across generations (Murray and Farrington, 2008; Wildeman and Western, 2010). As Todd Clear has conclusively demonstrated, “incarceration is not an efficient suppressor of crime” and brings with it a multitude of collateral consequences that lead to crime increases over time. Crucially, his point is not that incarceration has no temporary impact on crime, for there is no denying the effect of incapacitation and removal on individual actors. Rather the point is that incarceration’s net impact is not a given over time. Incarceration itself can also become a multiplier of crime (Clear, 2014). This is due in large part to extended family separation, the very heart of the carceral punishment, which has long-term impacts on not just the imprisoned, but also their loved ones, especially when those loved ones are still at highly formative periods of their development.

In this section I build upon the existing literature and offer a deeper exploration of one of the counterproductive processes identified earlier — the systematic production of absence through mass incarceration, and the reproduction

of mass incarceration through widespread absence. Through the following stories, I highlight the experiences of Austin residents who are actively involved in the cycle of widespread removal and absence, as well as the perspectives of systems officials who play a pivotal role in this cycle. These stories show how loss and absence intersect, how street-level actions do not define household roles, how violence is cyclical, and how an entire generation of parents has been affected by the rise of concentrated incarceration.

### *Missing Parents & Probation*

Describing the scope of the problem of parental imprisonment, Wakefield and Wildeman (2011, p. 793) assert that “[m]ore than 3 percent of the adult population in the United States is under correctional supervision, and roughly the same percentage of children have a parent incarcerated on any given day, with the number of children experiencing parental incarceration at some point during their childhood being much larger.” Crucially, because whites are imprisoned so much less than blacks in the United States, there is great inequality in children’s risk levels for parental incarceration (Wakefield and Wildeman, 2011). As of the year 2000, 7.5 percent of all black children were estimated to have a parent in prison, a prevalence that has increased in recent years (Wakefield and Wildeman, 2011). However, while estimates “show that the risk of paternal imprisonment for Black children is large and has grown tremendously in recent decades, [...] the risk of paternal imprisonment for White children remains modest” (Wakefield and Wildeman, 2011, p. 795). This differential pattern of parental incarceration frequently makes already

vulnerable children even more vulnerable, creating an entrenched pattern of missing parents for families in highly impacted communities like Austin.

Pamela, the Probation Supervisor for the area, sees this trend as well. Explaining some of these dynamics, she says, “The one thing I can tell you without any hesitation, and I know for a fact from our case reviews, in the majority of our cases the children are being raised by their grandparents. There may be mom that is not in the picture, incarcerated or she is absolutely nowhere to be found, or if she is in the picture, she is just not part in that person's life.” “Fathers,” she says, “it is rare that we even know of an existing dad. Let alone that he is part of that person's life. The majority of the cases that we have, the children are being raised by a guardian, many times it is arranged family, with custody granted to a relative. And if you think about, those grandparents are elderly, they have a lot of serious health conditions, and the children, younger now, are offending more and they have less supervision. And so there are a lot of factors.

Explaining where the fathers have gone, she says, “many are incarcerated, or have been incarcerated and are just not in the life of that young person once they are paroled.” Of the 25 youth on Juliette’s caseload, she has one youth with two active parents. About half have one active parent, which is “almost always” the mother. Meanwhile, she says, “almost always the father has had criminal involvement.” He is either “currently incarcerated or has a history of incarceration. A lot of times he has been absent for an extended period due to incarceration.

*The Structure of Anger*

Wakefield and Wildeman have found that not only does “having a parent go to prison [exacerbate] preexisting behavioral problems (and other poor outcomes) among children,” but in many cases “the incarceration of parents *causes* poor outcomes for their children,” finding that boys become more prone to aggression after parental incarceration and girls demonstrate a rise in internalizing problems (Wakefield and Wildeman, 2011, pp. 797-798). Their findings build on a strong base of research on the effects of parental absence, much of which was being conducted in the early 1990s as mass incarceration was still on the rise. It has been found that fatherless children have an increased likelihood of mental illness, suicide, drug and alcohol abuse, struggles in school, teen pregnancy, and criminal behavior (National Center for Health Statistics, 1993; Vaden-Kierman et al., 1995). Relatedly, it was found that 44 percent of juvenile offenders have parents who were never married and 33 percent have parents who were either divorced or separated, while only 13 percent come from households where the biological mother and father are related to each other (Wisconsin Dept. of Health and Human Services, 1994).

Speaking to how these dynamics impact the juvenile court, Judge J says, the “majority of these kids that come through my courtroom are angry and hurt over the fact that fathers have not been involved in their lives.” Explaining the underlying forces at play, she continues, “I was always taught in school that vacuums don't exist in nature. Something is going to rush in and fill up the space. You take a father out of the home away from the children, something is going to rush in and fill up the space. Gangs have rushed in and filled up the space. Drugs have rushed in and filled up the

space. Despair. A belief that there is nothing else for me out there. Anger.” Speaking to the anger she sees in her courtroom, Judge J says, “mothers will come in and they have their fourteen year old, fifteen year old, sixteen year old sons and they talk about, ‘He just got this nasty attitude! He’s just angry all the time!’” She adds, that “kid doesn’t understand why he is angry all the time. He doesn’t know why he is fighting at the drop of the hat all the time. And when he is not doing that he is smoking marijuana and when you ask him about his father he says, ‘I don’t care about him. I don’t think about it.’ That’s what is coming out of his mouth but it is all over him, the hurt from him not being involved in his life.”

### *Bearing the Weight*

Amidst the widespread removal of men from the community, single mothers often bear the full weight for raising a family. Speaking about the mothers she sees in her courtroom, Judge J says, “they are incredibly frustrated. Just beaten down. You got all too often women who are single parents, three, four, five or more children sometimes with two or three different absent fathers. They are struggling on two or three small part time jobs, trying to make ends meet.” Donald sees this stress as a reason that some women become addicted to drugs. He says, “more mothers just give up. That’s basically how it is. More mothers start using, because that’s basically your way out. It is like I say, that support system, they need it too.”

Of course, the majority of single mothers bear the weight without seeking to escape. Maya’s story illustrates this point. She has four kids, “ages 8, 6, 4 and 1” and says that her favorite part about being a mother is “making someone else happy,



that's the whole point of having kids. Trying to give them something I never had."

Describing her situation, Maya says, "I am a single parent. Their fathers were never there... We still don't say nothing to each other, they are not involved at all." Sharing about the impact on her kids, she says, "I know that it bothers them. It's something that I want to talk to them about, but I don't want to talk to them about it because I don't want it to get in the way of their school. So I just tell them, 'whatever ya'll need, I will give it to you' I'm there. I don't know if they understand it. I don't really want them to understand it right now." Each of the kids' fathers sells drugs to earn a living and each has spent significant time in jail.

### *Carrying the Burden*

Incarceration takes away material and emotional resources that are often crucial to successful family life (Comfort, 2007). As more and more parents have been removed, an incredible burden often falls on grandparents or other caregivers. Explaining this phenomena, Bobby says, "[i]t has dramatic effects when you have single parent homes and the boys don't have fathers, the girls don't have fathers. Sometimes the father and mother are [both] gone, so grandparents end up with them. You got somebody who should be retiring, enjoying their golden years, but they are raising their grandchildren." Yet parents are difficult figures to replace. Talking about one of his clients, Bobby says, "I have one young guy, he is really angry at his mother and father. His father was in prison and the mother had substance abuse issues. He ain't got nobody." He continues, "I was like, 'You had your grandma. As long as you understand, you had your grandma. She put a roof

over your head, she made sure you ate, she made sure you had clothes. You blessed. Some people have nothing.' He refused to look at it like that."

Describing the emotional state of these youth, Bobby says, "I guess they are saying, 'Why me? Why did my dad have to go to jail? Why momma?' And they are angry." For some of the youth Bobby serves, there is not even a grandparent to provide support. He says, "you have kids who don't have anything and they just lie about it because they want it so bad. You know, it is troubling how they [are] crying out for help. They all do it in different ways. I have one kid, you never know what is true coming out of his mouth. It is like he invents these stories up of family." The anger Bobby describes makes it harder for outside figures to have an influence. Talking about the impact of fatherlessness on Austin youth today, Donald says, "the young guys don't want to listen to nobody. They feel can't nobody tell them nothing. That's how they are in their households. So if they are doing it in their households they ain't going to come to the street and listen. 'I ain't even listen to my own momma, what makes you think I'm going to listen to you?' That's how they see it."

According to Douglas, parental absence is a major driver of gang involvement. He says that a lot of the youth he serves join gangs "out of necessity. Broken homes are real common with this population, same with single parent households where mothers are trying to do both jobs or they are living with grandparents, stuff like that, the elderly can't keep up with these youth in their old age." Douglas continues, "A majority of these guys' fathers are in prison or not even alive at all. It is a big issue because there's nobody in the household to teach you how to become a man, to teach you what a man is supposed to do. It's like on the job

training, you are getting bits and pieces from people you bump into. They might be positive, they might be negative, but if you out here on the streets the majority of what you are digging up -- infatuation with the rims or the clothes or jewelry or whatever -- 85 percent of that is negative. And then by the time you do run into a positive role model like a teacher or a mentor or something like that, this stuff has already been embedded in you. So they resisting.”

Like many other West Side men of his generation, Douglas has also lost significant time with his own children due to prison time, serving one continuous sentence for a drug case from 1996 until 2003. He says, “I ended up getting my son, when I came home, from his grandmother. He came and lived with me so it was just me and him. Our two daughters stay with their mom. I didn't know my kids aside from them coming to visit me in jail. When I left they were two about to be three, and when I came home they were nine about to be ten.” He continues, “It was rough for them. My son had it the worst because his mother wasn't as stable as my daughters' mother. So how he ended up with my father and then his grandmother.”

### *Impact on Siblings*

Parental incarceration impacts all the children in a household, a fact that routinely presents itself at both the juvenile probation and court levels. Pamela, the probation supervisor for Austin, says, “You get a lot of siblings or cousins. Actually, until six or seven years ago, we had family folders instead of individual client folders. And so every sibling that came into the system, that case would be filed within that family folder. In practice, it just meant that for one household we have

four folders as opposed to one very thick folder.” She continues, “I had one officer that in two cases had three children in each household. It’s concerning, especially when you have a pattern like that where you’ve got the three oldest already in the system and then you learn there is a nine year old.” Echoing this trend, Judge J says, “it is not unusual for siblings to come through my courtroom. I have a number of families where the oldest brother came through at seventeen or eighteen and now here comes the fourteen year old younger brother and there is another one in the wings over there. He is nine or ten and the chance of him coming through is great because he is watching his oldest brothers. So they walk in the same footsteps and it is not going to be any different for them then it was for the older brother.”

Speaking about his own life journey, Bobby describes the deep regret that can come from watching a younger sibling follow your mistakes. His youngest brother was killed in August of 1990. Explaining this loss, he says, “he was shot and killed. I felt like it was my fault that he was killed. He was trying to be like me and then I felt like I didn’t do my job as a big brother... So, I always tell young guys that the role models that your little brothers see are you. You the one they wake up looking at everyday, you the one they think is the greatest thing ever. You have a duty and an obligation to take care of them.”

### *Institutional Illusions*

Like other patterns identified in this chapter, concentrated incarceration’s impact on family structures shows how the punitive response to accumulated stress greatly reduces the parameters for healthy human development. Working alongside

punitive investment patterns and disruptions in social learning, the production of absences closes off the available routes to educational attainment or workforce success, until there becomes almost nowhere for a troubled youth or a disconnected adult to turn. Richie has argued that reducing the amount of family separations caused by imprisonment requires serious attention to multiple forms of violence against women. Answering this call may mean devising strategies for holding perpetrators of intimate and community violence accountable beyond the carceral state (Richie, 2003; Richie 2012).

As individual struggle and misbehavior are recast as criminal identity, the societal neglect that perpetuates American social ills is masked by the stigma of criminalized space. This masking process is enabled through a sort of 'institutionalized illusion,' in which human needs for support are ignored and met instead with containment strategies. This illusion is common among the Chicago Police Department, CCJTDC and IDOC. It is the result of regressive institutional logics, whereby popular conceptions of social ills take on a highly racialized form, one which often blinds the public to the real work and investments that are required for such ills to be uprooted. As I have attempted to show, prison is not exclusively deployed as a crime suppression strategy. Rather, concentrated incarceration dehumanizes people in ways that fuel cyclical disadvantage and helps to justify long-standing patterns of disinvestment and deindustrialization.

## Chapter 5: Breaking the Habit

Concentrated incarceration is a strategy for controlling disadvantaged African-American communities that has further eroded the economic and social basis for community recovery and advancement. It has simultaneously drained public resources, weakened social networks, and undermined society's commitment to human development as a priority investment area for the United States' most marginalized communities. If not reversed, these punitive patterns have the potential to become an enduring social structure rather than an historical anomaly. In order to begin this reversal, we must both counter dominant punitive logics and address the underlying neighborhood preconditions for concentrated incarceration.

By responding to the mechanisms described in Chapter 3, urban planners can anticipate how the reorganization of social and economic forces could lead to different outcomes at the community level. In high-incarceration neighborhoods like Austin, I propose that mandatory minimum sentencing laws are replaced with policies advancing restorative justice, that the neighborhood jobs base is rebuilt through intensive job creation and business development programs, that racially discriminatory 'tactical' policing is replaced with authentic community policing strategies, and hyperactive criminal justice is countered by the development of active restorative justice practitioners. As described in Table 12, the realization of these goals would strengthen local accountability systems for perpetrators of crimes, reduce community residents' financial dependence on illegal activities like drug sales, enable more functional relationships between police officers and the residents they are meant to protect, and strengthen the capacity of residents to

serve as leaders in the work of restoring justice after wrongdoing occurs. Taken together, these goals would curtail the channeling of young people into the illegal street economy, while also decriminalizing many of the transactions that occur across that economy and expanding local stakeholders' ability to take part in the daily work of neighborhood safety.

*Table 12: General Explanation and Transformative Alternatives*

<b>Current Mechanism</b>	<b>Punitive Function</b>	<b>Alternative Mechanism</b>	<b>Transformative Function</b>
Mandatory Minimums	Decline in case-by-case discretion	Restorative Justice Legislation and Common Sense Drug Laws	Rebuilds local accountability and addresses root causes
Disappearing Jobs Base	Heightened Visibility of Illegal Markets	Rebuilding of Neighborhood Economies	Reduces financial dependence on illegal drug market
Overreliance on Criminal Justice System	Racially Discriminatory Policing Patterns; Dominance of Plea Bargains Resulting in Felonies	Community Policing through Alternative Dispute Resolution; Development of Restorative Justice Practitioners	Supports real relationships between police and residents; Creates capacity needed for restorative justice practices
<i>Mechanistic Explanation</i>	<i>Pattern of Hyper-Incarceration</i>	<i>Mechanistic Response</i>	<i>Pattern of Community Justice</i>

Taken individually, the fulfillment of any one of these goals has serious transformative potential, with implications for each of the other mechanisms. For example, the rebuilding of the Austin economy would reduce the percentage of the neighborhood jobs subject to intensified law enforcement and mandatory minimums, thereby reducing dependence on the indigent defense system. Likewise, the development of neighborhood restorative justice capacity would reduce

communities' reliance on the formal system for criminal processing and, in turn, dramatically lower the rate at which people are convicted of felonies.

Similarly, it is also vital for society to respond to the patterns described in Chapter 4, moving beyond retributive reactions to accumulated neighborhood stress. This can be accomplished by advancing alternative logics towards the creation of more just social and economic patterns. In Table 13, I outline the need to shift from intensive investments in social control to robust investments in social reproduction, from population management to inclusive systems for realizing human potential, and from extended separation to harm reduction and widespread family supports. Each of these shifts would help to create a more trauma-informed society while also increasing opportunities at the neighborhood level.

*Table 13: Fundamental Explanation with Alternative Logics*

<b>Cumulative Patterns</b>	<b>Dominant Logic</b>	<b>Alternative Logic</b>	<b>Possible Patterns</b>
Switch in investment priorities.	Social Control.	Social Reproduction.	Reclaimed investment priorities.
Intersecting punitive systems and disruption of social learning.	Population Management.	Human Potential.	Empowering social learning through inclusive human development.
Disruption of families and blocks.	Extended Separation.	Harm Reduction.	Maintenance of healthy family connections.
<i>Concentrated Criminalization.</i>	<i>Advancement of counterproductive logics.</i>	<i>Addressing fundamental issues.</i>	<i>Concentrated Possibilities.</i>



Taken together, these shifts have the power to help society break the habit of concentrated criminalization and to create neighborhoods of concentrated possibilities. Doing so will mean taking on work that has been avoided for decades or, in some historical constructions, centuries. It will require an abandonment of those logics that have functioned as racialized blinders and justified society's avoidance of building neighborhoods based on economic equity and equal justice. Furthermore, breaking the habit of concentrated criminalization will require accepting our collective power to transform neighborhood conditions, strategically dismantling rather than punishing concentrated disadvantage.

### **Layers of Explanation**

I have argued that the continued availability of carceral objects in the Austin neighborhood has been ensured by each of the three mechanisms and three patterns explored in the previous chapters. As stress accumulated on Chicago's West Side amidst deindustrialization, an alternative economy developed rooted in drug trafficking; and society responded by investing heavily in community containment rather than community economic development. In so doing, public investment priorities shifted and the new punitive framework destabilized vital social networks at the household and block levels. This change further weakened Austin's available pathways for healthy human development and stress adaptation. As these forces show, society has avoided the difficult work of building more functional, socially inclusive systems for human development in marginalized neighborhoods.

In the absence of these inclusive systems, prisons now form the backbone of a larger process of criminalization, which enables the masking of the unmet needs and the unrealized potential of millions of people, doing so to such a degree that society as a whole no longer feels obligation towards its most marginalized members. Consequently, the practice of concentrated incarceration has effectively obscured societal responsibility towards areas of substantial disadvantage. As I've argued, this targeted criminalization conceals our failure to uproot the phenomena of disadvantage, rationalizing people's failed life outcomes in ways that blame individuals for poor life choices rather than blame society for our unwillingness to construct inclusive human development pathways. In so doing, targeted criminalization reduces the societal problem of concentrated disadvantage into a series of individual problems that can (presumably) be managed by criminal justice actors. Thus, concentrated incarceration is deployed as a geographically uneven incapacitation strategy that takes the place of other forms of coordinated local intervention. As evident in the three mechanisms and three patterns, these are places where local planning challenges are largely governed by punitive systems and individual removal frequently displaces collective problem solving.

Crucially, my argument rejects explanations of the high-incarceration neighborhood that attempt to explain the phenomena through a single driving force, such as crime levels. Rather, my explanation shows how the phenomenon results from multiple interwoven components. In Chapter 3, I provided a general explanation that demonstrates the functional mechanisms working at the core of the high-incarceration neighborhood, showing how the unaddressed devolution of

pressing socio-economic conditions in urban neighborhoods served as a precondition for the emergence of concentrated incarceration. Subsequently, in Chapter 4, I worked to explain why the phenomena is so durable, showing how the misguided policy compensations of the carceral state have sustained the high-incarceration neighborhood through distinct social and economic patterns. Table 14 summarizes these levels of explanation.

*Table 14: Levels of Explanation for Concentrated Incarceration*

<b>Level of Explanation</b>	<i>Emergence of the Phenomena</i>	<i>Perpetuation of the Phenomena</i>
<i>Simplistic – Points to Single Driving Factor</i>	Rise of drug market.	Ongoing crime.
<i>General – Reveals Multiple Mechanisms</i>	Loss of jobs base.	Underlying issues never addressed.
<i>Fundamental – Illuminates Underlying Patterns</i>	Punitive response to neighborhood distress.	Continued erosion of neighborhood fabric.

Each level of explanation represents a unique analytical method for comprehending the social world, methods which are ultimately more powerful when deployed in concert. I have argued that mechanisms arise from historical contexts and can catalyze major new trends, that patterns reflect society's response to these circumstances and thus indicate whether new trends will be sustained and/or redirected, and that, when left unchallenged, sustaining patterns have the potential to become an enduring structure. Across the general and fundamental layers of explanation, I have shown that concentrated incarceration is not the product of inevitabilities but rather of intentional policy decisions shaped by the predominant logics of governing institutions. Built into my argument is an

awareness that history could have unfolded differently and that the future relationships between neighborhood conditions and policy functions are yet to be determined, thereby opening up the creation of new realities.

The above levels of explanation have vital overlaps with Buroway's Extended Case Method. From the extended case perspective, simplistic explanations narrate the macro-structures created by historical circumstances, general explanations describe relationships between social situations and macro-structures over time, and fundamental explanations illuminate the patterns that underlie the predominant structures and persistent situations of any era. Thus, by moving beyond the simplistic through the general to the fundamental, we are also moving from an understanding of macro-structural clarity and predictive social characteristics to a place of deep process understanding (Buroway, 2009).

In the remainder of this conclusion, I trace out the theoretical implications of these layers of explanation, drawing concrete links between concentrated incarceration and theories of the US state. Starting with an overview of the academic literature connecting mass incarceration to contemporary state theories, I identify parallels and key distinctions among several of today's leading thinkers. Building on the works of these scholars, I then argue that to truly understand concentrated incarceration we must recognize what I call the 'collectivization of the law,' grasping how this process functions as an essential dialectical pair to what Gilmore calls 'the individualization of disorder' (Gilmore, 2007).

## **Shifts in the State**

What functions have been served by the build-up of the US prison population? Is mass incarceration merely punishment for punishment's sake? Or is it a fundamentally new form of governance? A way of managing deindustrialized communities? A new strategy for racial control? These questions are at the heart of established theories of mass incarceration in America and have been explored by numerous scholars in recent years. In this section, I review works from five of these theorists, including Jonathan Simon, David Garland, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Loic Wacquant and Charles Mills. Though they do not always use the same terms for describing the shifts, they have all observed dramatic changes in the nature and orientation of American governance in the ultimate decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Taken together, their works constitute a unique domain of theoretical agreement in mass incarceration studies, where the rise in US incarceration rates is inseparably linked to the dawn of a more punitively oriented state.

Jonathan Simon argues that mass incarceration results from the United State's decades long reshaping of "political authority around crime" (Simon, 2003, p. 6). Starting with the Nixon Administration and the War on Crime, he asserts that crime and the fear of crime have become foundational elements of American governance, helping determine everything from where domestic dollars are allocated, to who gets elected, to where people live and what they drive. Pointing to the passage of "the Omnibus Safe Streets and Crime Control Act" of 1968, which he calls the "mother of all contemporary crime legislation," Simon traces the genealogy

of crime's growing sway on the American public and the conditions for American democracy (Simon, 2003, p. 7). His book title and central concept — governing through crime — refers to the ways that authority figures in the United States, from politicians to school teachers, now rely heavily on institutions of the criminal legal system to exercise their power. More fundamentally, the term also refers to the ways that crime influences American subjectivity, shaping “the way we know and act on our selves, our families, and our communities” (Simon, 2003, p. 5).

According to Simon, the collateral consequences of America's obsession with crime are much farther reaching than most accounts allow, influencing the trajectories of not just the urban poor, but nearly all classes of U.S. society. Like other scholars surveyed in this chapter, Simon is very clear that imprisonment disproportionately affects a certain segment of the US population, asserting that “for the first time since the abolition of slavery, a definable group of Americans lives, on a more or less permanent basis, in a state of legal non-freedom,” a reality that he attributes to a combination of individual life sentences, recurring incarceration, and/or “the long-term consequences of criminal conviction” (Simon, p.6). Yet while mass incarceration disproportionately removes the African-American poor from their homes and communities, the perceived risk of crime now has unprecedented bearing on white middle class life decisions, “such as where to live, where to work, and where to send children to school” (Simon, 2003, p. 6). Simon argues that these two societal realms are co-constitutive of one another, representing interconnected modes of governance through crime. As a result of this perverse interdependence, America's democratic capacity has been eroded through diminished trust and social

capital, symbolized, in part, by the civic, economic, and social gulf between the heavily policed neighborhoods of the city and the fortified zones of the suburbs.

David Garland, in Culture of Control, explores social responses to crime in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century's closing decades, identifying what he sees as broad, interwoven organizing principles that influence how we act in the criminal justice arena. These organizing principles are all related to the era of 'late modernity', which is a "distinctive pattern of social, economic, and cultural relations that emerged" in the developed world between 1970 and 2000. Garland's gaze is wide in scope, examining shifts within "policing, sentencing, punishment, criminological theory, penal philosophy, penal politics, private security, crime prevention, [and] the treatment of victims," during the period in question (Garland, 2002, p. x). He cumulatively refers to these shifts as part of a "crime complex," a set of cultural formations around the field of crime control that legitimizes anti-welfare politics and the notion of an undeserving underclass (Garland, 2002, p. 163).

Garland argues that the current era features new strategies of governance, through which the politics of group management and social cohesion have shifted, along with conceptions of social order. This new realm of governance has the following twelve organizing principles. First and foremost is *the decline of the rehabilitative ideal*, which has been subordinated to the goals of "retribution, incapacitation, and the management of risk" (Garland, 2002, p. 8). Like Auerhahn (2003), Travis (2005), and others, Garland saw the ideal of rehabilitation as the central support structure for modern penalty, so that its decline necessitated the reworking of the field and paved the way for generalized retributive sentencing

policy (Garland, 2002, p. 9). Alongside this decline came the “re-emergence of punitive sanctions and expressive justice,” whereby the expression of public sentiment takes precedence over the judgment of penological experts. According to Garland, this principle enabled the regressive sentencing reforms such as the Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984. Relatedly, society underwent a change in public sentiment, referred to as “changes in the emotional tone of crime policy,” where the fear of crime grew ever more influential.

As this was happening, society also saw a *re-invention of the prison*, which was no longer just an instrument of last resort but now used regularly to meet demands for retribution. This re-invention entailed a sharp departure from post-war Penal-Welfarism, where alternatives to incarceration had broad support and correctional institutions were on the decline. Instead prison has become an “indispensable pillar of contemporary social order” (Garland, 2002, p. 14). According to Garland, this transformation in institutional form and function was tied to a parallel “transformation of criminological thought,” where “Welfare State criminologies” that viewed crime as a deviation from the norm were abandoned and replaced with the notion that crime is an inevitable part of society (Garland, 2002, p. 16). This new worldview required a change from a corrections focus to a control focus, where the state actively substituted “prevention for cure” (Garland, 2002, p. 16). Crucially, this focus on control was extended well beyond the prison walls. It involved the rise of a “new crime control establishment that draws upon the new criminologies of everyday life to guide its actions and mould its techniques,” an establishment that featured an “expanded infrastructure of crime prevention and



community safety" (Garland, p.17). Additionally, Garland, like Simon, observes that policymaking has become more populist and that policymakers have largely been displaced by political action committees and advisors, a trend he calls "politicization and the new populism" and that he associates with a narrowing of public debate.

Around what subjects were these shifts organized and justified? Garland asserts that the feelings and interests of victims were pitted directly against those of offenders, a re-orientation that he calls "the return of the victim." Meanwhile, the meaning of victimhood started having less to do with actual victims and much more to do with symbolic meanings. With this reconstitution of the victim as a public force, there was an increased concern with the containment of danger and the management of risk, thereby reinforcing the notion that prison should be used more widely as a vehicle for incapacitating people who might pose a threat to public safety. Naming this organizing structure "the public must be protected," Garland asserts "[t]he call for protection from the State has been increasingly displaced by the demand for protection by the State" (Garland, 2002, p. 12). At the same time, the boundaries of the state have shifted, expanding well beyond government to include "civil society and the commercialization of crime control," which has led to a mixed economy of policing with a more diverse set of authorities, including an enlarged private security industry. As the diversity of authorities has expanded, "new management styles and working practices" have emerged, whereby judges must work within the confines of legislated sentencing regimes and where community-based practitioners must scramble for dollars while mass incarceration policies enjoy excessive budget allocations. Underlying all of these principles is what

Garland calls “a perpetual sense of crisis.” Taken together, Garland asserts that these twelve organizing principles allow us to look at crime control as a coherent field with many interacting parts (Garland, 2002, p.193).

In her treatise, Golden Gulag, scholar-activist Ruth Wilson Gilmore seeks to “develop complex understandings of how prisoners become so massively available as carceral objects,” as well as “how the ground the prisons stand on becomes available for such a purpose” (Gilmore, 2007, p. 130). Like Garland and Simon, she charts society’s departure from the rehabilitative ideal and its movement towards a simple ‘incapacitation’ justification for prisons. In her view, “[i]ncapacitation doesn’t pretend to change anything about people except where they are,” providing only partial and temporary solutions to larger social problems like deindustrialization (Gilmore, 2007, p. 14). Importantly, Gilmore asserts that crime is a socially constructed category. She argues that prisons have expanded (and multiplied) because a new approach to social order has been developed, the meaning of stability has changed, and new groups within society have become important to control.

Gilmore illustrates how the buildup of the prison-industrial complex directly follows the militant struggles of black people in America during the 1960s, positing that the origins of mass incarceration may be most immediately linked to the deployment of prison as an attempt to control urban black communities following their political progress in the 1960s and 1970s. In her analysis, the rise of mass incarceration is tied to broader state shifts that have reshaped the meaning and motion of governance in the US around racial, economic and political controls. In

contrast to grassroots campaigns of earlier decades that sought to illuminate the disorder within society, Gilmore builds on the idea that mass incarceration marks the *individualization of disorder*. One criminal conviction at a time, the individualization of disorder places responsibility for the social and economic chaos of the contemporary world squarely on the shoulders of individual people living primarily in communities of color (Gilmore, 2007, p. 235; Feldman, 1991).

Loic Wacquant makes an explicit connection between neoliberal state restructuring and mass incarceration, pointing to a strong correlation between the expansion of prisons and the erosion of the economic foundations for community life. He argues that expansion of the penal system reveals the State's need to contain the widespread disorder caused by neoliberal policy shifts, creating parallel shifts in societal categories of belonging and exclusion. Deconstructing the policy platforms of Broken Windows Theory and Zero-tolerance, Wacquant asserts that our understanding of mass incarceration must be linked to a framework of population control, whereby marginalized groups are met with the punitive arm of the state (Wacquant, 2011). Importantly, across Wacquant's work he consistently lifts up the role of race in American criminal justice, arguing that mass incarceration can be genealogically connected to the enslavement of Africans in the "New World" during the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, naming the contemporary prison system as a form of large-scale institutional social control that has evolved from chattel slavery through the stages of Jim Crow and what he calls the "hyperghetto" (Wacquant, 2000). This type of genealogical analysis implies intergenerational transmissions of oppression, a phenomenon that points to a profoundly destructive relationship between African-

American communities and US institutions of social control. As commentators like Wacquant make clear, mass incarceration is just the latest stage in a long history of racial domination, one that is tied to racist presentations of black families.

Whereas Garland and Simon often leave race in the background of their analysis, Gilmore and Wacquant argue that naming race as a driving force behind the state's actions is an essential step in developing a clear picture of the world as it actually operates. In so doing, they align themselves with the field of Critical Race Theory, which posits that racism is deeply embedded within our thought processes and our social structures, making oppression a normal but often well-disguised state of affairs for many communities. In his book The Racial Contract, Charles Mills argues that unveiling the ideological structure of daily life reveals an *epistemology of ignorance* (Mills, 1997, p. 18). This epistemology, he advances, is a way of misperceiving and misunderstanding the world that is learned through a nation's conditioning of its polity. Such misperception is structured by a series of false binaries – civilized/savage, wild/safe, victim/offender – that conceal the fact that every human is equally capable of brilliance and violence, that every person has been at both the receiving and the giving ends of pain. Without a keen awareness of this concealment and the will required to see that which is obscured, we will continue to produce and reproduce human beings and social relationships rooted in inequality and captivity (Mills, 1997, p. 133).

### **Collectivization of the Law**

The law has become a vehicle for collective rather than individual-level intervention, creating enormous distance between the logics of punishment and the on-the-ground reality of mass incarceration. This is what I call the collectivization of the law, whereby the application of the law is filtered by geography rather than just individual behavior. The legitimacy of the law is greatly weakened through this collectivization, as we now discriminately punish already disadvantaged populations areas like Austin, thereby further destabilizing residents' basic rights to life. Along with the individualization of disorder, this fundamental departure in the function of the law helps to fuel the widespread availability of carceral objects within already marginalized neighborhoods. Taken together, the individualization of disorder and the collectivization of the law form what I call a carceral dialectic, one that emboldens a series of counterproductive logics that operate between neighborhoods and systems.

In the mainstream narrative, punishment is typically viewed as a necessary response to crime, with imprisonment serving as the quintessential punitive expression. This tendency towards punishment is empowered by one of four basic justifications, each of which conflates breaking the law with causing harm. These rationales are: retribution, incapacitation, deterrence, and/or rehabilitation (Banks, 2012). Retributive philosophy suggests that people who break society's laws inherently deserve to receive some measure of harm in return. Incapacitation advances that those who break criminal law can and should be removed from their social contexts, thereby disabling their ability to break future laws. Deterrence

asserts that by damaging those who damage others and their property, we send an important social message that wrongdoing is not acceptable and triggers substantive consequences. Finally, the rehabilitative approach says that isolation from society can help people to improve themselves, creating space to change whatever characteristics led them to their acts of wrongdoing. As indicated in Table 15, retribution may be viewed as 'inherent deserts,' where people are treated according to what they deserve. Incapacitation can be understood as 'deactivating capacity,' ensuring no additional wrongdoings are committed. Deterrence can be viewed as 'sending a message,' communicating the costs of crime to both current and prospective offenders. Finally, rehabilitation may be described as 'changing ways,' helping to transform offenders and their patterns of behavior. Whereas the vengeance-based idea of inherent deserts suggests that punishment provides an end all by itself, the 'deactivating capacity,' 'send a message,' and 'changing ways' explanations all support the idea that punishment prevents future wrongdoing.

*Table 15: Four Justifications for Punishment*

<b>Justification</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Premise</b>	<b>Implication</b>
Retribution	Break society's laws and you deserve some measure of harm in return.	Inherent Deserts	Punishment is an end to itself.
Incapacitation	Lawbreakers should be removed, thereby disabling their ability to break future laws.	Deactivating Capacity	Punishment prevents future wrongdoing.
Deterrence	By damaging those who damage others and their property, we send an important social message that wrongdoing triggers substantive consequences.	Sending a Message	Punishment prevents future wrongdoing.
Rehabilitation	Isolation from society can help people to improve themselves, creating space to change whatever characteristics led them to their acts of wrongdoing	Changing Ways	Punishment prevents future wrongdoing.

As described by Simon, Garland, and Gilmore, the rehabilitative or 'changing ways' justification of prisons has been all but abandoned. Prisons today offer 'corrections' in name only, as indicated by widespread disinvestments in prison-based educational and workforce programs, as well as recidivism rates that consistently average over 50 percent. Amidst this "decline in the rehabilitative ideal," deterrence, retribution, and incapacitation are now the primary rationales used to advance and sustain arguments of mass incarceration. However, none of these three justifications maintains its practical coherence within the context of concentrated incarceration. In the case of deterrence, the strength of instructional

messages sent by prison has been weakened by both the rate at which people are imprisoned and the disparity of these rates across communities, muddling the public perception of felony convictions in high-incarceration areas and slowing down the administration of justice to the point where 'swift and certain' responses to wrongdoing are nearly impossible. As incarceration became more common only in certain areas, new social norms emerged in those places, so much so that prison has become an honorable rite of passage among some social networks.

Consequently, without the justification of 'inherent deserts' and 'disabling capacity,' punishment would have few supporting logics today. Even these two rationales have serious limits in the current context. The internal consistency of each is suspect when the on-the-ground realities of concentrated incarceration are fully considered. Retribution is limited by two major facts: 1) most people incarcerated today are there for non-violent offenses with no immediately obvious victim, and 2) the administrative scale at which mass incarceration operates all but ensures that there is minimal time or space for addressing the needs of victims in those cases where they could come front and center. Furthermore, when we consider the role concentrated disadvantage plays in determining who actually gets incarcerated, it becomes clear that the practice of retribution is heavily mediated by race, class and geography, thereby de-linking actual individual behaviors and the work of vengeance. Each of these facts indicate how the state has assumed the work of experiencing the pain caused by crime, itself serving as the perpetual victim seeking retribution, as well as the enforcer and interpreter of law (Allen, 2001).



Similarly, the reasoning behind incapacitation is difficult to justify upon closer examination of the facts. Travis' (2005) has poignantly outlined how incapacitation offers society only temporary relief, for the work of incapacitation ends the very moment a person is released. He describes how this temporary incapacitation frequently reduces people's overall capacity as well as their societal positioning, so that they return from prison less prepared to attain and maintain gainful employment than when they were originally imprisoned. This process is clearly visible in the stories of Lawrence, Douglas and others whom I interviewed. Meanwhile, as seen in the Austin case, the systemic capacity for human development is greatly eroded by society's intensive investments in incarceration, wherein public resources are misinvested in carceral strategies that do nothing to build local institutions like schools, parks, or youth and family centers.

The incoherence of these punitive rationales suggests that mass incarceration has been built on logics that no honest observer can continue to sustain. The dynamics of high incarceration neighborhoods show how even the strongest arguments for the crime prevention benefits of incarceration do not apply within the most affected places. When we pay attention to the real life stories of those impacted, we see how the concentrated nature of incarceration enables the creation of a norm where prison-laden networks are common, where arrest is a rite of passage, where violence is a normalized means of resolving issues, and where the state's agents of protection are experienced as much as a threat to one's safety as they are a resource for securing it. The questions becomes: If not these four

justifications, what logic is now sustaining a social phenomenon with more than three decades of policy and cultural momentum?

According to each of the justifications above, prisons are a way to govern disorderly individuals who cause significant harm to others. Separation from the rest of society is presented as a form of individual-level population management, where the law is enforced, interpreted, and applied on an individual basis as a way of assessing the degree of past harm and future risk. Based on due process and the weighing of evidence, this idea of individual-level application of the law is foundational to the American legal system. However, when we look at the local life of incarceration by analyzing the places where the phenomenon concentrates, we find that it is not merely individuals we are punishing. As discussed in the earlier review of sentencing reform, the rise of mandatory sentences from the 1970s onwards greatly reduced the influence of case-by-case discretion, where sentencing lengths were based on general, pre-determined assumptions about harm and risk levels associated with particular offenses. In theory, though mandatory sentencing has reduced case-by-case discretion, the criminal justice system still operates as a form of individual-level population management, based on removing harmful persons from society at large. In practice however, as convictions became more frequent and sentencing more indiscriminate, American criminal justice shifted.

By interrogating the gap between the logics of the law and the actual, on-the-ground life of the law, we see how the law lost much of its public respect and ceases to assist the healthy functioning of many communities. Taking Chicago's Austin neighborhood as evidence, I argue that imprisonment has become a higher-order

phenomenon, a form of population management that impacts blocks and sets of blocks at one scale, and neighborhoods and neighborhood clusters at another. In this regressive approach, the law is applied collectively, with the most profound disparities at the community rather than individual level. In the words of Sampson, “[T]he nation’s experiment with ‘mass’ incarceration is in fact highly stratified locally, transforming some Chicago communities into hyperincarcerated outliers with prison intake rates almost inconceivably high” (Sampson, 2012, p. 422). As such, prosecution patterns are highly predictable by place and societal separation is commonly applied in some areas while incredibly rare in others. This community-level application of the law is, at a least in part, explained by the three mechanisms and three patterns discussed in previous chapters, which should be considered in contrast to the traditional justifications for punishment.

### **Criminalization of Space, Redux**

In many ways, my dissertation has served as a critical extension of Sampson and Loeffler’s (2010) article “Punishment’s Place: The Local Concentration of Mass Incarceration.” As they demonstrate, crime provides only a partial explanation for the intensive use of imprisonment in marginalized areas like Chicago’s Austin neighborhood. Rather, neighborhood disadvantage heavily mediates the relationship between crime and incarceration, and thus the practice of intensive punishment cannot be simply understood as a public safety strategy. Their analysis begs the question: If not crime, what exactly are we punishing in areas like Austin? Given the role that disadvantage plays in determining local incarceration rates, I

extend Sampson and Loeffler's analysis to posit that 'criminalization' is the racialized punishment of disadvantage, whereby low-income neighborhoods of color are punished at levels that cannot be explained simply by the behaviors of residents within those neighborhoods. Central to this process of criminalization is the narrow categorization of human identity according to surface appearances and/or a troublesome set of past behaviors, a narrowing which routinely obscures latent human potentials. In the contemporary US context, this process is built on a series of institutional markings that actively mask high levels of toxic stress, whereby individual decision-making is analyzed without attention to the contexts in which individual decisions are made and where higher stress areas are more heavily policed by criminal justice institutions.

Towards this end, disadvantage has enabled processes of criminalization that, in effect, convert groups of people living in marginalized spaces into individual identities that can be arrested, prosecuted, and confined. Consequently, the retributive character of the law has disrupted normal processes of healthy social reproduction in affected urban spaces. In neighborhoods like Austin, people are born into a context with limited life opportunities and then met with pervasive patterns of criminalization, patterns that originate at multiple points of community life and are continuously reified through neighborhood institutions. In this process, the criminal justice system continually produces the need for prisons by creating a steady stream of people convicted of imprisonable offenses. By failing to change our patterns of investment and our methods of public safety, we actively channel people into carceral institutions that themselves have consistently regressive outcomes.

This persistent structural racism increases the likelihood of future offenses, actively perpetuating criminal behavior through the disruption of basic social learning and relational building blocks.

The term ‘punishment of disadvantage’ describes how the state projects culpability onto individual actors growing up in landscapes of heightened stress and reduced opportunity. Our ‘blame and shame’ approach to accountability leads to years of productive life lost for each impacted individual. Meanwhile, it does nothing to remove underlying stressors in people’s lives or to enhance available opportunities, thereby increasing the likelihood of continued harm and/or illegal actions. From the perspective of healing past trauma, punishment might be considered the least enlightened form of accountability, isolating wrongdoers without doing anything to replenish lost resources, repair shattered interpersonal relationships, or help them be held directly responsible among the people and the places they may have harmed. Thus, there should be little wonder why, upon exiting those prison walls, people struggle to reintegrate into society. Individuals are now, once again, charged with meeting their basic needs for safety and sustenance on their own, while they have often spent years with minimal opportunities to grow their support networks and/or their marketable skills. Thus, the re-entrants are left alone, charged with finding the few resources still available to them in society and drawing whatever lessons they can from past experiences, despite the fact that few of their underlying needs (be they economic or therapeutic) have been addressed.

Applied across thousands of cases within concentrated geographies, the punishment of disadvantage multiplies local stressors, shrinks the opportunity

landscape, and widens the gap between people's unmet needs and their fulfillment. By adopting this lens, we can again make visible the societal, rather than individual, nature of disorder. We can see how neighborhood disadvantage, punitive laws, and discriminatory enforcement of those laws work together to perpetuate a cycle of harm and forced removal within certain places. Additionally, we can see how the fundamental rights to life and liberty within communities are conditioned by punitive institutional logics and their mutually reinforcing footprints. The neighborhood serves as a powerful convergence point for analyzing how the state re-works and further marginalizes racialized spaces like Austin, casting the long shadow of criminality across local households, schools, parks, bus stops, and places of business. Thus, while the phenomenon of mass incarceration is indeed locally discriminatory, it is determined by much more than the behavioral patterns of people within any given locale.

## Chapter Six – Beyond Concentrated Criminalization

*“[T]oday we must treat the social nucleus as the essential element in every valid city plan.”*  
 -Lewis Mumford, *What is a City?*

In 1996, the year the War on Poverty was to be won, nearly one of every three young black men in America were under correctional supervision in one form or another, whether in prison, on probation, or on parole (Mauer, 1995). Starting in the early 1980s, rather than dedicate our domestic policy efforts towards winning the War on Poverty, the United States had prioritized a parallel war in high-poverty communities, a war that fundamentally shifted the ways we understood the problem of concentrated disadvantage.

This was the War on Drugs. Rather than view poverty as the destructive force holding back many communities, the War on Drugs constructed the policy target as illegal narcotics, those who distribute them, and those who grow addicted to them (Clear, 2013). While largely unaddressed, this shift had huge implications for urban planning.

As a discipline, urban planning is dedicated to understanding and addressing the complex problems of the city. Yet public safety is rarely taken up as a sphere of concern.<sup>23</sup> This is due largely to issues of academic territory, rather than the actual, ontological importance of safety or its relationship to other major urban concerns. In fact, public safety is foundational to nearly all urban life, clearly affecting matters

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<sup>23</sup> ‘Crime Prevention through Urban Design’ is a rare planning subfield where safety has emerged as the main focal point. In this arena, urban designers explore how the built environment can reduce the likelihood of crime, deploying everything from brighter lights to tactical plant removal. This literature has helped designers to confront the real dangers of urban living encountered by those who will ultimately experience the environments they help to create. While an important inroad, CPTUD has two glaring oversights— community relationships and economic conditions.

of education, housing, the labor market, municipal finance, community development, and more. If, as Mumford asserted, planning for the social nucleus is essential for the future of cities, we must also plan for those occasions and conditions in which this nucleus breaks down.

Meanwhile, thanks largely to the War on Drugs, any serious observer of public safety in America recognizes the tremendous challenges facing the field today. As described throughout the dissertation, current approaches to making places safe are extremely limited in scope, relying almost entirely on punitive methods that forcibly remove and/or contain those people deemed to be problem actors within a community.

However, though vital, it is insufficient for the urban planner to merely identify a set of circumstances and to illuminate the reasons those circumstances have come to pass. The planner possesses an additional burden, which is to demonstrate viable paths for transforming presently existing circumstances. This chapter attempts to re-envision our public safety methods, calling for an end to the punishment of disadvantage.

As demonstrated in previous chapters, punishment is a response to wrongdoing that expands the gap between people's unmet needs and their fulfillment. Many years from now, punishment might be considered the least enlightened form of accountability, isolating the offender or wrongdoer without doing anything to replenish lost resources, repair shattered interpersonal relationships, or help people reclaim their potential.



Today we must ask ourselves: What does accountability beyond punishment look like? What infrastructure would that type of accountability require? What would it take to offer *everyone* the opportunity to heal, earn, learn and belong? Achieving these goals requires reversing decades of misinvestment in marginalized African-American neighborhoods like Austin, reversing the counterproductive logics named earlier, and helping communities move from concentrated criminalization to concentrated possibilities.

Currently, concentrated criminalization is legitimized through the narrow categorization of human identity according to a troublesome set of past behaviors, thereby concealing broader human capacities. This process is built on a series of institutional illusions that perpetuate structural racism and actively mask high levels of toxic and traumatic stress. By erasing people's capacities and punishing the symptoms of their accumulated stress, rather than working to uproot the primary stressors, we fail to take responsibility for the predictable failures of those individuals living under the most duress. This amounts to an extreme waste of human potential, where rather than dealing with the prevailing patterns of social inequity we instead rely on methods of social exclusion that, at the current magnitude, have become self-perpetuating.

By obscuring the failures of our human development systems, concentrated criminalization allows us to delay the task of building socially inclusive pathways for success, rationalizing people's failed life outcomes in a way that blame individuals for poor life choices rather than hold our society accountable for the unwillingness to construct adequate opportunity structures. Our presumed societal need for

prisons is contingent on the absence of viable economic pathways as well as a lack of viable alternatives for responding to violations of norms and laws, trust and broken relationships.

In the following framework, I offer three key pillars for ‘restorative community development,’ each of which might shape planning’s potential contribution. Building more robust, inclusive human development pathways requires a three-fold strategy that: 1) invests in new opportunity structures that help undo the long-standing damages of structural racism, 2) strengthens communities’ ability to heal their unresolved pain and suffering, and 3) reduces the entrance of new individuals into the justice system.

### *Ending Racial Disparities*

What possibly explains the decision-making behavior of a society that incarcerates its African-American populations at such a disproportionate rate? Any such answer requires a fundamental look at the history of race and public policy in America. Since the civil rights era, which was meant to open the United States up to meaningful political participation from a larger percentage of its members, new mechanisms of social exclusion have emerged. In The New Jim Crow, Michelle Alexander explains how the American criminal justice system has become a vehicle for the continued marginalization of African-American political influence (Alexander, 2010).

In our present attempts to explain neighborhood disorder we do not turn to the abandoned factory or classrooms without books, instead we look to the

individual criminal offender. As a result, social disorder is no longer seen as a public or neighborhood-level issue; instead societal chaos is understood and processed at the level of individual actions and decisions. No longer is disorder seen by the public as an expression of broader tensions and turmoil, it is now being projected onto individual offenders, one prosecution at a time.

In place of a systemic policy response to the closing of factories and the decline of urban employment centers, mass incarceration has functioned as a political response that worked to control those populations whose economic marginality was on the rise. Taking the institutional form of prisons, this response selectively focused on the same African-American communities that years earlier had been the pillars of progressive and radical challenges to the US state.

Today, as the popular momentum for criminal justice reform grows, the path of that reform has huge implications for the future of marginalized neighborhoods. In the low-road approach to reform, we can reverse our legislative course and undo the punitive sanctions that have enabled the punishment of disadvantage. In the high-road approach, we can both reverse our legislative course and address those neighborhood conditions that are enabling broader structural disadvantages to persist. In order to undo the impact of structural racism on areas of concentrated incarceration, we must take the high-road. Any investment in reducing mass incarceration must be an investment in strategically improving the conditions in African-American neighborhoods; rebuilding the capacity for informal and parochial social controls, reducing dependence on state-led controls while improving police-

resident interactions, and expanding the opportunity structure available for all community members.

### *Restoring Justice*

Crime creates many complex emotions. In the victim or survivor of a crime, any harmful act can lead to a sense of powerlessness and a reduced agency that is difficult to accept. How does a person regain their power after a crime? In the criminal justice system, victims and survivors rely upon the state for action to be taken. He/she calls the police and notifies authorities of the wrongdoing. If an arrest is made, the victim then relies upon the states' attorney to prosecute whomever is apprehended. The states' attorney becomes the victim's sole advocate for justice and punishment is the domain of government. Thus power is never restored to the survivor. If the state uses its power in a way that leads to a conviction, then that transfer of power is meant to result in some level of relief for the victim.

In 'street' justice, the quest for relief is much more direct. The survivor takes matters into their own hands or they call upon allies from their social network. In this equation, government is not a trusted intermediary. Instead, the offended party seeks out the offender and exacts whatever vengeance they deem appropriate, often very rapidly. Power is reclaimed quickly and with little outside support. In the context of street gangs, the primary agents in street justice, the battle for street justice is also enveloped in a complex web of economics, family, identity and boredom, any of which can provoke action. In place of the government, the social group becomes the advocate for justice, either supporting an individual's quest or

taking action on their behalf. Though more direct, street justice is also much more brutal, as violence replaces state action.

Both methods of justice have deep flaws. Whereas the criminal justice system relies upon forced removal, removing people from their homes for extended periods of time, the street justice system depends on violence and, all too often, on the ultimate act of violence—murder. To varying degrees, both of these systems remove key actors from family and community life and, as a result, both perpetuate cycles of trauma within communities. Though damaging to individuals and families, the removal created by jail and prison is typically temporary and it does not preclude any further contact between the prisoner and their loved ones. In stark contrast, the removal created through homicide is final and irreversible, ending all possibility of contact and all hope for reconciliation among the parties involved in previous acts of wrongdoing.

There is a third, alternative path: Restorative justice. Instead of focusing on broken rules, restorative justice is concerned with the harms that have been done and how to repair them. The process simultaneously strives to support the victim, hold the offender accountable while addressing the drivers for their behavior, and nurturing the surrounding community. Participants in restorative processes actively listen to each another and collectively move through whatever challenging emotions may be present (Pranis, Stuart and Wedge, 2003).

Though it does not repair the economic damage done in recent decades, restorative justice is an incredible tool for rebuilding devastated community fabrics. On an interpersonal level it is an approach that invites people to deal with the

existing tensions in their lives. When communities sit down in a circle and talk through difficult issues, then some real truths are going to be raised: The way we fear our youth, the way we sweep issues of childhood trauma under the rug, the way removing fathers en masse from their homes impacts future generations. Restorative justice says, “We have to wake up and face these realities.” And it gives a practical, non-clinical starting place for doing so.

This is a critical departure from the current paradigm. Rather than repair relationships or restore society’s trust in a person, time in prison cements this distrust, whereby that individual is deemed an ‘ex-offender’ and forever viewed according to specific past actions. This permanent distrust represents the fact that society never actually dealt with the emotions surrounding that person’s wrongdoing. For those directly impacted by a wrongdoing, there is little opportunity to ever share its deeper effects or to process the emotions and loss that result from those effects. For those who are indirectly impacted, there are few chances to support those who have been affected by the harm or to hold accountable and support those who caused it. In both cases, our everlasting judgment is a confirmation of our own disconnection from the events involved.

### *No-Entry*

Public safety desperately needs a future-orientation and urban planning – as an academic discipline established on a commitment to enhancing urban futures – is uniquely positioned to help this orientation come to life. Throughout much of the last decade, the criminal justice reform movement has been dominated by a re-entry

focus, which accepts the initial institutional channeling of millions of Americans into prisons. Crucially, mainstream prisoner re-entry conversations are limited by their inability to look towards the horizon and to prevent the future generations of prison entrants that are being made today. From the perspective of a long-term planner, to ignore the social reproduction of the crisis is to accept and further normalize the oppressive conditions posed by our hyper-dependence on state-led social controls.

Many criminal justice reform circles, which highlight reentry-oriented policies, accept a reality where tens of thousands of Chicagoans enter the prison system every year. They focus on the status and needs of residents of marginalized urban residents areas only *after* they have endured the experience of imprisonment. Rather, we need interventions that do not assume that millions of Americans must pass through the prison system before they warrant the attention of public safety professionals and criminal justice reformers.

When combined with a future-orientation, intergenerational analysis can help to move us towards a 'no-entry' policy framework. Taking this step requires viewing violence and wrongdoing as socially produced rather than inevitable neighborhood outcomes, and developing reliable strategies for reducing these outcomes without amplifying issues like household absence and block-level isolation. While urgent attention must still be paid to the challenges facing people returning from prison, we also have the capacity to examine how these needs are being created and prevent their continued manifestation in future generations.

One way to begin this work is to dramatically re-invent what happens to young people at the point of arrest. What if every arrested youth received the

support they needed to become community leaders instead of perpetrators? What if their arrest was taken as a call to surround them with mentors and/or tutors, and to support their family and loved ones as well? A pilot of this approach is currently being tested in select Chicago police districts through a program called RISE, which stands for Restoring Individuals Supporting Everyone. RISE works with youth on their second to fifth arrest and diverts them to a community-based leadership development program instead of sending them deeper into the juvenile justice system. Though it is only one step, it is a powerful example of the kinds of 'no-entry' interventions that can be advanced moving forward.



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