The CPS Paradox:

Life Course Criminology, Juvenile Justice, and

Growing Up in Child Protective Services

by

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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved June 2018 by the
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

August 2018

ABSTRACT

In the United States, approximately 400,000 youth are in out-of-home care in the custody of child protection systems (CPS). They are incarcerated, but not as punishment for a crime. States place youth in CPS custody for many different reasons, centered around legal determinations of families' failure to provide adequate care. Such youth are forcibly separated from their biological ("bio") families and required to live in shelters, group homes, and foster households at the threat of arrest. Through the socio-legal concept of *parens patriae*, the government assumes responsibility for their safety and development. In other words, the state assumes the role of parents to children it places in CPS. Still, despite years of social work research, three fundamental questions remain about CPS for criminology. First, criminologists are beginning to recognize the overlap between criminology and CPS but lack a theoretical framework for analyzing that intersection. Second, the proper role of the state in youth development and the measurement of its relative success are of central importance to criminal justice, but at best loosely defined. Finally, this dissertation asks: how do entering CPS custody, growing up in state care, and (someday) exiting CPS shape the experiences and perceptions of CPS youth? Given the attenuated social processes associated with CPS, criminologists might expect youth to experience significant barriers to transitioning successfully to adulthood. At the same time, therapeutic assessment and treatment in CPS should ameliorate those barriers. This dissertation addresses that theoretical paradox in eight chapters. After an introductory overview, Chapter Two posits social control, social support, and agency over the life course as a theoretical framework for understanding the implications of growing up in CPS. Chapter Three details the phronetic and ethnographic

approach of the study, designed to encounter the perspectives of youth themselves in their "natural" setting. Chapters Four through Seven present findings from interviews with participants in an arts-based therapy program for youth in CPS (n=33). Chapter Eight concludes the study with a discussion of the implications of this work for criminological research, juvenile justice policy, and youth who grow up in CPS.

DEDICATION

"Do not allow public issues as they are officially formulated, or troubles as they are privately felt, to determine the problems that you take up for study. Above all, do not give up your moral and political autonomy by accepting in somebody else's terms the illiberal practicality of the bureaucratic ethos or the liberal practicality of the moral scatter. Know that many personal troubles cannot be solved merely as troubles, but must be understood in terms of public issues – and in terms of the problems of history making. Know that the human meaning of public issues must be revealed by relating them to personal troubles – and to the problems of the individual life. Know that the problems of social science, when adequately formulated, must include both troubles and issues, both biography and history, and the range of their intricate relations. Within that range the life of the individual and the making of societies occur; and within that range the sociological imagination has its chance to make a difference in the quality of human life in our time. (C. Wright Mills 1959, p. 226)"

"I have tried to be objective. I do not claim to be detached"

(C. Wright Mills, 1962, p. 10)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My grandfather, Gilbert Alfaro, told me when I was five that if I spent my life helping people, I would never have to worry about helping myself. That advice has never failed me. This dissertation is evidence of his theory.

My high school English teacher, Patricia "Smoky" Sanders, never gave up on me. When I, like some of the Theater Camp respondents, found high school to be pedestrian and uninteresting compared to my life in the real world, she gave me Steinbeck, Marquez, and Trumbo. She plotted, cajoled, and hugged me into college early, so that when I got expelled, I was already on the road to this dissertation. Without dedicated and fearless public-school teachers that advocate on behalf of their students, there will be less people like me in the world. I will leave it to the reader to decide if that is a good thing or not.

My mentor, Scott Decker, does not suffer bullcrap, but is always down to listen to a new hairbrained research idea. His fieldwork work with burglars, armed robbers, and gang members, and the body of "street" ethnography that flowed from that fieldwork, is where I first saw myself reflected in criminology. His mentorship over the years of planning, theorizing, data collection, and analysis were invaluable to this dissertation, and to my development as a scholar in my own right. Working with Scott peeking over my shoulder as he and Cassia Spohn were designing and implementing the fifth-best criminology school in the world was an honor and a privilege. I hope this lengthy tome does that tradition justice. Group process.

I would never have made it through grad school without Drs. Mike White and Dani Wallace. Dani gave me my first research job and coached me through the more

subtle and fine points of a budding academic career. Sometimes she gave me guidance and encouragement, but she always reminded me to keep writing. As in CPS, in grad school it is hard to find someone that will look out for you, and help you understand decisions you must ultimately make alone. Dani has always been that person for me. Mike put me to work and challenged me to apply my skills in areas outside my own ethnographies. Working with him on police technology research, and watching that research turn into relatable findings and usable implications for police was an education unto itself. He is a craftsman, and I have benefitted greatly from his example.

The Theater Camp study could not have happened without the research team. Janelly Ortiz, mi amiguis who is also a social worker and ASU student, volunteered to serve as an in-house trauma-informed counselor for the duration of the study. She took two weeks off work to participate and was invaluable throughout the process. Lisa Dario and Arynn Infante, both late-stage graduate students, volunteered to serve as impartial recruiters. Carmen Trujillo transcribed the hand-noted interviews. Without them, this unfunded study of minors in state custody would have been impossible. Arriba la causa!

The arts mentorship organization (the AMO), has meant much more to my graduate career than a sampling frame for my dissertation. The CPS youth, volunteers, and administrators I met working with the AMO were a safety net from the rigors of doctoral studies, and a respite from thinking about my career, comps, and the nagging self-doubt of grad school. Being in the room while CPS youth are processing their trauma can go a long way toward processing your own. Being surrounded by brave group homies and dedicated volunteers who love you unconditionally is a feeling that everyone

deserves, but many never experience. Jessica the den mom, Ruthie the show-runner, and Alicia the punk rock boss all accepted me, flaws and all, as family. Show love, get love.

My grad school colleagues made the process fun and challenging. Our cohort was made up of ten top recruits from across the country. Natalie Todak and I formed a survivor's alliance that saw us both through to the end. We ate meals, mentored youth, and made grad school our own. Kate "the Great" Kempany came from the same soil as me, and her grounded, but self-deprecating charm was a constant source of comfort. A good hug goes a long way. Chant Fahmy and I will always maintain a friendly sense of competition. She got published before me, passed comps better than me, and defended before me. So maybe it was less of a competition than me following in her footsteps. But still. Rick Moule and Lisa Dario were not in my cohort, but they both mentored me through the process. Watching them do everything a year or two before I had to and picking their brains along the way was priceless. I look forward to being back in front of a white board theorizing with them soon in Florida.

Most importantly, hundreds of brave CPS youth made this dissertation possible. The youth at Golden House taught me about code of the group home. They also served as my own pseudo-family while I was far from home. Patience the Thug, Katie D., and McDuffy offered advice and support throughout the research process. Every CPS kid I met was tasked with navigating the juvenile justice system (and life itself) largely alone. Their willingness to share that journey with me made my career and made me a better person. I hope that this dissertation honors their forced bravery, and faithfully relates their stories.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Criminology has forsaken the orphan. But orphans are central to the history of criminology as a discipline, the development of criminological theory, and the ongoing implementation of juvenile justice. In the early days of criminology, Shaw's (1930) case study of Stanley's successes and struggles as a turn-of-the-century orphan helped set the stage for generations of criminological research (Becker, 1966; Wright, Jacques, and Stein, 2015). Decades before Shaw's work, the "child savers" (Platt, 1969) developed a juvenile justice system that allowed for "undifferentiated handling" of youth by allowing the placement of youth in reform schools, youth prisons, or orphanages[1] dependent on a judge's discretion and the "best interests of the child" (Tanenhaus, 2012, p. 422). Through the socio-legal concept of *parens patriae* and the application of chancery law, the same juvenile justice system applies social control to juvenile delinquents, youth who are abused, neglected, or orphaned, runaways, youth who have mental health or behavioral issues, and any other youth determined by the state to be problematic (Feld, 2007; Cohen, 1985).

The goal of this undifferentiated juvenile justice system is to prevent adult criminality (Platt, 1969; Feld, 2017). In other words, the juvenile justice system routinely incarcerates youth with the intention of assessing their needs, treating their deficiencies,

[1] It is important to point out at the onset that not all youth in state custody are there due to delinquency, abuse, or neglect. Any minor without parents, kin, or guardians who are available and willing to care for them could be subject to placement in state custody. This dissertation takes the position that forced removal from a child's bio-family and social context and placement with strangers in a state-sanctioned facility (i.e. "entering CPS") represents a traumatizing process that forms the foundation of the ongoing CPS experience (i.e. "growing up in CPS"). In this sense, youth in CPS all share a traumatic childhood experience, although the scope and severity of their traumatization varies widely (Samuels and Pryce, 2008).

and improving their pathways through life. Youth adjudicated responsible for crimes or status offenses can be sentenced to live in reform schools or other correctional facilities. Those determined to be abused, neglected, disruptive, or orphaned can be "placed" in a child protective service (CPS) system. Formally, the juvenile courts do not "convict," or establish "guilt" but "adjudicate" youth as "responsible" for delinquency and status offenses (Feld, 1993, p. 204). This distinction arises from the premise that juvenile court proceedings are not adversarial, but conducted solely in the best interests of the child. In the case of "orphans" juvenile courts can override parents' rights and place youth in CPS if the court deems it necessary for their healthy rearing or the stability of the bio-family. Placement in CPS can also be imposed by juvenile courts in lieu of criminal processing.

Both forms of incarceration (juvenile correctional facilities and CPS) are only to be applied *in the best interest of the child*, but they both involve involuntary placement in a "total institution" (Goffman, 1968; Rothman, 1971). Both forms of incarceration are disproportionally applied to poor folks, Blacks, and other marginalized groups (Lopez, 2017, p. 27; Lash, 2017; Lee, 2016). The legal validity of placing youth in CPS is predicated on the ability of the state to impose prosocial change in the life course trajectories of youth. But research has yet to demonstrate a positive effect of CPS custody over the life course (Berger et al., 2009; Maclean et al., 2016). Despite the substantial theoretical, legal, and practical overlap between criminology, juvenile justice, and child protection systems, modern criminologists have been slow to consider orphans as a population of interest, or CPS as a form of incarceration with significant implications for life course development, crime control, and victimology. This failure has broad implications given the scope of CPS involvement in the United States (Kim et al., 2017).

In the United States alone, approximately 400,000 youth are in out-of-home care in the custody of CPS (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS], 2015). They are incarcerated, but not as punishment for a crime. Such youth are forcibly separated from their families, homes, and communities of origin and required to live in shelters, group homes, and foster households at the threat of arrest (Sarri et al., 2016). States[2] place youth in CPS for many different reasons, centered around legal determinations of families' failure or inability to provide adequate care. But what constitutes "adequate care" is a standard left nebulously defined and applied by the state, to the marked disadvantage of poor people and racial, ethnic, and gender minorities (Fluke et al., 2003; Jonson-Reid, Drake, and Zou, 2013). Youth may be removed from their parents and placed in CPS due to emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, parental death, incarceration, or deportation, neglect, poverty, homelessness, incorrigibility, or behavioral, mental health, or other issues that cannot be managed by the bio-family. A "latch-key kid" with a working mother in one social context may be a "victim of neglect" in another (Lee, 2016).

In the United States, the national government maintains primary jurisdiction over "unaccompanied alien" youth who migrate from other countries, and contract with local agencies to place them in stable residential settings (Crea et al., 2016). This system relies on Customs and Border Patrol agents to screen unaccompanied minors and make referrals

[2] The term "state" is used in this dissertation to refer to governmental bodies and corollary organizations formally engaged in establishing and enforcing laws and policies. The usage adopted here acknowledges that state power transcends geographical boundaries, and includes socially-constructed institutions, laws, and customs (Neep, 2016). For the sake of clarity, child protection systems in the (federated) United States are generally administered respectively by its constituent states (i.e. provinces) and not the national government.

to the Office of Refugee Relocation (ORR). In 2016, 59,170 such youth were identified and referred for services (ORR, 2017a) and 52,147 were placed with sponsors in the U.S. (ORR, 2017b). The remaining 7,023 youth were placed in shelters, group homes, or foster care. Legal questions regarding communication between state-level juvenile justice systems and federal immigration forces abound (Adams, 2017). The intersectional social and legal marginality of this population, and their profound relevance to the study of social control and juvenile justice are beyond the scope of the present dissertation. For now, the federal systems that seize and detain children pursuant to national immigration policy remain an important, but understudied area for future research in criminology, particularly in the broader context of non-criminal incarceration that forms the foundation of this dissertation.

CPS therefore has a wide scope of influence on the lives of youth, families, and communities. The role of neglect allegations is particularly salient to social groups at higher risk of negative social outcomes such as Black, Latino, immigrant, and working-class families (Choi, 2017; Dettlaff et al., 2011; Feld, 2007; Jonson-Reid et al., 2013; Lash, 2017). One process that disproportionally exposes poor folks to increased state surveillance by social service and medical providers is through mandatory reporting policies (Lee, 2016, p. 84). Reports of abuse or neglect to CPS can be used as a weapon to achieve coercion or retribution between neighbors and family members (p. 86). A recent New York Times article referred to CPS as a system of "Jane Crow" laws that can be used to subjugate economically disadvantaged single mothers (Clifford and Silver-Greenberg, 2017).

One recent study estimates that more than one third (37.4%) of all youth in the United States are subject to investigation by CPS before reaching adulthood, with a disproportionally higher rate (53.0%) for Blacks (Kim et al., 2017). Latinos and immigrants may in fact be *under* represented in CPS, despite "considerable" risk profiles (Dettlaff and Johnson, 2011). One explanation for this is that Latinos and immigrants may be reluctant to participate with police and child protective service agencies when they suspect child abuse or neglect. Another explanation is what has been referred to as the "Latino Paradox" by which Latinos are known to have riskier socioeconomic profiles, but better social outcomes than Whites (Abraido-Lanza, Chao, and Florez, 2005; Sampson, 2008; Wright, Turanovic, and Rodriguez, 2016).

Despite the system-wide orientation toward "family reunification" (Shireman, 2003), over 20,000 young adults "age-out" of CPS custody each year at the age of eighteen or nineteen (DHHS, 2015). The social costs associated with CPS are difficult to estimate because of the long-term interactional effects associated with childhood trauma and institutional social control over the life course (Brännström et al., 2016; Corso and Fertig, 2010; Fang, et al., 2012 Felitti et al., 1998; Jonson-Reid, et al., 2010; Jonson-Reid, Kohl, and Drake, 2012; Widom, Czaja, and Dutton, 2008; Widom, Dumont, and Czaja, 2007; Samuels and Pryce, 2008). The financial burden on states is a somewhat more straightforward consideration (Daro, 1988; Miller, Cohen, and Wiersema, 1996), with estimates suggesting that $25.7 billion is spent in the U.S. annually on CPS (DeVooght, Allen, and Green, 2008). With the lives of hundreds of thousands of youth, and billions of dollars on the table, understanding the life course effects of CPS should be of central concern to criminologists.

The salience of CPS to criminology extends well past individual traumatization and the financial burden to governments. The legal separation of families and non-punitive incarceration of youth have profound implications for understanding and imposing social control, particularly from trauma-informed and life course perspectives (Feld, 1993). CPS is a state-sanctioned form of social control developed in conjunction with youth courts and juvenile reformatories to constitute a unified but bifurcated juvenile justice system designed to police and protect marginalized youth (Levine and Levine, 1992, p. 207) and prevent the development of adult crime (Zimring, 2014, p. 27). Such systems result from a codified application of *parens patriae* (Platt, 1969, p. 28) and chancery law (Lindsey, 1914; Sutherland, 1939) whereby the state takes over as parent when the bio-parents, extended family, and community are deemed by that state to be unable or unwilling to care for them. In terms of justice, compulsory out-of-home residence in the custody of the state via CPS is among the most severe enactments of social control based on *parens patriae*, which incorporates concepts from both criminal and civil law (Rothman, 1972).

In theoretical terms, separation from important bonds to family, school, and community imply profoundly negative consequences (Hirschi, 1969). For many children from acutely disrupted or traumatic homes of origin, however, having the state take over as parent could also have positive implications for life course trajectories (Giordano, 2010, p. 223). The problem is that despite decades of research demonstrating the wide-ranging and long-term negative medical, social, and legal implications of adverse childhood experiences (Felitti et al., 1998; Monnat and Chandler, 2015; Widom, 1989; Wolff and Baglivio, 2016) recent research casts doubt on the ability of CPS placement to

improve life course outcomes (Berger et al., 2009; Maclean et al., 2016). This is particularly true for youth who eventually "age-out" from CPS as young adults (Courtney, 2009; Courtney and Hook, 2017; Courtney et al., 2005; Samuels and Pryce, 2008; Stein, 2006a; 2006b).

Given the profound lifelong challenges faced by hundreds of thousands of youth placed in CPS, and the billions of dollars of government spending to fund such systems, accounting for the process should be a key concern for social scientists and legal scholars alike. However, a general failure of criminologists to analyze CPS both theoretically and empirically has limited the scope and development[3] of social control *theory*, particularly in consideration of the life course (Horrocks, 2002). That failure has also skewed criminology's understanding of state-sanctioned social control policy and *systems* (Bazemore and Erbe, 2004; p.49, footnote 2). The scope of the substantive intersection between child protection and criminal justice systems (Berger et al., 2016; Cutuli et al., 2016; Phillips and Dettlaff, 2009), and the implications the intersection poses for criminological theory underscore the need for criminologists to apply a theoretical framework for the study CPS youth (Stein, 2006a). Despite the general failure to this point of criminologists to analyze the intersection of the child protection and criminal justice systems (see Turanovic and Rodriguez, 2012; Baglivio et al., 2016 for two notable

[3] This dissertation adopts a conceptualization of "development" (regarding both theory and human subjects of study) consistent with that of Sampson and Laub, which is "conceived as the constant interaction between individuals [and theories] and their environment, coupled with purposeful human agency and 'random developmental noise'" (Sampson and Laub, 2005, p. 178). However, what Sampson and Laub refer to as "random noise" may be better understood as the product of latent forms of agentic behavior such as "identity agency" (Hitlin and Elder, 2007) and their interactions with ever-evolving and reflexive systems of social control. Admittedly, the discernable effects of such a wide range of possibilities likely approach functional randomness (see the thought experiment regarding marriage in Sampson and Laub, 2005, p. 34).

exceptions), the social sciences already have a long-established theoretical framework that is well-suited for the task.

The life course perspective in sociology (Elder, 1979) and criminology's age-graded theory of informal social control which derives from that perspective (Sampson and Laub, 1995; Laub and Sampson, 2003; Laub, Rowan, and Sampson, In Press) are well-suited as a framework for the study of child protection systems and youth entering CPS custody, growing up in CPS care, and aging-out[4] at the age of eighteen. Broadly speaking, the life course perspective centers on the ongoing and reflexive interactions between social structures and individuals over time (Elder, 1979; Sampson and Laub, 2016).

The age-graded theory formulizes the life course perspective with testable hypotheses unified by the process of human development (Sampson and Laub, 2005; Laub, Sampson, and Sweeten, 2008). Much of the literature in this area has centered on the social structure side of the life course equation (Elder, 1979; Elder and Rockwell, 1979; Elder et al., 1988; Farrall et al., 2010 Rutter et al., 1990), but a large body of research has also detailed the importance of individual characteristics and variation over the life course (Caspi, Bem, and Elder, 1989; Caspi, Elder, and Herbener, 1990; Elder, 1994; Giordano et al., 2002; Gove, 1985; Hitlin and Elder, 2006; Lane, 2016; McGloin and Widom, 2001; Moffitt, 1993; Moffitt and Caspi, 2001).

[4]To paraphrase Pyrooz and colleagues' integration of life course criminology and gang research: Because youth are placed in CPS custody, participate with CPS programming, then exit CPS in a systematic fashion (e.g. through reunification or aging-out), the life course framework applies to the study of growing up in CPS custody (Pyrooz, Decker, and Webb, 2014, p. 492; Curry, Decker, and Pyrooz, 2014, p. 61)

Current Focus

This dissertation integrates and builds on these bodies of work, generating four primary contributions to the social sciences. First, by considering CPS as a form of social control, the dissertation opens important new avenues of theorization in life course development. Youth who grow up in the custody of CPS are of relevance to researchers across the social science spectrum, and researchers in social work and psychology have long considered the clinical ramifications of growing up in CPS (Courtney, 2009; Courtney and Hook, 2017; Courtney et al., 2005). Criminologists, however, have been slow to examine CPS as a source of both coercion and treatment (i.e. social control and social support) for marginalized youth. This biases theoretical criminology, warps considerations of juvenile justice, and restricts other social science disciplines from the benefits of years of criminological research on the development of delinquency, violence, and crime.

Second, by examining youth growing up in one state's child protection system, the dissertation analyzes how growing up in CPS shapes both the "successes" (e.g. parental and school attachment, good grades, steady employment) and "failures" (e.g. delinquency, arrest, unemployment, homelessness) of youth who grow up subject to the state's parenthood. Criminological theory relies heavily on the role of social control imposed by parents in guiding life courses away from criminality and negative outcomes. This approach fails to account meaningfully for the healthy development of youth with severed or severely restricted parental ties, particularly those who grow up in the care of CPS (i.e. "off-diagonal" cases; Giordano, 1989).

Given the severely attenuated familial ties associated with placement in CPS, such youth grow up with minimal levels of social inputs from parents due to (at least) physical separation. In such cases, developmental inputs such as mentorship, peer relations, parental control and support, and social bonding more broadly must be facilitated somehow by the state (Greeson et al., 2015; Thompson, Greeson, Brunsink, 2016). This facilitation may come by way of internal programming by CPS, or through relationships with external organizations and service providers (e.g. parochial social support; Bazemore and Erbe, 2004). Youth also facilitate (or fail to facilitate) their own development of social bonding and engagement with social support in important ways (Greeson et al., 2015; Samuels and Pryce, 2008). Social support therefore offers a useful organizing concept for understanding the institutional treatment of such youth, and the role of agency in the development of youth growing up in CPS and other forms of incarceration (Bazemore and Erbe, 2004; Cullen, 2011).

Third, the dissertation analyzes the narratives of youth themselves (Sandberg, 2010) and encounters them where they are: "juvenile justice purgatory." They are not in jail, but they are not free to go home (Mays and Winfree, 2013, p. 279). The term incarceration is generally associated with prisons and jails. But from the perspective of a child who is removed from their home by the state and forced to live in a place not of their choosing, often with people from outside their kin and community, all at the threat of arrest, the term necessarily applies to CPS. The "hidden custodial systems" (Cohen, 1985, p. 62) encompassed by CPS include, but are not limited to, group homes, foster care, shelters, and detention centers for unaccompanied migrant minors (Crea et al., 2017). Youth in CPS are not incarcerated as punishment for a crime, but their exposure to

one system of control (the child protection system) places them at risk for exposure to other forms of social control, particularly the criminal justice system (Cutuli et al., 2016; Jonson-Reid and Barth, 2000; Sarri et al., 2016).

Their unique socio-legal status as non-criminal minors in state custody gives the life course narratives of CPS youth a theoretical potency that is all too uncommon in criminology (Cullen, 2011, p. 310; Maruna, 2015) particularly regarding the study of institutional social control (Cohen, 1985; Goffman, 1968; Rothman, 1971; 1972; 1980) over the life course (Laub and Sampson, 2003; Sampson and Laub, 2016).

Fourth, the "social ledger" approach to policy evaluation considers both the positive and negative effects of incarceration (Sampson, 2011). By applying the social ledger approach to incarceration in CPS, the dissertation moves toward a "valueless" version of social science designed to elicit "the discovery of new facts and the explanation of known facts" and to forego determinations of "good" and "bad" from a moral standpoint (Black, 2013, p. 764). For instance, through CPS states invade families, impose morality, and allocate resources based on value judgments that may be objectionable to some analysts. At the same time, CPS custody can break up cycles of violence, interrupt (at least temporarily) the intergenerational transmission of delinquency and trauma (Giordano, 2010, p. 125), and provide medical, psychological, and educational treatments that have been demonstrated to be beneficial by research across the social sciences. The goal of this dissertation is not to demonize or lionize juvenile justice systems, CPS, social control, or social support.

Rather, the goal is to develop nuanced insights regarding state-sanctioned social control, and to consider more comprehensively established evidence regarding life course

criminology, the consequences of juvenile incarceration, and how individuals interact with social structures to produce life course pathways (Augustyn and Loughran, 2017). The present dissertation is grounded in eight years in the field with hundreds of youth from diverse backgrounds, and with unique family, socialization, and trauma histories that were living in CPS custody. Access to the field was established through ongoing participation with a non-profit agency that provides therapeutic art services (referred to here as "art mentorship") to youth in CPS. Over an eight-year period (2010-2018), the author served in a variety of volunteer roles, such as weekly art mentor to youth in CPS living at a group home, a program evaluator, and a camp counselor at a series of summer performance arts programs. The experience allowed the author to establish relationships with dozens of youth in CPS (some of whom have since aged-out, absconded, or been adopted), other service providers, and staff and administrators from group homes, shelters, and residential treatment centers from across the local metropolitan area.

The guiding hypothesis is that doing time in CPS presents opportunities for both positive and negative changes in life course pathways. This approach is supported by two antinomic[5] theoretical claims. First, a large and growing body of research on resilience in young adults who have aged-out of CPS suggests that viewing placement in CPS merely as a risk factor for life course problems is both myopic and short-sighted (Daining and DePanfilis, 2007; Elam and Onn, 2017; Samuels and Pryce, 2008; Shpiegel, 2012; Yates

[5] The current dissertation adopts Quine's (1976) classification of three types of paradoxes: veridical paradoxes that contain unknown but true premises; facidical paradoxes that contain unidentified fallacies; and antinomies, which represent an unresolved contradiction between two logical conclusions which are based on valid (and known) premises. The theoretical implications presented in this dissertation as a "paradox" may be best described as an "antimony" in which the logical application of valid premises leads to a fallacy or contradiction (Kalwaitis, 1998).

and Grey, 2012). Undoubtedly, some children are born into homes that are not ideally organized to support prosocial youth development. In the most extreme cases, placement in CPS affords access to basic mental, physical, educational and residential services that bring treatment and relative stability to their traumatized lives. Second however, separation from bio-families and communities while in CPS custody necessarily hinders and complicates organic bonding processes between families and their children (Andrews and McMillan, 2013; Baker et al., 2016; Palmer, Maiter, and Manji, 2006). But those same bonding processes are at the core of modern, mainstream criminological theories, suggesting that familial separation via CPS placement should be systematically negative (Agnew, 2006, p. 71; Akers, 2009, p. 331; Anderson, 1999, p. 35; Braithwaite, 1989, p. 56; Giordano, 2010, p. 127; Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990, p. 97; Hirschi, 1969, p. 86; Laub and Sampson, 2003, p. 97; Sampson and Laub, 1993, p. 97).

This paradox is humanized succinctly in a comment made by a female respondent with mixed feelings about CPS[6]:

> "CPS sucks, but I like it because I think I'm better off in the system…I'm gonna share this with you… My mom's boyfriend broke in the house and put a knife to her neck. So... I feel better in CPS than in that kind of situation." (Respondent 36)

The interview in which this comment was made was conducted on a Wednesday, during a theater arts program in which approximately 65 youth (including Respondent 36) were

[6] "CPS" (child protective services) was common parlance in the state and time in which this interview was conducted. The Department of Economic Security (DES) administered the child protection system in that state, which was named the Child Protective Services division. In 2013 over 6,500 cases that had been referred to CPS for investigation were found to have been dumped into an invented designation of "Not Investigated" and ignored. In response to the ensuing scandal, the child protection component of DES was removed and made an autonomous agency, and renamed the Department of Child Safety (DCS). In the time since then, stakeholders have generally adopted the new name in conversation, but in 2015, when the interviews for this dissertation were conducted, the terms CPS and DCS were used interchangeably by staff, volunteers, and client youth.

writing poems, choreographing dance routines, and developing a stage play that emphasizes the voices, histories and hopes of youth in CPS. The assault she described had taken place while she was on a sanctioned, overnight family visit ("on pass") just two days earlier. From this sixteen-year-old's perspective, theoretical questions about juvenile incarceration and social control are not academic, but matters of survival that play out in real time. Youth in CPS are forced to live simultaneously in a world that combines the unpredictability of their natal homes, with the prosocial programming associated with placement in CPS. The stark difference over forty-eight hours from witnessing a threatened neck-cutting between parental figures, to participating in an expressive theater arts program illustrates the dual worlds that must be navigated by youth in CPS.

Still, recent research suggests the child protection system is unable to systematically improve long-term outcomes for youth placed in CPS (Berger et al., 2009). This lack of empirical support has important implications for sociological theory, the administration of juvenile justice, and the lives of youth growing up in CPS. Stated plainly, if the long-term social effects of being parented by the state are null at best (Maclean et al., 2016), foundational justifications for juvenile incarceration (including the application of *parens patriae* and chancery law) need to be re-conceptualized and re-evaluated (Feld, 1997; 2017; Zimring, 2014). The life course perspective and age-graded theory of informal social control offer powerful starting points for the development of a more comprehensive theoretical framework of social control, as well as a more just and effective juvenile justice system. However, two key components of the life course paradigm remain loosely defined, and therefore difficult to measure consistently.

First, agency refers to the ability and willingness of individuals to act on their own behalf, and in their own best interest (Hitlin and Elder, 2006; 2007). But the role of agency in life course development remains in question (Giordano, 2010, p. 129; Sampson and Laub, 2016). Second, social support refers to the ability of groups (e.g. families, communities) to foster prosocial development in individuals. Social support generally garners only "mixed" or "moderate" support in macro-level quantitative studies (Antonaccio et al., 2015; Pratt and Cullen, 2005), but figures prominently in qualitative studies of youth living in, and aging-out of CPS (Ben-David and Jonson-Reid, 2017) and longitudinal studies of individuals (Dong and Krohn, 2016; Sperry and Widom, 2013). What remains missing is an integrative, theoretically-informed framework for understanding CPS as a form of social control, and a profound opportunity to exacerbate or improve (and study) the life course pathways of traumatized and at-risk youth (Bazemore and Erbe, 2004; Samuels and Pryce, 2008).

Research Questions

The broad goals of the current dissertation are as follows: 1) to establish and detail the overlap between criminology and CPS; 2) to examine how growing up in CPS shapes the experiences of youth; 3) to move toward a "social ledger" of incarceration that considers both opportunities for successes or "hooks" (Giordano et al., 2002) and failures or "snares" (Moffitt and Caspi, 2001), particularly in the context of CPS.

The specific objectives are presented here as formal research questions:

1. ENTERING CPS
   How do youth in CPS characterize life *before* CPS?

2. GROWING UP IN CPS
   How do youth in CPS characterize life *during* CPS custody?

3. (SOMEDAY) EXITING CPS
   How do youth in CPS characterize their plans for *after* CPS custody?

The dissertation addresses these research questions in the following chapters. The second and following chapter reviews research regarding the life course perspective in social science, and the roles of social structure and agency in shaping life course outcomes, particularly in the context of Sampson and Laub's age-graded theory of informal social control. The chapter then reviews the historical development of CPS as an institutional component of juvenile justice, and how placement in CPS circumscribes the experiences of youth over time. The second chapter concludes with the restatement of the three formal research questions that structure the analysis and results.

The third chapter details the data collection procedures and qualitative analytic methods that form the empirical core of the current study. The methodological approach undertaken here is referred to as "Phronetic Criminology," drawing on the work of Tracy (2010; 2012) and Saldaña (2015; 2016). Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven present the results from in-depth field interviews with youth currently in CPS custody (n=33). Chapter Eight discusses the implications of the findings for the study of social control, juvenile justice, and youth who grow up in CPS. The dissertation concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the research, and suggestions for integrating theory, practice, and multidisciplinary research to positively impact the life course pathways of youth, particularly those who are placed in CPS and other forms of juvenile incarceration.

CHAPTER 2

CRIMINOLOGY, JUVENILE JUSTICE, & CPS

This literature review establishes a theoretical foundation for the criminological consideration of youth who grow up in CPS. The chapter begins by outlining **(a)** the life course perspective in social science research, and **(b)** the "age-graded theory of informal social control" in criminology. Taken together, the perspective and theory suggest that the interplay between **(c)** social structures (e.g. social control and social support) and **(d)** individual responses, referred to as "agency" (by way of both actions and omissions) over time generate "pathways" that are conducive to differential future outcomes. Importantly, examining the entire life course (starting at birth) suggests that initial life course trajectories are proscribed by the social control/social support profiles of parents. Initial life course trajectories therefore precede both transitions (i.e. maturation stages) and the potential for turning points to occur through agentic interaction with preexisting and emerging social structures. In subsequent (post-infantile) life stages, trajectories, transitions, and turning points interact with individual characteristics to produce social outcomes, which then shape future pathways by structuring the social control/support characteristics of future trajectories (Raudenbush, 2005).

The review then deploys the life course perspective and age-graded theory as a theoretical framework for examining qualitatively the experiences of youth in CPS, discussing **(e)** the scope and characteristics of incarceration for youth in CPS, particularly as it relates to life course criminology and juvenile justice. Finally, the literature review **(f)** integrates the research on CPS with the theoretical framework of life course criminology as a step toward a more nuanced consideration of how state-sanctioned

social control shapes life course pathways. The integration of concepts from social work and sociology (i.e. CPS and life course criminology) suggests a paradox. Removal from abusive, neglectful, or otherwise unsuitable homes and placement in state custody should avail youth to the vast resources of the state relative to its constituents. At the same time, separation from bio-families and communities could hinder or sever the natural social networks on which individuals rely to navigate social worlds.

The literature review ends with a discussion of the implications for people who grow up in CPS, the systems and policies that structure their experiences, and the study of social control and human development over the life course. After detailing the historical development of social control, integrating that history with the theoretical framework of the life course perspective, and applying the resulting framework to the context of juveniles in CPS, the dissertation transitions to the methods, findings, and conclusions from the current study.

The Life Course Perspective

The life course perspective in social science is simple but profound. The perspective suggests that social outcomes do not develop in a vacuum, but are framed by social structures and influenced by individual characteristics and behaviors (Elder, 1979; 1994). For instance, the historical era (Elder and Rockwell, 1979) and generational status relative to the bio-family into which one is born can have implications for both previous and subsequent generations (Elder, Caspi, and Burton, 1988). To account for these effects

> "the life course perspective embraces the idea of continuity *and* change in behavior as individuals age; recognizes the importance of multiple factors, multiple pathways, and multiple contexts in understanding behavior; acknowledges the prominence of co-occurring problem behaviors; and highlights the salience of social ties and social control" (Sampson and Laub, 2016; p. 325).

Elder and colleagues conceptualized a process of "interdependent lives" (1988, p. 156) situated on a historical timeline, and taking place against the unidirectional passage of time (i.e. the life course; Hitlin and Elder, 2007). In this conceptualization, individuals interact reflexively (Caspi, Bem, and Elder, 1989) with a series of contexts (differential trajectories) that evolve as people move through life stages (unidirectional transitions), and encounter age-graded opportunities for change (potential turning points). These interactions, collectively referred to as "pathways" (e.g. Moffitt and Caspi, 2001; Stewart, Waterson, and Dennison, 2002; Werner and Smith, 2001) make certain social, medical, and legal outcomes more (or less) likely over time (Sampson, Laub, 1995; Laub and Sampson, 2003).

Incorporating a time component to crime and criminal careers generated a new way of organizing thoughts in criminology (Hitlin and Elder, 2007, p. 186), because the consideration of relative temporality allows the life course perspective to integrate contextual variables (e.g. social control, social support) with individual characteristics such as personality and resilience. In short, the consideration of temporality allows the life course perspective to account for changes in social structures and individual behaviors across historical eras, and as individuals age. The perspective also considers the effect of previous social interactions on opportunities for and experiences with future pathways at both micro- and macro- levels. In this way, the life course perspective suggests a pivotal role for individual human responses and the potential to transcend

trajectories and transitions through both strategic and serendipitous interactions with potential turning points[7] (Laub and Sampson, 2003; p. 277).

This perspective helped move criminology beyond cross-sectional analysis, and underscored the importance of studying individual development over time (Widom, 1989). The three primary constructs of the life course perspective are "trajectories," "transitions," and "turning points" (Laub et al., 2008). Each of these are detailed, critically evaluated, and modified where warranted in the sections that follow, before turning to the age-graded theory of informal social control posited by Sampson and Laub.[8]

Trajectories

The prevailing social, political, and economic trends of a given historical era frame the experiences of current and subsequent generations (Elder 1979; Feld, 2003). The life course effects of historical events are easily identifiable in the work of Sampson and Laub in their Glueck sample follow-up (Laub and Sampson, 2003). The men in that study were born proximate to the Great Depression, came of age proximate to World War II, and then transitioned into adulthood during the post-war economic boom (Elder, 1985). From a more current standpoint, being born proximate to the World Trade attacks on September 11, 2001, entering adolescence proximate to the collapse of the housing

[7] One might think of *strategic* interactions with turning points as purposive efforts to exercise agency or "taking the bull by the horns," and *serendipitous* interactions as "getting lucky." Even when approached with the most altruistic and sincere intentions, both analogical phenomena can have incredibly positive, and disastrously negative outcomes.

[8] The term "Sampson and Laub" is used throughout to refer to their collective body of theoretical and empirical work regarding life course criminology and their age-graded theory of informal social control, as well as subsequent revisions. This is consistent with Farrington, who cast Sampson as "the person who seems to be the most associated with [their theory]" (2005, p. 254).

market in 2008, and transitioning into emerging adulthood during a Donald Trump era of presidential leadership also have structural implications for today's adolescents and young adults (i.e. "the millennial generation"). As groups, previous generations who encountered those historical developments at more advanced life stages (e.g. "baby-boomers" or "generation X") had systematically different experiences with the same events. Throughout history, such structural implications are particularly salient for marginalized social groups, struggling families, and at-risk youth.

Generational placement within families also shapes life course experiences (Elder et al., 1988). Through reflexively "linked lives" (Elder, 1994), whereby "each generation is bound to fateful decisions of the others" (Elder, 1985, p. 40) the roles and experiences of grandparents, parents, emerging adults, and children vary systematically over the course of history. Elder and colleagues (1988) also point out that these historically- and socially-situated lives are "interconnected" by nature, because individuals shape social structures, and social structures frame the experiences of individuals. In other words, social structures circumscribe social opportunities in important, but not deterministic ways. While historical, community, and familial contexts strongly influence the experiences of individuals, individuals are not bound to any outcomes, and necessarily influence history, communities, and families themselves.

Trajectories, then, are best described as probabilistic orientations toward certain life course outcomes, and the product of continually-interacting social structures and individual characteristics. The social control and support regimes into which one is born, through which one comes of age, and into which one recedes set the framework for the experiences, decisions, and reactions of individuals throughout the life course. This

suggests that from a life course perspective, historical eras and enduring social structures function as parameters for the early trajectories of children. In the context of the entire life course, which necessarily starts at birth[9], the initial trajectory of an infant is dependent upon the trajectories of the parents. Therefore, a formulaic presentation of *initial* life course trajectories can be produced:

$$\mathbf{Trajectory_1 = (Trajectory_m)\ (Trajectory_f)}$$

where $Trajectory_1$ denotes the initial trajectory into which an infant is born, and $Trajectory_m$ and $Trajectory_f$ denote the trajectories of the infant's bio-mother and father respectively.

Obviously, the assertion that a child is the product of their parents is not profound or particularly informative. But in the context of life course development, this concept orders temporally the components of the life course (trajectories, transitions, and turning points). At the most basic level, humans have a trajectory *before* being able to transition to a subsequent life stage, by which one might engage potential turning points. This simple formulation therefore organizes concepts left circular by Sampson and Laub (Laub et al., 2008, p. 314) and suggests that, from the starting point of the life course, trajectories temporally precede both transitions and turning points, which are discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

[9] This dissertation adopts extra-uterine birth as the starting point for the life course, but sidesteps the ontological discussion of the starting point for human life. It may be preferable to the reader to substitute the term "birth" with "conception." The argument here is that at some point, a person begins to exist who is dependent on a preexisting social milieu for their *trajectory*, and has yet to *transition* into a life stage that affords the opportunity to interact with that social milieu to generate the necessary (but insufficient) conditions for individual *turning points* to occur.

Transitions

In the current dissertation, *transitions* refer to the biological movement of individuals through graduated life stages over time. Barring catastrophe babies are born, children mature, adults grow old, and all people eventually die during a natural life course. During these transitions from life stage to life stage, opportunities to interact with (formal and informal) social structures emerge, evolve, and recede systematically. Elder refers to this process as a system of "age expectations" which he defines as "behaviors that are prescribed and proscribed by age" (1998, p. 6). For instance, entering and progressing through school, compulsory registration for military service, and eligibility for retirement benefits are all social constructs with age-graded expectations that both prescribe and proscribe certain behaviors. Deviation from these age expectations can have dire consequences for the life course. This is particularly so during the adolescent years, when the imposition of social control and incarceration are decidedly "trans-institutional" (Cohen, 1985; Platt, 1969) and problematic regarding constitutional due process (Zimring, 2014, p. 73; Feld, 1984; 1989; 2006).

As they are generally presented in criminology, however, life course transitions are temporally ambiguous and contingent on social interaction: "transitions… are short term events embedded in trajectories which may include starting a new job, getting married, having a child, or being sentenced to prison" (Laub et al., 2008, p. 314). As postulated by Sampson and Laub, temporal ambiguity refers to their premise that one could "transition" into and out of marriages, parenthood, and prison without regard to the unidirectional passage of time. This ambiguity may contribute to Sampson and Laub's continued confusion regarding agency. A person could be hired (or not hired) for reasons

other than their merit, and similarly fired. A marriage or parenthood can be beneficial or negative over the life course, depending on how individuals navigate the myriad social interactions that come along with those commitments. Ultimately, changes in life course trajectories are dependent on both opportunities for, and agentic interactions with potential turning points. Viewed this way, it is unclear how a construct of back-and-forth transitions into and out of life events that can have positive or negative implications on life course pathways could be interesting or informative to life course theories of human development.

As conceptualized in this dissertation, however, transitions are characterized by unceasing, unidirectional movement through recorded time and concomitant biological life stages. Transitions shape trajectories, because transitions (i.e. birth, maturing, aging, dying) bring about age-graded opportunities to interact with the environment. The life course events discussed by Sampson and Laub (e.g. military service, employment, marriage) are dependent on those age-graded trajectories that emerge from interactions between individual and environment. The life events postulated by Sampson and Laub to represent transitions are therefore more accurately characterized as "potential turning points" with the ability to alter trajectories. In other words, the common conceptualization of transitions in models of life courses fails to adequately account for Elder's "age expectations" (1998).

Consider the following thought experiment. As transitions are currently conceptualized, a person could uniformly decline to interact with other people and external social structures, and in doing so, would not transition through their life course. Such a person would be unable to secure a job, inaccessible to a potential spouse, and an

unlikely candidate for prison. However, that person would (barring catastrophe and biological anomaly) certainly transition from childhood to adolescence, then to adulthood, and into old age regardless of their interactions with other individuals and social structures. Regardless of the legal statuses associated with specific ages (e.g. juvenile court jurisdiction, emancipation, social security benefits eligibility), and regardless of biological characteristics of maturation relative to medical, psychological, and intellectual standards of development (e.g. puberty, agency, intelligence quotient [IQ]), all humans eventually and systematically cease to be alive. As such, all humans can be said to be "transitioning" through life continuously, in accordance with the unidirectional and unceasing passage of time. More poetically, *time and tide wait for no transition*.

As opposed to assuming a temporal orientation at the trajectory level (or not at all), it therefore makes sense to define transition as the constant, unidirectional time component in life course models (Hitlin and Elder, 2007), as presented in the equation:

$$\boldsymbol{Trajectory_1 * Transition_1 = \{Potential\ Turning\ Points_{j\text{-}i}\}}$$

where $Trajectory_1$ denotes the initial trajectory, which is inherited from parents. $Transition_1$ denotes the first life stage transition that allows for some level of interaction with the social world. Potential $Turning\ Points_{j\text{-}i}$ represent potential (not guaranteed) turning points, the outcomes of which depend on the deployment of individual agency, or lack thereof. Turning points are discussed in more detail in the following section.

Turning Points

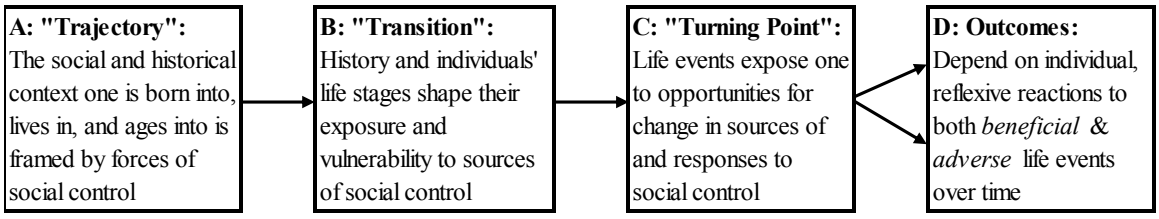
Turning points are life events that produce opportunity for changes in trajectory. Whether an opportunity for a turning point is actualized depends on prevailing social

structures and individual responses to events. Sampson and Laub are unclear about what differentiates a transition from a turning point, but they imply that agency is an important factor in the process (Laub et al., 2008, p. 327). As conceptualized in the current dissertation, opportunities for turning points are embedded in age-graded life stage transitions (e.g. military eligibility, aging-out of CPS at age 18, retiring from the workforce) and sometimes result from more serendipitous events (e.g. new employment, developing friendship networks, or emerging marriage prospects). Trajectories do much to frame opportunities for turning points, but external factors such as historical and social change (Elder, 1979) and internal factors like agency (Laub et al., 2008) can alter that opportunity structure over time as well, at both macro- and micro-levels. For instance, at the macro-level the educational, military, and career prospects for women in the United States have changed over the last century. In general, women who reached adulthood in 2016 had more opportunity to encounter and capitalize on turning points than those who came of age in 1916. In life course terms, the current opportunity structure of turning points for women in society was gained as a process, over generations, of interaction between prevailing social structures and individuals who challenged prevailing laws, policies, and social trends, often at their own peril.

At the micro-level whether a potential turning point is converted into a lasting change in trajectory (for better or worse) depends not only on the presence of opportunities for change but just as importantly, on an individual's ability and willingness to react to the opportunity (i.e. agency), as well as the substantive quality of the reaction (Hitlin and Elder, 2006; 2007). This ability to deploy agency in self-interest, in specific instances, is referred to as a "conversion process" (Hvinden and Halversen,

2017). Figure 1 illustrates this agentic conversion process in a life course model. In this model, the passage of time propels the process of human development. Time and the concomitant transitions through life stages are therefore the only constants.

Figure 1: Agentic Conversion in a Life a Course Model



Admittedly, some eternal and therefore constant force of self may exist, which learns and grows but does not fundamentally change over time (e.g. a spirit, soul, life force). This is an important ontological question, but such inquiry is yet largely restricted to religion and philosophy. A small group of existential criminologists have considered the role of a "transcendent self" (e.g. Katz, 1989; Mackenzie, 2009). For the purposes of the current work, however, the component of life course theory that is most reliably measurable and predictable is the incessant progression of time,[10] punctuated by human births, life events, and inevitable deaths. How initial trajectories are "aimed" toward certain probabilistic outcomes, and how people respond to external opportunities for change in relation to their age-graded experiences are more fluid.

To summarize, the life course perspective suggests that trajectories, transitions, and turning points interact with "time, process, and context" to influence outcomes and generate pathways (Elder, 1979; Elder et al., 1988; Elder and Rockwell, 1979). But the

[10] The current work also forgoes the consideration of the physical relationship between space and time (DeLong, 1981), instead focusing on the role of the perceived passage of time on earth in shaping the group processes and individual interactions (e.g. Cai and Connell, 2015) that make up the human life course from a *sociological* perspective (Flaherty, 2003).

perspective alone does not illustrate how these components function in a theoretically informed model with testable hypotheses and a unifying process. Sampson and Laub's "age-graded theory of informal social control" addressed this shortcoming (Laub and Sampson, 2003; Laub et al., 2008). It is important to reiterate here that the age-graded theory of informal social control does not temporally organize trajectories, transitions, and turning points as suggested in the previous discussion of the life course perspective. But conceptualizing life course transitions as a function of time with a necessary starting point at birth (as in the current work) is consistent with the theory's position that the presence and implementation of social control vary with life stage. Their theory is discussed in more detail in the following section.

The Age-Graded Theory of Informal Social Control

The age-graded theory of informal social control draws heavily on Hirschi's (1969) theory of social bonds, but runs contrary to later versions of control theory (e.g. Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990) that fail to explain changes in offending patterns, especially those connected to advancements in age. Stated simply, the theory suggests that social bonds (which influence trajectories), fluctuate systematically over the life course (i.e. across life-stage transitions) and that some life events (i.e. potential turning points) offer opportunities for changes in trajectory throughout the life course. The three primary premises of the age-graded theory of informal social control suggest that: (1) the effects of social structure are mediated substantially by informal social control from family and school, (2) that there is "strong continuity" between antisocial behavior in childhood and adulthood "across a variety of life domains," and (3) that changes in

antisocial behavior over time are attributable to age-graded informal social control. (Laub et al., 2008, p. 315).

Sampson and Laub revised their theory (2005; Laub et al., 2008) to allow for the integration of individual and structural components of social life (Sampson and Laub, 2005, p. 175; Elder, 1994) through the inclusion of human development (Sampson and Laub, 2016, p. 326; 2005, p. 176). These characteristics make the life course perspective and the age-graded theory of informal social control particularly well-suited as a theoretical framework for studying the experiences of children in CPS. To address the complex role of human reactions to life events and contextual variation, criminologists have begun to integrate social/structural contexts and individual (i.e. macro- and micro-) characteristics (Bernard and Snipes, 1996; Laub et al., 2008). At the broadest level, there is growing agreement among theoretical criminologists that external social factors interact with internal individual factors over time to generate life course outcomes (e.g. Agnew, 2006; Akers, 2009; Cullen, 2011; Felson, 2013; Giordano, 2010; Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990; Laub and Sampson, 2003).

The focus of Sampson and Laub's work has centered primarily on correctional practices and the experiences of adults (Sampson and Laub, 2016) but the premises of the theory have implications well beyond those domains. Specifically, the age-graded theory of informal social control suggests that social control can positively influence behavior, perhaps even independently of individual motivation (Sampson and Laub, 2016). The details of this process are of particular interest in the context of youth in CPS, considering the continuity between adverse childhood experiences and negative life course outcomes (Craig et al., 2016; Felitti et al., 1998; Monnat and Chandler, 2015; Widom, 1989) and

the intervention of the state by way of involuntary, non-punitive incarceration. Sampson and Laub suggest informal social control is a "fundamental" component of the socialization of children; that that socialization process in turn has effects that extend to adulthood; and that changes in informal social control in adulthood lead to variations in offending "independent of prior individual differences in criminal propensity" (Laub et al., 2008, p. 315). For youth growing up in CPS, informal social control is mediated (formally) by the state.

If Sampson and Laub's life course theory applies to the prosocial development of adults after leaving prison (e.g. desistance), then the same theory should apply to youth as they transition through life in (and after) CPS custody. If time in the corrections system can improve the life course trajectories of adults convicted of crimes, it should be able to do the same for abused, neglected, and orphaned youth. Importantly, the legal and moral underpinning of the entire juvenile justice system is predicated on the assumption of the benevolence of the state, and the ability of "undifferentiated" and "non-adversarial" juvenile courts to generate positive outcomes for marginalized youth (Platt, 1969; Ward, 2015; Zimring, 2014). The due process rights of minors are systematically subverted under the assumption that all actions of the court are "in the best interest of the child" (Feld, 2007; Tanenhaus, 2012; Zimring, 2014). If placement in CPS, or any other form of juvenile incarceration is not conducive to prosocial development, the logic of the entire juvenile justice system is invalid, and the system itself is therefore subject to "abolishment" (Feld, 1997; 2017).[11]

[11] The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN Doc. Art. 3, 1st para. [1989]) states: "In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts

Still, the implications of this formulation for youth placed in CPS are unclear and important questions have not been addressed, much less answered by social science research and legal scholarship. For instance, if children are removed from their families of origin and placed in CPS, does the state assume the responsibility of mediating the effects of disrupted or unhealthy social structures, for instance overcoming trauma, and establishing and maintaining prosocial bonding? Further, can CPS systems redirect the continuity between negative social outcomes in childhood and adulthood? To what extent and in what ways do they currently seek or accomplish this goal? Is it possible that placement in CPS makes prosocial and self-serving conversion of turning points even *more* difficult? For youth who turn eighteen in and "age-out" from CPS, how does the dual transition from adolescence in CPS to adulthood in the community shape informal social control over their burgeoning adult life courses? What role does social support play in the process? These are questions that can, and should be, addressed from the perspective of criminology (Fader, 2013).

One mechanism that connects adverse childhood experiences, CPS, and negative outcomes across the life course is trauma (Milot, St-Laurent, and Ethier, 2016; Riebschleger, Day, and Damashek, 2015). Even in the absence of acutely traumatic experiences that may have led to their involvement with CPS (some youth experience more pre-CPS abuse/neglect than others), simply being taken from their families, schools, and neighborhoods of origin constitutes a traumatic event with lasting consequences (Baker et al., 2016; Samuels and Pryce, 2008). For Hirschi and other control theorists, the

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of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interest of the child shall be a primary consideration." http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx.

family is the foundation of a child's identity, personality, and behavior (1969; Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990; Sampson and Laub, 2016). It follows logically that being taken away from parents should shatter that process, likely with profoundly negative consequences over the life course. Having their parental roles taken over by the state on the other hand, we might expect (in an ideal world) improved outcomes relative to abused and neglected youth who are not removed from their traumatic homes.

Given states' substantial medical, psychological, educational, and financial resources relative to citizens, the life course pathways of youth who grow up in CPS should, in theory, be ideal. This proposition assumes the benevolence of the state. But state benevolence is the essential legal and moral foundation for imposing institutional social control on children through the concept of *parens patriae* and the application of chancery law (Levine and Levine, 1992; Platt, 1969; 1977; Sutherland, 1939; Zimring, 2014). To that end, The Adoption Assistance and Child Protection Act of 1980 set forth a requirement for states to make timely and "reasonable efforts" to repair and reunify families, or to achieve permanent residences for youth in CPS. In 1997 The Adoption and Safe Families Act set a time frame for the process at fifteen out of twenty-two months in out-of-home placement (Shireman, 2003, p. 84). Still, problems with re-victimization after reunification remain (Giordano, 2010, p. 223; Connell et al., 2009). Further, evidence is emerging that suggests long-term negative effects of placement in CPS, even net of other disadvantages (Brännström et al., 2016; Berger et al., 2009; Maclean et al., 2016).

Circumscribed this way, how do some youth "resist" the negative life course effects of trauma? In other words, what separates "resilient" individuals from those that

succumb to the effects of adverse childhood experiences (Cicchetti, 2013; Werner and Smith, 2001)? Research conducted with youth themselves has suggested a need for social support over time (Greeson, et al. 2015), as well as the internal resources and individual characteristics to capitalize on that support (Werner and Smith, 2001, p. 172; Riebschleger, et al., 2015; Samuels and Pryce, 2008; Vaughn et al., 2008; Wojciak et al., 2016). The state can provide some necessities that a family is expected to provide (food, shelter, school), and assess the individual medical, psychological, and intellectual characteristics of youth. But the state appears to struggle to provide and support the emotional and developmental opportunities that children need in order to draw on their internal resources and grow and bond in healthy ways (Rothman, 1980, p. 261; Abrams and Terry, 2017; Fader, 2013; Samuels and Pryce, 2008). In fact, many young adults return to their (ostensibly distressed) bio-families after aging-out of CPS (Collins, Paris, and Ward, 2008).

Incorporating social support as an organizing concept in the imposition of control offers the potential to bridge this gap (Sampson and Laub, 2016, p. 330; Bazemore and Erbe, 2004; Cullen, 1994; 2002; Wright and Cesar, 2013). This is particularly true in the context of Sampson and Laub's age-graded theory of informal social control as applied to youth in CPS. The following section outlines three problems with Sampson and Laub's age-graded theory of informal social control that emerge from considering CPS as a form of incarceration with profound impacts on social bonding as a life course process. The dissertation then proposes social support as a complementary force to social control in models of the life course and age-graded theories of social control and human development (Bazemore and Erbe, 2004).

Three Problems with the Age-Graded Theory of Informal Social Control

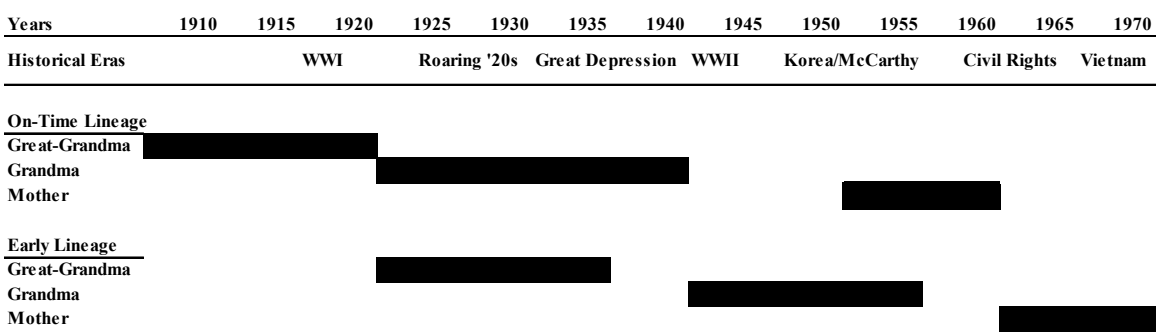
The age-graded theory of informal social control is an elegant[12] theory with testable hypotheses, centered on the development of individuals and groups over time, and situated in historical context (Elder, 1979). There are three important shortcomings of the theory, nevertheless. First, Laub and Sampson (2009) posit *informal* social control as the primary influence on life course trajectories, transitions, and turning points. This approach fails to account for decades of theoretical literature detailing the expansion of *formalized* forces of social control into areas referred to by Sampson and Laub as sources of informal social control such as family, school, and community (Cohen, 1985, p. 83). In the United States, the progressive reform efforts of the "child savers" movement during the late 19th century (Platt, 1977) led to states' invocation of *parens patriae* on children deemed by the state to be "at-risk" for juvenile delinquency and therefore future adult crime and amorality. Subsequent generations of reform (Levine and Levine, 1992) expanded the force of formal social control beyond the wall of state-run "asylums" such as orphanages and mental hospitals (Rothman, 1971; 1980) and into the community by way of "penetration and absorption" into the family, school, and community environments (Cohen, 1985, p. 76; see also Simon, 2007).

Today, over a third (37.4%) of all youth in the United States are exposed to investigation by CPS (and therefore potential placement in state custody) by the age of 18 (Kim et al., 2017). Much of this scrutiny and surveillance is disproportionally imposed by

[12] The term elegant is used here in the scientific sense (Saldaña, 2015, p. 157): (of a scientific theory or solution to a problem) pleasingly ingenious and simple. [e.g.] *'the grand unified theory is compact and elegant in mathematical terms'*. As suggested by the Oxford English Dictionary at: https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/elegant.

states on marginalized communities such as women, people of color, and poor and working-class communities (Drake, Lee, and Jonson-Reid, 2008; Lash, 2017; Lee, 2016). In this context, modern "informal social control" structures are dependent in important ways on formalized social control structures and historical trends. Being born into different eras has different implications for the developing life course as well, by way of the responsibilities, opportunities, and socially constructed role patterns associated with a given era. Figure 2 below is recreated from Elder and colleagues (1998 p. 163, Figure 6.1) and presented here to depict the salience of generational placement relative to prevailing social trends.

Figure 2. "Birth Years of Two Lineages of Black Females, On-Time and Early" (Recreated from Elder, et al., 1998)



This chart illustrates how the era into which one is born, as well as the relative generational placement within families systematically shapes forces of social control.

For instance, for the lineage group "mothers" depicted above, being born during the McCarthy era to a mother born in the roaring 1920s has systematically different implications compared to being born during the Civil Rights era to a mother born just after the Great Depression. These arcs of interconnected (socially bundled) lives over time have been referred to as "social convoys" (Moen and Hernandez, 2009; Horan and Widom, 2015). More specifically, the concept of "generational convoys" accounts for age

and the associated responsibility and role expectations of incoming, maturing, and receding constituent members, for instance newborns, "adult children," and grandparents, respectively. For instance, struggling depression-era families (and their members in relative life stages) tended to have different experiences from their counterparts during and after World War II. How current historical, economic, and political events will influence today's marginalized youth is yet to be determined (Feld, 2003; 2017).

Second, Sampson and Laub have recently doubled down on the theoretical importance of social control as the primary (if not only) source of social structure that shape trajectories, transitions, and turning points. In fact, Sampson and Laub's most recent work has moved away from their previous calls to study agency as a precursor to life course changes as a central concern in favor of "behavioral strategies" (Sampson and Laub, 2016, p. 330). In response to the uncertainty, and integrating the sociological work of Elder and colleagues with the criminological application by Sampson and Laub, this dissertation considers both social *control* (i.e. repressing negative behaviors) and social *support*[13] (i.e. promoting positive behaviors; Cullen, 1994) as complementary components of the social structure in which life courses transpire (Bazemore and Erbe, 2004). This approach allows a more comprehensive criminological analysis of life course successes and failures, and a more detailed explanation of variations in life course trajectories, particularly regarding positive and negative effects of social control (i.e. "hooks" and "snares").

[13] Forces of social control and support are presented here as elements of the overall social control structure into which a child is born (i.e. initial trajectory), and which are reflexively shaped through interactions with time (transitions) and agency (via potential turning points). This relationship is explained further in the section that follows.

For criminal justice, this distinction has important implications for preventing crime and victimization, as well as policy and programming for juvenile offenders, victims, and orphans in various forms of incarceration. The sources for such relevant forms of incarceration include, but are not limited to, remanding for crime and delinquency, placement in child protection systems, and detention of unaccompanied "non-citizen" migrants (Adams, 2017).

Third, Elder's concept of "interdependent" or "linked" lives (Elder et al., 1988, p. 156) suggests that lives are "…embedded in social relationships with kin and friends across the life span" (Elder, 1994, p. 6). Sampson and Laub acknowledge this reflexive characteristic of life course interactions between individuals and social structures, yet fail to temporally order the three primary components of their theory. This is an important distinction, because the passing of time is fundamental to life course development (Hitlin and Elder, 2007 p. 186). As one example of this concept, Sampson and Laub encountered the role of mortality in desistance from crime in their seminal work following up with the Glueck sample of delinquent boys as elder men. They found that, contrary to the common assumption that desistance from crime is "always a voluntary decision" some offenders desist due to insufficient physical or mental capacities to accomplish illegal objectives (Laub and Sampson, 2003 p. 20). This straightforward but profound finding is evidence that social outcomes are not always the product of unadulterated agency. Desistance due to mortality, advanced age, or disability is not voluntary, but biological.

Just as biological death imposes irreversible desistance from further participation in crime, birth imposes an initial trajectory wholly embedded in (and reliant on) the trajectory of parents. In other words, before a child can *transition* into a life stage that

allows for the agentic interactions between individuals and environments that produce *turning points*, every child has a *trajectory* beyond their control. This "biological helplessness" circumscribes and shapes the initial life course trajectories of all infants, as it eventually will for all late-life pathways to desistance from crime. In between infantile and geriatric states of ineffectiveness, people interact with relatively greater independence from social structures that provide control and support. But there can be no doubt that the earliest and latest stages of the life course are characterized by reduced autonomy and increased reliance on others. In other words, the autonomy of a newborn infant starts at zero, and increases to varying degrees with time. Reliance on others similarly starts at one hundred percent, and recedes to varying degrees with time. These processes reverse during midlife for those who reach the upper percentiles of life expectancy, become disabled to varying (but functionally unidirectional) degrees, and eventually die.

The section that follows presents an integrated model of social control which highlights the importance of support within social control regimes over the life course (Bazemore and Erbe, 2004). The resulting framework builds on the theorization of Sampson and Laub and represents a step toward a complementary "age-graded theory of formal and informal social support" which posits that (1) the effects of social structure are mediated substantially by social *support*, which can come from both formal and informal sources; (2) that there is strong continuity between *adverse childhood experiences* and problems in adulthood across a variety of life domains, and (3) that changes in *prosocial* behavior over time are attributable to formal and informal social *support*.

Social Control, Social Support, & Bonding as a Process

Taken together, the shortcomings detailed above suggest that the study of children in CPS has important implications for the study of social control over the life course. The section that follows defines social control and outlines the historical development of "total institutions" (Goffman, 1968; Rothman, 1971) as a means of dealing with problematic members of society such as juvenile delinquents, people with mental illness, and orphans. An important distinction is made between institutional (macro-level) social control and the process of (micro-level) social bonding to those institutions. For instance, Hirschi (1969) suggested that positive relationships (i.e. attachment, involvement, commitment, and belief) with various formal and informal sources of social control (e.g. parents, school, and peers) are associated with the development of positive social outcomes. This formulation suggests an interpersonal *process* of social bonding. The causal mechanisms underlying this process, and whether the state can conjure the bonding process in incarcerated youth through social control are questions yet left largely unaddressed, and therefore unanswered.

Social Control

The current dissertation adopts the definition of social control provided by Cohen:

> "…those organized responses to crime, delinquency and allied forms of deviant and/or socially problematic behaviour which are actually conceived of as such, whether in the reactive sense (after the putative act has taken place or the actor has been identified) or in the proactive sense (to prevent the act)" (1985, p. 3).

This definition encompasses both informal iterations of social control such as parenting and peer influences, as well as more formal iterations such as schools, police, and courts. The definition also incorporates both minimally intrusive forces of social control like voluntary compliance based on prosocial bonds, as well as restrictive and coercive forms

which can only be imposed by the state involuntarily such as prison sentences, commitment to mental institutions, and placement in CPS.

Historical research on the use of institutional incarceration as a means of correcting defective or problematic members of society provides a detailed account of this process in the United States. The term "trans-institutional" refers to the array of residential social control systems that Rothman (1971) referred to as "asylums" (e.g. almshouses, orphanages, sanitariums, and prisons). Goffman offers a useful definition in his description of asylums as "total institutions" which he describes as places of "residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life" (1961, p. xiii). More specifically, Goffman classified total institutions into five regimes based on the target clientele. These include facilities designed to care for people who are incarcerated by (civil and/or criminal) law after being determined by the state to be (1) incapable of caring for themselves and not a threat to others, such as orphanages; (2) incapable of caring for themselves, and a threat to others, such as mental hospitals; or (3) capable of caring for themselves, but a danger to others, like prisons.

Other total institutions house more voluntary[14] participants, for instance (4) residential training or occupational facilities like boarding schools or military barracks; and (5) religious facilities for refuge from the secular world, such as monasteries and convents. Rothman (1971; 1972; 1980) focused on the first three (i.e. coercive, state-

[14] Military service can be coercive and compulsory in the United States based on the popular draft, but the conscription system has not been activated there since the Vietnam war. Similarly, participation in sequestered religious training may be coercive and compulsory in certain cases, for instance disaffirming therapy and "sexual orientation change efforts" (i.e. "gay conversion" programs; Finnerty et al., 2017, p. 88).

sanctioned) types in his historical analysis of 18th and 19th century asylums. He noted that the imposition of incarceration in total institutions on both criminals and non-criminals became widespread practice for the first time in post-colonial Jacksonian-era America (roughly between 1824-1840). This trend had particularly profound effects on the treatment and control of what we now refer to as "at-risk" youth. Platt (1969) portrayed the development of a concomitant movement in juvenile justice as largely the work of middle class women, which he referred to as "the child savers." Platt credited the child savers with the establishment of the juvenile justice system, which combined civil and criminal law for application to minors deemed problematic by the state. The goal of the juvenile justice system was ostensibly the betterment of individual youth and society writ large.

Through the establishment of juvenile courts, the child savers invoked the socio-legal concept of "*parens patriae*" to give the state both standing and jurisdiction to intervene on behalf of youth who agents of the state deem to be abused, neglected, or otherwise in crisis. This approach led to the establishment of juvenile courts as "helping agencies" designed to steer neglected, delinquent, and otherwise wayward youth from becoming adult criminals (Levine and Levine, 1992, p. 100-101). This new system of justice for juveniles transcended traditional criminal justice by focusing on risk factors such as poverty and family disruption, and extending the scope of institutional social control to include non-criminal events like parenting practices (e.g. defining neglect) and juvenile incorrigibility (i.e. delinquency; Zimring, 2014, p. 27). This was possible through a legal convention inherited by the United States from British Common Law referred to alternatively as "chancery," or "equity" law. Chancery law allows courts to

forego the rigid imposition of the law in cases where justice would not be served by the imposition. In the case of juvenile justice, chancery law was enacted at the broadest level, and allowed for special processing of youth deemed at-risk for future criminality.

At the same time, chancery law allows the juvenile justice system to circumvent the due process rights of youth and their families, under the assumption that the courts (by design) act in the best interest of the child (Feld, 1984; 1991). Sutherland (1939) summarized the paradigm succinctly:

> "Equity [chancery] courts stand for flexibility, guardianship, and protection rather than rigidity and punishment. Consequently the friends of the juvenile court insist that children's cases should fall within the equity jurisdiction instead of the criminal jurisdiction. The supreme courts have approved of this in several decisions. But there is a minority opinion. E. Lindsey [1914], for instance, states that there is no justification for placing the juvenile court under equity jurisdiction, and explains the decisions of the supreme courts as due to the influence of public opinion and the fact that *few persons of wealth or influence have fought the question in courts*" (p. 307; emphasis and citation added).

The jurisdiction to intervene on the behalf of children granted by *parens patriae*, coupled with the broad scope of chancery-oriented courts expanded the net of social control of children well beyond crime and delinquency and "in effect, gave the juvenile courts full responsibility for child guidance and child protection" (Levine and Levine, 1992, p. 101).

As indicated by Sutherland (1939), the legal ambiguity of specialized juvenile justice systems (e.g. statutory, procedural, and case law) has long been viewed skeptically as it restricts fundamental due process rights of minors that are indicated by the United States Constitution (Feld, 1989; 2006; Lindsey, 1914). Whether minors should have access to the benefits of chancery courts and the potential for amelioration, or the constitutional benefits of due process in an adversarial trial has still not been fully rectified (Feld, 2017; Zimring, 2014). This controversy has been a characteristic of the

juvenile justice system since its earliest days. Lindsey noted over a century ago that after 1900, there was a push in juvenile legislation toward

> "(1) providing increased administrative machinery for the application by the courts of established principles and recognized powers, such as suspension of sentence and probation, the results of which have been generally beneficial and (2) the entire disregard, as far as the statutes themselves go, of established legal principles and the absence from them of any limitations of the arbitrary powers of the court, which always involves dangerous possibilities" (1914, p. 141).

Ninety-seven years after Lindsey wrote those words, a juvenile court judge was found guilty of racketeering for years of wrongfully sentencing minors to detention and receiving financial payments ("kickbacks") from commercial construction developers that built juvenile detention centers (Peralta, 2011). The appropriate balance between approaching minors as malleable and therefore "treatable" and compromising their constitutional rights on their own behalf remains a point of contention among legal scholars and practitioners (Zimring, 2014 p. 55). Since Lindsey's time, the progression of the juvenile courts away from a "helping system" and toward a "penal system" has also been documented by legal scholarship (Feld, 1991; 1997; 2017).

In addition to expanding the scope of state social control through the child savers movement, the growing tide of first-wave feminism also liberated many middle-class women during the late 19th century, opening new philanthropic and career opportunities. By asserting maternal hegemony in proper parenthood, the child savers opened new pathways for female employment. The emerging role and job of social worker were brought about by the child saver movement, and largely staffed by women. The movement gained support from both conservatives interested in bolstering the primary role of women as caregivers to children, and liberals interested in expanding the employment and civic activation of women. The movement was founded on "faith in

traditional institutions" (e.g. nuclear families with women at the core), and advocated a prohibitionist approach to youth development (Platt, 1969, p. 27). Stated plainly, the child savers believed, consistent with other Jacksonian-era social movements (Rothman, 1971) that in the right environment, with the proper dosage, social control could solve the problems associated with childhood poverty, neglect, and crime (Platt, 1969, p. 31).

At the individual level, Goffman referred to this relationship as one of "servers and the served" (1961, p. 321). In the case of juvenile corrections, one might think of probation officers and probationers (Gaarder, Rodriguez, and Zatz, 2004; Fine et al., 2017). A comparable CPS relationship is that of caregivers (e.g. caseworkers, residential staff) and the CPS youth they care for (Barone et al., 2015). This overlap is even more clear in the cases of youth placed in "probation-supervised foster care" (Eastman and Putnam-Hornstein, 2018). Recall that the juvenile justice system is "undifferentiated" because it has access to both juvenile corrections (i.e. youth prisons) and child protection systems (CPS). The same underlying justifications (i.e. *parens patriae*) allow the juvenile courts to incarcerate youth as deemed necessary and in the best interest of the child.

Goffman noted that this provision-and-acceptance of services process is designed to be "gentlemanly" and defined by mutual trust (1961, p. 336). The assumption of reciprocal benevolence, whereby servers consistently act in good faith, and the served engage meaningfully with programming, undergirds the entire social control process. The same assumption also provides the theoretical, legal, and moral justification for the development of the juvenile justice system, of which the child protection system is one component. In other words, the expansion of institutional social control described by Cohen (1985), the shift to the use of asylums described by Rothman (1971; 1972; 1980)

and Goffman (1961), and the child saver movement detailed by Platt (1969) were all justified by their purported ability to restrict negative behaviors, limit exposure to negative stimuli, and prevent crime over the life course. Given sufficient (and compulsory, if need be) access to the "right" ways of life, the logic goes, even acutely problematic individuals could be molded into acceptable and productive members of society.

The historical and contemporary implications of these reforms for the development of institutional social control were discussed in detail by Cohen (1985). Over time, institutional "nets of control" expanded through waves of reform to include individuals who were not previously subject to control, as was the case with the child saver movement (Cohen, 1985, p. 42). When formalized, brick and mortar institutions (e.g. prisons, mental hospitals, orphanages) were moving out of favor by reformers, and proving to be problematic as documented by Rothman (1980), "community control" was pitched by a new generation of reformers ostensibly to reduce the intrusion of the state in the lives of citizens, and to increase the input and autonomy of informal social control systems (Clear, Hamilton, and Cadora, 2011, p. 94).

Despite the progressive promise of reduced state intervention, problems persist. Community-based versions of social control such as probation, outpatient mental health therapy, and CPS group homes *supplement*, and do not *replace* traditional forms of incarceration (Cohen, 1985, p. 44). Over time, "shallow-enders" get "sucked in" (p. 53), resulting in a state-sanctioned "hidden custodial system" (p. 62). Ultimately, privatization, and the resulting commodification of "social junk," leads to "trans-institutionalism" (p. 64). Cohen summarizes the process, whereby:

> "the [social control] system penetrates the space of the family, the school and the neighbourhood; it tries to buttress their existing control processes by exporting the modes of discipline and control which characterize 'its own' spaces; it rationalizes all this by appealing to a vision of what the real family, school or community looked like once or should look like now – and these institutions are then changed further rather than restored to their pristine state" (p. 83).

From the beginning, Platt notes, the juvenile courts championed by the child savers were "part of a general movement directed towards removing adolescents from the criminal process and creating special programs for delinquent, dependent, and neglected children" (1969, p. 28). Over time, the argument for more expansive crime control "penetrated" the family in punitive new ways through policies and practices surrounding domestic violence, child custody proceedings, and "one strike" public housing and insurance regulations (Simon, 2007).

What this means is that juvenile justice itself was conceived at the intersection of social work and criminal justice. Cohen's trans-institutionalism is by design. Juvenile courts, chancery law, and novel forms of surveillance and incarceration such as reform schools and CPS were all conceived and implemented as part of an overarching "juvenile justice system" ostensibly designed to help youth perceived to be at the highest risk avoid adult criminality, amorality and destitution (Platt, 1969). Despite the trans-institutional reach of juvenile justice courts, life course criminologists have been slow to consider CPS and associated state-sanctioned surveillance and incarceration systems as a central concern for social control theory and practice. Instead, life course criminology has focused largely on adulthood trajectories, transitions, and turning points, particularly as they relate to prison, recidivism, and desistance from crime. This dissertation moves beyond the retrospective study of adults and their criminal and prison/parole careers to

examine how one state's child protection system shapes the trajectories, transitions, and turning points of youth as they enter, grow up in, plan to (someday) exit CPS.

The compounding development of institutional social control is therefore salient to the current dissertation because of how those (macro-level) developments, and the resulting "deposits of knowledge and power" (Cohen, 1985, p. 89) contour the lives of youth in CPS by way of (micro-level) bond development. Here, Hirschi's (1969) work is instructive though not comprehensive. Hirschi suggested *attachment*, *involvement*, *commitment*, and *belief* as the elements of the bond, but fell well short of explaining how those may develop naturally, or be developed artificially through programming. Further, this formulation suggests a central role for agency in individual interpretations and reactions to ecological stimuli. Hirschi's theory, like that of Sampson and Laub, treats informal social control as both constant and prosocial across the population. Therefore, their theoretical frameworks both *assume* that social control can produce and sustain prosocial, as opposed to simply limiting negative behaviors.[15]

Both Hirschi's and Sampson and Laub's frameworks, however, have difficulty predicting outcomes for youth involved in CPS. Emerging from problematic families, traumatized, removed from their communities and peers, moved to new schools, and placed in residential care, youth in CPS are separated in many ways from what Hirschi and Sampson and Laub described as naturally occurring informal social control. For such

[15] Dahl's (2017) work on "ecological commitments" in the developmental sciences is instructive here. Writing from the perspective of social psychology, the author notes that theories of human development rely on assumptions about "entities that have to exist for a theory to be true" (p. 2, footnote 1). Relationships measured in laboratories and through statistical analysis are abstracted and idealized by design, however. To address this shortcoming, Dahl suggests the utility of naturalistic methodologies such as extended fieldwork to illuminate the causal assumptions underlying common ecological commitments of theory, such as the idea that social control facilitates conformity and prosocial development.

children, institutional social control takes the place of organic, informal modes of social control. Therefore, if social control could produce prosocial outcomes, then complete "encapsulation" (Lofland, 1969) in non-punitive, state-sanctioned social control would be an ideal setting for "troubled youth" to develop in healthy ways. Further, this effect would be systematically observable whether the effect was limited to a subgroup, or applicable to all youth placed in CPS. Historically, however, this has not been the case with empirical evaluations of total institutions. In fact, behavioral control and ameliorative treatment may be fundamentally incompatible (Rothman, 1980, p. 419; Colvin et al., 2002). The section that follows therefore argues that both social control and social support play important but underspecified roles in the development of life course pathways, by differentially impacting age-graded bonding processes, and therefore trajectories, transitions, and turning points as well.

Social Support

In contrast to social control, social support refers to policies, programs, services and behaviors that are oriented toward promoting *prosocial* outcomes. Borrowing heavily from Cohen's (1985) definition of social control, the current dissertation defines social support as:

> Those organized responses to *adversity*, *marginalization*, and allied forms of deviant and/or problematic life course *pathways* which are actually conceived of as such, whether in the reactive sense (after the putative *pathway* has been identified) or in the proactive sense (to prevent the *pathway* from developing).

The concept of social support has been defined in psychology as "the perceived or actual instrumental and/or expressive provisions supplied by the community, social networks, and confiding partners" (Lin 1986, p. 18). Cullen (1994) first suggested social support as an "organizing concept" for criminology. More specifically, Cullen provided a series of

propositions that are derived from several criminological and criminal justice paradigms, although not expressly discussed in their relative points of origin (1994, p. 529). In general terms, the propositions set forth by Cullen (1994) suggest that in various forms, social support has a crime-reducing effect at multiple levels of the criminal justice system (e.g. policing and correctional settings), as well as society (e.g. individuals, communities, states).

The research on social support theory is not decisive, however. As an example, one recent cross-site international investigation of the effects of social support and coercion on criminal probability demonstrated only partial support for supportive social contexts (Antonaccio, Tittle, Brauer, & Islam, 2015). Meta-analysis has suggested social support to be a "promising" but understudied macro-level theory (Pratt and Cullen, 2005). In the end, the validity and specification of social support theory remain loosely defined, and relatively unexplored by empirical evaluation (Orrick et al., 2011). At the individual level, Cullen's work points to the importance of *perceptions* of social support, or the knowledge and belief that support agents can and will assist (Greeson, et al., 2015; Hitlin and Elder, 2007). In other words, individual reactions (e.g. the exercise of agency, or lack thereof) to formal and informal implementations of control and support further complicate the process by which control and support shape life course pathways (Sampson and Laub, 2005).

Importantly, however, while social support generally garners only "mixed" or "moderate" support in quantitative studies (Antonaccio et al., 2015; Pratt and Cullen, 2005), the construct figures prominently in qualitative studies of youth living in, and aging-out of CPS (Ben-David and Jonson-Reid, 2017; Samuels and Pryce, 2008). A

growing body of prospective research that compares child abuse and neglect victims with matched controls suggest that the reason for inconclusive findings regarding social support "may reflect differential impact of different types of social support for different outcomes and for different people" (Sperry and Widom, 2013, p. 422; Horan and Widom, 2015; Widom, Horan, and Brzustowicz, 2015). These studies also support the ability of social support to work as a protective "buffer" against negative mental health, behavioral, and social problems over the life course (Sperry and Widom, 2013, p. 416). By using a standardized psychometric measure (the Interpersonal Support Evaluation List [ISEL]; Cohen et al., 1985) these studies also address inconsistent measurement of social support.[16]

The reflexive process of interaction between server and served demonstrates the expressive nature of social support, whereby support through interaction with others (i.e., bonding) is seen to foster feelings of inclusion, self-worth, and involvement. The ability of social support to operate at the individual level (e.g. between intimate family and friends) as well as within the communities and systems of social control in which individuals are "enmeshed" suggests that bonding happens as a process between social entities (Cohen et al., 1985). As such, according to Cullen's (1994) formulation, the state should be capable of providing social support through criminal justice agencies, health care provision, and public schools (Pratt and Godsey, 2002; 2003). In the context of

[16] The ISEL is a 40-item questionnaire that assesses individual perception of the availability of four types of social support. *Tangible* support refers to instrumental assistance like money or other material help. *Belonging* support refers to the availability of others with whom to commiserate. *Self—esteem* support refers to the perception that one compares favorably to their contemporaries. *Appraisal* support refers to the perception that there are trusted confidants with which to consider events and evaluate options (Cohen et al., 1985, p. 95, see Appendix).

growing up in CPS for instance, it is likely that levels of social support, either altruistic in nature (e.g. volunteer mentorship organizations) or state-sponsored (e.g. programs and caretakers within child protection systems) facilitate the process of healthy development (Mateos et al., 2016; Samuels and Pryce, 2008).

Colvin, Cullen, and Vander Ven (2002) went so far as to propose that coercion causes crime, and social support reduces crime. This is an extreme statement, but one that is consistent with Rothman's more measured (1980) assertion "that to join assistance to coercion is to create a tension that cannot persist indefinitely and will be far more likely to be resolved on the side of coercion" (p. 419). Theoretically then, social control, particularly as applied through incarceration in total institutions, may be *incompatible* with successful treatment (Antonaccio, et al., 2015). Still, Sampson and Laub's retrospective research with the Glueck men (2003) points to the important role of social constructs such as military service, marriage, and employment in the process of desisting from crime. The extent to which factors such as these (separately and in concert) work to deter negative behaviors, and to what extent they promote positive behaviors are less clear.

All the men in the Glueck data set who served in the military, or married, or had opportunities for employment did not desist from crime (Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolph, 2002). Including measures of social support as a complementary component of the social structures that frame life courses could therefore help develop our understanding of the role of agency in developing life course pathways. Sampson and Laub do note variations in the qualitative nature of marriages, as well as variation in individual reactions to common stimuli such as military service. In the end, however,

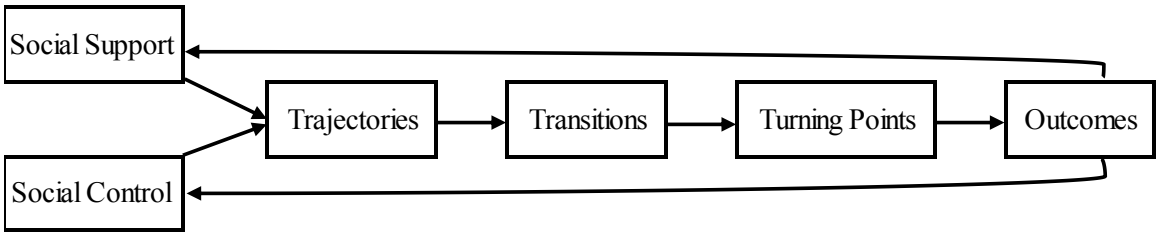
Sampson and Laub's age-graded theory of informal social control relies heavily on *informal* social control to deter people from deviance, and to encourage prosocial decision-making and behaviors in response to opportunities for turning points.

This formulation is inconsistent with the historical development of institutional social control in the United States, which suggests that domains of *informal* social control have increasingly been penetrated by *formal*, and even criminal iterations (Simon, 2007). This is particularly true in the context of juvenile justice (Feld, 2007; Tanenhaus, 2012). For instance, Rothman (1971; 1972; 1980) and Platt (1969; 1977) both documented generations of reform starting with a move in the late 18th and early 19th centuries toward institutional incarceration in prisons, poor houses, and orphanages. Cohen (1985) detailed the subsequent expansion of institutional social control through successive reforms, by which the reach of state control moved beyond walled facilities and into communities. Taken together, this body of work suggests that ample time has passed for positivist researchers and progressive reformers to get it right. Sampson and Laub have noted that their findings are consistent with the so-called Robins paradox: "antisocial behavior in children is one of the best predictors of antisocial behavior in adults, yet most antisocial children do not grow up to be antisocial adults" (2005, p. 20-21; see also Robins, 1978). Similarly, all youth in CPS are immersed in state sanctioned (formal and informal) social control, yet not all children who exit CPS have successful life course trajectories (Maclean et al., 2016).

Figure 3 illustrates the interplay between social control, social support, and outcomes in a reflexive life course model (Bazemore and Erbe, 2004). Note that in this model, social support and social control complement each other to structure the

trajectories of individuals. As time passes, people unidirectionally enter new age-graded life stages that both afford new opportunities and preclude old opportunities for turning points. How individuals engage with potential turning points, and the skills, histories, and goals with which that engagement transpires are reliant on individual characteristics and behaviors. The interaction between social structure, the passage of time, and agentic engagement generate outcomes, which then influence the social structure in which the life course generates new trajectories in anticipation of subsequent life stages.

Figure 3: Integrated Model of Social Control/Support over the Life Course



To more systematically examine this process, it may be helpful to conceptualize bonding as an ongoing process between individuals and social structures, as opposed to a list of factors or "elements" of a monolithic bond (Giordano et al., 2002).

Social Bonding as a Process

Important questions remain about the role of social bonding *as a process*, particularly in relation to institutional social control and total institutions. For instance, elements of the social bond have been suggested (i.e. attachment, involvement, commitment, belief; Hirschi, 1969) and supported (with caveats) by empirical research (Humphrey and Brunschot, 2018; Krohn and Massey, 1980; Wiatrowski et al, 1981; Wu, Lake, and Cao, 2015). Further, the presence and qualitative nature of adult social bonds have been demonstrated to be salient to crime and deviance and life course development

(Sampson and Laub 1990; 1995; Laub and Sampson, 2003). How social bonding might be influenced by the juvenile justice system, particularly placement in CPS, remains largely unexplored (Abrams and Terry, 2017). Generally, if social bonds are central to the development of life courses, how do they form? How might enduring social bonds be established by agents of social control in the absence of natural parental, school, and community relationships? Would the establishment of such "synthetic bonds[17]" be possible without the ability or willingness of the served to cooperate with the servers?

Giordano's theory of "cognitive transformation" is informative here (Giordano et al., 2002). Cognitive transformation refers to the internal processes by which agency is deployed, over time, as part of the ongoing interaction between individuals and their social worlds. More specifically, Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph (2002) proposed four components of cognitive transformation. First, individuals must be "open to change" and therefore *willing* to consider novel courses of action (p. 1000). The second type of transformation is less clearly defined, but centers on the *opportunity* to engage with emerging possibilities: "[a] fundamental premise is that both exposure to a hook and one's attitude toward it are important elements of successful change" (p. 1001). In other words, in addition to being broadly open to change, an individual must also be exposed to opportunities, and perceive the opportunities as viable and valuable. The third type is generated by deploying agency in engagement with environments in new ways (bounded

[17] Though beyond the scope of the present work, parallels might be drawn between social and chemical bond formation. In the ionic bonding process, one particle gives up an electron to another particle, generating two bonded, and oppositely-charged particles. In that way, ionic bonding is comparable to biological parental bonding, which involves the transfer of DNA and differential roles for child and parent. In the covalent bonding process, two particles share outer electrons, and become bonded through the connection. In this way, covalent bonding is comparable to bonding that can result from shared experiences, for instance between adults and children, mentors and protégés, and caregivers and clients.

by types one and two), which over time leads to a series of cognitive transformations toward a new identity (p. 1001). The fourth type of cognitive transformation occurs through the "filtering" process of type three, resulting in an individual viewing their old "selves" as no longer desirable or necessary (p. 1002).

This symbolic interactionist approach to understanding agency fills in some gaps left by social control theorists. For instance, Giordano and colleagues suggested moving beyond social control as a "theory of constraint" (p. 992), although they focused on the process of desistance from crime. In subsequent work, Giordano (2010) explored both positive and negative outcomes, and shed considerable light on the long-term processes that underpin agentic life course development, particularly in the context of the parent/child dyad. Still, several questions remain, especially regarding youth in CPS custody. For instance, what role might cognitive transformation play in the lives of youth who have not been convicted of crimes or delinquency, but who come to CPS from neglectful, abusive, or absent parents? Is it necessary for such youth to cognitively transform their identity from "abused/neglected/at-risk youth" to "productive self-sufficient adult?" Is it possible for a self-perceived identity of independence to be counterproductive for young adults as they age-out from CPS?

These questions are of little import to Sampson and Laub's most recent work, which states "*behavior changes identity*, not the other way around…" (2016, p. 330; emphasis in the original). If Sampson and Laub are right (and if states can be trusted to act in the best interests of *all* children), then more than a century of juvenile justice reform would have by now at least partially mitigated the negative trajectories associated with abused, neglected, and orphaned youth (Berger et al. 2009; Feld, 2017; Maclean et

al., 2016; Tanenhaus, 2012). If institutional social control could systematically improve the life course pathways of such youth, it is likely that evidence of this would be readily available by way of adequately funded, evidence-based, and consistently implemented systems of child protection (Cohen, 1985, p. 64). The "net" of institutional social control has persistently expanded beyond the walls of formal institutions since the 19th century (Cohen, 1985) with control options for youth that include penal incarceration as punishment for crimes, community incarceration in facilitated group homes, parole and probation systems, school policing and oversight, and varying degrees of surveillance and monitoring in the community (Kim et al., 2017). If institutional social control could "save children," children in CPS in the United States would likely have been saved by now.

If, on the other hand, the healthy development of children into sustainable adulthood requires input from the children themselves, there are obvious problems with Sampson and Laub's non-agentic treatment of social control over the life course. Most notably, longitudinal research with traumatized youth suggests that even after acutely adverse childhood experiences, some individuals thrive as they transition into adulthood and subsequent stages (i.e., they demonstrate "resilience" Cicchetti, 2013; Daining and DePanfilis, 2007; DuMont, Widom, and Czaja, 2007; McGloin and Widom, 2007; Werner and Smith, 2001). Similarly, agency has been identified with both positive outcomes such as desistance from crime (Farrall et al., 2011; Giordano et al., 2002; Paternoster et al., 2015) and negative outcomes such as offending itself (Lindegaard and Jacques, 2014).

Returning to social bonding *as a process*, the "elements" of the bond suggested by Hirschi (1969) and adopted by Sampson and Laub (2016; Laub and Sampson, 2003; Laub

et al, 2008) are attachment, involvement, commitment, and beliefs. These components can be easily identified in a cross-sectional sense, with some people reporting or demonstrating higher or lower levels of each construct. Nevertheless, the processes by which those elements are developed in individuals requires some form of bi-lateral interaction between individuals and sources of social control (and by extension, support). In that regard, Giordano's typologies of cognitive transformation function well as complementary "internal" forces that work in concert with the "external" forces described by Hirschi (1969). Perhaps cognitive transformations are best conceived as micro-level mechanisms that contribute to the establishment, maintenance, interruption, and severance of bonds with other individuals and groups.

This integration of Hirschi's "elements of a bond" (1969) with Giordano et al.'s (2002) theory of cognitive transformations allows for the interaction between individual and social structure that is central to the life course perspective. Giordano and colleagues do not present their theory as temporally ordered or mutually exclusive, but their presentation of cognitive shifts do suggest a progressing series of events that builds on previous interactions:

> "Our [primary] premise is that the various cognitive transformations not only relate to one another (an ideal typical sequence: an overall 'readiness' influences receptivity to one or more hooks for change, hooks influence the shift in identity, and identity changes gradually decrease the desirability and salience of the deviant behavior) but they also inspire and direct behavior" (p. 1002).

Table 1. presents an integration of Hirschi's elements with Giordano's typology of cognitive transformation. The table is not presented as a definitive treatment of the these two independent, innovative, and often opposed lines of theory. Rather, the table is presented as a heuristic for thinking not just about what a bond is, but how one forms.

Such a formulation provides a starting point for people in the field who are interested in helping marginalized youth find their own way through life's vagaries.

Table 1. Integration of Hirschi's Bond Elements and Giordano's Cognitive Transitions

	Types of Cognitive Transformation	
Elements of the Social Bond	**1. Open to Attachment:** Subject is willing and able to develop a durable, trusting connection with a new person or group	**2. Value in Involvement:** Subject perceives value and viability in the prospect of participating in the bonding process
	3. New Identity and Commitments: Subject is abe to adapt to the new roles and activities that emerge from new relationships and activities	**4. "Old Self" and New Beliefs:** Subject comes to view their old roles and activities as ineffective or undesirable, establishing new beliefs

More specifically, for practitioners tasked with developing bonds with youth who have experienced profound abuse, neglect, abandonment, or other childhood trauma, some acknowledgement of the youth to be "bonded" is necessary. Stated clearly, it is likely that for a "bonder" to establish an attachment *as a process* a willing participant is needed on each side of the relationship (Cell #1). Rather than assuming a universal desire for involvement with prevailing social structures, it makes sense that the evaluations of value and viability would shape the engagement of would be "bondees" (Cell #2). While their causal and temporal ordering is beyond the scope of the present study, new individual identities and commitments to new social structures are linked processes (Cell #3). Similarly, micro-level changes in self-perception are linked with new beliefs about the macro-level social world (Cell #4).

Whether the process is referred to as "social control over the life course," "cognitive transformation," or "bonding as a process," how social bonds and support networks develop over time is of central importance to the study of sociology,

psychology, and justice. In other words, a central concern for criminology. This is particularly so in the context of children with marginal parental contact, those who are raised as wards of the state, and those deemed at heightened risk for victimization, delinquency, and adult crime. Life course criminologists would therefore do well to more systematically analyze the implications of CPS as a form of incarceration and social bonding as a process. This is particularly important after generations of "progressive" juvenile justice reform that continues to apply "the worst of both worlds" to youth by combining the punitive features of adult court with the relaxed legal protections of juvenile court (Feld, 2007; 2017, Tanenhaus, 2012).

Stated plainly, if the "moral absolutism" (Platt, 1969, p. 27) of the child savers and the scientific benevolence of subsequent "community-minded" reformers (Cohen, 1985), coupled with the resources of the state itself were sufficient to both "cure and coerce" (Rothman, 1980, p. 419) we should expect that modern-day children who are raised professionally by the state would fare relatively well over the life course.

This is counter indicated by recent research that finds CPS to be associated with either null or negative effects over time (Berger et al., 2009; Maclean et al., 2016). Regardless of the theoretical (in)compatibility of coercing (i.e. social control, incarceration) and curing (i.e. social support, treatment), both are implemented on youth across the juvenile justice system. Child protection systems deploy an ostensibly more support-focused regime, while the juvenile criminal justice system focuses more on control. Still, how forces of social control and support interact in a life course framework to explain positive and negative trajectories, transitions and turning points remains only loosely defined. What is needed is a more systematic treatment of social control and

social support as forces that influence life course pathways. Toward that end, Table 2 presents a heuristic that outlines sources of informal and formal social control and support.

Table 2. Sources of Formal and Informal Social Control and Support

	Social Control (To Limit Antisocial Outcomes)	**Social Support (To Promote Prosocial Outcomes)**
Formal	**Forms of Incarceration:** Prison and jail; Community Corrections; Child Protective Services (CPS)	**Forms of Treatment:** Behavioral and Psychological Therapies, Education, Training
Informal	**Ecological Resources:** Family; Peers; School; Employemt; Marriage; Fictive Kin	**Ecological Resources:** Family; Peers; School; Employemt; Marriage; Fictive Kin

In this representation, the social bonding outcomes of those exposed to forms of incarceration (i.e. total institutions or "asylums") will tend to rely more heavily on formal iterations of social control and support, owing to their attenuated ties to ecological resources. It is worth noting here that formal sources of social control and social support are implemented by distinct institutions (e.g. CPS, outpatient therapy respectively), whereas individuals rely on the same ecological resources (e.g. family and community) for informal sources of control and support. This suggests that youth from marginalized social and economic backgrounds are less likely to receive adequate social structure early in life, and therefore more exposed to formal, and perhaps involuntary implementation of formal forces of control and support.

Considering both social control and social support as complimentary components of the social structures that frame lives and experiences therefore facilitates a more comprehensive conceptualization of life course trajectories, and allows life course

theories to better explain both "successes and failures" (Laub et al., 2008) regarding CPS and other forms of incarceration. In sum, just as successes and failures do not happen in a vacuum, neither do they imply predictable or logical outcomes (Sampson and Laub, 2005). Rather, individuals vary in their responses to formal and informal sources of social support and control, as discussed in detail in the following section.

Individual Responses to Life Events: Agency

The life course relevance of social constructs such as gender (Balfour and Comack, 2013; Chesney-Lind, Morash, and Stevens, 2008), race/ethnicity (Anderson, 2012; Barrick, 2014; Ward, 2012), history (Dannefer, 1984; Elder, 1979 Rutter et al., 1990) are well-established. The same can be said for institutionalized structures, such as marriage, employment, and military service (Elder, 1994; Laub and Sampson, 2003). These factors shape the ways in which individuals interact with social structures over time. Additionally, a stable set of risk factors has been established that link adverse childhood experiences to negative social, medical, and mental health outcomes (Craig et al., 2016; Felitti et al., 1998; Monnat and Chandler, 2015; Vidal et al., 2017). Research has also demonstrated that the consequences of negative social interactions can have persistent, and even lifelong effects (Moffit 1993; Moffitt and Caspi, 2001).

In certain combinations (e.g. racial and ethnic minorities who are also gender or sexual minorities) these social factors can result in compounding marginalization at their "intersections" (Crenshaw, 1990). This body of research has been largely retrospective, moving backwards in time and connecting negative outcomes to their precursors. The life course perspective, on the other hand, views lives prospectively, as individuals and institutions move reflexively through time in historically situated, "interconnected lives"

(Elder et al., 1988). From this point of view, a familiar edict reemerges: “most antisocial children do not become antisocial adults” (Gove, 1985, p. 123; Robins, 1978).

The prospective study of youth as they transition through life, coupled with the consideration of social support as a component of the social structure in which children develop can help identify both failures and successes at both the institutional and individual levels (Widom, 1989; Sperry and Widom, 2013). This approach illuminates the interactive and cumulative effects resulting from the many social control and support processes that characterize social interaction at a given time in history (Sampson and Laub, 1992, p. 72; Elder, 1994). Demography is not destiny, and how individuals interpret and evaluate social structures and **“**social events**”** (Hagan and Palloni, 1988) have important implications for human development over the life course. The human reaction to social stimuli suggested in life course perspectives and formulated in the age-graded theory of social control has been referred to by social scientists as “agency” (Laub and Sampson, 2003), and has been used to understand both positive and negative social action (Paternoster, et al., 2015; Lindegaard and Jacques, 2014).

Revisions to the age-graded theory of informal social control suggested a pivotal role for agency (Laub and Sampson, 2003, p. 141; Laub et al., 2008) based on individual “states and traits” (Van Gelder and DeVries, 2012; also see Laub and Sampson 2003 p. 141-149; 162-64; 280-82). Despite the central importance of individual responses to life events over the life course, researchers have been slow to empirically define and measure agency (Laub et al., 2008). As such, fundamental questions regarding the nature and definition of agency remain largely unexplored (Hitlin and Elder, 2007), and an empirical model of the concept remains only loosely defined (Hitlin and Elder, 2006). This

ambiguity has led some researchers and theorists in life course criminology to relegate agency to population heterogeneity or unexplained variation (Sampson and Laub, 1992; Laub et al., 2008). Over time, Sampson and Laub themselves have been inconclusive and inconsistent in their theorizations of agency.

For instance, Sampson and Laub themselves once suggested that a deeper, more detailed understanding of agency was a "first order challenge for future work in life-course criminology" (Laub et al., 2008, p. 328). In more recent treatments however, the duo has suggested agency is *not* important and cognitive transformation and identity change are not necessary precursors to change in life courses (Kools, 1997; 1999). Rather, "nudges" from external forces (i.e. social control) modify behavior in small ways that accumulate, eventually altering individual perceptions of identity (Sampson and Laub, 2016, p. 329). As suggested above however, these theoretical propositions are challenged by the inability of research to demonstrate a net positive life course effect of CPS. Children who are encapsulated in the vast resources and consistent "nudges" of parenthood by the state, assuming the benevolence of the state and all the state's agents, should have systematically and observably positive pathways through life, compared to similarly situated youth who are not placed in CPS. But that is not the case (Ryan and Testa, 2005).

Stated another way, if ex-prisoners can be "nudged" by parole officers into behaviors that lead to desistance in the absence of prosocial cognitive transformations, as suggested by Sampson and Laub's most recent work (2016), then it stands to reason that children who spend years in CPS, encapsulated in state sanctioned social control, could be "nudged" in prosocial directions as well. This is especially true, as suggested by

Sampson and Laub, considering "watershed" advancements in "…a by-now large research program in behavioral economics and cognitive science" (2016, p. 329-330). But empirical research on child protection systems and CPS is generally pessimistic regarding the outcomes of youth placed in CPS (Berger et al., 2009). The proposition that social control can fix people independent of their cognitive states and traits is also fundamentally inconsistent with a recent meta-review of research on the outcomes of youth after CPS that suggests a "null or negative effect" over the life course (Maclean et al., 2016).

In summary, Sampson and Laub have moved away from any need to explain agency and cognitive transformation, suggesting instead that social control tells the whole story of human development. The pair has recently proposed that agents of formal social control (parole officers) can manifest "nudges" toward prosocial behavior and that those small movements can have a cumulative effect on life course pathways over time (Sampson and Laub 2016, p. 330). Still, like any social interaction, the relative effect of nudges toward certain behaviors depends on the capability and willingness of individuals to respond to the interaction (Hitlin and Elder, 2006; 2007; Sampson and Laub, 2005). However, there is merit to Sampson and Laub's fear that the study of agency could prove to be a profound "distraction" as opposed to a "theoretical advancement" (p. 329). The discussion of agency by social scientists could, of course, spiral into overly-individualistic explanations of human development, which neglect the group process that shape the course of opportunities over a given life course.

But with theories as with people, that which does not kill (may) build resilience (Samuels and Pryce, 2008). How agency functions in the life course framework, how it

might be encouraged or discouraged, and when and how agency is used in pro- and antisocial endeavors, are not straightforward considerations. But a systematic understanding of agency over the life course is imperative to a comprehensive model of life course pathways.

Defining Agency for Theory, Research, and Practice

A crucial step in understanding the role of agency and avoiding unnecessary empirical "distractions" is a clearly stated and empirically supported definition of agency. Hitlin and Elder addressed this challenge in a pair of papers, using the social psychological concepts of "self" and "time" as organizing concepts. Hitlin and Elder (2007) suggested four typologies as a framework for research and critical thinking about agency. First, *existential agency* refers to the universal and fundamental ability that functioning humans use to make decisions. The authors point out that even enslaved people and mental patients (and, by extension, imprisoned people and youth in CPS) maintain some ability to make decisions, "though they face severe consequences for those choices" (2007, p. 177). Existential agency is therefore universal, but differentially-delimited. This fundamental, non-varying type of agency is circumscribed or "bounded" by societal and biological forces that form and shape the development of the other three types of agency (Hitlin and Elder, 2007, p. 185).

Second, *identity agency* refers to the habitual decisions that individuals make to establish, maintain, or develop their relative social status. Bounded by the social structures that shape the trajectories into which one is born, people make micro-level decisions in management of their "presentations of self" (Goffman, 1978). The identities that individuals develop over time are therefore both macro-structured and micro-

interactive, *and required for social bonding to occur as a process*, for instance "movement toward a marital partner" (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002, p. 999, footnote 3). This patterned aspect of agency allows people to develop habitual decision-making behaviors in circumstances and situations that are predictable, and follow established (though not pre-ordained or direct) pathways to desired outcomes. Over time, this process "free[s] up cognitive space" for other tasks (Hitlin and Elder, 2007, p. 179). For instance, in less-predictable social contexts, agentic decisions and behaviors are bounded primarily by temporality and urgency (as opposed to established and durable social structures), requiring more fast-paced critical analysis and decisive action. Such situations require a more fluid application of agency.

Third, *pragmatic agency* is required in response to more novel situations where habitual decision-making is insufficient. Whereas identity-oriented agentic behaviors develop in response to established, systematic social structures, pragmatic agency develops in response to emergent and dynamic stimuli. Hitlin and Elder's (2007) typologies incorporate Meadian concepts of self to explain agency enacted on the "knife's edge" of any given moment, in the context of both past experiences and the developing nature of life course pathways. Here again, considering the constant, unidirectional passage of time in models of human behavior (i.e. longer-term identity agency, and shorter-term pragmatic agency) suggests that individuals cannot opt-out of transitioning through life. In the years after infancy, humans are increasingly tasked with making both explicit and implicit choices by way of both action and inaction. Through these conversion processes of identity agency and pragmatic agency (Hvinden and Halversen, 2017), people execute behaviors regarding immediate survival (e.g. crossing

the street and interacting with dogs) and the development of self with age and experience (e.g. intellectual interests, career goals).

The fourth type of agency is different from the first three. People deploy both identity and pragmatic forms of agency in response to proximal stimuli, or "established, self-in-situation processes implicating the reflexive aspect of the self" (Hitlin and Elder, 2007, p. 182). In contrast, *life course agency* refers to decisions and behaviors that are undertaken to alter one's own long-term life course trajectories. Research in criminology often refers vaguely to agency in the existential sense (Laub and Sampson, 2003; Laub et al., 2008). More specifically, however, life course criminologists are primarily concerned with life course agency, which includes components of "planfulness," rational choice, and individual variation based on both the functional capacity to act and the self-perceived capacity for effective agentic action (Rutter, Quinton, and Hill, 1990, p. 146). It is important to reiterate here that any concept of agency necessarily consists of both decisions and actions, as well as *not* deciding and *not* acting. Hitlin and Elder's (2007) typology is consistent with the process outlined previously in Figure 2 whereby individuals transition through time on historically-situated and socially-structured trajectories, navigating temporally unidirectional pathways to age-graded interactions between social structures and individuals. Such interactions may or may not foster turning points based on social structures, the traits and states of individuals, and the incessant passage of time.

Another step toward understanding the role of agency while avoiding unnecessary "distractions" comes from operationalized measures and factor analysis. Hitlin and Elder (2006) derived measures of agency from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent

Health (Add Health) data to identify and model antecedents and components of agency as a construct. The authors extended their social psychological conceptualization of the self, over time, situated in social structures, and reacting to stimuli. Drawing on previous research, and much of the conceptualization later published in Hitlin and Elder (2007), agency was operationalized by measures of *planfulness*, *optimism*, and *self-efficacy*. All three of these measures capture the inherently temporal nature of agency in practice. In some cases, agency must be employed to navigate dynamic and novel short-term situations, and in other cases agency is employed to maneuver through social life more predictably. In theory, however, any exercise of agency is necessarily influenced by individuals' *ability* to make plans ("planfulness"), positive/negative psychological *affect* ("optimism"), and the *self-perception* of those abilities and affects ("self-efficacy").

To further explicate this theoretical approach, Hitlin and Elder (2006) proposed social support as a contributing factor in the development of self-reported agency (p. 43). They offer three ways that socially supportive networks could foster prosocial development such as agency by

> "allow[ing] latitude for making mistakes in terms of emotional (and possibly financial) support… guiding individuals toward repeated success[es] that, over time, lead to a sense of efficacy. Also, one might feel more optimistic about one's life chances if they feel as if they are not encountering problems alone" (p. 43).

Framed this way, the structural equation models presented by Hitlin and Elder (2006) suggest that all four measures of social support [18] are "highly significant predictors" of self-reported agency in youth, but not as significant as measures of planfulness (p. 53).

[18] Hitlin and Elder (2006) measured social support using measures available in the Add Health, which asked respondents to rate the extent to which they perceived that "Adults care," "Teachers care," "Friends care," and "Family pays attention" (p. 50).

Importantly, planfulness performed not as a component of agency, but an underlying trait that contributes to agency (p. 49). This finding is consistent with findings from research with young adult who aged-out from CPS (Samuels and Pryce, 2008; Stein, 2006a; 2006b; Vaughn, 2008).

In their conclusion, Hitlin and Elder suggest that rectifying "false dichotomies like 'agency vs. structure'" is a key strength of life course approaches to social science (2006, p. 60). Their models, based on theoretically-derived constructs and empirical analysis, suggest that individual perceptions of agency both shape, and are shaped by, structural position, or "social address" (Giordano et al., 2002). Taken together Hitlin and Elder (2006; 2007) suggest a framework in which people interpret their capacity for action and their chances for success, and consider both as they deploy existential agency tailored to identity development and exigent circumstance, and make plans to influence their life course trajectories. Their social psychological approach therefore marries the structural and historical frameworks discussed by Elder (1994), and studied by social control theorists (Hirschi, 1969; Laub and Sampson, 2003) with the individual characteristics of personality and psychological processes analyzed in psychology (Caspi, Bem, and Elder, 1989; Caspi, Elder, and Hebener, 1990; Moffitt, 1993; Moffitt and Caspi, 1993; 2001), as well as Giordano et al.'s (2002) theory of cognitive transformation.

A comprehensive (i.e. integrated) model of the life course remains difficult to rectify (Hirschi, 1989). Agnew (2011) has acknowledged both the challenge, and necessity of an integrated theory for the future of criminology:

> "Constructing such a theory will be a gradual process, involving the contributions of a broad range of individuals, since it requires expertise in a wide range of areas. The pursuit of such a theory, however, is critical given the current state of criminology […] current theories are able to explain only a small portion of the variance in crime. Further, the amount of variance explained has not increased in recent years (Weisburd and Piquero, 2008). This is the case even though criminology is awash in theories, with new theories appearing at a rapid rate (see Bernard and Snipes, 1996). It seems doubtful that the development of yet another theory will significantly advance the discipline. Rather, we should recognize that […] a full explanation of crime requires a that we find a way to integrate and build on the key insights of [existing] theories" (p. 201-202, citations in original).

Child protection systems offer criminology a uniquely relevant context in which to further explore theoretical and empirical questions regarding the implementation of and engagement with social control over the life course. This is so because CPS is a fundamental component of the "undifferentiated" juvenile justice system (Tanenhaus, 2012, p. 422; see also Levine and Levine, 1992; Platt, 1969; 1977; Shireman, 2003; Sutherland, 1939). CPS is a state-sanctioned, ostensibly non-punitive form of incarceration designed to reduce crime and victimization over the life course. CPS therefore falls well within the purview of criminology, and represents a particularly salient area of research for life course criminology, with its focus on human development and interacting pathways, nested within evolving social structures.

Despite availability of rich, representative, longitudinal data sets about trajectories through child protection systems,[19] criminologists have largely neglected CPS as a source of social control, social support, and a forum for the study of agency and bond formation in relation to both. Scholars of law and justice have largely neglected to interrogate the

[19] Examples include the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System [AFCARS]; National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System [NCANDS]; the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being [NSCAW]), each of which is curated by Cornell University and available at https://www.ndacan.cornell.edu/datasets/dataset-details.cfm?ID=204.

legal underpinnings of juvenile justice which suppress youth's access to due process through chancery law (Feld, 1984; 1989; 2006) and the legal and moral imperative to act in the best interest of youth (Feld, 1991; 1993 Tanenhaus, 2012). Practitioners and community volunteers are positioned to intervene in the lives of youth in CPS, but how to best prepare youth for life back in their natal homes and communities (Fader, 2013), or life after CPS remains largely unexplored (Samuels and Pryce, 2008; Stein, 2006a; 2006b).

The sections that follow detail the substantive overlap at the intersection of child protection and criminology, and the social impacts CPS can have on youth. The theoretical framework set forth so far, applied to the context of CPS, places the roles of state-sanctioned social control and support (in the predominant absence of informal forces of control and support from bio-family, kin, and community), as well as the agentic decisions and behaviors of and youth who grow up in, and age-out of CPS, into stark relief.[20] The following section discusses in detail the substantive and substantial overlap between CPS and the study of criminology.

Child Protective Services & Juvenile Justice

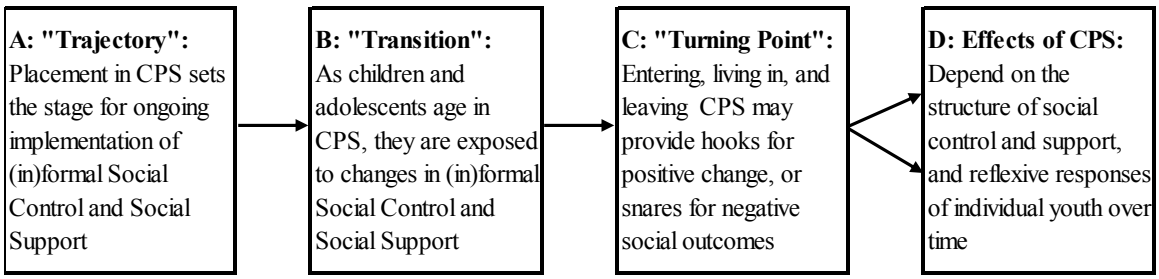
Children can be subjected to a child protection system for a variety of reasons centered on a state's determination of a family's failure or inability to care for their offspring (Cross et al., 2005; Kim et al., 2017). Parents may be incarcerated, deported,

[20] The term relief is used here in the artistic sense. For example, carving in relief refers to a technique of chiseling away the background matrix of a substrate, leaving the foreground images to appear raised above the background. The analogy here is that for youth in CPS, the "background matrix" of attachment to parents, peers, school and community are largely "chiseled away" by the child protection system, leaving the effects of extra-parental state-sanctioned child-rearing (i.e. institutional social control) to appear elevated and more easily discernable.

abusive and/or neglectful; or they may be too ill, too poor, or emotionally unable to care for their children to the state's satisfaction. Some youth end up in CPS not because of parental behavior or abandonment, but because of unexpected death. Some are in CPS because of sexual abuse between siblings that cannot be managed within the home, but was not charged as a criminal offense. Despite the diverse backgrounds of children placed in CPS, the characteristic that links them is the inherently traumatizing process of being removed from their families of origin and placed in a state-sanctioned total institution (e.g. a shelter, group home, or foster household) with other traumatized clients.

Another characteristic of CPS is the psychological and medical assessment of youth upon intake, and continued therapy and programing to address the needs and risk profiles of youth as deemed necessary by agents of the state (Shireman, 2003). CPS therefore offers opportunities for both social control and support, and could have effects consistent with "hooks" for positive change (Giordano et al., 2002), or "snares" for negative changes that can mire people in unhealthy pathways (Moffitt and Caspi, 2001). Figure 4 illustrates this model.

Figure 4: Model of CPS as Life Course "Life Event" and the Role of Agency



This dissertation argues that by analyzing the experiences of youth who grow up in CPS, researchers can address the "first order challenge" regarding agency described by Sampson and colleagues (2008). Such an approach could also help open other "black

boxes" in criminology, such as the *process* of social bond formation and the role of social support in life course development.

This is true because CPS comprises a state sanctioned form of total institution[21] designed for children who experience parental abuse, neglect, incarceration, deportation, poverty, infirmity, death, or abandonment. In other words, children placed in CPS are exposed to forms of social control that are currently novel, but fundamentally important to criminological research. Further, the legal underpinnings of CPS are based on assumptions of states' benevolence and ability to act in the best interest of children. But research on the life course effects of placement in CPS challenges those assumptions. The vast scope of the problem only underscores the need for research on the implications of CPS over the life course.

Recall that 400,000 youth are in CPS custody in the United States on any given day (DHHS, 2015, p. 1), with approximately 20,000 aging-out annually (p. 3). Recall further that a recent estimate suggests that over a third (37.4%) of children in the U.S. are the subject of a child protection investigation before the age of seventeen (Kim et al., 2017). This group of children come from diverse backgrounds, each with different needs and resources. Families of children screened-out from placement in CPS may receive (voluntary or involuntary) services through child protection systems (Lee, 2016; Shireman, 2003).

[21] Goffman (1968) described total institutions as physical, "brick and mortar" institutions, removed from the community. The group homes, foster households, and shelters that house children cared for by the child protection system are not institutions in the strictest Goffmanian sense. But in consideration of Cohen's subsequent (1985) explanation of the expansion of state-sanctioned social control forces into communities and families, as well as the lived experience of youth who are remanded to CPS regardless of their wishes, all three meet Goffman's definition of a total institution in contemporary terms.

Those screened-in for placement in CPS[22] custody spend some or all their childhoods in the care of the state. For both groups, state investigation and/or intervention could have either net positive or net negative consequences for youth as well as their families and communities.

Those consequences are acutely more impactful to the already- marginalized groups on whom CPS intervention tends to focus: people of color, people struggling with poverty, and working-class communities (Lash, 2017; Lee, 2016). For these reasons, criminologists interested in life course criminology, social bonding, social support, the effects of trauma, or human agency would be well advised to more comprehensively analyze child protection systems as sources of both control and support. Similarly, legal and justice scholars interested in juvenile justice, incarceration, chancery law, civil commitment, or disproportionate minority contact with law enforcement (DMC) would do well to examine how and why CPS is imposed, and subsequently shapes the life course pathways of youth.

The Intersection of CPS and Modern Criminology

Social, legal, and moral lineages of development directly connect CPS to the broader juvenile justice system (Bishop and Decker, 2006). With few exceptions, however, criminologists have been slow to study the experiences of youth in CPS, or to consider CPS as a form of (ostensibly non-punitive) incarceration in research. This is the case despite their importance to a comprehensive, life-course-informed understanding of criminological theory and criminal justice practices. As notable exceptions, Turanovic

[22] DHHS (2014) reported that on average, the 46 reporting states screened in about 60, and screened out about 40 percent of referrals (p. 8; see also the flowchart in DHHS, 2013, p. xii)

and Rodriguez (2015) examined how parental incarceration affects, and is affected by the child protection system. Additionally, Baglivio and colleagues (2016) analyzed how "involvement in – and timing of" CPS placement shapes recidivism. Still, the fields of historical sociology and social work have long recognized the overlap between child protection and criminal justice systems (Berger et al., 2016; Cohen, 1985; Cross et al., 2005; Levine and Levine, 1992; Platt, 1969; Rothman, 1971; Ryan and Testa, 2005; Shireman, 2003).

Applied to CPS, the life course perspective suggests three important conclusions. First, traumas during childhood are important life events with lasting implications for trajectories, transitions, and turning points (Widom et al., 2015). The volunteer work that facilitated this dissertation allowed access to the experiences and narratives of children who have lived through profound trauma, and received state-sanctioned residential, medical, and mental health services. Second, in the context of social control and agency over the life course, youth who age out of CPS have nuanced and important insights regarding how CPS placement might interrupt trajectories, help or hinder the transition to adulthood, and foster positive and negative turning points. The interviews in the current study are therefore consistent with the earlier work of Sampson and Laub by "taking seriously the life-history provided by the [youth] themselves" (Laub and Sampson, 2003; p. 277).

Finally, analyzing CPS through a life course perspective suggests the utility of Sampson's (2011) "incarceration ledger" approach to assess the benefits and challenges of CPS (Turanovic et al., 2012). The Theater Camp narratives generated several nuanced insights regarding the struggles, successes, and failures associated with life in CPS. The

social ledger approach serves as a guiding concept for the analysis in the current dissertation, and is unpacked in more detail in the section that follows.

Accounting for Incarceration: The Social Ledger

The ledger is an accounting tool used to document and compare costs and benefits, and determine net balances of resources. Applied to human resources, a "social ledger" approach has been used to explain the development of interpersonal and professional relationships over time (Brass and Labianca, 1999; Labianca and Brass, 2006). In a criminological application of the social ledger approach, Sampson proposed that researchers should consider both the positive and negative social consequences of incarceration, and move beyond entrenched positions claiming incarceration is "good" or "bad" (2011, p. 824).

For example, in the United States, some reduction in crime is likely attributable to mass incarceration, as Sampson points out (see also DeLisi, 2005). At the same time, the negative collateral consequences of mass incarceration have been well documented, and include familial conflict, employment and health problems, and strain on communities (Travis, Western, and Redburn, 2014). These negative consequences disproportionately affect Blacks (Alexander, 2010; Steffensmeier, Ulmer, and Kramer, 1998; Wakefield and Wildeman, 2011), and the most economically marginalized working-class families (Beckett and Western, 2001).

Similarly, CPS placement likely represents a hook for positive change for the most severely abused and neglected youth. At the same time, CPS investigations are disproportionally imposed on Black youth and their families (Kim et al., 2017), and disparities persist throughout the placement process (e.g. intake, treatment, reunification;

Font, 2013, p. 370-371). Research indicates that the mechanisms that cause racial disparities in CPS are complicated by ethnic and cultural bias and modern political shifts (Dettlaff et al., 2011; Fluke et al., 2003; Hines, 2004; Wells et al. 2009).

This array of factors that coalesce into CPS practices that disproportionally affect ethnically, economically, and socially marginalized people make simple, unilateral conclusions difficult. For instance, Dettlaff and Johnson (2011) have noted that despite similar risk profiles, Latinos and immigrants are slightly under-represented in CPS rolls. This may be evidence of a reluctance for Latinos to participate with law enforcement based on a lack of faith in the system, previous interactions with law enforcement, or a fear of identifying an undocumented family member or associate. It was with these types of competing effects (incapacitation by state force/the social impact of state intervention) that Sampson proposed the social ledger approach to incarceration.

Sampson (2011) supported his proposal of the utility of an incarceration ledger with two contradictory bodies of incarceration research. One body of research he interpreted as suggesting a positive effect of incarceration through incapacitation. The other body of research suggested "criminogenic effects of imprisonment" Sampson referred to these bodies of research as "Eras 1 and 2" respectively (p. 819). Sampson extended his reasoning to posit that mass incarceration has lifelong positive implications for children, particularly minority children, both inside and outside the households of offenders (p. 822).[23]

[23] Sampson offers a conservative thumbnail estimate of 10-15% reductions in crime rates associated with mass incarceration. He notes further that though far from the profound reductions suggested by more ardent advocates of crime control and incarceration, such reductions are generally agreed upon, and "far from trivial by social science standards" (2011, p. 822).

Without hinting at irony, Sampson (2011) argued that because minority youth are disproportionally affected by community and family violence, they disproportionally benefit from even a small reduction in crime. At the broadest level, this argument demonstrates a fundamental and continued fealty in the ability of institutional social control to resolve the complex and intergenerational social problems of individuals, even at marginal rates of "success" (Cohen, 1985), and even considering historical evidence of failure (Rothman, 1972; 1980). Sampson made these claims in a review of research which recommended reducing rates of incarceration to reduce the disproportionate collateral consequences of incarceration on minority youth. More specifically, Wakefield and Wildeman (2011) found that "father incarceration has the effect of additionally burdening already vulnerable children…" (p. 800). Wakefield and Wildeman acknowledged that paternal incarceration is undoubtedly beneficial in some cases, for instance in cases of physical or sexual abuse, and recommend identifying subsets of offenders that "most contributed to the massive incarceration rate" (i.e. non-violent drug offenders) and not incarcerating them (p. 804).

Sampson (2011) details two primary critiques of Wakefield and Wildeman's (2011) findings. The primary critique regards the policy recommendation. Sampson's counterargument to the "decarceration" of non-violent drug offenders proposes that since criminologists and juvenile justice practitioners are unable to reliably predict future offense severity based on current offense, and since offenders do not demonstrate high levels of specialization, it is impossible to distinguish the difference between a so-called "non-violent drug offender" and a violent drug offender (2011, p. 823). He poses several rhetorical questions about "substantive" violent and drug offenders. Taken together, these

questions imply a "Minority Report" approach[24] to criminal justice, and suggest that the incarceration of someone *charged* with a "non-violent drug crime" today *might* be a good idea, based on his potential proclivity to offend violently *in the future*. In other words, Sampson dismisses the utility of not incarcerating non-violent drug offenders (as charged) in reducing the negative effects of incarceration on children because some of those offenders have done, and some might do in the future, additional unreported or otherwise unrecognized violence.

The problem is that few studies have heeded Sampson's call to explore the utility of a social ledger approach to evaluating the intended (e.g. incapacitation) and collateral (e.g. familial disruption) consequences of incarceration. This lack of theoretical and empirical research squanders the primary contribution of Sampson (2011), by missing an opportunity to develop an "Era 3" of criminological research that considers more fully the complex range of outcomes associated with incarceration. Turanovic, Rodriguez, and Pratt (2012) built on the idea of a social ledger of incarceration and did much to move the discussion beyond the false "good" vs. "bad" dichotomy identified by Sampson (2011). Turanovic and colleagues (2012) explored how the lives of some children may benefit, while others suffer, and still others experience no change from parental incarceration. Specifically, their qualitative study of 100 caregivers of children of incarcerated parents moved criminology forward in two important ways.

[24] Minority Report is a 2002 movie which takes place "in a future where a special police unit is able to arrest murderers before they commit their crimes, [and] an officer from that unit is himself accused of a future murder." (http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0181689/)

First, they interviewed people who were experiencing the collateral consequences of incarceration first-hand (Cullen, 2011; Maruna, 2015). This design allowed the authors to pursue the underlying causal mechanisms that might make life worse (or better) for children of incarcerated parents, as opposed to allowing the human element of their work to remain a "black box" throughout the research process or writing agency off as an unimportant concept (Sampson and Laub, 2016). They found that the quality of the caregivers' experiences (i.e. negative or positive change after parental incarceration) "depends on the social processes that characterize their family systems" (Turanovic et al., 2012, p. 944). Specifically, the pre-incarceration parent/child and caregiver/prisoner relationships, and the level of familial social support reported by caregivers were found to be important determinants of whether children's lives improved or worsened after the incarceration of a parent.

As predicted by Sampson (2011), some parents were described as destabilizing forces in the lives of their families, and their incarceration allowed for increased organization and predictability in their daily lives of those they left behind. Some of the incarcerated parents had been the sole, or primary source of disruption to the familial process. For this and other reasons, 20% of respondents reported a positive change after parental incarceration. Other parents in the study had been functionally absent from their familial obligations for years, and their incarceration had little to no effect on their families (22%). The majority (58%) of caregivers reported that their lives had gotten more problematic after the incarceration of their wards' parents, primarily due to loss of parental income and emotional support.

Second, and more fundamentally, Turanovic and colleagues did not stop at identifying and confirming a well-established trend in criminological research. Instead of focusing only on how incarceration made over half of caregivers' lives worse, they also interrogated thematically the 'off-diagonal" cases that reported null or positive effects (Giordano, 1989). The authors applied a ledger-style analysis, taking Sampson's proposal out of the laboratory, and found that in general, family processes drove the (positive, negative, and stable) valence of trajectories for the caregivers of children with incarcerated parents. Though not presented in a life course framework, Turanovic et al.'s (2012) work is broadly consistent with (and relevant to) Elder's conceptualization of "interdependent lives" and relative generational placement (Elder, 1988), and Sampson and Laub's age-graded theory of informal social control (Sampson and Laub, 1990; Laub and Sampson, 2003). Through the social ledger approach to the consequences of incarceration, these findings suggest that social support may play an important role in developing negative and positive experiences of the families left behind by incarcerated parents (Cederbaum et al., 2017).

Integrating the history of juvenile justice with the main tenets of life course criminology, and adopting a social ledger approach to the evaluation of incarceration provide a solid foundation on which to develop a more detailed understanding of institutional social control. That approach could also help identify the mechanisms of prosocial individual-level social bonding over time (e.g. attachment formation, involvement with supportive peers and adults, commitment to life course goals, optimistic beliefs regarding possibilities for the future). The child savers advocated, implemented, and developed child protection systems alongside juvenile criminal justice

systems as a combined effort to reduce juvenile delinquency and adult criminality (Platt, 1969). Generations of subsequent reformers (Rothman, 1971) tried iteratively and progressively to perfect institutions of social control that could repair and repurpose "social junk" (Cohen, 1985). But such institutions were increasingly viewed as inhumane warehouses for problematic people, as opposed to sanitary and just centers of treatment (Rothman, 1980). Consequently, formal systems of social control were expanded to include community programs such as parole and probation, out-patient psychological therapy, group homes, and foster care.

What is now understood about social bonds and life course development suggests that opportunities for turning points are structured by social control systems, but that those systems fail to account fully for the complex and diverse pathways that individuals follow over time. The pathways of individuals have reverberating effects through society writ large, local communities, and families. Social scientists conduct research largely in accordance with the "ecological commitment" (Dahl, 2017) that the state can solve social problems with laws, policies, and systems of social control. But how that is achieved, and in what cases those laws, policies, and systems should be applied are often nebulously interpreted and unevenly applied (Black, 2010). It is theoretically and empirically unclear who should be put in prison, what should be done with them inside, and what we should expect of them after their sentence. It is equally unclear which (and whether) children should be removed from their homes and placed in CPS (Berger et al., 2009; Kim et al., 2017), whether the goal should be familial reunification (Connell et al., 2009; Shireman, 2003), and what we should expect of youth who age-out of a child protection system (Horrocks, 2002; Maclean et al., 2016; Samuels and Pryce, 2008; Stein, 2006a; 2006b).

The time has come for multidisciplinary social science at the intersection of social work and criminology, with placement in CPS recognized as a fundamental and non-voluntary component of the juvenile justice system in the United States and other Western societies. There are two primary reasons for this. First, CPS placement is a form of incarceration that is foundational to modern juvenile justice in the West. Under current international, national, and state-level legal systems, all state interventions (e.g. filing delinquency charges or filing motions to terminate parental rights, prosecuting cases, adjudicating responsibility, and remedying legal disputes) should be conducted *in the best interests of the child before the court*.

However, research that examines the life course effects of CPS (Maclean et al., 2016), and other forms of state intervention during childhood (Bernburg and Krohn, 2003; Aizer and Doyle, 2015) and after aging-out (Fader, 2013; Abrams and Terry, 2017) suggest negative life course effects of juvenile incarceration. These findings are consistent with the preeminent theories of contemporary criminology, but they counter-indicate the current practices of the juvenile justice system directly. Despite this disparity, few juvenile justice researchers in criminology have meaningfully and critically evaluated the practices and policies of the juvenile justice system regarding its ability to achieve its stated goals to "save children."

Second, despite the growing consensus in social science that individuals interact with social structures to produce their life course pathways, the role of agency in the development of social bonding *as a process* is as-yet only loosely defined for the purposes of theory evaluation. This confusion is compounded by modern mainstream criminology's myopic and shortsighted focus on adult desistance from crime, particularly

as it relates to incarceration in prison. Analyzing the experiences of youth currently or formerly incarcerated in a "non-punitive" but compulsory CPS system[25] therefore offers a prospective context in which the effects of institutional social control (both positive and negative) could be measured and assessed. Stated plainly, the moral, legal, and social implications of adult prison are more convoluted than those same considerations for youth in CPS. While many researchers suggest prison is a proper social response to crime (e.g. the "just desserts" argument), the argument that abused and neglected youth "deserve" to be incarcerated is more difficult to rationalize, particularly if the life course effects of placement are null at best (Berger et al., 2009; Maclean et al., 2016), even when compared to similarly situated youth (Doyle, 2008).

The following and final section of the literature review builds on concepts from Elder's large body of work, the well-supported, insightful, and iterative theorizations presented by Sampson and Laub, and the qualitative work of Turanovic and colleagues. The broad goal is to use life course criminology as a theoretical framework, and the social ledger approach as an accounting tool for the evaluation of the intended and unintended consequences of incarceration. More specifically, the objective of the following section is to frame the experiences of youth in CPS in life course terms: trajectories, transitions, and turning points, and age-graded social control, support, and agency. Thus framed, a social ledger approach to incarceration can be informed by

[25] It bears pointing out again that under the socio-legal concept of *parens patriae*, the state has both the legal standing and moral obligation to take over as the parent of the child before the court. Under the legal doctrine of chancery law, the court can circumvent the due process protections of youth in the "undifferentiated" juvenile court, which can place youth in CPS, reform school, juvenile prisons or community supervision. But regardless of the nature of the adjudication, the moral and legal underpinnings of all forms of juvenile incarceration, as all activities undertaken by juvenile courts writ large, should be in the best interest of the child.

examples of CPS generating "hooks" for positive change (Giordano et al., 2002), and "snares" for negative outcomes (Moffitt and Caspi, 2001).

This simple dichotomy begs a profound question. Why is there any empirical ambiguity as to whether CPS placement improves the lives of abused, neglected, and otherwise traumatized youth? Despite the profound traumatic experiences that characterize child abuse and neglect, and given the vast resources of states compared to citizens, we should expect to be able to detect some baseline improvement in the life course pathways of youth who are placed in CPS. Instead, research suggests a null or negative effect of placement in CPS over time. This counterintuitive dichotomy is referred to here as "the CPS paradox," and is discussed in more detail in the following section.

CPS as Life Course Hook & Snare

Ultimately any net balance on the social ledger of incarceration, be it positive or negative, depends largely on the ability of state-sanctioned social control to produce desired effects, particularly in individuals at heightened risk for deviance and victimization, such as abused and neglected youth (Feld, 1997; 2007; 2017). In other words, whether incarceration is ultimately constructive or destructive depends on whether the various forms of incarceration (e.g. prison, secured treatment centers, CPS) have net effects that "hook" individuals toward prosocial trajectories, or "ensnare" them in antisocial ones. For instance, the formal and heightened social controls implemented by child protection systems on youth in CPS should foster relative safety and stability for youth from disrupted, abusive, or neglectful homes. Similarly, the supportive nature of the behavioral assessments and psychological treatments implemented on a case-by-case

basis should encourage personal growth and social bonding. In some ways, then, the social control and support efforts imposed through CPS likely operate as a "hook" for positive change.

At the same time, children placed in CPS by the state do not get to choose where they go, who they live with, or when they return home, if ever. Additionally, youth may come to rely heavily on the support structures and treatment plans implemented by a child protection system, and become dependent on the state for ongoing care. In fact, some forms of state care may extend into adulthood (DHHS, 2015; Samuels and Pryce, 2008). In this context, programming plans may not adequately prepare youth for return to their communities of origin (Fader, 2013). Worse, long-term reliance on formalized social support may lead to unhealthy dependence over the life course that limits autonomy (Bazemore and Erbe, 2004; McKnight, 1995). As with social control, then, social support imposed through CPS may also function as a snare for negative outcomes. Table 3 depicts this heuristic.

The first cell in Table 3 is labelled "Assistive Social Control." This iteration of social control is what is posited by juvenile justice systems.

Table 3. Theoretical Effects of Social Control and Support for Youth in CPS

	Social Control	**Social Support**
"Hooks"	**Assistive Social Control:** Provides relative safety and stability through removal from distressed family	**Assistive Social Support:** Encourages personal growth; develops prosocial bonds in the absence of family
"Snares"	**Oppressive Social Control:** Restricts agency, limits access to family, peers, and community of origin	**Oppressive Social Support:** Discourages autonomy, inadvertently develops dependence on bonds to CPS

In the context of CPS, this form is evident when a severely traumatized youth is removed from an unhealthy environment and placed in the relatively safe environment of out-of-home care. This is the straightforward concept championed by Sampson and Laub, particularly in Sampson's recent (2016) treatment of agency and behavioral nudges.

Similarly, the second cell identifies "Assistive Social Support. In the context of CPS, this iteration is evident when a youth who is placed in CPS engages with the social, medical, emotional, and educational resources of the child protection system agentically, and to their own benefit. This form has been identified by Turanovic and Rodriguez (2015) through the increased mental health service access to children of incarcerated parents who live in CPS relative to those that remain with kin. Samuels and Pryce have detailed the role that young adults themselves play in the process of engaging with social support after aging-out of CPS as well.

Cells three and four in Table 3 identify the negative, oppressive iterations of social control and support. "Oppressive Social Control" refers to the possibility that removal from natal homes restricts the agentic behaviors of developing youth. While there may be positive effects of removing traumatized and marginalized youth from their problematic environments, that same removal can damage existing social bonds to family, community, and cultural groups, and may restrict the formation of new prosocial bonds. This is the form of social control that is often associated with the negative consequences of incarceration (Travis, Western, and Redburn, 2014). Finally, cell four illustrates "Oppressive Social Support" which has been described by Bazemore and Erbe as the "dependency of serviced life." In this form, support can have a deleterious effect if

"institutional roles" do not support the deployment of the subject's skills on their own behalf (2004, p. 44).

The problem is that we do not know much about how social structures provided to at-risk youth by the state qualitatively shape the trajectories, transitions, and turning points of youth who are placed in CPS. Some quantitative studies have linked CPS placement to positive social outcomes (see, for instance Turanovic and Rodriguez, 2015), yet a recent systematic review of the literature has suggested that the overall longitudinal effects are null at best, and may even be detrimental over the life course (Maclean et al., 2016). The problems with conducting research in this area are further complicated by considerations of selection bias, whereby individuals exposed to the most profoundly adverse experiences are more likely to be referred for investigation and considered for placement in CPS (Kim et al., 2017). Maclean et al. (2016) suggested the use of caseworkers who make decisions to invoke CPS at the individual level as instrumental variables in a pseudo-experimental design (see also Dettlaff et al., 2011).

This is a promising avenue for future studies of the longitudinal effects of CPS, as there is considerable variation between decision-makers, which approaches functional randomness (also see Berger et al., 2009; Doyle, 2008). While beyond the scope of the current study, which focuses on the experiences and narratives of a small sample of youth in one state, random assignment of similarly-situated youth regarding CPS experiences is becoming increasingly viable given the emerging collection of national, longitudinal, and publicly available data sets.

The current lack of empirical support for the ability of CPS and similar forms of social control to produce prosocial outcomes has dire implications for youth who are

exposed to acutely adverse life experiences, come of age in state custody, and transition to adulthood in the community. Given what we now know about how life course trajectories, transitions, and turning points shape criminal careers specifically (and social, medical, and psychological outcomes more broadly) a comprehensive criminological understanding of how youth navigate trauma, CPS, and the transition into adulthood is long overdue. The elements of the paradigm presented here that are at best loosely defined are social bonding *as a process*, and the role that individual agency plays in life course development. In the context of CPS, harnessing the agentic forces of youth and fostering prosocial bonds are of central importance because despite the total control imposed by CPS, youth eventually transition to adulthood, and out of the purview of juvenile justice (Abrams and Terry, 2017; Courtney and Hook, 2017; Fader, 2013).

Agency, Resilience, and Aging-Out of CPS

As with social control and support, agency can function as both a hook and a snare from a life course perspective. Youth who come to CPS from homes where they were restricted in developing agency, for example due to physical or sexual abuse, may tend to develop prosocially agentic behaviors and decisions based on the relative increase in social structure and household stability. Contrarily, youth who come to CPS from homes where they regularly employed high levels of agency, for example due to parental neglect, may deploy agency in ways that are oppositional to child protection goals, staff in CPS, and the treatments provided thereby. These same relationships also have implications for youth as they transition to adulthood (Stein, 2006b; Vaughn, 2008). As such, despite the holistic approach taken by CPS and other total institutions, the outcomes

of individual youth as they transition through life in the system can be as varied as the youth themselves.

The life course framework imparts yin and yang qualities to social control and social support as complementary processes, which allow them to foster compliance, independence, and growth. In the life course model presented in this dissertation (see Figures 2 and 4), trajectories are derived (exclusively at birth) from the social structures into which one is born. Transitions through life stages (e.g. infancy, adolescence, old age) are postulated as a unidirectional and constant function of the passage of time, regardless of physical maturation, emotional development, and social interactions. Turning points are the result of interactions between individual characteristics and social structures which are shaped by age-graded iterations of social control and support. Modeled this way, the role of agency appears to be particularly important in the conversion of *potential* turning points to *actualized* turning points. This is important because turning points are the mechanisms by which individuals influence their life course trajectories, by action and inaction, over time (as depicted in Figure 1).

The life course perspective therefore presents a useful framework for examining the phenomenon of CPS (Horrocks, 2002), particularly in relation to the role of agency in Sampson and Laub's age-graded theory of social control. In short, the relative lack of knowledge about how human agency shapes the pathways to adulthood for traumatized children hinders a more comprehensive understanding of life course perspectives in criminology. All children who are placed in CPS have been traumatized to some degree, but not all of them fail to become productive, healthy, and self-sufficient adults (Samuels and Pryce, 2008). All children who are placed in CPS are encapsulated in state-sponsored

social control, ostensibly for the benefit of the child, but research is yet to systematically demonstrate a net positive effect of CPS (Maclean et al., 2016). Similarly, youth who are born into ostensibly more stable homes (i.e. those not placed in CPS) may still produce positive and negative outcomes regarding life course pathways. Table 4 illustrates this phenomenon.

Table 4. CPS and Successful Transition to Adulthood

	Successful Transition to Adulthood	**Unsuccessful Transition to Adulthood**
Transition to Adulthood from CPS	Configuration A, ***"CPS and Success"*** : Youth exposed to CPS who transitions into healthy, stable adulthood	Configuration B, ***"CPS and Failure"*** : Youth exposed to CPS who does NOT transition into healthy, stable adulthood
Transition to Adulthood from Family	Configuration C, ***"Family and Success"*** : Youth NOT exposed to CPS who transitions into healthy, stable adulthood	Configuration D, ***"Family and Failure"*** : Youth NOT exposed to CPS who does NOT transition into healthy, stable adulthood

Samuels and Pryce (2008) examined this process in a sample of 44 young adults who had aged out of CPS, derived from a larger longitudinal study (The Midwest Evaluation of Adult Outcomes of Foster Youth; Courtney et al., 2005). They describe young adults navigating the tensions described in Table 3 by developing a self-identity of "survivalist self-reliance" through familial separation and becoming "independent" from others. Specifically, "three interrelated mechanisms are noted as contributing to this identity: *premature conferral of adult status and independence*, *'growing up without your parents' as a developmental task*, and *survivor pride in disavowing dependence*" (emphasis added; Samuels and Pryce, 2008, p. 1202). Premature conferral of adult status reflects the pressures to develop self-reliance and autonomy during childhood faced by youth who grow up in total institutions (Kools, 1999). Children of abusive, neglectful, or

absent parents must learn to make decisions and find strength internally, especially if they are physically removed from their natal homes.

The young adults interviewed in Samuels and Pryce's (2008) study discussed caring for themselves, siblings, and even biological parents prior to placement in CPS. The perception of institutionalized youth as independent had shaped both how the young adults self-navigated their transition into adulthood, and how caseworkers and other stakeholders (e.g. family members) perceived the needs associated with those transitions. The emerging adults studied by Samuels and Pryce also discussed feeling different from "normal youth" who had the advantage of living with their bio-families. Some youth in CPS have contact with their parents and some do not. Some come from abusive homes and some do not. But physical separation from, and hindered communication with bio-family connect the experiences of all youth in CPS custody (Baker et al., 2017).

Samuels and Pryce referred to this physical and/or emotional separation as "growing up without parents" (Samuels and Pryce, 2008, p. 1207). The early conferral of adulthood, in the effective absence of parental influence therefore represents a group process that characterizes placement in CPS. From the perspective of that group of young adults who aged-out of CPS, such characteristics are fundamental to self-identity, and separate "wards of the state" from everyone else. The dichotomy between those who had the benefit of parents, and those who had to navigate childhood and adolescence "alone" in CPS led to a sense of "survivor pride" in young adults who aged-out. The self-perceived sense of independence and efficacy that develops in such cases is very likely beneficial to youth who are separated from their families in CPS for extended periods.

However, survivalist self-reliance may also be a barrier to the development and maintenance of support networks needed by youth as they transition to adulthood, especially those who are also aging-out of CPS (Samuels and Pryce, 2008, p. 1203). Young adults who come to perceive themselves as "self-reliant survivalists" may be reluctant to ask for or accept assistance. At the same time parents, kin, caseworkers, and other stakeholders who perceive an emerging adult as highly self-reliant (or unwilling to accept help) may be reluctant to offer support or assistance. In this way, youth aging-out of CPS can function both as their own best advocate, and worst adversary during and after transitioning to legal adulthood (p. 1207; see also Oshri, Topple, and Carlson, 2017 regarding social skills in the growth patterns of youth *investigated* for maltreatment).

As an early advocate for the application of theory to the process of aging-out, Stein (2006a) proposed attachment, focal theory, and resilience as theoretical frameworks for the analysis of young adults' experiences and life course pathways post-CPS. The framework was "set in the context of social exclusion" theory (p. 423). Like social control theories that focus on bonds to society, exclusion theories suggest that material and social marginalization leads to higher risk for adverse life events such as arrest, substance abuse, and health complications. To demonstrate the utility of theory in the study of aging-out, Stein (2006a) presented three theoretical constructs. First, he discussed attachment as a theoretical orientation for understanding how youth in CPS develop relationships, and how those relationships are shaped by the juvenile justice system. Attachment theory, in short, suggests that youth who age-out from CPS may have profound barriers to establishing healthy social bonds. Primary among these barriers is

the fundamental lack of "emotional platform" on which to base the decisions, actions, and pathways they make through life.

Second, Stein (2006a) proposed the "focal model of adolescence" as a theoretical model for analyzing the age-graded and overlapping primary concerns that structure the lives of developing youth. In the context of youth in CPS, focal models suggest that such youth are forced to take on the concerns of more advanced age groups, while still contending with concerns of childhood. Role transitions are typically measured in three primary stages: disengagement from the old role, a transitional period of flux, followed by integration into the new role. In effect however, youth aging-out from CPS must encounter all three stages of "transition" in one conflated stage. In contrast to youth who turn eighteen in the care of their families, alumni of CPS must transition to adulthood when they come of age, regardless of their relative preparedness. They are not allowed to "move back home" if their plans for emerging adulthood do not pan out, and they do not enjoy state support indefinitely into subsequent stages of adulthood.

Third, Stein (2006a) discussed resilience as a theoretical concept relevant to the process of aging-out of CPS. According to Stein, key correlates of resilience are stable residential placement, positive self-identity, school achievement and stability, opportunities for turning points, and the development of practical life skills (e.g. personal finance, hygiene). In practice, stable residential placements and continuity of school (i.e. not switching schools due to residential instability) are largely the purview of the state by way of CPS. Political climates, funding issues, as well as perceived legal and moral obligations and biases all factor into these processes as well (Feld, 2002; 2003). Identity development, school achievement, potential turning points, and life skills can all be

augmented by service providers outside the state apparatus. Together with a subsequently published research review (Stein, 2006b), Stein found that the framework of resilience suggests three primary typologies of CPS alumni: youth who are focused on "moving on" who were able to take advantage of the benefits of CPS during their time there, "survivors," who were able to overcome the negative aspects of CPS with continued help from supportive networks, and "victims" who were unable to access supportive networks during and after CPS, and who continue to struggle into adulthood (Stein, 2006b, p. 277).

The concept of resilience as a trait that can be developed in individuals suggests the importance of risk factors that inhibit resilience and protective factors that promote it (Ben-David and Jonson-Reid, 2017). To that end, Stein notes research that suggests the importance of factors such as "secure attachment to at least one unconditionally supportive parent or parent substitute;" networks of family and community support, residential and school stability, opportunities for turning points, and the "ability - or opportunity- to make a difference, for example, by helping others through volunteering" (Stein, 2006a, p. 428; see also Maruna, 2001, p. 120 regarding "helping others" as a protective factor in the process of desistance from crime). Unfortunately, all these factors are systematically (though not uniformly) restricted for youth who age-out of CPS. That restriction places youth who age-out from CPS at heightened risk for a range of negative social outcomes.

Still, Vaughn et al.'s (2008) latent class analysis of a series of interviews with youth before, during, and after aging-out suggest a large portion of alumni of CPS are at low risk for delinquency and legal involvement, at least relative to others within the child protection system. The outcome variables of interest in that study were self-reported

arrests, drug sales, gun carrying, assault, and being mugged or threatened with a weapon. Vaughn et al. (2008) demonstrated evidence for 4 distinct risk groups. The largest group (69%) was classified as "low risk" youth. The low-risk group was characterized by higher levels of females and youth of color. The gender finding is consistent with broader offending patterns, but the finding about youth of color is counterintuitive based on criminological research. While youth of color are generally at higher risk for delinquency and arrest (Brame, Bushway, Paternoster, and Turner, 2014), they are also under heightened surveillance through the child protection system (Kim et al., 2017; Lee, 2016) and therefore "there are fewer differences between African American adolescents in care and those out of care" (Vaughn et al., 2008, p. 438). Low-risk youth were also characterized by higher levels of employment and familial support.

The second-largest group (16%) was classified "moderate-risk" youth, characterized by high rates of arrest and participation in violence and illegal money making. The moderate-risk group also tended to have less familial support, and higher likelihood of "polysubstance" drug use and externalizing psychopathologies, even compared to the two high-risk groups (p. 439). These anomalies associated with the "moderate-risk" group are of interest for the current work. The remaining 15% of the sample made up the two higher-risk groups which Vaughn et al. (2008) categorized as "high-risk externalizing psychopathology" and "high-risk drug culture" youth. Externalizing psychopathology youth are "arrested at an alarmingly high rate (approximately 90 percent)," are likely to report being the victim and perpetrator of violence, and have social support levels two thousand percent lower than low-risk youth. Drug culture youth are less likely to get arrested, or to perpetrate or be the victim of

violence when compared to externalizing psychopathology youth, but deal drugs, make money by other illegal means, and carry guns at higher levels than the other groups. Drug culture youth report social support levels three times lower than the low-risk group.

The authors point out the fact that over two thirds (69%) of the youth in their study qualified as low-risk for future legal involvement, and just under one third (31%) is at moderate- or high-risk. But another way to view that relationship is that only 15% of youth in the study were at high-risk for legal involvement, with acute behavioral problems. That suggests that as many as 85% of youth who age-out of CPS are not at high risk for legal involvement after aging-out. As Vaughn and colleagues make clear, much more research is needed to identify "potentially moderating characteristics and how they may be leveraged to lower the risk of legal involvement for youths aging out of care" (2008, p. 440). The current dissertation is well situated to begin to address this need. The parameters of the study are summarized, and the research questions restated, in the following sections.

Current Study & Restatement of Research Questions

In summary, criminologists have been slow to analyze CPS as state-sanctioned form of social control designed to curb criminal behavior. Relevant data has been available for several years (e.g. AFCARS, NCANDS, NSCAW). The reluctance to consider CPS in criminological circles has been driven by a failure to conceptualize CPS as a form of incarceration, and the substantive siloing of criminology as a discipline apart from others in the social science such as social work and psychology (Jacobs and Frickel, 2009). The resulting oversight has contributed to an overall failure to consider the experiences of youth in CPS in the context of general theories of crime causation and

human development. Nevertheless, life in CPS custody amounts to life in a total institution operated by the state, in which marginalized and traumatized youth are incarcerated alongside similarly disadvantaged and traumatized youth. Further, the history of the juvenile justice system demonstrates that juvenile courts, juvenile jails, and CPS were developed in concert with each other, ostensibly to halt the development of criminal propensity in youth deemed by the state to be at elevated risk of future degradation, delinquency, and crime as adults.

Regarding life course pathways, CPS may be expected to have negative social effects consistent with those associated with incarceration, lack of parental attachment and control, and association with traumatized peers. From this perspective, CPS would likely function as a "snare" for negative adult experiences and outcomes (Maclean et al., 2016; Moffitt, et al., 1996; Moffitt and Caspi, 2001). At the same time, children placed in CPS custody are assessed medically, psychologically, and educationally as a part of the intake and placement process, and ostensibly throughout their time in care (Shireman, 2003). That perspective implies a positive effect on social outcomes, consistent with those associated with access to healthcare, psychological and behavioral therapy, and attachment to prosocial adults. In other words, CPS could also function as a "hook" for positive change and prosocial growth (Giordano et al, 2002; Turanovic and Rodriguez, 2015).

Failure to analyze child protection systems as forms of social control with profound criminological implications limits criminology's understanding of total institutions (Cohen, 1985; Rothman, 1971; 1972; Goffman, 1968). Failure to analyze the experiences of youth during and after growing up in CPS (along with residential

treatment facilities, reform schools, and juvenile halls) as a fundamental effect of juvenile justice limits our understanding of how incarceration impacts the lives of youth (Abrams and Terry, 2017; Fader, 2013; Platt, 1969; Sutherland, 1939). The social ledger approach allows for an analysis of both positive and negative effects of incarceration at both the macro- and micro-level, but few studies have used this tool to analyze the role of social control on the lives of children (Sampson, 2011). What emerges is a paradox. If CPS was conceived, designed, implemented, and repeatedly reformed to improve the lives of "at-risk" youth, we should expect to be able to measure that effect reliably by now (Feld, 2007). Instead, placement in CPS appears to be a risk factor for negative life course outcomes, even net of confounding factors such as abuse and neglect.

This dissertation explores the CPS paradox through three research questions that center on the experiences and narratives of youth with firsthand experience growing up in CPS. For the sake of clarity, the research questions are as follows:

1. **ENTERING CPS**
   How do youth in CPS characterize life before CPS?

2. **GROWING UP IN CPS**
   How do youth in CPS characterize life during CPS custody?

3. **(SOMEDAY) EXITING CPS**
   How do youth in CPS characterize their plans for after CPS custody?

The following chapter presents the data collection procedures in the Theater Camp study, then details the analysis plan by which the life course experiences of youth growing up in CPS were examined.

CHAPTER 3

PHRONETIC METHODOLOGY

Very little criminological research has examined the experiences of youth growing up in CPS. Theoretically, CPS youth are a group at systematically heightened risk for delinquency and other negative life course outcomes. Regarding the administration of justice, CPS is part-and-parcel with the court system criminologists commonly refer to as the juvenile justice system. For the study of human development and group process at the broadest level, CPS offers a test tube for examining the manufacture of productive citizens by the state. Despite this obvious overlap, criminology's reluctance to consider CPS systems and the youth that grow up in custody has likely persisted for three primary reasons.

First, like most other contemporary social science disciplines, criminology is ***heavily focused on quantitative methods***, "generalizable" samples, and negative outcomes. Such research has done much to outline the effects of social structure on the lives of individuals, but largely fails to explain the mechanisms underlying the variation in life course outcomes for similarly-situated people (i.e. "off diagonal" or "negative" cases; Giordano, 1989, p. 261). This focus largely restricts criminology to knowledge that can be gleaned from expensive, difficult to (re)produce, and perhaps over-mined data sets like the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) and the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health). In general, criminologists tend to focus on formal systems of criminal justice euphemistically referred to as "cops, courts, and corrections" and on negative outcomes such as violence, arrests, and incarceration. In this sense, criminology has forsaken the orphan.

Second, there are ***formal procedural hurdles*** to gaining and maintaining research access to minors. The hurdles are even more stringent and numerous for minors who are wards of the state. This applies to those placed in CPS for familial disruption, parental abuse, neglect, or absence, as well as those held pursuant to crimes or status offenses (i.e. youth who are "state property" Lopez, 2017, p. 143). Those same characteristics produce legal, clinical, and ethical hurdles that further complicate the research process. Several layers of protections were required by the Internal Review Board (IRB) before data could be collected in the current project. The procedural barriers to accessing such populations underscore the intersectionally-marginalized social addresses of youth in CPS, and their relevance to a criminological understanding of social control and agency over the life course. In other words, incarcerated youth are not "low-hanging fruit," but understanding their experiences can be fruitful for criminology.

Third, researchers interested in moving life course theory beyond "laboratory" settings to examine the group processes inherent to CPS must establish and navigate ***informal rapport*** with CPS administrators, caseworkers in charge of long-term planning, and caregivers in charge of day-to-day care. Just as importantly, researchers must access trans-institutionally-involved youth, establish some level of trust, and elicit narratives about the vagaries of trauma, familial separation, and growing up in state custody. The interpersonal nature of this rapport makes research projects that rely on it unpredictable and difficult to schedule. It also requires researchers to deploy their "selves" as data collection instruments. This means researchers must navigate ethical interpersonal relationships with research subjects, and remain accountable to the youth under study,

their caretakers, and internal review board (IRB) requirements for lengthy, and sometimes indefinite periods of time.

Collectively, such barriers combine to make research like this dissertation uncommon in modern criminology, despite the central role played by fieldwork and qualitative analysis in the development of the discipline:

> "The roots of American criminology are anchored firmly in qualitative research, which has animated the discipline from its earliest days. It is difficult to imagine where criminology would be today without such qualitative classics as Shaw's *The Jack-Roller* (1930), Sutherland's *The Professional Thief* (1937), or Whyte's *Street Corner Society* (1943). Qualitative research has provided criminology with many of its most influential and enduring theoretical concepts, including, among numerous others, differential association, labeling and deviance amplification, self-help, techniques of neutralization, moral panic, and stakes in conformity […] Yet qualitative research currently enjoys far less prestige among American criminologists than its quantitative counterpart and consequently exerts far less influence on the discipline…" (Wright, Jacques, and Stein, 2015, p. 339).

As was the case during the emergence of criminology as a discipline (Fisher et al., 1998 Faris and Broom, 1967), field-based data collection and qualitative, case-oriented analysis are needed now to address modern criminology's most pressing theoretical questions and inconsistencies (Cullen, 2011; Maruna, 2015).

Toward that end, the current study took a phronetic approach to planning, conducting, and analyzing data. Phronetic methodology centers on three organizing concepts: self-reflexivity, social context, and thick description (Tracy, 2012). The following section details the phronetic approach. Subsequent sections present the themes (i.e. variables) of interest, and explain the samples, data collection protocols, and analysis plan for the interviews with youth in CPS (n=33). The interviews with youth in CPS were conducted in summer 2015 during a theater-based summer camp program for youth in CPS. Those interviews are referred to collectively here as "the Theater Camp study."

The Theater Camp respondents are linked by their shared experiences of removal from bio-family (i.e. "entering CPS"), their status as wards of the state (i.e. "growing up in CPS"), and the framing of their future adulthoods by their experiences in CPS (i.e. "[someday] exiting CPS"). At the same time, their diverse individual characteristics, their reasons for placement in CPS, and their life course trajectories as they approach the prospect of exiting state custody make the respondents diverse in the context of the possession, perception, and engagement of life course factors (e.g. agency, social control, and social support).

The Phronetic Approach to Research

The problem-based phronetic approach to research (Tracy, 2012) is based on three concepts: self-reflexivity, social context, and thick description. Regarding the conception and planning of phronetic research agendas Tracy notes:

> "This approach suggests that qualitative data can be systematically gathered, organized, interpreted, analyzed, and communicated so as to address real world concerns. I suggest researchers begin their research process by identifying a particular issue, problem, or dilemma in the world and then proceed[ing] to systematically interpret the data in order to provide an analysis that sheds light on the issue and/or opens a path for possible social transformation"

Self-reflexive analysis of the researcher/respondent relationship, exploring the "historical roots of an issue," and acknowledgement that the research endeavor will help some more than others are all important components of phronetic data collection and analysis. These are of particular import in the current study. There are clear power disparities between the researcher (an employed adult; volunteer mentor; free to come and go at will) and the

respondents in the current study (unemployed minors; compelled clients; forced to live in CPS). The historical roots of Western juvenile justice and child protection are long and circuitous, but they sustain modern processes social of control for youth who are placed in, parented by, and released from CPS. The research endeavor (a dissertation) benefitted the researcher (a doctoral candidate) substantially, materially, directly, and immediately. But the backbone of this dissertation is formed from the uncompensated willingness of traumatized youth to share their stories and insights into CPS, youth development, and life course pathways.

Regarding output, the phronetic approach calls for research designed to generate "knowledge that is interactively constructed, action oriented and imbued with certain values" (Tracy, 2012, p. 4). In the context of the current study, the data collection methods were developed in conjunction with agency staff to meet the youth in their natural setting of a two-week Theater Camp program. Further, the interviews were designed to focus on the perspectives and narratives of youth themselves, through open-ended questions and prompts. The current study is action oriented by exploring a form of social control that expands theoretical criminology, and places into relief the paradoxical relationship between treatment and punishment in modern juvenile justice. Finally, some of the values with which this dissertation is imbued include the idea that theory can inform practice, and practice can inform theory; that children develop most ideally in healthy environments; and that generating healthy environments for children includes both the prevention of negative events, and the promotion of positive events.

It is important to point out that the values that are acknowledged in phronetic research (and all self-reflective approaches to social science) are values associated with

good science and not good public policy or desirable social reform. Like Black's conceptualization of value free sociology, the phronetic approach is concerned with "what we should study, what methods we should use, what concepts or theories we should employ, [and] what ideas we should praise or criticize" (Black, 2013, p. 767). More specifically, the phronetic paradigm calls on researchers to identify areas of needed knowledge, where research can better inform both theory and practice, to conduct research with rigorous methods, and to generate and communicate findings that are both meaningful to stakeholders and useful in applied settings.

Regarding methodological rigor, Tracy (2010) argued for more systematic criteria to assess the relative quality of qualitative research to increase the reach, influence, and communicability of qualitative researchers (see also Miller, 2005; Lietz et al., 2006). Tracy uses the analogy of "mouthfeel" in the cheesemaking industry to demonstrate the utility of universally-accepted criteria of quality that differentiates the goals of a process, such as research *findings*, from the actions by which those goals are achieved, such as research *methods*. Cheesemakers use different procedures, based on tradition and technology, to make different types of cheese. As there are many types of cheese, a unified criterion for the "best cheese" would be both misguided and ineffective. Instead, judges and connoisseurs evaluate how specific types of cheese feel in the mouth, as compared to other samples from the same type of cheese.

Tracy notes that fine brie cheese should "melt;" blue cheese should "crumble;" and cheese curds should "squeak" in the mouth (2010, p. 839). To apply the criterion used to judge cheese curds to evaluate brie would not be of use. Similarly, judging the quality of qualitative research using criteria developed for quantitative research is a

profound impediment to the ability of the former to move social science forward through rich description, theory evaluation, and research with unique or hard-to-reach populations.

Tracy's (2010) proposal to apply method-specific criteria to qualitative research allows would-be evaluators of qualitative research (e.g. journal editors, grant reviewers, colleagues, students) to consider the contributions of a wider range of research methods, according to the "trustworthiness" of the resulting evidence (Lietz and Zayas, 2010). Tracy proposes this approach as a more productive avenue than continued participation in the "paradigm wars" that pitch groups of qualitative researchers against each other based on differing epistemological and ontological perspectives (Denzin, 2008; see also Agnew, 2011; Hirschi, 1989). The distinction between methods and goals also supports the ability to assess research products relative to other research products across paradigmatic, methodological, and disciplinary boundaries. To provide structure to the discussion of "qualitative quality," Tracy (2010) suggested eight criteria for planning, conducting, communicating, and evaluating qualitative research. Table 5 details Tracy's eight criteria.

In the current project, the worthiness of the topic, level of rigor, sincerity, credibility, and resonance of the finished product, making a significant contribution (to the discipline and community), ethics, and meaningful coherence were all vital to generating a sound and impactful dissertation. Tracy's criteria served as a framework for developing the research agenda and planning the Theater Camp study. Tracy proposed the criteria as a way for qualitative researchers to gain and maintain access to the "big tent" of top-tier research publications, grant funding, and public policy development.

Table 5. Eight "Big-Tent" Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research (Tracy, 2010)	
Criteria for quality	Various means, practices, and methods through which to achieve criteria
Worthy topic	**The topic of research is:**
	•Relevant •Timely •Significant •Interesting
Rich rigor	**The study uses sufficient, abundant, appropriate, and complex:**
	•Theoretical constructs •Data and time in the field •Sample(s) •Context(s) •Data collection and analysis processes
Sincerity	**The study is characterized by:**
	•Self-reflexivity about subjective values, biases, and inclinations of the researcher(s) •Transparency about the methods and challenges
Credibility	**The research is marked by:**
	•Thick description, concrete detail, explication of tacit (nontextual) knowledge, and showing rather than telling •Triangulation or crystallization •Multivocality •Member reflections
Resonance	**The research influences, affects, or moves particular readers or a variety of audiences through:**
	•Aesthetic, evocative representation •Naturalistic generalizations •Transferrable findings
Significant contribution	**The research provides a significant contribution:**
	•Conceptually/theoretically •Practically •Morally •Methodologically •Heuristically
Ethical	**The research considers:**
	•Procedural ethics (such as human subjects) •Situationally- and culturally-specific ethics •Relational ethics •Exiting ethics
Meaningful coherence	**The study:**
	•Achieves what it purports to be about •Uses methods and procedures that fit its stated goals •Meaningfully interconnects literature, research questions/foci, findings, and interpretations with each other

The criteria are not suggested as an exhaustive or final list, but a more systematic way of thinking about, performing, and communicating qualitative methods (Copes, Tewksbury, and Sandburg, 2015). The phronetic approach to research and the "big-tent" criteria posited by Tracy (2010) serve as a methodological framework to situate the current ethnographic dissertation within the broader fields of qualitative and criminological research.

The phronetic approach (Tracy, 2012) is a paradigmatic orientation that deals with the abstract goals of what, how, and why researchers research. As detailed in Table 5, the big-tent criteria (Tracy, 2010) offer a systematic treatment of how those goals are attained, and can be used as a rubric for assessing the resulting research products. To be fair, some qualitative researchers have argued against rigid criteria, especially criteria designed to evaluate quantitative research, as overly simplistic (Bochner, 2000; Guba and Lincoln, 2005; Schwandt, 1996). However, Denzin (2008) points out the problems associated with the failure of qualitative researchers to establish and employ some criteria that bridges the gap between methodologically conservative, quantitatively-oriented "science-based-research" (SBR) paradigms and the constructivist, critical paradigms more common in qualitative endeavors:

> "The conservative and SBR criticisms of critical and constructivist (postmodern) paradigms may have created divisions within the qualitative research community. Rather than endorsing many different forms of inquiry, SBR has helped marginalize critical qualitative inquiry. The imposition of experimental criteria on qualitative inquiry has created a rush to produce our own standards. The mixed-methodology group… has been most helpful, for they have painstakingly catalogued interpretive criteria. We [purely qualitative researchers] have not made productive use of this discourse. It is as if we are starting in a vacuum, when in fact this is not the case at all" (p. 320; citation omitted).

In this context, Tracy's criteria offer a guerrilla strategy to the research "paradigm wars."

In the social sciences, a broad reliance on national-scale, federally funded data collection and quantitative statistical approaches to large data sets has fostered a myopic view of juvenile justice, particularly as it is administered in child protection systems. That myopic view favors relatively well-established, powerful researchers. In contrast, fieldwork and qualitative analysis of the experiences of individuals can not only complement some of the shortcomings of "big data" approaches to social science, but can be a more accessible path to developing new insights and new directions for research. Such an approach also represents an opportunity for emerging researchers (e.g. graduate students) to explore the fundamental theoretical claims from previous generations in different social contexts, and with nuanced approaches and interpretations. This was certainly the case in the current study.

Tracy's systematic, deliberate approach to the development of qualitative research also offers a chance to reverse the trend described by Wright, Jacobs, and Stein (2015) wherein "qualitative research currently enjoys far less prestige […] and consequently exerts far less influence[26]…" in criminology (p. 339). In addition to the theoretical innovations detailed in the literature review, this dissertation contributes to the current "third methodological moment" described by Denzin, by way of "paradigm dialog"

[26] Wright, Jacques, and Stein (2015) also note: "Quantitative criminological training now is almost universally regarded as essential, whereas its qualitative counterpart typically continues to be treated as an option (Buckler, 2008; DiCristina, 1997; Sever, 2001; Sullivan and Maxfield, 2003). Indeed, some programs offer no courses whatsoever in qualitative research methods. This means that most PhD students in criminology and criminal justice receive little or no training in qualitative research methods. As a result, few of them are prepared to write qualitative dissertations or to go on to teach qualitative methods to the next generation of scholars (Tewksbury, Dabney, and Copes, 2010). This has also acted to tighten the hold that quantitative methods have on the American criminological imagination" (p. 341). Having benefitted much from the work of Dr. Wright, and even more from the mentorship of his colleague Scott Decker, the present dissertation is a humble attempt to continue the community-engaged, qualitative tradition that was so fruitfully adopted by the St. Louis School of criminology (SLS) at the University of Missouri-St. Louis (Decker and Smith, 2015; Dickinson, 2014).

(2008, p. 315; Coleman, 2015). The phronetic approach and criteria are particularly informative to the methods undertaken here, which were designed to be useful in "provid[ing] insight about marginalized, stereotyped, or unknown populations – a peek into regularly guarded worlds, and an opportunity to tell a story that few know about" (Tracy, 2012, p. 4).

Youth in CPS certainly meet these criteria, particularly considering the theoretical implications of the literature review in Chapter Two. The dissertation is therefore designed to generate a systematic "peek" into the guarded world of one state's child protection system, acknowledging both history and pre-existing theory, and the emergent themes from analysis (Tracy, 2012, p. 22). This is accomplished through the iterative use of a theoretical framework (social control over the life course) to generate a set of *a priori* themes of interest or "sensitizing concepts" (e.g. trajectories, transitions, turning points, social control and support, agency) and reflexively comparing emerging themes from the data to *a priori* themes of interest and their relative positions and relationships in the framework (p. 28).

A Priori Themes of Interest

The primary theoretical framework for the current study is the life course approach to human development. The theory being explored is Sampson and Laub's age-graded theory of informal social control. Two-cycle thematic analysis was applied to analyze how respondents perceived and characterized measures of the themes of interest, as well as emergent themes that were not included in the *a priori* list. One key social construct of overarching interest is *the life course* (*trajectories*, *transitions*, and *turning points*). Youth were not directly asked about their deployment of *agency*, but they were

probed about their participation with school, programming, mentorship, and their plans for the future. The remaining *a priori* themes of interest were *social control* and *social support*. The broad goal of the dissertation was to establish the extent of the overlap between the study of criminology and the experiences of youth in CPS. As a first step in that direction, and to provide a substantive description of CPS youth for criminology, a series of well-established criminological scales was administered during the interview process (e.g. self-control, delinquency, code of the streets).

The more specific objective was to explore the experiences of CPS youth in the context of life course criminology, as revised and presented in Chapter Two. This more rich and detailed description required the use of open-ended questions, allowing the youth to respond in their own words. A key feature of the interviews and case studies was a reliance on the youth to tell their own stories with minimal interference from the interviewer. With those caveats, the open-ended questions were structured around the *a priori* themes of interest concerning life course criminology (e.g. entering, growing up in, and exiting CPS). Demographics were recorded to describe the respondents' relative social address, and to establish a foundation for exploring the substantive overlap between criminology and CPS. The qualitative variables (i.e. themes) of primary interest are detailed in the following section.

Life Course Themes

In the context of CPS, the theme "*trajectory*" refers to the social control and support structures that orient life course pathways before, during, and after CPS custody. Stated more clearly, CPS does not happen in a vacuum. Factors that influence parental control and support like poverty, incarceration, and violence orient the trajectories of

family members toward unhealthy life course outcomes. For the juvenile justice system to live up to the benevolent premises that justify its existence, it would have to systematically improve the valence of the life course trajectories of youth who grow up in their custody. From the life course perspective, while a positively-valenced trajectory does not guarantee positive outcomes, it does make them more likely. The same rule applies to negatively-valenced trajectories. Whether the most likely outcome of a given trajectory is realized or not depends on the age-graded social structures (e.g. minor/adult status), and the resulting opportunities for (and ability and willingness to engage with) potential turning points (i.e. agency).

The theme "*transitions*" refers to movement through life stages such as infancy, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Social control and support structures change in systematic ways associated with age. Regarding entering CPS, younger children are at higher risk for abuse and neglect, which are two central risk factors for CPS placement. Regarding growing up in CPS, older children are less likely to be adopted, and more likely to age-out. Youth in CPS, like their non-CPS-involved counterparts, become increasingly autonomous as they mature. But for as long as they are wards of the state, the lives of youth in CPS are proscribed in profound ways. At age eighteen, CPS youth are legally emancipated as adults, and exit the system. In life course terms, transitions systematically shape experiences with CPS.

Most importantly for generating changes in life course pathways, "*turning points"* require appropriate life stages, actionable opportunities, and agentic engagement from youth themselves. Most broadly, entering and exiting CPS are important turning points. The interviews invited youth to describe the life course trajectories that led to their

placement in CPS, how their trajectories changed as they transitioned through childhood in CPS, and how they expect their trajectories to proceed into adulthood. Respondents were also asked about their own past, present, and future roles in the development of their life course pathways. In life course terms, these discussions describe changes in the life course trajectories of youth through the opportunity for and engagement with turning points.

Social Control and Social Support

The themes of *formal and informal social control* refer to the repression of negative behavior such as delinquency, drug use, and truancy, as well as actions that would be conventional and desirable for non-CPS youth like communicating with or visiting bio-family. Similarly, "*formal and informal social support*" refers to the promotion of positive behaviors, such as participation with school, engagement with mentors, and planning for the future either through institutional (i.e. formal) sources, or organic (i.e. informal) sources. For CPS youth, informal sources of control are mediated almost entirely by formal processes. Focus was placed on these life course themes in the context of entering, growing up in, and exiting CPS (Giordano, 2010, p. 196).

Taken together, these themes represent the *a* priori, theoretically-derived concepts which were used as a framework for collecting, understanding, and coding of the interview data. After coding for these themes in the resulting narratives, relevant emergent themes which were not included in the *a priori* themes were examined and coded. The theoretical and emergent codes were then classified and grouped. This inductive, two-cycle analytic process is discussed in detail in the following section. In conjunction with the quantitative scales borrowed from mainstream criminology, the

open-ended questions and resulting youth narratives of experiences with CPS form a foundation on which criminologists might begin to consider the orphan once again an important subject of study.

Analytic Framework: Two-Cycle Thematic Analysis

In addition to the volunteer work that framed the current study, the Theater Camp study generated the data analyzed in the current dissertation: thirty-three structured interviews with youth in custody of CPS. This approach resulted in rich, narrative data that gave voice to the perceptions and experiences of youth regarding entering, growing up in, and exiting CPS. The analytic framework for the study is based on the two-cycle thematic analysis detailed by Saldaña (2016).

The interviews generated a snapshot measurement of the characteristics of a group of youth currently in custody of one state's child protection system. Descriptive statistics illustrated the racial, ethnic, gender, and sexuality diversity in such a group. The purposive sample precluded broadly generalizable findings and measures of statistical significance. But the scales provide insight into the ways youth in CPS are likely similar and distinct compared to traditional criminological and criminal justice samples. Two-cycle thematic coding (Saldaña, 2016) allowed for systematic analysis of themes that emerged from the narratives of respondents, guided by the theoretical framework outlined above.

More specifically, first-cycle coding was focused on the structural analysis of responses (Saldaña, 2016, p. 98), and considered the broad themes that characterized the interviews. Of importance were the *a priori* theoretical themes of social control, social support, trajectories, transitions, turning points, as described by the respondents. An

additional step in the first cycle coding process was to identify, consider, and include for analysis any emergent themes that were not included in the list of *a priori* themes. Second-cycle coding was then applied to conduct pattern analysis (p. 236), and assign individual words, phrases, and text segments to the themes developed in the first cycle. Consistent with the phronetic approach to qualitative research, theoretical constructs from life course theory were used as guiding concepts for thematic analysis, but the coding process was iterative and reflexive, allowing for emergent themes from the data to add and subtract themes from analysis as determined by the data. The section that follows turns to a detailed discussion of the samples and protocols for the ethnographic interviews with youth in CPS.

Theater Camp Study: CPS Youth

The broad goal of the Theater Camp interviews was to document the overlap between child protection systems and criminology. A more specific objective was to generate a description and preliminary sense-making of the life course effects of entering, growing up in, and exiting CPS. For instance, how can child protection systems and the experiences of youth in CPS inform the study of social control, social support, and life course development? How does CPS shape delinquency, victimization, and beliefs about social interactions? How do youth in CPS perceive their futures, and how do they plot the causal pathways of their plans? To address these questions, the mixed-methods interviews included well-established Likert-type scales from criminology, open-ended questions about youth's experiences before and during their time in CPS, and both scales and open-ended questions about their perceived futures. The youth who were interviewed are discussed in more detail below.

Sample: Theater Camp Respondents

It is important to note that the Theater Camp group was purposefully sampled to facilitate discussion of both positive and negative aspects of growing up in CPS, particularly regarding the transition to adulthood (Wright et al., 1992). The sites of the interviews in the field during a summer programming series allowed for the "natural" grouping of youth from around the metropolitan region at one location, and the theater space allotted for the camp allowed the interviews to take place with minimal intrusion upon subjects. The primary data for the dissertation comes from field interviews (n=33) with adolescents (ages 13-18) currently in CPS custody and participating in a series of theater arts therapy programs collectively referred to here as "Theater Camp." The Theater Camp programs[27] are administered each summer to about 200 participants by a local non-profit organization that provides art-based mentorship to youth in CPS (referred to here as "the AMO"). One key feature of Theater Camp is the cooperation between a team of about 20 community volunteers and 10 peer mentors comprised of campers from previous years (Gopalan et al., 2017).

Self-expressive narratives are the norm at Theater Camp, and form the basis for the emergent theater production which is guided by youth in participation with volunteers and a small team of professional teaching artists. The author was a volunteer group facilitator in this capacity at the 2012, 2013, and 2014 Theater and Hip-Hop Camps. During the 2015 season, the author conducted the interviews that formed the primary

[27] Taken from the AMO's website: "[…] we offer three different camp experiences [Multicultural Arts Camp, Theater Camp, and Hip-Hop Camp]. Through the program, children explore various art forms with the guidance of professional teaching artists, experienced staff, and caring volunteers. Each week-long, therapeutically-intense art camp concludes with a final performance where participants share their art with the public."

source of data for the present dissertation. The author again served as a volunteer during Theater Camp in 2017. At the time of this writing, he is helping plan for the 2018 Theater Camp. The goal for the AMO this year is to place as much creative and technical responsibility as possible on the camp participants themselves, with help from camp alumni who have aged-out of CPS and returned to Theater Camp as volunteers.

Another feature of Theater Camp is the "audition" process for would-be participants. By design these programs endeavor to be inclusive of anyone who would like to participate. But the Theater Camp program is somewhat severe in its required time commitment (8 hours per day, Monday-Friday, for 2 weeks during summer). The audition process involves no skill requirement or assessment. Rather, the goal is to identify youth who (1) live in CPS placements that are able and willing to transport the youth to and from camp each day, and (2) are willing to (and want to) participate in an extended participatory theater performance. The facilities in which the youth lived were generally group homes or shelters in suburban neighborhoods, which housed between 10 and 20 youth. Scheduling and fulfilling such a commitment can therefore be challenging for the facilities and staff. More importantly, the process of Theater Camp (like other iterations of art-based therapy; see Gussak, 2007; Heiney et al., 2017) is inherently one of self-expression and participation, calling on youth to tell their stories and to take part in creating, staging, and performing dances, poems, and songs.

The commitment by CPS youth to do things like write and share poetry, dance in public, or tell their stories in theatrical performances is not one that is embraced by all who might otherwise participate in Theater Camp. Given the traumatic and evolving familial processes that characterize placement in CPS, this may not be surprising. To be

clear, Theater Camp participants do not represent a random selection of CPS youth by any measure. In research terms, the resulting sample is therefore best interpreted as "the cream of the crop," with selection systematically biased toward behaviorally and residentially stable youth in CPS. Table 7 presents sample demographics for the 38[28] Theater Camp respondents. While larger sample sizes are generally preferred in research over smaller ones, the scope of the current study is such that insights from a small number of subjects are sufficient to open a dialog (Becker, 1966; Maruna, 2007; Yin, 2009).

The youth analyzed here offered an opportunity to examine life course pathways and agency from the perspective of youth who had seen some of the worst life can offer such as parental neglect, family and neighborhood violence, and exposure to drugs, alcohol, and deviance. At the same time, it is likely that these subjects had been exposed to more professional programming via various social service agencies than might be received by a child from a family not affected by forced removal of children, parental death, incarceration, or deportation, or other acute crisis. This dichotomy underscores the uniqueness and utility of the present sample. The dichotomy also hints at a paradox between social control and social support, and between incarceration and treatment. The interviews were therefore designed to explore the ways in which CPS shapes life course pathways, by encountering the narratives of youth themselves. The Theater Camp interview protocol is discussed in more detail below.

[28] All quantitative data refers to the thirty-eight at-risk youth who participated in the Theater Camp study. The interviews revealed that in fact, five of the respondents were not currently in CPS custody. The narratives of those five respondents are excluded from the qualitative analysis, as discussed below.

Protocol: Theater Camp Interviews

The Theater Camp interviews were IRB-approved and conducted in the summer of 2015. The protocol covered experiences such as abuse, relationships with family, delinquency, crime, and offending, future life expectations, and their perceptions of and experiences with mentorship. Given the intersectional marginalized status of minor youth in CPS, parental consent letters were presented to caregivers of youth who were scheduled to participate in the 2015 Theater Camp program. A list of youth with signed caregiver consent letters (66 of the 107 total Camp participants) was generated on the first day of camp. The author addressed the camp as a group at the beginning of the first day of programming and discussed the details of the study. To minimize possible bias from the researcher/respondent relationship regarding voluntary participation two research assistants[29] served as recruiters. They advised each potential participant (i.e. youth who had a signed guardian consent form) of their rights, and stressed that declining to participate would in no way affect their participation with the AMO. Forty-three youth were invited to participate. Five youth who were invited declined to participate. Ultimately, time and privacy constraints limited the sample to thirty-three interviews, each lasting about one hour, documented by hand notes as interviews transpired.

In addition to the independent recruiters, a social worker trained in trauma-informed practice (Bryson et al., 2017; Milot, St-Laurent, and Éthier, 2015) was present at each interview as a resource for youth who might become distressed at any point

[29] The recruiters were (now Dr.) Lisa Dario and (soon-to-be Dr.) Arynn Infante, graduate school colleagues of the author. Their voluntary assistance was an immense help in planning and conducting the project, and including them in the data collection process was an added protection for respondents and potential respondents that contributed to the IRB's approval for this ambitious and unfunded project.

during the research process. Janelly Ortiz was a social work student who worked professionally with special needs youth in CPS. She agreed to participate as the social worker for a full month, 8 hours per day, 5 days per week, as a volunteer on this unfunded dissertation. The services of an on-site behavioral health professional would have been a steep hurdle for the project without voluntary participation. In this case, having some friends in the social work department paid off big time. But even meeting Janelly was serendipitous. Friendships and informal networking are a key tool in the phronetic researcher's tool box, and the importance of nurturing relationships (by helping others) cannot be overstated here.

Despite the highly personal and far-reaching nature of the interviews, no respondents reported or displayed signs of distress. However, Janelly was an asset both as a precaution, and as a go-to person for the youth to ask questions informally before and after the interviews. She also knew several of the youth at Theater Camp through her own work, independent of the study, and could relate and communicate with the youth individually. Her input also helped generate nuanced reflections on the interview procedure and individual reactions as data collection progressed. These trauma-informed safeguards[30] were developed in conjunction with a supportive and open-minded Internal Review Board (IRB), and helped minimize the potential of risk to participants, while allowing research access to this uniquely situated group of youth.

The protocol included Likert-type scales of criminological variables of interest (e.g. familial attachment, self-control, code of the street, delinquency over time, and

[30] Resource lists, containing contact information for national-, county-, and local-level crisis intervention hotlines were also provided in hard copy to each respondent.

ideations about the future). Moving beyond traditional scales, the protocol also included open-ended questions that allowed respondents to describe their experiences in their own words. Respondents were invited to speak in detail about their experiences with family, school, peers, CPS, delinquency, role modeling, and mentorship before and during CPS. Respondents were also asked to discuss their plans for their post-CPS futures, as well as the actions they anticipated (or were already) taking to achieve those plans. The protocol concluded with an invitation to respondents to add anything they thought was important, or that the interview had missed.

Quantitative Likert-Type Scales

Beyond demographics, several scales that measure prominent components of mainstream criminology were included in the interviews. *Self-control* (Tangney et al., 2004), *attachment* (to parents, siblings, peers, school, and mentorship; Hirschi, 1969; Giordano, 1989), *code of the street* (Anderson, 1999; Burt, Simons, and Gibbons, 2012; Moule et al., 2015), *victimization and adverse childhood experiences* (i.e. ACEs; Felitti et al., 1998), delinquency over time ("ever, since entering CPS, within the last month"), and scales measuring perceptions of success and predictions for the future were included to establish a language with which to start considering CPS youth in the context of life course criminology, juvenile justice, and youth development.

As one of the most empirically-supported constructs in criminology (Pratt and Cullen, 2000), **self-control** has been correlated with many criminal and imprudent behaviors (Arneklev et al., 1993; Grasmick et al., 1993) ranging from the commission of violent crime and homicide victimization (Piquero et al., 2005) to public flatulence and drunk dialing (Reisig and Pratt, 2011). Higher levels of self-control have been linked to

positive and healthy outcomes over the life course (Tangney et al., 2004). Low self-control (LSC) has also been linked to repeat offending and "poly" victimization (Pratt et al., 2014; Turanovic and Pratt, 2014). Synthesizing the large volume of empirical data, Pratt (2016) suggested examining the role of self-control in the development of the life course. To that end, LSC was measured in the Theater Camp study using a shortened version of Tangney and colleagues' (2004) Brief Self-Control scale (BSC).

The time constraints and richness of the Theater Camp sampling frame required maximization of both brevity and comprehensiveness. The BSC does both in less time and space than the full version:

> "The Brief Self-Control Scale correlated .93 and .92 with the Total Self-Control Scale in Studies 1 and 2 respectively. Moreover, the Brief Self-Control Scale taps the same range of content as the Total Self-Control Scale." (Tangney et al., 2004, p. 283).

The BSC includes thirteen questions, reduced from the original 36 items. The nature of the sample (traumatized youth in state custody) led three questions to be excluded. Questions 2 ("I have a hard time breaking bad habits") and 28 ("Pleasure and fun sometimes keep me from getting work done") were considered more applicable to adults than children, especially children in custody of CPS. Question 32 ("I often act without thinking through all the alternatives") was excluded to avoid an accusatory tone. Finally, Question Twenty-Two ("People would say that I have iron self-discipline") was revised, replacing "iron" with "strong." These slight revisions made the BSC more streamlined in the interview process and more relatable to the young, socially marginalized respondents at hand.

Cernkovich and Giordano (1987) pointed out that **family attachment** is more complex than the false dichotomy of "attachment/non-attachment" (p. 300). They identified seven dimensions[31] of "family interactions" in a study of 824 adolescents who reported varying degrees of delinquency. In the context of youth living in CPS however, many barriers exist to the development and maintenance of those dimensions by virtue of separation from bio-family. Baker, Creegan, Quiñones, and Rozelle (2018) addressed that problem in a content analysis of 27 peer-reviewed studies that examined the tension youth face between "two families" as they grow up in CPS. That work explored the views and hopes of youth in out-of-home-care about their bio-families. Baker and colleagues identified three themes that pertain to how foster children view their bio-families. They note that such youth often experience "(1) [y]earning for the birth family (2) fear and anxiety due to separation from the birth parents and (3) minimization of the maltreatment perpetrated against them by the birth family" (p. 177).

In the Theater Camp study, family attachment was measured with three separate questions: "How close are you to your [1] bio mom [2] bio dad [3] siblings?" Maternal attachment scores were higher (3.14/5) than those for paternal attachment (2.00/5), but sibling attachment was rated higher on average than both (3.86/5) and with the lowest standard deviation from the mean (1.353).

Code of the streets (COS) was measured using a shortened version of the scale used by Stewart and colleagues (Stewart and Simons, 2006; Stewart, Schreck, and Simons, 2006). The final question used by Stewart and Simons (2006) reads "people tend

[31] "…control and supervision, identity support, caring and trust, intimate communication, instrumental communication, parental disapproval of peers, and conflict." (Cernkovich and Giordano, 1987; p. 295)

to respect a person who is tough and aggressive." That question tested poorly in test-runs of the scale with young adults who had aged-out of CPS. The test-run consisted of administering the COS scale to 3 young adults who had aged-out of CPS. All three of those respondents found that question difficult to answer based on their perceived distinctions between toughness, which they tended to value, and aggressiveness, which they tended to perceive as an undesirable trait. Based on those test runs, the seventh question was excluded from the current study.

Open-Ended Questions

The richest data from the Theater Camp interviews came from responses to the open-ended questions. Like the open-ended demographic questions, the interviews allowed respondents to react in their own words regarding their perceptions of and experiences entering, growing up in, and exiting from CPS. Youth were asked about good and bad memories of their bio-families, their perceptions of their teachers, their participation with the AMO, their experiences with mentorship, their beliefs about their futures and their role in developing their life course pathways, and their plans for after exiting CPS. Finally, respondents were asked to add anything the interview missed or that they thought was important. Some of the most poignant comments came from that final space.

Data Collection Protocols: Theater Camp Interviews

Three components of the data collection protocol for the Theater Camp interviews were influenced by the IRB. First, data was collected using hand written notes, as opposed to audio-recording. There were also two independent recruiters, so that recruits were not unnecessarily influenced by the author himself. Throughout each interview, a

social worker was in attendance to monitor the respondents and talk with them if they elected to after the interviews. Finally, a paper resource list (i.e. crisis hotlines) was provided for each respondent in case they experienced distress that they did not wish to discuss with the author or social worker, or in case they became distressed after leaving Theater Camp for the day. After data was collected, all hand-noted interview instruments were transcribed verbatim by the author. Open-ended responses were entered into Microsoft Excel and printed for data immersion and thematic analysis. Quantitative data was entered into SPSS for descriptive statistics, quantitative analysis, and table development.

CHAPTER 4

"CPS YOUTH "

The research questions in the current study were designed to add empirical nuance to the theory and policy implications identified in the literature review. The questions were organized around three life course events: entering CPS custody, growing up in CPS care, and the dual transition from childhood in state custody to adulthood in the community. The Research Questions sought to identify and describe how placement in ("entering") CPS structures life course pathways.

The following section outlines the characteristics of youth in the Theater Camp study to demonstrate the uniquely diverse yet consistently marginalized backgrounds of youth in CPS. The literature suggests CPS systems are home to some of the most acutely abused and neglected children in the United States, alongside children whose parents may simply be ill or unable to pay for child care (Lee, 2016). Studies have also demonstrated racial and ethnic diversity in CPS or "foster care" populations (Kim et al, 2017). There was also reason to suspect diversity in sexual identity (Finkelhor and Browne, 1985; Mitchell et al., 2015) and gender identity in the group under study (Love, 2014; Sterzing et al., 2017). The descriptive characteristics of the Theater Camp study illustrate these themes. The subsequent sections detail the results of the Theater Camp study to address the Research Questions.

Characteristics of Youth in the Theater Camp Study

The exploratory nature of the current study was necessitated by the relative lack of (empirical *and* theoretical) attention paid to youth growing up in CPS by mainstream criminology and traditional juvenile justice scholars. That failure also means that the field

of criminology and criminal justice (CCJ) lacks a clear picture of what CPS youth "look like" as potential subjects of research, and what that image might mean for theory, practice, and policy. As such, the intersection of CPS and criminology remains loosely defined and largely unexplored. As a first step in "introducing" criminologists to CPS youth, Table 7 details the sample characteristics for the thirty-eight youth who participated in the Theater Camp interviews.

Table 7. Interview Respondent Demographics (N=38)

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Age in 2015 (n = 37)	15.03	1.4	13	18
Parents Married (n = 35)	0.14	0.36	0	1
Current school enrollment (1=yes)	0.81	0.4	0	1
	n	%		
Race/Ethnicity				
White	17	44.7	--	--
Latino	8	21.1	--	--
Native American	1	2.6	--	--
Black	1	2.6	--	--
Mixed	11	28.9	--	--
Sexual Orientation				
Gay	2	5.4	--	--
Straight	29	78.4	--	--
Bi	5	13.5	--	--
Other	1	2.7	--	--
Current Residence				
Group Home	26	68.4	--	--
Foster Home	1	2.6	--	--
Shelter	5	13.2	--	--
RTC	2	5.3	--	--
Other	4	10.5	--	--
Currently in CPS Custody	32	84.2	--	--

NOTE: M = mean; SD = standard deviation.

Demographics. Research suggests that nationally, Blacks are over-represented in the CPS system based on their prevalence in the general population. Whites are under-represented, but are the modal category. Latinos face similar risk profiles to Blacks, but

are under-represented like Whites (Dettlaff and Johnson, 2011; Drake et al., 2011; Jonson-Reid, Drake, and Kohl, 2009). The Theater Camp study sample was consistent with the literature in that regard, with just under half of the sample (17 respondents, or 44%) identified as "White." The study was conducted in a Southwestern state with a large Latino population, which likely contributed to one fifth of the sample (21%) self-identifying as Latino, or some variation on that theme (e.g. "Mexican," "Hispanic"). The second-largest racial/ethnic group self-identified as "mixed" (28%).

The relatively high level of detail in demographic responses was a function of the interview instrument, which recorded some often-overlooked demographics with open-ended questions (e.g. race, ethnicity, gender identification, sexual orientation). Backstrom and Hursh-Cesar (1963) suggested open ended questions are a promising option where researchers are not sure about the range of responses they might elicit, where they are curious about what a respondent will offer with minimal prompting, and/or where they want "to go a little deeper" (p. 73). Babbie (1990) reminded researchers that "data are created, not collected," and noted that closed-ended questions, which provide a list of possible answers, may restrict the range of responses (p. 127-128). Given the relative lack of knowledge in criminology about the origins, perceptions, and characteristics of CPS youth, the present study asked open-ended questions about some demographic variables. This approach allowed the study to probe the breadth of self-identity for the youth under study, and to generate a nuanced depiction of the social addresses related to one group of CPS youth for consideration by criminologists.

For instance, *race/ethnicity* was measured using the open-ended prompt "what race or ethnicity do you identify as?" A similar question was asked for *gender identity*.

Sexual orientation was measured as "gay, straight, bi, other." This approach required some additional coding and consideration, but also recorded a considerable amount of racial, ethnic, and sexual "bi-ness." For example, over a quarter (28%) of respondents identified as "mixed" race/ethnicity (e.g. "Black and Puerto Rican," "Mexican and Native"). Additionally, eight respondents (21%) identified with a sexual orientation of "gay, bi, or other" In this case, "other" referred to one individual who self-identified as pansexual. These measures of 33 CPS youth suggest a group characterized by social diversity that goes deeper than simplified racial, ethnic, gendered, and sexual measures that characterize large-scale data collection efforts. Other background questions were measured with yes/no questions such as *nationality*: "born in the U.S." All respondents reported U.S. nationality.

The dates respondents had entered CPS, and the dates they had moved to their current residences were measured as the approximate month and year those occurred. The time respondents had spent in CPS at the time of the Theater Camp study (summer 2015) ranged from four months to 18 years prior to the interview. Most respondents had been in CPS between one and two years. This finding is consistent with national statistics that suggest an average time in care of 20 months, and a median stay of 12 months. Still, 28% of CPS youths in the United States in 2015 were in custody longer than 24 months (USDHHS, 2015, p. 2). Recent research that probes the role and processes associated with CPS suggests a paradox. Specifically, despite the therapeutic effects that are ostensibly the goals of CPS (i.e. ameliorating child abuse and neglect; Russell, Kerwin, and Halverson, 2018), the duration of custody in CPS has come to be viewed as a risk factor for negative outcomes over the life course (Orsi, Lee, Winokur, and Pearson,

2018). Taken together with the findings of the current study, this recent research suggests a paradoxical relationship between the goals and outcomes of CPS, referred to here as "The CPS Paradox."

Multiple-choice questions measured *current residence*: "group home, foster home, shelter, RTC [residential treatment center], secure facility, other." As indicated in Table 7, six youth (14%) reported not being in the legal custody of CPS at the time of the interview. The table also shows that five youth reported currently living in a shelter, two in a residential treatment facility (RTF), four reported living in some "other" residential arrangement, and one subject reported living in a foster home at the time of the interview. The majority (68%) reported living in a group home. As discussed in the methods section, some marginalized and traumatized youth who are not in the custody of CPS may qualify for Theater Camp and other services through the AMO.

For example, the agencies serviced by the AMO include housing facilities and services for residentially displaced but in-tact families, and transitional housing for runaway teens. Other clients are housed in covert domestic violence shelters where children and mothers are housed together in hiding from abusers, generally fathers, (ex)husbands, or (ex)boyfriends. Of the six cases that reported not being in CPS custody, one 18-year-old Latina had been adopted as a baby, and was still involved with state services through the adoption. One 15-year old Hispanic male reported living in a group home, but not in the custody of CPS.

Three non-CPS respondents (one 13-year-old, Black/White female, one 16-year-old Black/Hispanic male, and one 16-year-old Hispanic male) reported living in some "other" arrangement. All three of them reported living with their mothers, and two of

those three reported subsequently during the interview that they were at Theater Camp through their participation with a local agency that provides social services to intact, but displaced families. The perspectives of these five "non-CPS" respondents are therefore not directly relevant to the discussion at hand, and their narratives were excluded from the analyses. The sixth non-CPS respondent was a Native American/Hispanic 16-year-old female was in a Tribal version[32] of child protective services. Nevertheless, her case was being serviced contractually by the state's CPS system, and her narratives were therefore included in the analysis. After excluding the five non-CPS respondents, the qualitative analysis focused on the narratives of youth currently in the custody of the state's CPS system (*n*=33). The quantitative results below are based on the full Theater Camp group (*n*=38).

Criminological Scales. Criminological scales were included as a rough measure of the overlap between criminology and CPS youth. From a research perspective, CPS represents a group process by which "at-risk" youth are corralled by the state for their protection and nurturing. In this light, youth in CPS custody are uniquely interesting for the study of crime, justice, and human development. They have not necessarily committed crime or delinquency. But as a group, they are much more likely than non-CPS youth to have been exposed to or to have been a victim of crime or delinquency. Many of them have been victimized by their bio-parents directly. All of them have

[32] The Indian Child Welfare Act (1978) restricts jurisdiction to decide about the placement of youth in CPS and allows tribes to cooperate with state CPS systems at their own discretion (Shireman, 2003, p. 294). Over the arc of time, however, the historical, legal, and political implications of interactions between child protective services agencies in the U.S. (including national, state, and local initiatives) and Native American tribes is long, complex and generally resolved to the detriment of the tribes (Lash, 2016, p. 52). In this case, the tribe had facilitated the girl's custody in the state system since she was six months old.

attenuated parental relationships and contact. All of them are under heightened state surveillance, and therefore at higher risk for increased sanctions for legal, behavioral, and academic infractions. All of them rely on the state to manage their development. With that in mind, Table 8 is presented below as a heuristic device to start thinking systematically (and criminologically) about CPS youth. The table details the results of well-established criminological scales as applied to CPS youth in the 2015 Theater Camp study.

Table 8. Criminological Scales and Delinquency Counts (n=38)

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Low Self-Control (LSC=10; Max=50)	27.74	6.777	14	41
Attachment: Biological Mother (n=36)	3.14	1.743	1	5
Attachment: Biological Father (n=37)	2.00	1.394	1	5
Attachment: Siblings (n=35)	3.86	1.353	1	5
Attachment: School	4.24	1.218	1	5
Embeddedness: AMO (n=36)	2.44	0.735	1	4
Lifetime Arrests	2.09	4.458	0	20
Adverse Childhood Experiences	6.26	2.658	0	10
Code of the Streets	14.74	4.607	6	24
	n	%		
Delinquency (Lifetime)				
Bullied	31	81.6	--	--
Arrested	16	42.1	--	--
Fist Fight	30	78.9	--	--
Drunk (n=37)	22	57.9	--	--
Vandalism	17	44.7	--	--
Petty Theft (<$50)	22	57.9	--	--
Theft by Force or Threat	6	15.8	--	--
Carried Weapon	21	55.3	--	--

NOTE: M = mean; SD = standard deviation.

Scores are listed for scales, and frequencies for binary variables measuring delinquency.

As indicated in Table 8, the average **self-control** score was 27.74 out of a possible score of 50 in the Theater Camp sample. Two studies presented by Duckworth and Seligman (2005) examined self-control in eighth-grade students using the BSC. Study 1 was conducted in November 2002 with 140 students (71% of eligible students) at a "socioeconomically and ethnically diverse magnet public school in a city in the Northeast" of the United States. The mean age of respondents in Study 1 was 13.4 years. Study 2 was conducted in October 2003 with 164 students (83%) from the same school (p. 940). Those samples generated self-control scores comparable to, though slightly higher than the similarly-aged respondents in the Theater Camp study (31 and 32.6 respectively when adjusted to the present scale). Finkenauer, Engels, and Baumeister (2005) reported slightly higher scores (adjusted mean = 35.3) in their study of over 1300 Dutch teenagers.

These rough comparisons suggest that despite the acutely traumatic experiences associated with placement in CPS, the youth in the current study had self-control scores comparable to youth samples outside of CPS. One obvious explanation for this effect is that Theater Camp participants were not randomly selected from CPS rolls. Much to the contrary, youth in the program had to be in one of the facilities that had already participated regularly with the AMO's programs. To achieve placement in a group home, CPS youth generally have to move through a series of shelters and temporary housing arrangements as they process in to CPS custody. Additionally, the facilities each had to agree to transport one or more client(s) downtown each morning (and back home each afternoon) 5 days per week for two summer weeks. These are considerable commitments

for staff at busy residential social service providers. In general, this skewed participants toward those in relatively stable residential situations.

Participants were also restricted (for obvious reasons) to those who desired to participate in the theater arts based program, which included two public showings at the end in front of audiences upwards of 500 people. Theater Camp respondents were very likely to have higher levels of self-control than a randomized sample of CPS youth. That necessary criteria restricted participation to youth personally and emotionally equipped to volunteer to express themselves creatively in group settings, share their stories, and support their comrades. While more CPS youth volunteer and participate in good faith than one might imagine, it is certainly not a group that reflects the most residentially-destabilized or "emotionally-decapacitated" youth in CPS custody. Quite the opposite is the case. One takeaway here is that within CPS populations there are subgroups of youth interested in and equipped to volunteer for and follow through on the tough emotional labor involved in autobiographical storytelling, theater creation, and public performance.

The findings regarding self-control are therefore consistent with the CPS Paradox. Researchers should expect abused and neglected youth in state custody to report (and exhibit) lower levels of self-control. But the self-reported perceptual measures and years as a volunteer both suggest that some CPS youth are both willing and able to participate in extended periods of group participation and performance.

In the Theater Camp study, maternal attachment scores were higher (3.14/5) than those for paternal attachment (2.00/5), but sibling attachment was rated higher on average than both (3.86/5) and with the lowest standard deviation from the mean (1.353). Much of the thinking in criminology about youth **attachment to family** has been conducted

about youth who are not in CPS custody. As such, benchmarks for criminological measures in this population require a bit of creativity. Decker and Van Winkle's (1996) ethnographic work with young gang members is informative here as a rich body of research with another youth group at heightened risk for familial crisis, state surveillance, and violent offending and victimization.

Like the attenuated relationships between youth in CPS and their families, Decker and Van Winkle noted that most of their gang member respondents endeavored to hide their gang membership from their families, and that most families that knew of a respondent's membership tried to dissuade the respondent from continued gang participation. Nevertheless, almost three quarters of them expected to have positive relationships with their families in the future (p. 256). The attachment profiles from the Theater Camp study suggest the respondents considered themselves emotionally connected to their mothers and siblings, but to their fathers to lesser degree. Recall that only three respondents reported still living with their birth mothers (a fourth with an adoptive mother), while the remainder were in some form of out-of-home care. Overall, Theater Camp respondents self-reported substantial levels of attachment, despite the residential disruption and physical separation from their bio-families indicated by CPS custody.

Regarding attachment to school, Decker and Van Winkle suggest that membership in legal groups (i.e. non-gang groups such as school clubs and sports teams) declines precipitously after initiation into a youth street gang (1996; p. 188). Still, they note that over half (60%) of their sample were either in school at the time of the interview, or had graduated previously. Most of the youth in the Theater Camp study

reported currently attending, tracking to an on-time graduation, and valuing school in their long-term plans. Respondents in the current study reported nominally high levels of school attachment (4.24/5), measured with the question "How important is school to you?" As indicated in Table 7, over 80% of respondents in the current study reported being currently enrolled in school, and over 70% reported being on-track to graduate from high school on time (i.e., at age 18). In other words, despite their histories of trauma and removal from their bio-families, youth in the Theater Camp study reported almost unanimously high perceptions of the importance of school, and high levels of participation with school.

The results for embeddedness in the mentorship program were more mixed. Self-reported embeddedness in the AMO was measured using a visual scale resembling a target where the "bullseye" represented the deepest or highest level of embeddedness, and outer rings represented a graduated scale of lesser degrees of embeddedness (range = 1-4). Some respondents had been clients of the AMO for years, and had participated in events at museums, theater productions, local schools, their own residential facilities, and/or previous camps. Others had only heard of Theater Camp and the AMO during the previous few weeks and had never participated in an event. Respondents reported an embeddedness score of 2.44/4, suggesting a nominally moderate level of embeddedness. As a measure of exposure to the criminal justice system, self-reported lifetime arrests averaged 2 arrests per youth. But most respondents (22, or 58%) reported no arrests, while two respondents reported 20 and 10 arrests respectively.

Regarding trauma during childhood, **adverse childhood experiences** (ACEs; Felitti et al., 1998) are of increasing interest in criminological research (Baglivio et al.,

2015; Baglivio et al., 2016; Craig et al., 2016; Wolff, Baglivio, and Piquero, 2015; Wolff and Piquero, 2016). Respondents in the current study reported an average ACEs score of 6.26/10. That score places youth in the Theater Camp study around the ninetieth percentile of adverse experiences during childhood among youth in the United States (Sacks, Murphy and Moore, 2014). Scores in that top range indicate an acutely heightened risk for negative medical, psychological, legal, and social outcomes throughout their life courses such as obesity, substance abuse, depression, anxiety, victimization, arrest, and recidivism (Felitti et al., 1998; Wolff and Baglivio, 2016; Wolff Baglivio, and Piquero, 2015). As such, this is one of the most poignant findings from the characteristics of CPS youth regarding their importance for criminological research. Even though they were some of the most residentially and emotionally stable youth in one state's CPS system, the Theater Camp respondents were among the most acutely traumatized youth in the United States.

In wave 2 of their study of African American youth aged 12-15 years in Iowa and Georgia ("The FACHS" data) Stewart and Simons reported averaged **code of the streets** scores of 17.22 (2006; p. 17). In the current study, respondents' averaged score was comparable, but lower (14.74). That average is suggestive of a group that is relatively more amenable to code of the street cognitions than should be expected in the general population (e.g. not in CPS), but not as highly as Stewart and colleagues' urban, African American samples. The interview protocol was designed so that the ACEs scale was in the middle, because the research team and IRB agreed that included the questions with the highest risk for re-traumatizing respondents by causing discomfort or distress while recalling violent events such as sexual, emotional, and physical abuse at the hands of

parents and caregivers. Previous questions were ordered to (hopefully) "build up" to the emotional climax of the ACEs scale. The COS scale came shortly after the ACEs scale and was placed as a way to help transition from the heavier topics in the abuse and delinquency-centered scales.

As the interviews progressed it became clear that while the ACEs scale was certainly not fun for respondents (again, none reported or displayed distress to the research team nor to AMO staff). The research team (the author, the social worker, and the recruiters) discussed this phenomenon outside the interviews. It is likely that respondents had already encountered the common psychometric (e.g. self-control) and behavioral (e.g. delinquency) scales that comprised the first half of the interview in CPS-related psychological and intake evaluations. Or as Respondent 5, a 17-year-old White male stated: "I've been telling my story for years and years, so it's whatever."

The COS scale would have likely been the first purely criminological scale that the youth had encountered. Regardless of *why*, it was apparent in many respondents' verbal, physical, and facial reactions that many of the COS questions did not sit well. Initially, the research team posited that youth growing up with other traumatized youth in communal residential facilities as wards of the state would be aware of, and amenable to COS cognitions. Actually, in many of the interviews, the COS section was the first section that got a rise out of respondents. For instance, questions about using violence to generate respect often elicited side comments like "what kind of question is that? *Of course not!*" In the Theater Camp study, COS was measured with one Likert-type scale made up of six questions. Future studies in criminology would do well to expand on the concept of COS cognitions in CPS groups, particularly regarding the qualitative nature of

those cognitions, their origins in the conceptualizations of abused youth, and how those perceptions influence their life course pathways.

Logically, COS cognitions should function in unique ways for a child that has been victimized primarily by their bio-family and caregivers, as opposed to youth growing up in disadvantaged communities, gangs, and other marginalized groups. If a child is beaten, sexually assaulted, or emotionally abused by their bio-families, it is possible that their emotional responses and coping strategies may differ from those victimized or threatened by strangers. Given the salience of COS cognitions to youth development, particularly in adverse environments detailed by Anderson (1999), and the relative importance of fostering context-specific resilience in youth who are "property of the state" outlined by Fader (2013) the role of COS cognitions in CPS warrant further attention by criminologists. Both of those works suggest that as states work to prepare youth for the transition to adulthood, the optimal approach may not be to orient youth toward life course pathways (e.g. through coping mechanisms, behavioral strategies, or other interventions) that fail to account for their bio-families and communities of origin.

As one example, the AMO encourages creative expression through what they call "expectations" (not rules). Those are "Be respectful of others," There are no mistakes in art," and "Your voice matters." These axioms are a minimally-intrusive yet effective way to set standards for a "safe space" for honesty, openness, and expression. But in participants' families and communities of origin those parameters are not as likely to be available or enforceable. At the time of this writing, the author and the AMO were workshopping ideas (based in part on Fader's 2013 work on "cultural assault") around moving away from developing "safe space" in favor of "brave spaces" that are supportive

of youth, but acknowledge the external environments that is not always tolerant of or informed about best practices for healthy youth development. Understanding this interaction is of central importance to researchers and practitioners interested in treatment and programming for youth in crisis such as those who are abused, neglected, or adjudicated delinquent.

Self-reports of lifetime **delinquency** were recorded as a series of binary variables. As detailed in Table 8, thirty-one of the thirty-three respondents (81%) reported having been bullied, thirty (78%) reported participation in a fist fight, and over half (21) reported carrying a weapon for protection at some point in their life. Twenty-two respondents (57%) reported petty theft (of something worth "less than fifty dollars"), and the same number reported having been drunk. Seventeen respondents (44%) reported committing vandalism, and sixteen (42%) reported at least one arrest. Not surprisingly reports of the most serious offense, "theft by threat or force" were the least prevalent form of experience with delinquency. Six respondents (15%) reported having stolen by force or threat of force. In other words, even some of the most stable youth in CPS self-report substantial victimization and participation with violence and delinquency. Taken together, these criminological scales sketch a picture of CPS youth that suggests a high-risk profile for heightened exposure to formal forces of social control and negative medical, social, and psychological outcomes.

Understanding the life course pathways of such youth, and how state sanctioned social control shapes those pathways should be central imperatives of modern criminologists interested in theories of crime causation, justice policy and practice, and family and youth development. To add some empirical nuance to this nascent area of

research, the research questions in the current study explored the qualitative nature of the CPS experience through the interview responses from the Theater Camp study. The Research Questions explored how entering, growing up in, and (someday) exiting CPS shaped respondents' perceptions of their lives and futures. The following sections present the findings from the Theater Camp study to address Research Question One. First, narratives around entering CPS suggested three primary themes: Mixed memories of bio-families, Shifting roles from "normal kid" to "CPS kid", and Conflict with clients and staff. Those themes are discussed in detail in the section that follows.

CHAPTER 5

ENTERING CPS: BIO-FAMILY, ROLE SHIFT, & CONFLICT

Qualitative research is especially useful in exploring new ideas and examining novel social contexts like the intersection of CPS and criminology. The phronetic ethnographic approach taken in the current study allowed for years of participant observation, an iterative series of guiding questions, and later, praxis-based systematic data collection. Doing so within the paradigm of criminology afforded the integration of well-supported theories of crime causation, legal justice, and human development to frame the formal research questions and subsequent analysis. Theater Camp 2015 provided an ideal forum in which to explore the experiences of maltreated and incarcerated youth in their own words. The Research Questions therefore collectively asked: *How do youth in CPS characterize entering, growing up in, and (someday) exiting CPS custody?* The analysis centered on those three life course processes associated with CPS custody, and those processes constituted the *a priori* themes that guided data collection and analysis.

The characteristics of the Theater Camp respondents detailed in the previous section describe a group of youth from diverse racial, ethnic, sexual, and victimization backgrounds. But they are also a group unified by acute traumatization and attenuated familial processes. Analyzing the life course trajectories, transitions, and turning points of such groups therefore represents fertile ground for the future of criminological theory and criminal justice policy and practice, particularly regarding youth development and juvenile justice. In the current context, "trajectory" refers to the pathways that lead to CPS, how those change during custody, and how they are oriented as youth transition to

adulthood. As proposed in Chapter Two, "transition" refers to the unidirectional passage of time and the physical and social changes that accompany that passage. Finally, the term "turning points" refers to events that result in significant change in life course trajectories. This section relays the findings regarding those constructs according to the primary themes "entering CPS," "growing up in CPS," and "(someday) exiting CPS."

The author did not ask respondents to detail the reasons they were in CPS, or to relay the intake process. Rather the protocol was designed to get respondents talking *in their own words* about their families, their development while in CPS, and their plans for the future. The analytical process of two-cycle coding first grouped responses according to the primary "*a priori*" themes (entering, growing up in, and exiting CPS), and then classified the responses in each group into secondary "emergent" themes (Saldaña, 2014). Respondents' narratives about entering CPS suggested three secondary themes about entering CPS: mixed memories of bio-family, the role shift from "normal kid" to "CPS kid," and conflict with clients and staff.

Some respondents took a level of solace in being away from unhealthy or frightening home environments. Others opined for their bio-family and minimized negative family experiences, including illegal drug use, violence, and sexual abuse allegations. By and large, perceptions of and experiences with entering CPS were mixed both within and between respondents and narratives. These mixed responses are indicative of the diverse backgrounds of the populations served by CPS. Recall for instance that some respondents reported zero ACEs, while some reported having dealt with all ten. Some youth come to CPS from loving, supportive bio-families that are struggling from illness, death, or poverty (e.g. parental infirmity, absence, or inability to

provide). Others come from homes that were disrupted by violence, sexual abuse, and/or parental incarceration.

As an example of the mixed narratives, Respondent 19 reported that both her parents were in the military, and that she had been in CPS for a little over two years (she was 16 at the time of the interview). She did not discuss chronic social problems that extended beyond her bio-parents. Nor did she report physical or sexual abuse. She did report experiencing emotional abuse and neglect, as well as mental health issues and incarceration in her natal home. In a correctional setting, all inmates are suspected in, charged with, or convicted of a criminal offense (see Fader, 2013). In gang contexts, all members are assumed to be involved with criminal activities (Decker and Van Winkle, 1996). But all youth growing up in CPS do not come from families accused of physical abuse. In contrast to total institutions traditionally studied by juvenile justice (reform schools, youth jails/prisons, boot camps), CPS provides homes and services for traumatized youth who have not been accused of a crime, and who may have come from a stable healthy family prior to some crisis event.

It bears mentioning here that it is not likely that *every* respondent in the Theater Camp study was *completely* truthful in *all* their responses. Some of the questions in that protocol were as intimate, and potentially traumatizing or humiliating as any questions could be. The respondents were intersectionally marginalized (i.e. minors in state custody). Additionally, the author was known to many of the youth at Theater Camp, which may have caused some level of social desirability bias (Holbrook et al. 2003; Kuran 1995; Tourangeau and Smith 1996; Tourangeau and Yan 2007). Some respondents

may have wanted to accentuate their stories of trauma to appear more sympathetic to the author, or to downplay their traumas and appear stronger.

One respondent reported his age as 16 years old at the onset of the interview. But after hearing and responding to the COS questions, he recanted and asked if he could go back to the beginning so he could give his true age (14). The author asked why he had decided to change his answer; after all, he had already succeeded with his believable ruse. He responded that the interview questions and follow-up prompts made him think the author's goal was to try and "listen" to youth who were in CPS. That sentiment made him want to be as accurate as possible to not "mess up" the data with misinformation. He was also asked if there were any other responses he wanted to revise, and he declined. He said he had come to Theater Camp with the plan to tell everyone he was 16 to avoid being perceived by his peers as one of the "little" youth. He was caught off guard by how the interview questions made his true age seem relevant to what he perceived to be the study's aims.

This story demonstrates the thin line between truth and falsehood in interview settings. Plainly speaking, any interviewer who assumes 100% truthfulness in their responses is likely kidding themselves, their readers, or both. Still, Sandberg (2010) noted that there is value in the overarching stories that ethnographers observe and solicit:

> "Whether true or false, the multitude of stories people tell reflect, and help us understand, the complex nature of values, identities, cultures, and communities. Thus, "truth" may not be the best measure of interesting and theoretically relevant data" (p. 448).

In other words, the collective narrative of this group of CPS youth has value that extends beyond the veracity of any single account. Similar to narratives of former prison inmates (Maruna, 2001) and contemporary street gangs (Densley, 2013), the stories of CPS youth

allow researchers to "peek" into the experiences, perceptions, and ethos of "shadow" groups that are hard to reach, but important for theoretical development. The net effect of these narratives has been referred to as "verstehen" by Weber and subsequent generations of social scientists (Tracy, 2012, p. 41).

The lie and recantation about age also demonstrates the identity management that many respondents discussed deploying and witnessing after entering CPS. In short, after entering CPS, youth can no longer depend fully on their parents for help. For those who never could count on their parents fully for help, the autonomy they experienced in the past is severely restricted. Grounded in eight years in the field, the Theater Camp study therefore sought to capitalize on the "socially situated construction of discourse" between the author and respondents (Presser, 2009, p. 177) to develop a picture of CPS youth for criminology.

The relationship between the author and the respondents may have led to some artificially socially desirable responses. But it is just as likely, if not more so, that those relationships allowed for higher levels of trust, and more open and truthful responses than may have been elicited from a stranger. The respondent who had initially overstated his age offered the following advice to the author at the end of the interview:

> "You should try to get really connected to youth. Like when I decided to tell you my real age. You made me be comfortable to be myself. You connect to youth well, keep it up."

The author did not know the respondent prior to our interview. But it is likely that the respondent had been told some variation of the sentiment above by a fellow camper or volunteer during the early days of Theater Camp. It is therefore plausible that this complementary comment was a form of artificial social desirability designed to ingratiate

the respondent to the author (although the interview was over, Theater Camp continued), or to parrot the opinions of others at Theater Camp (perhaps to align his ostensible opinion with his comrades at camp).

It is also plausible that the reputations of the author and the AMO, combined with the expressive and collaborative setting of Theater Camp, as well as the tone and content of the interview process made the respondent feel safe enough to be more open and honest than he would have been otherwise. That level of rapport was the gold standard for which the current study aimed, and helped set the stage to explore the experiences and perceptions of youth before and after entering CPS in their own words. To accomplish this the open-ended interview questions started by asking youth about their bio-families. Respondents were then prompted to comment on "good" and "bad" memories as needed to get conceptual coverage of family narratives where possible. Some respondents could not, or would not recall any memories of their families at all. Some recounted memories of being in a "normal" family prior to some crisis. Others discussed families that were characterized by long-term delinquency that extended throughout their extended kinship and community networks.

But even narratives of fond family memories were often tempered with memories that were negative and/or frightening. The section that follows details the narratives of youth regarding their memories and interactions with their families, before turning to the other emergent themes of role shift and interpersonal conflicts associated with entering CPS.

Mixed Memories of Bio-Family. Regarding their familial situations prior to CPS custody, narratives were mixed both between and within respondents. Two respondents

were unable or unwilling to discuss any memories of their bio-families. For instance, Respondent 28 had been in CPS since she was 6 months old. Her father died when she was 5, and she had not seen her mother for four months. She reported 3 siblings, whom she had never seen. When asked about her family, the 16-year-old responded:

> "No contact... I don't like talking about this. All my memories are bad. I try to put the past behind me. That's what makes me who I am."

A few respondents discussed criminal offending that extended well beyond their immediate families. One respondent discussed chronic offending across her "whole family":

> "My mom was 16 when she had me…She did drugs, had to give [her] kids to my aunt at 5 or 6 years old. [Then] my aunt abused [us] for 2 years… My whole family is in the system. Drugs, gangs, prison." (R4)

Another indicated some of her family had just "given up" on her:

> "Some [of my family is] really messed up, some on drugs, some just gave up on me. I got molested, then raped. I went with my sister, she's 24. [But we] don't get along." (R32)

For Respondent 31, "Not fighting, when we weren't fighting" was the best memory she could muster. She added:

> "My whole life [was a bad memory]. My mom is really bad. She wasn't a mother."

Narratives such as these, which include child abuse, sexual assault, neglect, and illicit drug use, were common during the author's volunteer work with CPS youth. But extreme abuse and chronic offending across extended family were not the only family narratives in the Theater Camp study.

Some respondents had never lived with, or had never really known their bio-parents prior to entering CPS. For them, CPS custody was all they had known. Respondent 3 could only remember family members as individuals, but "never together as one." Respondent 23 had never had a relationship with her mother. Her father died when she was about 2 years old. Before entering CPS eight months prior to the interview, she had been raised by her grandmother. Through her grandmother, she maintains regular contact with her three younger siblings, who are not in CPS:

> "My mom was never in my life, just us and gramma. I still see her [gramma]. We went to [indoor recreation center] last week."

Respondent 37 was 17 years old, and had been in CPS since age 5. She had lived in 21 different foster homes:

> "Most families I have lived with were rude, disrespectful, and emotionally torturing… I once saw a special needs girl get locked in a garage because she wouldn't put her clothes on."

Nevertheless, based on her experience, she preferred living in a foster home to group home life. As the interview concluded she offered that opinion, and postulated succinctly: "less people, less drama."

Many respondents could easily relay more mainstream and prosocial memories of their families prior to entering CPS. Respondents mentioned conventional activities such as going to parks, riding bikes, camping, shopping, barbecuing, and watching movies with their families. Respondents 21 and 24 recalled less active, but more intimate memories. Both of their narratives also may have hinted at underlying problems. The former talked about relaxing with family members:

> "Dumb and goofy - we play, we make some mistakes, but we are fun. I would like to change it, but I have no control now. We would sit in mom's room and watch TV, play video games. Me and my mom reminiscing about old times…" (R21)

The latter discussed the birth of a niece/nephew as a happy memory:

> "[When] my sister had her baby. Me and my siblings would help with the baby. We would all sleep on the floor to be together…Bonfires in the backyard." (R24)

Some respondents discussed memories of prosocial activities with their families even after entering CPS. One had been to a local trampoline park with family within the previous week. Another had been on a family trip to an amusement park in a neighboring state within the previous month.

CPS youth and staff referred to these unsupervised family visits as being "on pass." Generally, youth go on pass for durations ranging from a few hours to a few days, at the discretion of their caseworkers. Passes can be issued for visits with bio-parents, extended family, friends, or mentors. The adult with whom the CPS youth will spend time must be over 18 years old, approved by caseworkers, and able to pass a background check. The author has known youth to go on day trips or even overnight camping excursions with formal mentors (assigned through a social service agency such as Big Brother/Big Sister), or informal natural mentors they have acquired along the way. But passes are primarily used so that CPS youth can maintain some level of connection with their biological and extended families. In that light, family passes have the value of maintaining familial contact, graduated reductions in oversight, and support for reunification (Shireman, 2003).

But passes also invoke a level of recalcitrance on the part of CPS systems and agents. States, policymakers, and individual CPS agents can be exposed to criticism from families, communities, agency leaders, and the media when children are hurt due to decisions made by CPS systems. Most importantly for youth in CPS, the effects of that

scrutiny and anxiety roll down the proverbial hill to the caseworkers and supervisors who serve as gatekeepers. In addition to the personal anxiety that comes with making decisions that affect the lives of maltreated children, CPS gatekeepers must also navigate professional culpability for negative outcomes:

> "There's been many times I have turned over in my sleep and like 'Oh my God, I gotta see this woman'… Just being on your mind too much … and it's like a Russian roulette 'cause you know, you don't know when a kid is gonna die… you coulda just seen them, and the mother coulda killed them the minute you left, but it's gonna be your fault. You will have to answer to the board [i.e. the state] on what you did or didn't do, and today it's even worse [than it was in previous eras] (child welfare caseworker quoted by Lee, 2016; p. 56).

In other words, while family contact is not necessarily severed completely after entering CPS, it is severely attenuated, and only occurs at the discretion of the CPS system and agents therein. CPS agents are incentivized to be cautious in deciding when to let CPS youth have unsupervised contact with family.

Similar to police officers who may suffer symptoms of "burnout" (Bishopp, Piquero, Worrall, and Piquero, 2018), CPS agents may experience burnout or "moral injury" over time (Haight, Sugrue, and Calhoun, 2017). Burnout and moral injury can influence the decisions that police and CPS agents make in both subtle and overt ways. After entering CPS, youth can only see their bio-families with the state's permission. And that access is by no means guaranteed. Parents or clients who do not comply with CPS standards are not likely to earn passes for unsupervised family visits. From the viewpoint of the child in this situation, one could behave perfectly, and meet all requirements set forth by caseworkers, but still not be able to visit home or family due to familial failings or shortcomings as determined by CPS (Lee, 2016). In other words, when youth enter CPS, the state seizes control of parental access and then endeavors to fill the resulting

gap. To paraphrase Cohen, CPS further alters families, instead of restoring them to their "pristine state" (1985, p. 83). And the progress of the child in such cases is not divorced from the behavior and stability of their families until reunification is replaced as the ultimate goal in a given case.

The idea of a CPS Paradox is further borne out in the mixed (within-individual) family narratives from the Theater Camp study. For many respondents, any fond family memories were tempered by acutely negative, and sometimes frightening[33] ones. For some, the first memories that came to mind in the interview referred to the events that precipitated state intervention and their entrance into CPS:

> "[We had] a regular family. CPS might disagree… Fights yes, but nothing *that bad*. We lived in Tennessee. Every summer [we spent] the 4th of July in Myrtle Beach. [My worst memory] is when they took us away. Someone lied and said my dad "harassed" my sister. CPS took all the youth out." (R22; emphasis and "handquotes" in original)

At least one respondent had also been told by their bio-family to lie about physical abuse against their mother prior to placement in CPS custody:

> "The worst was when my stepdad got drunk and beat my mom and cut her head open, broke her phone. So, I had to call the cops and she told me to say [she] fell down the stairs because she was on drugs, so I did. At the hospital I told the cops the truth. She got mad at me for it, my family abandoned me, and I was homeless. I lived with a friend [for a time], and then CPS." (R25)

In sum, respondents' narratives about their bio-families were mixed both within, and between respondents. Several could not, or would not discuss any memories of their bio-

[33] Folks reading this who have never been in CPS can likely recall both positive and negative or frightening family memories of their own. This is certainly true of the author himself. Further, deciding who gets placed in CPS is discretionary, and variation between decision-makers approaches randomness (Maclean et al., 2016). But the narratives of CPS youth are dominated by stories of direct victimization, neglect, and abandonment by family members. While others may have shared these experiences, state intervention, removal from natal homes, and entering CPS separates CPS youth in important ways from "normal youth."

families at all. Overall, Theater Camp respondents described pre-CPS life course trajectories characterized by parental substance abuse, familial violence, neglect and abandonment, and shared struggle. As Respondent 9 summarized, "we all got beat together."

These narratives suggest that after entering CPS, youth are generally conflicted between their memories of their families (good and bad) and the relative stability of CPS. While some respondents may have artificially minimized or maximized their involvement with family maltreatment, the overarching story that emerged suggested that for many, entering CPS reduced their exposure to harmful family environments. This is the ostensible goal of *parens patriae* and chancery law as applied in juvenile justice. But paradoxically, entering CPS also debases youth by legally declaring their parents unfit to care for them properly, and removing them from their natal homes. That act has profound effects on the self-identities and social addresses of CPS youth. Namely, entering CPS imposes a role shift on youth it places in custody, from "normal kid" to "CPS kid." That role shift, and the implications it has for the experiences of CPS youth are discussed in the following section.

Role Shift: "Normal Kid" to "CPS Kid." In contrast to similarly-situated youth[34] who remain in natal homes, entering CPS forces youth to navigate their new status as wards of the state. This is another reason respondents may have artificially minimized their reporting of family violence and discord out of an overarching desire to maintain a narrative that would support a running bid to return to their natal homes.

[34] For example, those who are investigated by, but not placed in custody of CPS (Kim et al., 2017; Maclean et al., 2016), or maltreated youth whose abuse or neglect never comes to the state's or community's attention.

Goffman (1968) referred to such purposeful shaping of narratives and behaviors to sway the judgment of gatekeepers as "secondary adjustments" made after entering a total institution. Standardized "primary adjustments" (e.g. changes in residence, suspension/revocation of parental rights) are imposed on those entering a total institution (e.g. CPS). Secondary adjustments, then, are informal actions taken by individuals to "[stand] apart from the role and the self that were taken for granted for him by the institution" (p. 189). In CPS, it is often assumed that parents are morally and socially deficient, and that stigma extends to their children as well, as products of that deficiency (Lash, 2017).

In CPS, if your goal is to be released from custody and return home, you must convince CPS agents and caregivers that both you and your family are independently stable and responsive to the demands of the court and the agency (Lee, 2016 details this process from the standpoint of bio-parents navigating the system). One way for CPS youth to work toward that goal is to manage their narratives by minimizing family problems, and avoiding talk about conflict. In a more direct application to the current work, Fader (2013) has referred to this behavior pattern as "faking it to make it" in her study of young males during and after juvenile incarceration (p. 211).

Respondents may also have tried to artificially maximize their narratives of abuse, neglect and violence. Such exaggeration may help bolster a CPS kid's "street cred" while in custody (Anderson, 1999). Some respondents did add unsolicited side stories about tangential involvement with the highest levels of violence. This note about a relative on the East Coast is one example:

> "My cousin got shot in the head hitting a lick [burglarizing a house]. It was an officer's house." (R34)

Another respondent recalled learning of the murder of her sister, as the first anniversary of her death was approaching at the time of the Theater Camp interviews. The sister was killed while setting up for the respondent's previous birthday:

> "On my birthday they sent my sister to my gramma house so they could set up for my birthday and then they woke me up at midnight and said look at the news. I saw my sister body… she got her throat slit & [he] shot my gramma and my uncle. It was my mom's ex-boyfriend. My birthday is coming up [again]... I want to celebrate but thinking about my sister... its messed up." (R38)

Both these narratives were offered at the end of the interview, when the author asked if there was anything else they would like to add. It may be that these narratives were partially or wholly constructed to elicit sympathy or respect. Still, the youth who participated in the Theater Camp study were almost all currently in CPS care, and as a group, reported abuse profiles that placed them in the 90th percentile nationally. In short, if extreme things such as this happen to children (and they do), then CPS populations are where researchers should expect to hear narratives such as these. For the sake of clarity, the author had no reason to suspect any specific narrative from the Theater Camp study was inaccurate or untrue.

To be sure, extreme stories are not uncommon in CPS circles. The author has worked with[35] children of documented cartel and gang members, children in CPS due to

[35] The term "worked with" here refers to the many relationships that the author developed while volunteering and mentoring with local AMOs. In many different capacities over several years, the author met with, made art with, and discussed life with hundreds of CPS youth, scores of service providers, and dozens of staff. This let the author "get to know" CPS youth, and organically "keep up with" them through subsequent AMO events, events with other agencies, and informal updates from other service providers. The author rarely saw official records regarding the youth with whom he worked (other than a few IRs). But as a long-term volunteer with several AMOs that served CPS youth in the local area, he often discussed clients' histories, casefiles, and ongoing development with group home staff, agency administrators, non-profit service providers, and CPS youth themselves.

parental homicide, children who had been forced into incest with parents and siblings, and bestiality with pets for years, children of parents (both) serving life in prison, children who had been in witness protection programs through the FBI, and children who had come to CPS directly from sex trafficking raids. One of the residential agencies that works with the AMO (and sent about 10 girls to Theater Camp in 2015) only houses girls who have been trafficked for sexual exploitation. Some of the youth at Theater Camp were living in a clandestine housing facility that hides families from abusive parents (generally fathers, stepfathers, and maternal boyfriends) due to pending threats of violence. In short, the author did not rely on the veracity of any one story of pre-CPS abuse in the analysis, but the stories told in the interviews, in general, bear the mark of truth.

Especially for youth from more acutely traumatizing backgrounds, entering CPS illuminates a stark contrast between their lives before entering CPS, and what they learn about ("normal") families after entering CPS. For CPS youth from less acutely traumatizing backgrounds, living in communal settings in state custody with such youth sends a strong message about state power relative to families, and the roles played by CPS youth to improve or hinder their own lots in life. In addition to the abuse, neglect, and parental separation that characterized the youth in the Theater Camp study, entering CPS custody therefore imposes an existential role shift. For this reason, entering CPS custody represents an important turning point imposed on some children by the state.

The decision to place youth in CPS can happen quickly, sometimes over the course of a day. A physical or social observation by a teacher, doctor or other "mandatory

reporter" (Hutchison, 1993) can lead to a child's abrupt removal from a world dominated by bio-families either through parental behaviors or absence (i.e. pre-entry trajectory). Based on the discretion of a social worker or police officer, a child can be placed in a shelter or group home for observation, evaluation, and potential placement in CPS. That decision places such youth in a new world dominated by courts, caseworkers, and residential staff (i.e. post-entry trajectory). They must learn as soon as possible to navigate the child welfare system and self-advocate to their new (traumatized) roommates and new (professional) caregivers. Some youth are more adept at this than others:

> I don't let CPS get in my way. I am my own caseworker... My caseworker calls me 'Lady Boss'" (R23)

Clearly, this respondent had little problem self-advocating and maintaining a sound relationship with her CPS caseworker. But histories of abuse and the stigmas associated with CPS can cause problems for others as they navigate CPS.

Upon entering CPS, one ceases to be a "regular kid" and becomes a "CPS kid." After exiting CPS, one will forever be an "Ex-CPS kid" (Ebaugh, 1988). One non-CPS respondent commented on the distinction between these identities. Her father's violence against her mother led to her participation with social service agencies. During the interview, she reported experiencing emotional abuse and neglect by her parents. She also reported that her mother regularly suffered physical abuse by her father; that he abused alcohol and drugs in the home; and that he had eventually gone to prison. Still, she reported never having been in CPS custody and currently living with her mother. As the interview closed, she added:

> "Most CPS kids shouldn't feel different than other kids just 'cause they got took out the house. Because some kids have the same problems, but [they] don't end up in CPS." (R6, not in CPS)

Respondent 19 added:

> "Most [CPS] kids don't have a family, and that's all most kids want. Most kids have depression and are on pills."

In other words, youth in and around CPS are aware that status as state property marks CPS youth as different from other youth in their extended families, schools, and broader communities. That negative stigma extends to families who have their youth "taken" by CPS (Lash, 2017) and "catching a case" with CPS can have dire collateral consequences[36] for parents as well. Lash (2017) and Lee (2016) both attribute this stigma and legal entanglement to a cycle of "stratified reproduction" in capitalist political regimes, by which families are expected by the state to produce efficient and capable workers. They argue that when families fail to accomplish this capitalist ideal, they are categorized by the state as dysfunctional and their children are removed so that the state can rectify the failure.

The stigma associated with being (or producing) a CPS youth may or may not be a desired outcome of CPS systems, but it is not without explanation. As Fader (2013) points out:

> "*All total institutions* construct moral distinctions and social distance between staff, who represent the rest of law-abiding society, and inmates. But these boundaries take a peculiar form at reform schools [and in CPS] … Here

[36] Haight and colleagues' work with CPS parents characterized dealing with CPS as "combat" (2017b) for the bio-families of CPS youth. Lee (2016) noted that parents with open CPS cases can lose jobs due to the time commitments required for compliance with CPS meetings, court dates, and programming. She also pointed out that the requirements of CPS constitute "literally a full-time job" but that valuing one's employment "over" one's children (for example, by missing CPS appointments due to employment obligations) was not viewed favorably by CPS gatekeepers in New York (p. 187). Parents in some states can also be terminated or barred from certain professions, such those in the medical field or in child- and elder-care based on a CPS allegation or finding.

> criminality is medicalized, and inmates, known as 'clients' or 'students' are seen as being in need of treatment" (p. 210, emphasis and reference to CPS added).

Fader's (2013) study was based on youth incarcerated for criminal offenses. She concluded the passage above by noting that the criminal justice programming she encountered in her work was "premised on the assumption that inmates are morally culpable for their offenses" (p. 210).

Children in CPS are not ostensibly held morally accountable for the shortcomings of their parents, but they shoulder stigma because they are a direct product of those shortcomings. CPS (formerly the orphanage system) also falls under the umbrella of "all total institutions." What this suggests is that placement in CPS, similarly to placement in other involuntary total institutions (in-patient mental health facilities, reform schools, jails, prisons) comes with a role shift and stigma that must be managed by all those who enter. Some CPS youth are better equipped to navigate that role shift to "state property" without conflict than others. Importantly, entering CPS places youth in daily residential contact with "pseudo-siblings" and "pseudo-parents" who were previously unknown to each other. On that topic, respondents discussed emotional, verbal, and physical conflict with their new housemates and caregivers.

Conflict with Clients and Staff. For those who are placed in CPS custody, the resulting shift in roles involves exposure to new "pseudo-siblings" who are similarly (i.e. precariously) situated and "pseudo-parents" who are paid to fill the role of parents for groups of youth in crisis. While sibling/sibling and parent/child relationships can be strained in any family, these processes have higher stakes for youth in CPS. Several respondents discussed escalating conflict or crisis regarding their fellow clients in residential facilities like group homes and shelters. For instance, Respondent 36 had

never gotten in serious trouble until her placement in a temporary shelter immediately after entering CPS, where she was in a fistfight with another client:

> "I look at it like this: I got in fights and stuff [before], but I never got arrested until I went to CPS. [After getting arrested for the fight,] I learned my lesson from that. I learned respect even, because they hold me accountable."

In other words, behaviors that might go unnoticed outside state custody are more likely to result in formal sanctions after entering CPS. This quote illustrates the heightened level of surveillance and risk for sanction that comes with CPS custody as compared to some, and perhaps all bio-families.

Bio-parents who are not under CPS control are incentivized to avoid contacting law enforcement for sibling conflict, even if sibling conflict becomes physical. Generally, parents are not legally required to report assaultive behavior between siblings to police. Laws that made that mandatory would "widen the net" of the criminal justice and child welfare systems substantially. Instead, much of such behavior is generally considered "child's play" and therefore escapes official scrutiny (Stock, 1993). After entering CPS however, youth are raised by professional staff. As state-sanctioned pseudo-parents, staff are trained to document and report serious rule infractions, improper sexual conduct, and behavioral problems. The willingness of CPS caregivers to involve the police in the behavior of youth is an understudied area ripe for criminological research. But entering CPS involves an increased level of scrutiny and sanctioning by the state.

What might be considered a "schoolyard scuffle" outside of a total institution can only formally be recorded and considered assault in CPS, jail, or prison. There is no training or mechanism for bio-parents to write up IRs and submit them to caseworkers. Police involvement in conflict or disruption caused by a CPS youth may not be any more

beneficial to a CPS than it would be a normal kid. But mandatory reporting policies for professionals who work with youth, and mandatory arrest policies for domestic violence both work to increase the surveillance of the state on youth after entering CPS (Emery and Laumann-Billings, 1988).

Respondent 36's story also illustrates how CPS youth are at risk for formal sanctions such as arrest far beyond youth in bio-families. When juvenile siblings in their natal homes have conflict, even physical altercations, legal authorities are rarely called in for formal sanctioning. But police and court involvement is much more likely in a residential environment where all residents are wards of the state, and where all day-to-day familial bonds have been supplanted with synthetic replacements. In CPS, the traditional familial role of "siblings" is played by "clients" who are also in state custody. In this context conflict, bullying, or violent episodes that might be considered "family business" for a "normal" family is much more likely to be reported to authorities by professional caregivers to youth in state custody.

Staff do not file formal incident reports (referred to by youth and staff as IRs) for every insubordination, argument, or physical altercation. IRs are filed at the discretion of staff, and they can lead to changes in residential placement (e.g. to a more secure facility or treatment center), graduated sanctions in their case plans e.g. (restricted privileges, denial of family passes), and referral to the police or juvenile courts in the most extreme cases. But the interpersonal conflicts in group homes and shelters are not always as straightforward or overtly violent as those in other total institutions like jails and prisons. Several respondents discussed unconventional forms of provocation and retaliation. For instance, Respondent 21 reported currently facing charges of disorderly conduct, theft,

and assault. She told of a long-term conflict with one roommate (not related to her pending charges). In the end, the roommate:

> "[…] threw away my clothes, put my bras in the toilet and AWOLed [absconded] with my color contacts [lenses]."

Another respondent had an ongoing back-and-forth conflict with a roommate that involved the respondent using physical violence, while the roommate ("roomie") opted for more passively aggressive tactics:

> "My roomie is obese, lazy, and pees the bed *awake*. She is scared to go to the baño [bathroom]. She pees the bed, I beat her down. She won't wash her sheets, and she makes fun of me for being gay." (R15)

In the field with CPS youth, such stories of bullying and "biological warfare" are not uncommon. A 10-year old client at the group home where the author was a weekly art mentor is one example.

As the youngest and smallest boy living in a house with nine teenaged boys, Miguelito was faced with the challenge of asserting himself among his older and bigger pseudo-siblings. Sometimes Miguelito was picked on with friendly banter, but sometimes the banter shifted into bullying in that volatile environment of marginalized and generally abused teenagers. As the weekly mentor, the author was working (over the course of several months) to develop an environment at the group home where the older boys supported the younger ones. Generally, this involved role modeling the desired behaviors in a style that had social currency with the boys. The author conducted traditionally masculine adolescent behaviors like wrestling (sometimes in the house, to the consternation of staff); talking about girls (or boys) they liked; and playfully poking fun at each other to provoke a similar verbal response (referred to as "busting caps" on each other).

But these behaviors were coupled with more nurturing behaviors like cooking meals together, respecting both the younger and elder boys as young men, and delegating some responsibility for the youngers to the elders in tasks. For instance, when cooking meals, a younger might get to slice vegetables, but an elder would be assigned to help and oversee. As an example of that mix of rambunctious adolescent masculinity and supportive, pseudo-familial nurturing, the author once spent an evening cooking nachos with the boys and challenging their ability to eat spicy peppers. A 10-year-old from Mexico cooked the ground beef, a 9-year-old with autism cut lettuce and tomatoes, and the older boys were helping. As they plated the prepared ingredients, the author cut up four habaneros for the brave souls who planned to partake. At some point, habanero juice made its way to the author's face and eye, and the boys took aim. They disparaged the author's ethnicity, his manhood, and his spice tolerance mercilessly. They had been waiting for just such an opportunity.

Impromptu events like that allowed the "boys to be boys" while simultaneously developing skills that allowed them to be creative, respect and nurture others, and create something of value as a group. The staff also enjoyed being served dinner by the boys. During this same time, the owner of the group home agency called the AMO to let them know that the weekly mentorship program being run by the author and his coauthor was having positive effects on the boys. So, when Dino said they had all stopped picking on Miguelito "forever" it came as more welcome news. As a curious, praxis-driven participant-observer, the author inquired about the reason for the new rule. Dino's response did not suggest any positive influence of nurturing mentorship, the AMO, or CPS:

> "Last week we ate Miguelito's snacks, and we were making fun of him. We were like 'fuck him' right? Well, when we fell asleep, he peed in my clean laundry… I washed it three times, and it still stinks. *I had to throw away my favorite hoodie*!"

In this case biological warfare served as a potent strategy in the hands of someone for whom violence was not a viable or preferable option. Instead of initiating increased physical reprisals from the older boys, the weaponization of bodily fluids levelled the playing field and the resulting retribution generated a status for the smaller boy that protected him from further bullying.

In other words, Miguelito did not have the physical ability to exact violent, face-to-face revenge. But he creatively deployed a chemical produced naturally and without acquisition costs by his own body as a mechanism for revenge. This allowed Miguelito to negatively impact one of his adversaries sufficiently to achieve submission. Having done so, he developed a reputation that extended throughout the group home. One staff at the group home admitted privately to being impressed with Miguelito's devious and punitive tactic, as well as the protective effect it had. As Dino described it, no one wanted to cross after that because "there's no telling what that fool will do."

While these tactics may appear unconventional in mainstream criminology, Jacobs and Wright (2006) have identified the basic form of such acts of revenge as "sneaky retaliation" in the context of street crime:

> "Because the delay [in the timing of the retaliation, i.e. waiting for the others to sleep] is desired, this implies a certain amount of strategizing on the part of the grievant. That is, the grievant wants to 'get' the violator in a particular way, and this requires a period of planning and preparation… it appears that [such] grievants want to keep their identities secret – to minimize the risk of detection and arrest and/or of counter-retaliation" (p. 58).

Jacobs and Wright focus on the concept of "an eye for an eye" and avoiding detection as reasons justifying sneaky retaliation. But for a 10-year-old in CPS, living with teenaged

pseudo-siblings, sneaky retribution may be the only viable option, irrespective of whether the "grievant" becomes known to the "violator" and regardless of the level of parity between the violation and the retaliation.

Anderson (1999) discussed the interconnected roles of group and individual processes in this calculus. In short, having large groups of people who are willing to "have your back" during interpersonal and physical conflict is considered among the most powerful protective factors in street code environments. But upon entering CPS, having others to help resolve conflicts favorably is not likely to be an option. In CPS as in the street, at times "…to maintain his honor, the young man must show that he himself, as an individual, is not one to be 'messed with' or dissed. To show this, he may 'act crazy'- that is, have the reputation for being quick tempered" (Anderson, 1999, p. 73). In CPS, a quick temper and violent outbursts are likely to result in behavioral consequences (e.g. IRs, heightened security, or residential moves) or legal sanctions like arrest or placement in a secured facility. But sneaky retaliation allows for revenge without disruptive outbursts and minimizes the risk for punishment by dislocating (in both time and space) the initial violation from the retributive act.

These findings about conflict between pseudo-siblings in CPS suggest some overlap between the "code of the streets" and the "code of the group home." These emergent social systems serve similar functions of informally ordering group processes, but with some subtle differences. Entering CPS places marginalized youth at heightened risk for negative outcomes into total institutions with similarly-marginalized and at-risk youth. In this milieu, each CPS youth must self-advocate to manage conflict, which may come in forms of psychological, biological, or physical violence. In both "street code"

environments and CPS, identity and role management are perceived by some as central to the prevention of victimization. This sentiment is indicated in the following advice:

> "I told a kid at [my new school] I'm from the hood; you gotta put on your game face. I don't... here's how I look at it. People won't want to mess with you if you have a mean face." (R36)

Statements like this are consistent with code of the streets, and the 15-year-old girl who made this scored 20/24 on the COS scale in the Theater Camp study. During the administration of that scale (1-4), Respondent 36 asked if she could respond "5" (again; out of only four) to indicate her extremely high advocacy of the statement "If someone uses violence against you, it is important to use violence against him or her to get even."

But that straightforward and violence-centered perception of the code of the street was not the norm in the Theater Camp study. It may also be the case that sneaky retaliation plays a more prominent role in CPS group homes than in the "street" or in jails or prisons because as a group, maltreated youth in CPS have different viewpoints on violence, but similar viewpoints on the management of identity, roles, and status. Youth who have been violently victimized by their bio-families may be more likely to view violence as abhorrent, or to think that no one, even an abusive parent, deserves to have violence done to them. In situations where CPS youth cannot avoid conflict with pseudo-siblings, it may be beneficial for some to employ less confrontational "sneaky" strategies and non-violent tactics like biological warfare for retribution instead of immediate physical violence.

In addition to conflict with other clientele, entering CPS also leads to some youth coming into conflict with staff (as pseudo-parents), which can lead to violence as well. Group home and shelter staff are professional caregivers without the lifelong and

biological attachment that characterizes bio-familial bonds. Further, rules, programming, and treatment strategies do not always support the development of coping strategies that will benefit them in their natal context. Fader (2013) refers to this process as "social assault" regarding the mostly white, middle class staff and their programming for poor, Black clients who were born into cultures adhering to the "code of the streets" (p. 211). CPS and other forms of juvenile incarceration are characterized by a culture of psychological and behavioral change. This culture emerges from the continual assessment, treatment, and evaluation of each CPS youth' psychological and behavioral development. But individual psychological processes and behaviors sometimes lead to conflict with caregivers in CPS.

Respondents discussed struggling and witnessing others struggle with mental health and behavioral issues that were exacerbated by antagonistic staff. Notice the use of terms from therapeutic psychology in the following narratives:

> "I had a coping skill – writing. One night I was writing and staff wanted me to do something, but I didn't [do it]. So, she ripped the paper from me. Then she followed me to the back yard and was in my face yelling at me. Then a girl held me back and I stabbed her with the pen." (R37)

"Coping strategies" are commonly associated with cognitive behavioral treatments (CBT), which teach clients to identify negative emotions, and purposefully deploy cognitive (mental) strategies to modify their behavior (Meichenbaum, 1977). Diagnoses of depression, anxiety, hyperactivity, and post-traumatic stress disorder are common in CPS. Some *internal* coping strategies are mindful breathing, counting to ten, and purposefully delaying reactions. When these do not suffice to stall negative emotional or mental health events, next-level strategies often include external activities like stream-of-thought writing, intentional journaling, or taking a walk or "break." In Respondent 37's

case, her need to employ her writing strategy at that moment was at odds with either a house rule or a staff directive (e.g. bed time or chores).

When mental health issues and house rules (or staff demands) are in conflict, stalemates develop that predictably tend to favor staff. But the stalemates may not be in the child's best interest. Respondent 37, who grew up in 21 foster homes, recalled:

> "I saw a special needs girl get locked in a garage because she wouldn't put her clothes on."[37]

In other words, respondents discussed heightened levels of surveillance after entering CPS through both roommates and staff. Staff sometimes made this process worse by antagonizing their charges. Particularly regarding mental health crises, the rules of the facility or the directives of the staff may run counter to the deployment of healthy coping strategies. At the same time, it is virtually impossible for staff to know if and when clients are intentionally manipulating the system, instigating staff, being "oppositionally defiant," or suffering from a mental health crisis in earnest. To modify Respondent 37's postulate: "More people, more drama."

Like other incarceration settings, CPS youth' collective family histories are characterized by high rates of abuse, neglect, violence, delinquency and mental health issues. This conglomeration of youth in crisis places CPS youth in daily, residential contact with other youth at high risk for unhealthy and destructive behaviors. The diverse resulting groups are then policed by paid staff and formal disciplinary systems connected to court-sanctioned consequences. In sum, the narratives from Theater Camp suggest the

[37] The respondent did not specify any disorder or mental health issue beyond "special needs." This is common parlance in CPS for youth diagnosed with neurodivergent medical conditions. However, hypersensitivity to sensory inputs such as tactile sensations from clothing is a symptomology consistent with the experiences of some people with autism (Tomchek and Dunn, 2007, p. 191).

process of entering CPS separates youth from abusive or unhealthy families, imposes a role shift from "normal" to CPS youth on them, and forces them to live with similarly-situated pseudo-siblings under the discretion and control of pseudo-parents. The paradox here is that despite their high-risk histories and the challenges imposed by entering CPS, all CPS youth are not doomed to negative life course pathways (Daining and DePanfilis, 2007; Samuels and Pryce, 2008; Yates and Grey, 2012).

At the same time, despite the "wrap-around" (i.e. "total institutional") nature of treatment strategies in CPS programming, most CPS youth are not spared from those predictable and destructive outcomes (Berger et al., 2009; Maclean et al., 2016). "Entering CPS" is therefore an important **turning point** in the lives of some children, because custody alters their life course **trajectories**. Further, the narratives from the Theater Camp study demonstrate substantial overlap between entering CPS and traditional research in criminology and criminal justice. This is particularly true for research that examines "juvenile justice." Some key concepts that characterize that overlap include police; juvenile courts; incarceration; drug abuse; gang membership; sexual assault (offending and victimization); domestic and community violence; the inter- and intra-generational transmission of values; aggression; stigma, role, and identity management; mental health crises and treatments; trauma and trauma-informed practice; and social control over the life course.

In short, the process of placing youth in CPS removes children from unstable or unhealthy households, and places traumatized youth in multi-client residential facilities staffed by caregivers with as little as a high school-level education. Particularly during the first days and weeks while a newcomer to CPS is being processed into the system,

youth are more likely to be in shorter-term, higher-occupancy shelter facilities than group homes or foster family placements. The subsequent process, "growing up in CPS" usually involves relatively more stable residential placements (depending on the behavior of the client and other residents and availability of "beds"). During this time, CPS youth may return to school (though generally at a new school, and after a significant gap in attendance). They also participate (to varying degrees and effects) with behavioral modification and psycho-therapeutic programming overseen by a caseworker (as deemed necessary by the state).

Like their "normal" counterparts, teenagers growing up in CPS **transition** continually and unidirectionally toward adulthood, and those transitions can be similarly helped or hindered by adults. But the experiences and opportunities afforded to CPS youth are mediated in important ways by the state. The experiences of CPS youth as they grow up in CPS are discussed in more detail in the section that follows.

CHAPTER 6

GROWING UP IN CPS: "CPS SUCKS, BUT…," TWO FAMILIES, & SUPPORT

The following section presents three emergent themes from the Theater Camp interviews. These illustrate both challenges and opportunities associated with "growing up in CPS." First, several respondents spontaneously pointed out shortcomings or faults with CPS at some point during their interviews. This sentiment took many forms, but their disdain for life in CPS can only be considered in contrast to the problematic settings from which they tended to come. Second, respondents discussed emotional ties that they had either maintained, lost, or struggled to (re)establish while growing up in CPS. Respondents discussed using Facebook, telephones, and visits to maintain contact, but those processes were sometimes interrupted by CPS policy or practice. Others were unable to communicate with their erstwhile loved ones (often a "real dad") but still discussed strong attachments and desires to reunite with them. These first two themes emerged from the narratives of youth over the course of the interviews. Respondents were not asked for their opinion of CPS, or if they "liked" growing up in CPS. Neither were they asked about the crossover between their bio-families and CPS. Those themes arose "emically" from the data (Tracy, 2012, p. 21).

The third emergent theme regarding growing up in CPS was a result of the *a priori* theme of interest "social support." Respondents were asked directly about their experiences with education, mentorship, and the AMO. In response, they discussed navigating new schools and teachers, what "mentorship" means to them, and participating in community- and art-based therapeutic programming. In other words, the theme of social support arose "etically" from the theoretical framework in which the

current study is situated (Tracy, 2012, p. 102). These three thematic categories are referred to respectively as "CPS Sucks;" "Navigating Two Families;" and "Social Support in CPS." The following sections discuss those themes in more detail.

"CPS Sucks, but… I'm Better Off in the System." In general, respondents were ambivalent or conflicted about growing up in CPS. Their collective family histories and abuse profiles suggested that despite being separated from and (perhaps) missing bio-family members, growing up in CPS may be in their best interest. Respondent 36 summarized the dichotomy succinctly:

> "CPS sucks, but I like it because I think I'm better off in the system…I'm gonna share this with you… My mom's boyfriend broke in the house and put a knife to her neck. So... I feel better in CPS than in that kind of situation."

In extreme cases like this, where family violence is present, it is likely that growing up in CPS is more stable and healthy than life with bio-families. Egregious and fatal cases of *child abuse* have historically been used to promote the need for and expand the scope of CPS, particularly when such cases result in media coverage (Shireman, 2003, p. 29; Lee, 2016). But most youth in CPS custody are there due to *neglect* charges (Ben-David and Jonson-Reid, 2017). There are therefore youth who see CPS as a net improvement in their lot in life, but this feeling is by no means universal. Most respondents in the Theater Camp study were conflicted about growing up in CPS. Respondent 34 echoed this sentiment: "Some people like CPS, but I don't understand it… not me."

Other respondents were much clearer in relaying negative perceptions of CPS. Respondent 21 noted concisely "CPS is shit." She was upset that although the state where she was in CPS had no age requirement for getting a job, the private agency that operated the group home where she lived did not allow clients to have jobs until the age of 16.

Even then, a working client was required to maintain good grades ("As and Bs") in order to stay employed. But she admitted she had received intangible benefits from growing up in the system. She noted that "being in CPS had opened [her] eyes to lots of things." Based on the narratives about entering CPS, it is likely that the "things" to which she referred included both constructive or therapeutic (e.g. psychotherapy) and destructive or traumatizing (i.e. bullying or conflict with staff) aspects of the human experience. Regardless of any one CPS kid's background, after spending any time growing up in state custody, CPS youth have heard violent, sexually deviant, and traumatizing stories recounted by their pseudo-siblings.

Along the way CPS youth also tend to get savvy to therapeutic terminology and activities. They learn about trauma-informed practice, psychological triggering, and behavioral coping strategies through both direct and vicarious exposure to psycho-behavioral treatments and evaluations. They also tend to be well-versed in psychiatric medications, and the "meds" assigned for their peers. The narratives above suggest further that CPS youth are at heightened risk for both witnessing and participating in violence and conflict in their CPS residences, often involving mental health crises. What this means is that growing up in CPS involves a socialization process that teaches youth about the "right way" to manage psychological distress, and the "right way" to behave in a (pseudo) family context. But those two perspectives are sometimes at odds in applied settings, particularly when a CPS youth fails to comply with staff commands. In such cases, the fundamental conflict between the therapeutic and coercive goals of the juvenile justice system are laid bare.

For some youth growing up in CPS custody, this conflicted milieu leads to ideations of getting out, one way or another. Talking about absconding and returning to bio-family, friends ("homies"), or significant others is therefore fairly common among CPS youth. Following through and leaving a residence, school, or other designated location without authorization of a caseworker (residential staff can not authorize unsupervised trips) is not nearly as common. But AWOLing was not unheard of during the author's time in the field. One of the first CPS youth with whom the author developed a relationship consistently ruminated about AWOLing. D, (the youth that had his laundry sullied by M) never bragged or threatened staff about this. But in abstract terms, he made it clear that his plan was to "someday" sneak out of the group home, leave the state, and never come back. For instance, concepts like returning to Sinaloa and participating in the drug trade; corridos (Mexican folksongs; see glossary) about his hometown and narcotrafficking, and going north to work construction were often juxtaposed and intertwined in the poetry, visual arts, and storytelling projects he worked on in participation with the author and the AMO.

In conversations about his progress growing up in CPS, Dino would observe that he was not like the other boys at the group home. He had already spent a year in the construction trade at the age of 13. At 14, he drove a friend's car to pick up another friend in the current state. He was pulled over for a license plate violation, and placed in CPS when no adult claimed him. He was convinced that if he could make it back to that construction job, he would never come back to CPS. At 16 years old, he did just that. He is, at the time of writing, in his early twenties, working construction in a midwestern state. Dino's story was somewhat unique, because he had worked under-the-table

construction jobs prior to entering CPS. Most CPS youth are far less likely to have those "off the books" relationships with private businesses. The author hears from Dino sometimes by way of social media and a mutual friend.

Narratives from the Theater Camp study did not suggest respondents were preoccupied with absconding. In the author's experience, those that do AWOL generally return to custody within a day or two. This may happen by the AWOLer voluntarily returning, being escorted back by police, or getting arrested for other charges. In cases where the client is arrested, the group home staff decides whether to pick up the client or leave them to the devices of the criminal justice system. But the dual roles of the juvenile court as a source of both coercion and treatment in the best interest of the child can cause a conundrum for agencies engaged in juvenile justice (e.g. police, courts, corrections, CPS, and service providers):

> "Based on the concept of *parens patriae*, the juvenile court established informal procedures [i.e. chancery law] designed to individualize the judicial response in the hope of rehabilitating the young offender or helping erring parents to learn new ways. […] As the court assumed responsibility for the welfare of the child, delinquency was broadly defined. A complaint was usually termed a 'petition in behalf of the child.'" (Shireman, 2003, p. 62)

What this means is that youth growing up in CPS are in a form of "juvenile justice purgatory." Mays and Winfree referred to CPS youth as "nondelinquent children in the juvenile justice system" (2013, p. 279).

Those who AWOL and are caught or are otherwise arrested by police run the risk of invoking both aspects (e.g. to address delinquency and welfare) of the system (Sarri, Stoffregen, and Ryan, 2016). Such youth have been referred to as "crossover," "dual-involved," or "dual jurisdiction" cases because they involve both the criminal justice and

child welfare systems (Herz, Ryan, and Bilchik, 2010; Siegel and Lord, 2005). But again, the juvenile justice system is composed of both the criminal/delinquency, and child welfare "arms of the law" for juveniles. For the CPS youth and the judge concerned, there is no functional distinction between the two responsibilities, the decisions they invoke, and the relative outcomes of those group processes.

What happens after an AWOL CPS youth is apprehended therefore depends heavily on a client's criminal and behavioral records, any current offenses, and (in no small part) the relationship between the residential staff and the client. When a CPS youth who AWOLs comes back voluntarily or is released to CPS by authorities, they may be returned to the home they AWOLed from, or moved to a new (and perhaps more secure) facility. After 8 years in the field, and having worked with hundreds of CPS youth, the author has known of only two CPS youth who AWOLed and never came back to CPS. One of them was a third-generation gang member with strong ties to underworld economies in another Southwestern state. The other was Dino, who had previously worked under-the-table construction jobs in a Midwestern state. It may be that their access to informal labor markets in other states gave them the long-term support they needed to survive, and avoid detection by the CPS system from which they had absconded.

Still, as indicated in the quote that gave this section its title, some respondents felt they were "better off in the system." Their collective histories suggest that may be true, despite their negative perceptions of CPS. Many people experience contradiction between how they perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others, and those assessments can influence how people interact with the world (Gardner and Gar-Schultz,

2017). But for CPS youth, those role and self-identity assessments can have life-and-death implications, particularly over the life course. In contrast to the AWOL narratives above, two respondents reported planning to stay in CPS past the age of 18 on a voluntary basis so that they could finish college. These arrangements are referred to colloquially as "voluntaries" by CPS youth and staff. The fact that some youth elect to remain in CPS after the age of legal majority (pending approval of CPS and the residential facility) runs contrary to narratives about CPS "sucking."

Voluntaries suggest the life course pathways of at least some CPS youth are better served by growing up in state custody. Whether by choice or force, whether they like it or not, most CPS youth are ultimately required grow up in CPS until the state determines it is in the child's best interest to return to bio-family (reunification; Shireman, 2003), or until they turn 18 and "age-out" of state jurisdiction. Along the way, those who grow up in CPS are forced to navigate roles on two fronts: within their biological family, and within their CPS pseudo-family.[38]

Navigating "Two Families." Navigating "two families" has been identified elsewhere as a key characteristic of growing up in CPS (Baker et al., 2018), and that theme emerged in the Theater Camp narratives as well. In contrast to married couples who must deal with "in-law" family, or to children of divorced parents who inhabit the role of both "child" and "stepchild," CPS youth grow up in between a bio-family that is either absent or in crisis, and the legalistic formalities of the state. To that end, many respondents in the Theater Camp study reported maintaining strong bonds to specific

[38] In the case of children who were completely estranged or disconnected from their bio-family, the term "bio-family" refers to their own lives separate from their CPS pseudo-family.

members of their bio-families despite their troubled histories and current statuses. The theme of emotional ties to a "real dad" "out there" somewhere waiting for their erstwhile children came up several times. Respondent 24 reported that her mother had struggled with intravenous drug abuse and that her bio-father had once "slapped me and called the cops." Still, she wanted to leave CPS and go live with her bio-father in a rural town in the state. Respondent 25 (who had been ostracized from her family for not lying about her stepfather's violence toward her bio-mother) also wanted to leave CPS and reunite with her bio-father in his rural town.

One 10-year-old CPS youth known to the author through the group home AWOLed with an 11-year-old accomplice to reunite with his father. Odysseus was among the youngest and smallest in a group home of older adolescent boys. Like Miguelito, who used urine as a weapon for sneaky retaliation, Odysseus was sometimes bullied. And like Miguelito, he did not relish his position of relative powerlessness in his group home. To him, life in CPS was not the proper way for a Native American boy to grow up. He thought that if he could make it to the Native American reservation where his dad lived (referred to locally as "the rez"), his uncle and father would raise him in a way he saw as more culturally appropriate. One day he and his accomplice boarded the local metropolitan public transit rail system intending to travel to the rez, over 100 miles away. When the duo got to the end of the line on the train and realized they were still 80 miles from the rez, Odysseus called his uncle. His uncle was on parole, and promptly called CPS and reported his nephew as a runaway. The boys were picked up by police from two cities away, and dropped off by them at their group homes.

Odysseus planned on reuniting with his father and uncle, despite not having talked to either of them in months. The boys did not find out until the end of the line that they would not make it to their destination because the rail system did not go anywhere near their destination. The adventure won the Odysseus increased "juice" with the older boys (Anderson, 1999), but also opened him up to some good-natured ridicule for his uninformed plan. Regardless, this narrative is an example of a CPS youth who, for better or worse, was attached to the idea of reuniting with his bio-father, even without the father's knowledge or consent, and at great personal peril. The story also demonstrates the discord that can develop between how CPS youth see themselves and their families, and how those families feel about them.

To be clear however, households like those discussed by Theater Camp respondents are traumatizing and unhealthy for youth development (Horan and Widom, 2015; Widom et al., 2015). CPS custody can offer a respite from destructive environments in such cases. Respondent 36 explained that she found it better to avoid her bio-mother at times:

> "When mom drinks, I stay away. I go to my grammas. My gramma is still like my mom, but she doesn't drink, [gramma] is bi-polar. My mom gets violent, my gramma just yells."

For this respondent (who had been in CPS for over a year at the time of the interview), growing up in CPS may offer a safer and more stable environment than both her bio-mother and grandmother. And while many youth have mothers who abuse alcohol, or grandparents with mental health disorders, not all of them have the stop-gap solution of state custody (or the external oversight of CPS) as a respite from their troubled bio-families. In cases like this, CPS serves its intended purpose of filling in for parents when

parents fail to provide adequately for their children as determined by the state. And just as CPS can protect youth from their families, it can sometimes be used to protect families from their youth.

Respondent 25 discussed how she wanted to talk to her bio-mother and was prevented by CPS:

> "I just want to talk to my mom. They won't let me. I messaged her [on Facebook], she said she divorced my stepdad. Remarrying, moving to Oregon. They [CPS] said since she abandoned me, so she doesn't have the right. But I just want to talk to her. My mom understands me. They won't let me talk to any of my family."

Respondent 25 was one of the few to score a 10 on the ACEs scale. She had been asked to lie about family violence, and was ostracized by her family when she later told police the truth. At the end of the interview, she added:

> "My mom ODed [overdosed] on meth and heroin when I was 10. No one would take care of her, she wouldn't go to the hospital. I was a little kid trying to think what to do. I would bring her food, water, blankets. She would never go to the hospital, because she was afraid to lose us [to CPS]. Family would say 'She will be ok, she's just doing it for attention.'"

Clearly, nursing a mother back to health after narcotics overdoses is not a stable healthy family environment. Many respondents discussed wishing to return to their bio-families so that they could help reduce their dysfunctions or struggles. Respondent 25's narrative demonstrates the anxiety and powerlessness felt by many youth separated from her bio-family, and unable to reconnect as they grow up in CPS. Balancing that tension is a fundamental component of growing up in CPS. These types of adverse experiences may foster resilience or "positive adaptations" in CPS youth (Cichetti, 2013). But the separation from family and resulting anxiety may also lead to potentially negative or harmful adaptations such as "survivalist self-reliance" (Samuels and Pryce, 2008).

Respondent 34 was also frustrated at being separated from her family. Her mother, siblings, and natal home were elsewhere in a large city in a Midwestern state. The 16-year-old had come to her current Southwestern state to see her father on summer vacation the previous year. She had discussed being close with and having barbecues at the lake with relatives from her hometown, as well as family from Michigan and a small Caribbean island. She also reported that her mother had been incarcerated for "dope dealing" when she was quite young:

> "I was four. We were in the car when they got pulled over. [She was charged with] interstate dope transport."

Her father was incarcerated (in the state of the study) on an attempted murder conviction at the time of the interview. He had been "out" for a time, prompting Respondent 34's summer visit, but:

> "When this shit happened, they locked him back up... I came to visit my dad in [current city]. Then my dad's girlfriend got CPS called on her by the girlfriend's mother, and I got sent to CPS with them [youth]. Now they [CPS] need to do family therapy with my mom in [Hometown]."

For Respondent 34, a short family trip had already turned into at least a year growing up in CPS. She was away from her family and hometown, and had not seen her mother or three siblings since leaving home a year earlier for the visit. Interestingly, she had seen her father only three months prior. Since they were both "state property," she had more access to him in prison than she did to her out-of-state mother who was not incarcerated.

The fact that a summer vacation with dad can lead to the placement of a 16-year old in out-of-state custody indefinitely underscores how disruptive growing up in CPS can be in the life course trajectories of youth. This can have both negative and positive effects. On one hand, entering and staying in CPS for extended periods of time can

disrupt school attendance and progress. Respondent 34's summer vacation snowballed into an entire school year away from her home school system, which was 2000 miles away. As indicated above, being away from family can make some CPS youth feel separation anxiety, powerlessness, or frustration. Being forced to switch schools can have a similarly debasing effect on CPS youth. On the other hand, growing up in CPS could make school attendance steadier through residential stability and professional oversight. This is especially true considering the vast economic and social resources of the state relative to individual marginalized families.

Further, considering CPS as a life course event suggests that exposure to prosocial adults in the system can provide CPS youth with access to formal and informal role models and mentors over time (Erickson, McDonald, and Elder, 2009). However, the ways in which CPS youth and other marginalized youth engage with those opportunities is not well understood (Sperry and Widom, 2013; Horan and Widom, 2015). How those opportunities are provided by public sources like CPS, and parochial sources like the AMO remains an important, but understudied facet of social control (Bazemore and Erbe, 2004). The role of social support in youth development, particularly with regard to total institutions such as CPS and other forms of juvenile incarceration is therefore at best only loosely defined, particularly in criminology. In the Theater Camp study, respondents were asked about school, mentorship, and the AMO. Those themes are collectively referred to as "social support in CPS" and are detailed in the following section, from the perspectives of CPS youth themselves.

Social Support in CPS. This section draws on heavily Bazemore and Erbe (2004) which proposed integrating social control and social support to better understand

the process of post-incarceration offender reintegration. In the context of prison and reentry, they proposed considering control and support in terms of informal and formal iterations. They focused on informal iterations of support, and clarified two system-level types of informal social support: private and parochial. Private social support is provided (to whatever extent) by "families and extended families" (p. 39). Parochial social support comes from community groups such as the AMO. The Theater Camp study therefore allowed for an extension of Bazemore and Erbe's theorization. For youth growing up in CPS, almost all applications of control and support are mediated directly or indirectly by the formal structures of the state-run CPS system. Once CPS youth have completed risk/needs assessments and behavioral evaluations, they are generally placed in a more stable residential setting (i.e. moved from a shelter to a group home). At that point, the process of growing up in CPS begins in earnest.

"Settling in" to growing up in CPS system involves participating with both formal (e.g. school) and informal (e.g. "natural" mentors) sources of social control and support (Greeson et al., 2015; Thompson, Greeson, and Brunsink, 2016). These sources are not just private (bio-family and self) and parochial (non-profit service providers). CPS custody also involves public sources of control and support by way of CPS policy and localized staff practices. For instance, growing up in CPS often involves switching schools after a gap in attendance. Further, youth in CPS grow up with disrupted family relationships and restricted access to natal families and kinship networks. The unstable and unhealthy home environments that characterized the lives of Theater Camp respondents prior to CPS placement suggest that disruption may be in CPS youth' best

interest. But what (or more to the point, who) should replace those dysfunctional family relationships with stable, healthy adult relationships remains unclear and loosely defined.

For youth growing up in CPS, any prosocial adult/child relationships must be developed either formally by CPS (formal mentorship) or informally between the CPS youth and a willing and able adult they encounter while growing up in CPS (natural mentorship; Greeson et al., 2015; Thompson, Greeson, Brunsink, 2016). Very little is known about mentorship in the broader population. Even less is known about what mentorship means to CPS youth, bond formation between mentors and protégés in CPS, and the social support networks of youth as they make the dual transition from childhood in state custody to adulthood in the community. But long-term, caring relationships (i.e. natural mentorship) and durable social support networks have been demonstrated to be effective protective factors over the life course, particularly for maltreated youth such as those who end up in CPS (Horan and Widom, 2015; Sperry and Widom; Widom, Horan, and Brzustowicz, 2015).

The Theater Camp study was an ideal opportunity to explore these life course processes from the perspective of youth growing up in CPS, and ostensibly participating with multiple forms of mentorship, public social control, and parochial social support. To that end, respondents were asked about their experiences with and perceptions of teachers and school; mentors and mentorship; and the AMO responsible for the Theater Camp program. In sum, respondents discussed self-advocating, switching schools, needing additional help from teachers, and self-advocating. Most did not report currently working with a formal or natural mentor, and many discussed not needing role models or being independent. The narratives of CPS youth who had experience working with a mentor,

and their perceptions of parochial social support were informative regarding what CPS youth might need from a natural mentor, or a parochial social support agency. With that in mind, the following section presents the narratives from the Theater Camp study regarding school, mentorship, and the AMO.

School Engagement and CPS. Profound challenges to continuity in school attendance have been identified for youth growing up in CPS (Clemens et al., 2017; Skyles, Smithgall, and Howard, 2007; Smithgall, Jarpe-Ratner, and Walker, 2010). Overall, the narratives from the Theater Camp study suggest respondents perceived their public-school teachers favorably, with some common critiques. A few discussed extended gaps in attendance or problems engaging with school and teachers. But one Theater Camp participant stood out regarding her engagement with school. Respondent 23 discussed self-advocating to remain in the school she was attending when she entered CPS:

> "I am in 10th grade, taking 11th grade classes. Youth that are older than me, but in the same grade [as me], are dumb. I am in AP classes, and set to graduate early. I don't let CPS get in the way. I am my own caseworker. They wanted me to make me change schools but I wanted to stay in [school district]. I got myself transport to the school. I like my school. I got *invited* to [that school] for softball."

Perhaps predictably, this narrative came from Respondent 23, who had boasted that her actual caseworker had nicknamed Respondent 23 "Lady Boss" for her penchant for self-advocacy.

All CPS youth are not that effective and steadfast in their self-advocacy. In fact, Respondent 36 discussed missing the same school in which Respondent 23 had fought to remain:

> (R36): "[My current school is] a new school, so. But I liked my last school, [names school]. The teachers were nice and understanding."
>
> [Author]: Did they know about CPS?
>
> (R36): "Yes, my teacher and I talked about a field trip. I told my teacher I was in CPS so I needed to ask my gramma for money [to pay for the field trip]. But my teacher got me a scholarship to go. Ever since then, we would always talk."

Teachers are not necessarily aware when their students are growing up in CPS custody. The narratives from the Theater Camp study illustrate the stigma, role shift, and identity management that characterize growing up in CPS. Broaching the subject with teachers can easily be perceived as a daunting, risky, and perhaps unnecessarily personal task by some CPS youth. This is especially true since divulging that one is in CPS custody often invokes some version of the question "for what?" In other words, divulging CPS status to teachers (or anyone else) therefore generally involves not only admitting that one's parents are deficient, but also explaining how that deficiency led to one's status as a ward of the state.

Informing a teacher about CPS status is therefore an emotional investment for a CPS youth in any context. Navigating state custody and normal school activities like field trips and fundraisers often requires CPS youth and their teachers to collaborate to make informal arrangements. Once a level of trust has been established with a teacher, walking away from that investment can leave a CPS youth feeling disconnected. Respondent 24 discussed her concerns about starting over at a new school in the upcoming fall, after 2-year gap in attendance:

> **"**I've been out [of school] for 2 years, so I'm going to meet all new ones [teachers]. I am scared they will think I am stupid. I missed 8th grade so I don't know anything." (R24)

Importantly, she had been in CPS custody for almost a year, and had been at the same group home for that entire time. That may be ample time and stability to determine and enact an educational plan. But for some adolescents in CPS and their caseworkers "the lines between non-enrollment and non-attendance become blurred" through previous academic struggles, residential instability, and behavioral problems (Smithgall et al., 2010, p. 14).

In other words, CPS custody does not happen in a vacuum. Some pre-CPS characteristics of youth' life course pathways (e.g. school attendance and performance) continue to shape their time in CPS. In short, some CPS youth have struggled with school attendance and performance for years before entering CPS. In addition to child safety and psychological treatment, CPS must also manage educational trajectories, but in that matrix, school may take a relative back seat. Still, over 100 years after the child savers established juvenile courts the modern, state-sanctioned, total institution of CPS is unable to link some of their wards with schools after 12 months in custody. More broadly, the idea that some youth growing up in CPS do not regularly attend school certainly casts doubt on the viability of Sampson's (2016) concept of social control "nudges" at least at the macro-level.

In contrast to the "Lady Boss" (Respondent 23) who was actively engaged in self-advocacy and "being her own caseworker," some CPS youth afforded little regard to school, and took a more *laissez-faire* approach to their cases and caseworkers. Respondent 29 had been in CPS for almost a year. She was 15 years old, and reported not knowing whether she was enrolled for fall, nor if she was on track to graduate on time (at

age 18). When asked about her teachers and what she thought of school, Respondent 29 answered:

> "I can't judge them [teachers], school is fun. Sports, socialize. [School] lets me analyze different kinds of people, so when I'm older I can tell [between] good and bad people."

Respondent 29's school narrative underscores the reservations many CPS youth have about participating fully in prosocial institutions while growing up in CPS. She did however suggest that she would like to play varsity soccer if and when she got to high school. How that would happen, and to what extent it would require more investment on the part of the respondent remained to be determined.

Eight respondents reported not being enrolled in school for the upcoming semester. One of them, Respondent 18 was planning to take the General Education Test (GED) when he turned eighteen years old (he was seventeen at the time of the interview). He was an intelligent young man who expressed an interest in neuroplasticity, CBT and DBT (dialectical behavioral therapy, which was designed to address shortcomings in CBT). He described teachers as:

> "…provocative sometimes - they try to get psychological. Try to tell me about emotions and heart, but emotions come from the brain."

Two other unenrolled respondents reported according very little importance to school. One said simply that they had not liked any of their teachers: "they rude." She had been in CPS for over 2 years, and was currently living in a shelter. The other (Respondent 14) was more magnanimous about the idea of schooling, but critical of what she saw as pedestrian pedagogy:

> "Without education, you can't get nowhere [in life]. But teachers are boring and book-addicted!"

Respondent 14 was seventeen at the time of the interview, and not enrolled in school. She had been in CPS since she was thirteen and pregnant when she was placed in a group home for sex-trafficked girls. She also reported winning a fistfight while in custody, and just 4 months from a full-term pregnancy.

Personal histories such as Respondent 14's provide one explanation for why some youth may not engage well with school while growing up in CPS. CPS youth have many more life-altering considerations and stressors than youth growing up outside of CPS custody including acute trauma, mental health disorders, family disruption, residential instability, and parental abandonment, death, incarceration, and deportation (Smithgall, 2010). Several respondents had mixed narratives regarding school and teachers that acknowledged the benefit of good teachers, and some characteristics of bad ones. Like Respondent 14, Respondent 37 struggled with the curricula with which she had been presented in the past. The latter noted that from her perspective, teachers were:

> "Not all that bad, but I can't learn well with some teachers. I need step-by-step instructions, and to talk about stuff a lot, so it will stick in my head."

Respondent 32 had a similar viewpoint on teachers: "good ones give me more help and be more specific." She reported school was not important to her at all, and that when she was in school, her grades had been Ds and Es.

Two respondents who were not enrolled in school both reported that teachers had informally helped them navigate their lives with bio-family prior to CPS. Respondent 31 had a teacher that would bring her food, until her expulsion from her previous school. Respondent 15 noted regarding her teachers at her previous school:

> "They [were] nice because they knew what happened at my house. Teachers helped me stay after at school to avoid going home."

These two narratives illustrate the important role that informal relationships with adults can play in the lives of abused or neglected youth outside of CPS. But the benefits of such relationships only gain in importance as youth grow up in CPS with limited access to their natal families and the wider community. As a formalized vehicle for control and support, school is one common source for CPS youth to develop trusting relationships with supportive adults. But helping youth in custody develop supportive relationships with adults in the community is another way CPS programming could help develop healthy life course outcomes (Thompson, Greeson, and Brunsink, 2016). To that end, there are several privately-run programs that link CPS youth with prosocial adults (Brady et al., 2017; Goldner, 2015; Huebner et al., 2018; Osterling and Hines, 2006).

Many private (and some public) programs that link CPS youth with responsible adults are primarily staffed by volunteers. For instance, court-sponsored (i.e. public) CASA programs (Court Appointed Special Advocate) assign a volunteer to a single child's case. The CASA then serves formally as a pseudo-parent to provide guidance to the client and advocate for the best interest of the client in court. Informally, CASAs also help ensure their case does not "fall through the cracks" between under-funded CPS agencies, over-docketed courts, and the sundry risks and needs associated with bio-parents. Privately-run "mentorship" programs link CPS (and other "at risk") youth with responsible adults for extended periods so that the two can form a personal and supportive relationship. Big Brothers and Big Sisters (BBBS) is the archetype for this form of private mentorship service (Brady, Dolan, and Canavan, 2017). BBBS works to

link prosocial adults ("Bigs") with youth ("Littles") in need of support. The shape that support takes is left largely up to the interests of the pair and the needs of the Little. The term of mentorship is indefinite, and sometimes lasts for years.

The AMO's "Weekly Mentor" program is similar to the BBBS model with a few differences. First, in the Weekly Mentor program, the mentor/protégé ratio is not one "Big" to one "Little", but two co-mentors to about ten CPS youth in a group home or shelter. The resident lists at group homes tend to experience less turnover than shelters. Over time, weekly mentors at both group homes and shelters develop relationships with staff and clients. Second, the mentorship programs implemented by the AMO are all loosely-centered on creative arts like writing, painting, and performing. Third, the duration of mentorship is limited, and roughly aligns with fall and spring semesters of school, and summer breaks. Often, weekly mentors re-sign up to stay at the same location for several consecutive terms. "Natural" mentor/protégé relationships often evolve, to varying degrees, over time and multiple events such as Theater Camp, Weekly Mentorship, and Youth Leadership Team events for youth who have aged out, but still participate with the AMO as volunteers.

But the Weekly Mentorship and BBBS programs both connect volunteer mentors and protégés for extended periods. Both programs, like other mentorship programs, endeavor to put youth in contact with responsible adults from the community. But what they do, and how they do it, must be socially constructed between the respective Bigs and Littles (Greeson and Bowen, 2008; Greeson et al., 2015). This is particularly true of deep, long-term, supportive relationships that sometimes form between mentors and protégés. Stated clearly, very little is known about bond development *as a process* (Hirschi, 1969).

Even less is known about how *synthetic bonds* might be forged between youth growing up in CPS and the communities into which they will someday transition to adulthood (Sulimani-Aidan, 2016).

These are glaring exclusions in criminology considering the central role played by human interaction in virtually any "general" theory of crime or delinquency. Control, learning, and strain theories (and biological and psychological approaches to understanding crime) all rely on human interaction to transmit values and resources.[39] Much of that thinking about human development in criminology is premised on the centrality of the natal family. But for youth growing up in CPS, the role of the natal family is played by the state. In such cases where the natal family is not available or able to care for their children to the satisfaction of the state, prosocial bonds must be synthetically developed. Further, this must either be accomplished formally by the state (i.e. public social support), or the informally by the community (i.e. private and parochial social support) Bazemore and Erbe (2004). Clear and colleagues (2011) have argued that increasing levels of *informal/community-based* social support and control (e.g. the AMO) reduces the burdens on (and need for) *formal/state-sanctioned* social support and control (e.g. CPS).

Bazemore and Erbe referred to volunteer- and community-based mentorship programs as "parochial social support" (2004, p. 41), and Shireman has detailed the role of volunteer-based programs and agencies to get CPS services "up to scale" (2003, p. 103). Many of the respondents in the Theater Camp study had extensive experience

[39] In the case of biological approaches to crime and delinquency, human interactions generate genetic methylization profiles and neuroplastic brain development (Burt and Simons, 2014).

participating with the AMO in previous Theater Camps and various other events. For others, Theater Camp 2015 was their first foray into the AMO's services. To better understand social support while growing up in CPS, the remainder of this section details the narratives about what mentorship meant to respondents, and their experiences with and perceptions of both mentorship generally, and the AMO that produced Theater Camp 2015 specifically.

What Even Is Mentorship in CPS? Responses regarding mentorship suggested 3 basic (and not necessarily mutually exclusive) narratives: "I don't know;" "someone to 'be there;'" and "someone to have fun with." Respondents were asked about, and some discussed conflict with mentors. Some were currently awaiting an assigned mentor from their caseworker, while others had developed mentors organically. Together with the narratives below about the AMO, these mentorship narratives illustrate what social support "looks like" at the ground level, from the perspective of youth growing up in CPS. Several respondents discussed some form of being a mentor to themselves or not needing mentorship, a phenomenon described by Samuels and Pryce as "survivalist self-reliance" in youth aging-out of CPS (2008). Self-advocacy and "being your own caseworker" are effective strategies if they can be achieved. At the same time, not accepting help (or conveying that help is not needed or welcome) can also hinder the development of social support networks for young adults emerging from CPS custody.

Consistent with the concept of survivalist self-reliance, some respondents discussed little interest in, or knowledge of what mentorship even was:

> "Tomás told me to think about this. I don't know - someone you can talk to and they can show you a good path." (R17)

Tomás was a 36-year-old teaching poet, an ex-gang member from a formerly dangerous, now gentrified local neighborhood, and longtime AMO volunteer. At Theater Camp, he was workshopping poetry with the campers. Over the course of two weeks, the group developed the poems, stories, and characters into a 2-hour stage presentation. In the process, he helped youth dig into concepts they may not have not previously considered, or talked about publicly. More generally, Tomás works to develop "brave spaces" where youth can express themselves and practice self-advocacy in a supportive environment. Several respondents mentioned Tomás in their discussions of mentors. He is a mature, masculine, and caring man who mixes the 90s-era hip-hop culture of his generation (e.g. Outkast raps as articulation exercises) with the emerging musical cultures of his students (e.g. examining bar structure and theme abstraction in J. Cole songs).

Tomás' social currency with CPS youth grants him a level of trust with the youth with whom he works that may be hard for more formal agents of social control like CPS caseworkers or teachers (Sulimani-Aidan, 2016). In criminological terms, he provides parochial social support to CPS youth through community partnership with the AMO. Shireman (2003) identified these localized community partnerships as an important source of services for youth in CPS (p. 102). But what that looks like at the ground level is less well understood (Kobulsky et al., 2018; Raposa, Dietz, and Rhodes, 2017). Another respondent also struggled to define mentorship. She spoke in the context of public social support, by way of a therapist with whom she did not connect, and one with whom she later did (based on shared ethnic culture and taste in snack foods):

> "I don't know. My therapist said, 'it's ok to express our feelings…' I got rid of her. Now my caseworker got me a Hispanic therapist. She is better. We eat hot Cheetos." (R29)

These narratives suggest that even for CPS youth who are not clear on what mentorship is or should be, having trusted, responsible adults with whom to explore life course decisions and process events is an important resource that is often lacking as youth grow up in CPS.

In contrast to those who mentioned they "didn't know" many respondents articulated more nuanced perspectives of what mentorship is or should be:

> "Someone who shows you not what's right or wrong, but someone who helps you get what you need before you leave [CPS] or before you have to do it for yourself. (R24)

Others also made distinctions between authoritarian figures like caseworkers and therapists and what they considered mentors:

> "[A mentor is] someone that listens to you and not go against what you say, but also give you advice in a situation." (R37)

Respondent 37 elaborated that she did not feel safe or comfortable being completely honest with service providers who had authority over her and perhaps a duty or willingness to report some information to the state:

> "Other caseworkers, my CASA, and independent living specialists have given me advice along the years, but I can't talk to them too much because staff can use that against me."

For non-CPS youth, psychological therapy can provide a private source for information and communication from outside the family. But in CPS, even the therapist is beholden to report to the state by way of caseworkers and progress evaluations. Further, while rebellion against natal parents is a natural component of maturation, in CPS that rebellion amounts to failure to comply with the state.

Respondents also discussed mentors as someone who could help the fill in the gaps left after removal from family, and while growing up in CPS. Many talked about someone to "help;" "guide;" or "talk with" them. A key theme was a nonjudgmental adult who could contextualize life choices that the child ultimately had to make alone. Given the natural tension between the state and natal families, youth growing up in CPS are forced to navigate decisions made by the state, and to make some important decisions without family input. Some decisions made by youth growing up in CPS maybe in direct opposition to the beliefs and values of their bio-families.

> "When I was like seven, a girl in her twenties [was my mentor]. We went to the science center together once, but that was the last time I saw her. My mom wouldn't let me go [anymore], because she said she heard mentors could steal youth and take them out of state."

Respondent 36's mother was from Mexico, and it is possible that the mother's culture contributed to this "protective parenting" style (Domènech Rodriguez, Donovick, and Crowley, 2009). But regardless of the origins of her mother's opposition to mentorship, Respondent 36's narrative demonstrates the tension that can emerge between the prosocial expectations of the state, and the wishes of bio-parents.

Other respondents characterized mentors as someone who could help with figuring out their pasts, presents, and futures over time:

> "A person who's gonna be there to help you understand what's going on around you." (R23)

Respondents thought of a mentor as someone who:

> "[Talks to you] when you're down, giving insight on choices" (R18)
>
> "Tries to help in ways you don't understand, take you away from places." (R3)

> "Spend[s] time, especially for those without parents, to make them feel normal" (R7)

> "Take[s] me out, show me the world isn't so bad. Help me express [myself], teach me skills" (R19)

Whereas CPS custody accomplishes its ostensible goal of "child saving" in the short term by removing maltreated youth from unhealthy homes, the state struggles to provide organic, prosocial adult/child relationships for youth growing up in CPS. But those relationships can have life-long protective effects (Horan and Widom, 2015; Widom et al., 2015). Volunteer mentorship (i.e. parochial social support) is one way that gap may be filled.

Just "being there" was also an important component of mentorship narratives. For good reason, the state's focus as youth grow up in CPS is to limit harm from the bio-family, and to reduce the negative effects of being maltreated. But youth development involves more than just limiting "bad" behaviors. Some respondents talked about mentors as someone with whom they could "hang out" and have fun:

> "[You can] look forward to them, lean back on them, have fun, be myself" (R5)

> "Keep me busy, have fun, do new things. I never turn [that] down!" (R21)

> "[A mentor] hangs out with you, takes you places, have fun." (R32)

> "Some are [there] to go out with, have fun with and they teach you stuff you should know." (R33)

It may sound childish for a CPS youth to think of mentorship as a source for fun. But trusting, prosocial relationships are not easy to come by in CPS. And with the focus so heavily placed on limiting bad behaviors and thought patterns, having fun in a safe (and non-CPS) environment can be a welcome respite from the levity of state custody.

These narratives were based on open-ended questions about "mentorship" that left the definition of the word to the respondent. The stories they tell are therefore informative regarding what CPS youth might need from mentors, and offer ground-level insight into social bonding *as a* process. Those narratives suggest that the relationships that develop between adults and youth growing up in CPS are a two-way interaction. For instance, several respondents discussed withholding information from official adults like staff and CASAs for fear of reprisal, or not having anyone they trusted to act in their best interest. Impartial volunteers from the community (i.e. separate from both CPS and bio-family) represent an opportunity for trusting, but responsible mentor/protégé relationships to evolve (Cheng, 2018).

Organizing those opportunities, determining best-practices, and evaluating outcomes are far less straightforward concerns. The AMO that produced Theater Camp has been conducting volunteer-based art mentorship with CPS youth in the same state for over 20 years with that goal. The next round of questions in the Theater Camp study pertained to the AMO directly, and asked about respondents' experiences with and perceptions of the AMO. The responses are discussed in the following section.

The Arts Mentorship Organization and Growing Up in CPS. Informal mentorship is one component of parochial social support (Bazemore and Erbe, 2004). Shireman (2003) has noted the important roles played by non-CPS service providers and organizations in programming for youth growing up in CPS. The AMO that produces the Theater Camp program in the current study is a comprehensive example of these concepts in action. The AMO is a privately funded, non-profit, volunteer-based organization that provides art-based mentorship and programming to CPS youth and

marginalized public schools. The Theater Camp study therefore provided an opportunity to explore one lesser-studied aspect of social support in an applied context, and from the perspective of clients. These narratives should be considered with a level of scrutiny. It is possible that any negative opinions of the AMO may have been filtered for social desirability. Again, the study took place during a 2-week AMO program (Theater Camp), and many respondents (and the author) had been longtime participants with the AMO.

Some respondents discussed "drama" among campers at Theater Camp, and some expressed suspicion at the motives of some of campers and the AMO. But in general, the narratives about the AMO were positive. Given the longstanding relationship between the author and the AMO, and with several of the campers at Theater Camp, "influence bias" or social desirability bias were constant possibilities. A primary concern for the AMO during the Theater Camp study was developing quantifiable metrics for success that were not based on simplistic client surveys. The problem with their client surveys had been that there was very little variation in responses, which were almost uniform in their high appraisals of the AMO. The author worked during this time as a volunteer board member on the AMO's program evaluation committee, and helped design evaluation metrics clustered around the development of resilience in clients. As an early step in that process, the Theater Camp study allowed the author to probe more deeply into the experiences and perceptions respondents had regarding the AMO.

As such, the following narratives are not presented as evidence that the AMO or Theater Camp are "good" or effective at their goals of "mentorship," "art-based therapy," and "community." Rather, the goal is to explore *how* this group of CPS youth experience the services of one local parochial social support agency while growing up in state

custody. Shireman (2003) noted that private social service agencies have become an important component in getting treatment "up to scale" by making services more broadly available to CPS youth than overworked and underfunded state systems could alone. Recent research suggests that CPS administrators are aware of, and participating with the trend (Kobulsky, Cage, and Celeste, 2018). Further, parochial social support is an important, but understudied aspect of social control theory (and therefore life course criminology). The following narratives about the AMO therefore offer some unique perspectives about the role that the parochial social support might serve in the life course pathways of youth growing up in CPS.

One respondent illustrated the delineation between the relative stability CPS provides (*public* social support), and the opportunities for interpersonal relationships that can be provided by *parochial* social support:

> "You go to a group home or foster care, you feel OK. But no friends. [The AMO] is like a way to make friends outside of CPS and the group home. CPS gives me a home, but [the AMO] gives me friends." (R25)

Respondent 25 had been in CPS for over a year, but had been moved to a new group home only a month prior to the interview. That new location had a Weekly Mentorship program in progress through the AMO, which is how Respondent 25 got linked with the AMO and ended up at Theater Camp.

> "When I first got to the group home, and they [weekly AMO mentors] came, they seemed like family. It blew me away how cool they were."

Respondent 25 had also struggled with her behavior during the Weekly Mentorship program, and was surprised at the non-punitive nature of her relationship with her AMO mentors (even if she received an IR for her indiscretion).

> "Once, we had a party at the end of the semester [mentorship term]. I stole and ate the frosting from the cookies. The [AMO] mentors yelled at me for taking it. I got wrote up, and then I apologized. That was the end of the term."

In the author's experience, mentors with the AMO are not trained to "yell at" or discipline youth, or to report mild misbehavior to staff. Instead of "rules," AMO mentors work to establish "expectations" of mutual respect. Regardless of the reaction by the mentors in this case, Respondent 25 was welcomed to Theater Camp, and did not seem to harbor ill will toward her former mentors in the weekly program. She noted: "I don't know why they didn't put me in therapy!"

Other respondents also described the AMO in familial terms. This suggests that volunteer, community-based parochial social support systems may help fill the vacant role of bio-families for some CPS youth. For many Theater Camp respondents, the family environment of the AMO was expressed through 2 themes: acceptance and support. Respondent 12's back-and-forth with the author during the interview was illustrative of the dual forces at work for many respondents:

> (R12): "I love it [the AMO]. They help lots of youth – give them new outlets. Like for me. I one hundred percent was not gonna come [to Theater Camp], but I got depressed, and decided to come."
>
> [Author]: "Why?"
>
> (R12): "Because they are supportive. They *care*. That is new to me. I want a family. But [AMO] is as close as I can get right now."
>
> [Author]: "How does [AMO] help you?"
>
> (R12): "Positive outlook. Using my story to help other kids."
>
> [Author]: "Are you especially close to any other kids that participate in [AMO]?"

> (R12): "Yes. They accept me, and know my story. They don't treat me different because of my past. No judgment. We [CPS youth] are all similar. They have all done bad things [too]."

Respondent 12 had been participating in AMO events for over two years at the time of the interview. Later in the discussion, she estimated she had between fifty and sixty friends who also participated with the AMO including volunteers and fellow campers. From a theoretical perspective, these narratives shed light on the intersection of public, parochial, and peer support for youth growing up in CPS. From a policy and practice perspective, these narratives suggest that developing a "community of CPS youth" organized around some goal (e.g. a theater production) may be a viable and productive path for CPS agencies, and private service providers.

Along with the levity of child abuse, trauma, and growing up in CPS, developing "brave spaces" for youth to be creative, honest, silly, vulnerable, and supported are central to the mission of the AMO. Several respondents talked about the AMO generally, and Theater Camp specifically as a place to "be themselves;" "express themselves;" and to "tell their stories." Respondent 12 credited the AMO with increased self-confidence:

> "Ever since [AMO] I am much more comfortable with myself. I could talk in front of any group of people now. Made me more independent. I try things myself."

Several respondents also discussed feeling liberated by the collaborative context of Theater Camp and the supportive group of peers, teaching artists and volunteers:

> "[Theater Camp is] home. People like me [here]. Not like school. They don't understand. All I wish to do in life, I can do here. I can be anything I want here. Out there, people look at you different. If I dance, they would look at me weird; would say it's stupid. Dancing, singing, poetry" (R3)

Respondent 4 was a 15-year-old girl who had referred to teachers as "douchebags." She reported not feeling "especially close" to any adults at Theater Camp, but also reported friendships with between 15 and 20 fellow campers. Respondent 4 found the value of the AMO through peer camaraderie and the art forms themselves:

> (R4): "I can be myself around [people like me]. Everyone understands and has been through the same thing."
>
> [Author]: How does [AMO] help you?
>
> (R4): "Expression, coping skills. Poetry helps anger, sadness. Dancing too."

These narratives underscore the idea that CPS youth often come from backgrounds that may not be supportive of creative expression, and may find levels of comfort and agency in supportive and evocative environments such as Theater Camp.

Respondent 28 had been in Tribal CPS since she was six months old. She had lived on the reservation before the tribal authorities contracted her case to the state system at age 15. She had been placed at her current group home in the 30 days prior to the interview. Despite a friendship with one veteran client of the AMO that went "way back," She did not know many volunteers, and only a couple of fellow campers:

> "I feel safe, but I don't know anybody. [But] they are here to help us. We should take the chance and let them help us."

When prompted to elaborate on how the AMO helped, she discussed how such programs could help youth move beyond their comfort-zones. She also explained the relevance of that process for youth growing up between Anglo-American and Native American culture:

> (R28): "[The AMO] helps kids come out of their shell… I was on the rez from [age] nine to fifteen. Natives try to not be shy all the time, and when we have problems we work together and talk it out. Tribes try to get kids with problems to

talk about their problems. Elders tell kids to 'open up' about abuse, drugs, alcohol."

[Author]: "Do you miss the rez?"

(R28): "I got made fun of for being 'too white.' But I just make good choices."

This narrative demonstrates the social disjuncture that can emerge when youth are removed from their natal homes, neighborhoods, and cultures. The case therefore illustrates the concept of "juvenile justice purgatory" that many youth find themselves in. Respondent 28 was existentially caught between Tribal, United States, and CPS cultures and laws.

More generally, CPS youth often come from backgrounds characterized by poverty, family disruption, and parental maltreatment. But CPS treatment and behavioral training is geared toward mainstream, Western, middle-class values (Fader, 2013). This disjuncture can cause tension between a CPS youth's natal culture and that of the state. That tension can also extend across juvenile justice systems such as Tribal, criminal, welfare and different state systems (Abrams and Terry, 2017). One Theater Camp respondent was in a CPS system that was not in her home state. Still, the state where she was held in CPS would not release her to her home state until "counseling" classes could be administered (across the country) with her bio-mother in her home state. Partly to escape this tension altogether, Respondent 28 did not plan on returning to the rez, nor remaining in her current state. Her plan for her future residence was as clear as her timeline to accomplish it. She planned to leave at her first opportunity: "Seattle. Right out of high school."

Before the following section turns to the findings from the Theater Camp study regarding "(someday) exiting CPS," Respondent 28's final comment bears mentioning. In the context of the previous chapters and sections, her short comment at the end of the interview has implications for criminological research, juvenile justice policy, trauma-informed practice, and youth growing up in CPS:

> "Kids like me need a chance to tell their stories." (R28)

Taken together, the theoretical arguments made about life course criminology and the "CPS Paradox" could benefit greatly from stories like hers. Similarly, the legal and political underpinnings of the juvenile justice system writ large could benefit from an increased consideration of parochial social support, particularly through volunteer organizations and art-based mentorship.

The individual-level benefits of telling one's story in a supportive setting described by respondents in the Theater Camp study suggest that having supportive "brave spaces" where youth can express themselves without reprisal may help youth process trauma (Coleman and Macintosh, 2015; Harden et al., 2015; Palidofsky and Stolbach, 2012). Evidence is developing that similar programming may help adults process trauma as well, particularly for female criminal offenders and victims (Cohen and Wilson, 2017; Merrill and Frigon, 2015). Those same brave spaces can also to be opportunities to develop peer/peer and mentor/protégé relationships. Respondent 10 indicated that for the last 2 summers, the AMO's camp series had given him the opportunity to:

> "Be brave, learn, connect with people. Being a leader is not as hard as I thought it would be."

> [Author]: How important is [AMO] in your life?
>
> (R10): "Really important. My facility is locked down. [AMO] lets me meet people. Comforting, supportive people. I was not raised to be open, [AMO] helps. It helps me feel like a person after all I've been through."

In the context of prisoner reentry, Maruna (2001) referred to a similar process as uncovering a "real me" independent from the total institutions from which people emerge such as prison or CPS.

But in contrast to Maruna's adult ex-inmates attempting to redeem themselves of past transgressions, respondents in the Theater Camp study were children in state custody. As developing adolescents, they cannot "reach back" very far to mine for moral victories. CPS youth are, by design and definition, still working on who their "real selves" are. The Theater Camp narratives reflected this concept at all three stages of CPS involvement: entering, growing up in, and [someday] exiting CPS.

These expressive experiences also help campers develop "soft skills" that are desired by employers, and difficult to teach in occupational settings (e.g. public speaking, teamwork, independent thinking). From the perspective of youth growing up in CPS, parochial social support organizations provide a valuable source of opportunities for relationships with similarly-situated peers for friendship. These implications are beyond the scope of the current study, but they are each deserving of future analysis within criminology. This is especially true as criminologists are beginning to recognize many of the same legal and moral inconsistencies in juvenile justice uncovered in the Theater Camp study (Feld, 2017). While children grow up in CPS, the state has full custody and broad control of CPS youth's life course trajectories. Still, research suggests that

spending time in CPS is not a protective factor over the life course, but a risk factor for negative outcomes (Berger et al., 2009; Maclean et al., 2016).

The narratives from the Theater Camp study run contrary to mainstream conceptualizations of social control over the life course in modern criminology (Sampson and Laub, 1995; Laub and Sampson, 2003). This is particularly true of Sampson's (2016) discussion of "nudges" imposed by formal sources of social control such as parole officers. Simply put, if institutional social control could nudge people into prosocial perceptions and behaviors, the youth who grow up in CPS should be consistently and effectively "treated" by the time they age out. Given the neuroplasticity of the juvenile brain (Dahl et al., 2018) youth in CPS should be more amenable than adult parolees to reform. Further, the protective effect of nudging should be observably stronger over longer periods in CPS and earlier entrance dates. But the opposite is the case. Rather, the narratives above suggest that client participation (i.e. "agency") plays an important role in informal relationships such as those between mentors and protégés, as well as formal relationships between CPS caseworkers, therapists, staff, and the clients they serve.

All these group processes come the fore as CPS youth get closer to (someday) exiting CPS. Some grow up in CPS under case plans with the goal of reunification with family before turning 18. Others plan to be emancipated from the system after turning 18, and entering the community as a legal adult. Some CPS youth plan to stay in their home state, while other plan to go "anywhere but [here]." In the following section, respondents discuss their long-term goals for their lives, their plans for making those goals happen, and the role models they use (or do not use) as examples on which to base those plans.

CHAPTER 7

EXITING CPS: BIG GOALS, NO PLANS, & "(ANTI-)ROLE MODELS"

Many of the Theater Camp respondents reported specific goals for their futures, but few had detailed plans or active support in achieving those goals. In general, respondents discussed ambitious goals and expectations for their futures. A few had very clear plans for making those goals come to fruition. Most had little to no plan at all. A few discussed having someone they "looked up to" or upon whom they modeled themselves. Those narratives tended to be very clear, if not very detailed. One of the most common responses included some variation of "I am my own role model." Several discussed seeking role models as a fool's errand. That sentiment is not likely something intentionally *taught* to CPS youth, but something they independently *learn* as they grow up with the state serving as their parents. "My own role model" narratives involved proactively and consciously forging independent pathways through life without emulating anyone else. This process in adolescent CPS youth has been referred to as "survivalist self-reliance" (Samuels and Pryce, 2008).

Survivalist self-reliance can be helpful to CPS youth as they navigate the system and advocate for their own futures. But as CPS youth exit CPS their bio-families may not provide adequate social networks to support successful transition into adulthood. In those cases, parochial social support and natural mentorship play a more prominent role in the ongoing development of adults (Greeson et al., 2015; Horan and Widom, 2015; Sperry and Widom, 2013. Thompson, Greeson, Brunsink, 2016). Some Theater Camp respondents used their parents as role models of what not to become, and described their future selves as a direct negation of their bio-parents or families. Those respondents

talked about being "the opposite of their parents." In sum, the Theater Camp respondents reported optimistic views of their futures, but few had clear plans for realizing those futures. Their narratives about role models suggest that most have little faith in attempting to emulate others. This section is therefore organized around three main themes: "big goals for the future;" "(virtually) no plans to achieve those goals;" and lack of mentorship, or "(anti-)role models."

Big Goals for the Future. Perhaps predictably, several of the adolescent Theater Camp respondents discussed going far away from their current Southwestern state, and having successful careers. They mentioned moving to big cities in the United States like Chicago and New York, and other countries like Brazil and England. One respondent planned to join the Marines and travel the world. Many discussed entering the helping professions, especially in medical and/or artistic fields. The future Marine (Respondent 10) planned to be a writer and move his bio-family away after exiting CPS. Prior to entering CPS, he had been emotionally abused by his mother and physically abused by both his uncle and his brother. In fact, he reported experiencing every adverse childhood experience on the ACEs scale except sexual abuse. He reported that his uncle and mother were alcoholics, and attributed the abuse he received from his brother to the abuse his brother received from them. He noted that since being in CPS, the two siblings had developed a "good relationship."

Respondent 10 had 7 bio-siblings, and had seen his mother and siblings within the previous 2 months. But he had not seen his bio-father for 10 years. After exiting, he planned to:

> "Stay on track, not let distractions take from my goals: Finish high school, Marines, a few college degrees. [I want to study] world languages, literature, history. Convince my family to go somewhere for a new start."

In other words, Respondent 10 planned on being a savior to his bio-family and (re)establishing stability for his siblings. Respondent 10's story resonates with what Maruna referred to as "redemption scripts" used by offenders as they desist from crime after incarceration (2001). He identified redemption scripts as retroactive narratives designed to explain offenders' current crimelessness coherently to make their reform more believable to others, as well as themselves (p. 86). The process allows the narrator to "make good:"

> "The redemption script begins by establishing the goodness and conventionality of the narrator - a victim of society who gets involved in crime and drugs to achieve some sort of power over otherwise bleak circumstances. This deviance eventually becomes its own trap, however, as the narrator becomes ensnared in the vicious cycle of crime and imprisonment. Yet, with the help of some outside force, someone who 'believed in' the ex-offender, the narrator is able to accomplish what he or she was 'always meant to do.' Newly empowered, he or she now also seeks to 'give something back' to society as a display of gratitude" (Maruna, 2001, p. 87).

Again, in applying Maruna's work to CPS, nuanced differences emerge.

First, Respondent 10's narrative about someday exiting CPS suggests some CPS youth may feel compelled to redeem not only themselves, but their bio-families as well. Narratives like this aspiring Marine's are suggestive of a desire to use overachievement to overcome the social stigmas associated with coming from "bad" families and growing up as a CPS kid. Many youth have high aspirations, but relative to their normal peers, CPS youth have more ground to cover to attain them than most. In Maruna's words, their life course prognoses are "dire" as a group (2001, p. 57). Second, and in contrast to Maruna's ex-prisoners, the idea of moving far away or to a new place was expressed by

about half of the Theater Camp respondents. That group of soon-to-emerge adults may see a new place for a fresh start as more viable, or more desirable than adults with more established life course trajectories. The Theater Camp narratives suggested that by becoming successful, helping people, and (perhaps) moving to a new place, they could overcome the negative impacts of maltreatment, family disruption, and growing up in CPS. Maruna referred to similar cognitive attempts to convert a negative past into a positive future as "tragic optimism" (p. 97).

Like the redemption scripts identified by Maruna, Theater Camp narratives regarding (someday) exiting CPS reflected a widespread desire to help people. This was particularly true regarding their career goals. Respondents were not required to pick only one career goal. Rather, they were asked the open-ended question "what career do you plan on having?" The following list of career goals is therefore not mutually exclusive. The vast majority of respondents discussed some area of the helping industries as at least part of their career goals. Eleven respondents reported becoming a doctor, nurse, or other medical professional[40] as career goals. Ten included professional artist as a career goal, including singer, photographer, tattooer, fashion designer, dance teacher, and author. Eight named academic careers such as teacher, scientist, archeologist, and librarian. Five mentioned careers in criminal justice, which included criminologist, forensic analyst, FBI agent, and criminal lawyer. Only one respondent mentioned entry-level positions (fast food and grocery store) as career goals. She also mentioned "group home staff" as a possible career.

[40] In addition to doctor and nurse, respondents mentioned veterinarian, veterinarian technician, physical therapist, psychologist, and substance abuse counselor as medical field career goals.

Overall, these findings suggest Theater Camp respondents had high hopes for their future careers, and a strong desire to serve people after they (someday) exited CPS. But respondents were less clear about *how* they were going to accomplish those goals. Like Maruna's ex-offenders, the overall prognosis for life course success in the Theater Camp group is "dire" in even the most promising cases (Berger et al., 2009; Maclean et al., 2016). The military may serve as a social structure on which Respondent 10 could base his life course pathways. The training, social capital, and medical benefits may serve as a framework that can support his lofty goals over time (Laub and Sampson 2003). For CPS youth, the military offers a well-resourced total institution like CPS, but without the stigma of a failed family. In fact, CPS youth emerge from CPS well-prepared for military life, if they so choose. They all share the experience of living in communal housing; are used to living in state custody and the vagaries of governmental subsistence, and have grown up estranged (to some extent) from their bio-family and natal home.

Several respondents that had plans for accomplishing their goals mentioned college as a key component of accomplishing them. Those that did tended to acknowledge that it would involve a substantial commitment. Respondent 23 acknowledged that in her plans for after exiting CPS:

> "College. Lots of college. [Local University], then Berkeley." [For what], I really don't know. People tell me I should go around giving speeches. I'll go to [Local University] for four years, then grad school at Berkeley. Then I will decide. Maybe you can put in a good word for me."

Similar to the role that military service played in Sampson and Laub's updates of the Glueck men (1993; Laub and Sampson, 1993), college attendance may provide a much-needed social matrix on which CPS youth might anchor their own pathways through life.

In contrast to military service during World War II however, college attendance is not compulsory. For many emerging adults, the cost and reduced labor market participation associated with college attendance is prohibitive. Further, given the barriers that entering and growing up in CPS can present for educational development, making it to (and through) college may prove more difficult than most respondents had considered. One respondent did mention that "high school in the system" had hurt her chances at higher education. She also attributed some of the blame to her use of alcohol and drugs.

But beyond a few plans of military service, and a few detailed college agendas, few respondents discussed plans for the future in much detail. Even those who had the reasonably attainable and functional plan of entering college were relatively vague about what it would take. Common responses to how respondents planned to achieve their post-exit goals included nebulous terms like "hard work" and "focus" instead of narratives about working with high school guidance counselors or community-based (i.e. parochial) college preparation programs (Harris and Linder, 2018; Tierney, 2004). A few respondents had very specific plans, but most had virtually no strategy or action plan in place to get from where they were at that moment to their goals later in life.

In other words, life in CPS complicates the life course transitions of CPS youth at every turn. Familial dysfunction and separation, disruption in school attendance, and the resulting lack of role models and mentors all make planning to exit CPS a daunting task. The removal from family and school, and the relative dearth of supportive, organic relationships in CPS custody leave CPS youth to plan (or fail to plan) largely on their own. Correspondingly perhaps, many respondents in the Theater Camp study had little to no action plan at all regarding life after CPS custody. But the plans of adolescents in state

custody are both administratively feasible and salient for life course development (Hitlin and Elder, 2006; 2007).

(Virtually) No Plan of Action. The future Marine's redemption script demonstrates the "tragic optimism" Maruna identified in his reentering ex-offenders. But he had the Marines as a proposed roadmap and passport to his plans. Like the "Lady Boss," and her Berkeley-bound colleague, Respondent 10 also had detailed plans for his future, and appeared to have the intangibles (e.g. "life course agency;" see p. 67 herein) to self-advocate during the transition from childhood in state custody to adulthood in the community (or the military). But these three respondents were the exception, not the rule. Many respondents mentioned college as a framework for future success in life. But very few were taking concrete steps to follow through on that goal. Some respondents reported platitudes to explain what they would need to do such as "believing in myself" and "not let anyone get in my way." Respondent 21 reported that all she needed to do to reach her goals was to "get out of CPS."

When Respondent 30 reported no career goals other than being the first female NFL player, the author asked what she would need to do to make that goal a reality:

(R30): "Not much."

[Author, chiding]: Because you so smart?

(R30): "Yup."

The likelihood that she will accomplish this goal is not high. But this narrative demonstrates the lack of realistic planning that characterized the Theater Camp respondents' plans for (someday) exiting CPS.

The average age of Theater Camp respondents was 15 years old, which is an appropriate time to start thinking about and planning for college and careers. As a rough comparison to respondents in the Theater Camp study, the "Potholes on the Road to College" study analyzed the experiences of juniors in three "neighborhood high schools" over three years in Chicago (Roderick, Coca, and Nagaoka, 2011). They found that college culture during late adolescence was a potent factor on the road to accomplishing college aspirations:

> "Across all our analyses, the single most consistent predictor of whether students took steps toward college enrollment was whether their teachers reported that their high school had a strong college climate, that is, they and their colleagues pushed students to go to college, worked to ensure that students would be prepared, and were involved in supporting students in completing their college applications. Indeed, students who attended high schools in which teachers reported a strong college climate were significantly more likely to plan to attend a four-year school, apply, be accepted, and enroll. Importantly, having a strong college climate seemed to make the biggest difference for students with lower levels of qualifications. In addition, the college plans and behaviors of Latino students in CPS are particularly shaped by the expectations of their teachers and counselors and by connections with teachers." (Roderick et al, 2011, p. 4).

But late adolescence is also a life stage characterized by an optimism that is not always founded on sound experience and careful consideration. Hitlin and Elder identified optimism as an important element of agency in the context youth development (2007). More recent research suggests that the role of optimism and agency may work differently for girls and children of color (Williams and Merten, 2014). Yet the role of agency over the life course, and the role of optimism in the development of agency are understudied and not well understood in the social sciences. This is particularly true in criminology.

For CPS youth in the Theater Camp study, all these characteristics (race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, agency, and optimism) have unique features. As discussed at

the beginning of this chapter, as a group the respondents were characterized by a degree of "bi-ness" regarding race, ethnicity, sexuality and gender. Research suggests that black children are at higher risk for CPS attention than their white counterparts, and that Latino children have similar risk profiles, but are less likely to be placed in CPS than their non-Latino counterparts (Dettlaff and Johnson, 2011). The experience of CPS is unique for LGBTQI youth (Mitchell et al., 2015) as well as genderqueer youth (Love, 2014). Poverty also places families and their children at heightened risk for CPS involvement (Lee, 2016), and likely influences perceptions of optimism and agency in CPS youth as well (Williams and Merten, 2014).

But most importantly, CPS youth are away from their bio-families, and in the care of the state. In that context, the development of agency and optimism in CPS youth cannot be simplistically viewed as a natural process between parents, youth, and communities. Rather, the socio-legal concept of *parens patriae* and the legal doctrines of chancery law allows the state to legally terminate parental rights, and take custody of children. The moral underpinnings of those legal traditions imply that the state takes responsibility for the development of agency and optimism CPS youth, at least to the extent that those characteristics are in the child's best interest. Promoting college culture in CPS is one avenue by which the state's vast resources[41] could be leveraged to benefit young adults as they emerge from CPS. The state's resources could also be augmented

[41] A recent PBS story noted that as of December 2017, three U.S. states (California, New York, and Pennsylvania) had funding in place to help former CPS youth attend college. (https://www.pbs.org/newshour/education/these-states-are-helping-former-foster-youth-navigate-college). In some states, there are charitable trust foundations that fund college for former CPS youth.

with parochial social support initiatives designed to help CPS youth navigate the "potholes on the road to college" (Roderick et al., 2011)

Overall, CPS custody is a risk factor for negative outcomes over the life course, even net of any benefits to the child (Berger et al., 2009; Maclean et al., 2016). Still, consistent with "the Robins Paradox," not every child who grows up in CPS is doomed to a life of degradation. During years in the field, the author attended high school graduation ceremonies, helped young adults who were aging-out to get into college, and has regularly patronized local restaurants where his protégés work. But it bears mentioning here that virtually all the CPS youth with whom the author worked over the years were participants with the AMO. This means that the CPS youth from the Theater Camp interviews represent the "cream" of the CPS "crop." CPS youth with acute behavioral problems are more likely to be in secure facilities and to experience more residential placement changes (Newton, 2000). The AMO does have mentors in some of these facilities, as well as shelters which may house any manner of CPS kid. But most of the AMO's weekly mentorship programming happens in group homes which are relatively stable compared to secure facilities and shelters.

The Theater Camp program only includes CPS youth willing to commit to public performance, and from residences able to provide consistent transportation. But the characteristics of the Theater Camp group demonstrate that even the "cream of the crop" in CPS is marked by extreme levels of maltreatment, attenuated family attachment, and social struggles while growing up in state custody. The ability to overcome such barriers to positive life course outcomes is referred to in youth development research as resilience (Cicchetti, 2013). Mentorship has been suggested as an important factor in the

development of resilience. Resilience has been proposed as a central concern as CPS youth age-out from the system (Daining and DePanfilis, 2007; Yates and Grey, 2012), and a protective factor for survivors of neglect over the life course (Ben-David and Jonson-Reid, 2017).

In criminology, the role of agency, optimism, and resilience are not well understood (but see Lindegaard and Jacques, [2014] regarding agency; Lindegaard, Bernasco, and Jacques, [2015] regarding challenge; and Burt and Simons, [2012] regarding resilience). Seeking a more nuanced understanding of the life course experiences of CPS youth as they enter, grow up in, and exit CPS would therefore provide fertile ground for criminological theory and research.

(Anti-)Role Models: Who do you want to be like when you grow up? One final set of findings from the Theater Camp study bears mentioning. Several respondents named a role model to whom they could look for inspiration. Some had famous role models like Michael Jackson (The King of Pop), Ronda Rousey (Former Mixed Martial Arts champion), and Shigeru Miyamoto (creator of the Mario Brothers video game series). Two mentioned uncles, both of whom had been in the military. One respondent mentioned her *tía* (aunt) who had overcome drug abuse and crime:

> "[I want to be] like my tía - she was on drugs, in gangs. But she made it. She's a doctor [now]." (R15)

Another discussed her 25-year-old attorney cousin as someone they wanted to emulate in life. One respondent discussed his stepdad as someone he could look up to:

> "Stepdad – he's been through the same things as me... He's been to prison and stuff. But not to be cute or nothin but he been out for a while now, he been doing good, going to school, and he likes to rap and I like to sing." (R38)

Common responses regarding role models referenced mothers, but those narratives were often tempered with cautionary caveats, as is Respondent 10's stepdad narrative. Overall, the responses regarding role models as youth consider (someday) exiting CPS fell into three categories: "Like my mom, but…;" "Anti-role models" and "My own role model."

Some respondents reported their mothers or other bio-family as role models, but those narratives were often tempered by qualifiers ("Like My Mom, but…"). Respondent 2 called her mother "Wonder Woman" and unequivocally looked up to her. Respondent 35 was unequivocal in her admiration for both of her bio-parents:

> "[I want to be] something like my mom and dad at the same time. They are my idols. My mom is good at business. She has a 'happy' store.[42] Dad manages the store. He has a college degree, but he's still locked up for two more years."

This is the same respondent who reported strong familial ties with family from out-of-state (and a Caribbean island), and maternal incarceration for "interstate dope dealing." That background suggests that her bio-parent's business acumen could have negative implications for Respondent 35's life course trajectory after exiting CPS. Her role models were a mother with a history of transporting narcotics across state lines with her children in the car, and a father who was incarcerated at the time of the Theater Camp interview for attempted murder. In other words, Respondent 35 wanted to be like her parents, but her parents were not necessarily prosocial role models.

[42] "Happy store" refers here to a retail operation that specializes in paraphernalia and equipment for processing, selling, and ingesting non-pharmaceutical drugs such as marijuana (e.g. rolling papers, bongs, and pipes), cocaine (e.g. additives and vials), and nitrous oxide "Whip-Its" (e.g. nitrous oxide cartridges and receptacles). The reader may be more familiar with the term "head shop." Various levels of marijuana decriminalization have expanded the retail market for cannabis products significantly in the last decade or so, and the products sold by such stores now include chemical extraction equipment (e.g. vacuum pumps, precision heat elements) and specialized tools. Smoking those extracts is referred to as "dabbing" or "vaping" depending on the type of extract (Caulkins et al., 2018).

Similarly, other respondents reported wanting to emulate their parents, but with qualifier statements attached. Some talked about their mothers struggling with health issues:

> "I don't know. I would say [I want to be like my] mom, but she is *depressed*" (R19, emphasis in original)
>
> "Like my mother, but she has health and weight issues. She is a good person" (R20)
>
> "Like how my mom used to be. She used to be kind and sweet and she knew how to be nice before drug abuse." (R24)

These narratives are consistent with a recent literature review conducted by Baker and colleagues (2016). In short, despite profoundly abusive and/or neglectful family histories, all CPS youth do not view their parents unfavorably. These narratives may also belie a distinction between victims of child *abuse* and *neglect* (Jonson-Reid, Drake, and Zhou, 2013). Clinical depression, obesity/bulimia, and drug abuse could all precipitate a parent's inabilities to engage with their children in healthful ways. In cases where such issues hinder the ability of parents to effectively manage their children's behavior and social benchmarks (e.g. school, nutrition), children in CPS may be more likely to perceive their parents as victims, not perpetrators.

Many respondents, however, included caveats about *not* wanting to be like their parents. For instance, one respondent reported aspiring to be like her mother in some ways, but not in one key aspect:

> "Like my mom, but better. I don't want to be a jailbird." (R21)

These "like my mom, but…" narratives suggest that the respondents maintained some level of respect for their parents, but were also able to identify some of their

shortcomings. In addition to the fact that they were removed from their natal homes and placed in state custody, growing up in CPS involves therapy and behavioral modification regimes designed to replace the negatively-valenced environments and perceptions ostensibly provided by their dysfunctional bio-families (Fader, 2013; Lash, 2017; Lee, 2016). In that context, it makes sense that some CPS youth would maintain positive perceptions of bio-parents, but also be critical of their behaviors and parenting practices.

In fact, several respondents identified their bio-parents as role models of the exact *opposite* of how they wanted to be. For that group, anything other than recreating the mistakes of their bio-parents was preferable to becoming like them:

> "The opposite of my father: No drugs, no abusing youth" (R5)
>
> "Not like my mom. I don't know my dad." (R11)
>
> "Not like my mom. Avril LaVigne, Pat Benetar, Joan Jett [female rock and roll stars from several eras]." (R14)

Respondent 22 noted that she wanted to live differently than her mother and father had regarding residential stability and nutrition:

> "Not like my parents. [I want to be] someone with a place to live, with lots of food on the table - not just snacks."

One of the respondents who reported looking up to a military uncle juxtaposed his life plans with those of his mother:

> "My uncle. He went to the military, got a diploma. He has a good life. I want to be like that, not like my mom" (R33)

These "anti-role model" narratives suggest that some CPS youth do use their parents as role models, but instead of trying to emulate them or aspiring to accomplish similar goals, they use them as a guide for what not to do ("no drugs, no abusing youth"). Such "anti-

aspirations" are sound in consideration of the narratives from the Theater Camp study regarding natal homes and bio-families. But in the context of agency, planfulness, and optimism as CPS youth prepare to (someday) exit CPS, anti-aspirations may replace positive aspirations and plans (Samuels and Pryce, 2008).

Wanting to be better than or different from parents is natural for any kid. But for CPS youth who must make life changing decisions without parental input, "anything except my parents" has the potential to become an empty platitude over time. To some extent, growing up in CPS involves continued separation from stigmatized bio-families, inherent conflict between control (coercion) and support (treatment) in state custody, and the disruption of school trajectories. Wanting to construct a healthier and more sustainable life course than parents who have maltreated, neglected, or abandoned them is a stable place to start thinking about the future. But cognitively reducing the future to a negation of parental behaviors could allow CPS youth to forego the more serious task of making concrete plans for their futures. The Potholes study suggested that "college culture" may be the most important element on the pathway from high school to college, particularly for lower-performing students (Roderick et al., 2011, p. 4).

Roderick and colleagues study presented Frida Kahlo High School in Chicago as a case study of strong college culture in action, first quantitatively, then qualitatively:

> "Kahlo is one school that is higher than average on measures of college-going culture and organization around postsecondary planning. That is, Kahlo had a higher than average percentage of prior graduates who went on to four-year colleges, applied to three or more schools, and completed a FAFSA. In addition, teachers' impressions of college climate were more positive than average. Overall, Kahlo performed very strongly on indicators found to be predictive of students taking the steps necessary to enroll in a four-year college."

Talking to students themselves elicited a clearer picture of what strong college culture "looks like" functionally:

> "Based on our qualitative interviews, students at Kahlo were far more likely than students at other schools to receive one-on-one guidance from a knowledgeable adult, primarily one of the counselors. Though not a universal experience, most students at Kahlo reported at least briefly discussing their future plans with a counselor. Many students reported more involved support from their counselors, repeatedly visiting their offices to discuss college options, seek information, and receive help on applications." (Roderick et al., 2011, p. 62)

In the Theater Camp study, sixteen respondents were between 16 and 18 years old (i.e. 11th and 12th graders). Another eight were 15 years old (i.e. 9th or 10th graders). No respondents mentioned working on FAFSA forms or ACT tests. The reader of this dissertation will perhaps agree that 9th grade is at the low end of where college preparations *need* to start (i.e. qualification, college-readiness, identification of "match" schools). But 9th grade is not likely to be considered too young in the context of a high school with a strong college culture. In other words, through residential and school instability during state custody, CPS youth may miss out on valuable college preparation time.

The most common narratives about role models stated explicitly that the respondent had no role models or that they were "my own role model." Fifteen respondents reported some version of this narrative. Respondent 10 did not think anyone should try to emulate others:

> "No one. I will make my own path. No human should try to be like another person because we are all unique in our own way."

Respondent 18 also saw himself as a trailblazer. He moved beyond simply choosing himself as a role model. He elaborated that he planned to excel beyond expectations. His narrative also intimates Respondent 18 viewed role models as kid stuff:

> "Myself. I am unique in my own way. I don't want to be compared. I want to be greater. I have done too much to turn back. We all gotta grow up. I am tired of that old life."

Others were less ardent in their assertions. Respondent 37 suggested that she didn't necessarily see a need for a role model:

> "[There's] not really someone I wanna be like... I just wanna be me."

Respondent 7 admitted that for her, not having a role model was less of a lifestyle choice and more a question of human resources:

> "Nobody - I don't really have nobody"

Other responses in this category were much more concise. They included "myself;" "me;" "no role models" and "no one; I am me."

Some respondents, then, did not think they had anyone to draw on for inspiration. Some perceived themselves capable of "claiming" role models from the ranks of famous singers, professional athletes, and extended family. Others appeared to have restricted their definition of role models more tightly to their bio-families, and found themselves wanting. A few had clear, detailed ideas about someone they wanted to emulate in life. But the most common type of narrative regarding role models included not having role models, not needing role models, and being "my own role model." This finding is also consistent with the concept of "survivalist self-reliance" during the transition from childhood in CPS to adulthood in the community (Samuels and Pryce, 2008). Entering and growing up in CPS involves family conflict, school disruption, and navigating new

self-identities. If survivalist self-reliance during CPS custody restricts the development of social support networks, the consequences after exiting could be dire. If CPS youth are reluctant to even look to someone else for abstract inspiration, they may feel isolated and unsupported as young adults during the important transition to adulthood.

While beyond the scope of the present work, what to say by way of advice to a youth entering CPS; how to go about establishing and maintaining trust with youth growing up in state custody; and how one might best help a young adult as they make the dual transition from childhood in CPS to adulthood in the community are all important group processes worthy of continued study in criminology. Integrating life course and social control theories with phronetic methodology is one promising avenue by which this may be accomplished. The Theater Camp interviews and the resulting narratives allowed a glimpse into the group processes at work in the lives of adolescents living in CPS custody. Many of the findings were consistent with research in youth development and social work. But integrating criminological thinking also allowed for some novel insights to emerge, for instance "the code of the group home" and "redemption scripts" in CPS narratives. This criminological consideration of CPS youth turns traditional thinking about institutional social control upside-down in three key areas.

First, social control is fundamentally proposed in criminology as a protective factor, but the life course outcomes of CPS youth do not support this claim. Instead, the apparent inability of CPS to systematically and observably improve the life course trajectories of youth who grow up in their custody casts doubt on the entire juvenile justice system. If state or court actions are not in the best interest of the child, those actions are not ethical nor legal according to constitutional law and United Nations

Resolutions. It is easy for criminologists to ignore CPS and the theoretical problems that population poses for the field. But a more nuanced, theoretical understanding of the group processes associated with CPS suggests and important role for the community in the development of marginalized, delinquent, and orphaned youth (Clear, Hamilton, and Cadora, 2011), particularly organized through volunteer-based parochial social support models such as the AMO in the Theater Camp study. But both of those concepts have so far been given little attention by mainstream criminology.

Second, the system traditionally referred to in mainstream criminology as "the juvenile justice system" includes only cases regarding delinquency offenses. But juvenile justice systems are bifurcated systems that process both delinquent children, and "orphans" (nondelinquent youth in the juvenile justice system; Mays and Winfree, 2013) Through the socio-legal concept of *parens patriae* and the legal doctrine of chancery law, juvenile justice systems systematically suppresses the civil rights of children, ostensibly to provide treatment instead of punishment. CPS youth are forced to live in state-designated homes with other orphans at the threat of arrest. Rules at those residences are sometimes contrary to psychological and trauma-informed coping strategies. Conflict often arises between staff and fellow CPS youth, and the relationships and communication between CPS youth and their bio-families is restricted by the state. CPS youth are incarcerated, but not for committing crimes. In short, they are in juvenile justice purgatory.

While CPS effectively removes youth from problematic families, the state struggles to replace those dysfunctional family bonds with prosocial "synthetic bonds" that provide youth with the support networks they need to successfully transition into

adulthood after custody. As a cosmic analogy, the state removes youth from their unsustainable worlds. But the lack of an organic, sustainable, and supportive ecology to replace that world of origin leaves CPS youth effectively floating through space. Prosocial network opportunities such as the military, college, and creative art represent "worlds" to which such drifting youth might anchor. But the Theater Camp study and emerging research about the process of aging-out of CPS suggest the pathways from juvenile justice systems to such network opportunities is theoretically unclear and not well defined in policy. But while the primary objectives of juvenile justice are stopping child maltreatment and juvenile delinquency, the long-term goal, by legal definition and moral justification, must be the successful, prosocial, and sustainable transition from troubled child to healthy adult.

Third, life course theories represent one of the preeminent theoretical paradigms in modern mainstream criminology. But key components of the paradigm are at best loosely defined. Applying the life course framework to the group processes of CPS in the Theater Camp study suggested that before baby humans can interact with the social world, they are subjected to a trajectory: that of their birthparents (or caretakers). Youth born to healthy, affluent parents are born into trajectories oriented toward differentially and probabilistically prosocial outcomes. But human development does not (and cannot) happen in a social vacuum. Social control requires engagement from the recipient (client) of control. Existential agency dictates that all individuals have the innate ability (to varying degrees) to exercise will, but the role of agency has been discounted or simply excluded from mainstream conversations in criminology (Sampson and Laub, 2016). But off-diagonal cases that do not adhere to theoretical expectations (i.e. cases consistent with

the Robins Paradox) demonstrate that something outside maltreatment and social control is at work in the development of the life course pathways of CPS youth and other marginalize youth.

A growing body of research has identified resilience as a characteristic of some people who experience adversity (Ben-David and Jonson-Reid, 2017; Bourbeau, 2013; Cicchetti, 2013; Daining and DePanfilis, 2007; Dumont, Widom, and Czaja, 2007; Flores, Cicchetti, and Rogosh, 2005). But much of this work on resilience has been published outside criminology, despite the importance of resilience in criminological thinking (McGloin and Widom, 2001; Walklate, 2011). Youth who enter CPS have life course outcomes similar to those who enter gangs (Curry, Decker, and Pyrooz, 2014, p. 134) and juvenile jails (Abrams and Terry, 2017; Fader, 2013). But CPS youth are not generally in state custody because they have been accused or found responsible for delinquency or crime. They are there "for their best interest." In some cases (e.g. acute violence, abandonment), this is almost certainly true. But the research available today suggests that the effects of CPS involvement are best considered null at best, or risk factors for negative life course outcomes at worst (Maclean et al., 2016; Berger et al., 2009).

Some criminologists concerned with juvenile justice have long recognized the role of CPS in the juvenile justice system (Feld, 2017). But the field of criminology has been reluctant to consider CPS as a life course event or a source of incarceration. Nevertheless, the novel form of social control raises important questions regarding human development and the role of the state in shaping the lives of children. The

implications of the Theater Camp study are discussed in more detail in the following and concluding chapter.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

These findings have important implications for criminological research, juvenile justice in practice, and life in CPS. At the broadest level, if CPS and other forms of juvenile incarceration do not systematically improve the life course trajectories of youth, then the role of institutional social control over the life course should be reconsidered and perhaps reconceptualized. That implies that the justifications for the juvenile justice system itself must be reconceptualized. The sections that follow first discuss those implications in terms of the entering, growing up in, and exiting CPS. The dissertation concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the project, and directions for future research.

Studies of life course criminology and incarceration have identified an overlap between CPS and juvenile criminal justice populations (Baglivio et al., 2015; Giordano, 2010; Turanovic and Rodriguez, 2015; Turanovic, Rodriguez, and Pratt, 2012). But criminology has been slow to examine the precarious legal status of CPS youth as a population of interest in criminology (Zimring, 2014). This oversight is questionable given despite the longstanding tenet of criminology that places the family at the center of theories of criminal development (Hirschi, 1969; Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990; Sampson and Laub, 2003; Sutherland, 1939). Both inside and outside of criminology, the family has been identified as a key determinant of decisions to place youth in out-of-home care such as correctional facilities and CPS (Berger et al., 2016; Rodriguez, Smith, and Zatz, 2009). In addition to micro-level characteristics (e.g. their maltreatment or

criminal histories) and macro-level risk factors (e.g. poverty, community violence), youth in the juvenile justice system are held accountable for the shortcomings of their parents.

Entering CPS

Entering CPS removes youth from homes that are ostensibly distressed, abusive, or otherwise in crisis. At the same time however, entering CPS also places youth in direct contact with other traumatized youth and restricts access to positive family bonds. Given the centrality of the family in youth development, youth entering CPS are at high risk of becoming "deep enders" highly reliant on state-sanctioned systems of social control. Full encapsulation in state services in the best interest of the child should ameliorate the effects of familial dysfunction, but that effect is not demonstrated by empirical study. Rather, entering CPS is best described as a risk factor for life course pathways (Berger et al., 2009; Doyle, 2008; 2011; Maclean et al., 2016). Over a third of Theater Camp respondent reported at least one arrest. Respondent 36 discussed her placement in CPS as the precipitating factor in her first arrest. She noted that before entering CPS her bad behavior went largely unchecked, but in CPS she was "held accountable." But while a normal youth may have a parent to advocate for them in court, CPS youth are much less likely to have that support. As such, they are left to navigate their criminal charges with restricted access to their parents and other forms of private support.

In general, the delinquency measures in the Theater Camp study suggest that delinquency, victimization, and arrest dropped precipitously after entering CPS. The interview protocol asked if respondent had been bullied, arrested, or committed delinquency ever, in the last year, or in the last month. After about half of the interviews, the author started to notice that trend, and mentioned it to some if the respondent to see

what they thought of the idea that delinquency would drop so directly after entering CPS. One respondent identified a historical effect that had been lost on the author:

> "It's summer fool, school is out. Bullying and fights happen mostly at school, and we do crimes with our friends, not CPS kids."

The treatment of CPS youth in the juvenile criminal justice system, and the use of CPS as a force to stabilize the lives of traumatized and troubled youth are important areas for future research in criminology. The juvenile courts restrict the civil rights of youth, leaving their parents to advocate for them to the best of their abilities. But for "crossover" youth, the state is both prosecutor and parent.

Growing Up In CPS

Growing up in CPS forces youth to navigate state systems and family connections. Growing up in CPS also requires youth to self-advocate in their own best interest, and some CPS youth are better-equipped to accomplish this than others. The Theater Camp narratives suggested that psychological treatment was an important component of growing up in CPS. Respondents discussed coping strategies, therapist/client relationships, and taking "meds" to ameliorate the negative effects of maltreatment and familial separation. Behavioral modification and trauma-informed practice are sometimes at odds in CPS, and that discord sometimes led to conflict between CPS youth, their pseudo-sibling, and staff.

One recent article demonstrated in a sample of 5,691 youth that individual behavioral problems like felony involvement, gang activity, and running away, as well as system-level characteristics like previous placement in CPS or lengthy case duration were predictive of increased out-of-home placement and placement instability over time (Orsi

et al., 2018). Importantly, that study also found that increased services while in CPS ameliorated those negative outcomes:

> "Findings from the current study suggest that providing adolescents with services such as those included in Colorado's Core Services package may result in more youth staying [in their natal home] or returning [to their natal] home, compared to youth who do not receive these services. Specifically, youth who received Core Services were substantially less likely to have experienced a nonpermanent outcome [at CPS] case closure [e.g. aged-out, incarcerated for crime, or AWOL, as opposed to reunification with family]. Thus, there are practical benefits to using Core Services resources and expanding these services should be considered. More significantly, findings help to support the approach of keeping youth in their community whenever possible, and suggest that even youth deemed beyond the control of their parents can and may be better served in their home and community rather than in an OOH [out-of-home] placement" (p. 13).

Consistent with previous research (Berger et al., 2009; Maclean et al., 2016), Orsi and colleagues suggest that out-of-home placements such as CPS may be detrimental to youth. Further, keeping youth in their natal homes, but providing services to strengthen the family may be more aligned with the best interest of children.

These findings raise important questions for criminology. Almost 20 years ago, Jonson-Reid and Barth linked negative experiences in CPS to future offending and prison (2000). Findings such as these cast doubt on the ability of state-sanctioned social control to foster prosocial outcomes over the life course. But criminologist have been slow to consider CPS youth, perhaps due to a perception that CPS was social work, and not criminology. But as "state property" (Fader, 2013; Lopez, 2017) youth in CPS should be afforded the vast treatment, educational, and social resources of the state. The recent postulations of Sampson and Laub (2016) regarding nudges from social control agents suggest that probation officers can serve as both "monitors and mentors" and nudge behaviors into identity change. That speculation is consistent with the idea that social control, in the right dosage and application, can "fix" people. If so, the ability to produce

prosocial behaviors and identity should be particularly feasible in children, who are still developing both socially and biologically (Burt and Simons, 2014).

In other words, despite decades of research in social work, criminologists have remained in the dark, perhaps intentionally, regarding the experiences of CPS youth. Stated plainly, if social control can help youth develop better behaviors, CPS youth should be well-situated to demonstrate that effect. Crossover youth, who would "benefit" from the "nudges" of both CPS and criminal justice agents (i.e. Sampson and Laub's "monitor mentors" [2016, p. 330]), should be even clearer evidence of the rehabilitative capabilities of nudges. But there is scant research supporting this theory. In Jonson-Reid and Barth's (2000) study, CPS youth supervised by both CPS caseworkers and probation officers fared worse than those not nudged by probation officers. Examining a sample of 11,188 CPS youth in "probation-supervised foster care" (PSFC), Eastman and Putnam-Hornstein (2018) found that the needs of dual involved youth often "go unmet due to separation between the departments that serve them" and suggest data sharing between CPS and probation systems is an area of needed improvement (p. 8).

The preeminent theoretical framework in criminology, the life course framework, is therefore of little use to practitioners working to establish and sustain prosocial outcomes in marginalized youth. The Theater Camp narratives suggest that mentor/protégé relationships may not be desirable at all to some CPS youth. For others, developing trust in non-family, non-CPS adults may be hindered by a hypervigilant sense of survivalist self-reliance. Beyond life course theories, both theoretical and practical social control rely in some part on the willingness of individuals to comply with laws, rules, and social norms. That willingness is generally referred to as a social bond,

comprised of four elements (Hirschi, 1969). But how those bonds form, what precipitates and sustains them, and whether those bonds can be unilaterally imposed by the state are questions left largely unanswered within criminology. As such, social bonding as a process remains loosely defined and not well understood. The following section discusses the prospect of exiting CPS custody in the context of the Theater Camp narratives.

Exiting CPS

The prospect of exiting CPS and transitioning to adulthood is complicated by the restrictive nature of CPS custody. For CPS youth, "successful" transition to adulthood is commonly measured by "independence," but for normal youth, "successful" transition to adulthood is dependent upon "interdependence." In general, there is a need for much more research on the dual transition from childhood in state custody to adult in the community (Abrams and Terry, 2017; Fader, 2013). More specifically, there is a need for evaluative and experimental research that can compare the life course pathways of similarly-situated youth with divergent outcomes (Maclean et al., 2016). Further, very few studies have applied theory to the analysis of youth who age-out from CPS (Stein, 2006a, p. 431). More theoretically-informed, comparative research like that undertaken here could do much to improve criminology's understanding of bonding *as a process*, as opposed to a monolith of decontextualized elements (Young, 2011). Consistent with previous research, the Theater Camp respondents reported low levels of involvement with mentorship or admiration of role models. Several discussed distrusting state agents such as staff or therapists. Overall, respondents had ambitious goals for their futures, but were unclear about how those goals might be realized.

The results of the Theater Camp study suggest that establishing and maintaining social bonds in CPS custody is an important, but complex and under-studied process. CPS youth may be reluctant to trust "outsiders" or professional caregivers. The development of "survivalist self-reliance" may make CPS youth reluctant to establish relationships with anyone at all (Samuels and Pryce, 2008). States and CPS systems are more focused on child protection, and largely fail to provide adequate services during custody (Shireman, 2003). For instance, youth in the Theater Camp study talked about independent living programs (ILPs) which train older CPS youth (usually around 16 years old) for things like banking, resume building, and renting apartments. As the name implies, these programs work to develop independence in clients as they prepare to transition to adulthood from CPS.

But young adults emerging from more stable natal homes do not generally achieve independence abruptly at age 18, as is expected of CPS youth. Rather, successful transition to early adulthood in normal families often includes an "exploratory period" characterized by less-than-full personal responsibility, often with a substantial parental safety net. The distinction was explained by Abrams and Terry (2017):

> "For economically and racially privileged young adults, this exploratory period often takes place in a college setting, an arena that offers some sense of protection from real-world responsibilities (here we invite you to envision college parties, summer internships, and spring break in Florida). However, unlike their more privileged peers, a substantial number of emerging adults are not afforded a protected or nurtured passage to adulthood. By contrast, upon reaching the age of legal maturity, youth with histories of foster care, homelessness, school disruption, and early age of parenthood must fend for themselves, and often their own children and families, to meet even their most basic needs" (p. 3).

In other words, conventional success in early adulthood is characterized by *interdependence* (Samuels and Pryce, 2008, p. 1199), but programming in juvenile justice

focuses on developing *independence* (Fader, 2013). ILPs in CPS are an example of training intended to develop independence. But as indicated in the Theater Camp narratives, most respondents were not well connected with social support networks such as stable families, natural mentors (Greeson et al., 2015), or college preparation assistance (Piel, 2018).

Samuels and Pryce (2008) suggested interdependence as a more effective benchmark for success in the transition from CPS to adulthood because it incorporates both self-reliance and engagement with social support networks. They noted that the respondents in their study (44 young adults who had aged out of CPS) developed "independence… from a place of insecurity and a sense of interpersonal disconnection (p. 1208; see also Propp, Ortega, and NewHeart, 2003). That finding is consistent with narratives from Theater Camp. Not only did most respondents report not being engaged with social support networks, many discussed perceptions of needing help as weakness or a lack of creativity. But a recent survey of 345 young adults who aged out of CPS in Israel suggests that awareness of, and engagement with social support networks (Melkman, 2017).

In order for social support of any type to impact life course trajectories of CPS youth, those who exit CPS (particularly those who age-out and transition abruptly to adulthood in the community) must be willing and able to perceive, access, and capitalize on external support (i.e. be interdependent) to facilitate "successful independent" adulthood (Propp et al., 2003; Keller et al., 2007). In fact, many young adults return to the natal families from which they were removed as children after aging-out of CPS (Collins, et al., 2007). While this makes intuitive sense, we have yet to understand what

types of social support are of most importance to the young adults as they leave the care of CPS. A more systematic measurement of what types of social support that are most important before, during, and after this transition will support the development of evidence-based approaches to the social support of youth who grow up in CPS.

A more detailed understanding of how members of this high-risk group engage with their support networks will help with targeting and implementation of programs designed to establish durable prosocial bonds in young adults who age-out of CPS. Combining phronetic methodology and social network analysis to examine the networks and network engagement of CPS youth is one way to generate a contextual, but also computational "narrative" in criminology (Abramson et al., 2017).

Sampson and Laub (2016) suggested that probation officers can be both monitors and mentors (p. 330). but the results of the Theater Camp study, and the research on interdependence during the transition to adulthood from CPS do not support this assertion. Theater Camp respondents reported not trusting caseworkers, staff, and therapists. It is not likely that probationers would feel more trusting toward their probation officer than would CS youth to their caregivers. The narratives of CPS youth therefore raise questions for life course criminology that go beyond empathy. For instance, to paraphrase Sampson and Laub, if probation officers could serve as effective and trusted mentors, there would be no need for juvenile jails, nor CPS (Sampson and Laub, 2016, p. 330). If social control alone could save children (or if social control could substitute for social support), children would be saved by now.

But a century of juvenile justice research suggests otherwise. The juvenile justice system suppresses the due process rights of youth in order to protect them from harm and

encourage prosocial development. But very little research demonstrates a positive effect of this process. Rectifying the theoretical CPS paradox, and the juvenile justice purgatory that results should therefore be a central concern for criminologists going forward. A deeper understanding of social bonding as a process represents one step toward those goals. This dissertation opened generated a snapshot of the CPS experience for criminology.

Limitations

Eight years of fieldwork with youth in CPS and participating with a local arts mentorship agency set up the current study to generate a detailed, nuanced depiction of CPS youth. The Theater Camp study offered a chance to explore how the experiences of CPS youth might inform criminological theory, improve juvenile justice, and facilitate healthy youth development. This approach to studying group process generated a nuanced, child-based perspective into CPS processes and their effects on the life course:

> "The most complete form of sociological datum, after all, is the form in which the participant observer gathers it: An observation of some social event, the events which precede and follow it, and explanations of its meaning by participants and spectators before, during, and after its occurrence. Such a datum gives us more information about the event under study than data gathered by any other sociological method." (Becker and Geer, 1957, p. 28).

The current dissertation applied a phronetic approach to research planning, designing, conducting, and analyzing data to accomplish these lofty goals (Tracy, 2012). Phronetic methodology requires continual self-reflection on the part of the researcher, and systematic reflection on the data. That includes how the data reflects (or fails to reflect) *a priori* themes, and what themes emerge from the data itself.

The Theater Camp study and the fieldwork that precipitated it allowed broad access to youth growing up in state custody and in-depth interviews about sensitive topics

of relevance to criminology. But the nature of the project restricted the analysis to narratives from a relatively small, purposefully-sampled group of CPS youth. Using Theater Camp as a purposive sampling frame also resulted in a sample that arguably represented the most stable, healthy youth in CPS. Theater Camp also imposed a limited time frame for the interviews, as the camps last only two weeks. At the same time the 33 interviews offered a much-needed peek into life in CPS for criminology. Several themes from the interviews were consistent with previous research (e.g. survivalist self-reliance), while others were perhaps new (e.g. the code of the group home). Encountering the experiences of relatively stable CPS youth collaborating with an art mentorship program elicited narratives of both positive experiences (e.g. removal from families in crisis) and negative experiences (e.g. experience with parochial social support).

Another limitation to the current study was the lack of audio recordings of the interviews. While the IRB that oversaw the study was helpful and supportive of the study, the board would not approve audio recordings because there were scales in the protocol, in addition to the open-ended questions. This was a product of the mixed-method protocol. The scales could have been removed, and the interviews audio-recorded. Or the interview could have focused entirely on scales. But given the scant criminological research that has examined the experiences and outcomes of CPS youth, the author decided to forego audio recording in order to provide a descriptive set of comparison between traditional criminological groups of youth (e.g. gang members, youth in juvenile correctional facilities). This required the author to take hand notes during the Theater Camp interviews. While some nuance may have been lost due to the lack of audio

recordings, the primary narratives and themes from the interview were faithfully transcribed.

The Theater Camp study was conducted without funding. Through collaboration with fellow students in social work and criminology, the author staffed the study with two independent recruiters, a social worker with training in trauma-informed practice, and a data entry assistant. Additional human and financial resources would be needed to conduct a scaled-up mixed-methods study with youth in CPS such as this dissertation. Such a scaled-up study would generate more generalizable results, and would add further empirical clarity to this nascent area of criminological research. At the same time, smaller, focused studies like this (and Samuels and Pryce, 2008) are predicated on trusting relationships with CPS administrators, residential staff, and parochial service providers. Most importantly, studies that develop a nuanced contextual understanding of individual problems by encountering the lived experiences of CPS youth and other shadow groups require long-term investments that go well beyond studies of preexisting data sets.

Substantively, the current study focused on youth who had been placed in CPS, and spent at least part of their childhood growing up in state custody. Additionally, the ACEs scores (6.2/10) from the Theater Camp respondents suggested that as a group, they were as "at-risk" as any youth in the United States can be. Still, the groups studied here are very likely to be systematically different from the general population of youth in CPS. For instance, most youth interviewed at the summer camps (26/38, or 68%) lived in group homes. Five (13%) lived in shelters, while two were in residential treatment centers, and only one was living with a foster family. In the state time frame in which this

study was conducted, approximately 80% of youth under CPS control were "in family settings either with relatives, in foster homes or trial home visit with a parent" (McKay, 2015; 2016, p. 44). Additionally, the participants in the interviews were all participating in a theater arts program. This "creaming" of the population suggests a bias toward youth who had demonstrated sufficient stability in their behavior, and who were willing to volunteer to participate.

This purposive approach allowed for the analysis of relatively "successful" members of a group of youth at exceptionally high risk for negative outcomes (Abrams and Terry, 2017). In sum, this dissertation examined and described the contours of the child protection system from the perspective of CPS youth themselves for criminology. Future studies could do much to expand on the theoretical frameworks, integrated theory, and socio-legal considerations that emerged from the present work. The concluding section that follows outlines three directions for the future of criminology at the intersection of social control and human agency over the life course, policy at the intersection of child protection and criminal justice; and the role of communities in supporting youth coming of age in CPS.

Conclusion: Phronetic Research & the Criminological Imagination

In contemporary criminology virtually all mainstream theories of criminality center on the role of parents: social bond/social control (Hirschi, 1969); self-control (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990); strain (Agnew); social learning and social structure (Akers, 2009). Despite the substantial overlap between CPS and criminology, criminologists have been slow to examine the experiences of CPS youth. Important

questions therefore remain for criminologists concerned with life course development, juvenile justice, and social control.

In conclusion, the Theater Camp study was conducted during graduate school, without funding. It generated vast field experience, expansive community engagement and the resulting relationships, and a research agenda that is grounded in both theory and practice. This dissertation therefore demonstrates the power of praxis to develop contextualized understandings, enrich the professional academic experience, and generate new ideas. This approach put the author in the field for years, developing relationships, and a feel for life in CPS. At the same time, engaging with criminological research and theory allowed for a systematic analysis of best practices, group process, and the theoretical implications regarding CPS and the life course.

> "Whether praxis takes the form of direct organizing or other actions, it has the potential for being profoundly intellectually original, opening up new areas of research for [criminologists]. In addition to its theoretical generativity, praxis also can provide models for ethically acceptable and even admirable behavior in a world in which the conventional avenues of professional advancement increasingly restrict the human potential not only of the people studied, but of the [criminologists] who study them (Nonini, 2016, p. 249).

In other words, praxis provides pathways for graduate students, professors, and practitioners to collaborate on interesting, community-engaged criminological projects that engage with, and hopefully positively impact the communities and individuals they study. Modern criminology would be the better for it.

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APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND VERNACULAR

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ACE(s)	Adverse Childhood Experience(s): Scale developed by Felitti et al., 1998 and deployed in almost all 50 states. Measures minor and major physical and emotional abuse, neglect, and familial stress during childhood.
AFCARS	
AMO	Art Mentorship Organization: Local non-profit art-based youth mentorship organization that works primarily with youth in out-of-home-care. The AMO involved with the current study has been in operation for over 20 years, and provides a wide range of program for youth in crisis. They place weekly mentor teams in group homes and shelters for 3-month terms; offers free classes to local schools for marginalized youth, and a series of theater-based summer camp programs.
AWOL	to abscond (i.e. to be "Absent Without Leave"): Vernacular used by CPS youth and staff as a verb to describe CPS youth leaving a residential facility or other location without permission of CPS staff, caregivers, or caseworkers.
BBBS	Big Brothers Big Sisters (Mentorship Program)
BSC	Brief Self-Control Scale
CASA	Court Appointed Special Advocate (Volunteers): CASAs serve formally as a pseudo-parent to provide guidance to the client and advocate for the best interest of the client during their CPS court cases. Informally, CASAs also help ensure their case does not "fall through the cracks" during the sometimes lengthy legal proceedings.
CBT	Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
COS	Code of the Streets
Corrido	The *corrido* (Spanish pronunciation: [koˈ riðo]) is a popular narrative song and poetry that form a ballad. The songs are often about oppression, history, daily life for peasants, and other socially

	relevant topics. It is still a popular form today in Mexico and was widely popular during the Mexican Revolutions of the 20th century. The corrido derives largely from the romance, and in its most known form consists of a salutation from the singer and prologue to the story, the story itself, and a moral and farewell from the singer. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corrido
CPS	Child Protective Services/Systems
DBT	Dialectical Behavioral Therapy; designed to address shortcomings in CBT (see CBT entry above)
DMC	"Disproportionate Minority Contact" with institutions and agents of law enforcement and social control
GED	General Education Diploma (High School Equivalence Certificate)
ILP	Independent Living Program
IR	Incident Report (official report of rule breaking in CPS custody)
ISEL	Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (Cohen et al., 1985)
Meds	Medicine; Used colloquially by CPS youth and staff to describe the psychological medication regimes imposed by CPS and staff on some CPS youth
NCANDS	The National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (*NCANDS*) is a voluntary data collection system that gathers information from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico about reports of child abuse and neglect.
NSCAW	The National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW) is a nationally representative, longitudinal survey of children and families who have been the subjects of investigation by Child Protective Services. There have been two cohorts of children enrolled in the survey, which makes available data drawn from first-hand reports from children, parents, and other caregivers, as well as reports from caseworkers, teachers, and data from administrative records.
On Pass	Visiting home on a CPS- authorized, unsupervised family visit: Vernacular used by CPS youth and staff
OD	Overdose (on narcotics)

Rez	Reservation; Used colloquially by CPS youth and staff to describe the designated lands of sovereign Native American nations
SLS	"Saint Louis School" of Criminology
Voluntary	Contract allowing client to remain in CPS after age 18: Vernacular used as a noun by CPS youth and staff

APPENDIX B

YOUTH IN TRANSITION QUESTIONNAIRE

Interview#:

YOUTH IN TRANSITION QUESTIONNAIRE
2015

Hi, and thanks for agreeing to participate in the study. First off, and most importantly, I am gonna ask you a lot of questions, and you are free to NOT answer anything you are not comfortable with. You can end the interview at any time, and you can for sure NOT answer any question, but move on to the next. As long as you feel comfortable, I would like you to feel perfectly free to tell me whatever you'd like to. I will NOT be recording your name, or any other information with this interview information. What we talk about will be locked up and stored securely in my offices at ASU, and again, your name will NOT be stored with the interview data. I am recording our voices, but we will not be discussing names of people. If something like that gets mentioned, it will be removed as I type up what was recorded. I have no need for specific names. Your interview will be assigned a subject number, and that will be the only identifying information recorded with your file. **So, I know that was a lot. Before we start, do *you* have any questions for *me*?**

SECTION ONE: Okay then, let's get started. Remember you are free to tell me anything you'd like, or to decline to answer any question you want to. Let me know if you have any questions as we go through this, okay? We will start with some questions about your background. Remember; please do not use real names during the survey.

1. Interview Date _____

2. How old are you? _____

3. What race/ethnicity do you identify as?

_____

4. What gender do you identify as?

_____

5. Sexual Orientation? **Gay** **Straight** **Bi** **Other**

6. Born in U.S? **YES** **NO**

7. Parents born in U.S? **YES** **NO**

8. Are you currently in CPS?
YES NO

9. Ever been in CPS?
YES NO

10. When did you first enter DCS care? Month_____ Year_____

11. Current residence?
Group Home Foster Home Shelter RTC Secure Facility Other

12. When did you start living at your current residence? Month_____ Year_____

SECTION TWO: This section asks you to describe yourself. On a scale of ONE to FIVE with five representing "*very much*" and one representing "*not at all,*" please indicate how much each of the following statements best describes you.

13. I am good at resisting temptation.

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 *Very Much*

14. I am lazy.

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 *Very Much*

15. I say inappropriate things.

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 *Very Much*

16. I do certain things that are bad for me, if they are fun.

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 *Very Much*

17. I refuse things that are bad for me.

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 *Very Much*

18. I wish I had more self-discipline.

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 *Very Much*

19. People would say that I have strong self-discipline.

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 *Very Much*

20. I have trouble concentrating.

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 *Very Much*

21. **I am able to work effectively at long-term goals.**

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 *Very Much*

22. **Sometimes I can't stop myself from doing something, even if I know it is wrong.**

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 *Very Much*

SECTION THREE: This section is about your family. For the rest of the interview, on some questions, I will ask you to answer in your own words. Please feel free to speak freely, and let me know if you have any questions as we proceed.

23. Do you have any contact with your biological Mom?
YES **NO**

24. How long has it been since you saw her? _____

25. How close would you say you are to your Mom?
NOT CLOSE AT ALL 1 2 3 4 5 VERY CLOSE

26. Do you have any contact with your biological Dad?
YES **NO**

27. How long has it been since you saw him? _____

28. How close would you say you are to your Dad?
NOT CLOSE AT ALL 1 2 3 4 5 VERY CLOSE

29. Are they married?
YES **NO**

30. How many siblings? _____

31. How long has it been since you saw them? _____

32. How close would you say you are to your siblings?
NOT CLOSE AT ALL 1 2 3 4 5 VERY CLOSE

33. How important is family to you?
NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL 1 2 3 4 5 VERY IMPORTANT

34. Tell me about your family: What are they like?

35. What are your favorite memories being with them?

36. How about bad memories?

SECTION FOUR: This section asks you about your past. Please indicate whether each of the following things has happened to you.

(Did a parent or other adult in the household . . .)

37. Swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you OR act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?

YES **NO**

38. Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you OR ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?

YES **NO**

(Did an adult or person at least 5 years older ever . . .)

39. Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way OR attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you?

YES **NO**

(Did you often or very often feel that…)

40. No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special OR your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?

YES **NO**

41. You didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you OR your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?

YES **NO**

42. Was a biological parent ever lost to you through divorce, abandonment, or other reason?

YES **NO**

43. Was your mother or stepmother: sometimes, often, or very often, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her **OR** kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard **OR** ever repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?

YES **NO**

44. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic, or who used street drugs?

YES **NO**

45. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?

YES **NO**

46. Did a household member go to prison?

YES **NO**

SECTION FIVE: This section asks about your experiences with school and Free Arts. Regarding school, please refer to your current or last attended school. Regarding Free Arts, think about any and all experiences you have had.

47. Are you currently enrolled in school?
YES **NO**

48. **What grade are you in?** **5** **6** **7** **8** **9** **10** **11** **12**

49. How important is school to you?
NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** **VERY IMPORTANT**

50. What do you think of your teachers?

51. How are your grades? A/B C D/E

52. Are you currently on track to graduate on time?
YES **NO**

53. What do you think of Free Arts?

54. Are you especially close to any adults at Free Arts? Who?

55. Why?

56. Are you especially close to any other kids that participate at Free Arts?

57. How did you become friends?

58. When was the first time you participated in a Free Arts event?

59. How does Free Arts help you?

60. How important is Free Arts in your life?

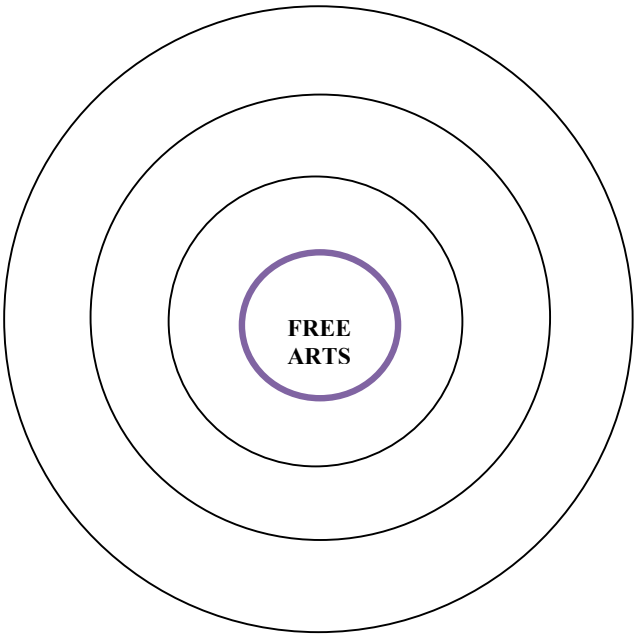
61. How safe do you feel expressing yourself at Free Arts events?
NOT SAFE AT ALL **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** **VERY SAFE**

62. Why do you think that is?

63. In the last year, how many FAAZ events have you attended?

64. How many friends do you have that participate with FAAZ (volunteers, clients, artists)

65. Draw an x on the picture below to show how you feel you relate to Free Arts. The outer rings represent being involved, but not very strongly. Rings closer to the center represent feeling more familiar and involved with Free Arts.



66. What does mentorship mean to you?

67. What other mentors have you had/do you have?

68. Which mentor are you closest to?

69. **When** did you meet them? Month _____ Year_____

70. How did you meet them, and what made you become close?

71. Have you ever had any conflict with someone you considered a mentor?

72. Tell me about that. What happened? How did you resolve the issue?

SECTION SIX: This section asks about things that have happened before you entered DCS, after you entered DCS, and within the last 30 days. All responses are anonymous, and your answers are confidential.

73. Have you ever been **bullied**? (has another kid picked on you, called you names, or hit you?)
YES **NO**

74. Have you been **bullied** since you have been in DCS?
YES **NO**

75. Have you been **bullied** in the last month?
YES **NO**

76. Have you ever been **arrested**?
YES **NO**

77. Have you been **arrested** since you have been in DCS?
YES **NO**

78. Have you been **arrested** in the last month?
YES **NO**

79. Total Lifetime arrests? _____

80. Have you ever been **in a fist fight**?
YES **NO**

81. Have you been **in a fist fight** since you have been in DCS?
YES **NO**

82. Have you been **in a fist fight** in the last month?
YES **NO**

83. Have you ever been **drunk on alcohol**?
YES **NO**

84. Have you been **drunk on alcohol** since you have been in DCS?
YES **NO**

85. Have you been **drunk on alcohol** in the last month?
YES **NO**

Have you ever intentionally **destroyed property** that didn't belong to you?
YES **NO**

86. Have you intentionally **destroyed property that didn't belong to you** since you have been in DCS?
YES **NO**

87. Have you intentionally **destroyed property that didn't belong to you** in the last month?
YES **NO**

88. Have you ever **stolen or tried to steal** something worth less than $50?
YES **NO**

89. Have you **stolen or tried to steal** something worth less than $50 since you have been in DCS?
YES **NO**

90. Have you **stolen or tried to steal** something worth less than $50 in the last month in the last month?
YES **NO**

91. Have you ever **used force or the threat of force** to get money or something you wanted?
YES **NO**

92. Have you **used force or the threat of force** to get money or something you wanted?
YES **NO**

93. Have you **used force or the threat of force** to get money or something you wanted in the last month?
YES **NO**

94. Have you ever carried a **weapon** for protection?
YES **NO**

95. Have you carried a **weapon** for protection since you have been in DCS?
YES **NO**

96. Have you carried a **weapon** for protection in the last month?
YES **NO**

97. How often do you do illegal things with friends?
NEVER **SOMETIMES** **OFTEN**

98. Where do most of your friends live?
Current (e.g. DCS) neighborhood **Another (e.g. Back Home) neighborhood**

99. How many of your **friends** do you think use drugs?
1. Not many 2. Quite a few 3. Most 4. All

100. How many of your **schoolmates** do you think use drugs?
1. Not many 2. Quite a few 3. Most 4. All

SECTION SEVEN: This section asks about your personal views about respect and fairness.

101. When someone disrespects you, it is important that you use physical force or aggression to teach him or her not to disrespect you.
STRONGLY DISAGREE **1** **2** **3** **4** **STRONGLY AGREE**

102. If someone uses violence against you, it is important that you use violence against him or her to get even.
STRONGLY DISAGREE **1** **2** **3** **4** **STRONGLY AGREE**

103. People will take advantage of you if you don't let them know how tough you are.
STRONGLY DISAGREE **1** **2** **3** **4** **STRONGLY AGREE**

104. People do not respect a person who is afraid to fight physically for his/her rights.
STRONGLY DISAGREE **1** **2** **3** **4** **STRONGLY AGREE**

105. Sometimes you need to threaten people in order to get them to treat you fairly.

STRONGLY DISAGREE 1 2 3 4 STRONGLY AGREE

106. It is important to show others that you cannot be intimidated.

STRONGLY DISAGREE 1 2 3 4 STRONGLY AGREE

SECTION EIGHT: Okay, almost done. This section asks about your plans for the future.

107. What are some things you want to accomplish in your life?

108. Who do you want to be like when you grow up? Why?

109. Do you think you will be able to be like them? How?

110. What career do you plan on having? Why?

111. What will it take for you to get there?

112. On a scale of one to ten, how likely do you think you are to attend college?

NOT LIKELY **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10** VERY LIKELY

113. Are you planning on aging out of DCS?
YES NO

114. Are you planning on leaving DCS before you turn 18?
YES NO

115. When you get out of DCS, do you plan to return to your old neighborhood?
YES NO

116. When you get out of DCS, do you plan to reunite with your family?
YES NO

117. Where will you go?

_____

118. What will you do?

_____

By the age of 25, how likely are you to:

119. Die before by 25 **NOT LIKELY 1 2 3 4 VERY LIKELY**

120. Contract AIDS **NOT LIKELY** **1** **2** **3** **4** **VERY LIKELY**

121. Go to prison **NOT LIKELY** **1** **2** **3** **4** **VERY LIKELY**

122. Have children **NOT LIKELY** **1** **2** **3** **4** **VERY LIKELY**

123. Be married **NOT LIKELY** **1** **2** **3** **4** **VERY LIKELY**

How important are the following things for you to have a happy life?

124. Marriage **NOT IMPORTANT** **1** **2** **3** **4** **VERY IMPORTANT**

125. Children **NOT IMPORTANT** **1** **2** **3** **4** **VERY IMPORTANT**

126. Good Job **NOT IMPORTANT** **1** **2** **3** **4** **VERY IMPORTANT**

127. College **NOT IMPORTANT** **1** **2** **3** **4** **VERY IMPORTANT**

128. Money **NOT IMPORTANT** **1** **2** **3** **4** **VERY IMPORTANT**

129. Church **NOT IMPORTANT** **1** **2** **3** **4** **VERY IMPORTANT**

130. On a scale of one to ten, how likely do you think you are to accomplish your goals in life?

NOT LIKELY **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** **6** **7** **8** **9** **10** VERY LIKELY

OK, we are all set. Is there anything I missed, or something else you would like to tell me that you think is important?

_____

_____

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Gabriel T Gilberto Cesar was born in Southwest Detroit, and grew up in Inkster, MI. His high school principal predicted he would never make it to college. Most people did not think he would live to see 25. But he did. Now he spends his time and energy trying to help kids like him also make it past age 25.