

2012

Jail Pedagogy: Liberatory Education Inside a California Juvenile Detention Facility

Jerry Flores

University of Washington Tacoma, jflores3@uw.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.tacoma.uw.edu/socialwork_pub



Part of the [Social Work Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Flores, Jerry, "Jail Pedagogy: Liberatory Education Inside a California Juvenile Detention Facility" (2012). *Social Work & Criminal Justice Publications*. 154.

https://digitalcommons.tacoma.uw.edu/socialwork_pub/154

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Social Work & Criminal Justice at UW Tacoma Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Social Work & Criminal Justice Publications by an authorized administrator of UW Tacoma Digital Commons.

**JAIL PEDAGOGY: LIBERATORY EDUCATION INSIDE A CALIFORNIA
JUVENILE DETENTION FACILITY**

JERRY FLORES

University of California-Santa Barbara

Approximately two million juveniles are arrested each year half of whom are sentenced to serve terms of incarceration. Much has been published regarding teaching in detention facilities, but few publications have addressed directly how prisoners are being taught. This research paper seeks to explore the experiences, teaching philosophy and practices of correctional educators. In order to gain a comprehensive look into what is taking place within these classrooms, I interviewed and observed twelve instructors that worked in 3 male juvenile detention facilities in San Diego, California over the course of 15 months. Through semi-structured qualitative interviews, I took an in-depth look into their teaching techniques. I found that these teachers adopted a humanistic and liberatory approach to teaching behind the walls of juvenile detention facilities in California.

The United States leads all advanced and developed nations in rates of incarceration with a total of 2.3 million inmates (U.S. Department of Justice 2007). Rates of juvenile incarceration are equally high. Approximately two million juveniles are arrested each year, half of whom are sentenced to serve terms of incarceration (Ramchand et. Al. 2009). Incarcerated juveniles, like all young people under the age of 16, are required by law to attend class during the regular school week. A significant body of research shows that the quality of education students receive can increase their educational attainment and improve the probability of other positive life chances (Breen and Jonsson 2005; Kozol 2005; Aronowitz 1997). This means that approximately 100,000 minors attend correctional schools daily (U.S. Department of Justice 2009). The strong relationship between educational attainment and positive outcomes, including a lower likelihood of recidivism (McCarthy 2006) and the fact that incarcerated youth are receiving their education in correctional institutions, means that studies of jail pedagogy are crucial.

While there have been some studies of education in correctional facilities, these studies have mostly focused on whether specific programs reduce re-offending and if so how they work to prevent recidivism (Berhan 2007). However, researchers have failed to explicitly examine the common barriers that disrupt attempts to implement effective correctional education or to look closely at the experiences of correctional educators. The studies that have been exceptions to this pattern identified three common challenges teachers face in detention facilities. First, they note frequent harassment of prisoners by staff (Gehring 2007). Second, they show that incarcerated individuals often have lower-than-average levels of formal education compared to their non-incarcerated peers (Foley

and Gao 2004). Third, they note a general lack of resources for teachers¹ and students such as inadequate provision of books and basic classroom supplies (Thomas 1983).

These studies however do not provide much insight into the teaching practices of correctional educators. Further, the literature provides us with almost no insight into how teachers view their students or how they develop an educational pedagogy within the institutional constraints of juvenile detention centers. This paper aim is is to examine the experiences, teaching philosophy, and practices of correctional educators. Using interviews with 12 teachers, I discuss how they believe they navigated structural problems inside of juvenile justice facilities while simultaneously adopting an innovative teaching approach.

When discussing teaching in an east Los Angles High School Eduardo F. Lopez discusses prison pedagogy. According to Lopez (2002), prison pedagogy seeks to “render servile and closely control and regulate (students)” (p. 187). Moreover, the goals of prison pedagogy involve “policing... thinking about control, surveillance, classroom management, and quick and swift punishment.” (Lopez 2002: 190). Lopez concept embodies several theoretical notions of punishment, incarceration, and compulsory education. However, he fails to support his ideas with empirical findings from an actual prison or detention facilities². While it may be true that prisons use education to control and regulate their subjects, I found that correctional educators in the juvenile justice facilities are attempting to educate and empower their incarcerated students. I have named this approach to teaching *jail pedagogy*. Jail Pedagogy is a teaching approach that embodies a kind, compassionate, and libratory teaching approach in a structure that seeks

¹ Instructors, teachers and educators will be referred to interchangeably throughout the paper.

² Detention facilities, juvenile detention facilities, juvenile justice facilities and institutions of confinement will be referred to interchangeably throughout the paper.

to punish individuals and strip them of their individuality. Furthermore, jail pedagogy is the commitment to bring intellectual empowerment to individuals that have been stripped their capital (what capital – social, economic, cultural?), cultures, and freedom. It is a devotion to teaching students that no other instructor wants to teach and working inside schools most people do not know exist.

I begin the next section of this paper by reviewing current literature and empirical work in the field of incarceration and punishment, education and pedagogy, and correctional education. After the review of current literature, I discuss the methods used in this project and the research questions. This is followed with a description of correctional schools and classrooms. In the “Correctional Educators” section I discuss my findings, which I separate into three sub-finding sections. These sections are titled teaching prisoners, teachers and their experiences and jail pedagogy. Finally, I discuss the significance of my work and its contribution to existing literature in the sociology, criminology, and correctional education.

Incarceration and Punishment

Both Erving Goffman (1961) and Michel Foucault (1977) see prisons as total institutions. Goffman defines a total institution as “ a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life.” (1961:XIII). Most importantly for the purpose of this paper, Goffman (1961) argues that total institutions train inmates to accept notions of social control by stripping them of agency, autonomy and self identify. Similarly, Foucault (1977) believes the primary goal

of prisons is to control human behavior and make inmates obedient (Ayers 1997). Empirical research suggests that this vision of the prison is consistent with what occurs in juvenile facilities where the emotional, physical and sexual abuse of inmates is ubiquitous (Friedman 2003). In the next section I explore the literature on education including the goals of public schooling.

Critical Educational and Pedagogical Literature

Public education in the United States began as a way to transmit dominant cultural norms to new immigrants in the country (Neubeck et al. 2007). Proponents of public education intended to create a system that could serve as the great equalizer, where people from all walks of life could gain skills that would allow them to attain social mobility (Kosters 2003). Despite the equitable goals of public education, current schooling in the US has reinforced inequalities among poor students and students of color (Kozol 2005; Valencia 1993).

According to Kim and Taylor (2008) schools in general work to benefit elite groups at the expense of people in marginal positions (Bowles and Gintis 1976). This often results in the reproduction of current social inequities (Kim and Taylor 2008). Schools, especially those that serve marginalized communities often provide their students with basic skill set instead of preparing them for college or teaching them critical skills (Oakes 2005; Dance 2002). Similarly, Sadker and Sadker (2001) found minority and working class students are more likely to “receive fewer academic contacts in class, . . . are asked fewer complex and abstract questions, receive less praise or constructive feedback and are given less direction...” (2001:129). Howard (2002) and Valencia (1993)

find that schools that serve communities of color, especially Latino communities, are often underfunded and racially segregated. Finally, because poor students and students of color are disproportionately concentrated in underachieving schools, they are more likely to encounter teachers that have low academic expectations (Hirschman and Lee 2005; Ferguson 1998). These low academic expectations and lack of resources often result in students performing poorly as compared to their white or more affluent classmates (Rose 1995). This process results in underserved students receiving less resources/ as compared to their white and/or more affluent classmates. Freire (1970) would argue that these kinds of institutions encourage teachers to embrace the banking method of education where they treat students like passive empty receptacles to be filled by the all knowing instructors.

Freire and other critical pedagogy scholars call for a dialogical approach to learning that counters the banking method and asks teachers and students to share their experiences and knowledge with one another. Dialogical learning emphasizes critical thought and encourages students to critique their reality in order to find ways of changing the world individually and collectively (Darder 2002). Adopting dialogical learning also includes teachers building solidarity with their students, especially those students that have been marginalized by society (Freire 1970). By relinquishing their oppressive role in “banking” education, instructors can begin to create solidarity with their students by helping them understand how they have been taken advantage of and cheated (Freire 1970). Most importantly, dialogical teaching requires instructors to teach with compassion and love.

Taking into consideration the nature of the institutions of confinement and

compulsory education one would expect educators who work in juvenile detention facilities would adopt the banking method of teaching rather than a liberatory pedagogy. The instructors I interviewed embodied a dialogical pedagogy within the walls of detention facilities. They were resisting the banking method of education and the legacy of menial public education by adopting a liberatory approach to teaching. While I cannot say for certain that this process is taking place in all correctional facilities no previous research explores this type of correctional education. Other research does provide some insight into teaching in corrections. The next section will explore these works.

Teaching in Institutions of Confinement

Many correctional education researchers have argued that vocational training is the primary way to help young people desist behavior that increase their chances of recidivating. For example, Foley and Gao (2004) call for a shift away from programs that are focused on granting GED's to an educational model that emphasizes vocational training. Hollingsworth (2006) writes that specific courses are needed for the professional development of inmates. Mattucci (2006), who teaches adult education in a New York state prison, justifies a shift towards vocational training because he believes that these courses provide inmates with practical training that will translate into better prospects for employment. Other research suggests that emphasizing vocational training in corrections is misguided, because higher education has proven to be the best way to prevent recidivism (McCarthy 2006). However, juvenile justice policies that require convicted individuals to pay restitution to their victims or make employment a condition of early release, probation or parole status encourage programs that lead to immediate employment rather than programs that require long-term investments before they will pay

off in the form of new employment. As a result, some student may re-enter society with the ability to do certain types of labor but without the basic mathematics and reading skills that would allow them greater flexibility and independence in choosing a lifelong career.

Teaching in detention facilities usually involves instructing students that have a number of educational deficits, many of which are not addressed by penal institutions (Zable and Nigro 2007). Correctional educators often encounter students with undiagnosed disabilities, linguistic impairments or drug dependence (Iasevoli 2007; Gehring 2007). An increasingly large percentage of inmates are culturally and linguistically diverse, meaning they speak English as a second language (Collier and Thomas 2001). In addition, many inmates lack basic academic skills such as phonemic awareness and the ability to add beyond single-digit numbers (Foley and Gao 2004). In addition to the specific characteristics of the student population, the structure of correctional facilities creates unique challenges for effective teaching.

Unlike traditional schools correctional officers³ often monitor schools inside of jails. Correctional guards are supposed to maintain order inside of the detention facility, enable prisoner rehabilitation, and keep them and corrections staff safe (Gray and Salole 2006; Dvoskin and Spiers 2004; Rutherford 1993; Stadler 1992). Although correctional officers are supposed to facilitate rehabilitation they tend to view their jobs as primarily about maintaining control of inmates and ensuring the rules and regulations of the facility are met (Crawley 2004). They view educational opportunities and classes as either an undue reward for prisoners or as a situation that presents new challenges for their own safety (Crawley 2004). Thus, research has shown that correctional guards tend to view

³ Correctional officer and correctional guard will be referred to interchangeably throughout the paper.

teachers with contempt, as they believe instructors are overly compassionate and empathetic (Bouchard and Kunze 2003).

As a result of these attitudes correctional guards often engaged in behavior that undermines the educational process through the harassment of teachers, the harassment of students and by micromanaging educational programs. Guards sometimes prevent teachers from getting to their classrooms or fabricate rules to justify excessive waiting times for access to facilities and other resources (Thomas 1983; Zabel and Nigro 2007). The harassment of students by guards can range from rude statements to bodily assault. Iasevoli (2007) found that prisoners are often terrorized by the guards when attempting to do homework for class or are physically intimidated when they try to attend their courses. In the state of Michigan, a professor in an all-women's facility teaching a women's studies course, shared this: "...another (guard)...(told) the women that they would have to stay in the class 100 years because it would take that long to understand women. Such comments are unfortunately not unfamiliar..." (Lempert et. al. 203:2005). It is not only low-level guards who engage in harassing behavior, wardens and administrators may also put up barriers to effective correctional education. For example, many wardens are constantly reviewing educational programs in an attempt to manage every aspect of their institution (Gehring 2007). Harassment by guards and administrators discourages instructors from working in correctional institutions and also pushes inmates out of educational programs (Zabel and Nigro 2007).

These difficulties experienced by teachers do not appear to be caused by rogue correctional officers, but, in fact, are entirely consistent with the punitive nature of detention facilities. The purpose of this study is to explore the teaching techniques,

practices and philosophy of correctional educators and to learn how they cope with the obstacles in corrections.

METHODOLOGY

Using ethnographic research I entered the world of juvenile detention facilities for 15 months. According to Emerson et al. (1995) the goal of ethnography work is to immerse oneself in the lives of your respondents and to understand what they feel is meaningful and important. I achieved this by conducting qualitative interviews, which I supplemented with participant observations at three juvenile detention facilities. Prior to beginning this project I developed a key set of questions that guided my research.

I used five main questions to guide my semi-structured interviews. These questions were worded as follows: 1) Tell me about getting into teaching in corrections? 2) Can you tell me about your experiences teaching? 3) Can you tell me about some of the highpoints you have encountered working here? 4) Can you describe a day of teaching? 5) What do you think is most important your students go away with from your class? These main questions also included sub questions, which can be found in the appendix. During the interviews I encouraged participants to focus on issues that they felt were particularly important to teaching in corrections.

Each interview lasted between one to three hours with most lasting about an hour and half. At the end of this process I had gathered approximately 18 hours of digitally recorded data. I primarily used snowballing techniques to recruit teachers for my study. However, I also used multiple contact points in order to obtain a wider breath of teachers' experiences. Instead of relying on my first respondent as the sole means of find other participants, I randomly called teachers employed by juvenile justice facilities. Using this

technique allowed me to reduce the bias of using a convenience sample. Since I used snowballing techniques, I am unable to find at random if most correctional educators are caring and compassionate or if my sampling techniques lead me to these types of instructors.

During my jail visits, I toured the facilities, interviewed teachers and guest lectured in correctional classrooms. During these lectures I discussed how to gain access to academic resources and how to transfer from community college to four year Universities. Agreeing to guest lecture allowed me to gain access into the facilities where my respondents worked. This greatly enhanced my study as it allowed me to contextualize the teaching environment of the instructors I was trying to understand. Moreover, it allowed me to gain access to total institutions that are often off limits to researchers.

Of the twelve participants, five were male and seven female. Two of the males identified as Mexican-American or Latino. Two male teachers self-identified as white and one considered himself African-American. Of the seven female teachers I interviewed, one identified as Chicana while four women self-identified as white. Finally, two of the female instructors were African Americans.

The teachers varied in age from early twenties to mid fifties, although most instructors were in their late thirties or early forties. All of the teachers have worked in juvenile facilities for at least one year, but most of them have worked in corrections for ten or more years. While all the instructors were currently teaching in detention facilities, two of them were employed as long-term substitutes rather than as tenure-track teachers. However, all teachers had the same day-to-day responsibilities. Of the teachers I

interviewed four taught special education, five taught English and history and three taught math and science. Most of them were educated at traditional teaching colleges and two were educated in the Ivy League. All of them had a bachelor’s degrees and at least one teaching credential. Several of the instructors have multiple teaching credentials and/or a master’s degree. Table 1. shows participants pseudonyms, age, race and teaching area.

Table 1. Participants

Name	Race	Age	Gender	Teaching Area
Briana	Black	30	Female	Math/Science
Anna	White	34	Female	English/History
Rachel	White	51	Female	Math/Science
Janice	Black	45	Female	English/History
Rose	White	58	Female	Special Education
Frank	Black	46	Male	English/History
Manuel	Latino	29	Male	English/History
Leslie	White	35	Female	Math/Science
Tim	White	39	Male	English/History
Javier	Latino	40	Male	English/History
John	White	41	Male	Special Education
Maria	Chicana	23	Female	Special Education

The Setting

In San Diego County there are four main juvenile detention facilities housing a total of approximately 900 juveniles. These facilities are under the direct control of the San Diego County Probation Department that is responsible for holding incarcerated juveniles, hiring correctional staff and maintaining these facilities. Unlike traditional

schools that are usually under the direct supervision of a centralized school district, correctional schools in San Diego fall under the auspices of both the San Diego County Office of Education and the Juvenile Court and Community Schools. The four detention facilities employ a total of approximately fifty-seven full-time instructors as well as an unknown number of long-term substitutes or teaching assistants who also work in correctional classrooms. Although in some ways these schools are otherwise operated like almost any other, they differ in that they must adhere to the rules, regulations and authority of the probation department.

In these facilities the Probation department is in charge of bringing kids from their cells to correctional classrooms. These classrooms are located inside of the unit where inmates are held. Due to this, it takes less than one minute for students to walk out of their cells and into class. The probation department is also in charge of supervising students throughout the facility and dealing with discipline issues such as fights and aggressive behavior in the classroom. Correctional classrooms typically use block schedules where two to four separate groups of students sequentially occupy one classroom for approximately two-hour blocks. After two hours, one group of students leaves and goes to another classroom while another group enters the classroom that was just occupied by the first group of students.

Teachers identified several challenges associated with working within a detention facility. First, unlike instructors in traditional classrooms for adolescents, teachers in this setting teach more than one subject. Instructors usually taught both math and science or English and history. Many of them also organize several independent study sessions where they work closely with their students in order to help them earn credits towards a

high school diploma or a GED. Second, the career track of a correctional educator is also different. Principals, vice-principals and sometimes instructors are tasked with hiring new teachers. Most teachers currently working in this setting started as teaching assistant or long-term substitute where they worked for a substantial amount of time before transitioning into full-time teaching positions. Finally, these instructors have to deal with gang issues in the classroom and constantly monitor supplies that can be stolen and used to deface the facility or to hurt other inmates and faculty.

For the most part correctional schools resemble traditional public schools. Correctional classrooms look very much like non-correctional classrooms but there are several differences that are unique to the location. A typical classroom in the jail looks something like this: At the front of the class room there is a long white board with an attached smart board. The smart board allows teachers to use multimedia videos and access the Internet while teaching. The smart board and white board are mounted to a cinder block wall that is painted white. Under the white board there are posters with words like “success” pasted to the wall. There are also banners of colleges that teachers attended such as San Diego State University and the University of California, Los Angeles. The rooms often have posters depicting social justice activist like Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., Noam Chomsky and César Chavez. To the left of the white board in the corner of the room, there is a sink with an attached drinking fountain. Next to the drinking foundation there are three computers for student use resting on a blue shelf. To the right side of the room sits the teacher’s well-worn wooden desk. A stack of papers and a computer monitor sit atop the desk. Next to it are a couple of steel bookshelves and file cabinets. The ceiling is white and has six double light florescent fixtures lined up one

after the other with about 6 inches in between each. These lights illuminate the classroom very well. In between two of these fixtures you have a projector that is mounted to the ceiling as well. The classroom has a gray tile floor that is peppered with brown tiles in random locations. In the middle of the class there are five rows of five desks lined up one in front of the other. These desks are gray and heavier than one would find in most traditional non-correctional schools. Aside from the desk, you get the general impression that you are in any common classroom.

However, once you turn around you see a camera nestled in the right corner of the room. Turn further and you can see that one entire wall consists solely of a blue steel frame that is holding thick glass panels in place. Through this wall you can see out into the rest of the facility. On the first floor you have multiple cells with kids behind heavy blue steel doors with small glass windows in the middle that allow staffers to peer into the cell and the kids to peer out. On this same floor there are showers with blue doors that only cover the middle of a person's body, but leave the upper body and legs exposed. On the second floor you have more cells with the same blue steel doors. It is not until you turn one hundred and eighty degrees from the white board in the class and look through the wall of steel and glass that you realize you are in a detention facility. For the teachers that work in these classrooms the view of the correctional facility is the scene they will see when they are standing in front of the room interacting with their pupils. This backdrop is a static reminder that they are not in a traditional classroom.

CORRECTIONAL EDUCATORS

In this study, I gained a better understanding of the experiences of teachers who work in juvenile detention facilities in San Diego County. In particular, I was interested

in the pedagogy employed by instructors who work in corrections. During our interviews correctional educators also provided me with several details unique to teaching in this setting.

Based on my interviews and some of my observations in the classroom, I found that the teachers who work in this setting are a caring and compassionate group. Most of the instructors I interviewed, 11 out of 12, mentioned getting into correctional teaching by chance as they had not previously intended to go into this type of education. Nevertheless, many of these instructors demonstrate their dedication to their students by organizing extracurricular activities. For example, one instructor created a drama program and another teacher brings in poets from the community to teach students how to write poetry. Many others volunteer their time after work and on the weekends to put on plays, provide mentoring to their students and to beautify the facilities by planting vegetable and flower gardens.

The teachers I interviewed also seemed very socially conscious and cognizant of the inequalities that contributed to their students being incarcerated. Several of them noted that most of their students are students of color and talked about discrimination, injustice, sexism, and white privilege freely and openly although half, six of twelve, are not themselves people of color. In spite of working in this unorthodox and often difficult environment, the teachers all mentioned their jobs as being extremely rewarding. Nevertheless, all the instructors described teaching in this setting as being challenging and often emotionally draining.

The students in these classrooms resemble the general makeup of the imprisoned populace of the US (San Diego County 2009). The inmates in these juvenile facilities

range from nine to nineteen years of age. They are predominantly Black and Latino and come from working class families (Gilmore 2007; Reiman 1995). According to instructors, they often have low academic skills and have not attended school regularly throughout their lives. Current research shows that the majority of incarcerated juveniles have moderate to severe academic deficiencies (Leone et. al. 2005; Foley 2001). For example, 34 percent of incarcerated youth were reported to have an educational disability compared to 12.7 percent of students in public schools (Quinn et. al. 2005).

Because students are required to be in school while they are incarcerated, many work towards a diploma or GED. For the students that attain a diploma or certificate while they are incarcerated, the schools within the facilities organize graduation ceremonies and invite the friends and family of the graduates. During these ceremonies kids are able to address the audience and their instructors say a few words about them.

Unlike traditional classrooms that have specific classes for students based on their level of educational proficiency, correctional classrooms generally lump students from various grades and educational abilities into the same room. This can be as extreme as having a student that cannot add in class with a student who is doing pre-calculus, or students that cannot read in the same classroom as a student that can give a lecture on famous literary works such as the Odyssey.

For the teachers I interviewed, working in this setting provides them with a unique opportunity to work with and educate individuals who have often been overlooked in traditional classroom. Though all of the instructors I interviewed wanted their students to succeed inside as well as outside of the facility, many of the teachers mentioned high recidivism rates and often seeing their pupils return to their classrooms. My findings

illustrate some of the experiences, challenges, and teaching techniques used by correctional educators.

While analyzing my data, several themes emerged which I present three categories. The first category of findings “Teaching Prisoners” focuses on issues specific to the incarcerated student population. Teachers point out that due to the structure of institution, they have students in the same classroom who are at very different levels of academic preparation. Since these are students who have often had negative school experiences and general problems with authority, building a working rapport with them is extremely important but also quite difficult. Students in correctional classrooms may have significant gaps in their academic knowledge which means that they may be at a substantially higher grade level in one area (e.g. math) than in another (e.g. English). Teachers also argue that their students are intelligent in ways that are not usually measured by traditional academic metrics. Finally, instructors constantly have to change their teaching techniques and improvise in the classroom.

The second category of findings “Teachers and their Experiences” deals with the specific challenges that these teachers experience which they see as being unique to teaching in the correctional setting versus mainstream classrooms. Teachers discussed the dilemma of having to play multiple roles while teaching e.g. having to act as teachers, counselors, therapist and mentors. Instructors also mentioned experiencing harassment from correctional guards as well as guards harassing their students. They also mentioned that no one teaches new teachers about how to deal with the correctional facility procedures.

The last set of findings titled “Jail Pedagogy” deals with the pedagogy of the instructors and the extent to which they embody the teachings of Paolo Freire and other critical pedagogy scholars. The instructors talked about teaching with love and compassion; they also created a space in their classroom where they felt their students began to feel empowered. Finally, they connected their students’ culture to the material they were teaching. My findings both support the insights I garnered from the academic literature and also provide new findings in correctional education. The next three findings subsections will follow the outline that I laid out in the previous paragraphs.

Teaching Prisoners

The teachers I interviewed discussed the many difficulties associated with working in this setting. First, they usually have students of very different academic abilities in class at the same time, which makes instruction difficult and can encourage some students to engage in disruptive behavior. Second, teachers noted that they have to struggle to build rapport with students, many of whom view authority figures with distrust. Third, instructors discussed their students having large gaps in their academic knowledge. However, teachers noted that their students differ from kids in mainstream classrooms in a positive way as well. The teachers often found their students were intelligent in ways not often measured. Finally, instructors described correctional classrooms as being in constant flux, which required them to continuously modify their teaching techniques.

Half of the twelve instructors complained that having students at different levels in the same classroom made teaching more difficult. While some language arts

instructors mentioned this as an issue, it was more likely to be mentioned by math and science teachers. Briana, an energetic, caring and socially conscious instructor provided a salient example of the repercussions of having students at different levels in the same classroom:

I pulled a kid the other day (out of the classroom)... he is sixteen now and when he was thirteen he had a seizure. He had no memory of anything. He had to learn how to walk, talk, and feed himself--all of these things over again. When he is in class, he does not understand anything that is going on, nothing. So the teacher takes the transparency and puts it on his desk and says, "just copy down what I am writing." So I work with him and we work on some basic words and he wanted to send his mom a card and he wanted to write happy birthday, so he wanted to learn how to write out some of these basic words. I could only work with him that day, but the resources do not allow for someone to come work with him everyday...So what do you do in those situations? You just pretty much say "I can't help you." It is like letting go of someone's hand and saying there is no more room on this lifeboat, you are just going to drown.

This example is one of the more extreme challenges of any of the teachers mentioned but speaks to the point that teachers faced numerous challenges by the different academic levels of their students. While this problem is not unique to teaching in jails, it can hinder the learning process of incarcerated students who often have a history of difficulties in school. Furthermore, not addressing the needs of incarcerated students can lead to violent outburst in the classroom. Rachel noted that some students were disengaged when covering rudimentary material and other pupils acted out when the material was too difficult. She provides an explanation for why having multi-level classrooms is likely to be more of a problem for math and science teachers than for instructors in other subject areas.

We don't have one class for Algebra I. We don't get one class for kids that are just learning how to multiply. It is everybody all at once every period. There is no separation by ability. Math, unlike other subjects, you have to do in order. You can read history out of order; you can read American history and it doesn't matter if you don't read any world history. With math you can't do your algebra if you really didn't get fractions. You can't get past linear equations. So we had to develop this juggling approach so that the brightest and most advanced kids are getting their needs met as well as the kids that are completely terrified of math.

Rachel solved this problem by assigning her students' work at different levels simultaneously. She accomplished this by providing students with self-contained lessons that start from the beginning of math and move through to advanced courses such as calculus.

For correctional instructors building rapport with their students is key infor teaching in this setting. Building a good rapport with students in correctional facilities can be difficult as many students view all adults with suspicion. Anna, a seasoned instructor and ex-correctional guard said, "the kids see all adults as just another correctional officer." Because of this and the students' general distrust of adults, it is absolutely necessary for instructors to build rapport if they are going to teach their students successfully. Anna elaborates on this point here:

... what they (students) ended up doing is fighting every adult that they associated with that system (detention facility), which includes the teachers and I am not use[d] to that. It has really been a humbling experience for me. Because I was use[d] to being able to very easily overcome that and develop rapport with my students. And I think a lot of it had to do with the fact that I was out so much...If you don't have rapport with your kids it's not like, in my opinion, in a more affluent community where the kids don't necessarily need to have rapport with their teacher. They are academically inclined. I was this way. I was raised to do well in school; I knew I would do well in school from the age of three or four because it is just ingrained in my brain. It's what I was; I was to be a student that was my job. You study, you don't have to like your teachers. Your teachers don't have to like you. You learn your material and you get out of school. That is not my kids' experience. My kids have to be connected to me for anything I do to be relevant.

Anna illustrates how integral building rapport is in a correctional classroom. She realized how important this is when she was forced to be away from her class and had trouble gaining the trust of her students. Rose, a special education instructors in her late fifties with 30 years of teaching experience expands on the importance of building trust with her students:

I understand that yes, covering the curriculum is very important and standard-based instruction is very important, but you are not going to get anywhere with these troubled young men if you don't prioritize establishing rapport so that they trust you. It takes a lot of trust to attempt to do something you don't know how to do.

Anna and Rose embody the sentiments of seven of the twelve instructors that mentioned rapport building as an important part of teaching successfully in corrections classrooms. The importance of trust building has also been identified by other academics (Erickson 2001; Strawderman 1994; Thomas 1983).

All of the instructors I interviewed stated that their students had large gaps in their academic knowledge. Instructors talked about the dilemmas of trying to fill some of these voids while also trying to teach new material. This double strain slows classroom learning and adds another obstacle for correctional educators. Janice discussed her students' academic deficiencies and the challenges this poses:

...if I ask them to read a section in the history book they don't understand. If I ask them to answer the questions in the back, they do what a lot of kids do. They see the keyword in the question and see the keyword in the book and copy everything around that, they don't even put it into their own words. So that is how deficient most of them are. So I am in a struggle the whole time. Do you want me to teach them the content area or do you want me to teach them how to read? And now you have these state standards, "you have to teach them, this, this and this (in an angry administrator's voice). So I am in a constant struggle and if I ask them to read it they don't understand it and I have to explain it to them, break it down for them. So they walk away with the knowledge but I haven't helped their skill in reading.... But there is no time to actually teach reading because they should have learned that already. When do I teach it? So it is a struggle. You do what you can.

Teachers are expected to teach students new material, which entails meeting state standards and preparing them for the California High School Exit Exam, but they are provided no extra time to help fill in their students' educational gaps. Thus teachers are stuck with having to work twice as hard to teach their students. Javier elaborates on this double strain:

I mean they (students) come to me and I have kids that have not gone to a traditional school with any regularity since the fourth grade or fifth grade. So here they are now eighteen or seventeen (years old) and they have all these holes in their education. The way their educational system is set up, it is like stairs. You build a foundation and then you take a step. You build a foundation and then you take a step. You build a foundation and then you take a step. And you are not dumb or slow or anything else. You are missing a bunch of these steps in the middle, so now all of a sudden you took those first few steps and the circumstances required you to miss a bunch. Now because of your age you are now in high school. So you are behind, not because your brain is not capable, not because you are not capable or motivated, it is because you missed those critical steps

in the middle. So a big part of our thing is to go back and create those scaffolds and build upon that while still pushing forward. And from an academic sense I would say that that is how we really earn our money as jail teachers...and that comes back to one of the big differences. We can't make the assumption that they have those foundational steps (in their education) because most of them don't. Some do. At a traditional school I knew when my student came to me ready because they have been through this. They understand taking US history so I can make all kinds of academic assumptions and I react accordingly. Whereas here you can't. So a lot of it, what you lay out, it is also building foundations and you are also building forward. So it is building scaffolds as you build forward.

Javier very articulately discusses how correctional educators have to develop ways to work with students who often lack basic educational skills. Students and teachers both have double-strain in correctional classrooms. Students have to learn skills they should've learned in earlier grades and teachers have to help them to do this while teaching new material required for their grade level. Instructors are not provided extra time or resources to do both types of teaching.

Instructors noted that when given the opportunity, their students often were able to very quickly absorb new information and training. Tim mentioned one incident where a student with a speech impediment decided to recite a passage from Shakespeare's

Romeo and Juliet:

There was this one kid. I was explaining that Shakespeare's plays have been taught using only males, including the roles of Juliet because that was the law. And I said we will be learning like them. Here is a kid with a speech impediment having to learn the lines of Juliet, and he had enough confidence because the students honored him for taking on the role of a female but also they respected the fact that he had the courage to do it despite his speech impediment...I am excited to see kids get up and use things that I taught them, that they have been able to improve upon. They have taken the skill I have given them and taken it way beyond what I can do.

Tim's experience exemplifies the remarks made by seven out of the twelve instructors. Students who never attended school regularly often demonstrated forms of intelligence not often measured such as the ability and courage to act in front of their class. Janice said:

Everyone thinks that our kids are stupid or something but there are a lot of bright kids just like in the regular schools. If you don't challenge them, if you don't go fast enough they will just tune you out. I talked to a kid today and he said he had never gone to a school when he was not locked

up, when he was on the outs (not incarcerated). And I said you need to go ahead and get your GED and bypass this high school thing and go on to college because you are bright you have a lot of potential and school is just too slow for him and too boring.

The instructors expressed these feelings about their students and believed that their pupils are very intelligent. Janice believed her student was bright enough to succeed in college and should work for his GED and move on to higher education. The instructors were also aware that most employees not affiliated with the school in the facility as well as in the general public believe that these students are intellectually deficient or unable to succeed in school. Although students might be educationally deficient in specific subject areas this does not mean they are intellectually deficient. In fact, they demonstrate considerable intellectual abilities.

Students in correctional classrooms have a variety of needs and learn using several different methods. Because of the diverse needs of incarcerated students, teachers noted that there is “never a typical day”. The classroom is in constant flux and teachers are constantly changing their teaching practices. Ten of the twelve instructors I spoke with discussed having to constantly change improvise in the classroom. When I asked Rachel how often she changed her teaching techniques she replied:

Every hour. You have to use a whole bunch of different stuff because you have all different kinds of learners. Special education teachers will tell you the same thing. If things are not working, and I can see their eyes are dead, I change it right there. If I do a new lesson I know that it may be great and it may be terrible. If it is terrible I will actually change the lesson for the next period. And I tell my first period you are the unlucky guys who get my first run through. By the time six period comes I will be great at this. So I actually change the technique on the spot if it is not working.

The teachers I spoke with mentioned changing their techniques and improvising as being key to not “losing your students” and to “getting them the material.” Leslie shared a very interesting example of improvising in the classroom:

We just had a student that no one knew he was special ed (a special education student). I am sitting there looking at what he is doing on his paper and we need to find out if this kid is special

ed or if we need to test him. I went over and talked to him and talked to our special ed people and it turns out he is special ed, and he fell through the system. He does have an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) but we did not know because no one told use when he came into the system. So I am sitting there thinking about how we are going to help him. He is an auditory learner and teaching him math is very difficult. Plus he is very kinesthetic. So, I just put some paper clips out for manipulatives and the next thing you know he is taking the paperclips and everything is coming together. He is listening and it is clicking. Whereas if he did not have anything to do with his hands he would not be getting it. It is those little things that we go, "oh, now we have a new trick." Let's put this out and see what he does. These are things that we have never even thought of...Even the special ed teacher said he never experienced something like that.

Teachers mentioned incidents like the one above where they would have to change their techniques or improvise in the middle of class.

Teachers and Their Experiences

The previous section summarizes some of the challenges associated with incarcerated students, however, their individual characteristics were not the only significant issues affecting pedagogy. While the jails themselves are cold, concrete and steel structures that seem static, the teachers I spoke to mentioned having to adapt to constant changes inside these facilities. They also mentioned having to be flexible due to the constant possibility of change within the facility that can include fights, riots, students suffering from drug withdrawals and unexpected inspections from higher-level administrators. However, teachers also noted that the corrections setting presented several other unique challenges. First, instructors mentioned having to be flexible in their roles as educators that often require them to work as mentors and life coaches in their classrooms. Second, teachers noted that they and their students experience harassment by correctional officers and that this dynamic of intimidation leads to negative consequences for teaching and learning. Finally, teachers often find themselves in this strange

environment with very little if any preparation for the specific challenges associated with working in corrections.

Half of all the instructors I spoke with discussed having to play multiple roles in their classroom. For example, teachers had to work as school counselors and life coaches. Manuel elaborated on how he takes on the role of “life coach” for his students:

My goal for the kids is for them to see that there was another option. Whether it was giving them my personal experiences or whether it is bringing people into class to talk to them. I did whatever I could to let them know that there is another way out. It was not just about gang banging or representing for your hood, killing and so and so. There is a lot more to life than that. And if I did not get the point across to them then I failed. So most of the time I think I did a pretty good job of getting the message across. Whether it was by bringing special speakers into the classroom, giving them my personal experiences and just showing them that I cared about their lives. That pretty much sometimes did the job. And they allowed me to kind of put them under my wing and guide them through the whole process.

Teachers also discussed having to act as a counselor/mentor for their students. Tim talked about how his students confide in him and how he provides them emotional support during difficult life events:

For example, I think more so than the regular school especially where I teach. I can be kind of not just a teacher but a mentor. I can be someone that kids will confide in. If a member of their family passes away or one of their friends were killed and so, I get to play the role of counselor or just someone who is willing to listen and extend a bit of sympathy.

In addition to the demand of having to fill many roles for their students, teachers talked about how difficulties with guards affected them and their pupils.

The teachers noted that correctional guards frequently harassed students and teachers. Although this was less commonly mentioned than other themes, many of the stories the instructors shared were alarming. Anna elaborated on the interactions with her students and correctional guards:

Just watching sometimes the way they (correctional guards) treat the kids, it so affects the kids and the place they are in and how able they are to actually take in what’s going on in the classroom. If you got a funky officer on duty that has just been messing with the kid all morning long you got a whole classroom room full of kids that just won’t learn that day. So that can be a huge challenge... (if) you get the one random officer in there we all have bad days.

Incidents such as the one mentioned by Anna are not atypical. Javier has similar experiences to that of Anna:

But the difficulties to be honest with you are the daily interactions. You see the conflict constantly between the line officers and the way they speak with one of my students. And they call them wards, I call them students. It is frustrating to know that you just built-up that kid or you have been attempting to build that kid up and to have him ask to go to the bathroom and to have the officer degrade him and break him down. And to have him coming in mumbling and angry and upset and whatever is upsetting.

Javier describes how correctional officers adversely affect the learning process. Six of the twelve teachers I interviewed mentioned the guards as being problematic inside and outside of the classroom. Leslie shared with me an incident where a correctional officer entered her class and disrespected her in front of her students. During this event her students spoke up and told the guard “we don’t speak like that to the teacher.” Once Leslie left for the day the guard:

...took them out and it was in the wintertime. He took them out at like 8 o’clock at night. And out where we are it is very cold without their jackets and made them walk two miles. And not just walk, they call it duck walk, for two miles in the cold. I am sitting there saying it is a wonder all of you don’t have pneumonia.

The guard punished the students for speaking out against him and defending their teacher. Harassment by correctional staff is ubiquitous in correctional education and has been identified in prior research systemic problem (Gehring 2007; Zabel and Nigro 2007; Lempert et. al. 2005).

One of the overarching themes involved the lack of training educators received to teach in a correctional classroom. All of the instructors asserted that they had not receiving training to teach in this setting. Tim stated, “I am all for learning as far as the theories. But when push comes to shove, when you are in the classroom you are writing your own theories in a hurry.” Correctional educators felt unprepared and undertrained when they began their careers.

When I asked Briana if she received training to teach in corrections she said:

No. (laughs out loud and smiles) Are you kidding? No. For me it was trial and error. A month after I started working there I got up in front of a classroom and started teaching by myself in the classroom with just an emergency button and a class. So my assessment of the juvenile justice system has just been from trial and error and observation. It is not stuff that I learned in a textbook or in a class it is stuff that I observed.

All of the teachers describe the lack of training as problematic. Several also mentioned depending on previous training or training that was offered on a volunteer basis only.

Some teachers describe beginning to teach in a correctional classroom as “sink or swim.”

Maria said this when I asked her about training:

They just basically told me here is the walkie-talkie, if a kid needs to go to the bathroom this is what you say. If a kid breaks out in a fight you yell, “fight” over the walkie-talkie. I don’t think I was given all of the different codes that you use to say different things. I wasn’t even trained for a fire drill. We had a fire drill and I was just like, “OK, what do I do?” And I basically grabbed the role book, grabbed the walkie-talkie and was just like “OK let’s go”. Because I didn’t know if I was suppose to stay in the room, or if the two rings meant stay in because something outside is going on or there is a fire and you are suppose to go out. I didn’t know any of that. They didn’t train me on any of that. Then we had a meeting and they said “oh yeah, you guys did really poorly” and during the meeting I said I wasn’t trained. I didn’t know what I was supposed to do. And I think the head teacher responded to me, “Oh there is a fire drill manual pasted to the back of your door. Which there wasn’t! So I basically peeked my head out of the door and I was just like “alright guys let’s go”, and I lined them (students) up and took them where I saw everyone else going because I didn’t know what I was doing. And things like that, I wasn’t trained on what do to or how to do things, or what to do in case of a fight. Should I try to intervene? Should I step back? There was just absolutely no training. I think I shadowed a teacher for two days. Which wasn’t a teacher so much as a substitute that was there before me. Training was non-existent.

Maria illustrates very well her lack of training and the general lack of training the teachers received to work in a correctional classroom. This varies from basic school drills and extends to emergency situations like fights in the classroom that can often be very violent. The lack of training was one of the most commonly shared themes in the narratives of the teachers I spoke with.

Jail Pedagogy

While teaching in this setting is often challenging the educators I spoke with are adopting a compassionate teaching approach. Freire calls for teaching as an act of love where educators comprehend their position of power and attempt to change this dynamic

through praxis and libratory pedagogy. The teachers I interviewed are doing just that. Ten of the twelve instructors I spoke with have rejected the repressive nature of traditional “banking” education and their own role in the hegemonic⁴ educational system by using Freire’s ideas and the ideas of other critical pedagogy scholars. These teachers have embodied what Freire refers to as teaching with love. Part of their critical pedagogy has led them to create programs inside of their classrooms and in the detention facilities that help to inspire and empower their students. Integral to the process of teaching with caring and sensitivity, teachers are incorporating the cultures of their pupils during the learning process.

Freire (1970) discusses teaching with love as key component in libratory pedagogy. Although many of the instructors did not explicitly mention love or teaching with love, they did demonstrate compassion, care, and understanding during interviews and in the classroom. Teachers showed this by bringing in motivational speakers, planting gardens, tutoring students after school, sharing their own troubled past, bringing professional poets to their classrooms, organizing poetry workshops, as well as creating drama programs for their students; all of which they volunteered to do and were not paid for. Javier embodies teaching with love:

...I have always said that to all the administrators that I have up here, I lead with my heart. And to me it is real simple. If your students sense it, your management and the way you run your room will for the most part run itself. Because there is an unstated respect and you won’t have the issues and the incidents and the fights or they will be very limited. And I have been very fortunate and blessed, for the kids and I to have that. And that is sort of an unstated respect for one another. And again I am hoping that that comes from the consistency of me kind of doing things the way that I have over the years... (but) My core is the same, compassion and understanding.

⁴ “Hegemony is a topic widely discussed by Antonio Gramsci, Hegemony is defined as “a process of social control that is carried out through the moral and intellectual leadership of a dominant sociocultural class over subordinate groups.” (Darder et. al. 2003:13)

Javier discusses here how the core of his teaching comes from compassion and understanding. Because of this, he is able to minimize fights and outburst in the classroom as well as foster a mutual respect with his students. Javier is embodying Freire's notion of teaching with love and teaching with courage, "...love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is commitment to others. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause..." (Freire 1970:89). Javier and the other instructors exemplified the courage of teaching with love in their narratives and through the programs they created in their classrooms.

While teaching in this setting is challenging and students are often underprepared, the teachers I spoke with created programs within correctional classrooms that helped support and inspire their students to work towards empowerment through education and academic achievement. Anna, when discussing a poetry workshop she developed for her students said this:

...if I had to pick one thing that has kind of changed the way that I do education, changed my ability to educate kids it would be poetry workshop. Because when students first come to the workshop they almost always say "I don't want to come, I don't write poetry, I don't know how to write poetry." There are no rules in this poetry workshop; poetry is just two lines on a piece of paper. If you write down "My life sucks and I hate being here today" you have written a poem because you have expressed something from the heart. So you get kids that come into the poetry workshops saying "I don't write poetry" then walk out the door feeling like they are on top of the world because they have expressed themselves. And what we do then is send a journal with them to their rooms and invariably within three or four days the kid is going to come back to me with a journal and he is going to have five more poems in there that he has just been writing in his room...so it allows them to really express themselves and it really boost their self-confidence (because) these are kids that are really lacking in self-proficiency. I have had students that write at a first grade level, and instead of writing their poetry they dictated their poetry to me and I put their poetry down on paper and they love that. For the first time they are able to put their thoughts down on paper and express them to the rest of their class and they feel intelligent.

Educators use programs like this to help inspire their students and to facilitate academic breakthroughs and success for their pupils. Teachers mentioned wanting their students to realize "that education is for them" and that they can succeed in a classroom even if they have not previously succeeded in the educational arena. John challenges his students to

“prove people wrong” by attaining a diploma:

I think the most important thing right now is the belief that they can succeed no matter what anybody tells them. I always tell them that a good motivator is when somebody tells you that you can't do something. But if somebody tells you “hey, you can't get your diploma, you are going to be in jail the rest of your life. Hey, you are going to be nothing but a dope head on the side of the corner.” You want to get the best revenge, a lot of the kids have anger, prove them wrong, that is the best thing you can do. So you can motivate them once they get out of school, or continue with education or with a trade or something positive.

John creates a space in his classroom where he is able to motivate his students by challenging them to prove that they can complete their education and achieve other goals they previously thought were unattainable. These goals range from getting a high school diploma, to matriculating into a university, or to staying sober if they are struggling with drug addiction. Although teachers cannot directly empower their students (Freire 1970) they are in a position to support this process. Antonia Darder describes empowerment as

”...a process that we as individuals must willingly and freely undertake for ourselves. Within the classroom, this entails participation in pedagogical relationships in which students experience the freedom to break through the imposed myths and illusions that stifle their empowerment as subjects of history and the space to take individual and collective actions that can empower and transform their lives... Teachers do not “empower” their students, but they are in a position to support their process by creating the dialogical conditions, activities, and opportunities that nourish this developing process within students...” (Darder 2002:110)

Darder argues that students cannot be directly empowered by instructors, but instructors can use pedagogy and create programs that provide dialogical conditions and opportunities where students can breakthrough negative notions of themselves and experience empowerment through their own success. The educators I interviewed expressed commitment to facilitate student empowerment in their classrooms.

Along with creating programs and spaces to inspire the empowerment of their students, correctional educators use their pupils' culture and previous experiences in the teaching process. Correctional classrooms consist predominantly of Latinos and African Americans (Gillmore 2007). Instructors used novels written by prominent people of

color during literature lessons, text writing by ex-inmates, and they incorporated counter-narratives during history lessons. Anna described the importance of using such texts:

...we try to find authors that are either writing novels that somehow relate to the kids experience because they have to connect with the literature somehow. So we don't do a lot of the traditional classics, we have read Jimmy Santiago Baca... Jimmy Santiago Baca is a man that spent time in federal prison and was illiterate when he went in and he became this prolific poet while he was there.

Many of the instructors mentioned using critical texts in their classrooms like Howard Zinn's *A Peoples History of the United: 1492 to Present*. Manuel said this about incorporating the cultures of his students in a history lesson:

...I try and bring as much cultural stuff into the classroom as possible, that is what I do every single day. Whatever I am teaching I try to incorporate whatever relates to them (students). If we are talking about history stuff I try to bring in as much of how did a Chicano or African American contribute to that cause. We were talking about the Vietnam War and the Black Panthers and Brown Berets came into play and we talked about the Chicano Movement...For some of us we hear the Chicano movement and we hear Dolores Huerta, César Chavez, Reyes Tijerina, and Corky Gonzalez and all of that makes sense to us, but a lot of these kids have never heard of these people...And I think it is important to teach them about what certain people did, certain voices for the Chicanos and African Americans like Malcolm X. All of these people who are leaders in the African American community we need to bring them in somehow, some way, that is what is going to spark their interest and they are going to want to learn about it. Now you are relating it to them, to their background, and to their experiences and they may know somebody, who knows, you know somebody who went through that period and as soon as you sparked that interest than that kid is all yours and what ever you tell him from that point is money.

For Freire and other critical education scholars, incorporating the narratives of marginalized groups is key. Lilia I. Bartolomé (2003) states "The actual strengths of methods depend, first and foremost, and the degree to which they embrace a humanizing pedagogy that values the student's background knowledge, culture, and life experiences" (p. 424). The instructors that I interviewed are using the humanizing pedagogy prescribed by Bartolomé by incorporating the culture and experiences of students during lessons and within the classroom.

In this section, I discussed how instructors are teaching incarcerated students. I also examined their experiences teaching in this setting. Finally, I elaborated on their

teaching approach and how it embodies critical pedagogy. Adopting a critical pedagogy inside of juvenile justice facilities has implications for how we view these institutions and how instructors are teaching their often-marginalized students. In the next section I will discuss the significance of my findings and its implications for future work.

CONCLUSION

Although there is a vast body of literature evaluating specific correctional education programs, no research focuses primarily on the experiences of instructors that work within these institutions. This paper uncovers how some teachers in juvenile detention facilities, chosen at random, provided libratory education in a space where freedom was revoked.

From the twelve interviews I conducted, I was able to discern three important themes. The first theme focused on the characteristics of the student population in juvenile detention facilities. The second addressed the idea that teachers in juvenile corrections believed that they must be more flexible in their planning and take on more roles than teachers in mainstream classrooms. The third theme is the most unexpected, as I found that despite the pressure of both the educational system and the correctional institutions to create submissive inmates, teachers rejected banking methods of teaching and adopted a pedagogy of liberation.

Unlike traditional classrooms that separate students by specific academic ability, correctional classrooms lump students from various different skill levels into the same classroom, which creates problems for educators. Teachers mentioned the importance of building rapport in order to teach their students successfully. All of the instructors I spoke with identified large gaps in the academic knowledge of their pupils. Due to this,

instructors must fill in the previous educational gaps of their students while simultaneously teaching them new material. Teachers noted that their students, contrary to popular belief are very intelligent, however they often exhibit this intelligence in alternative ways.

The correctional educators I studied constantly changed their teaching techniques and often had to improvise in the classroom. Teachers often find themselves acting as more than just educators; they also play the role of counselors, therapist, and life coaches for their students. In addition to playing multiple roles teachers talked about how difficulties with correctional officers affected them and their students. Instructors identified not receiving training to teach in a correctional classroom—a theme not discussed in the current academic literature.

Finally, the narratives of the educators I interviewed showed that they are engaged in the kinds of instruction championed in the teachings of Paolo Freire and other critical pedagogy scholars, even though, they did not generally indicate knowledge of this literature. They are doing this by putting compassion and love at the core of their instructional philosophy and practice, by creating programs and space in their classrooms where students can begin to empower themselves through education, and by connecting educational concepts to the students own cultures.

All instructors demonstrated care and concern for their students. However, teachers desire to educate their pupils were being undercut by correctional guards and staff. My research shows that the goals of the caring instructors I interviewed are clashing with the goals of the punitive correctional facility. Based on my interviews it is clear that the teachers do not feel the structure of detention facilities is conducive to educating or

rehabilitating juveniles. These institutions fail to support correctional instructors who must deal with an array of challenges specific to teaching in corrections. In fact, my research confirms that at least from the perspective of the teachers within them, these institutions are designed to discipline and punish as suggested by Goffman (1961) and Foucault (1977). Both the teachers who attempt to provide their pupils with cognitive liberation and their students experience harassment at the hands of correctional guards and other staff. Correctional educators are able to feel the process of being stripped of their freedom, which in turn encourages them to adopt a compassionate teaching approach. Paradoxically, the punitive nature of detention facilities forces educators to become liberatory teachers.

Although institutions seek to control and make their inmates more manageable, the instructors continue fighting against the punitive nature of detention facilities. They are accomplishing this by creating a semi-autonomous zone in their classrooms that allows them to combat the “total institution” model. From their classrooms teachers are creating counter-hegemony. Darder (2003) discusses counter-hegemony here:

“ The term counter-hegemony is used within critical pedagogy to refer to those intellectual and social spaces where power relationships are reconstructed to make central the voices and experiences of those who have historically existed within the margins of mainstream institutions. This is achieved whenever a counter-hegemonic context is forged out of moments of resistance, through establishing alternative structures and practices that democratize relations of power, in the interest of liberatory possibilities.” (Darder et. al. 2003:14).

Teachers are reifying the notion of counter-hegemony by creating an alternative structure and space that enables their students to feel empowered. From their classrooms, teachers are encouraging students to understand that all people can resist domination and create knowledge. Furthermore, correctional instructors are putting the voices and experiences of their students in the center of the learning process by incorporating the students’

cultures and past experiences. From their classrooms and through the use of critical pedagogy educators are resisting the hegemony of detention facilities and compulsory education. The space instructors created is possible because of their efforts as well the unique positioning of correctional classrooms in San Diego County.

I believe the existence of a semi-autonomous space in correctional classrooms is possible partly because of the unique position of correctional classrooms in San Diego. San Diego County correctional schools are monitored by both the San Diego Office of Education and Juvenile Court and Community Schools system. Although both of these organizations are charged with supervising teachers and administrators, the reality is that neither is directly involved in shaping the day-to-day curriculum implemented by the teachers. Thus, correctional classrooms are often able to operate more freely as compared to most traditional schools that are supervised by one agency. This anomaly allows teachers to be more flexible with their curriculum and pedagogy because there is less administrative oversight. The unique position of correctional classrooms in San Diego detention facilities along with the caring nature of teachers has provided an ideal environment to create a space that actively challenges the punitive goals of detention facilities.

The training and background of instructors is key in their compassionate approach to teaching. Most correctional officers receive training that emphasizes controlling inmates as well as adhering to the safety and security guidelines of detention facilities. Unlike correctional officers, correctional educators do not receive this training. Their sparse training means that teachers are not indoctrinated in the total institution model like other correctional staff. Moreover, unlike most other correctional staff positions, schools

tend to attract individuals with backgrounds in education instead of criminal justice. Teachers' lack of training in corrections and their background in education may help to explain why correctional teachers, unlike correctional officers are more caring and compassionate. It appears that the teachers are likely to see their young charges as students rather than wards or inmates and may contribute to the fact that school employees are more sympathetic to the students. Thus, nurturing is cultivated in spaces where punishment is ubiquitous.

When I first began this project, I believed correctional teachers would embody Lopez's (2002) concept of prison pedagogy. A method of teaching that focused on policing, controlling and punishing students. However, I found that correctional educators are adopting a liberatory teaching approach. While teachers did not directly mention teaching with love or Paulo Freire, they are using his teachings and subscribing to his notions of educating for liberation. What I am finding then is not prison pedagogy, but a jail pedagogy that actively seeks to enable the empowerment of prisoners in spite of the challenges associate with teaching in corrections. To reiterate, Jail Pedagogy is a teaching approach that is kind, compassionate, and liberatory in a total institution. It is a commitment to teaching with love. Finally, it involves creating counter-hegemony from within juvenile justice facilities. For the teachers I interviewed it involves teaching poor students and students of color. This research discusses several factors that have not been addressed in criminology, sociology, and correctional education. Moreover, my work challenges theoretical notions of incarceration and punishment by suggestion that detention facilities can provide something other than punishment. However, I believe we

need an effective overhauling of the current juvenile justice and prison systems. One that would abolish this institution as we know it today.

REFERENCES

- Aronowitz, Stanley. 1997. "Between Nationality and Class." *Harvard Educational Review* 67(2):188-07.
- Ayers, William. 1997. *A Kind and Just Parent: The Children of Juvenile Court*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Barclay, Cathleen. 2004. "Future Employment Outlook: A Tool Measuring the Perceived Barriers of Incarcerated Youth." *The Journal of Correctional Education* 55(2):133-46.
- Bartolomé, Lilia I. 2003. "Beyond the Methods Fetish: Toward a Humanizing Pedagogy." Pp. 408-26 in *The Critical Pedagogy Reader*. edited by Antonia Darder, Marta Baltodano and Rodolfo D. Torres.
- Berhan, Cormac. 2007. "Context, Creativity, and Critical Reflection: Education in Correctional Institutions." *The Journal of Correctional Education* 58:157-169.
- Bouchard, Joseph and Linda Kunze. 2003. "Teaching Diverse Students in a Corrections Setting with Assistance from the Library." *The Journal of Correctional Education* 54:66-69.
- Breen, Richard and Jan O. Jonsson. 2005. "Inequality of Opportunity in Comparative Perspective: Recent Research on Educational Attainment and Social Mobility." *Annual Review of Sociology* 31:223-43.
- Bullis, Michael, Paul Yovanoff and Emily Havel. 2004. "The Importance of Getting Started Right: Further Examination of the Facility-to-Community Transition of Formerly Incarcerated Youth." *The Journal of Special Education* 38(2):80-4.
- Bowles, Samuel and Herbert Gintis. 1976. *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life*. New York: Basic Books Inc. Publishers.
- Collier, Virginia P. and Wayne P. Thomas. 2001. "Educating Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Students in Correctional Settings." *The Journal of Correctional Education* 52:68-73.

- Crawley, Elaine. 2004. *Doing Prison Work: The Public and Private Lives of Prison Officers*. Portland: Willian Publishing.
- Dance, Janelle L. 2002. *Tough Fronts: The Impact of Street Culture on Schooling (Critical Social Thought)*. New York: Routledge Falmer Press.
- Darder, Antonia. 2002. *Reinventing Paulo Freire: A Pedagogy of Love*. Bolder: Westview Press.
- Darder, Antonia, Marta Baltodano, and Rodolfo D. Torres. 2003. "Critical Pedagogy: An Introduction." Pp. 1-21 in *The Critical Pedagogy Reader*. edited by Antonia Darder, Marta Baltodano and Rodolfo D. Torres.
- Davis, Angela Y. 2003. *Are Prisons Obsolete?* Toronto: Seven Stories Press.
- Dvoskin, Joel A. and Erin M. Spiers. "On the Role of Correctional Officers in Prison Mental Health." *Psychiatric Quarterly* 75(1):41-9.
- Emerson, Robert. M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Erickson, Patricia E. 2001. "The Benefits of Teaching Sociology to Prisoners." *Teaching Sociology* 29:343-53.
- Ferguson, Ronald F. 1998. "Teacher's Perceptions and Expectations and the Black-White Test Score Gap." Pp. 273-17 in *The Black White Test Score Gap*. Edited by Christopher Jencks and Meredith Phillips. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Foley, Regina M. 2001. "Academic Characteristics of Incarcerated Youth and Correctional Educational Programs: A Literature Review." *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders* 16:85-5.
- Foley, Regina M. and Jing Gao. 2004. "Correctional Education: Characteristics of Academic Programs Serving Incarcerated Adults." *The Journal of Correctional Education* 55:6-21.
- Foucault, Michel. 1977. *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. 2nd ed. New York: Vintage Books.
- Freire, Paulo. 1970. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd.
- Friedman, Alex. 2003. "Juveniles Held Hostage for Profit by CSC in Florida" Pp. 154-55 in *Prison Nation: The Warehousing of America's Poor*. edited by Tara Herivel and Paul Wright. New York: Taylor & Francis Books, Inc.

- Gehring, Thom. 2007. "The Organization of Correctional Education Services." *The Journal of Correctional Education* 58:323-36.
- Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. 2007. *Golden Gulag: Prison, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalization California*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Goffman, Erving. 1961. *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.
- Gray, Garry C. and Abigail Tsionne Salole. 2006. "The Local Culture of Punishment: An Ethnography of Criminal Justice Worker Discourse." *The British Journal of Criminology* 46:661-79.
- Giroux, Henry. 2001. *Theory and Resistance in Education: Towards a Pedagogy for the Opposition*. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.
- Hirschman, Charles and Jennifer C. Lee. 2005. "Race and Ethnic Inequality in Educational Attainment in the United States." Pp. 107-38 in *Ethnicity and Causal Mechanism* Edited by Michael Rutter and Marta Tienda. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hollingsworth, Terry. 2006. "My Story." Pp. 101-13 in *In the Borderlands: Learning to Teach In Prisons and Alternative Settings*. edited by Randall Wright. California: Correctional Education Association.
- Howard, Tyone C. 2002. "Hearing Footsteps in the Dark: African American Students' Descriptions of Effective Teachers." *Journal of Education for Students at Risk*. 7(4): 425-44.
- Iasevoli, Dave. 2007. "Behind Educaton: How Can You "Be the Book" Behind Bars?" *English Journal* 96:19-23.
- Kim, Jeong-Hee and Kay Ann Taylor. 2008. "Rethinking Alternative Education to Break the Cycle of Educational Inequality and Inequity." *The Journal of Educational Research*. 101(4):207-18.
- Kosters, Marvin H. and Brent D. Mast. 2003. *Closing the Education Achievement Gap: Is Title I Working?* Washington, D.C. The AEI Press.
- Kozol, Jonathan. 2005. *The Shame of the Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America*. Michigan: Crown Publishers.
- Lempert, Lora Bex, Suzanne Bergeron, and Maureen Linker. 2005. "Negotiating the Politics of Space: Teaching Women's Studies in a Woman's Prison." *NW SA Journal* 17:199-207.

- Leone, Peter E., Michael Krezmien, Loretta Mason and Sheri M. Meisel. 2005. "Organizing and Delivering Emprirically Based Literacy Instruction to Incarcerated Youth." *Exceptionality* 13(2): 89-02.
- Lopez, Eduardo F. "Teaching Against Prison Pedagogy" Pp. 185-195 in *Reinventing Paulo Freire: A Pedagogy of Love*. Edited by Antonia Darder. Bolder: Westview Press.
- Mattucci, Robert. 2006. "Personal Reflections on Austin MacCormick's 1931 Correctional Education Book: The Integration of Vocational, Academic, and Social Education." *The Journal of Correctional Education* 57:26-41.
- McCarty, Heather Jane. 2006. "Educating Felons: Reflections on Higher Education in Prison." *Radical History Review* 96:87-94.
- Oakes, Jeannie. 2007. "More than Misplaced Technology: A Normative and Political Response to Hallinan on Tracking." Pp. 313-24 in *Sociology of Education: A Critical Reader* Edited by Alan R. Sadovnik. New York: Routledge.
- _____. 2005. *Keeping Track: How Schools Structure Inequality*. 2nd ed. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Platt, Tony. 2006. "The Prison Fix." *Social Justice* 33:203-205.
- Quinn, Mary M., Robert B. Rutherford, Peter E. Leone, David M. Osher and Jeffrey M. Porrier. 2005. "Youth with Disabilities in Juvenile Corrections: A National Survey" *Council for Exceptional Children* 71(3): 339-45.
- Ramchand, Rajeev, Andrew R. Morral and Kirsten Becker. 2009. "Seven-Year Life Outcomes of Adolescent Offenders in Los Angeles." *American Journal of Public Health* 99(5):863-70.
- Reiman, Jeffrey. 1995. *The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison: Ideology, Crime, and Criminal Justice*. 4th ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Rios, Victor M. 2008. "The Racial Politics of Youth Crime." *Latino Studies* 6:97-115.
- Rist, Ray. 1973. *The Urban School: A Factory for Failure. A Study of Education in American Society*. London, England: The MIT Press.
- Rose, Mike. 1995. *Possible Lives: The Promise of Public Education in America*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Rutherford, Andrew. 1993. *Criminal Justice and the Pursuit of Decency*. Oxford: Oxford

- Press.
- Sadker, David and Mayra Sadke. 2001. "Gender Bias: From Colonial America to Today's Classrooms." Pp. 135-63 in *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives*. 4th ed. Edited by James A. Banks and Cherry A. McGee Banks. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- San Diego County. 2008. *Juvenile Halls: Facilities*. San Diego: San Diego Probation Department. Retrieved December 3, 2008 (http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/probation/juvenile_halls.html).
- Stalder, Richard L. 1992. "Correctional Officer Role Ambiguity." Pp. 21-30 In *The Effective Correctional Officer*. by The American Correctional Association. Fredericksburg: BookCrafters.
- Strawderman, Jerry Arnold. 1994. "The Incarcerated Adult Basic Education Student: A Qualitative Study." *Journal of Correctional Education* 45:172-85.
- Thomas, Jim. 1983. "Teaching Sociology in Unconventional Settings: The Irony of Maximum Security Prisons." *Teaching Sociology* 10:231-50.
- U.S. Department of Justice. 2009. *Juvenile Residential Facility Census, 2004: Selected Findings*. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics. 2007. *Prison Statistics*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.
- Valencia, Richard R. 1993. *The Plight of Chicano Students: An Overview of Schooling Conditions and Outcomes*. In *Chicano School Failure and Success: Research and Policy Agendas for the 1990s*. New York: The Falmer Press.
- Western, Bruce. 2006. *Punishment and Inequality in America*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Zabel, Robert and Frank Nigro. 2007. "Occupational Interests and Aptitudes of Juvenile Offenders: Influence of Special Education Experience and Gender." *The Journal of Correctional Education* 58:337-55.

Appendix

Interview Guide

*****Thank you for agreeing to the tape recorded interview*****

****Tell me about getting into teaching in corrections****

- What drew you to teach in this setting?
- What do you like?
- What would you change?
- Please tell me the ways the two types of schools are different and the same? **Or**
- Why stay in corrections?

****Tell me about your experiences teaching****

- Tell me a little about yourself?
- Where are you from?
- What kind of schools did you go to growing up?
- What levels of education do you have?
- Have they given you any special training to work here?
- Has it helped?
- What do you teach?

****Can you tell me about some of the highpoints you have encountered working here?***

- Can you tell me about some of the challenges?

****Can you describe a day of teaching?***

How often do you have to change your techniques?

What kinds of methods or teaching tactics do you find yourself using more often?

****What do you think is most important your students go away with from your class?***

Are there any skills you emphasize?

What type of education do you think they need?

How are you accomplishing this?

What do you think the goal is for the people you teach?

****Wrap up Questions****

Do you have any questions for me?

Is there any questions that surprised you?

Is there anything you thought I would ask but did not?