FORMERLY INCARCERATED ACTIVISM AS TRANSFORMATIVE INTERVENTION: A FEMINIST EXAMINATION OF IDENTITY, INTERSECTING OPPRESSIONS, SELF, AND SOCIAL CHANGE THROUGH CARCERAL CITIZEN RESISTANCE

by

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(Under the Direction of Sarah Shannon)

ABSTRACT

Mounting evidence reveals that the criminal justice system fails people in nearly every conceivable aspect of social, economic, and political life. Yet, its individualistic, punitive, and retributive models of "correction" continue to be practiced despite critical and abolitionist criminological scholarship that has repeatedly shown how it is not only individuals that need healing, but social structures, systems, and relationships that also require repair. With growing empirical interest in carceral reforms and reentry, few scholars have looked to criminalized people who have turned into active social-change makers. Thirty-two desisting formerly incarcerated participants varying by race and gender from across the US were interviewed for this project. Findings reveal that activism supplies the directly impacted with dignity and robust forms of human (cultural), symbolic, and economic capital. Their transitions from carceral subjects to insurgent change-agents are marked by critical social connections, education, and action. Although desistance scholarship has illustrated the value of community engagement for reentering people, it has not specified precisely what the work entails - this project begins to address that problem. Participants differentiate peer and individual healing-work from activism.

They describe how the work in their various capacities paradoxically interweave as crucial components of transformative intervention, providing emancipatory healing for themselves, others, and society. In the experiences of shared oppression and collective action, carceral citizens are made legible as one distinct positionality within a carceral status system of oppression/privilege that intersects with race, class, and gender. Thus, granting clemency for some, and grave consequences for others. The findings highlight how racism, poverty, sexism, and other numerous social harms shaped their early life experiences and their collisions with the state. As activists, they aim to dismantle these imbalances in power. Reaching across lines of difference, as carceral citizens, they construct new identities through their mobilizations for self-determination. Implications of this study suggest that the unconsciousness, submissiveness, and low-expectations perpetuated by conformist and carceral treatment logics, are ineffective for any vision of safety or justice. Those models of recovery may be replaced with transformative interventionist approaches that spark consciousness, solidarity, and hope for healing. Formerly incarcerated activist stories in this project serve as evidence that returning people can survive, and even thrive, as they fight to bring about conditions of justice -- broadly.

INDEX WORDS: Carceral Citizens, Abolition, Qualitative, Feminist Criminology, Desistance, Identity, Capital, Stigma, Activists, Social Change.

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DEDICATION

For Sandy, mom, Ashley, Mary, and all badass women.

To everyone harmed by the carceral state and our allies.

To real utopias.

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healing secret cabin in the lands around the sea. They illuminate their knowledge from everywhere. They are parts of the woman that I am today, and they are the owl and the robin in the yard.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

CHAPTER 1
THE PROBLEM, THEORETICAL GUIDEPOSTS, AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The growth of incarceration over the past 40 years is historically unprecedented and its destructive impacts upon society are wide reaching (Travis, Western, and Redburn 2014). Over 2.2 million people are incarcerated in the US and approximately 4 million are under community corrections (The Sentencing Project 2019). and 1 in 3 U.S. adults have been arrested by age 23 (the Sentencing Project 2015). Research shows that this hyper-incarceration is destructive to individuals, families, communities, the nation, and the world (Baxter 2017; Brown and Bloom 2009; Clear 2007; Global Commission on Drug Policy 2011; Pager 2003; 2008; Pattillo, Western, and Weiman 2004; Richie 2018; Shannon, Uggen, Schnittker, Thompson, Wakefield, and Massoglia 2017; Travis 2002; Travis, Western, and Redburn 2014; Western 2006; Western 2018). In response to this destruction, significant reforms have been underway and, in recent years, a marginal slowing of the rates of incarceration has occurred (Clear and Frost 2015; Gramlich 2018). However, an ever-widening net of surveillance and social control continue to ensnare individuals, families and communities in the criminal justice system (Hannah-Moffat and Maurutto 2012). Mass incarceration arose out of, and continues to shape, a patriarchal racist capitalist social order (Coyle and Schept 2017) and will take immense political work to reverse (Gottschalk 2016).

One pervasive driver of mass incarceration is the revolving door that locks individuals into cycles of re-arrest (Pew 2011). According to the Department of Justice, 44 percent of prisoners will be rearrested within their first year of release (Alper, Durose, and Markman 2018). Some scholars attribute these high rates of recidivism to the tremendous barriers reentering

people face in regard to employment (Pager 2003; 2008; Uggen, Vuolo, Lageson, Ruhland, and Whitham 2014; Uggen1999), housing (Fontaine, Roman, and Burt. 2010), education (Runell 2017), parental rights (Brown and Bloom 2009), social inclusion, and voting rights (Clear 2007; Manza and Uggen 2006; Uggen and Manza 2002; Miller and Stuart 2017; Shannon et al. 2017; Uggen, Shannon, and Manza 2012; Uggen, Larson, and Shannon 2016). Eight percent of all adults in the US have felony convictions and three percent have been to prison (Shannon et al. 2017). Many, or all, of these individuals are likely to experience a number of collateral consequences. Even low-level offenses can impact an individual's employability (Uggen, Vuolo, Lageson, Ruhland and Whitham 2014; Uggen 1999) and lead to other experiences of stigma (LeBel 2007; 2008; 2012; 2013; LeBel, Richie, and Maruna 2015; Maruna; 2001; 2004; 2011; Maruna and LeBel 2002; Uggen, Manza, and Behrens 2004). In short, these barriers become ongoing punishments that permeate the lives of the formerly incarcerated. These additional and ongoing punishments are a form of internal national exile in that formerly incarcerated people are reduced to non-citizens (Travis 2002), carceral citizens (Miller and Stuart 2017), or even socially dead (Cacho 2012) in all-encompassing marked sociolegal positions (Woodall 2019).

The empirical evidence has mounted to the point of conceptualizing the formerly incarcerated as an oppressed social class (Cacho 2012; Coyle 2014; Monoghan 2013; Pager 2008; Polk and Polk 2016; Simon 2007; Woodall 2019). Formerly incarcerated individuals have been systematically marginalized (Travis, Western, and Redburn 2014), exploited (Chang and Thompkins 2002; Kilgore 2012; Rusche 1978), othered (Brown 2009; Garland 2012; Presser 2013), disempowered (Shannon et al. 2017; Uggen, Larson, and Shannon 2016; Uggen, Shannon, and Manza 2012), and even violently assaulted or killed (Carbado 2017; Davis 2011; Skolnick and Fyfe 1993). These realities intersect with raced and gendered conditions to impact

their intensity (Alexander 2012; Collins 1986; McCorkel 2013; Richie 2018; Rios 2007; Wacquant 2007; 2009). Due to these intersections, an individual's ability to acquire long-term reentry success is thereby, incredibly challenged (Miller and Stuart 2017). Stigma and barriers to capital acquisitions upon release diminish their chances of long-term success (Farrall 2004; LeBel 2012; 2013; LeBel, Richie, and Maruna 2015; LeBel, Burnette, Maruna, and Bushway 2008; Maruna 2001; 2011; Maruna and LeBel 2002).

Under such bleak social circumstances, individually aimed programs of rehabilitation are unlikely to be successful. Conformist ("rehabilitative") intervention strategies often attribute social difficulties to flawed character (Lynch 2000). These aim to mold individuals to fit deep social structural ills and demand that they accept and transcend impossible social situations (Braithwaite and Mugford 1994; Currie 2013; Maruna 2004; Miller 2017). However, a repair of social circumstances necessary for decarceration's successful consummation is beyond one individual's control. Meaning we will not *cure* all people to end mass incarceration, rather repairing cycles of harm and punishment will involve significant work to transform social arrangements, and thus the achievement of radical safety, healing, and transformation for people will require a social movement (Maruna 2017; Miller 2017).

Criminal justice related reforms have been underway in attempts to challenge mass incarceration at every stage of the process (Porter 2020) or aim to abolish it all together (Carrier and Piché 2015; Coyle and Schept 2017). These reforms may involve, or be led by, directly impacted formerly incarcerated people. However, few studies have sought to examine the experiences of these reentering people who become involved in such reform and abolition work. Writings on the problems of the criminal justice system abound and theories of reform are plenty, but little is known of the effects that justice reform social movement work, conducted and

led by formerly incarcerated people, has on their ability to achieve personal success, and less about what is possible for social liberation when they engage in collective action.

Little attention has been given to conceptually locate criminalized people's positionality in the social strata and few theoretical considerations have been given to define carceral status as a structure of oppression/privilege (Woodall 2019). We know little about how formerly incarcerated activists manage stigma and garner access to various forms of capital at the level of the individual, and even less about how carceral subjects challenge social forces of oppression broadly. Generally, scholars have not differentiated formerly incarcerated people's micro-focused-change-work from their macro-focused-change-work, and by extension there is a void of knowledge around how these efforts intertwine to remedy social problems that have perplexed criminologists and sociologists alike. No trajectories of formerly incarcerated activists have been charted, so little is known about what motivated them into activism in the first place. Academic research remains uninformed about how formerly incarcerated people's engagement in activism challenges common sense logics of criminality and understands little of the potential of their movement-work to disrupt socially constructed totalizing fictions about criminalized people in the social imagination. We know even less about how any of these experiences vary across lines of race and gender.

Whether engaging in criminal justice or prison reform, community building, or abolitionist work, formerly incarcerated activists (FIAs) contest categories and engage with broader social and institutional forces where they shine a light on the social problems surrounding our carceral state as they seek to dismantle its corrosive effects. In the process of effecting social change, their work catalyzes immense self-transformations and personal healing.

RESEARCH QUESTION AND AIMS

The broad purpose of this project is to fill research gaps in knowledge about formerly incarcerated change-work, particularly activism, with empirical evidence from the lived experiences of formerly incarcerated activists. A number of specific aims guided the project and the associated research questions are answered in the ensuing chapters, in the following order: 1) How should formerly incarcerated activism be differentiated from other community engagement work? 2) What were some of the turning points in the life-course that led formerly incarcerated people into activism? 3) How do criminalized people constitute an oppressed class and how does the work of formerly incarcerated activists challenge those oppressions? 4) How is the work formerly incarcerated activists engage in used to overcome barriers to social reintegration and achieve personal reentry success? 5) In what ways, if any, does macro-level social change focused activism contradict or supplement individual level personal reform work and in what ways might such work operate as a "transformative intervention"? 6) How do race and gender intersect with carceral status to shape their experiences? The respective chapters are aimed at answering these questions and they are summarized below.

OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION

Each chapter includes a summary of the relevant literature on the particular research aim it addresses. This is followed by, and at times intertwined with, the findings that address that aim. I provide the relevant literature within each chapter staying close to the data to how my respondents' experiences support or contradict our prior scholarly understanding of formerly incarcerated people or to illuminate new lines of theorizing. Though each chapter does not contain all-inclusive citations of every piece ever written on the various concepts, relevant literature is cited to frame their experiences. In that sense, the literature used is not meant to be comprehensive, but rather engaged, in order to interpret the reality of participants as a co-

constructed ethnographic project that tells a story.

Qualitative work is ever emerging and shaped by the researcher's gaze (Haraway 1988). I made use of my particular standpoint as a directly impacted scholar-activist to guide all phases of this project from inception to publication. Findings are meant to serve as information about a larger story, be it one that could be told differently by another researcher. I put immense effort into representing the participants in a manner that dignifies their lives and their work. Where evidence emerged in the analysis that was informative of the ways in which structures of racial, gender, and classed oppressions intersect to make formerly incarcerated activists experiences distinctive, I exhibited it, either interlaced throughout the chapter or in a separate subsection.

In Chapter 2, I answer my first research question. I report the full preliminary content analysis that sensitized both my entrance into the empirical field and the data collection and analysis. I define different forms of what I refer to as *change-work,* in which formerly incarcerated people are engaged. I consider the civic-engagement component of the multi-pronged restorative justice approach and provide a very brief history of the potentials and failures of community service sentences to transform lives. Arguing that not all *change-work* is alike, I define formerly incarcerated activism and lay out the typology of *change-work*. The typology, and related theoretical frames, contoured this dissertation and sensitized my selection of participants.

Chapter 3 lays out the procedure for the project and answers research question two. First, I discuss the feminist and critical constructionist epistemology upon which the project lies and the theoretical sensitization I carried into the field. Then I discuss the technicalities of the method I employed, including the particulars of my proposed sample, an explanation of the time I spent

in the field, the recruitment process, details specific to a qualitative endeavor, and the sample demographics.

In Chapter 4, I describe the participants' trajectories into activism. Routes are paved with *moments,* or turning points, that include critical social connections, education, and opportunities for action that intertwined meaningfully to produce *critical awakenings,* which sustain their activist work. Knowledge of structural injustice and activist involvement may be life-long themes in their lives, but for most of them, awakening and transformation have occurred in sudden discernable instances

In Chapter 5, I answer question three and define carceral subject position as a structure of oppression. Rooted in critical feminist theorizing, intersectionality, abolitionist scholarship, and contemporary studies of punishment, I articulate formerly incarcerated activism as a counter-oppressive project from which a rights-bearing group arises. I explore the limitations and strengths of understanding carceral citizenship as a socially constructed category and propose a more sociologically robust understanding of carceral status as a system that oppresses some, while privileging others. I consider how a carceral citizen collective identity forms in their mobilization and resistance work.

In Chapter 6, responding to question four, I report how activism helps the individual formerly incarcerated person resist the *slow death* and social disadvantages that impact their lives following encounters with the carceral state. Using micro-level of understandings of Erving Goffman's *stigma* and Bordieuan and Weberian notions of *capital* (i.e. symbolic, human (cultural), social, and economic), participants challenge notions of *frailty* that scholars have invoked to describe them (Western 2018). Although participants undoubtedly agree that social problems are a source of instability and barriers to their well-being, they articulate themselves in

terms of powerful agents of resistance to deeply rooted oppressions. Individual stigma management skills and capital-building projects take place in the context of carceralism, poverty, sexism, racism, and neoliberal individualism wherein, and against which, formerly incarcerated people re-cast themselves as *survivors* and *warriors*. Such work is negotiated differentially across race, gender, and change-work philosophy. Implications for a language that reflects their power and agency are discussed.

In Chapter 7, I examine the inextricable link between both micro, individual-level - change-work, and macro, social-level-change-work that carceral citizens engage in. This chapter addresses research question five. Participant selection required that they have engaged in meaningful peer-mentoring as well as activism. I used their experiences to compare the meaning, utility, and limitations of one-on-one work to their activist work. I also provide insights about conventional and pathologizing rehabilitative programming compared to the utility of more social-structural focused interventions. Participants made clear references to many social conditions that led to their incarceration. Their interviews articulate how social forces crushed, compelled, and catalyzed them into criminal behavior yet they also acknowledged the value of individual-level change work. Personal-change work will be limited in the face of such oppressive social conditions and thus should be differentiated from social-change focused reform-work. Participants found it important to expand social services that help individuals, to peer-mentor others one-on-one, and to work on self-care, but they also found that those labors are inextricably linked to their change-work related to policy, social structure, and institutions. From their words, both are necessary for their own quality of life and to bring about their visions of justice. The self and peer healing work weaves meaningfully into their activist work, harmoniously and paradoxically.

In each chapter, I report on race and gender differences. Where evidence emerged in analysis that was informative of how structures of racial, gender, and classed oppressions intersect to make formerly incarcerated activists experiences distinctive, I exhibited it by interlacing the evidence throughout each chapter. In the concluding chapter, I summarize the findings, implications, and future research suggestions derived from this study.

A goal of this project was to create a coherent narrative about the types of change-work formerly incarcerated people engage and how the meaning and importance of that work varies from their perspective. Because little is known about formerly incarcerated people's community engaged work, I use qualitative data to reveal things not yet known. There is much to uncover regarding this population and this research begins to fill that void.

CHAPTER 2
CONSTRUCTING A FORMERLY INCARCERATED CHANGE-WORK TYPOLOGY

"Formerly incarcerated activist" (FIA) is a title referenced in contemporary media (e.g., Ava DuVernay's groundbreaking film *13th*) and referred to in progressive publications (e.g., *Colorlines*, *The Marshall Project,* and *Vera Institute of Justice* publications) without a clear or consistent definition of its meaning. Specifying the meaning of such a label is important because formerly incarcerated people's civic engagement, volunteer work, service to their community, or "giving back" is generally associated with reentry success (Bazemore 1998; Bazemore and Boba 2007; Bazemore and Karp 2004; Bazemore and Stinchcomb 2004; Flores 2018; Fox 2015; Fox 2016; LeBel 2007; 2013; LeBel, Richie, and Maruna 2015; Maruna 2011; Maruna and LeBel 2002). However, little scholarly attention has been paid to how various endeavors of civic engagement may differ in their ability to help activists thrive post-incarceration. Therefore, I generated a typology that categorizes multiple forms of change-work that formerly incarcerated people engage in. This allowed me to explore the meaning and utility of various types of change-work in formerly incarcerated people's journeys to success (as they understand it).

I considered the "logics of change" and "targets of change" as differentiators of their work (see Figure 6). From the construction of that typology, I define 'formerly incarcerated activism.' This typology and definition framed my entrance into the field of study in the full dissertation project. I find that participants indeed do differentiate their work in alignment with the typology; however, they believe that although their change-works differ, they are intricately intertwined (see chapter 7). The following chapter describes the process by which I built the framework for differentiating formerly incarcerated change-work types.

I sought to separate change-work focused on social problems from change-work focused on individual pathology. In this project I refer to transformative social-change work that the formerly incarcerated engage in as *formerly incarcerated activism*. These are important distinctions because criminalized people are often blamed for social ills, but activists understand that it is not themselves to blame for social problems, but rather fundamental aspects of society that drive harms of crime and punishment. Little to no attention has been paid to this differentiation in scholarly theorizing or empiricism.

Conventional rationalities may condemn formerly incarcerated people's indictment of systemic problems that drive crime. FIAs who speak out against unjust social arrangements may be viewed as lacking accountability, averting personal responsibility, blaming others for their wrongs, or even being in denial about their own actions (Currie 2012). But is this the case? How does taking a firm stance against social harms really impact the trajectories of the formerly incarcerated? Does individual change require one to focus primarily on changing oneself? Or can self-change be accomplished, at least partially, through social-change work? There are formerly incarcerated activists adorning stages, being featured in news stories, trending on social media feeds, and stepping into political spaces who all appear to be faring quite well in their personal lives. In order to know if their successful presentations-of-self match their personal experience, their personal stories would need to be empirically examined. To undertake this, I had to choose my sample for the full dissertation project carefully. I needed to select formerly incarcerated people whose work strikes at the systemic roots of the problems of crime and punishment to explore if such system-blame attitudes really interfere with reentry success --or catalyze it.

DEFINING FORMERLY INCARCERATED ACTIVISM

To distinguish activism from other forms of change-work, I conducted a content analysis of activist mission statements in different regions of the US. This typology proved very useful in the broader project and participant stories confirmed it to be an effective theoretical tool for future research and understanding the various types of change-work that formerly incarcerated people engage in which have distinct impacts on their lives. In the typology, various forms of change-work are associated with adherence or resistance to assortments of cultural logics. I found in the broader study that these various forms of work have powerfully different impacts on criminalized people's sense of identity, purpose, and well-being. Therefore, we cannot assume that all forms of *giving back* or vague notions of *community activism* will have the same effects on reentry trajectories. Furthermore, the categorical splitting of self-change and social-change work, allow us to consider that criminalized people are not the only part of the equation that needs changing.

External loci of change, as I identify below and my findings suggest, when mobilized, not only changes social conditions, but also significantly and positively transforms the individual. Constructive identity changes, desistance from crime, and quality of life improvements are imbued in the stories of formerly incarcerated activists. But these realities run counter to the assertions of therapists, counselors, probation officers, judges, and treatment providers who often discredit and even disallow criminalized people to blame others or circumstances for their plight. These conventional logics require system-impacted people to focus on their own self and their personal pathology to *get well* (Currie 2012; Miller 2017). Participant experiences show us that their activist work turns them into quite different people from who they were before incarceration. FIAs in this study believe in their community's right-to-have-rights and they seek to challenge the state, oppressive policies, and destructive social arrangements. The activists

whom I interviewed take the stance that criminalized people are not broken people who need fixing, but rather they are the product of a broken carceral system in need of reform, or abolition. Little attention has been paid to this group of people who squarely indict the social systems that cause the harms of crime and mass incarceration. Yet they seem to be enjoying many of the fruits of *recovery*. These are the experiences that are detailed in the larger project.

In this chapter, I report on how I constructed a set of analytic tools to differentiate institutionally and socially transformative formerly incarcerated activism work from other types of community service and case advocacy efforts aimed at fixing broken people. These tools define who was considered an FIA, and who was not, in the larger research project. The framework differentiates between formerly incarcerated activism (work that is citizenship rights affirming, transformatively intervening, and system-focused) from non-activist (contractual-based, conventionally interventionist, and personal reformative) projects. I argue that these are two distinct forms of work. This theoretical differentiation was the basis upon which I empirically explored identity and behavioral transformations among formerly incarcerated people who engaged in efforts of both social reform (activism) and personal reform (peer-mentoring).

First, I discuss why a definition of formerly incarcerated activism is needed and how the current literature has limited the ability to differentiate personal-reform work from activism. Then, I describe the data and methods used to create a typology. I then report on findings from the iterative process by describing how the relevant concepts drawn from the literature are integrated into the typology and provide supporting examples from the mission statements of organizations some of my seed participants have been involved with. I conclude with an explanation of how the typology was used as a categorical tool to specify the scope of formerly

incarcerated activism regarding how a rights-affirming externalization of blame through the activist process impacts outcomes for formerly incarcerated people. I include my definition of formerly incarcerated activism. I made a claim about what *activism* should be going into dissertation data collection, then discovered its soundness in subsequent analysis.

UNDERSTANDING THE INCARCERATED-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

The benefits of formerly incarcerated people's work in the community is understudied and blurry, but it is not new. The stated purpose, philosophies, and functions of the work vary greatly. To illustrate this, I take a look at two ways that formerly incarcerated people's involvement in communities have been envisioned to-date: 1) In the long history of community service sentencing and 2) The indigenous-rooted tenants of restorative justice. To varying degrees, both of these practices have had intended and unintended consequences of social integration, esteem building, and other positive outcomes. But, the primary difference between the two are their purposes: restorative justice's civic engagement is meant to be restorative (Bazemore and Boba 2007; Bazemore and Stinchcomb 2004; Clear and Karp 2002) and community service is meant to be punitive (Bazemore and Stinchcomb 2004; McDonald 1986; Krajick 1982). Nonetheless, people who have offended have, at times, benefitted from such service.

Community Service Sentencing and Corrections - Punishment or Social Integration?

Very few mentions of community service work in the literature describe it as rehabilitative. Rather, most discussion of community service is as a form of punishment. Primarily in the UK, and later in the US, the exchange of offenders' service to the community has primarily been punitive. With its seeds in slavery, the commutation of sentences in exchange for enlistment in the military (Pease and Williams 1980) was popularized. In 1604 Queen Elizabeth said that

offender service could be “beneficial to the community in some way” (Pease and Williams 1980). In the 1700s, well into the prison commutation to military program, the House of Commons' Home Secretary, Richard Ryder, advocated for the continuation of the prison-to-military program. His argument was that military service is a way for offenders to, “make good names for themselves“ (1980:3). Ryder added that entire regiments were made up of convicts and were “revered by their comrades” (1980:3). Historically, therefore, the idea of service to the community by criminalized people in the UK was understood to be somewhat restorative, yet far from progressive.

The first use of community service in the United States was in 1966 in Almada County, California as a substitute for paying traffic fines (Bazemore and Maloney 1994). In this context, the purpose was almost solely punitive, at worst, compensatory, at best. Its use is described by Gordon Bazemore as a practice without a theory (2004:). In the 1970's, rehabilitation effects were considered. It was mostly concluded that the work could heal the *broken offender* and address issues of disconnect from community (Mackenzie 2001). The most progressive idea in those days was that doing socially-valued forms of work could help relieve the offender of stigma (Pease and Williams 1980). Those philosophies are rare today, even for some of the most progressive community service groups oganized around a restorative mission.

The Community Service Sentencing Project (CSSP), for example, was a community service program pilot that ran for two years in the Bronx by the *Vera Institute of Justice* and the Indiana-based *Prisoners and Community Together* program beginning in 1979. They framed service as ways for individuals to obtain a sense of “responsibility to society” and “increase community control of offenders,” but it inspired the idea of alternative sentencing and encouraged the formation of a “symbiotic relationship between the criminal justice system and

the people it is meant to serve" (Vera Institute of Justice 1996). The sentences came with case management assistance for reentering people so that while they engaged in service, they could gain access to needed resources. Ultimately, the sentence of community service has been largely punitive and only occasionally conceived of as restorative. More useful for thinking about how community work can be used in a rehabilitative manner has emerged in Restorative Justice practices.

Restorative Justice plus Social Justice

A push to re-orient punitive practices and values to healing ones is in progress. Restorative justice is a theory of justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused by criminal behavior (Centre for Justice and Reconciliation). Practices and programs reflecting restorative purposes will respond to crime by 1) identifying and taking steps to repair harm, 2) involving all stakeholders, and 3) transforming the traditional relationship between communities and government in responding to crime. The goal of restorative justice is to bring together those most affected by the criminal act—the offender, the victim, and community members—in a nonadversarial process to encourage offender accountability and meet the needs of the victims to repair the harms resulting from the crime (Bergseth and Bouffard 2007). Such programs addressing crime in the US are heavily connected to institutions of criminal justice. Restorative justice scholars are recognizing the utility of social inclusion of offenders in these models, seeking to bridge them to their communities via civic engagement. A model of the restorative process presented by the Prison Fellowship (2015) indicates the utility of civic engagement in its philosophy, however it neglects the importance of "responsible parties" in community participation. Although the restorative process calls upon the community to be

engaged with participation in the distribution of justice, there is also a growing expectation that civic participation on the part of the "offender" increases their chance for positive social integration (Bazemore and Boba 2007; Bazemore and Karp 2004; Fox 2016;).

Figure 1. A General Restorative Justice Model (Source: Prisonfellowship.org)

I challenge the conceptions of restorative justice that place the civic engagement piece as only a responsibility of the community who are constructed as different from victims and responsible parties. Also, I believe that more research is needed to understand the way that these relationships exist in broader systems of oppression that drive harm.

Transformative justice is a more applicable model for my study. This model advocates the building liberatory alternatives to punishment. It responds to the experience of violence, harm, and abuse by identifying and challenging oppression by systems of domination in the ways outlined in Figure 2. It is like "restorative justice plus social justice" (Nocella 2019[2013]:12).

Figure 2. Transformative Justice Model (Source: SavetheKids.org)

In a transformative justice model, the work of creating safety is undertaken by a diversity of social actors that asks everyone and everything to change, that is individuals and well as our systems, structures, and relationships (Nocella 2019[2013]). The principles of transformative justice include liberation, shifting power, safety, accountability, collective action, respect, resilience, and sustainability (GenerationFive 2017).

KEY STUDIES ON FORMERLY INCARCERATED CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Few contemporary studies of civic engaged work in the desistance trajectories of offenders populate our knowledge base. One recent example is Edward Orozco Flores' (2018) publication, "Jesus Saved an Ex-Con." Flores examines how political activism is redemptive for formerly incarcerated people by following those working in faith-based community organizations in Los Angeles (LA VOICE and Homeboys LOC). He admits that personal reform and political reform are mutually constitutive. His sample of 34 men were all black or Latino, none were white. Flores makes the case that faith-based community organizing fosters "prophetic redemption." That is, their religious displays afford opportunities for social

integration and redemption. He illustrates how activists drew from their experience in gangs to forge partnerships for the purpose of providing social services. Their efforts to make good and distance themselves from their past emerged from their narratives. The activists drew from their individual recovery rituals in their organizing efforts for collective and political action. The formerly incarcerated faith-based activists challenged the cultural deficit narratives that defined their experiences in communities riddled with violence and they shed light on social problems like unjust laws, poverty, and insufficient access to housing and education.

Flores argues that criminal justice reform should encompass organizer trainings, lobby days at the capital, and other civic engaged work that facilitates social integration, for the purposes of expanding their rights and to make good from their pasts. This recently published research illuminates some of what I wish to highlight in my own current study. Flores' study, however, is limited in that it only considers two faith-based organizations located in one part of the country, his theoretical framework is rooted in notions that offenders need redemption, and it was mostly inattentive to gender differences.

Arguing that cognitive and behavioral interventions will not be enough to solve the problem for reentering people., Reuben Miller states that "we cannot CBT (cognitive behavioral therapy) our way out of mass incarceration" (Miller 2017). His current work, the *Detroit Reentry Study* funded by Antipode Foundation, articulates how carceral expansion has produced second-class citizenship, or "carceral citizenship." This occurs by "translating" a conventional citizen into a carceral one through institutions of coercion.

Miller's report to *Antipode* and his presentations for the *Vera Institute of Justice* speaker series indicate that he has been interviewing activists, but it is unclear at this point, what/if any type of personal change he discovered comes from activism, how he is defining it, or how it

varies across race and gender. I find his conceptualization of carceral citizens and their fight for full rights to citizenship useful and fitting for conceptualizing formerly incarcerated people as an oppressed group. I draw heavily from Miller, for that conceptualization explained in chapter 5. Miller at this point, has not clarified what his proposals or findings are around the phenomena of carceral citizen civic engagement. It is not known yet if he is looking at personal reform, reentry success of the individuals involved in activism, or if he is merely interested in the strategies FIA's employ for social change. He indicates that he examines the correctional classification of ex-offenders and he speaks to some extent how those identities are internalized as well as resisted. He also makes little mention of gender.

Thomas LeBel (2012) has examined this relationship between an 'activist orientation' and desistance, however this was limited to inclinations for activism rather than actual work. He also examined the role of "helping" in desistance (2007). Multiple studies involving Shadd Maruna have conceived of community integration being accomplished through "helping" or "volunteering" (LeBel, Richie, Maruna 2015; Maruna 2011; Maruna and LeBel 2002). To varying degrees the purpose of the helping or volunteering are related to the creation of redemption scripts that helps an individual re-story themselves (LeBel, Burnett, Maruna, and Bushway 2008; Maruna 2001). However, 'wounded-healer' work (helping others improve themselves) is undistinguishable from social movement work in much of the research (LeBel, Richie, and Maruna 2015). Though the gains acquired through wounded-healer work, may be similarly acquired through activist work as well. Maruna's more recent assertions (2017) make clear how successful desistance requires a change in the social conditions for reentering people. Therefore, I find it important to think about how change is carried out by those most closely impacted and how any of that translates to personal change. Few studies examining this

phenomenon exist, and fewer differentiate the types of work that are more socially transformative and rights-based. They are also less attuned to nuances of race and gender.

A participatory action research doctoral dissertation in 2009 by Todd Callais examined stigma and social capital building among approximately 30 formerly incarcerated people, he called “ex-offenders” involved in a solitary organization. The work contributes some insights into interpersonal issues experienced with formerly incarcerated people in their attempts to build a movement and organize. However there were many limitations: He had clearly-stated rapport issues with group, he openly admitted that his own ideas about “ex-offenders” impacted the quality of his research, his positionality made trust building problematic, his measure of successful stigma management was defined by a rehabilitative ideal, he over-sampled white respondents, and he offered a problematic framing of the anger expressed by formerly incarcerated people as an emotion that stems from their reliance on the state, rather than a reasonable response to systemic oppression. I assert, in this study, that carceral status is a system of oppression/privilege whereby criminalized people, particularly formerly incarcerated people, are oppressed. He makes little reference to such harsh conditions to explain his participants’ emotions. He does do the bold work of honestly admitting the limitations he had in collecting his data. For these reasons, this study is limited and there is much more to know about the utility of activism for formerly incarcerated people.

Lastly, a relevant 2018 study by Michael Leo Owens and Hannah L. Walker reported that custodial citizens’ community service organization (CSO) connections increase their political participation. They make a strong and important case for CSO’s useful impact on politically engaging formerly incarcerated people. Such scholarly interest, however, has largely been informative about democratic functioning, but less on the lived experience of individuals.

However, the impact that such exile has on people have been examined (Uggen, Manza, and Behrens 2004; Uggen and Manza 2003), greater understanding of how community engagement relates to desistance trajectories is needed. Political disenfranchisement has a stigmatizing role in directly impacted people's lives and alternative routes to political engagement are desirable and effective for some, and simply un-desirable for others (Uggen, Manza, Behrens 2004), research that digs into these experiences is needed. Although we know something about these stigmatizing and negative effects of political exclusion, we know less about how formerly incarcerated people move to change those conditions, and less about how that social justice oriented political engagement results in an array of positive life outcomes. The current project addresses these deficits.

Another notable limitation of Owens and Walker's 2018 study is that they differentiate forms of engagement in terms of hierarchical levels of mobilization intensity. That refers to the depth and involvement of the work formerly incarcerated people engage in. This is useful for understanding how leadership roles in movements relate to actors' perceptions and realities of their own political empowerment. Arguably, however, formerly incarcerated people do not always have interests in social justice. Formerly incarcerated people can be heavily mobilized and become leaders in organizations that perpetuate the ideas that individual pathologies alone drive crime or are guided by ideas that *tough-on-crime* initiatives are preferable. Such a quid-pro-quo style of conservativism lays the responsibility for change on individuals. From this logic, one can be mobilized, yet still adhere to a self-blame and self-pathologizing philosophy. For example, "personal responsibility crusades" can be undertaken and facilitated by right-wing ideology (Somers 2008:111). Such crusades lead to victim-blaming which abandons the socially marginalized, who are without assets, and further degrades and dehumanizes them (Somers

2008). I argue, based on Somers theorizing, that social justice logics, which focus on inclusion, have much better chances of increasing the health and vitality of directly impacted people than conservative logics. Formerly incarcerated people in fact can align themselves with conservative principles. However there have been considerable empirical barriers to knowing precisely what the political leanings of the formerly incarcerated are. We do know that at least some of them align with conservative politics of carceral expansion (Meredith and Morse 2018; Burch 2012). I find it empirically important to specify the logics of political engagement. I estimate that alignment with politics of social and equitable justice will be associated with more fruitful outcomes for directly impacted people than change-work aligned with quid-pro-quo conservative logics of personal responsibility. Owens and Walker cannot disentangle the relevance of such difference in their mobilization logics. Understanding political engagement by virtue of "levels" of involvement will be limited in what it can tell us about how countering oppression and fights for social distributional equality relate to wellness for formerly incarcerated people. I therefore decide not to classify regressive political engagement as *activism*. I justify this claim in the following sections and through this content analysis.

FRAMING ENTRANCE INTO THE FIELD: CONTENT ANALYSIS AND CHANGE-WORK TYPOLOGY

Data and methods for the content analysis groundwork

An exploratory content analysis of criminal justice reform movements and organization mission statements known to have members who are formerly incarcerated was conducted to create the typology which guided my entrance into the empirical field. For this analysis which set up the framework for the larger project, data was gathered from two sources: (1) the materials provided from a selection of my sample seeds, formerly incarcerated people who are engaged in

change-work with whom I have contact; and (2) Google searches to obtain the mission statements of other types of movements the respondents are involved with. The sample seeds for the initial content analysis were located across five sites: Atlanta, Tucson, Oakland, Philadelphia, and New York. I explored the mission statements of 22 organizations associated with my potential participants to create the typology.

ORGANIZATION OR MOVEMENT	SUMMARIZED MISSION
Critical Resistance	Penal Abolitionists: End mass incarceration
All of Us or None	Civil rights organization of formerly and currently incarcerated
The Marshall Project	Journalism organization focused on criminal justice issues
Smart Justice	American Civil Liberties Union campaign to reduce the U.S. jail and prison population
Just Leadership	Leadership training of directly impacted people to drive criminal justice policy reform
Elle Baker Center	A human rights non-profit strategy and action center
Restore Oakland	Restorative Justice neighborhood space of community and self-determination building
Black Lives Matter	Global movement against violence and systemic racism against black people
Safe Return Project	Community and returning citizen strengthening organization
The Reentry Project	Collaborative news initiative with a community engagement and advocacy focus
Re-framing Justice Project	Storytelling public education initiative of American Friends Service Committee
Philadelphia Coalition for a Just DA	Alliance to support a District Attorney with concrete commitments to address police targets of black communities, increase transparency, and protect youth
Criminal Justice Policy Foundation (CJPF)	Drug law and policy reform advocacy group with strong leanings toward abolition of prohibition and support for community harm reductive approaches
Ban the Box	Campaign picked up by numerous civil rights groups advocating for removing boxes on applications regarding criminal records
The Community Service Sentencing Project (CSSP)	Sentencing Reform and alternative sentencing advocacy
Center for Returning Citizens	Training, legal-aid, and referrals
Change the Hustle	Consulting and training to increase employment opportunities for formerly incarcerated
Recovery Community Organizations (RCO) and peer-movement advocacy	Movements to expand the use and availability of peer-support services in communities and nationally.
Drug court and diversion program advocacy	Movements that advocate for policy and legal reform that expand diversion options. Largely advocating for treatments delivered by appendages of the criminal justice system.
Behavioral counseling services	Mode of treatment service delivered by credentialed professionals for people with behavioral disorders.
Peer-mentorship services	Approaches to treatment of a variety of problems associated with offending. Services are provided by people who have overcome similar obstacles. Mentors may or not be credentialed.
Diversion program counseling	Mode of treatment service for a variety of problems associated with offending by credentialed professionals tied deeply to the criminal justice system

Table 1. Organizations and Movements included in the Mission Statement Content Analysis

I attempted to capture the widest variety of types of change-work and selected organizations out of a crate that seemed to represent all of the various work people whom I had initial contact with and were soliciting for future interviews in the early phases of the dissertation, were involved in. Coding for emerging themes in the mission statements of these organizations was undertaken with theoretical sensitization to the work of David Aberle (1966), Elliott Currie (2012; 2013), Margaret Somers (2008), Nikolas Rose (1996), Pierre Bourdieu (1985), Damon Mayrl (2013), and Hanna-Mari Husu (2013). Through an iterative process of shifting back and forth between the literature and data coding, the categories of formerly incarcerated change-work took shape.

This initial framework is by no means a comprehensive list of all formerly incarcerated change-work; rather, the sample was meant to encapsulate the widest variety of types of work that formerly incarcerated people seem to engage in to see what emerged. Only those who fell into the activist category were selected to respond in the broader study. My own standpoint also informs the categorization. As a directly impacted person, I have been civically involved with reentering people and engaged in a variety of change-work from peer mentorship to abolitionist work, to sentencing and legislative reform, to local community safety building projects for over 15 years. I gained access to this study's population through my work and the level of rapport that I had previously established. The range of movement work, based on my experience and interactions with civically engaged formerly incarcerated people, is representative of the types of work formerly incarcerated people I have known engaged in across the United States. In the following paragraphs, I explain the typology with movements and mission quotes to exemplify the dimensions

Findings: Overview of the typology – from the groundwork content analysis.

The typology reflects activist work logic, targets, and contour. First, a movement's logic refers to the mission driving their work. These range from transformative-rights-based-social-blame philosophies (i.e. penal abolitionist) to personal responsibility-individual-blame philosophies (i.e. accountability courts advocacy), plotted along the vertical axis. The horizontal axis represents the state and community targets of change-work. Actors and movements target their work on a spectrum between the theoretically blurred lines of state (legislation, prison reform, and policy) and community (enrichment, empowerment, etc..). Finally, I add contour to the typology, acknowledging how social justice, identity-based reform, and personal reform movements shape fields where movements and actors jockey for particular resources and make use of various types of capital. All of these elements emerged from the iterative process of engagement with the relevant literature and coding of the content data prior to entrance into the field.

The typology served as a useful categorizing tool by which I was able to differentiate activist work from non-activist work of the formerly incarcerated. The typology specifies the signposts which designated my entrance into the field and provided a useful framework for better understanding the ways in which citizenship-rights affirming system blame-work affects the personal lives of, and counter-oppressive accomplishments of, the formerly incarcerated. In the following paragraphs, I explain the typology with movements and mission quotes to exemplify the dimensions.

Logics of change – vertical axis

The vertical axis specifies a set of change logics that drive the various types of change work that formerly incarcerated people find themselves involved in. Logics are akin to rationales that drive change-work, philosophies that motivate their work, or missions. They are sets of principles or sensibilities through which action is conducted. The work of David Aberle (1966), Margaret Somers (2008), and Elliott Currie (2012; 2013) are used to define the ends of the vertical spectrum of change-work logics. See Figure 3.

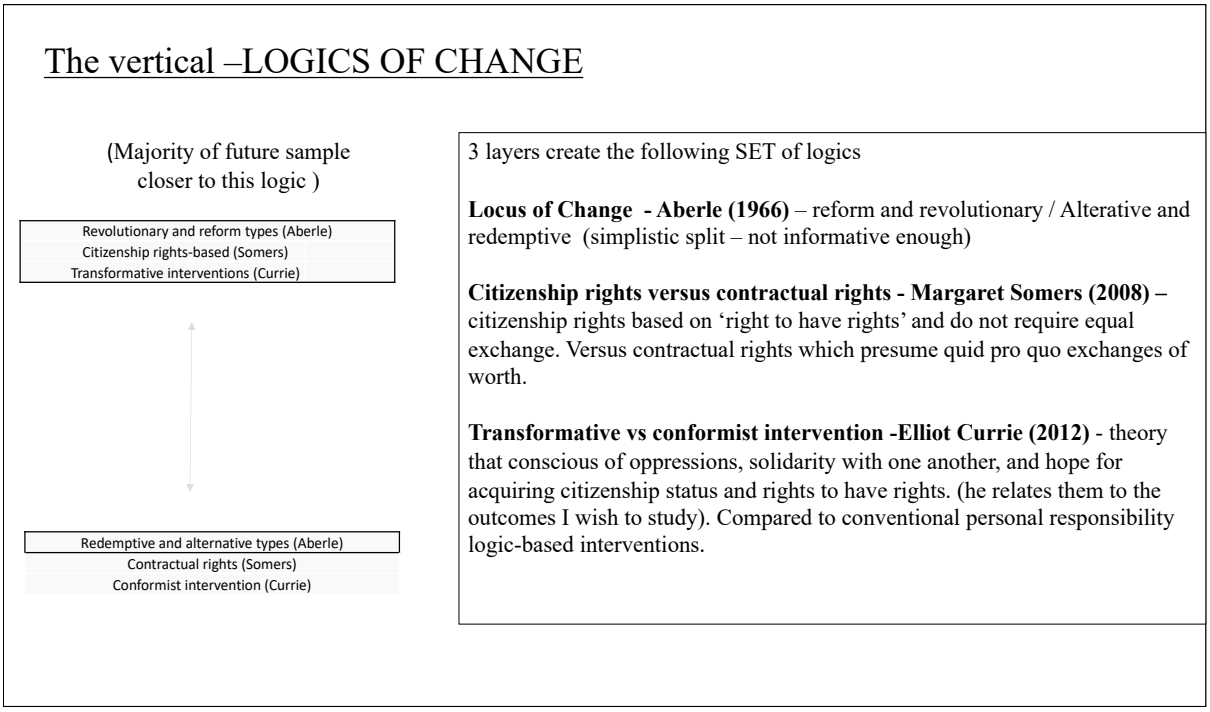


Figure 3. The Vertical Axis of Typology – Logics of Change

David Aberle - internal and external locus of change logics

David Aberle's (1966) classification of social movements informs the vertical axis. Aberle's work simplifies the division at both ends of the spectrum, external locus of change at the top of the axis and internal at the bottom. Aberle identifies transformative and reform movements (at the top of the axis) as actions aimed at change in supra-individual systems. Redemptive and alterative movements (at the bottom of the axis) aim to change individuals.

Aberle's classification has wide-reaching acceptance in social movement theory. Google citations reach approximately 200 and his work is often cited in introductory social movement sociology texts (Macionis, Benoit, and Jansson 2000).

Reform and revolutionary movements would be closer to the top of the axis such as *Ban the Box* initiatives which challenge "stereotypes and discrimination" against people who have been incarcerated. Also, *JustLeadership* which is situated at the top. This organization trains formerly incarcerated people to mobilize people to "change misguided policies like mandatory minimums and three-strikes sentencing reforms." These organizations easily fit into external locus of change and system-blame logic.

Aberle's categorization helps to contour the bottom end of the logics-of-change spectrum as well. Redemptive and alterative movements may arguably be designed to fix *broken people*. Diversion program movements and mental health movements, in this vein, center the locus of change in individuals and are thus, placed at the bottom end of the vertical spectrum. *The Council of Southeast Pennsylvania's* (The Council) can focus on "advocacy" which would arguably be placed closer to the external locus of change. However, their peer-support services are centered on "self-help, mentoring, and coaching" because of their focus on helping individuals change, even if making more spaces for them to do so, I classify them understood closer to an internal locus of change focus. RCO's and peer movement organizations are very similar. Even drug court advocacy and diversion program advocacy follow similar models. They basically all incorporate counseling services with advocacy work and focus on counseling service expansion. Therefore, I find such internal locus of change service expansion to be different from activism. This differentiation was confirmed by the participants in the subsequent interviews (see chapter 7). Peer, behavioral, and diversion program counseling are work that

formerly incarcerated people may engage in but are heavily focused on changing individuals. Therefore, they are out of the range of what I define as *activism*.

Using only Aberle's analysis, however, leaves the typology too simplistic and fails to provide sufficient theoretical explanatory power to movements that may fall in the middle of the spectrum. For example, *Change the Hustle* which "turns [individual] legal entrepreneurial skills out of illegal ones," also acknowledges the "structural constraints of economic marginalization and helps [the affected] raise capital needed to make [their] transition." It's hard to tell what exactly needs changing in this case. Since Aberle's paradigm may be less theoretically precise, Margaret Somers' and Elliott Currie's work were added to complete a logic-set that is more informative for my study.

Margaret Somers - Citizenship-based rights versus contractual-rights logic

"Citizenship rights," also on the top end of the spectrum, are described by Margaret Somers as "a distinct ethos precisely because the right-to-have-rights does not require passing of any kind of litmus test of moral worthiness" (2008:34). For example, the *All of Us or None* organization's mission is to "win full restoration of formerly incarcerated people's human and civil rights" while abolitionists, like *Critical Resistance*, frame their work as a "global justice effort" asserting that basic rights to food, shelter, and freedom are what make us safe. The formerly incarcerated activist logics, then, should adhere to an ethos of citizenship.

The bottom end of this spectrum would lie "contractual rights," which includes movements that root their actions in the beliefs that rights must be earned. These actions are carried out in a logic of individual adherence to rules of economics and "personal responsibility" (Somers 2008:72). Personal reform movements, such as the drug court movement, purport that "treatment is anchored in the authority of the judge who holds the defendant or offender

personally and publicly accountable for treatment progress" (Goldkamp 1995:1). *The Davis Direction Foundation* is focused on changing treatment, but still asserts that people are diseased. Appropriate treatment of addiction for this group maintains a separatist logic which differentiates one type of drug use from another and segregates drug users from those who enjoy full rights to citizenship. They also advocate for transformation of drug laws, but those that further separate drug dealers from drug users, calling for higher penalties for dealers. Therefore, as they do not call for everyone's full citizenship rights, but rather maintain bases for exclusion, people involved in these movements would not be considered *activists*. Though some may find this distinction of who gets the activist label and who does not problematic, perhaps even insulting, Elliot Currie's work really provides the basis for why this distinction is important to be made. Formerly incarcerated people are uniquely scapegoated as the cause of social problems, rather than products of them. It is therefore imperative that a formerly incarcerated activist resists absorption of the blame for social ills. For this reason, Currie's work is a critical component in the construction of this set of change-work logics I am laying out.

Elliott Currie - Transformative versus conforming interventionist logics

The basis for this dissertation project has been heavily inspired by Elliott Currie's (2012; 2013) description of transformative interventions, which provides the third layer in the set of logics for the vertical axis of this typology. Currie articulates three mechanisms thought to have profound effects on successful reentry. In the keynote address at the 2012 *Critical Criminology and Justice Studies Conference*, Currie explained transformative intervention as including: 1) An increase in consciousness, or a formerly incarcerated person's coming to understand how systemic deprivations led to their criminal experience; 2) A sense of solidarity, the taking of a more community social orientation, rather than an individual one; and 3) Hopeful action, the

practice of striving to change social conditions perceived as destructive, and a belief that such action will lead to positive change. These processes run counter to conventional reentry programs which send messages to criminalized people to look inward, fix oneself, and adapt to harmful social realities. Transformative interventions seek to shift the reforming person's attention to external conditions, make mental and real social connections along shared experiences, and take meaningful forms of action directed at changing social realities. Fostering these behaviors may provide better chances for long-term desistance (Bazemore and Stinchcomb 2004).

Aberle, Currie, and Somers as a set of change-work logics

Currie's ideas are blended with Somers' and Aberle's to convey a set of philosophies, missions, or reasons that drive change-work of the formerly incarcerated. On the top end of the vertical axis, Currie's theory parallels Somer's citizenship-rights. Where Somers asserts people's *right to have rights*, Currie asserts that one "should be treated as a full- fledged human being with rights to security, opportunity, and dignity" (Currie 2013:8). This position aligns with the ACLU's *Smart Justice Campaign* whose mission includes work to ensure a "fair system, respectful of people's rights to safety and success, to freedom, to be free from life sentences and exclusion from access to housing, family, to fair bail and fair trial, rights to freedom from extreme laws and policies that drive extraordinarily long prison terms." These categories echo both Currie's and Somers' idea of *rights*. All of these missions place the point of contention squarely outside of the individual seeking acknowledgement of rights in accordance with Aberle's external locus of change.

Currie's conventional intervention and Somer's contractual rights-based-work at the bottom of the vertical spectrum work well together with Aberle's internal locus of change also.

Currie argues that conformist interventions "emphasize personal responsibility," "making good choices," and stopping the harm that people "bring upon by themselves" (Currie 2013:7). These themes fit well with Somers' contract-based-rights-work which also emphasizes "rights earned through the exercise of personal responsibility" (2008:72). The rights guided by "rules of economics" and shift from "social insurance to individualizing risk" (2008:115) also align with Currie's description of a conformist approach that is "individualistic, like contemporary capitalism," perpetuating the sense that reentering people (or recovering people) are "on their own" and that their transformation is a matter of "self-reliance" (2013:7). Such narratives exemplify an internal locus of change specifying that what needs to be altered are individual characteristics and behaviors.

Finally, the theories of Somers and Currie fit the bottom end of the vertical spectrum: work encourages formerly incarcerated (reentering or recovering people) to have "lowered expectations" (Currie 2013:9) and for Somers, contract rights should be earned through work and "people should accept any kind of work no matter how degrading" (2008:90). Again, change in individual's levels of willingness to accept such lots in life fit with Aberle's individual change end of the spectrum.

All three scholar's work illuminate multiple facets of the two ends of the spectrum of the logics of change vertical axis. The mental health movement and diversion programs at the bottom and rights-affirming social-blame transformative work at the top. To illustrate how all three work at the bottom I offer an example of the *National Reentry Resource Center* funded by the *Department of Justice* claims to be "the nation's primary source of information and guidance on reentry:" They claim to train and provide resources on peer mentorship programs across the nation. However, they offer little information on their mission other than to assert one person

with experiences can help another. So, with little information to go on, I chose a peer mentorship program that people in my seed sampling are involved in. The peer mentoring program based on the *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration* (SAMHSA, n.d.) has a peer-mentorship program in line with a broader peer mentorship movement and often used to address reentry issues. Their program is described as:

> Services delivered by individuals who have common life experiences with the people peers are serving. People with mental and/or substance use disorders have a unique capacity to help each other based on a shared affiliation and a deep understanding of this experience. In self-help and mutual support, people offer this support, strength, and hope to their peers, which allows for personal growth, wellness promotion, and recovery (SAMHSA n.d.).

This mission quite clearly aligns with Currie's conformist tradition, Somers' contract-based rights propagating only earned paths to rights, and Aberle's internal locus of change.

On the top end of the spectrum the *Ella Baker Center* is rooted in "human rights" logic in line with Somers, to "create opportunities" in the social context in line with Aberle's external focus, and "truth telling and the training of directly impacted leaders" constitute a transformative intervention.

The three also help make sense of otherwise contradictory or blurry missions. Take the case of *The Center for Returning Citizens* (TCRC). The organization agrees with the notion of "transforming lives" but the degree to which a worker in this organization believes that major social transformation is needed to bring that about is less apparent. To find an individual's place along the vertical axis I can look first for Aberle's logic of external locus of change, but his theorizing alone does not indicate whether the change-work an individual engages in is necessarily transformative or rights-affirming. Somers adds that. I can look for a change-workers general philosophy about whether people have a pre-existing, non-contractual, rights-to-have-rights. Somers, however, leaves out that specific oppressive beliefs about formerly incarcerated

people that don't just exclude them, but place them at the center of blame for many social ills. Formerly incarcerated people must continuously negotiate taking responsibility with calling out social injustice, Currie, in a philosophical sense, gives them authorization to do so.

The inclusion of all three theorists, Aberle, Somers, and Currie, in the logic-set provides contour and depth to the classification of types of formerly incarcerated change-work. All three contribute to making the vertical continuum more meaningful and useful for assessing the philosophies or reasons (described as logics) that drive formerly incarcerated change-work.

Targets of Work – Horizontal Axis

The horizontal axis specifies what sphere is being targeted in the individual's particular change-work: on one end of the spectrum is the state and the other, is the community. See Figure 4.

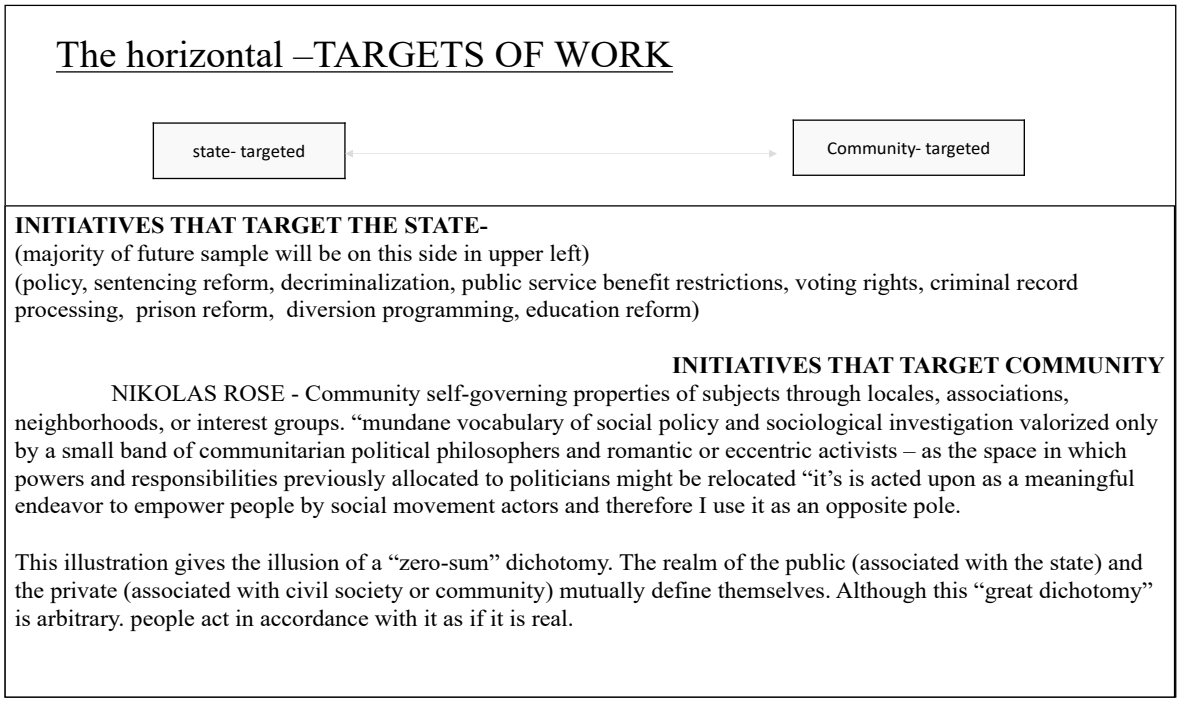


Figure 4. The Horizontal Axis of Typology – Targets of Change

The state

Conceptions of the state vary across disciplinary approaches. Marxists approaches to the state view it as an appendage of capitalist class rule (Block 1977). While Weberian theorists, like Theda Skocpol (1985), approach the state as a more autonomous actor, while still others view the state as a cultural object (Gramsci 2006) that is imagined (Gupta 2006) and difficult to study (Abrams 2006). The state's topography is further nuanced as something with many hands (Morgan and Orloff 2017), variable in its capacities, and differentially constructs its subjects (Scott 1998), such as Judah Schept's (2014) work (*Un) Seeing Like a Prison,* which articulates how prisons view the carceral potential of landscapes and shape them with their own ideology.

There is no one agreed upon view of the state, nor its differentiation from civil society. So, for this study, I conceptualize the state broadly as a sphere that includes various branches of government, police, public institutions, and regulatory agencies. Any work on the left side of the typology, depending on their distance away from the spectrum, is seeking change within this blurry sphere. Whether targets are *actually* the state or merely *perceived* of as the state, the actors who qualify for inclusion in my sample will articulate these institutions as targets of, and spaces where, they perform their change-work.

The *Philadelphia Coalition for a Just District Attorney* is an example of state-targeted activism work in that they seek to directly impact the carceral hand of the state; specifically, the district attorney's (DA) office. Formerly incarcerated activists registered people to vote to put a prominent civil rights attorney into the DA's office in Philly because the candidate promised to end cash bail, increase transparency, push legislation that would have kept juveniles out of detention facilities, and refused to incarcerate undocumented people in cooperation with the federal government. Thus, activists worked closely and specifically to embed a fellow activist into a state seat. Their work specifically and directly sought to mold the look and feel of an

important hand of state power quite specifically. These are the type of movements that I have placed close to the left horizontal access.

The logics of state-targeted work, however, can differ (hence the importance of the vertical axis). Personal reform movements also work directly with the state, but under logics of quid-pro quo rights, internal locus of change, and pushing conformist agendas. For example, accountability court movements, like the drug court movement, work closely with prosecutorial offices to encourage inmate participation in such programs. I argue, however, that accountability court movement work is more person-blame, contractual rights based, and conformist that would not qualify as activism.

Community

The other end of the horizontal axis, specifying the spheres which change-work is carried out, is community. Movements and individual activists may prefer to focus on community, which is perhaps an idea more contentious than the state. For Somers, community might be considered a part of civil society, which "has a relational identity whose meaning is assigned by its place in its conceptual network/knowledge culture" (2008:268). Community cannot be conceived of as separate to, but rather relations with the state and market.

Nikolas Rose (1996) takes on the idea of community more directly, defining it as a "new territory for the administration of individual and collective existence, a new plane or surface upon which micro-moral relations among persons are conceptualized and administered" (1996:331). Communities are configurations of collective relations that have been harmful in preventing the excluded from receiving protections. Further, the community concept can be harmful in that it can shift the blame for people's life situations back onto the victims and their communities or cultures.

A concept of *the social* is losing explanatory power and has limited ability to challenge the state even in the best scenarios of attempted inclusion in participatory politics (Baiocchi and Ganuza 2017). The idea of a public sphere capable of representing a common good is not possible, people will be excluded. For Rose, the term society is suspect as it is "dissociated into a variety of ethical and cultural communities with incompatible allegiances and incommensurable obligations" (1996:353). Claiming a public common sphere capable of representing a broad social common good: a good that is not possible, no matter how the idea is reinvented. The solution to this heterogeneity problem has been to sort people into discernable communities. The results of which, Rose argues, has been efforts riddled with problems. Although it attempts to challenge the ideas of any national unified polity, the social has been "replaced by a "mundane vocabulary of social policy and sociological investigation valorized only by a small band of communitarian political philosophers and romantic or eccentric activists – as the space in which powers and responsibilities previously allocated to politicians might be relocated" (1996:354). Communities may contain self-governing properties of subjects through locales, associations, neighborhoods, or interest groups. Community, constituted in modern thought and made observable via governmental technologies of the state and other authoritative practices of collective existence, is coming to be understood as the concept of communities, which is an invention. However, the idea of community empowers people as social movement actors. Therefore, I use community as the opposite pole to the state, albeit made discernable by modern technologies of the state, because that is how it is approached by change-work actors. They approach community as some true autonomous collective of common ground capable of invigorating self-contained power. It is the target of their work.

Restore Oakland is an example of a movement where formerly incarcerated people work trends to focus on transformation of the community in that they target "building economic power in communities to increase self-determination, conducting job-training that elevates them into higher paid positions than menial labor, driving investment in their own communities and locally, and building restorative justice initiatives that circumvent the criminal justice system." They are quite clearly less interested in seeking state relief and more interested in building community self-determination.

Some efforts may straddle the indistinct state-community divide, like *Black Lives Matter New York,* they are in the typology in the spectrum between state and community because their foci fall on both "empowering communities" and "changing [state] policies."

Reform Fields –Contour

Pierre Bourdieu's (1985) concept of fields where actors use capital to jockey for position in spaces of collective action useful for this project. His framework has been used to study social movements (Fligstein and McAdam 2011; Mayrl 2013; Husu 2013). I find that the concept and its logic add texture to the typology. To help me more scientifically define the borders of such a counter-carceral field in a Bourdieusian sense, I turn to the conceptualizing power of the social movement scholarship of Doug McAdam of Stanford University who draws heavily on Bourdieu. A recent popularly cited article that helps me articulate a field was written by Neil Fligstein and Doug McAdam (2011). They use Bourdieu's fields concept to outline what they refer to as strategic action fields (SAFs). They assert that fields are shifting collections of actors who define new issues as salient and important. See figure 5.

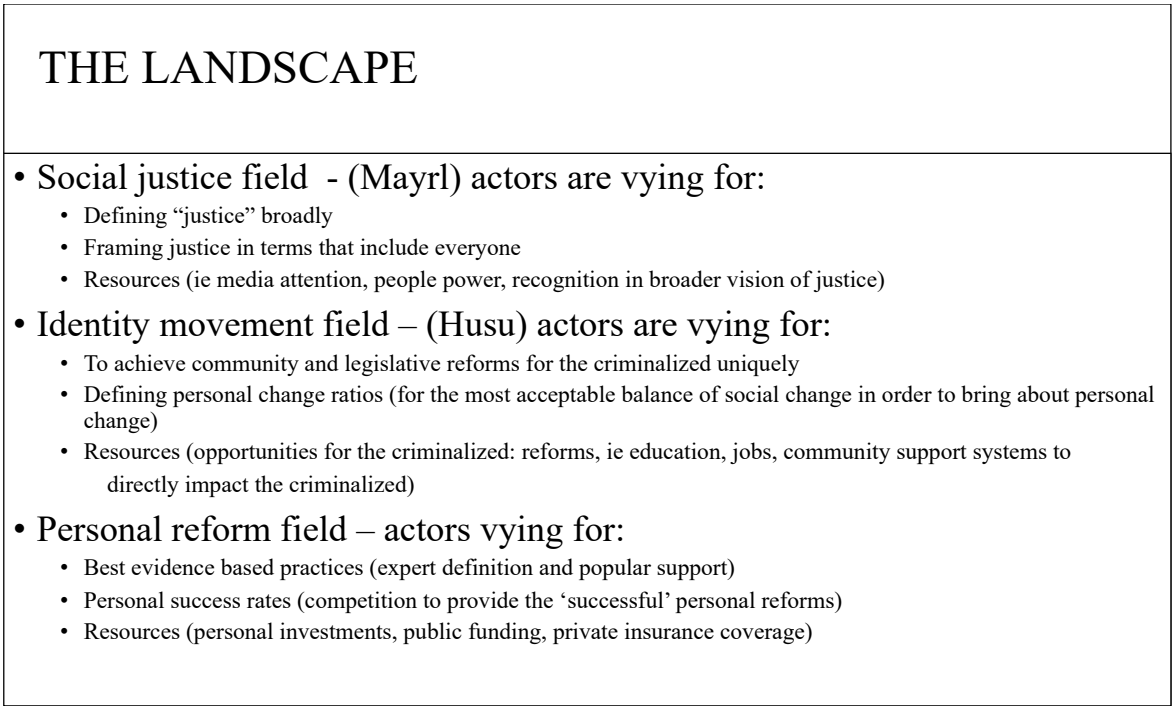


Figure 5. The Landscape of the Typology – Fields

The social justice field

Borrowing Damon Mayrl's (2013) conceptualization of a social justice field, I use to set a pole from which to specify other less-radical field logics, the principles and the criteria, of the social justice field is, according to Mayrl, "a delimited, trans-movement arena of contentious politics united by the logic of the pursuit of social justice." Actors are jockeying for cultural attention and legitimating the cultural understanding of their experience by dominant groups, or where actors battle for political attention and their conception of social justice. The field is comprised of actors who form a collective who fight for individual rights (i.e. gay rights or prisoners' rights) to redefine their position as fighting to change the overall social structure. They take an expanded realization that justice for all will bring about justice for themselves.

I might differentiate a radical social justice field from a social justice field. However, in the interest of brevity and simplicity, I retain Mayrl's social justice field acknowledging that it

may likely include people who fight for individual rights but see it as a part of a broader vision of justice for all. Contention within this field involves disputes over whose movement is most likely to bring about this broad version of justice, wielding various forms of capital to achieve the goals. Abolitionists, for example, who operate primarily in this space, can be highly marginalized in activist communities, finding themselves jockeying for recognition with other social reform movements.

Identity reform movement fields

Hanna-Marie Husu (2013) argues that identity-based movements operate in fields of their own that cross into other fields of contention. Identity movements may aspire to "resist cultural devaluation or new political rights" (2013:18). I argue that formerly incarcerated and criminalized people are taking on community projects and state-based reforms in defense of their rights to justice and inclusion as a discernable group whose value has been diminished. Husu claims that identity movements must work across different fields and incorporate different logics in order to function in various fields like the judicial field and the media field where they vie for attention, visibility, and resources (among other things) particular to their identity. I draw very generally from Husu, likely violating some of her ideas in my incorporation of others. But broadly and generally speaking, an identity reform movement field differs from the social justice field in that the claims of identity politics are not always engaged motivated by broader visions of justice for all, but rather justice particular to criminalized people more specifically.

Personal reform movement fields

A "treatment industrial complex" (TIC) allows private entities to profit off of treatment programming. These treatments are purported by drug court or diversion programs to serve as alternatives to prison and are often even run by private prison companies (Gottschalk 2016;

Isaacs 2014; Kilgore 2015; Schept 2015). Such alternatives to prison often involve the logic of person-blame and contractual-rights. These actors have an enormous amount of power and persuasive capital to use decarceration mantras to reformulate prison logic into treatment logic (Schept 2015) vying for implementation based on best practices for fixing broken people. Movements and actors vying for attention in this space, I would argue, would not be considered activists in that they have limited, to no, requests to claims of justice in the way of constituting the criminalized as people who have the rights to have rights, but rather people inflicted with social ills who can be coerced and coaxed into working hard to earn contractual rights back to citizenship through personal changes in that make them better able to labor, consume, and obey so that they may better become an entity deserving of inclusion. Personal redemption scripts and peer-based "wounded-healer work" (LeBel, Richie, and Maruna 2015), "helping" (LeBel 2007; Maruna and LeBel 2002; Maruna 2001; 2011), "altruism" or "other-centered" behavior (Maruna, LeBel, Mitchell, Naples 2004) even "volunteerism" (Burnett, Maruna, and Bushway 2008) can fall into this personal reform field, that neglects the role of social problems in generating harm. For example, drug court programs and RCOs vie for resources to support direct service expansions that perpetuate the idea that ultimately, it is individual offenders who need to change, and less on how society needs to change. Formerly incarcerated people engage in many aspects of the work of drug-courts and RCO's, especially as one-on-one, peer-based mentors, as advocates for the expansion of services, or 'helping' in a number of ways. As LeBel, Richie, and Maruna (2014) find, 'wounded healer' work has immense meaning for formerly incarcerated people. I find, however, that there are some directly impacted people who are dissatisfied engaging in peer-work, or personal reform service expansion, exclusively and feel that activism is also important in their lives.

Ultimately, the classification of FIA change-work along the axes and fields served as a useful guide into the empirical field and the categories seemed to hold significant meanings for my sample, Interviewing participants with the experience of engaging in both internal and external locus of change-work allowed me to explore, and ultimately find, that they attach different meanings to such work, and they serve different roles in their reentry trajectories. Figure 6 encompasses the final typology and screening questions derived from this analysis to guide participant selection in the broader study.

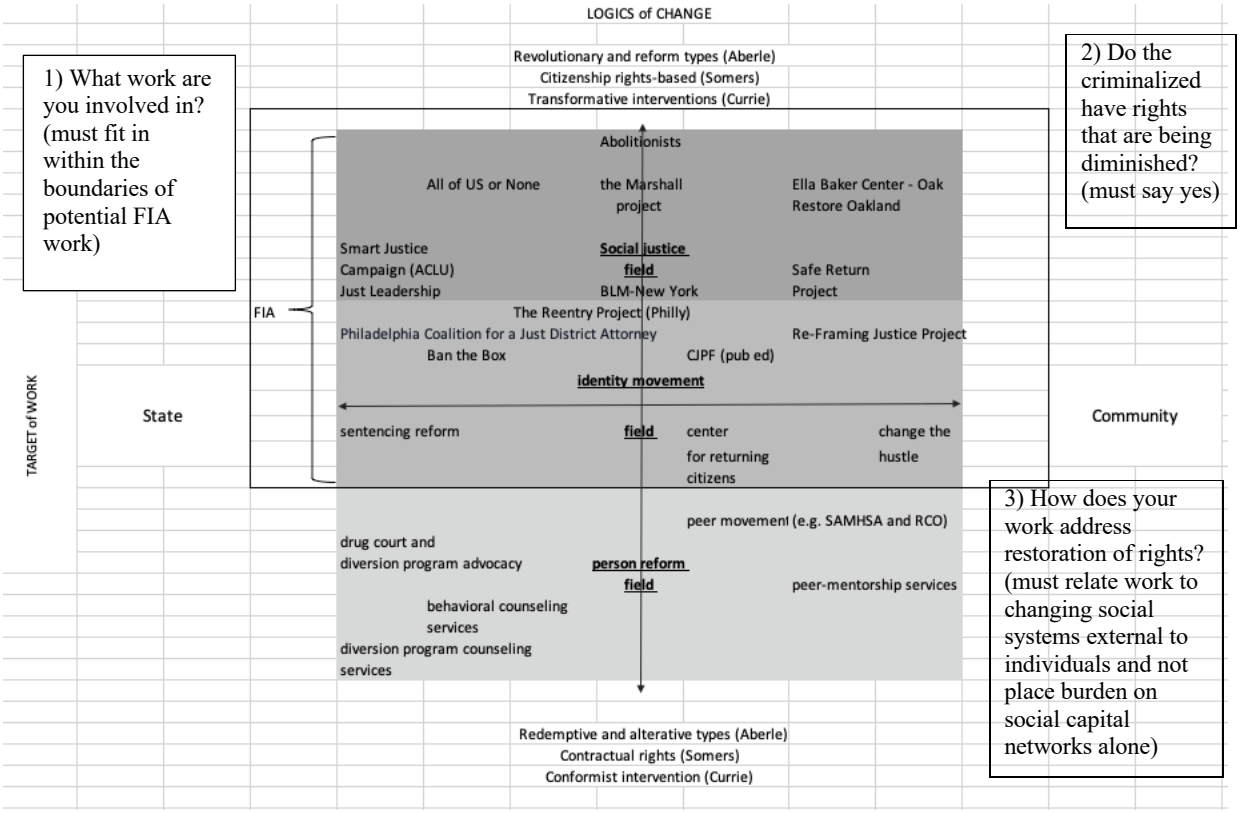


Figure 6. Typology of Formerly Incarcerated Change-work

Defining Formerly Incarcerated Activism

Limitations of current definitions

My empirical study of formerly incarcerated activism required a precise definition. The concept of "civic engagement" that has historically been the language of crime scholars when

talking about the beneficial characteristics of community-related work on desistance, as I have argued, lacks specificity. For example, civic engagement has been defined as:

> Working to make a difference in the civic life of communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes (Ehrlich 2000).

Civic engagement can include volunteerism and such work lacks a strong social critique. In a preliminary interview with a volunteer in an RCO, a space dedicated to the treatment of drug abuse and addressing the resource barriers this population often faces, my interviewee seemed to be focused on an attitude of "people who can't do right" as the problem, rather than on external oppressions causing problems for her clients. Basically, pathologizing attitudes can be found even among the most civically engaged formerly incarcerated people. So, neither volunteerism nor civic-engagement necessarily equates to a social-justice-focus style of work that is found in activism.

A deeper examination of the term "activism" revealed that it can be defined in many ways. For example, the Oxford English Dictionary defines activism as:

> Conscious willed action, esp. … that through which theory or philosophy is transformed into practical social activity; the synthesis of theory and practice seen as a basis for or condition of political and economic change.

This is a good definition; however, its focus is merely on action precipitated by theory and that actions must be precipitated by theories or philosophies in order to be called *activism*. I find this concept insufficient because one could conceivably seek carceral expansion through political actions aimed at capturing super-predators, extending already lengthy punishments, or increasing death sentences. These are certainly not the types of change-work that I'm looking to capture. Rather, I'm interested in language that describes socially directed change work that implicates social forces in problems experienced by the disempowered in ways that align with *rights-to-*

have-rights forms of justice. Therefore, I would be examining formerly incarcerated work that focuses on social harms like the criminalization and brutalization of communities, the civil death associated with criminal records, or the cycle of violence and desperation which carceral institutions produce.

Making matters more enigmatic is thinking about the personal as political. What are culturally conceptualized as personal problems of the individual who have "offended," I argue, are actually institutionally, or publicly, rooted. By extension, the personal work of such an individual could conceivably be called activism. Searching feminist literature for an expanded view of such work, Sowards and Renegar (2006) write:

> The rhetorical exigencies of contemporary feminist activism, and then examines examples of rhetorical activism that play an integral part in contemporary feminism, such as creating grassroot models of leadership, using strategic humor, building feminist identity, sharing stories, and challenging stereotypes. This activism contributes not only to our understanding of the rhetoric of contemporary feminism, but also extends the rhetorical theories of social movements and counterpublics to include alternative kinds of activist options.

To be clear, although indeed the personal lives of carceral citizens are arguably political, from this perspective, all forms of action that run counter to dominant culture could be considered activism. Indeed, private issues, such as the experience of social pressures to offend or the wearing of shame post-incarceration, are linked to public and structural problems. Feminist ideologies have argued *this personal as political* angle (Hanisch 1969), but conceiving of activism in terms of personal healing only could break the gates open for just about anyone to be considered a formerly incarcerated activist. A substance dependent person who is not using drugs, by this definition, could be a political activist. I do not want to diminish those important forms of resistance within our culture, but for the sake of clarifying some lines in this exploratory research, I define activist work in different terms (i.e. conducted in conjunction with

others, under a semblance of a mission, and involve broader targets like the state or community viewed as the source of oppressions). I do this to reduce complexity and increase assurance that I am studying activism in terms of work that directly strikes at the social conditions that perpetuate human suffering, particularly with a degree of intentionality.

Limitations are important to note. One, formerly incarcerated activism's application as a term defined by the typology may only be applicable in the US hyper-incarceration context. Further research would be required to determine its relevance internationally. Also, a few of my participants in the broader study did not care for the activist label while for others, it had immense significance. For example, Kalif, a black man who did considerable time inside, did not care to claim the activist label. He called it "elitist"

> It kind of like distinguishes me. Like I'm the kind of person that gets out there and is active against these issues, and everybody else is inactive. Everybody else is asleep or they're just – going along, and that's not necessarily the case. When I think about the Civil Rights Era, you know those mothers that were boycotting and had to walk miles and miles to work or to carpool, you know, regular churchgoing folk –they didn't call themselves activists. You know, they were just people who were advocating for a cause, you know what I'm saying – And were fighting for their human rights and their civil rights. Society has been so inoculated against the term activist. Like you know when they think of me and you, you know, they have an image of us. You know, we're disheveled, or we're fringe people. We're weird – (laughs). You dig what I'm saying? and that's not the case (Kalif).

However, Taylor, a white woman who rotated in and out of incarceration, argues that the term 'activist' has poignant meaning for her. She asserts that the term is an important indicator that someone is engaged in a particular type of action.

> I can see why someone would not want that [to be called an activist), you know, indeed, the mother trying to get home before the sun to be there for her kids, against all the pressures of life is - kicking ass, well she's illustrating what we are made of. But I think the term 'activist' conjures up a certain image of someone doing work in spaces like communities or on policy and those type of things. Perhaps we need different words to describe those different forms of struggle? Like "moms kicking ass" or "badass women laborers" you know something that speaks to their specific work. But, activism has that feel you know, of someone in the streets, at the capitol, those things like advocating for

> others who I don't even know! Being considered an activist makes me proud and it makes me feel good. I consider myself an activist when I'm doing that work. I feel kind of guilty calling myself an activist if it's been a while since I've had my boots on the ground, even though I am a working-class mother (Taylor).

Many of the participants heard the following definition of activism and agreed that they fit this description. Formerly incarcerated activists are:

> Formerly incarcerated people (having ever been arrested) working in at least minimally organized groups who envision their work as an effort to bring about a more socially just society. Their work may seek to bring about radical broad-based change or take a more slow and incremental approach, so long as the work is intentioned to bring about justice (as in a right to have rights) for criminalized people, and in some cases - for all. Formerly incarcerated activists work to promote the quality of life for formerly and currently incarcerated people, for those at risk of incarceration and the people impacted and affected by incarceration, which may be conceived of narrowly or broadly. Activism targets the state and/or community spheres. Work is conducted with an engaged sociological imagination which places the "problems" they work to change firmly outside of any individual incarcerated person.

The preceding sections explained the empirical exercise that led to the formation of this definition and provides the typology used to distinguish among the various types of change-work that formerly incarcerated people engage in.

CONCLUSION CHAPTER 2

In the face of overwhelmingly bleak prospects for reentry, formerly incarcerated people who have become engaged in activism present an especially successful counterpoint, that action directed at changing systemic harms seem to have particularly advantageous powers to change individuals as well. Yet this point has, up until now, remained severely understudied. Formerly incarcerated activists making bold moves to reform harms, increase equality, affirm lives, shatter false narratives, and even abolish punishment appear to be well-stocked in social capital and occupational skills as they adorn stages, political platforms, and media feature stories. Their immersion in movement activities that seek change beyond the individual-level, seem to have helped them make amazing transitions from lives defined by harm production to being stewards

of harm reduction. The findings from this initial content analysis allowed me to differentiate social justice related political change-work with a right-to-have-rights orientation, from other well-meaning service expansive net-widening and individual pathologizing reform projects that bolster the carceral state.

Whether engaging in sentencing reform, community building, or prison abolitionist work, formerly incarcerated activists contest the narratives of brokenness by publicly engaging with broader social and institutional forces where they shine a light onto the social sources of crime and reentry problems. The typology allowed me to differentiate their work along these axes to explore how different forms of change-work impact their lives and give meaning to their experiences, differently. They show us how, although distinct, self and social change intertwine imperatively for realizations of justice. This study's findings provide a qualitative overview of a population of formerly incarcerated activists who have received little empirical attention and illustrate how their work becomes legible as a transformative intervention that contributes to personal success and social change victories.

CHAPTER 3
PROCEDURE AND SAMPLE

PROCEDURE

Denzin and Lincoln used with permission by John Creswell (2013:17), lay out the steps in a qualitative research process, which guides the organization of this project. The phases of qualitative research include consideration of the researcher as a multicultural subject, the theoretical paradigms and research strategies, stated methods of collection and analysis, and interpretation and evaluation.

The Researcher as a Multicultural Subject

Feminist standpoint epistemology

A feminist standpoint perspective acknowledges the importance of identities as an epistemological entry point (Smith 1974). Feminist standpoint asks the question, "Who is doing the research?" It encourages the inclusion of marginalized identities in the research process and more specifically reminds us that accessing the knowledge which exists from the standpoint of those who are oppressed is important for increasing wide-reaching understanding of those experiences. Formerly incarcerated people, as "wrongdoers," confront knowledge claims from oppressors, such as the knowledge shaped by professionals, the state, or a masculine criminology (Arrigo and Milovanovic 2008; Belknap 2014; 2015; Britton, Jacobsen, and Howard 2017; Hannah-Moffatt 2001; Mackinnon 1987; Presser 2013).

Living in the skin of someone continuously shaped by these broader social forces, I began my empirical inquiry from a unique vantage point, as a directly impacted scholar-activist. Keeping in mind that although what one knows is affected by their social location, no one can have objective knowledge completely and no two people have the same standpoint (Collins

1986). Situated knowledges are not complete, but partial (Haraway 1988). My experience served as a point of entry into this research and although the questions and design have been crafted with the lived experience of being a person impacted by incarceration and an activist, the project required me to reflexively adjust throughout all phases of the research asking, "How am I interpreting the FIA experiences?" Continuous awareness in the field that a matrix of multiple dominations creates our experiences was necessary for faithful inquiry (Collins 1986; Smith 1974).

Standpoint epistemologies in research is a point of contention among criminologists, but there has been a call for more experiential based research in recent years. Joanne Belknap, in her 2014 American Society of Criminology (ASC) presidential address, calls for the lifting up of convicted voices, paying particular attention to those of women and people of color. My own experience is a good anchoring point from which to understand knowledge about FIAs' experiences. As a directly impacted woman activist, I have insight into the experience that helped me to inquire about unchartered and important territory. I learned about my own oppression through activism; I was able to shed guilt and shame through the process of coming to understand the social injustice I faced and then working to change it. This had immense effects on my personal success. I learned valuable skills— to publicly speak, organize, build, fundraise, communicate with elected officials, formulate campaigns, deal with difficult situations and hostility, plan events, petition, problem-solve, delegate, and publicize. I have witnessed the same results in others — several of whom are among my sample.

Strengths and limitations of standpoint epistemology abound (Arrigo 1992; Belknap 2014; 2015; Collins 1986; Harding 1996; Hartsock 1987; Lugones and Spelman 1983; Ross, Jones, Lenza, and Richards 2016). It is an important entry point; knowledges that are

subjugated, when disclosed through qualitative research, expose us to alternate realities. Mainstream Sociology and Criminology seem to be considering these experiences of the researcher to be important scientifically. Victor Rios's (2007 and 2011) work is acclaimed and Michael Walker's (2016) insider work on jails are getting considerable validation from the field. Although directly impacted men scholars seem to have captured most of the attention, women with such experiences also have much to contribute. I believe in a feminist standpoint epistemology because research crafted from such positions can add to what we know about the population under study. I choose to generalize, rather than specify what my own particular experiences are. This is in accordance with the protection of human subjects, which also applies to the researcher (Fowler 2016).

Theoretical Paradigms and Research Strategies

"Stories as evidence"

Desistance is a complex process. In the field of corrections, "evidence-based" interventions, aggregated evaluations of "what works" (actually "what worked") are hailed as the gold standard. This standard provides little insight into how or why a process worked (Maruna 2015). Maruna makes the case for a broad definition of this term to include studies of life stories. Qualitative evidence is often screened out in exchange for randomized control trial data. This "institutionalized quantitivism" (Booth 2001) ignores many of the complex processes of offender reentry. It is exclusionary and normative whereby treatments are based on notions of self-change that evades the larger epistemological critique of medical models (including epistemological assumptions about research quality that excludes many forms scholarship – like qualitative interviews). Instead of evaluating programs, Maruna argues we should be evaluating theories of change by answering the question "how" rather than "what works." The "what works" involves

random control trials (Welsh and Farrington 2007), while desistance research focuses on individual lives (in social context) or journeys over time.

This work is predominantly qualitative and focuses on self-narratives of individuals who have moved away from crime (Giordano, Cernkovich, Rudolph 2002). If what counts as evidence is broadened, then much needed new theoretical models for change may be developed. Rather than asking "what works," effective qualitative research asks how formerly incarcerated people are able to rebuild new identities for themselves, explorations into what motivates changes, and what processes hider or catalyze their efforts. Viewing the formerly incarcerated as active agents, rather than subjects of programming, shifts our understanding about how people create change in their lives. These questions are best asked with qualitative analysis. Stories can thus serve as evidence (Maruna 2015).

Social harm perspective

Although Maruna's work has primarily centered on desistance, in this project, I refer less to crime and desistance, instead, refer to harm. A social harm perspective is a paradigm which expands a focus from individual acts defined as crimes, like interpersonal violence or theft, which criminology often concentrates to encompass all forms of harms that people experience from the cradle to the grave (Hillyard, Pantazis, Tombs, and Gordon 2004; Pemberton 2012; Presser 2013). A critical lens is turned to "recognize" broad forms of harm that are often not defined as crimes, but which are tenuous to define (Yar 2012). These produce conditions that perpetuate individual enactments of harm, that include crimes. In a sense, we understand poverty to *be* criminal-like, we study it as a purveyor of harm and as something that causes death and bodily harm or something that steals from people. This conceptual twist is a part of the social harm perspective formula. From this perspective, the lens is expanded and shifts away from

individual enactments of crime, viewing them as outcomes of broader harms, or as something that happens along a harm continuum (Dorling, Gordon, Hillyard, Pantazis, Pemberton, and Tombs 2008; Pemberton 2007). In this continuum, various forms of harm are imposed and enacted in overlapping, flowing from, through systems and people. Poverty (Dorling et al. 2008), heteronormativity (Bibbings 2004), xeno-racism (Fekete 2008), sexism (Pantazis 2004; Cain and Howe 2008), consumerism (Bouki and Kotze 2018), and neoliberalism (Collins and Rothe 2019) constitute harms that are not captured by the criminal law and play a part in the causes of individual enactments of harm.

Harm scholars insist that all forms of harm "must be analyzed together, otherwise a distorted view of the world is produced" (Hillyard et al. 2004:2). Some examples of the issues and themes of a social harm perspective will be familiar to criminologists. Examining poverty like we would otherwise examine the commission of crime. Poverty, thus, would be conceived of as a harm that drives murder rates in areas of its concentration, and harms of gender oppression would be indicted as causes of interpersonal violence against women, and systemic economic stress as a conspirator of emotional abuse in families. Though these have been largely conceived of as correlations in criminological empiricism, they are examples of how harm approaches can turn their critical lens toward the manifold of social harms that one becomes engulfed in, as well as something one enacts. The harm perspective itself is in a state of internal debate and specification (Bouki and Kotze 2018). I, regardless, make use of its conceptualization to situate my participants lives. The imposition of harm upon them and their resulting enactment of harm, that is cyclic, overlapping, manifold, and processual.

Given that criminology has enjoyed an intimate relationship with the powerful, a relationship determined largely by its failure to subject to critique the category of crime – and

disciplinary agendas set by this—around this the criminal justice system has been organized. (Cohen 1981; Foucault 1995[1977]; Foucault 1980; Garland 2012; Hillyard 2008;). Social harm approach scholars posit this "disciplinary approach organized around a concept of harm is more theoretically coherent, imaginative, and more progressive politically" than those centered exclusively on crime (Hillyard et al. 2004:2). I, to some degree align myself with this perspective, and I use the term "harm" to reflect the fuzziness of where harm begins and ends in society.

We can theoretically see how individual harm, like criminal harm, is an extension of broader social harms. A *zemiological* approach, as it's been described, is a shift in gaze that indicts social conditions for their role in the individual enactments of harm (Boukli and Kotzé 2018). I conceive that criminally categorized forms of harm are the manifestation of social harms transmitted through the individual and groups. This helps to situate formerly incarcerated, or carceral citizen, activism as a harm desistance strategy, rather than a criminal desistance strategy, as activism is often criminalized. Without delving deep into the definitional problems of how harm is defined, for whom, and when, I reference the harm continuum as a broad scope of harms that people are embedded in and from which, they enact harm themselves. Therefore, reference to harm as something that acts upon an individual and something that is enacted by individuals take the shape of a harm continuum. I refer to harm as such throughout this project.

Feminist methodologies

Kristen Esterberg's (2001) text emphasizing practical research skills that derive from feminist perspectives largely guided the technicalities of method for this project. Her strategies about initiating research, ethics, access, settings, field-note writing, the self-as-instrument, interviewing, and meaning-making out of qualitative data helped me through the phases of the

project. Applying her suggestions for constructing a qualitative research project, I devised an interview plan based on the theoretical concepts I found important, that also enabled participants to express their own opinions and ideas. Because of the semi-structured nature of the guide, interviews did not follow a prescribed order. Also, I came to the interviews with the acknowledgement that participants are producers of knowledge and I understand the stories as coproduced narratives between the participants and myself. While I approached the interviews with the semi-structured interview guide, participants, to varying degrees, guided some of the discussion.

I made ongoing reflexive adjustments during the course of research. This was assisted through detailed fieldnote writing (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2001; Esterberg 2001), reflecting on general impressions about the interview, insights that emerged, methodological concerns, deeper meanings, and new questions that arose as I moved through the ethnographic process.

Feminist standpoint epistemology and methodology, a harm perspective, combined with Maruna's (2015) notion of 'stories as evidence' speak generally to where knowledge is located, how it can be accessed, and what can be known. I constructed a model of theoretical sensitization based on my standpoint as a peer-supportive directly impacted person, a woman, an activist, and a scholar. This positionality influenced the research design.

Research strategy

I conducted qualitative interviews in order to gain a deep understanding about activism's relationship to the reentry process, given that this relationship is severely understudied. Qualitative methods lend themselves well to such exploratory endeavors. Furthermore, acquiring new identities from crime requires the agency of actors and qualitative interviewing helped reveal their interpretations of their change process. Additionally, given that little is known about

the relationship between activism and desistance, for any identity category, I interviewed FIAs who are differentially situated, that is women, men, non-binary, and genderqueer people from a variety of racial categories, age, and experiences. I gained some sense of similarities in their stories and ideas about their potential differences. Allowing their stories to unfold in ways that are responsible and responsive gave participants opportunities to interpret their own story. Finally, qualitative methods allowed me to understand 'how' activism works for formerly incarcerated people.

To imply that I took no ideas into the field would be dishonest. I consider this project both inductive and deductive. The potential relationships illustrated below represent the "theoretical sensitizations" that I took into the field (Charmaz 2006:132). These guided the research and to some degree demonstrated what I believed I would find. Each component of the study had something unique to contribute in the way of addressing and answering the research questions. I entered the field with particular personal experiences and academic training that led me to the development of particular theoretical sensitizations and expectations (Figure 7).

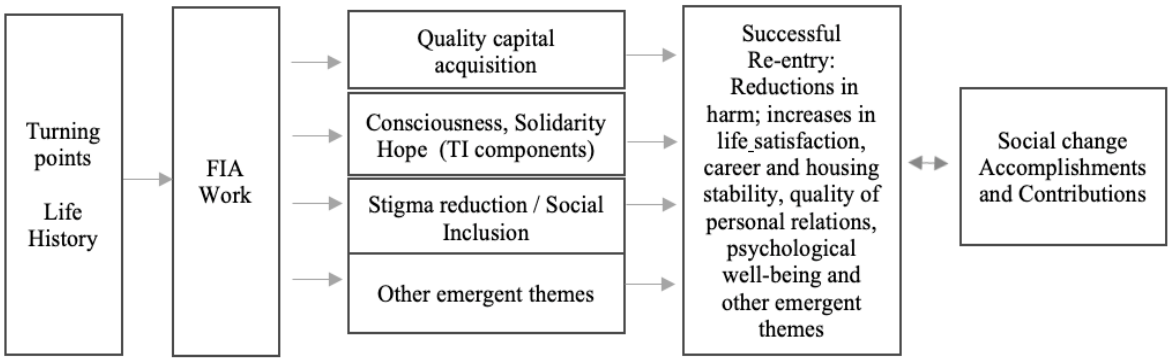


Figure 7. Theoretical Sensitization and Anticipated Findings

The role of the placement of theory in the process of qualitative research remains a point of contention (Gibbs, Kealy, Willis, Green, Welch, and Daly 2007). This study was an examination of social inclusion, social capital, and transformative intervention theory that

undeniably guided at least part of the qualitative component. Strong qualitative designs select their sample according to concepts derived from the theoretical framework for the study (Meyer and Ward 2014), and strong evaluative qualitative designs are sensitized to mechanisms that inform how and why interventions bring about change (Chen 1990). However, being overly predictive can be problematic in inductive designs. I consistently examined my findings for outlying cases and consider alternative explanations. To keep it simple and comparable, all participants had also done some peer-support work. I explored the nature and extent of differences of that work asking participants to compare it to activism. I did this by inquiring into the experiences of my participants, asking them to contrast the value of the work and the different parts they played in their desistance stories. Peer-support as a concept appeared to be somewhat more complex than anticipated as my field-work ensued and personal-reform work was woven into their activist work. Ongoing coding as I went through the interviews allowed me to ask more specific questions about that and the results of those questions are laid out in Chapter 7. Additional evidence of various forms of capital acquisition and stigma reduction was uncovered, trajectories were charted, and surprising findings guided subsequent interviewing.

Methods of Collection and Analysis

Overview

The data for this project was derived from three sources 1) A brief close-ended demographic survey, 2) Participant observation in activist activities (documented in field-notes), and 3) Semi-structured interviews. The bulk of the analysis for the project draws on qualitative interviews with 32 formerly incarcerated activists (FIAs) with diverse gender and racial identities. (See Table 2). The semi-structured interviews explored life histories, turning points, motivations into activist work, what was gained from their work (i.e. consciousness, solidarity,

hope, social inclusion, and social capital), tensions in their work (i.e. social transformation versus peer and personal change), the meaning and attainment of "success", the contributions they see themselves making to broader social change, and the perceived impact of gender and racial identity in their work. The close-ended survey administered acquired basic demographic information, incarceration information, criminal history, and basic life experiences (abuse, drug use, homelessness, geographical changes). This instrument combined with the qualitative data, provided much detailed explanation of the relationship between activism and reentry.

Sample and data

I interviewed racially and gender diverse sample of 32 formerly incarcerated activists using the semi-structured interview guide (Appendix B). When interview questions seemed to yield very little new discoveries, I decided that I had reached saturation. Snowball sampling began primarily with my own social network and mutual friend contacts made through social media. Sites for the study where I was physically present included Atlanta, Philadelphia, and New York. Many other cities are represented in the sample as snowballing led to contacts in other states. Because of this, the participants' locations are designated as being in one of four regions in the US: Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, or Southwest. All four regions are represented, though not in equal numbers.

Referral sampling may begin with a convenience sample of initial participants, referred to as *seeds* (Heckathorn 2011). I contacted seed participants at each research site prior to arrival and during my stay, I received referrals for in-person interviews. I combined this work with ongoing communication with out-of-state referrals and social media interactions with activists who shared mutual friends with me. These interactions led to some phone interviews. The visit schedule for Atlanta site participation, observation, and interviews took place over a two-month period in mid

2019. New York (one week) and Philadelphia (three week) site participation, observation, and interviews took place in the Summer of 2019. Phone interviews with out-of-state and social media contacts were conducted in and around those months as well. In total, the field work and interviews took place over an approximate three-month period. Audio recordings of interviews were numbered (de-identified filename) and uploaded to a transcriber-shared Dropbox each day that they were collected. The text-file transcripts, with appropriate interview # matching the audio recording, were uploaded on a rolling basis as they were completed.

This project required continuous analysis and sensitization to memos during analysis made in the field. Notes and important quotes were collected and documented in a file that helped shape the major themes here. My personal MacBook Air was loaded with NVivo software which helped me accomplish this. Each lodging accommodation was equipped with wi-fi to upload recordings and download transcriptions frequently while I was in the field. This way, the fieldwork continued seamlessly in conjunction with ongoing analysis. I spent several hours each night organizing notes and pulling memorable quotes. Immersed in the field and in the process of research, I was able to begin to document what was shaping up to be common themes in line with expectations, surprises that were not accounted for in the proposal, and interesting categorizations that emerged. I spend hours in bars, coffee shops, two very hot Airbnb rooms in central Philadelphia, hostel common areas in New York, and friends' guest rooms in Atlanta.

Screening questions determined eligibility for inclusion in the study which were described in Chapter 2 and listed in Appendix B. The brief demographic survey was then administered (Appendix A) and the qualitative questions (Appendix B) were asked with theoretical sensitization to the proposed model (Figure 7). Participants had their name entered into a drawing to win one of two $40 visa gift cards, participation was not required in accordance

with state and IRB ethics guidelines to win. Participants were chosen using a random number generator, they were contacted and issued the gift certificates.

Instruments

Demographics, incarceration and life history survey

Categorical and numerical data collected included: basic demographics (age, gender, race, sexual orientation, class, religious affiliation and education level) as well as incarceration, activism, and life history were collected on paper and entered into an Excel spreadsheet each night (Appendix A).

Qualitative interview guide and fieldnotes template

Participants were asked about their life history and how those have contributed to their entry into activism. Prompts to aid participant memory were imposed at times but were rarely needed. I had intended to prompt them to consider changes in social roles, relationships, geographical changes, education, work, homelessness or previous incarceration experiences that may have impacted their desistance trajectory. However, an early interview labeled something called a "critical awakening" meaning a massive shift in perspective. This theme recurred in interviews with other participants. Participants seemed to be very aware of exactly how their own political education and remember distinctly how they got involved (described in chapter 4). So, little prodding was necessary and seemed to unnaturally pigeonhole their experiences into pre-defined scenarios. I opted instead to deeply examine their "critical awakening" and involvement stories.

Questions also explored the themes of stigma, various forms of social capital attainment, and tensions between personal and peer reforms (internal locus of change) and social reforms (external locus of change). Openness to emergent themes, however, led to the discovery of a host

of other findings outlined in this study. Questions about their quality-of-life and desistance experiences were explored as well as their thoughts on formally implementing pathways to involvement for other formerly incarcerated people who might be interested in engaging in such work. Examinations of the way FIA's envision themselves in their various change-work roles, how they thought social forces impacted their paths into crime, how activist work helped them personally, how they perceive it to contribute to change broadly, the meaning of the various types of work they had engaged in (activism, peer, and personal), and what marked their paths into activism, and how they perceived their race or gender impacting their experiences. These were the crux of the topics discussed in interviews as those seemed to garner the most interesting information and where participants tended to focus their discussions.

My opportunity to participate and observe activists in action was tenuous, I spent a week 'hanging around' a leadership training in New York of formerly incarcerated community leaders. The time in Philadelphia and Atlanta was spent immersed in the work of activists in their respective cities, I helped where I could by giving rides to people, as well as showing up in support at various functions, demonstrations, and talks. The amount of data I gathered from the participant observation provided more in the way of changing my perceptions personally than as coherent additions to the interviews. There was no intention or systematic collection of this data, it was merely supplementary. However, my experiences arguably served as material to challenge my own beliefs and shaped interviews as the fieldwork proceeded. For example, the field experiences in poor black neighborhoods of Philly compared to the anarchist marches uptown taught me that peer reform and social reforms can intertwine more, or less, for various activist philosophies. Observing one-on-one interactions in the field with people who have broader visions of community safety (e.g. family behavior changes that diffuse to the community, artistic

expression for personal and community enrichment, gardening for individual and community health, or personal and collective history preservation for liberation) allowed me to challenge my own beliefs about the differentiation of self and social change that is one of the foundations of this project. What I found is that personal reform work, for the sake of personal reform only, is still quite different than personal reform work engaged in for the sake of changing oneself-- and systems. For this reason, I have even more faith in the typology and the differentiation between self and social change work particularly because my ideas were challenged in the field and I allowed myself to be changed. Detailed fieldnotes on my experiences were typed up every few days and although I attempted to document exactly how I was being impacted as I went, some of my understandings were caught in hind-sight in subsequent analysis.

Analysis

The qualitative data and demographic data inform one another. The demographic data tell us about how the participants, when faced with limited choices, identify. Data on gender, age, sexual orientation, class, education level and race/ethnicity as well as information about length of incarceration (inside and outside or correctional settings) and types of crimes, were used to compare differences and similarities in the themes of the interview responses. The interviews, and to lesser degrees the field observations, provided broad information about the relationship between activism, reentry, desistance, and social change. Multiple rounds of coding and ongoing reflexive adjustment continued while in the field and followed the collection of all interviews.

SAMPLE

Thirty-two formerly incarcerated people who identify as, or whose work involves, what has been defined as activism (see chapter 2) were included in the sample. The racial and gender diversity of the sample is illustrated in Table 2. Black men are over-represented in US prisons

and jails and are likewise in the sample. Women are incarcerated at much lower rates, but they are over-represented in the sample in order to gain insights into their unique experiences.

Table 2. Sample by Race and Gender

	White	Black	Latinx	Other	Total
Men	5	8	2	1	17
Women	4	6	3	1	13
Other	1	1			2
Total	10	16	4	2	32

Note: See Table 3 for meanings of 'Other'

Participants in the sample represented a wide range of experiences with the criminal justice system. Participants spent from less than one year to over 30 years incarcerated in jails or prisons. Their time under community supervision ranged from less than a year to 20 years (See Figure 8) and the number of charges over their life-time ranged from 1 to over 50 (see Figure 9).

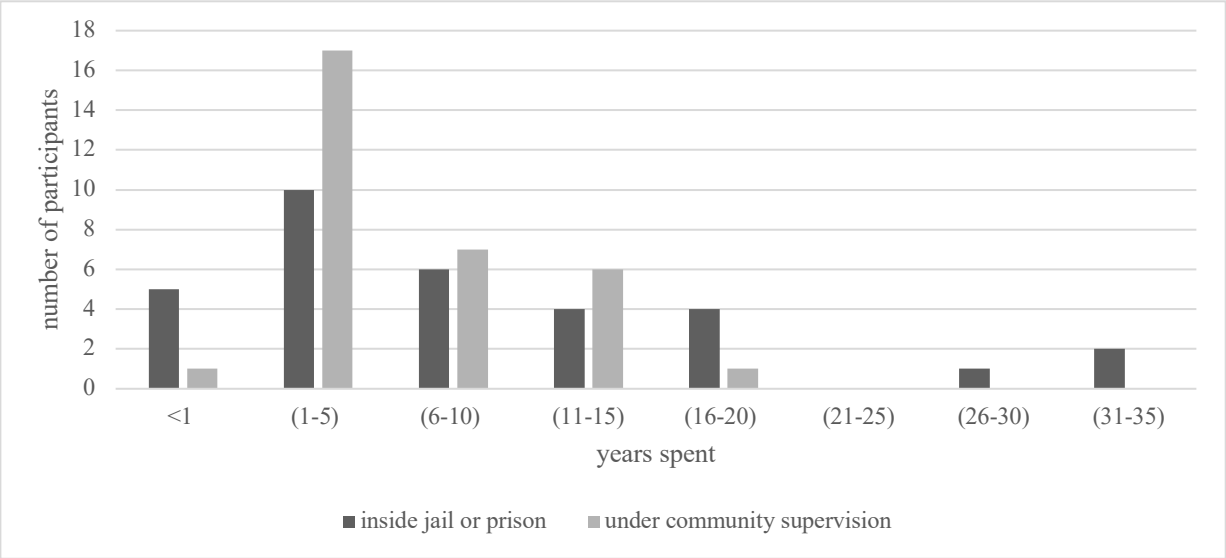


Figure 8. Sample Overview: Years Under Correctional Control

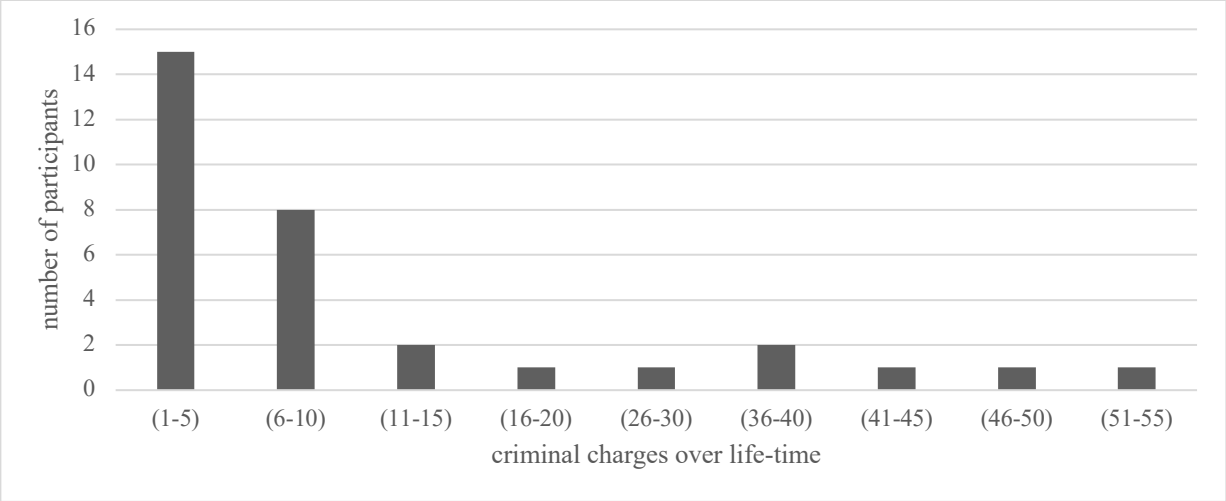


Figure 9. Sample Overview: Number of Criminal Charges over Life-time

In order to explore across a variety of formerly incarcerated activist experiences, participants were in many stages in the reentry process. Some participants had been clear of arrests for only a few years, while others hadn't been handcuffed for nearly 40 years. Regardless of their good behavior, some of them were still currently under supervision, while others have been free from under the system's watch for decades (see Figure 10). This assortment helps us to understand how activism is important in the early years of release from 'inside' jails or prisons as well as how it continues to function for people long after they are "off paper."

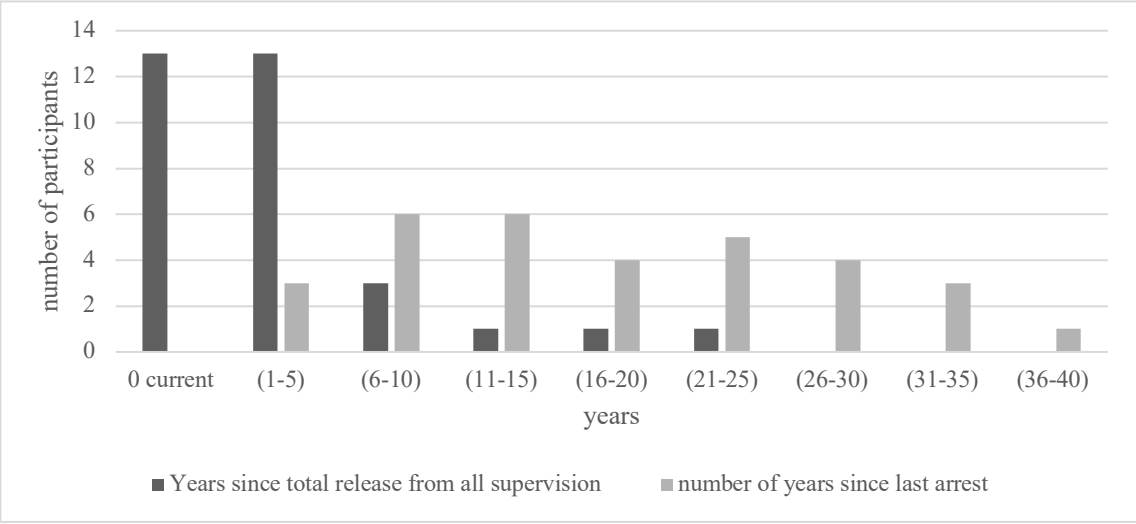
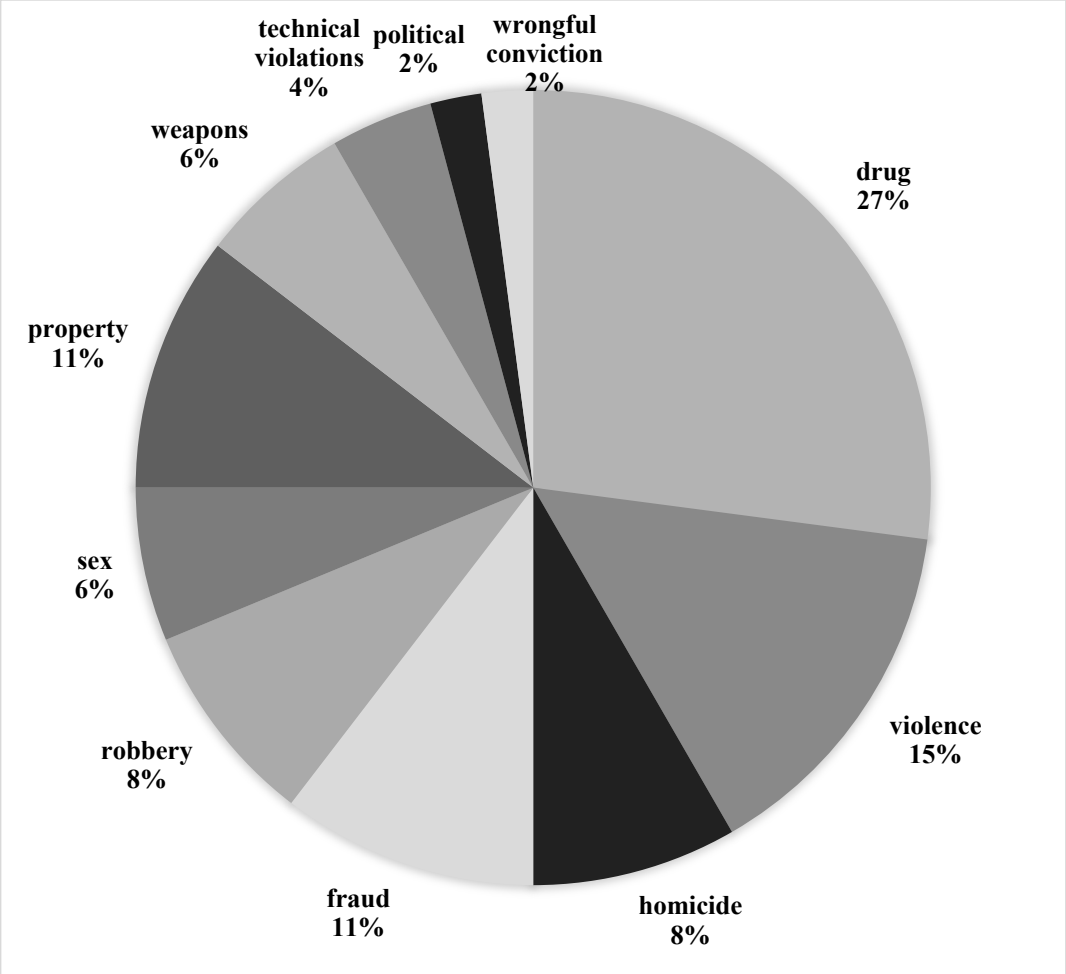


Figure 10. Sample Overview: Criminal Supervision Status and Time Since Last Arrest

The criminal offenses reported by participants also represents a good cross-section of general offense types. The demographic survey asked participants to list their primary and secondary offenses. Meaning, they were asked to report the offense for which they were caught most frequently or one that was most significant in their incarceration story, then to list others as secondary. Some had both primary and secondary offenses to report, but others did not. The full list of all primary and secondary offenses was categorized and are illustrated in Figure 11. Participants were not asked to give a long list of everything they had ever done or been arrested for, but to provide the major themes in their criminal history from their perspective.



*Sixteen participants reported multiple crime types

Figure 11. Sample Overview: Types of Offenses

Finally, the sample includes new and seasoned activists (See Figure 12). The average number of years involved in activism was 13.5. Some have become professional activists, while others are brand new on the scene. This variety allows for the exploration of activism's ups and downs, its inspiration to fresh eyes and its drudgery that can settle in over time.

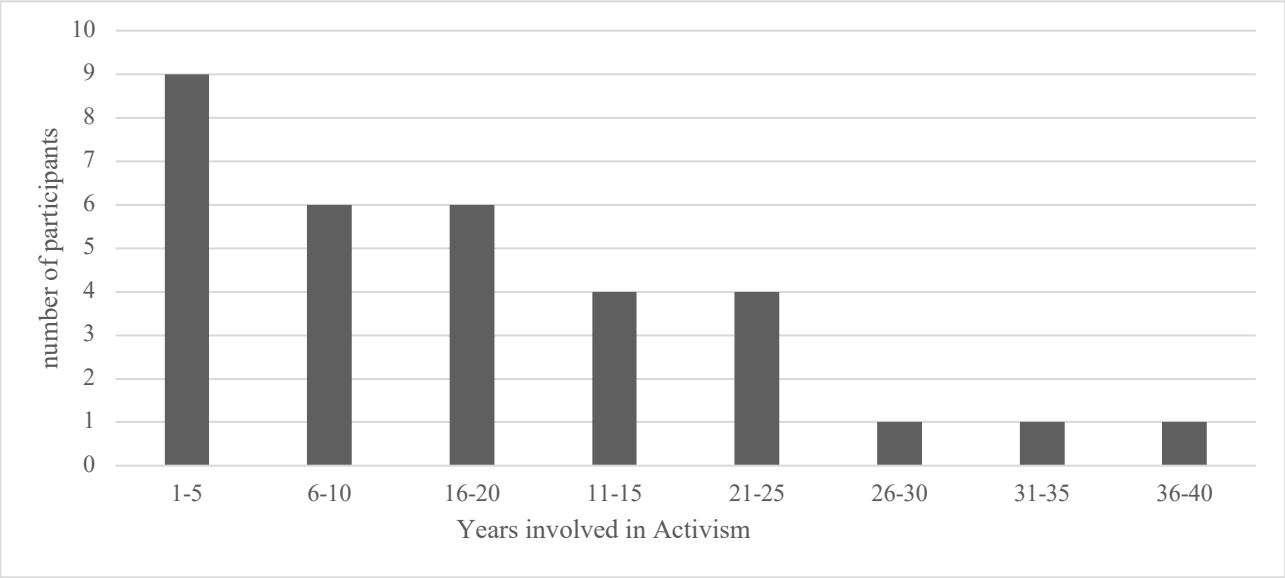


Figure 12. Sample overview: Years involved in activism

The illustrations above provide an overview of the sample. Although it is not meant to be representative, it is diverse along many relevant continuums. A detailed list of participant demographics is provided in Table 3. A qualitative comparison across race and gender is provided episodically across the chapters as differences or similarities appeared to be something important to identify for further research. Educational attainment becomes significant to the acquisition of forms of capital, in that for some activists, they had acquired capital via their educational trajectories, these are considered in Chapter 6. The regions from which participants were sampled are across the US. Data on regions are available upon request.

Table 3. Detail Demographics by Participant

Participant	Race	Gender	Sexual Orientation	SES m/w/p	Education level*	Age	Number of charges arrested for	Years inside jail or prison	Years under community supervision	Number of years since last arrest	Length of time off paper	Types of crimes over life-time: Primary	Types of crimes over life-time: Secondary	Years involved in activism
01FIA Lance	white	man	hetero	w	Grad	35-44	6-10	1-5	6-10	1-5	1-5	sex offense	technical violations	16-20
02FIA Brooklyn	black	woman	hetero	p	Bach	35-44	51-55	6-10	1-5	11-15	0	fraud	robbery	1-5
03FIA Sloan	white	man	hetero	m	Coll	35-44	46-50	1-5	11-15	1-5	1-5	drug	political	16-20
04FIA Zoey	black	woman	hetero	m	Grad	45-54	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	fraud		1-5
05FIA Terrell	black	man	hetero	w	Coll	65+	6-10	16-20	6-10	26-30	6-10	property	violence	6-10
06FIA Gwen	latinx	woman	queer	w	Grad	35-44	1-5	<1	11-15	16-20	1-5	sex		11-15
07FIA Randall	black	man	hetero	m	Bach	55-64	1-5	6-10	6-10	21-25	1-5	drug		11-15
08FIA Gabriela	latina/ white	woman	hetero	w	Grad	35-44	36-40	1-5	6-10	6-10	6-10	violence	property	6-10
09FIA Greg	white	man	hetero	m	Grad	35-44	1-5	1-5	1-5	6-10	1-5	drug		11-15
10FIA Jessie	black	man	hetero	w	Grad	35-44	16-20	6-10	1-5	16-20	16-20	robbery	violence	16-20
11FIA Kelly	white	woman	bi	w	Grad	25-34	36-40	1-5	6-10	6-10	0	drug	fraud	6-10
12FIA Scarlett	white	gender queer	pansexual	w	Coll	45-54	1-5	<1	1-5	21-25	21-25	drug	theft	36-40
13FIA Brandi	black	woman	queer	w	HS	45-54	1-5	11-15	1-5	21-25	1-5	drugs	weapons	16-20
14FIA Shana	black	non-binary	queer	p	Coll	55-64	6-10	1-5	11-15	26-30	0	theft	wrongful conviction	26-30
15FIA Wanda	black	woman	hetero	p	Bach	45-54	6-10	6-10	11-15	11-15	1-5	fraud		1-5
16FIA Garrett	white	man	hetero	m	Grad	25-34	1-5	<1	11-15	11-15	0	sex	fraud	1-5
17FIA Kalif	black	man	hetero	w	Coll	45-54	1-5	26-30	1-5	31-35	0	homicide		21-25
18FIA Tyson	black	man	hetero	w	Coll	45-54	1-5	16-20	6-10	26-30	0	violence		6-10
19FIA Aven	black	man	hetero	w	HS	35-44	41-45	16-20	0	16-20	0	drug		11-15
20-FIA Frida	black	man	hetero	w	Coll	25-34	1-5	1-5	1-5	11-15	1-5	drug		1-5
21FIA Pheobe	black	woman	bi	p	Coll	45-54	6-10	31-35	1-5	36-40	0	homicide	weapons	16-20
22FIA Lilly	white	woman	hetero	m	Coll	35-44	11-15	1-5	1-5	6-10	1-5	drug	theft	6-10
23FIA Jack	white	man	hetero	m	Grad	35-44	26-30	1-5	6-10	11-15	1-5	drug	technical violations	16-20
24FIA Samuel	afro-latino	man	hetero	w	Bach	45-54	1-5	11-15	1-5	26-30	6-10	drug		21-25
25FIA Marcos	latinx	man	hetero	w	Bach	35-44	6-10	11-15	1-5	21-25	0	robbery		21-25
26FIA Deedra	black	woman	hetero	p	Coll	35-44	1-5	6-10	1-5	6-10	1-5	drug	weapons	1-5
27FIA Price	black	man	hetero	w	Bach	45-54	1-5	31-35	1-5	31-35	0	homicide		31-35
28FIA Reginald	black	man	hetero	w	Grad	45-54	6-10	11-15	16-20	31-35	0	violence		21-25
29FIA Madelena	latinx	woman	hetero	w	Coll	35-44	6-10	<1	1-5	6-10	0	violence		1-5
30FIA Vasco	latinx	man	hetero	w	Bach	35-44	1-5	16-20	1-5	21-25	1-5	homicide		1-5
31FIA Piper	white	woman	queer	p	Coll	25-34	1-5	6-10	1-5	11-15	0	robbery		1-5
32FIA Taylor	white	woman	hetero	w	Grad	45-54	11-20	<1	11-15	16-20	11-15	drug	violence	6-10

*Education Level HS=high school education, Coll=some college, Bach=earned bachelor's degree, Grad=graduate school

Upon initial upload of the completed transcripts of all 32 participants, a word cloud was generated, removing conjugating and stopwords, the following was produced by the NVivo software. The word cloud gives an overview of the words most used in the interviews.

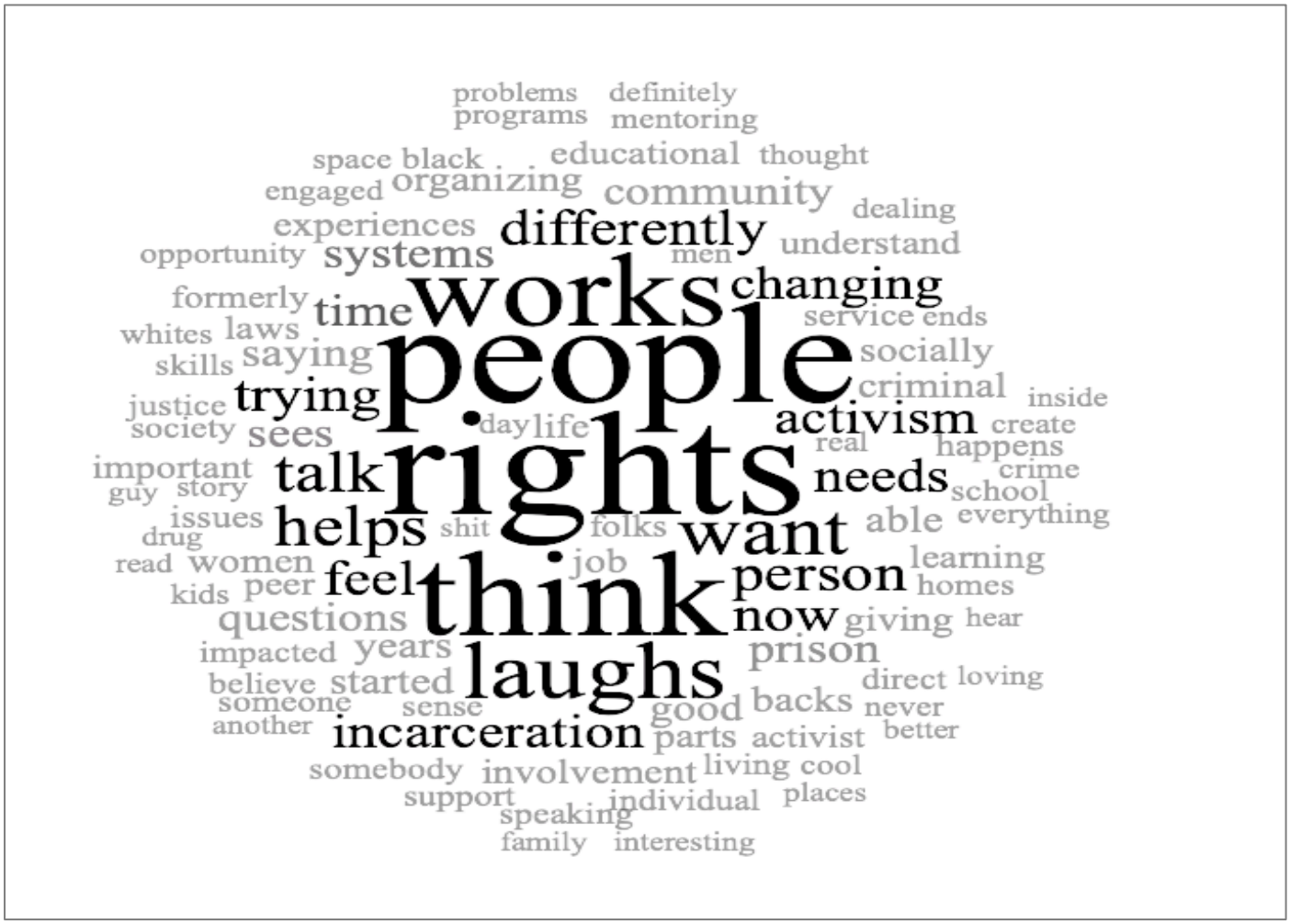


Figure 13. Word Cloud of Interview Text

The formerly incarcerated activists interviewed in this project have been involved in a wide variety of change-work that qualified as activism by the definition derived from the pre-study content analysis. This variety is important for the research in that it illustrates the wide-ranging sets of interests that formerly incarcerated people have in regard to system-level change. See Figure 14.

Figure 14. Activist Work of Participants

Most activists interviewed were involved with more than one issue over their life-time. Because this sample represents such a variety of activist endeavors, we can feel certain that their social, human, or economic capital gained from activism were not as much as a result of the specific areas of activism they found themselves involved in, but more a general experience that formerly incarcerated activists share.

CHAPTER 4
JOURNEYS OF CRITICAL AWAKENING: CARCERAL CITIZEN TRAJECTORIES INTO SUSTAINED ACTIVISM MARKED BY CRITICAL MOMENTS

This chapter reflects the themes that emerged from activist accounts of their migration into a life of active and intentional resistance to oppression and away from a life characterized by harm. Turning points involved critical moments in their life journey that include carceral "experiences" (i.e. with disciplinary establishments, systemic oppressions, or violence), "connections" to another person (i.e. a teacher, a sage, a mentor, or someone who challenged them), "action" they took which was transformative (i.e. organizing, mobilizing, or participating in political or community justice related events), and "education" (i.e. exposure to particular insurgent literatures, political education encounters, or formal higher education).

Based on participant reflections, the ordering of these turning points varied, but the nature of their impact was largely shared. Most activists in my sample expressed that their critical awakening began after their first contact with the criminal justice system (peri-carceral), while a few describe early life exposure to activism and progressive ideas (pre-carceral). Regardless of whether their critical moments began early or later, the same critical moments of experience, connections, education, and action marked their paths. However slowly or quickly they took place, activism became an important part of new healthy identities. And whether their activist work was steady or intermittent, it was consistently associated with periods of well-being or at the very least, desistance from harmful "old behaviors."

I organized participant accounts of their passages out of destructive pasts into sustained activist work using a feminist standpoint epistemological lens (Harding 1996). This standpoint

emerges from a shared political struggle with the participants, although it is only partial. I engaged in this scientific analysis rooted in the understanding that my view comes from my own experience and the resulting findings aim to be "less wrong" as the categories constructed herein are likely incomplete. Although I coded stories with the intent to represent their experiences, I was also unapologetically attentive to expressing their narratives with goals of liberating them from the confines of an often un-reflective science. I present here my interpretation of the ways in which carceralized and criminalized people came to be life-affirming fighters for justice.

Indigenous thought (Henhawk 2013) combined with re-workings of Paulo Friere (2005) provide the theoretical underpinnings of "critical awakening" trajectories that are described in greater detail below. Critical awakenings are considered here to be a "conscientiziation" or a coming to understand broader "mythologies" associated with oppression that occurs through praxis: Action, education, and dialogue that takes place in emancipatory struggles. Then, I use life course criminology frameworks guide my interpretation of the trajectories of the peri-carceral group (Farrall and Bowling 1999; Giddens 1991; Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph 2002; LeBel, Burnett, Maruna, Bushway 2008; Maruna 2001).

Although most of my participants articulated their first critical moment of awakening as occurring once carceral system collision occurred, I include some quotes from the few who articulated critical moments prior to the first police encounter. I briefly report those pre-carceral participants' descriptions, then I discuss the participants who describe critical moments that followed their first significant incident with the carceral state (the peri-carceral group). I refrain from using the term "post-carceral", because it implies that carceral citizenship ends and then activism begins, which is not accurate. Carceral citizenship in fact, never ends (see chapter 5).

It's important to note that participant's lives were often steeped in social injustices, and the activists I interviewed reflect on those in hind-sight, so their trajectories reflect recreations of their stories. They often made clear that although they were the victims of injustice as children and young adults, their analysis changed as they aged and encountered people, literatures, and opportunities for action that transformed understandings of their pasts. In this chapter, I will describe pre-and peri-carceral trajectories of my participants, provide the empirical and theoretical framework of critical moments and critical awakenings, then lay out the sequenced moments of action, education, and connection that coalesce into four trajectories.

PRE-CARCERAL (Pre-CCA) AND PERI-CARCERAL (Peri-CCA) CRITICAL AWAKENINGS

Carceral citizen activist lives were hallmarked by narratives of critical awareness and critical action taking. For some like Sloan, Lance, Scarlett, and Jack, involvement in activism and critical education began prior to their incarceration, arrest, or other significant carceral event. I categorize their trajectories as pre-carceral critical awakenings (Pre-CCA). The remainder of the participants, on the other hand, point to moments of critical awakening beginning upon first encounter with the criminal justice system and continuing thereafter. I categorize their paths as peri-carceral critical awakenings. Clear and critical moments began to shift participant perspectives following their first direct encounter with the criminal justice system (Peri-CCA) and continue over time. When asked, most respondents could clearly, quickly, and decisively pin point when a critical shift in their understanding of the world began to occur. Though they experienced an abundance of injustices prior to their first police or system encounter, their *concientization* took meaningful turns that led them to re-orient how they framed their experiences.

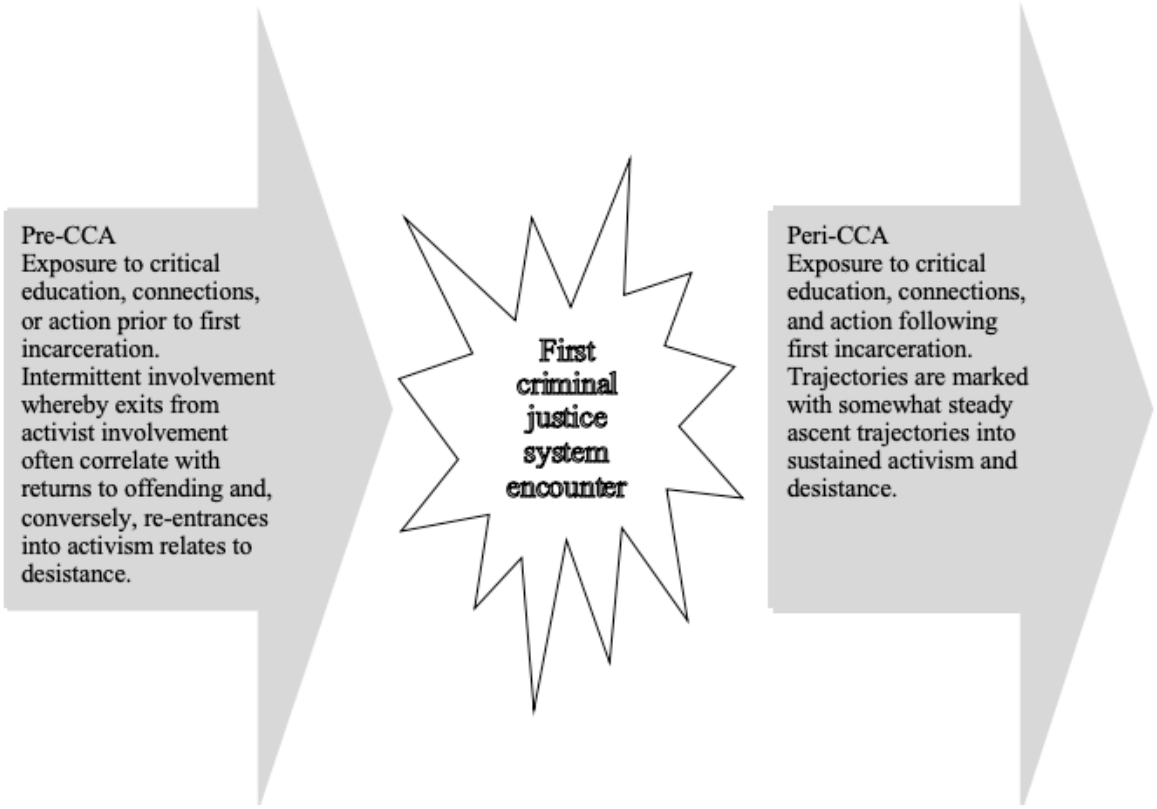


Figure 15. Groupings Based on first Critical Awakening Moment

Pre-Carceral Critical Awakening (Pre-CCA)

These participants had lifelong memories of political involvement and education that they learned from family or adolescent peers. Although this knowledge existed pre-incarceration, participants indicate that offending and activism rarely occurred in unison. Participants describe how moments engaged in offending were times that they had gotten away from their activism. It may be significant to note that all participants who fell into this category are white.

Sloan says, “I was brought to demonstrations as a kid.” He reflected on his involvement prior to his activism. When asked why he strayed away, he talked about how “smoking pot got [him] off track.” Later he entered drug recovery and met a critical connection. Sloan remembers, “This guy I met suggested that we take this off the couch and I found myself getting back involved.”

Scarlett reflects on her early critical awakening onset. She says, “My parents taught me about Martin Luther King Jr. and Ghandi when I was like age five and I grabbed onto it. I think that me being raised in an atmosphere where this is talked about really helped me understand the concepts of social justice and activism.” She explains how periods of activist involvement were related to recovery for her, and periods of non-involvement related to heavy alcohol use. She later learned to balance her self-care and activism to maintain a quality life. She explains, “I just had breaks in my involvement, I struggled with dyslexia which contributed to heavy alcohol use which contributed to a break in my activism. But experiencing sexual violence as a sex worker by police sparked me to get back into it…. activism is necessary in my recovery.” Jack also had his first critical awakening at home. He remembers, “It was a slow ascent at first, coming from a catholic home I was involved in social justice action. So, I understood injustice, but I became more actively involved in these recent years.”

Lance’s story did not begin with his family unlike Sloan, Scarlett, and Jack. Instead, he was involved in political youth groups. He recalls,

> I was political kind of before my offense, I was not interested in criminal justice at all. I was a member of *Socialist Action*, I was in a youth group. I did like LGBT stuff and work to stop tuition cuts at the university. I ran as a student senator. I was more into history, but you know then I met someone when I was in prison and stuff like that and {founded a} criminology group. Like I definitely have this new inner interest of like criminal justice now that it’s a part of my identity that's how I find my real-life like praxis (Lance).

Lance thus expressed a political awareness prior to his arrest and explains that his activist focus simply shifted away from his previous political interests to carceral reforms and penal abolition after his entanglement with the criminal justice system began.

To some degree, these four participants had some level of awareness of social injustice prior to their first arrest. There is a lack of empirical understanding of the trajectories of those

who are arrested for non-politically motivated crimes, but who are social justice oriented. While Sloan, Scarlett, and Jack were exposed to activism by their parents early on, Lance's experiences were primarily sparked and shaped by peers. Importantly, all of their accounts indicate that increases in offending activity was associated with a veering away from activism, and conversely, returning to activism coincides with desistance behavior. As a result, their trajectories may be marked by similar critical moments as the peri-carceral group's path (i.e. critical education, connections, and action), but their sequencing was more blurred and circulating due to their prior activist leanings.

Peri-Carceral Critical Consciousness Development

Participants frequently described life trajectories stemming from various forms of inter-generational disadvantage. During their interviews, they narrated their lives as embedded in historically broad colonial, capitalistic, individualistic, racist, sexist, homophobic, and classist forces that shaped their experiences. Yet many of them expressed that they acquired those understandings after their first encounter with the criminal justice system. Many referred to these new understandings and ways of being in the world as "critical awakenings' that transformed who they are, how they think, and what they do.

Prior to their mobilization, during their days "out there," "on the streets," "inside," or "incarcerated" they had experienced the powerful fists of multiple oppressions that pummeled their lives. They, to varying degrees, reacted to those oppressions by offending. They felt "angry," "hurt," "belittled," "restricted," "desperate," "unfulfilled," "tired," or "angst." They even felt "smart," "crafty," or "entrepreneurial." They may describe their offending essentially as a form of "lashing out," "dealing with the hand they were dealt," "hurting people because they were hurt," or "innovating" when other pathways were blocked.

They describe deep moments of coming into a new type of awareness through the merging of critical education, reflection on their own experience, taking action in attempting to change something outside of themselves. Most always such moments of awakenings and mobilization were catalyzed by people they could clearly identify, remember, and describe. Participants also referred to particular literature, formal educational experiences, or dialogue that shaped their views. Action could stem from newfound critical political education or action could be the impetus to learning. Critical awakening is a course made discernible by moments of education, connection, and action. It is conceived of as a method of ongoing transformation, not a destination, but a process of becoming.

PERI-CARCERAL CRITICAL AWAKENING TRAJECTORIES

Critical Moments

Critical moments according to Giddens (1991) are events understood as having important consequences in the participant's life and their identity. Giddens describes "fateful moments" as times when an individual stands at a crossroad of existence, or when a person learns information with "fateful consequences" (Giddens 1991; Holland and Thompson 2009). Life-course scholars refer to these critical life events as turning points (Laub and Sampson 1993; 2003; Meers, Cochran, and Siennick;). Participants in my study often articulated how particular moments had important consequences for shaping their life trajectory and their identity.

When I asked what brought them to activism or what led to their "critical awakening" (a term garnered from Gwen), participants consistently knew where to begin and how to sequence their narrative. They are fully aware, cognizant, and even grateful for the particular moments where their knowledge and their strength were realized. They were clear on this. The sociological work for me then lay in searching for conceptual frameworks within which their

experiences fit. I opt for a life-course perspective that articulates structural constraints as loosely coupled with agency (Elder 1985), combined with an affirmative post-modernist contour that attends to structural relationships, but with a more dynamic understanding of reflexive emergent constructions of self, others, and society (Giddens 1991; Henry and Milovanovic 1991).

Much debate surrounds the proper proportion of structure versus agency in mapping individual trajectories. Farrall and Bowling (1999) suggest an integrated theory of desistance, whereby life-course trajectories are marked by combinations of individual decisions and structural constraints. Incorporating Giddens (1984) into their framework, they point to how structures make opportunities to desist possible. The life-course literature on desistance tends to focus on key life events (e.g. marriage, employment, and childbearing) believed to serve as pivotal transitions and turning points (Kreager, Matsueda, and Erosheva, 2010; Laub and Sampson 2003; Sampson and Laub 1993). However, when swinging the pendulum from structural deterministic frameworks to those with heavy emphases on individual agency, we find equal limitations (Giordano et al. 2002). Viewing individual change as primarily the result of personal perspective shifts, assessments, and decision-making processes (Paternoster and Bushway 2009) denies the constricting forces of social arrangements that shape offending trajectories.

The verdict is still out on whether social factors are the 'chicken or the egg' in shaping life-course trajectories (LeBel, Burnett, Maruna, and Bushway 2008). As the structure versus agency debate continues, I find Shadd Maruna's (2001) re-constitutions of self via constructions of new coherent personal narratives to be a useful framework for making sense of participant trajectories. I consider the trajectories to emerge as carceral citizens "develop a coherent self-story to explain…how their checkered pasts…led to their new identities" (2001:7). Peggy

Giordano, Stephen Cernkovich, and Jennifer Rudolph's (2002) "hooks for change" are applicable as well. They define "hooks" as "the actor's own role in creatively and selectively appropriating elements in the environment" (2002:992). In their analysis they consider both the opportunities for change and the agentic moves participants make in the face of them. Desistance trajectories are characterized by such "hooks."

These life-course perspectives are valuable, although I am not studying desistance specifically. I draw on the life-course scholars and Gidden's concept of "critical moments" to think about how participants define their own trajectories to produce a loose framework, rather than by a pre-defined expectation of directionality implied by a "turning point" (Laub and Sampson 2003). I considered, rather, the participants' interpretation of a moment's meaning in line with Maruna and, to some degree, Giordano et al.

I coded for the moments that participants personally articulated as defining their ascent out of a previous way of being, and into a self that is constituted by sustained activist involvement. The trajectories were constructed from attention to the critical moments that were pivotal in their transition into becoming an activist, and what they expressed helped them move away from 'old behaviors' and into new ones. I refrain from the use of the concept of desistance because their new behaviors (i.e. direct action, non-violent resistance, and even violent resistance) are often criminalized. What is relevant in this analysis is that participants reflexively changed from a self that they discursively understood as being a purveyor of harm constituted in a harm continuum (Giddens 1991; Henry and Milovanovic 1991; Hillyard, Pantazis, Tombs, and Gordon 2004), which they take meaningful action to disrupt or even abolish. So, the life-course and postmodernist frameworks are a suitable foundation upon which I can interpret the themes of sequenced change participants reported.

Critical Awakenings

Critical Awakenings here are defined as:

> Conscientiziation that is an ongoing process by which the learner moves toward critical consciousnesses. … it means engaging in praxis in which one both reflects and takes action on their social reality to break through prevailing mythologies and reach new levels of awareness in particular awareness of oppression…identifying contradictions in experience through dialogue and becoming part of the process of changing the world (Goldbard 2006).

For my participants, this awakening process was characterized by moments in their carceral experiences, critical connections with particular individuals, educational events, and opportunities where they took meaningful action.

A thorough review of the literature on the concept of "critical awakenings" requires an examination of indigenous decolonization theorizing (Henhawk 2013; Brady 2018). Critical awakenings, from their roots, are understood to occur in accord with action, education, and dialogue in emancipatory struggles. The ideas of Karl Marx's false consciousness and praxis speak generally to that concept. Also, the philosophies of Kant include reference specifically to "critical awakening" which he differentiates from "dogmatism," or belief in insufficiently examined premises (Buchner 1897). Later scholars like Riyad Ahmed Shahjahan who, citing bell hooks and Paulo Freire's work, describe "critical awakening" as the result of anti-oppressive pedagogies (2009). Both Kant and Shahjahan's conceptualizations are rather static in that an "awakening" is understood as a state of understanding, rather than emergent in continuing action. Pedro Noguera (2008), points this out and "reinvents" Freire based on his work with inner-city youth. He asserts that liberatory transformation requires not only ongoing reflection, but also action upon reality.

Revolutionary practice is rooted in the experiences of the poor and powerless and occurs in collective struggles against oppression. This particular idea of *critical conscientiziation* can be

found in a Freirean interpretation of Joseph Knecht's character in a work of literary fiction *The Glass Bead Game* by Peter Roberts (2007). Robert conducts the pedagogical interpretation of the book using metaphors to illustrate how education links the self and society together and how critical consciousness gets developed in educational transformation that is marked by dialogue, action, and experience. Freire himself, and many of his interpreters, seem to understand critical consciousness as a transformative intervention into reality. Critical awakening refers to how one learns to "read the world" through action (Freire 2005).

Applying these ideas to the coding of my participant trajectories, the acquisition of a critical consciousness reveals itself not as an achievement, but as an ongoing process arising out of combinations of action, education, and connection with others in ways that facilitate cognition about unjust social and political forces, questioning them, and changing them. Though the idea of stages in any human process are indicative of colonialist science which fragments, divides, and compartmentalizes human experience (Brady 2018), I proceed with such linearization of the experience of critical awakening for the sake of clarity and scientific reporting. In the indigenous spirit of disrupting epistemological knowledge or rationalism, however, I use a blurred arrow to articulate, to a limited extent, how connections, education, and action are inseparable parts of one continuum.

I conceptualize critical consciousness in the following analysis as an ongoing process. The trajectories are reflections of the participants narrative recounting of their initiation stories into activism. As I will show, once the participants establish a foothold into activism, the order of the moments are quite impossible to differentiate. What I indicate below, therefore, are very general, non-mutually exclusive, generalizations about participants' pathways into activism. All

of the following pathways were bound at various points with reflections on, and transformations in, their understanding of their own experiences.

I coded participant responses to questions asked about "how they became involved in activism," how they became "woke," or to generally describe their "critical awakening" (without being explicitly defined). They provided their narratives that tended to be marked by the components of critical consciousness processes as defined by the above philosophical and historical traditions. I coded them with an awareness to the sequence of steps in their early journey. What I report below are the pathways that emerged. First, I provide more explanation of each turning point that surfaced within a critical awakening process, which include critical carceral experiences, critical connections, education, and action.

Critical Carceral Experiences

Acute or sustained carceral experiences were not necessarily always the impetus for participants' journeys into activism, but trajectories are classified as "peri-carceral" because the carceral experience came before connection, education, or action in their critical consciousness development. These critical carceral experiences were mosaics of various sustained and acute life harms, traumas, judgements, or punishments that occurred at times in contexts of violence, poverty, diminished education or work opportunities, and recurrently under arrays of other social pressures which merged to construct their first contact with the carceral system. These experiences before and during their carceral sequester, provided the material upon which they later reflected to formulate new understandings of social injustices.

To varying degrees, participants were able to critically evaluate the connection between their early life experiences and their ultimate apprehension by the carceral system. Most in the peri-carceral category admitted to lacking a meaningful critique of the connection between their

life experiences and the broader social structure prior to their collision with the carceral state. Participants, however, in hind-sight made clear references to the importance of their direct experience with these injustices that shaped their connection with others, their translation of educational materials, and their activist work. All of which defined their critical consciousness trajectory.

Michel Foucault's "carceral archipelago" is a useful theoretical tool to consider how participants come to understand the totality of their life experiences. They envision their experiences as being sifted and sorted through technologies of punishment which are profuse and touch all of society in a "great carceral continuum" (1995[1977]:297). Participants through their critical awakening came to construct their paths in these terms. As anti-prison scholars have argued, "the analytic ability to see how seemingly disconnected institutions of state violence are interconnected and how they produce and police social difference" (Loyd, Mitchelson, and Burridge 2012:3) is central to an understanding of the "slow death that maps the effect of carceral regimes upon individuals, families, and communities" (Brown 2014:179). For this peri-carceral category of participant trajectories, critical awakening must begin with their own personal experience because participants made clear that injustices they endured became the data upon which they reflected in their subsequent connections, education, and action (in whatever order).

Critical Connections

Participants mentioned at least one important person who changed their life trajectory and marked their transition from a disempowered carceral subject to a person actively acquiring a revolutionary praxis. These critical connections were encountered at a variety of stages in their

life-course, but commonly between their early collisions with the criminal justice system and their initiation into education and/or action, though not always (see trajectories below).

The individuals could be considered "consequential strangers." These are people in our social periphery who open us up to new opportunities (Blau and Fingerman 2009). Although this framework fits many of the participants' critical connection narratives, it was not always the case. Their connection could be an old friend who took them to an event or a family member who gave them a book. But more often, critical connection accounts began something like, "there was this person I met…."

I considered the organization of community and the presence of community organizations on the likelihood of directly impacted people to come into contact with such critical connections. Criminologists understand that densities of community-based organizations in high crime areas can act as social buffers to social harms and increase collective cohesion (Sampson 2012). There are many debates regarding the along this line of research related to understanding relationships between the formation of civil organizations and the community organizational context and how those directly, or indirectly, result in democratic participation, increased legal cynicism (Berg, Stewart, Intraviral, Warren, and Simons 2016), or lower crime rates (Sampson, McAdam, MacInde, Weffer-Slizondo 2005). Without digressing into those disputes, it seems increasingly clear that the presence of deep civilly rooted organizations in a community increase routine opportunities for engagement (Owens and Walker 2018) and, by extension, make carceral citizens' connections to engaged populations more likely to occur.

With little data to disentangle those larger arguments, I observed that formerly incarcerated activists in my sample, at some point early in their trajectories out of crime, made connections to civically engaged people. Participants' critical connections sometimes occurred in

the community context, but more often they occurred during incarceration, although not exclusively. These critical connections could be purveyors of informal or formal political and social educational materials or opportunities for action that sparked new enlightenments about participants' own life experiences and the social problems that produced them. Connections took the form of teacher (informal or formal), concerned friend, bunkie, or family member who exposed them to educational material or brought them to a civic event. These critical connections are individuals who, more or less, "hooked" (Giordano et al. 2002) the participants into an exchange that they can distinctly recall, and which changed their trajectory significantly.

Critical Education

Participants acknowledged the role of educational experiences as a part of their trajectory into activism and part of their critical awakening journeys via personal engagement with particular reading material (Table 4) participation in semi-formal learning arrangements (i.e. study groups), or attendance in formal institutional style education (i.e. classes inside carceral settings or outside in institutions of higher education). Educational materials listed by participants are conceptualized as components of the praxis required for liberation, a concept drawn from Paulo Freire (2005). These are reading materials that led to the mobilization of their consciousness about the problems of social conditions and the possibilities for transforming them (Freire 1970). The material that participants read and contributed to their paths into activism are listed in Table 4.

Table 4. Educational Material as Part of Participants' Critical Education

Authors	
	Assata Shakur
	Malcom X
	Angela Davis
	Nelson Mandela
	Mark Mathabane
	Keenga Yamahtta Taylor
	James Boggs
	Ta Nehisi Coates
	Michelle Alexander
	Noam Chomsky
	Howard Zinn
	Cornel West
	Paulo Freire
	Claude Brown
	Amos Wilson
	Frances Cress Welsing
	Jawanza Kunjufu
	Viktor Frankl
	Karl Marx
	Robert M. Pirsig
Media Publications	
	Prison Legal News
	California Prison Focus
	Revolutionary Worker
	Critical Resistance
	Counterpunch

Critical Action

Activists engaged in some meaningful social action that they described as "getting involved," "attending an event," "giving a talk," "showing up," or going to "work on" some project. Their first critical action, as they described, could have been an opportunity that was suggested to them by a critical connection, something initiated out of education, or some action they were driven to take by virtue of their own circumstance. Their action, for many of the participants, seemed to be understood as their first social-change activity. Examples of this include, attending a local city hall meeting, a conference, or a demonstration.

Sustained Involvement

Critical experiences, connections, education, and action catapulted these carceral citizens into varying degrees of sustained activist involvement. Some have been engaged in a steady stream of movement work while others have just begun their journey. Their first connections, education, and activist experiences sparked their critical consciousness and laid the groundwork for their sustained activist involvement; however, my data was limited on how trajectories looked beyond their activist beginnings. This sustained activist involvement constitutes a persistent, even life-long, critical awakening process, whereby they engage directly with a flow of action mediating the surrounding world (Giddens 1991), by an ongoing reading of the world through their action (Freire 2005), and continued relational developments with, and the creation of new, critical connections.

Critical Awakening Trajectories: Pathways of Initiation into Sustained Activism Involvement

The following figures 16, 17, 18, and 19 illustrate the trajectories represented by participant accounts of their paths into sustained involvement in activism.

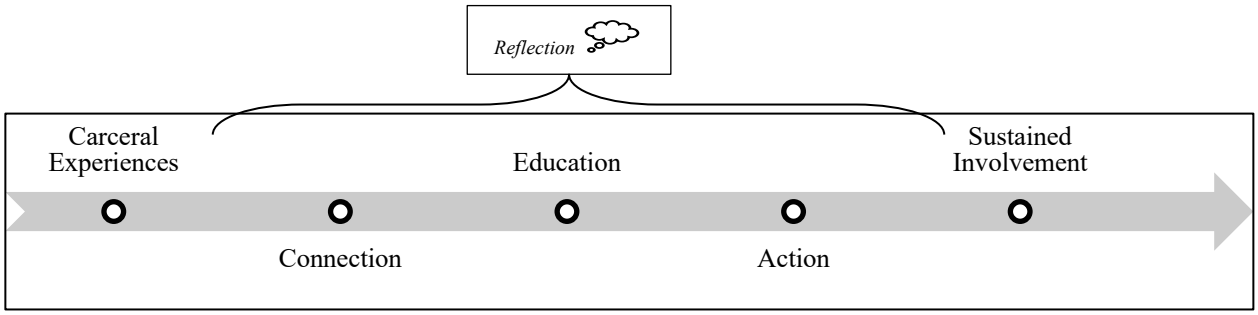


Figure 16. Connections that Educate to Inspire Action

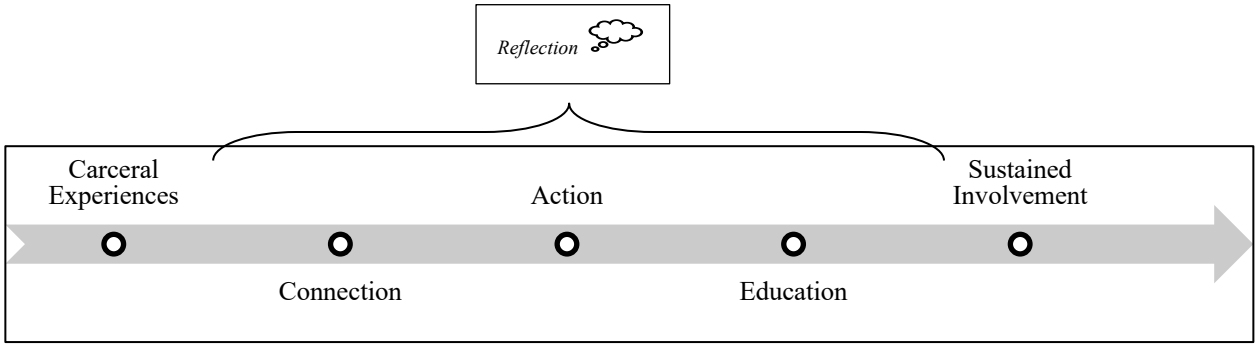


Figure 17. Connections to Opportunities for Action which Inspires Education

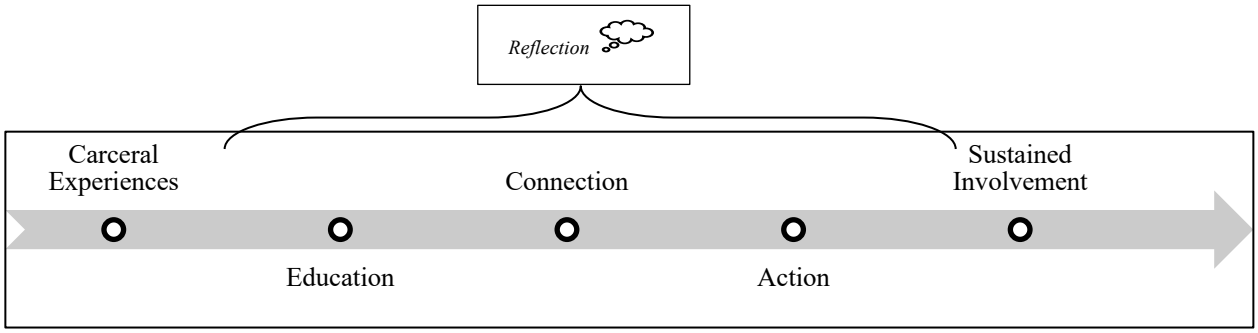


Figure 18. Education that Facilitates Connections to Action

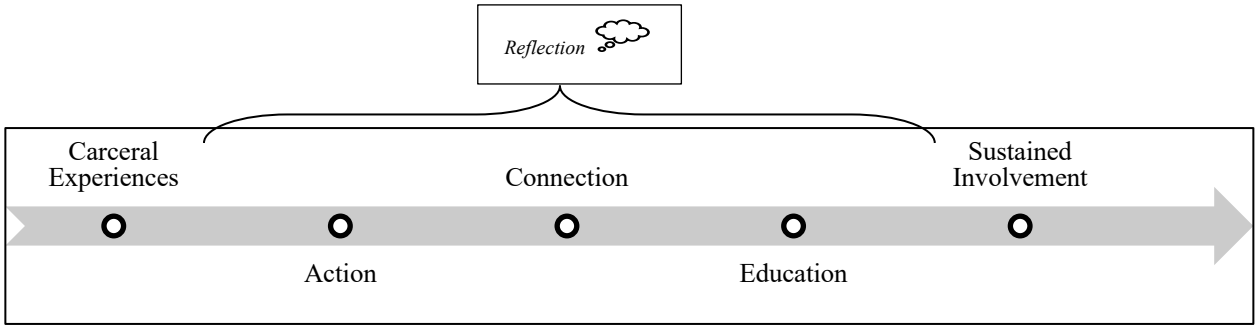


Figure 19. Action that Facilitates Connection to Education

These trajectories are not entirely linear, phases are not mutually exclusive, and they do not imply an absence of critical thought prior to incarceration or experience with the carceral state. Rather, these trajectories represent the participants narrative story line of 'what happened' that led them into activism. These four general paths seemed to emerge in their stories of their critical awakenings. I first asked the question as "how did you get woke?" Then, Gwen (interview number 6) used the term 'critical awakening' and I utilized that phrase in all subsequent interviews. Few participants asked for clarity on the question, "Can you tell me about your critical awakening?" When asked, they set out into a story that began with "I met this person," "I attended this event because I was experiencing ____," "I went to school," "I read this book," or "I took part in a study group" after which their story flowed, generally, through the phases described above.

The participant narratives emerged in this way generally. They are not precisely homogenous, and there are the chances that particular moments meant more than others. These pathways are meant to serve as a general guide to think about how activist engagement, critical education, and important relationships coalesce with FIAs experience to inspire change-work, sustain desistance, reduce harm, and create meaning and purpose in the lives of carceral citizens. The trajectories help explain how transitions are made from being ensnared in systemic carceralist oppressions to becoming active change-makers.

I coded participant stories being sensitized to the first declared moment that set them on their path of critical awakening, then noting the nature and ordering of subsequent events. The narratives have a number of sentences removed, replaced by ellipsis dots, but they reflect each phase of their respective trajectories. At times, I had to piece together the narrative, but they were told in this order. My findings provide much fodder for future research and for

consideration of the roles of critical moments, education, action, and connections in desistance processes and/or thriving post incarceration.

Trajectory 1: Connections that educate to inspire action

connection→ education→ action (Reginald, Price, Samuel, Marcos)

Participants who followed this trajectory report having direct painful experiences in conditions of concentrated poverty, systemic racism, inter-personal and police violence, as well as a host of other social problems that sociological research has empirically linked to the commission of crime in inner-cities (Travis, Western, Redburn 2014). Participants admittedly lacked a solid broad political understanding of these circumstances when they were in their adolescence or early adulthood. They assert that their critical awakening regarding these issues began with a critical connection(s). Crucial relationships were made with someone or several people who introduced participants to certain literatures and critical educational experiences. From this education sprang their activist work. Once set on the path, sustained involvement seemed to include all of these critical components that merge together to shape their ongoing trajectory.

> I had no idea prior to my incarceration that other stuff was happening. Like I had a sense of being caught up in, you know, in a system of injustice, but it was more like when I would say injustice, I would say like, "all right, there's no opportunity for me" or, you know, "the cops are foul", you know that kind of thing. But I didn't even know what the colonial relationship between the U.S. and Puerto Rico meant…So, I was exposed to it at my first jail facility where I met a lot of old-timers who had some books and they just started sharing stuff with me and that's when I was really was exposed to it. Prior to incarceration, there was like none of that – laughs – none. So, I kind of transformed, into this new sense of identity, like a historical identity - a connection to my past that I didn't have…. we developed study groups and there was like this newfound knowledge that wound up like helping me become something other than this ignorant drug dealer from the block. I came out into this position working in the field of HIV and fighting for change, I've gotten leadership training…I coproduced a radio program on criminal and social justice subjects…the work gives me a sense of identity, that people who come from Puerto Rico and who are of Latin American descent that I feel like I'm a part of fighting against injustice and I have a sense of connection to (Samuel).

Samuel reports a lack of critical understanding of social conditions that harmed him prior to incarceration. He was aware he was "caught up" and that "the cops were foul," but he developed a "historical identity" after he made a number of critical connections in "study groups" who introduced him to political literature. His critical education, or "newfound knowledge," guided his subsequent activist work upon release.

Reginald's trajectory also follows this general pathway from connection, to education, to action.

> I wasn't aware, I didn't have a political philosophy, I lived in a poor neighborhood and there was black people all around me, but I hadn't done any research into why that was. I was superficially familiar with elements on slavery based on public-school education, but I hadn't done any critical research on the issue…no matter where you are -- Philadelphia, Norfolk, Chicago, South Central L.A, everybody is experiencing the same hurt, feelings of isolation, lack of resources, poor education, the same struggles with addiction, crime, and violence. It's systematic and you realize this once you begin to peel back the layers…. the good thing is, I had some mentors while I was incarcerated…there were men who were already studying who helped me learn, it took me years to evolve so to speak…. we created study groups to meet with each other to discuss. We became a group that would discuss this literature trying to edify each other… by the time 1994 came around, Minister Farrakhan was promoting this Million Man March. The concept was to bring black men together, we organized a march in the yard, we brought in some cool speakers…. and the rest is history…when I got out, I made contact with one of the people that came up to the prison and I became involved with an organization fighting for prisoners' rights and I'm continuing that advocacy work (Reginald).

Reginald points out his lack of understanding prior to incarceration. Then, inside, men "who were already studying, helped [him] learn." From these connections and ongoing "study groups," Reginald and other men becoming politicized, "organized a march" in the prison yard. His story unfolds in this general pattern of making connections, receiving critical education, and being catalyzed into action. His story differs from Samuel in that Reginald reports becoming active while still inside, whereas Samuel reports becoming active post-incarceration.

Marcos trajectory similarly follows this type of trajectory, but he describes experiencing a period of "anger "between his critical education and action-taking.

> Like in prison, a guy gave me a bunch of stuff to read when I first got [there] and this was on prisoner's rights. So, I'm reading this literature and writings from different organizations. I'm taking this stuff in and it's developing my political consciousness, but I'm not getting involved in any movement work while in prison…I definitely went through a phase that I was pissed off about the way things are structured, what I was learning, I never learned how to channel that anger until coming home. Then when I went to college, I was already politicized, and I began creating a space for other formerly incarcerated students. This is all from my experience and writing that shaped my political consciousness, then once those doors opened, I got involved in the movement (Marcos).

Marcos explains that his "political consciousness" was developed by material given to him by "a guy," representing the critical connection to critical education pathway. Marcos points out something important, that politicization can "piss us off" before it catalyzes us into action. Eventually, Marcos reports that he later "got involved in the movement."

Price's pathway also seemed to match this general pathway as well. He, like Marcos, experienced a period of anger becoming exposed to literature by people on the inside before he embarked on meaningful action.

> Me, as an African-American male growing up in America and my relationship to it, I was not understanding it early as a young person, so I think I allowed myself to fall into forces that were detrimental to me, you know everything that we read about what exists in urban cities, this system that's designed to fail….so I went to prison and I met an older guy and he started giving me books and one of the first books he gave me was Malcom X, so I could relate to him. It got me wanting to really become a little bit more conscious of the social context of my experience…. that made me angry for real, because I was like "damn all these forces were there for me to fail!" So, I blamed white folks for that for a while, then I met another person who was a white guy and I identified him as 'the oppressor' but he was educated and we started getting really close and I started thinking about the system that it's not every white folk, but it's these systems that contribute…He was instrumental for giving me a way to think about things differently. It was also my interaction with him and thinking about academics more generally that broadened my perspective…just pursuing academics does not do this, it wants us to assimilate to American culture….I could not just jump from here to there….this was a process of meeting these people and this critical educational experience first, then later I could marry the two together…like now I'm really awake and conscious of what's going on, it's spiritual, I help to expose other people to this level of awareness now in the work I do

> in the community… helping with legislation to end life without parole sentences for juveniles (Price).

For Price, he was "not understanding forces that were detrimental to [him]," then he "met an older guy" who gave him a Malcom X book, and a white guy whom he initially identified as "the oppressor," but who taught him about social "systems." From those critical connections, sprung the educational experiences that one does not receive "just pursuing academics." He continues to work on "exposing other people to that level of awareness and on changing social policies."

All four participants here did a number of years inside and they are all men of color. Their connections were primarily made while incarcerated and with limited opportunities for action inside carceral settings right away. So, it makes sense that their critical education would come first through their connections with others that they developed while incarcerated. From that education, they sought ways to become active. This common trajectory suggests that allies on the outside would be helpful for activists of color inside, as this is where the insurgency and political education of incarcerated men of color is being born. The activism happening inside carceral walls is something that scholar-activists are currently working to support (Coyle and Schept 2018).

Trajectory 2: Connections linked to opportunities for action which inspired education

connection→ action→ education (Taylor, Deedra, Vasco)

Participants whose experience followed this trajectory met someone who catalyzed them into action. The critical education piece then followed that first action. Although their connections may have been associated with institutions of education, there seemed to be a heavier focus on meeting someone who pointed them to an event. The education piece in this trajectory, took third place. Compared to trajectory one, the critical connections brought participants directly into action, rather than engaging in education. So, their first mentioned

critical connection was someone who invited them to some type of activist related event. Their mobilization led to them garnering more critical education following the event. Taylor's path exemplifies this ordering,

> I was an idiot, I voted and spoke against my own interest… I was working with young people recovering from drug addiction and there was another person there who was involved in activism, like the anti-war movement. We met up one day and he was asking me tough questions and maybe my mind was open at the time…He invited me to come help at their coalition meetings to listen in and I did… I ended up helping out on some events and I met other people who exposed me to readings, like about capitalism and politics. The lights were coming on and everything I thought I knew literally was transformed, and I think I've been doing some kind of activist work ever since (Taylor).

Like all of these peri-carceral trajectories, Taylor reports a lack of understanding of broader social problems prior to the first collision with the carceral state. Following her release and initiation of work as a peer mentor, there was then a critical connection with someone who "invited [her] to an activist coalition meeting." She ended up "helping out" at their events where she met other people who "exposed her to" the critical education material about "capitalism and politics." The "lights [came on]" and she reports sustained involvement "ever since."

Deedra's trajectory also follows this basic path, but her involvement began, to a limited degree, inside.

> I had just lost my daughter and people started asking me to talk to another woman who lost her kid…People were really noticing that I was helping other women right after I lost my own. I would walk them through it, I was there for them. So, the founder of that organization really noticed that and she thought I would be a good person to come out and do something when I got out, it turned into me working on this legislation to provide parents the chance to get closure and attend their kids funerals…now I'm getting my degree and understanding more about the criminal justice system and working on legislation to help women not lose their kids while they're incarcerated (Deedra).

Like Taylor, Deedra was in a position of informal peer support, "talk[ing] to other women who lost their kid[s]" which put her into contact with, in Deedra's case, the "founder of an organization" who encouraged her to "work on legislation." Engaging in the work inspired her to

go to college where she received her education. Although some participants believed conventional education experiences were not the same as critical education, other participants, like Deedra, argue that it depends on the professor and the class. In these trajectories, I consider an educational experience to be critical if the participant says it is.

Vasco's narrative follows a similar order to this trajectory. He recalls,

> A friend of mine who I met in prison goes "hey dude there's this non-profit that started about a year ago and it's by a movie director"…so I go down there with my friend…it's in this expensive suite and I was skeptical, but I started helping out with the program and then they asked me if I wanted to become an intern, and I said "yea, why not?" So, I started doing advocacy and doing outreach…. this required a good bit of research. So, I started learning a lot. As time went on, they offered me a full-time position…now in my work I feel that I'm really helping to open doors for formerly incarcerated people (Vasco).

Taylor, Deedra, and Vasco's narratives follow the connection, action, education trajectory of moments whereby they met someone who helped them get active which led them to engage in subsequent learning. Taylor and Deedra's connections were made as they were in capacities of helping, whereby they came into contact with people doing more social justice-oriented work. Vasco's trajectory follows the general pattern, however his connection led him to an internship that required research. The primary difference between trajectory one and two is that the personal connection they made brought them into some form of action that led them to begin their critical education (trajectory 2) versus a connection that led them to education which sparked meaningful action (trajectory 1).

Trajectory 3: Education that facilitates Connections to Action

education → connection→ action (Madelena, Aven, Piper)

Participants whose process aligned with this trajectory attributed formal or informal education as the beginning of their journey into activism. Their educational experience put them

in contact with a connection that prompted them into action. Madelena's trajectory follows this pattern. She started out in school and her critical connection was a teacher. She remembers,

> I wanted to help people and Sociology opened up that door for me. I began to understand that my voice mattered…there was this professor who invited me to a "know your rights" event. My education empowered me because I felt like I knew a little more going into that event, this professor kept telling people I was a "leader," and I ended up co-founding a campus organization of formerly incarcerated scholars… that is where my passion continues to be (Madelena).

Madelena's formal educational experience, "empowered" her and "a Sociology professor" invited her into action.

Aven's journey similarly began with education, however, his was informal and self-guided. In his pursuit of educating himself to be his own attorney, he pursued contacts for help. It was a blogger who took interest in his case that placed him on the public stage, thus setting him up for his subsequent activist work.

> I started studying my own case, then I started studying everyone, I just kept going, I had no high school education and only a few hours in the law library at a time, I had to do what a lawyer learns with 6 years of college….in the process of these studies I met a man named Rodney, I would ask him questions and he would point to a book. So, he helped me, but he made me look things up, this helped me learn… when I went to fight my case in court, a local writer ended up in my courtroom and became interested in my case. He wrote on it, then people in the community started contacting me…. now I'm working to educate people about the law and their rights, I'm directing know your rights training videos for young people (Aven).

Aven started studying "his own case, then [he] studied everyone." Unlike Madelena, his education was informal. In his pursuit he met someone who introduced him to critical literature and inspired him into action.

The educational experiences can also be sparked by formal educational classes that are held inside of carceral settings. Piper describes her trajectory that began with taking college courses inside prison.

> I started going to this class inside and there was this guy who was a former black panther who exposed me to more readings, they were not all political, just how to change my perspective…. Then, I took a sociology class…. I got more political and after I met this reporter who wrote about me while I was inside, he was a big part of me getting involved in things…I became involved with a social justice student group…I wrote and edited articles on criminal justice issues…. as I faced more resistance in my own experience, pushback about trying to go to school and make opportunities for myself, that just pushed me to want to be more active…Now, I'm trying to publish things and help other people to tell their stories, I've got more film and discussion events coming up (Piper).

Piper recalls the process of her formal learning experience inside and in that educational experience she made a connection with a "former black panther" and after ongoing sociological and political education, she met "a reporter," who became a "big part of [her] getting involved in things."

Educational materials, literatures, and new perspectives whether attained through informal or formal means were critical turning points for Madelena, Aven, and Piper. Their educational experiences either directly connected them to people, or shaped their connections with people, who catalyzed them into action.

Trajectory 4: Action that facilitates connection to education

action→ connection→ education (Lilly and Frida)

Participants whose paths align with trajectory 4 could not place a social connection or educational piece that sparked their journey of awakening, rather they began by jumping right into action. Frida and Lilly's own experiences of injustice prompted their direct action. In their work, they met someone who guided their critical and political education. Unlike trajectory two participants, who were guided into action, these activists figured out how to fight a problem they were personally having which they knew required a policy or social resolution. They made personal connections who guided their subsequent education and critical awakening.

To some degree, Frida and Lilly are classic examples of relative-deprivation social movement theory. The theory argues that some social movements are born when certain people, or certain groups of people, in a society feel that they are deprived of a specific good, service, or resource (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1988). Lilly first went to city hall to voice a concern about her water utility pricing. Critical connections that she made engaging in the fight, suggested she pick up educational material. Those series of moments led her to champion supplemental nutrition assistance (SNAP) rights for drug-convicted people in her state.

> Things pissed me off, but it never dawned on me before to do something about it, it started with me getting involved with the water issue where we live, the water company was trying to raise our rates, and I searched Facebook and asked people to show up to fight this. Politics seemed distant to me, but then I got kind of inspired. Someone along the way directed me to listen to Michelle Alexander, then I did more research, and through this work, I became connected with others working on other collateral consequences of the drug war. I was denied welfare benefits myself because of my conviction. So, I did a lot of successful work on that issue then a lady helped me meet some committee members and I told them some of my story and we changed that law in my state and that was kind of my genesis story to everything I'm doing now (Lilly).

Lilly's issue with her water bill, turned into a critical connection which directed her to political literature that propelled her continued action.

Frida's journey similarly began with action; however, she was perusing events to learn about opportunities for involvement. She was seeking out other people who had experienced similar injustices as her, rather than directly tackling a bill, like Lilly had. Frida explains,

> I guess just me being incarcerated and seeing a lot of people that have faced a lot of real injustices and experiencing them myself so when I got out, I started trying to attend what I could, looking for things I could relate to….I ended up in the middle of a law event and I started telling a lawyer there that I really wanted to do something about these things, and he gave me a job! That law firm introduced me to a lot of programs in the community and I have learned from them all! I have moved on from that law firm…now I'm doing things in the community (Frida).

The injustices Frida faced motivated her action directly. Her attendance and participation in events led to a critical connection who initiated her work, subsequent education, and sustained activist involvement.

CONCLUSION CHAPTER 4

These formerly incarcerated activist trajectories serve as useful departure points for future research or scholar-activist interventions in carceral reform. These generalized pathways may provide some useful fodder for deeper empirical examinations of the roles of education, people, and action in the identity transformation process of carceral citizens; or they may modestly serve as inspiration to bring a book to a prisoner or to invite a formerly incarcerated person to a social justice event. It is important to note that gender and race comparisons yielded little difference in the nature, importance, or ordering of critical moments. However, since being inside of carceral settings yields few opportunities for action, it makes logical sense that men of color who historically receive longer sentences are more likely to begin their journeys with inside connections. Further examination of gendered and raced pathways into carceral citizen activism is needed. The participants' narratives, collectively, illustrate how critical moments coalesce to shape their journeys out of the clutches of the carceral state. These moments marked their ascent away from old ways, and into new ways of being. In this process, new identities were forged that afforded them new, constructive, meaningful, and purposeful ways to thrive.

CHAPTER 5
CARCERAL CITIZEN'S RISING: POSITION, IDENTITY, OPPRESSION, AND RESISTANCE

In this chapter, I seek to establish an understanding of carceral status as a system of oppression. All humans act in ways that transgress laws (Baxter 2017; Coyle 2018; Woodall 2016; 2019), yet those captured by the carceral state are marked and subjugated, while others are privileged to evade such categorization. The criminal label translates individuals into *carceral citizens* available for legal and social exclusions that *conventional citizens* are not subject to (Miller and Stuart 2017).

After demonstrating how carceral status can be conceptualized as a system of oppression, I show many carceral citizens, engage in emancipatory struggles, re-define themselves and re-shape the confines of *criminal* stereotypes, and emerge in the social imaginary as group with a *right to have rights* (Somers 2008). I argue that carceral status is best understood as a contentious category of social positioning that exists in its own right, and one that intersects with, and is shaped by, classed, raced, and gendered realities.

Note that I use the term *carceral citizens* in this chapter, rather than *formerly incarcerated*, for the purpose of clarity and theorizing about social status. The two are used synonymously in this chapter, however c*arceral citizen* is not an established label of choice by formerly incarcerated people at this time (Underground Scholars n.d.).

WE ARE ALL CRIMINALS: THE CONSTRUCTION OF CARCERAL STATUS

Overview

Carceral citizenship, a term coined by Reuben Miller and Forrest Stuart (2017), is a state-imposed position within a system of oppression that I call *carceral-status*. *Conventional citizens,* as Miller and Stuart explain, retain full rights to membership regardless of previous legal transgression, which all human beings engage in (Baxter 2017; Coyle 2018; Woodall 2019). And the *carceral* language is in alignment with an interdisciplinary critical carceral study and practice of critiquing the police and imprisonment. *Carceral regimes* are defined as those systems of governance, institutions, organizations, commercial enterprises and non-profits built around the project of mass imprisonment (Brown and Schept 2017; Gilmore 2007; Underground Scholars).

Baxter's (2017) pioneering work on "we are all criminals" visualizes the reality that every individual has violated at least one punishable law in his or her lifetime. This work is important because it highlights the fact that only 25 percent of individuals become property of the state and are shackled by the criminal label, while everyone else evades such criminalization and preserve their privileges and freedoms with the ease of ignoring their infractions (Baxter 2017; Coyle 2014; Gabor 1994; Woodall 2016; 2019;). Understanding carceral-status as an identity position, or social location, within a hierarchical system of oppression has been scantly theorized outside of its intricate connection with race (Alexander 2012; Miller and Stuart 2017). Therefore, acquiring a language around carceral status as a system of oppression that intersects in complex ways with other identity positions is an ongoing project.

The concept of carceral status as an identity category is rooted in sociological understandings of how power relations construct differences, such as in class, race, gender, and sexuality. Social location, or position, refers to an individual or group's place in a particular system's hierarchy (Collins 1986; Weber 2019; Young 1990). In this case, carceral-subject position, or carceral status, as I describe, being marked or unmarked (Pager 2008), refers to

different positions whereby those captured experience oppression, while those whose crimes went undetected experience privilege. This specification provides a theoretical framework for studying-up (Nader 1972; Woodall 2019), examining privilege and power of the unmarked, or down.

In this analysis, I use Miller and Stuart's (2017) carceral citizenship, Iris Marion Young's (1990) five faces of oppression, and my prior work on carceral-subject positionality (Woodall 2019) to frame carceral status as a separate but interlocking identity category that cross-cuts other social positions (e.g., race, gender, class, sexuality).

In this chapter, I use Young's five faces of oppression in order to bring participants' voices to bear on the identity categorical position of *carceral citizenship* by illustrating the ways in which they have experienced oppression. As I will show, participant responses reveal how formerly incarcerated activism can be understood as eruptions of civic opposition to the tyranny of the criminal justice state. Driven by consciousness and bound in solidarity as a group, respondents take hopeful action toward recognition of their "rights to have rights" (Currie 2012; Somers 2008). These movements shape-shift social sensibilities about criminality through collective carceral citizen resistance to the very social arrangements that generated it. The participants' direct quotations speak to the ways in which they challenge the five faces of oppression as a collective force for justice. Although oppressed carceral citizens endure exploitation, marginalization, cultural imperialism, powerlessness, and violence, in insurgent acts of identity-claiming and in life-affirming movements for justice (Glenn 2011; Holston 2009), they rise as a rights-deserving category. I also apply an intersectional lens to illustrate the ways in which oppression and liberation are experienced differentially across various positionalities, such as gender and race, where the data are available.

Carceral-Status as a System of Oppression

A type of second-class citizenry status begins from the moment one collides with the criminal justice system. Scholarly support for this phenomenon is well documented (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 2019; Travis, Western, Redburn 2014; Travis 2002). Such a status is marked by exclusions from the labor market (Couloute and Kopf 2018; Pager 2008; Uggen et al. 2014), from public assistance (Wolkomir 2018), and from the infliction of monetary sanctions (Martin, Sykes, Shannon, Edwards, and Harris 2018). There are considerable legal, cultural, and educational exclusions (Couloute 2018), as well as political exclusions (Shannon 2017; Uggen and Manza 2002; Uggen and Manza 2006; Uggen, Larson, and Shannon 2016; Uggen, Manza, and Behrens 2004; Uggen, Manza, and Thomson 2006; Uggen, Shannon, and Manza 2012) for formerly incarcerated individuals. Such consequences result in sustained economic insecurity for people impacted by the carceral system (Harding, Wyse, Dobson and Morenoff 2014; Richards and Jones 2004), and this insecurity reverberates inter-generationally (Foster and Hagan 2007).

These seemingly endless consequences of carceral involvement are categorizable in line with Iris Marion Young's (1990) five faces of oppression framework. The five faces include: 1) Exploitation, 2) Marginalization, 3) Powerlessness, 4) Cultural imperialism (or "Othering"), and 5) Violence. These are the experiences of oppressed groups, which I argue include the collective of *carceral citizens*. Our criminological knowledge base is fraught with the evidence to identify the 'marked' as a distinct oppressed group, yet few have characterized them in this way.

I argue that this theoretical framework supports my assertion that carceral-status is a distinct social structural category within which the criminally marked are oppressed, and the unmarked are privileged. The oppressed, or marked, carceral-subject position is created by the state. When one is arrested, detained, incarcerated, and marked with a criminal label, they are

exploited (i.e., in the labor market) (Rusche 1978), *marginalized* (i.e., via the denial of welfare benefits) (Mauer and McCalmont 2013), rendered *powerless* (i.e., voter disenfranchisement) (Murphy, Newmark, and Ardoin 2006; Uggen and Manza 2006; Shannon and Manza 2012), *culturally imperialized* (i.e., criminal "Othering") (Brown 2009; Garland 2012), and subject to ongoing *violence* by police, in their communities (Carbado 2017; Skolnick and Fyfe 1993), and by the prison itself (Irwin 2005; Presser 2013).

The social positionality of a carceral subject is generated within institutionalized forms of carceralism, meaning social control measures like legislation, surveillance practices, enforcement procedures, punitive sanctions, and other methods of governance that are associated with the carceral state (Brown and Schept 2017; Monaghan 2013). These historical, institutional, state, and cultural forces that arise out of, and catalyze, power imbalances impact everyone, but they do so differentially. Carceral privilege and oppression thus become unequally applied to individual and groups in variety ways.

The sifting and sorting of people into carceral subject positions, either marked or unmarked, occurs as individuals move across the life-course. The label of *deviant* can begin early in life (Becker 1963), particularly for black and Latino males, for whom the status of criminality is intricately woven into the fabric of how race is perceived and treated (e.g., in early education) (Rios 2007; 2011). One can also find oneself colliding with the law later in life, perhaps completing high school and even attending college only to become labeled (Goffman 1963). Thus, carceral citizens come to experience the reverberating effects of long-term "felonization" (Polk and Polk 2016) and discrimination on that basis. Marked actors may come to be referred to as urban outcasts (Wacquant 2007; 2009), human waste (Simon 2007), the socially abandoned (Biehl 2005), or the socially dead (Cacho 2012). Such subjects lie beyond recognition and

representation (Brown 2014). Whatever the individual particularities, social forces push and pull people into, out of, and across various carceral-subject positionalities over their life-course.

These positionalities have been scantly theorized, although the borders of a carceral-subject position are becoming more theoretically contoured. Most notably, Reuben Miller and Forrest Stuart (2017) articulate how carceral expansion has produced distinct forms of political memberships for people who have collided with the criminal justice system; they call such individuals *carceral citizens*. The authors describe how people who have been incarcerated experience legal discrimination that equates to a different status of citizenship with particular consequences and benefits. Their conceptualization of carceral citizenship fits squarely in this discussion of social structural categories; however, Miller and Stuart's theory lacks the vocabulary to describe carceral status as a structure of oppression within which positions of privilege are also held. Their powerful and important work to provide language for the concept of carceral citizenship simply does not fully articulate this positionality as embedded in a status structure with multiple status positions. However, they do provide useful ways of thinking about how having a criminal record (that is any type of run-ins with the law that leave a mark) make carceral subjects legible, translates information about their essence, flattens them in ways that inscribe them as purely 'criminal,' and renders their complexity invisible (Miller and Stuart 2017). The important work of fleshing out the variety of exclusions that carceral citizens experience has largely neglected to articulate that these exclusions simultaneously privilege others. Miller and Stuart do, however, compare carceral citizenship to conventional citizenship, meaning they articulate how conventional citizens have access to particular life chances that are denied carceral citizens, but they do not go quite far enough as they fail to conceptualize carceral and conventional citizens in a hierarchical system of oppression. So, this is not a case of

subjugating only the wrongdoers; rather, it is a case of structural forces separating people into categories that hold great benefits for some and grave consequences for others.

Carceral Status and Intersectionality

Carceral status must be understood as a system of oppression whereby one's positionality in is shaped by other identities. Black. Latinx, white, Asian, indigenous men, women and trans people become uniquely ensnared in the web of incarceration, thus compounding oppression or catalyzing privilege. Analyzing experiences in this manner requires taking an intersectional approach. Intersectionality is not only the sum of added oppressions. Rather, it represents the acknowledgement and analysis of positionalities produced by systems of oppression that are interwoven, overlapping, and multiplicative (Collins 1986; Crenshaw 1990).

One's experience of carceral status is constituted in accordance with one's position in other hierarchies as well. The most notable example is race, which allows us to understand the carceral system as an extension of slavery (Alexander 2012) that serves as one critical means by which all people of color are oppressed. In fact, criminality is inscribed into the very notion of what it means to be black (Young 2005). This is how we can understand that what it means to be black is also what it means to be *criminal* which makes someone who is black at a disadvantage by virtue of the visible characteristics of his or her body (Alexander 2012; Wacquant 2007; 2009; Western 2006). Someone who is white, as whiteness is not associated with criminality, may proceed with criminal behavior and yet go undetected by the state, by institutions, or by other social actors (Pager 2008). Individuals are placed into particular carceral status positions; one's likelihood of being forced into the position of criminal or felon is amplified by factors such as race, gender, class, and sexuality. The experience of that relegation differs across these axes.

Vulnerabilities to arrest are intensified for black families and communities (Berg, Lei, Simons 2019; Western 2006), and carceral oppressions are interwoven with racial subjugations in specific ways and with specific consequences that reverberate across generations (Travis, Western, and Redburn 2014). However, when a person of any race is excused from *checking the box* on job or college applications, they have, in whatever limited capacity, a privilege. Carceral subjugation is likewise, yet uniquely, differentially experienced across gendered positionalities. For example, a woman's experience of a marked carceral status is different from a man's (McCorkel 2013). Moreover, being marked is experienced differently for women of color than it is for white women (Richie 2018). Thus, carceral status positionalities are shaped by other positions in matrices of domination (Collins 1986).

OPPRESSION/COUNTER-OPPRESSION FINDINGS

The Five Faces of Carceral Citizen Oppression

Below I illustrate how carceral citizens constitute an oppressed group by using Young's 2019 interpretation of her original *Five Faces of Oppression*, supported by findings from my qualitative interviews with FIAs.

Exploitation

Exploitation is a form of oppression that occurs through the transfer of the results of one's labor to the benefit of another. These are relations which are reproduced and continuously extended to augment power. Angela Davis (2011) argues that mass incarceration, or the prison industrial complex, touches directly on prison's fundamental role in the exploitation of prison labor for profit. The warehousing of people in prisons creates jobs and the low-wages paid to prison labor or to formerly incarcerated people following incarceration benefit capitalists and

undermine labor union wins (Kilgore 2012). Thus, the incarcerated are superexploited (Chang and Thompkins 2002).

Study participants described this exploitation. Reginald explained how he has "seen employers take advantage of, manipulate, and exploit people because they know they're under supervision." Deedra explained exploitation from her experience, "They know I'll have a hard time finding another job, but it wasn't hardly worth doing it for the little bit of money that they were paying me." Brooklyn's experience corroborated others. She said, "I was working 93 hours a week at a poultry plant. My labor was being exploited because I was formerly incarcerated. They knew there was nothing better that I could do." Vasco said, "We get utilized as pawns or something for people's entertainment in cop shows, or jail break or whatever." Reginald, Deedra, Brooklyn and Vasco's quotations are expressions of how FIAs experience the ways that labor power of criminally labeled people is expended to benefit and reproduce relations of domination.

Marginalization

Marginalization is a form of oppression whereby a whole category of people is expelled from participation in social life and becomes subject to severe material deprivation through various redistributive polices and blocked opportunities. Power over people's lives is exercised by subjecting them to a set of harsh rules that differ from the rules for everyone else, thus creating issues of distributive justice. Formal laws and policies bar formerly incarcerated people in hundreds of ways (National Inventory of Collateral Consequences of Conviction n.d.; US Commission on Civil Rights Briefing 2019). Just a few of the exclusions documented in our literature involve exclusions from employment, housing, medical care, transportation, education, licensure, and other public benefits. Carceral-citizens, then, are denied basic rights to societal inclusion (Miller and Stuart 2017).

Participant narratives describe these exclusions. Brandi, Garrett, and Reginald explain the experience of marginalization post incarceration. Brandi described her experience, “My record stopped me from a lot of—I couldn't even get a place to stay, you know, and there's housing everywhere, but I couldn’t get one because of my record.” Reginald, working in activism and mentoring for many years explains the marginalization that reentering people experience.

> You're coming home, starting your life over from scratch with no resources. If you have housing, it's living with a family friend or loved one; you don't have the resources to be independent. So, I'm depending on someone to get me a bus pass, or a suit, or a fresh white shirt for an interview, and it puts you in a vulnerable position, because you're dependent on a society that doesn’t want you (Reginald).

Garrett believes these barriers are designed for people to fail, “We [the formerly incarcerated] are in a hostile society that does not want us. You know, like we [reformers] talk about reintegration, because a lot of our current policies, are not really reintegration; they're anti-reintegration policies.” Frida described the denial of needed resources, particularly medical care, that happens even while still inside the walls, “Medi-Cal got taken away from everybody who was incarcerated, so then none of us had medical care. We should be provided for with medical care, but these women were getting ripped off their medications, and this is viewed as acceptable.” The participants responses touch on some of the ways that carceral status is conceivable as a social category against which discrimination is legitimized and even encouraged.

Powerlessness

Another hallmark of oppressed groups is being rendered powerless in the process of deciding policies or rules that govern one’s life. In the US, the right to vote is considered a fundamental right that particular groups of carceral citizens are barred from. Often, directly impacted people are barred from meaningful civic participation and their voices are silenced in those

conversations, as well. Research illustrates massive disenfranchisement realities that render them powerless as a group at the ballot box (Manza and Uggen 2006; Uggen, Larson, and Shannon 2016; Uggen, Shannon, and Manza 2012) and in other areas of civic life (Bazemore and Stinchcomb 2004; Uggen and Manza 2003; Uggen, Manza, Behrens 2004).

Terrell described powerlessness by remarking, “We’re not able to vote or, or even voice our opinions like we want to.” Randall, who works specifically on issues of felon disenfranchisement, explains how it translates to dispersing policy making and resources away from carceral citizens.

> You've got thousands of people that are incarcerated that are not voting. Public policies are then being put in place to further exclude people after they get out. But they are disenfranchised, either by law or because they’re not used to having a voice, or the process to re-enfranchise is convoluted. There may be financial decisions to be voted on, and those financial dollars in those local and municipal elections, those elections determine whose streets get paved, who, who gets, you know, better protection of their neighborhood, who gets the better deal from local government. And criminal justice system impacted people are being excluded from having a say in those things (Randall).

Piper describes the injustice of carceral citizens being required to pay into the social system, but not legally being allowed to have a say in it.

> There was an election going on that I couldn't vote in and I was very angry about that. Having to listen to people talk about the election and, you know, it was hard not be allowed to participate in society in that very limited way. So, I’m, like, paying taxes, but not able to vote (Piper).

Terrell, Randall, and Piper focus on disenfranchisement as a deeply rooted form of oppression, and one particular way that carceral citizens are rendered powerless. What it means to be rights-bearing citizen in a democratic society, is having the right, no matter how limited, to have a say in the policies or conditions that impact one’s life. Formerly incarcerated people endure this form of powerless rendering to varying degrees by state across the US.

Cultural imperialism (“Othering”)

When the dominant meanings of a society render the perspectives of a group invisible, this is considered *Othering*. That is, the dominant group come to define the Othered group in terms of harmful stereotypes, classify them as deviant, or in some way positioned or plagued by any array of dominant meanings that deny their perspective. Subjects become narratively flattened subjects (Miller and Stuart 2017), which means they are reduced to being understood in terms of only a few criminal characteristics (Presser 2013), whereby their potentiality is limited and denied (Arrigo and Milovanovic 2008). The label is an expression of power to define the subject in deeply derogatory ways (Goffman 1968).

Participant comments illuminate how cultural imperialism shapes their experiences. Brooklyn explains this degradation, "I already see the scorn, I see the disdain when I walk into a room and folks know I've been to prison, I'm a criminal." This judgement can feel inescapable Jessie says, "I'm painted into a corner, I can only be now what I've been labeled." Gwen reflects the durability of this status, "My record is continuously used against me, and, like, in 10 more years, I'm still going to be a convicted felon. Like, that's a fixed situation. I can't change it." Shana signals the inaccuracy of the construction of difference and its related harmful assumptions between the criminalized class, and everyone else. "You're a criminal, you're this, you're that; I'm like, am I really? Because the only difference I'd say that's between me and some other folks is they just never got caught." Piper adds,

> I had to realize, like, no, I'm not a bad person; I was a sick person. And to begin to heal from that and to see myself as more than what I did. That makes me think about, like, how our worldview is so vastly different than people who have not experienced being incarcerated. And maybe people like our families have a better idea, too, because they have definitely had to go through a lot of the struggle with us. But I think that is the most important piece, is that we have this perspective that is designed to be ignored. You know? (Piper)

Brooklyn, Jessie, Shana, Gwen, and Piper all speak to various ways that labeled people are Othered, whereby they are marked out by stereotypes and their self-expression are overrun by dominant meanings.

Violence

Young defines oppressed groups as those whose members must fear random unprovoked attacks, damage, humiliation, and whose safety is continuously in jeopardy. In the case of criminalized people, violence is not only state-sanctioned, but the violence takes place at the hands of the state itself, by the very hands charged with protecting them. In this way, criminalized groups are deprived of liberties and safety. Scholars explain how people are criminalized and policed in violent ways with particular concentrations of police violence in black and brown neighborhoods (Carbado 2017; Skolnick and Fyfe 1993), noting also the brutal torture of incarceration practices like solitary confinement (Richards 2015), and the threats of violence reverberate post-incarceration as criminal records provide just-cause for police to stop, frisk, harass, or violently intercede in formerly incarcerated people's daily activities.

Jessie described his personal experience with police violence, "I was a victim of police brutality around the age of 11. I was beat [sic] and punched in the stomach." Criminalization begins prior to one's processing and arrest, it is a way that police and the carceral state translate behavior. Kelly describes the ongoing and daily threat of police violence that criminalized people endure, "People get, you know, just shot by the police. That's true. That's really something that we have to be continuously cautious of because we know that police kill us." Kelly's words emulate how people engaged in crime are not always captured and booked in accordance with procedure, but end up in deadly encounters with carceral state actors when their behaviors are translated as dangerous, or worse, their lives are viewed as expendable. Samuel exemplifies how

the broader legal system is structured to defend and justify such state acts of violence. He says, "There are laws that, that protect people in positions of power when they murder us. Like you know, how many police officers use an illegal chokehold and kill us and then they're not prosecuted!" Taylor describes her personal experience with police violence even as a white woman. Police violence decimates black and brown communities, families, and futures. Police do so under the guise of people engaging in behaviors that justified such use of force.

> I was beaten by a police officer when I was arrested as a teenager, the cop said I wasn't cooperating, but these encounters can be frightening. I'm white and a girl, and we think it doesn't happen to us at all, but it does. I had broken bones from this. I know it's much more rare and it's a different experience for white people, but it happens, I was just a kid and the officer got away with it, I was told it was my own fault (Taylor).

Jesse, Kelly, Samuel, and Taylor all touched on the physical violence that is a lived reality for criminalized people, and a threat from which others are shielded. People whose behavior were translated by state actors as acceptable, de-escalatable, or even completely undetected, are not subject to these violent encounters. Arguably, however, black people in the US always face this danger, with or without breaking the law. As stated, being black is interwoven with criminality; hence, the violence that black people endure is ever-present, and with compounding perceptions of danger and criminality inscribed into black bodies, is much more likely to be deadly (Edwards, Lee, and Esposito 2019). The conditions of any arrest, however, are violent by nature: getting stopped and frisked, having one's body groped, being handcuffed, stripped, contained, chained, isolated, held in a cage, and then warehoused. Criminalized relationships with police are imbued with fear, threats, and terror. Police violence is often carried out against people who were already victims of social and interpersonal harms (Hillyard et al. 2004; Potter 2013; Western 2015). The dominant narrative is that perpetrators of violence and victims of violence are separate, but they are often embodied in the same person;

indeed, there is significant victim-offender overlap (Berg, Stewart, Schreck, and Simons 2012; Jennings, Higgins, Tewksbury, Gover, and Piquero 2010; Western 2015).

Intersectionality and Oppression

All of these carceral citizen-based oppressions are experienced in a web of interlocking systems of oppression based on race, class, and gender that make experiences different. Applying Young's five criteria to the situation of groups makes it possible to think about and compare oppressions without reductive claims that one is more fundamental than the other. Particular forms of oppression appear differently for distinctive groups. We can compare the combinations of oppressions that groups experience and the intensity of those oppressions. Young asserts that "we can plausibly claim that one group is more oppressed than another without reducing all oppressions to a single scale" (1990:61).

Kimberle Crenshaw coined the intersectionality term in 1989 and Young's framework lends itself to conceptualizing criminalized people's experience in this way. Young (1990) argues that different groups endure different combinations of intensity of the five forms of oppression, thus providing a scaffolding with which to make empirical claims about compounding and intersectional oppressions. Furthermore, Young asserts that it would be false to represent one oppressed group as experiencing oppression the same way as another. These experiences of group-based oppression will vary across other systems of oppression (e.g., race, gender, class, or sexuality). Therefore, resisting oppression as a criminalized class requires ongoing negotiation between group solidarity and acknowledgement of group difference.

Take the oppression of violence, for example. Communities of color are entrenched in police violence, but white people also experience violence and excessive uses of force at the hands of police. The nature of this violence, however, varies both in likelihood and intensity,

across race. Some white people experience the cringe and the fear of blue lights approaching them. However, the police enact a particular systematized brutality against the black community that is not characteristic of the police relationship with white racial groups. Criminality is the excuse that gets absorbed into popular sentiment to justify the deadly use of force against communities of color. Meanwhile, the public ignores the police's ability to often deescalate criminal encounters when white defendants are involved. The findings that illuminate these intersecting oppressions are reported in chapter 6.

Carceral status is a system of oppression whereby carceral citizens endure exploitation, marginalization, cultural imperialism, powerlessness, and violence at the hands of the carceral state, that conventional citizens have had the luxury to evade. Carceral citizens are not agentless victims of these harms, however. In insurgent acts of dignity and rights-claiming movements for justice, they emerge as a rights-deserving social category. The following section outlines how carceral citizens resist and remake their identities.

CARCERAL CITIZEN ACTIVISM AS AN IDENTITY-MAKING, NARRATIVE CHANGING, ANTI-OPPRESSIVE PRACTICE

Social groups are constituted of individuals who share a common history that social status produces. People discover themselves through relational identities that arise in social processes (Somers 1994; Young 1990). Sometimes "a social group comes to exist only because one group excludes and labels a category of persons …those labeled come to understand themselves as group members on the basis of their shared oppressions" (Young 1990:46). However, there is also no reason to believe that identity stands a priori, that just because individuals share something, does not necessarily mean they will identify as a group (Somers 1994). Although one may experience the same political, legal, and social exclusions, they may

not define those exclusions as rights denied, to themselves or to the category as a whole. It is the sharing of narrational identity from which groups arise (Somers 1994).

Social identities are historically, narratively, socially, and relationally formed by institutional and cultural practices (Somers and Gibson 1993). The carceral subject, thus, becomes legible in the historical evolution of mass incarceration. The stories that are used to explain his or her behavior or the justifications for impositions of penal harm are all spun within a particular culture of punishment (Brown 2009; Garland 2012). But identification is also shaped in resistance (Polletta and Jasper 2001). Out of anti-prison and counter-carceral mobilization, a rights-bearing carceral citizen may arise. That is, in carceral citizen efforts to win rights, they transform who they are, how they are treated, and how they are understood. They gain recognition in struggles for citizenship rights that have been lost or gained.

Carceral citizens may self-segregate from those who are mobilized against the carceral state. Although collective identity can involve preexisting categorization placed on individuals by the state (Pollega and Jasper 2001), it may also require one to personally locate themselves within a particular narrative identity of a group (Somers 1994). Collective identification can be problematic to assemble across boundaries of difference (Gardner and Richards 2017; Young 1990). Race, class, sexuality, and gender cross-cut carceral status, and can impact whether a criminalized person identifies as a carceral citizen member, or stories themselves in the pathologizing narratives of the oppressor. Few carceral citizens may ever envision themselves as a member of the category, rather see themselves as individuals who simply behaved badly and *deserve* the harms they endure. Regardless of the carceral citizen's perception of self, they are subject to the same oppressions, and benefit from the same wins achieved by formerly incarcerated activists' work.

This is where Miller and Stuart's understanding of carceral citizenry as established by the label that translates them falls short (Miller and Stuart 2017). As I will show, carceral citizens can also powerfully re-shape the narratives that bind them. Symbolic understandings are created in struggles for institutional and political change (Giddens 1991). The carceral citizen is constituted in part by common sense cruel logics of criminality, in part by tyrannical legal exclusions, but also in part by their re-storying through media success feature stories, in their political win recognitions, and in re-framings of justice in terms of social problem and human conditions (ReFraming Justice n.d.). The category is ever re-rendered as carceral citizens they take the social stage as a rights-bearing group, shaping and shifting the public imaginary in their efforts of resistance.

Carceral citizen activists challenge the state and build community (see chapter 2). Their work is imbued with struggles for self-determination against oppressive policies and social arrangements. In their mobilizations to force the hands of states to loosen, or break, the shackles imposed on them, the articulation of themselves as a rights-bearing collective is communicated. Any carceral citizen, whether they join in solidarity with others similarly oppressed or not, will benefit from the work of carceral citizen activists. For example, there are numerous initiatives, such as *Banning the Box* on employment and education applications and re-enfranchisements occurring in many states (Sentencing Project Report 2012). These initiatives sweeping the nation represent a transformation in social renderings of carceral citizens from those deserving of their fate and dispossession, toward an acknowledgement of them as a rights-deserving group vis-a-vis their right restorations.

Participants in this study who have engaged in activist work, illustrated in Figure 14, re-configure the meaning attached to the carceral citizen category in their struggle against

oppression. Identities through legacies of dissent, counter exploitation even though exploitation can seep into activist practices, they counter marginalization, which can occur at the level of the state or community and can be compounded by race and gender positionalities, counter-imperialism, and counter-violence. In their claims to rights, they rise, as a category.

Activists I spoke with, articulate the importance of their work educating agents of social institutions about the inter-connectedness of systems of oppression and how produce the kind of social disadvantage that make police encounters more likely. This type of critical education can re-shape the way that the criminalized are perceived, even de-vilify them. Says Greg,

> So activism has given me the knowledge and the skill set with which to more effectively and efficiently, you know, have a powerful part in changing society and changing dysfunctional systems, these oppressive systems, you know…So that in and of itself has been powerful, you know, and then also it's given me knowledge of what the real problems are out there impacting the world, and our place in it. I work with an organization that coordinates forums and events to join citizens working for the common good. We come to understand the ways that people are oppressed, or damaged, or harmed by structural forces and how those interconnect. I then take that knowledge and teach, students, law-enforcement, correctional institutions, non-profits, rehabilitations that people are being harmed in these various ways and say - here's what the real experiences of people impacted by incarcerated are. I mean what the fuck are we doing, if we're not taking real social action? (Greg)

Greg links the struggles of the formerly incarcerated to broader issues of justice in educational practice to reconfigure the way criminalized people are understood, not as isolated actors, but rather people ensnared in webs of oppression.

IDENTITY MAKING THROUGH LEGACIES OF DISSENT

It's important to note that activism for formerly incarcerated people has also been criminalized, because political dissent can be criminalized. Participants made this connection of being dangerous in "another way." Formerly incarcerated activists I interviewed consistently refer to their change-work as a means of challenging power. They use the language "we," "us," "them," and "the system" to indicate distinctions between themselves as a group whose power

has been compromised and others who "need education" about how the system is failing. "Power" and "systems" are referred to as entities that need to be "challenged," "negotiated with," "pressured," or "forced" to act. The nature of some participants' work involved more community and formerly incarcerated mobilization than direct interactions with the state did. These participants seek to "build community" and "create safety" for themselves when the system has failed to do so. Participants in my sample continuously and paradoxically claimed their oppressed and resistant identities, as steeped in historically similar insurgent politics of oppressed groups along every conceivable style of oppression (see Figure 23). They envisioned themselves as part of a community of resistance to systemic carceral oppression.

For example, Jack reminds us that "our nation was founded by lawbreakers, ne'er-do-wells, and just outright criminals. It's unfair to wave that flag to ask us [the formerly incarcerated] if we respect the law. Are the wealthy who have power, like Elon Musk or Bill Gates, being asked if they respect the law?" Sloan explains that fights for justice may require methods that defy the law, which has immense historical significance regarding shifts in power.

> Now, I'm dangerous in a different way, arguably - in a more dangerous way to the system. When I take a trip to jail now [for activism], it's viewed by many as a righteous, you know, a decision, that it's connected to a legacy that we stand in the shadow of. So, I'm a lot more dangerous to the system as a community organizer, as opposed to a small-time criminal selling marijuana (Sloan).

Aven spoke to this historical threat via his insurgent education and rights-training in his community:

> Police might look at me like I'm talking about them, prosecutors might get antsy, people in power might see me as secretly plotting misconduct or misdeeds against them. The reward is making the world a better place, the reward is preventing someone else from receiving the same sentence I received, educating that little boy, those who would have grown up to be incarcerated, is [sic] instead, growing up to be a lawyer or a judge…I'm expanding the future, and people in power don't like that (Aven).

Aven speaks to how he is dangerous in another way. People in power are not fearful because of the danger he poses in a criminal sense, but the danger he poses as an active change-maker informing black communities of their rights to stand up to the state. Both Aven and Sloan's work challenge power and there is a legacy of the state to suppress dissent. Sloan referred to King's words, "Power is never voluntarily given by the oppressor: it must be demanded by the oppressed" (King 1963). In the state's efforts to prevent this, activism is often criminalized. The forging of new social orders, however, have historically been the product of law-breaking forms of resistance.

Below, I outline the ways that the FIAs I interviewed demonstrated resistance to the five faces of oppression. I also discuss the moves formerly incarcerated activists make against oppression and how oppression can be re-formulated and wielded against activists. Finally, I describe the he ways that the fight against particular oppressions is shaped by positionalities of the activist.

Counter-Exploitation

Prisoners are used as free labor. A resurgence of slavery in the prison industrial complex (Davis 2011) and the subsequent relegation of ex-incarcerated individuals to menial labor are lived realities, as was described in the previous section. Jack's work focuses on building gainful opportunities in the growing tech industry for the incarcerated. To do this, he works hard to ensure that incarcerated people have opportunities to put their hands-on and learn new technology; he petitions and raises funds to provide the programming for people on the inside. In general, he fights against the low-wage menial labor trap that so many formerly incarcerated people find themselves relegated to after release. Jack envisions his work as countering exploitation of directly impacted people. He explained this concentration of his activism:

> We are working with the Department of Corrections to do 21st century work. We don't want people to be paid low wages for doing unskilled labor. That is generally how people are exploited. Directly impacted people are learning to code, to build programs - preparing them for high paid jobs post-incarceration (Jack).

Similarly, Shana's activism has been centered on counter-exploitation. She describes her work as a labor organizer fighting for directly impacted rights to living wages and employment protections. "We formed an organization 20 years ago, we organize around fairness in the workplace, fair treatment, and fair wages for people who've been incarcerated."

Both Jack and Shana's work affirm carceral citizenship as an oppressed social category. Such an identity is affirmed in their active resistance to exploitation. Activists working to give system-impacted people access to opportunities, career training, fair wages, and fair treatment situate themselves squarely against power augmented by exploitative conditions that the formerly incarcerated become subjected to. In this way, these activists are engaged in a site of struggle, making themselves legible as citizens with rights to fair pay and fair treatment.

Exploitation seeps into activist practices

It is important to note that exploitation of carceral citizens can spill into activist work. A growing sentiment among activists is the ongoing unauthorized or unpaid use of their narratives and stories. Activists made clear that this oppressive practice of exploitation should not continue. Kalif explains how useful activism can be, how helpful it is when directly impacted people are compensated for their activist work, and how harmful it can be when they are not. "We want to contribute to the movement, and it's a blessing to have organizations that will hire us, that will employ our talents." Marcos chronicles his growth and ownership-taking over where and when he will share his story.

> I may go to different places, and give a keynote talk or an interview. I get paid to do that work by the place that I work, but there was a time I would do it for free. I would be on a

> panel for free or something for a small organization, I'll do that, but when it's a large foundation with money, I'm like no, fuck you, I need to get paid.

Reginald echoed these sentiments:

> The unfortunate thing is that our work may not be valued in a way that people are getting compensated. There is a lot of money, for example coming from the Koch Brothers, Americans for Prosperity, #Cut50, Reform Alliance, Color of Change, Open Philanthropy. That are getting a lot of money, but it's not coming to us, the grassroots folks. People returning may be recruited as volunteers to validate the work of folks who get grants, but those directly impacted people ain't getting paid. That is something I want to change. (Reginald).

Vasco confirmed Reginald, Marcos, and Kalif's experiences and he illuminates the exploitative sentiment embedded in the practices of unreflective or uncompensated use of formerly incarcerated activists' labor.

> I take formerly incarcerated people to several high-ranked and well-funded schools [around the southwest] to empower them to go to school. School officials or professors will ask 'Well, we want your guys to come and talk to our class so our students can get an idea of what it is to be in prison.' I said, 'So I can teach your little rich kids our life stories?' This is wrong, because we walk away with open wounds. So, no. I'm not going to empower their kids, when we're not empowering ourselves. If you want our students to talk, you pay us, because everyone else is getting paid and don't tell me you guys don't have money. I want our [formerly incarcerated] members who are interested in these field trips to sit in the classroom, become another student, participate in, like, a classroom setting so they can feel what it is to be a student. To get the same perspective, to be able to participate, because that's the way you change the narrative and the ideology. But we might get utilized as pawns or [as] another mechanism for just entertainment. I'm tired of that. (Vasco)

The issue of ongoing activist exploitation by various publics interested in change needs to be addressed to prevent further oppression of formerly incarcerated people as a class. Their work as activists has helped to forge pathways for formerly incarcerated people to thrive financially and to be released from exploitative conditions. These activists have raised awareness of the needs for formerly incarcerated people to have equal rights and to non-exploitation of their labor, and this is a significant narrative of change with immense potential for liberation. But the

practice of institutions and individuals using formerly incarcerated people's labor and stories without compensating them or acquiring consent, can actually promote their oppression.

Counter-Marginalization

Marginalization is hallmarked by material deprivation. Carceral citizens experience resource barriers in nearly every facet of life. Formerly incarcerated activists work, therefore, consists of struggles for the restoration of rights in a wide-variety of arenas (see Figure 14). Fighting for formerly incarcerated people's right to housing, access to education, food, legal representation, mental health services, and jobs are all areas of insurgent contestation where the formerly incarcerated become key players in acts of collective and mobilized resistance to their own marginalization. For simplicity, I use the case of food access to exemplify the ways activism is an anti-oppressive practice against marginalization. Formerly incarcerated people may be barred from accessing food via welfare or SNAP benefits (Wolkomir 2018). As they are denied access to jobs that pay a living wage, or denied jobs at all, finding food can be a daily struggle.

Carceral citizen activists' work may focus on the policies of the state, collection and distribution of goods, or radical farming initiatives to make communities self-sufficient. I will point out the intense experience of such vulnerability for brown immigrant families and how fighting became a crucial part of life.

Fighting marginalization at the state-level – a case of food access

States establish a variety of ways to ban and provide food for people who have convictions. Across the US, people may experience bans on a complicated host of welfare benefits. One component of President Bill Clinton's Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) barred people with drug convictions from

receiving benefits from the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP). States were given the option to opt out, but some states retained the lifetime ban (Wolkomir 2018).

Lilly is working to end lifetime bans on food stamp accessibility for people with drug convictions in her state.

> You know, [the ban] caught a lot of [drug] convicted folks. And interestingly enough, there was a Republican that wanted to reinforce this kind of lifetime consequence. She'd say, if you're caught with a drug charge, you're banned for life. But we fought this and the law has changed and people are getting food stamps again. When we passed it here, we were one of eight states that had not made food stamps available for drug convictions. People have been working on this, you know, since 1996, when Clinton passed that fucking thing. People have been working to undo that harm and those exclusions for 20-some-odd years (Lilly).

Lilly signaled that the work she engages in restores rights to the marginalized, giving them the basic human necessity of food that was, for decades, denied carceral-citizens.

Fighting marginalization at the community level - a case of food access

Activists may help one another meet their immediate needs in the face of oppressive state policies that deny them access to resources necessary for survival. Formerly incarcerated activists build a collective identity and build collective movements in this way. Lance described his work on the ground and in the trenches, which on the surface looks like charity, but underneath that veneer lies an insurgent, solidarity-building effort. Lance explains his work in the following way:

> There's a difference between solidarity and charity. Charity is top-down, but solidarity is being where people at. One of the organizations I help with is a collective commune. We have a food shelf, anyone can come in there at any time. It's a way for people who've been incarcerated, who may be banned in one way or another, to access food to get it. This is run by us, for us. We don't require licenses and we don't ask people to identify themselves. People come in there at any time, but, like, this is about solidarity. It's not, like, dominating them. Like, you know, if I give food to the poor, they'll call me a saint, but if I ask why they're poor, they'll call me a Communist. So that's kind of my world view. I am where they're at, or I've at least been there. We bridge across in solidarity, versus just charity. Non-profits, they stifle social movements; [but] this community service *is* activism….There's not like a pecking order [in our organization] where if

> someone screws up, they can't come back. We try and involve them in ways that give people a sense of self-worth. So, we're developing this communal model of getting our needs met (Lance).

In this passage, Lance speaks about his attempts to unlock people's dependency upon the state, which is a hallmark of marginalization. Under such dependency, one's livelihood is based on being subject to arbitrary and invasive authority of social services who enforce rules to which the marginal must comply (Young 1990). Lance's work, and his community, are providing for the immediate needs of people in support of carceral subjects' "right to claim to know what is good for them" (Young 2019:508). A community model such as the one described by Lance allows formerly incarcerated people basic rights to privacy, respect, and choice, all of which are generally denied to carceral citizens and granted to non-marked citizens.

Another example of counter-marginalization activism, as conceptualized in this singular material deprivation of food, is radical farming. Although seemingly focused solely on food, the repercussions of this practice are liberatory across an array of oppressions. Food growing is understood as an act of survival and is a root of community safety and sovereignty from state oppression. To help us think about meeting the resources needs of directly impacted people as an anti-marginalization practice, Gwen, describes radical farming in her highly surveilled town in the rural southwest.

> For a lot of people, there is a reticence to engage the state, like it's a protective thing. In radical community making, and through the radical farming organizations, we want people to be involved in organizations that are thinking critically about these systems that produce and perpetuate harm - then you're adding, like, another warrior to the work. (Gwen)

In this way, resistance to food scarcity for people impacted by the state or under threat of capture or violence by the state. They work to restore food to their communities with a deeper vision of

distributive justice that is not attached to or dependent upon the state. Activist work in the public sphere serves to contest illusionary divisions between the marked and everyone else.

Joshua Sbicca's (2016) *Plowing Justice,* an analysis of a food sovereignty movement out of Oakland, purports that providing enough food for oneself year-round is vital for a healthy community, but it also helps people claim power in the food system by rebuilding relationships between people, the land, and food providers. They are particularly focused on the problem of food insecurity among the currently and formerly incarcerated. Sbicca's analysis of the organization acknowledges the ways in which the initiative creates a foundation of psychosocial healing, empowerment, and community reintegration for the directly impacted. But he also observes how becoming food sovereign disrupts power, contests inequalities, and generates self-determination and economic stability for entire communities. Through activism, a new, expansive, reality-shaping discourse is brought about (Sbicca 2016). The healing power of prisoners fighting for food sovereignty creates a discursive shift away from the "offender-as-dependent" narratives and towards the possibilities of them as self-determined collectives, thus generating new discursive realities. Impressing the notion that prisoners have rights and that defending those rights is mutually beneficial for all of society, as well as for the justice-impacted shifts the conversation to a more rights-based approach to penal reform. In these spaces, the voices and actions of prisoners involved in such change-work constantly co-produce new realities of dignity and rights.

In the above ways, carceral citizens resist marginalization and survive by fighting to provide life-sustaining nutrition to directly impacted people. Participants spoke about many facets of marginalization; I used food access as one example of how their work is aimed directly at meeting the nutritional needs of directly impacted people who have become dependent on the

system, which is failing to provide for them. In their counter-oppressive efforts, they define themselves.

Intersections of race and immigration status in anti-marginalization work

Marginalization takes many forms, and other systems of oppression compound to multiply disadvantage carceral citizens. Immigrant status cross-cuts carceral status to doubly marginalize. Their resistance to such exclusions is, therefore, fought on multiple fronts. Gabriela describes her contestation with multiple oppressions. She describes how her multiple fights "interconnect."

> I do this activism to make systemic change because, you know, my family was suffering. So, we were dealing [with] immigration issues, citizenship issues, so living in the shadows, being in fear, both of us having a criminal record, being a brown family, being a mixed-status family, and being poor. All of these things work against us, there are real barriers that come with them and, you know, trying to push against all of these was like really through education and grassroots organizations, which were just forming. So anyway, so I'm doing this alone and I am going to school and trying to learn skills to change things. And then people started talking about 'Ban the Box.' I find people like me and boom, this is the first time I realize there were players fighting for these things…in this case, it was to not do background checks on people applying to school, trying to access education, but this is just one fight in a bunch of fights, for rights for black and brown people, for undocumented people, and convicted people that all interconnect. (Gabriella).

There is no one carceral citizen marginalization experience because marginalization is experienced along many lines simultaneous to carceral citizenship. Gabriela exhibits how the fight against marginalization for convicted people merges with the countering of marginalization on the basis of immigration status, class, and race.

Counter-Powerlessness

The fundamental right to citizenship includes the opportunity to vote. In the reclamation of those rights, a legible group of carceral citizens emerges. Randall works to re-enfranchise and register convicted people.

> It's that one-vote power. Even though it's only one vote, it is one vote. And as you count up all those folks, you know that adds up tremendously. I'm working to get people who are being granted these rights to vote back out to participate. We are only drops in a bucket, over time, we can fill the bucket (Randall).

In this passage, Randall describes his work to re-enfranchise and empower those who have recently gained back their voting rights. Although having the right to vote and exercising it can be arguably a limited form of political power (Owens and Walker 2018), it is a right of citizenship that has been denied people, and it is a part of a bigger civic engagement picture. Reginald explains how engaging in policy and advocacy work empowers him and other carceral citizens, politically.

> Like, you're pushing for system change and creating that change, and holding the politicians accountable, [and] it can give you a sense of power you didn't have before. If we can live that, then we are an example of what Gandhi refers to as *being the change you want to see in the world*. We can hold our elected accountable and [our] leaders accountable, [and] then that's the exact thing we want to see in the world. More men and women coming out of incarceration exemplifying that, the more change we're creating (Reginald).

Reginald argues that policy work on the part of formerly incarcerated people is a path to empowerment. Terrell described this "inclusion in the political process" as empowerment, as well.

Randall, Reginald, and Terrell describe a counter-powerless imperative for formerly incarcerated people to reclaim their influence and rights to self-determination. FIA's work in that vein makes them comprehensible as an oppressed group denied rights, rights that are given to others, who have also broken the law but who have had the luxury to retain this liberty (Brown 2014; Woodall 2019).

Counter-Imperialism

Activists work to challenge the dominant meanings that have rendered their points of view invisible. The meaning of criminalized people's existence has been interpreted by dominant

cultural products (Brown 2009). News stories, primetime television, websites, film, and musical depictions of "offenders" and "criminals" define the oppressed group as a whole. Frida asserted her work in countering such narratives, saying, "We're not only changing laws and policy, we're changing perception." Gwen explains how formerly incarcerated come to re-story themselves. and re-think systems.

> We're taught to think that what happens to people harmed by the system is right, and that it's fair. Then we come into our movements and we have these common-sense notions challenged, like we never even thought about it before. Should the police even exist? So, now I'm asking different questions, and our movement is interrogating whether the system should even exist in the first place… so those communities that are criminalized, that are surveilled, people who are supervised, folks who are convicted, incarcerated, formerly incarcerated, and also people who have survived harm can be understood. Because we are actually not talking about two different populations there, though I would say the state frames it as such – the vast majority of people who move through the system have also survived harm themselves (Gwen).

Often, without noticing, "dominant groups project their own experience as representative of humanity" (Young 1990:511). Their claims to truth and universality can be internalized, creating double consciousness whereby the oppressed refuse to claim the devalued, stereotyped visions of themselves. There is a contention, then, that the culturally different group (i.e., the criminalized) is marked as different. Oppressed groups find ways to express their experiences, experiences that previously had been interpreted for them by the dominant group. As Greg indicated, "We are trying to give voice to the voiceless." Also, Piper described that the objective of her film screening and discussion events on the realities of prisons is to reveal people's genuine stories. She said, "Prisons ae designed to be like out-of-sight and out-of-mind. I like putting it out there, so people have to think about these things, to think about the people. It could be our neighbor, the guy mowing our lawn, or even our problem." Gwen, Piper, Greg, and Frida's described how their work deals squarely with the issue of misrepresentation, a hallmark of subjugation. Their activism centers on story-telling whereby the harmful narratives of the

dominant that reduce and deny formerly incarcerated lived experiences can be brought to light and even challenge the category of *criminal*.

Counter-Violence

Formerly incarcerated activists challenge the myriad ways that the state abuses them, as well as the ways in which they are socially positioned to be the victims of violence. Wanda's work to end the shackling of pregnant women; Kalif, Price, Reginald, Frida, and Terry's work to end life without parole sentences; Lance's work on demilitarizing the police; and Shana's work on accountability for police brutality all aim to challenge the brutality of the state and the social arrangements that make the carceralized vulnerable to violence. Many of the participants, over the course of their activist careers, have worked on the human rights violations that people have experienced inside carceral settings, as well as on those violations experienced after release.

For example, Randall's activism centers on abolishing the psychological torture of long-term solitary confinement. He is sure to acknowledge that "harm occurs from violence at the hands of the people who have offended. However, and importantly, he reminds us that, "The victims and offender epithets have given the inaccurate impression that they are two separate groups." Randall similarly argues that there is a socially constructed difference between victims and offenders. He challenges the social perception of this difference in his work. He is sure to publicize that offenders are also victims. This, he argues, "Should matter in our decisions to determine what punishments are appropriate for victims; these punishments are arguably much harsher when we are blind to the victim within the offender, the person upon whom we unleash state-sanctioned violence."

Kalif, Price, and Frida are involved in spaces of community healing directed at highlighting how community, individually enacted forms of violence, and state-sanctioned forms of violence are all inextricably linked.

> As a freedom fighter, I have to talk about what influenced me to commit the crime [homicide]. Violence is real. I have to acknowledge that, it's important. Crack had seeped into my community, it changed everything, it made young people like myself -- 14, 15 years old -- think we had an express lane to the American Dream. I was a young unfortunate growing up in an inner city. You know the story. Cocaine offered us a promise, education became fruitless, I began to be seen like other young people who commit violence, sell drugs, so on and so forth. So, I do engage in analysis about what factors contributed to my acts. It's not just about me, though. It's about thinking about why there's so much violence in our society as a whole. Because it's all connected (Kalif).

System-impacted people are often also victims as Kalif emphasized that "Hurt people, hurt people." Kelly who was a victim of prolonged child abuse, domestic violence, and untreated trauma (like most system impacted people) talked about the "punishment of trauma." She spoke about the connection between her childhood victimization, her subsequent criminalization by the state, and her work on changing those practices of harm:

> It's the punishment of trauma. We're so broken at that moment in life, and just, you know, we had no sense that we could impact or change the system on a macro level, right? And so, I do my activism so the people that aren't ready to share their voice yet or aren't ready to share their narrative yet [sic]. They have somebody that is fighting for them. We can eventually end this cycle of violence, this cycle of abuse and incarceration; you know, sexual assault, that we experience at home, then by police and guards, all these different harms we experience, and now we try and change them through activism (Kelly).

Kelly's words illustrate how victimization in childhood is interwoven with the experiences of incarcerated people at the hands of state actors.

Formerly incarcerated activism, like what Kalif, Frida, Price, Kelly, Randall, and Gwen involve themselves in, is directed at deconstructing the victim/offender difference that is a figment of the social imagination and changing the very real harmful practices that impacted

their own lives. Thus, in their work, these activists arise in the collective imagination as a rights-bearing group, illuminating a variety of forms of violence that they, and other system-impacted people, continue to endure.

The Social Construction of Carceral Subjects in Claims to Rights

Reality-making formerly incarcerated activist work co-produces, co-shapes, and co-organizes the self and society. Social systems are practices whereby a level of "systemness" is achieved in interaction (Giddens 1984:27). Systems are thus social practices that have been reified to maintain organized collectives, which both constrain and facilitate action. Over time, the reification of these structures is loosened, giving hope that the carceral citizen's activist-work is accomplishing much more than what their policy or community changes are. From the perspective of Giddens and constitutive theory, FIA's are engaging in an active co-production of, and reclamation of, the world circulating through them. The knowledge that formerly incarcerated activists carry, which has arguably been displaced, is at least partially captured in my interviews. That is with an empirical eye to the ways in which formerly incarcerated activists challenge dominant discourse and "totalizing identities" (Somers 1994) of broken individuals. Discursively, formerly incarcerated people have the opportunity to become something more: an activist, a politician, or a neighbor. Through civic engagement, the stereotypical limitation and denial of what is possible for them unravels and they take "alternative lines of flight" (Arrigo and Milovanovic 2008:168).

CONCLUSION CHAPTER 5

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that carceral status is a system of privilege and oppression within which carceral citizens, or those marked by the carceral system, experience marginalization, powerlessness, exploitation, Othering, and violence. These oppressions cross

cut race, gender, class, and sexuality to multiplicatively impact one's experience. Carceral citizens have emerged as a social group, and members of this group, whether they identify with each other or not, experience common oppressions, and benefit from mobilized carceral citizen political and cultural wins. Re-working Miller and Stuart's conceptualization of carceral citizenship to include a much deeper understanding of carceral status as a social hierarchy rooted in our social order, I find that they achieve recognition as an oppressed group with a right-to-have-rights. This emerge in their solidarity with one another to counter oppression.

Despite contesting historical wrongs and confronting carceral oppressions, activist work also helps carceral citizens manage stigma, gain skills, and expand their social networks that help them thrive individually. In the following sections, I consider the ways that formerly incarcerated activists experience empowerment to re-cast their own lives vis-à-vis their activist work.

CHAPTER 6
FOILING FRAILTY: MANAGING STIGMA AND BUILDING CAPITAL FOR SELF-CHANGE THROUGH ACTIVIST WORK

The state-sanctioned violence associated with the placement of the "criminal" label upon someone has been described as a "massive assault" on the very selfhood of a person (Gamez 2015; Schmid and Jones 1991). State, institutional, and other social-actors remit continuous ongoing negative declarations about who and what people are (Gamez 2015; Goffman 1963, Lifton 1961, Silberman 1995), thus giving rise to the social category of "criminal." We step into pre-defined definitions of situations that also constructs the person (Mead 1934). Thus, criminality is not an inherent characteristic of a person, but emerges from the power and process of defining behavior, people, and discourse (Coyle 2014). Howard Becker (1963) speaks to this process of naming things. He provided insights in labeling theory about how marijuana users do not see themselves as deviant, but they become socially understood as such when their behavior is defined as illegal. Thus, criminality is defined by those with the power to circumscribe it (Coyle 2014).

We all violate at least one criminal law sooner or later, but only some are singled out to be named as such. Those who are not caught, retain carceral-status positions of privilege in the hierarchy of sociolegal location (Woodall 2019). Michael Coyle's (2018) *Standard theory* posits that human beings regularly display behavior that both upholds and violates social norms that have been codification into laws. Despite this human regularity or norm violation, the "criminal" categorization of some people and not others, distorts our perceptions of the people who are categorized, our differences are accentuated, our similarities minimized, and the *Othered* become

the subject of multiple oppressions, including stigmatization and hindered access to material and symbolic resources.

Agency and self-determination have been largely left out of dominant academic narratives of reentering people's lived experiences. Participants in my study respond directly to this shortfall. Their responses challenge an archetypical deficit model of reentering whereby people's abilities to change are severely hindered by social structural forces. Scholars may cast them as victims, being weak, helpless, or even frail (Western 2018). This well-meaning but incomplete story, though it challenges personal pathology narratives, still renders reentering people as little more than victims of the system. Without the incorporation of a lens that highlights their fight, their struggle, and their wins, reentering people remain understood, in part, as "doomed to deviance" (Maruna 2001; 2004; 2011; 2017; All of Us or None n.d.). Participants in this study respond to this mis-representation, casting themselves instead as "survivors" and "warriors" as they demonstrate their struggle to overcome incredible odds of reentering society post-incarceration.

The guiding literature of Erving Goffman, Pierre Bourdieu, Bruce Western, Shadd Maruna, and Thomas LeBel help frame the findings of this chapter which illustrate how formerly incarcerated people resist deep social- and self-discrediting (stigma), garner important resources (capital), foil human frailty narratives, and re-cast themselves positively in their struggle for dignity and inclusion. As discussed in chapter 5, formerly incarcerated people who engage in activist work directly counter oppressive conditions by taking on the social structural and cultural forces that subjugate them. But they also have very intimate and personal experiences with social relegation. Their tribulations and their triumphs come to shape and shift their individual life experiences and chances. Findings from participant interviews in my study

illustrate that activist work helps mitigate the harms of social and self-stigma; it even transforms it. Their stories also show us how their change-work helps them garner useful forms of symbolic, human (cultural), and social capital that they leverage to generate economic capital to help them in their reentry success.

The Formerly Incarcerated Experience: Justifying the Micro Approach of this Chapter

Abuse and harm are perpetuated by carceralism to produce a sort of *social death*, but activism has the power to counter such a process (Brown 2014). As a group without rights, formerly incarcerated people have to forage for survival. Activism as illustrated in the previous chapter is a counter-oppression project broadly, that is, when we resist, we build new territories of possibility (Arrigo and Milovanovic 2008). However, formerly incarcerated activism is also a personal journey in, and as, a daily negotiation for survival.

Here I feel the need to justify the individualized perspective of this chapter from my positionality as a directly impacted scholar-activist. I understand this struggle personally as a formerly incarcerated scholar-activist myself. Our trials and our triumphs are not only social goods for change that others get to benefit from, they are also uniquely our own. There are those who merely refer to us from a distance and have placed no investment in our personal life. We are not sharing our experience solely for the purpose of an academic's tenure or the politician's photo opportunity. Although we "take one for the team" when we are exploited, have our needs disregarded, or are left behind so long as, ultimately, our work, investment, or unauthorized sharing of our story will push positive social change.

There is a private reality that directly impacted people experience in their fights for justice that go unspoken. It is money in our bank account, it is our chance to fly in an airplane, it is our personal victory to stand at the podium, and it is our intimate bravery that we draw from to

step onto the political platform. Those who celebrate our wins as new possibilities for social change, we appreciate. We deeply regard our guides, our sages, and our allies, those who opened up doors of possibility for us and who are crucial to providing us with immense opportunities to give a voice to ourselves and those like us. They ensure we are cared for. Even the best of allies, at the end of the day, are not experiencing supervised visitation with their own children, their own pocketbooks do not shrink when we are rejected from an economic opportunity, they are not emotionally feeling our internal self-doubt and our fear that comes with wondering each day how our criminal history will come back to re-victimize us, they are not personally denied acceptance to graduate programs and jobs because of a carceral status, nor are they intimately struggling to master a new professional language or feeling the personal embarrassment of violating an academic social norm and having that attributed to a criminal past. Our allies allow us to share those struggles and together we challenge devastating social problems, shoulder-to-shoulder, while others simply theorize about us from a distance under the banner of social justice. In the end, the intimate experiences of formerly incarcerated activists, our joys and our personal pains, academically and politically, have often been treated as insignificant or unimportant, but to us, they are imperative. Therefore, I focus this chapter very much on what activism does for us, personally.

Although the visual spectacle of formerly incarcerated activist work powerfully re-shapes social conditions for directly impacted subjects and everyone harmed by the carceral state, the daily struggle is also happening in every inhale and exhale of life lived as a formerly incarcerated person, and that matters as well. This chapter moves us away from looking at the countering of oppression by a racist imperialist patriarchy, toward a focus on the intimate and personal. I examine the participant narratives to understand how individuals overcome and personally

triumph. First, I differentiate and examine self-stigma and social stigma. I then report on how formerly incarcerated activists challenge the misrecognition of their selves and garner life affirming capital necessary for them to thrive, and finally I examine how this challenges the deficit and limiting tropes applied to us and our possibilities.

STIGMA

The oppression of formerly incarcerated people has deep institutional, social, and historical roots that perpetuates a stigmatized social status (see chapter 5). The day-to-day experience of living as a marked person and overcoming the stigma of incarceration is a major challenge. Erving Goffman's (1963) concept of *stigma* is thus essential to the study of formerly incarcerated people's struggle. Stigma, from Goffman's perspective, is the result of someone being identified as different, being labeled as such, and having their character devalued as a result of possession of that particular mark, like a criminal record (Pager 2003, 2008) or label (Becker 1963). People may internalize societal stigma with enduring and prolonged exposure, this is considered self-stigma which takes a negative toll on an individual's self-esteem (Vogel, Wade and Hackler 2007). The impact of multiple stigmas deriving from race, gender, sexuality, or class status further compound negative self-understanding (Brinkley-Rubinstein 2015). Such self-stigmatization greatly impacts formerly incarcerated people's life chances post-incarceration (LeBel 2012). Manipulating their presentation of self, they may attempt to conceal that aspect of identity, but in many areas of social life, they are unable to do so (Maruna 2011).

Though applicable and conceptually sound, a methodological engagement with Goffman can limit us to a study of behavior and symbols. Goffman helps us understand the way stigma is experienced, though he gives us a limited framework for the unique ways broader social forces affect how disadvantage shapes personal experience. Nor does he offer a thorough explanation of

how certain knowledges come to be subjugated. In fact, Goffman says little about broader forces in which interaction is constituted. For example, incarceration is more normalized, and less stigmatized, as a life experience in many communities of color (Clear 2007; Irwin 2005; Western 2006). Goffman does, however, give us insight into various ways to redefine one's self when stigmatized and says less about how these redefinitions may be made via claiming one's rights to justice (i.e. through activism).

Regardless, self-stigma (taking place in general contexts of power and oppression) may be resisted and transformed through activism (Anspach 1979; Link, Struening, Neese-Todd, Asmussen, and Phelan 2002; Corrigan, Kosyluk, and Rüsch 2013; Siegel, Lune, and Meyer 1998). Activist initiatives led by people with mental illness (Corrigan et al. 2013) or HIV (Siegel et al. 1998) have resulted in lower levels of their own self-stigmatization, it seems appropriate to believe that formerly incarcerated educational and advocacy work would translate similarly. Goffman's (1963) theoretical framework is useful for studying how formerly incarcerated modify, adjust, or cope with stigma, yet few have applied it.

The work of Thomas P. LeBel (2013) is a rare study that uses Goffman's framework to explore the de-stigmatizing effects of activist orientations of formerly incarcerated people. He predicts that directly impacted people would, in some sense, find redemption through activism. Surveying 229 formerly incarcerated people receiving prisoner reintegration services in upstate New York, LeBel explored the relationship between well-being, criminal attitudes, and forecasts of rearrests with an advocacy/activism orientation. This orientation was measured by such characteristics as "willing to be a part of an effort to teach," "currently trying to change the way they're treated in society," and "involvement in activities to fight misunderstanding" (LeBel 2013:172).

LeBel's findings suggest that people with an activist orientation are not passive victims of the stigmatization process. They have strong group identification with other prisoners in a manner that helps them cope with stigma and create more positive identities in their desires, or actions, to fight back against stigma. The findings are one of a rare study focused on how these orientations or actions are related to psychological well-being, reintegration successes, and stigma resistance. LeBel, however, did not assess actual activist work as only a few respondents in his sample were already making efforts in that regard. A qualitative study focused on those already engaged in change-work is needed. In personal communication with LeBel (2016), he acknowledged the need to develop better measures for this orientation, to understand what drives this form of community involvement, who moves into activism and why. He advocates a much deeper, qualitative, examination into how FIA's manage a spoiled identity through activism.

The following analysis illustrates the de-self-stigmatizing effects of activism for formerly incarcerated people. Participants articulate how their work produces new narratives of self-identity via the process of teaching others to think differently about them and garnering respect and being valued. The work transforms identity by providing opportunities for them to act in accordance with their personal values, and even new ways to be a rebel. Through their work, they learn the value of their own story.

Changing Perceptions, Changing the Narrative, Changing Themselves

Participants explained how activist-work teaches people to think differently about them. Scarlett says, "Educating the public about the issues is a way to help destigmatize us…talking to policy makers and coming to the table, proclaiming nothing about us without us, and getting involved, it helps destigmatize us and others." Participants also explained how activist-work provides opportunities for formerly incarcerated people to showcase more of what and who they

are aside from their crime. Brandi says, “So, it makes me proud to know that people know that we can change, that we're not criminals just because we've committed a crime.”

A profound identity transformation takes place through their activist work. Activists repeatedly described the power inherent in coming to understand their own story and to tell it strategically in their fights for justice. Through this strategic storytelling training and practice, their identity transforms to match that dignity. Latina formerly incarcerated activist, Gwen, expresses this. She says,

> There’s an interior experience, casting off the shame and the stigma that was placed upon me, right, because that’s also a part of our punishment…. like the system actually wants you to see yourself as a different person, what happens to a person by engaging in activism is to step outside of the games. Activism allows us to reclaim our identity and our personhood in a really tangible way, and we model that for other people - what that looks like (Gwen).

Madelena, directly impacted Latina activist echoes Gwen’s sentiment. She explains how she steps powerfully into activist spaces. She says,

> As a formerly incarcerated woman of color, I began to not only find myself, but to define myself. An empowered person can do anything they want. So, when we have these social constructs pushing against us, but I walk into a room and there’s like deans and boards of trustees and I say “I’m a formerly incarcerated leader” their faces of shock when they hear me own that power, it garners their respect. I’m no longer allowing them to shame me and I don’t let it overcome me, because I’m sitting at the table that I was told that I could never be at (Madelena).

Frida’s comments resonate with Gwen and Madelena’s, in that her activist work has shifted the way others perceive her. She says, “People perceive me as an educator, not the way they used to view me. I’m someone with passion and drive now.” Deedra parallels,

> I go in everywhere with my head held high. I mean my conviction is my first thought in what I do, but when I go out and I speak. I’m working with lawyers and people making policy you know, they’re working with me, and they even reach out to me. I am closing jails and helping incarcerated mothers. People want me there, so my head is held high and I’m optimistic (Deedra).

Brandi similarly expresses how the work garners dignifying interactions, but her quote also tells us something about how these new social understandings of who she is, has the power to shift the narratives more broadly about what people who have been directly impacted *can* be. She says,

> I think that I help people become more of a believer. People who hear my story say they're so proud of me. It used to be people would clutch their purses or whatever… I'm proud to let people know that we change, and we're not criminals just because we've committed a crime (Brandi).

Participant Lilly discuss how owning and telling their story is a way of reclaiming her own power and she hopes this action encourages others to follow suit. Lilly says

> I'm owning my past, who I was as a contribution to who I am now, has created this space where I don't have to be ashamed or stigmatized, I've already put it all out there, and there's nothing you can do to me…I'm careful of where I share my story – I might help others put their toe in the water and make sure there's not a shark in there, but then dive in at some point telling their story – I own mine and have that be respected (Lilly).

Activism provides formerly incarcerated activists with a way to frame their own experience for others; historically that task has been taken on by the state in very damaging ways. When formerly incarcerated people strategically tell their stories to point to problems in policy and practices, they become a part of a re-framing of what it means to be a criminal at all. This, is a type of "re-storying." This idea, rooted in indigenous practice, involves re-shaping what notions of justice are and reconnecting with one's own story through that lens (Reframing Justice n.d.; Yes World 2019).

Goffman's perspective has been critiqued for having little to say about how broad forces impact interaction and the possibilities of liberation. Authors Imogen Elizabeth Tyler and Tom Slater (2018) in *Rethinking the Sociology of Stigma*, critique micro-sociological theorizations of stigma and they point to ways that stigma is not only embedded in systems of power, but also operates *as* power. I approached this project with a similar understanding of stigma and a belief that activism has deep roots in challenging power in its various forms. Arguably, there's more to

inclusion and successful reentry than managing stigma. Oppressed people need capital. Actors acquire resources to gain power and to survive, in the next section, I focus on how activist work helps formerly incarcerated people acquire capital.

CAPITAL

From positions of powerlessness, exploitation, marginalization, cultural imperialism, and violence, formerly incarcerated people are able to use their activist work to acquire valuable resources needed to navigate their daily lives and forge paths to successful futures. Respondent's expressed a variety of benefits they acquired from their activist work that align with Bourdieu's conceptualization of capital. Pierre Bourdieu's (1985) concepts of capital frame a social-structural dimension, lacking in Goffman, that are all especially useful for exploring the many ways that activism is useful for some individuals to thrive post-incarceration.

Bourdieu (1986) outlines a number of forms of capital, though the meaning of capital is contentious (Aziz 2015). I draw on notions of Bourdieu's cultural, social, and symbolic capital from Jeff Manza, Lynne Haney, and Richard Arum's 2017 *Sociology Project* text. Common sociological interpretations of Bourdieu's capital vary across the discipline. Some scholars have argued that people under capitalist production find themselves concerned primarily with garnering marketable skills to increase one's access to other forms of capital, yet it is also important to retain Bourdieu's theorization of how particular attributes come to be constructed as valuable.

I elect to define forms of capital in the following ways in accordance with Manza, Haney, and Arum (2017) and Aziz (2015): 1) Symbolic capital: prestige, honor, or reputation (closely related to stigma-reduction); 2) Cultural (human) capital: nonmaterial knowledge, like verbal skills, that is convertible for gain in a particular cultural context; 3) Social capital: those endowed

networks of contacts and acquaintances use to advance one's position; and 4) Economic capital: material resources. These are all useful for understanding many of the gains that formerly incarcerated people acquire through their organized social justice work.

There are also multiple levels of capital to consider. Micro, meso, and macro levels of capital derivation are options of empirical focus (Claridge 2018; Lin and Erickson 2010; Sampson and Graif 2009). I focus here primarily on micro level of capital attainment for the purpose of centering on how formerly incarcerated people garner resources for themselves under extreme conditions of exclusion. Indeed, their economic vitality, cultural competencies, social connections, and reputation are a part of collective goods which can be analyzed for their utility for reentering people. However, I argue the various levels of capital, like structural and even relational, are important dimensions for future considerations. In the current study, I focus on participant reports of how they gained economic, cultural (human), symbolic, and social capital that has been crucial to their own upward mobility.

Formerly incarcerated activists become armed to reclaim their life experiences in ways that are more aligned with social justice, suited to better tackle barriers to reentry, and help them achieve greater social and economic success than conventional reentry programming (Currie 2012; Maruna 2017). People who are released often return to communities without resources to acquire housing or jobs, but those individuals who have social networks are believed to fare better and are less likely to recidivate (Weill 2016). Many people returning to society have few healthy, stable, career-oriented, translatable skills to use as they reenter the work force. However, those who do have such skills are more likely to desist from crime (Rossner and Bruce 2016). Various forms of capital help formerly incarcerated people maintain desistance from crime, feel satisfaction with life, maintain stable careers and housing arrangements, foster quality personal

relations, and experience psychological wellbeing (Farrall 2004; LeBel, Richie, and Maruna 2015). In the following sections, I report on the experiences of formerly incarcerated activists' symbolic, human (cultural), and social capital acquisition.

Symbolic Capital

Symbolic capital are assets that arise from how a person is judged such as an accomplishment (Manza, Haney, and Arum 2017). Resources are made available to individuals on the basis of honor, prestige or recognition, and serves as value that one holds within a culture. Formerly incarcerated people who have "made it" or become successful can be placed in a "hero" type of category that comes with considerable social recognition and benefits. There is a fine line between reducing stigma and garnering symbolic capital, in fact one's story has the capability of killing two birds with one stone. The focus here is how one's story operates to build symbolic capital that can be leveraged in social and political spheres, like stock. The participants describe this stock, or symbolic capital, acquisition.

Personal success stories become symbolic capital. Former "offenders" become publicly transformed into champions, and the social meaning of who they are is transformed when people view them as heroes. This is immensely useful in activists' access to social spaces, persuasion power, and perceived value. Brandi describes this, "You know, to know that you've been through what you've been through, you've come out of it and you're a success story now, I mean just to see your victory changes how people view and treat you." I coded this as symbolic capital that is different from stigma in that the success story is a form of symbolic stock that can be wielded to garner much needed resources, rather than as an act of reducing harmful scripts of stigmatization. Though the two, however, are closely aligned. Formerly incarcerated people are able to wield their experience to persuade and be heard in spaces they otherwise would not be able to. Lilly

says, “And you know, once I was able to kind of see how my experience changed this person's mind about a policy, then I started thinking – huh, my criminal history is my superpower now.”

The symbolic value of the incarceration experience can actually open some doors. Marcos illustrates this: “I was able to use my experience in a way to allow me to get into spaces that I normally wouldn't be in. Because we're doing just criminal justice work, right? So, my experience complements the work. As opposed to like, you know, trying to.be a brain surgeon or something, right? It would be very different.” In this sense, being a directly impacted person can actually open doors for positions in non-profit or advocacy careers.

The ‘once-criminal, now-activist’ narrative translates into important forms of symbolic capital for formerly incarcerated people, which goes a step-further than mere de-stimatization. Their success stories are linked to personal achievement in the public imagination and that gets translated into the award of access and reputation that they would not have otherwise had access to if engaging in conventional reentry pathways. Their success stories provide them with symbolic stock which they can wield for personal gain and policy, perception, and community change.

Human (Cultural) Capital

For my purposes, I fuse Weberian marketable skills and Bourdieusian cultural competencies (Aziz 2015) in definng human (cultural) capital that aids formerly incarcerated people in upward mobility efforts and reentry success. Activists obtain the skills illustrated in Figure 20 in their various social change-work capacities.

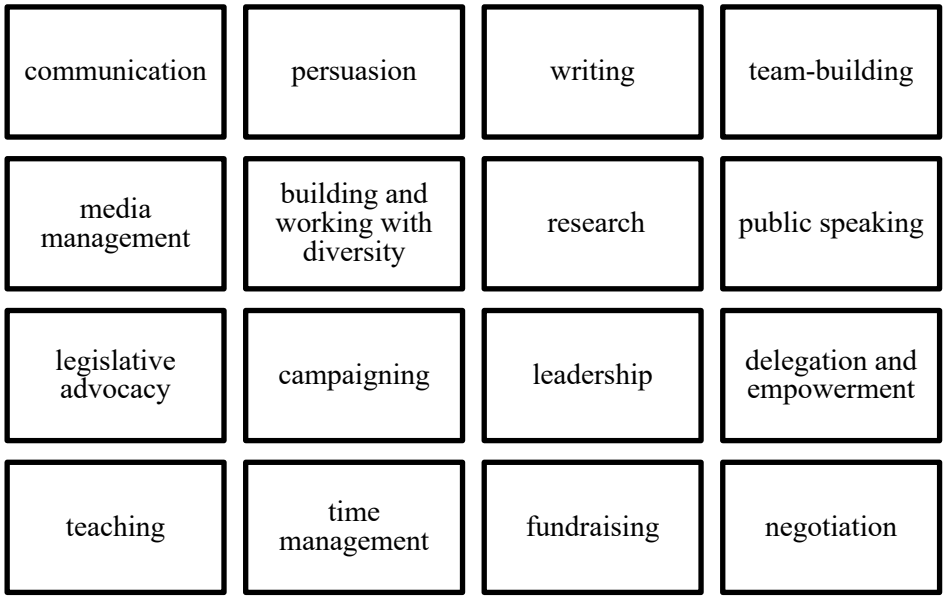


Figure 20. Human (Cultural) Capital Skills Acquired through Formerly Incarcerated Activism

For one, nearly all of the participants had worked on policy and legislation in a variety of capacities that taught them skills of advocacy, communication, persuasion, writing, team-building, media management, building and working with diversity, research, public speaking, campaigning, leading, delegating, teaching, time-management, fundraising, and negotiation. Many of my participants have been key players in a wide-array of policy reforms. For example, Jessie is drafting legislation to raise the age that a child can be charged with a crime, Brandi is designing legislation on women's access to hygiene products, Wanda worked on bills to ensure pregnant women had access to healthcare and safety, Lance and Garret are changing sex offense policies, Deedra is fighting for incarcerated parents' rights, Taylor works on expungement policy, Brooklyn's closing a jail, Sloan works on affordable and accessible housing, Terry, Price, Kalif, and Reginald are helping to end life without parole sentences, Terrell is abolishing solitary confinement, and Randall is challenging voting restrictions for felons. They talked about how they had to learn the legislative process, understand the components of a bill, how it gets

introduced, and how it progresses through a legislature. But as conceptualized in chapter 2, activism is not reduced to policy work.

Carceral citizen activist learn these skills in many other forms of movement-work they engage in. For example, Gwen acquires many of the human capital skills listed above through her radical community safety building efforts whereby she helps stakeholders design their own systems of well-being. Also, Lance gains many similar skills creating and operating cooperative resource-sharing groups. In such community-rooted work they learned how to team-build and organize across categories of race, gender, sexuality, and class. They learned communication skills in the way of framing their story and giving presentations within a time frame. They learned to structure messages to their audience and strategize ways to persuade people to make particular moves. They learned how to develop talking points and how to engage the media as well.

Regardless of the target of their work, in the course of their activism, participants were often required to teach stakeholders and decisionmakers about critical issues, so they learned effective teaching techniques. Formerly incarcerated people were often faced with juggling their own life responsibilities with their activist duties, thus learning time-management skills. They also learned to help people find their strengths and to delegate activities to formulate robust campaigns for justice. Activism provides a powerful skillset that formerly incarcerated people have otherwise been denied the opportunities to develop.

Social Capital

Social networks are transformed and expanded to aid individual formerly incarcerated activists garner “returns” (Lin 1999). The definition of social capital has been the center of lengthy and contradictory theoretical debate (Claridge 2018; Lin and Erickson 2010; Sampson

and Graif 2009). I focus here primarily on an individual, or micro level, understanding of social capital attainment. I apply this interpersonal lens to illustrate how formerly incarcerated people who become involved in activism build a stock of social relations from which they can draw to build new lives. Activism puts formerly incarcerated people in network with individuals in high status and high-power positions. The work also broadens and expands their networks to include a myriad of others who have similar interests and similar experiences. According to the participant responses, the impact of activism on social capital for formerly incarcerated people is powerful and positive.

Nearly all of the participants reported having expanded and powerfully transformed their social networks through their activist work. Brooklyn says, "I've been in front of city council, all over the country to speak, so my social network has expanded, news anchors, governors, all who are a part of my network now." Zoey exclaims,

> I'm getting all these requests on LinkedIn now. I wake up to emails and people are asking for my card because I participate in these actions around women's reentry. My network has increased greatly, I went from having like 400 Facebook friends to like a couple thousand! It's doubled in size and who is my network has been enhanced in ways that really help me navigate different spaces and be successful in my criminal justice work (Zoey).

Randall says, "I know public officials, I'm educating them. They view me as a change agent. Networking has been paramount for me, it's also gotten me into a lot of free chicken dinners (laughs)." Greg confirms, "Politicians, public officials, and lawyers have all become connections for me in activist spaces." Scarlett verbalizes that people have come to know her all over the country. "I can go anywhere where women's rights are being fought and I will be welcomed. I'll even have food and lodging." Wanda says, "I've been told that I have an award-winning, all-star social network (laughs)." Marcos, "I'm collaborating side-by-side with people instrumental in leadership and power positions. I did not do this by myself, I was introduced to one person via

one part of my work who then led me to other work." Price said he speaks to politicians and his perspective is often requested. He says that he's "affiliated with countless organizations and activities going on all over the country."

Although I specifically sampled based on formerly incarcerated people who have some degree of success desisting, and even thriving, these are not the kinds of quotes academics typically report from formerly incarcerated people. Reentering citizens are often subject to menial labor and relegated positions at work, ousted by communities, and denied access to education. Where else can people who have been directly impacted acquire these powerful social networks? Mostly nowhere. Those who pursue or have access to activist pathways, thus, are able to participate in creative spaces whereby they come into contact with different social networks. Carceral citizens step firmly into leadership and approach power - from power. Formerly incarcerated people who are not in these activist spaces are typically not able to access that kind of capital.

Economic capital

Activist work translated into employment and paychecks for many of my participants. Gwen has moved into a leadership position for an activist organization. "It is a paid position and one with authority." Scarlett has acquired various positions doing the work she loves, "I get to do my art." Kalif is moving toward a new career, "I am learning law and getting my certification, I'm getting experience suing cities and the department of corrections. I'm getting paid to wage revolution and getting experience that I can take with me." Samuel declares,

> My whole career is based on my activism. I was working in HIV, then in radio, then inside the criminal justice system. I'm getting paid to do trainings. Every job I've had is like this since I got out. In fact, for the last three jobs I was sought after, they called ME up, I'm super grateful (Samuel).

Marcos says, “I get paid to travel to speak and give interviews.” Taylor says, “I was a clerical assistant before activism and I was fucking miserable. Once I got involved, I realized there were these cool non-profit jobs, independent media, and lobbying positions. I started working in those jobs and I’ve never looked back-- except to grimace, so glad that isn’t my life anymore.” Reginald, who couldn’t get a job cleaning portable toilets, is now getting paid to travel and meet with legislatures and community leaders. His leadership engagements are compensated and has stable income with “strong alternative job prospects.” We find Brooklyn who previously worked in a poultry plant, is now shutting down jails and erecting community enrichment services in their place and getting paid to do the work by organizational funding.

There are deep ties that connect formerly incarcerated people’s poor fairing in the labor market to their subsequent incarceration (Couloute 2018; Sawyer 2017; Uggen et al. 2014;). Conversely, there are ties between employment satisfaction and desistance (Uggen 1999). Activists in the current study spoke little of the amount of money they made and focused more on the meaning and value that their work held for them. This is an area in need of further investigation. Participants consistently made connections between life-satisfaction and meaningful life-affirming work. Although most of them reported their social class as working or even working poor, they reported that they were excited to have jobs doing something they loved.

Use of street skills in change-work and economic capital acquisition

Directly impacted people have spent many years navigating the streets and surviving. Activists pointed to the ways in which those skills were transferrable to activism, and even subsequent employment. Kelly talks about this,

> We have transferrable skills that we got from surviving the streets. We can manage, we are leaders, we can run things, like we were a boss on the streets, like managing a gang or

> a whole drug business, so we can manage in the public sector or the private. We deal with a lot of personalities on the street, with stress, with constantly thinking about a lot of moving parts, we can do all these in a career. Young people come in with business sense, maybe more so than someone who just graduated business school. These skills need to be honed, but they know how to fundraise, they know how to speak to someone to give them a spin to persuade them of something. This is a lot of what we have to do to survive the streets, we learn to apply them in legitimized spaces (Kelly).

FIA's are able to build lives of self-determination and confidence Their work aids in their acquisition of important forms of capital and helps reduce the detrimental effects of stigma. However, the effectiveness of activism to accomplish this differs, in some ways, across race and gender.

GENDER, RACE, AND ACTIVIST PHILOSOPHIES IN STIGMA MANAGEMENT AND CAPITAL ACQUISITION

Activism's destigmatizing effects varied across lines of race and gender. It also varied in accordance with the type of social change-making they engaged in.

Different Activist Philosophies have Differential Destigmatizing Effects

Price, a black man, indicates that there are differences in the way black men are perceived based on the kind of activist work they do. For example, Kalif, a black man, identifies as an abolitionist, while Price identifies as more of a reformist. Price, who knew Kalif, says that he thinks his work within a reformist framework has a de-stigmatizing effect, more so than Kalif's abolitionist work does. Price says, "So, my friend (Kalif) who you already interviewed, well, his work makes people a little less like 'oh you're doing good now.' Whereas mine like the association with [reforming] groups that I work for aren't as stigmatized as say abolitionist work." This is similarly true for white cis-gender men. Abolitionists like Lance and Sloan have had continued run-ins with the police. Sloan describes that his "activism makes [him] an ongoing target of the cops." Jack, on the other hand, reports no harassment in his work fighting for

employment opportunities and skills-training for incarcerated people, that work is arguably more palatable for police. So, to varying degrees white and black men who engage in abolitionist or insurgent forms of action may be more stigmatized or targeted on the basis of the type of work they do. To be clear, however, even abolitionists agree that activist work has some kind of an ameliorating effect on stigma, particularly when they compare to the shaming they would be experiencing had they merely held their head down and not engaged in activism at all.

More research in this area would be helpful to disentangle how certain types of activism have varying results for people rebuilding their lives. Although I did not reach saturation, in my sample, men of all races and gender-non-conforming activists talked about activism being viewed as criminal, but this does not mean that it is not an issue for women. The women participants that I interviewed simply spoke less about it. Bear in mind, I had several women abolitionist in my sample. So, it was not that women were engaging in only well-received forms of activism, but they did not indicate that various forms of work were necessarily more or less harmful to them. More research would be needed to explore

Activism, Stigma, and Capital across Race and Gender

The acquisition of certain forms of capital were more useful for black men and women than they were for white men and women. I outline a few of these racial and gendered realities that nuance stigma reduction and capital building through activist work below.

Gender, self- and social-stigmatization

Women in my sample spoke at greater length about the de-self-stigmatizing effects of activism, more so than men did. This may have been entirely accidental. However, in coding I found that women provided extensive detailed description of this phenomena. Whether formerly incarcerated women are impacted by self-stigmatization more than men, or if activist work is

particularly helpful to women is a question I cannot answer with the current data. However, women did tend to elaborate on this issue more than men, and this tended to be true across race as well. Scarlett and Lilly are white women; Gwen, Frida, and Madelena are Latina; and Brandi and Deedra are black. All of them spoke about deep self-perception transformations that they experienced through their activist work. Regardless of race, women, more than men, seemed to articulate how activist work helped them reduce their self-stigma, they also articulated deep senses of personal power gained through their intimate experiences of re-storying themselves. To be clear on this comparison, men certainly articulated that their activist work aided them similarly, but women provided more illustrious detail in their interviews. Future research should explore potential gendered differences of self-empowerment for formerly incarcerated people involved in activist work.

In the next section, I report on some men of color's experiences of ongoing criminalization and social stigmatization that they have experienced as activists. They speak about struggling for social recognition and contending with social stigma at times in their activist work. Although, these issues rarely seem to be pervasive, I find them meaningful to report as directions for future research. Black and Latino men are impacted by ongoing struggles for social legitimacy (or to be seen not as a "criminal," but as an "activist"). Because what it means to be "criminal" in the public imaginary is so closely tied with what it means to be black or brown, and particularly male, their "criminal" identity may be very hard to overcome. Although more research is needed, for now, I would argue that it is at least --interesting that the personal stories of social stigma reduction were communicated by everyone in my sample, but when there were exceptions, it was men of color who expressed more troubles with achieving desirable public

perceptions. What this looks like needs additional attention, I report these exploratory findings below.

Activism can perpetuate the "angry black' persona

As reported in this chapter, participant narratives largely illustrated a destigmatizing and capital building benefit of activism for participants across the board. Black people, particularly black men and black non-binary identified, however, at times found that activist work catalyzed the 'angry black' persona. Tyson expresses this issue, "I am pre-judged that I'm an angry black male and I'm speaking out for my race. We've been mistreated before and I continue to be mistreated." This also seemed to be the case at times for black non-binary, or trans, people. Shana, who identifies as a non-binary black person, whose pronoun is "she," says this about the activism that she engaged in while she was incarcerated: "I was told I had the potential of creating a riot because of my activism when I was on the inside. I was transferred to a maximum-security prison, I came out and I continued to have anger issues with authority figures, and they view that as hostility." Here, Shana explains how her activism failed to transform the way law enforcement perceived her and they continued to construct her as a "menace." Tyson and Shana's experiences articulate a long legacy of law enforcement's association of black struggles for change -with criminality. This social construction has justified the squashing of black political progress for generations. Importantly, however, they reveal in other parts of their interviews that they garnered "respect" and "trust" among various political actors in the course of their activist work as well. This inconsistency can create troubles for black activists and, at times, result in violent backlash. Deeper analysis of these contradicting experiences for activists of color are necessary.

Variations in activism's utility for cultural (human) capital acquisition

Coming to understand criminal and constitutional law, and the act of teaching the law to others, were experiences shared by more black men then women or white men. Arguably, knowledge can relate to power. Thus, it seems that the process of politicization is connected to learning and teaching the law. In this way, they are becoming empowered. Aven describes this,

> I realized people are convicted because they didn't know their rights. I begin to look at my neighborhood and things that happen, I learn that the police can't do some of the things they do. People think they can't stand where they want to stand if the police tell them to move, but that's a violation of their rights, I've learned these things. I am trying to teach kids their rights, so they can prevent ending up like I was (Aven).

The human (cultural) skills of knowing the law and applying it for men of color is arguably important for forging hopeful pathways for themselves and for their communities.

There were few other differences in skill-attainment across race or gender. Black, white, and Latinx people of all genders seemed to benefit similarly in regard to human capital building through activism. However, the skills may be more or less useful, across race and gendered lines. More research would be useful to understand this as well.

It is important to note that higher educational attainment seems to reduce the impact that activism has on human capital building. Zoey explains,

> I think that for me, skill building through activism is a little different than other people, and I say that because I'm degreed. So, I think that people's perception of me is already different than if I didn't have the formal education. So, because I have the education, there's already validity in what I'm saying to them. I've done research, I've presented at conferences, you know, things like that (Zoey).

The mediating effect of education on the utility of activism came up and again and again. It is clear that de-stigmatization and capital-building are less impactful for formerly incarcerated people who have higher education degrees. For Zoey, a black woman, as well as other women of color, like Madelena and Frida, higher education is an important feature of their success. They

seem to gain less from activism than those without higher education. Although activism's role in helping them build new skills was undeniable, their education had already provided them with many human (cultural) skills. What formerly incarcerated people with higher education degrees bring to the table, and acquire from being at the table, needs further investigation.

Despite the value of activism in my participants' lives, reentry, for most, is strikingly difficult to navigate. These troubles have been the growing focus of much academic scholarship. Repeatedly, reentering people are framed as limitedly capable, a group that ought to aim for survival, or folks who ought to keep their expectations low. Rarely do criminologists use terms like, "leaders" or "warriors" to describe criminalized people. More often, the criminalized are constructed as a group that has *had it tough* or who is *poor*, *uneducated*, *unskilled*, or even *anti-social*. These narratives construct a reductive view of what carceral citizens are capable of. I asked participants to respond to these deficit paradigms. In the following section, they articulate how empirical attention to carceral citizen's struggles actually generate mis-representations of who they are, and what they achieve.

FOILING FRAILTY

Bruce Western's (2018) book *Homeward* reports the results of his Boston Reentry Study, a longitudinal study in which he followed 122 people released from Massachusetts Department of Corrections facilities. His close examination gives us a valuable look into the daily struggles of directly impacted people whose lives have been marked by policy and economic failures. He argues that deep layers of racism, poverty, and trauma that people who have been incarcerated experience results in a blurring of the lines between "guilty offenders and innocent victims" (2018:9). A clear definition of human frailty in his book is somewhat elusive, but the following quote by Western may define it best: "Many struggle with human frailty, where adversities of

mental illness, untreated addiction, and physical disability all come together under conditions of poverty" (2018:6).

Although the dissemination of data that articulate the harms of social inequality, racism, and violence are critical to crafting and enacting effective social policy, Western proceeds to cast formerly incarcerated people more as victims, than as agents of meaningful change. Poverty, violence, addiction, mental illness, and physical problems accumulate to form human frailty. Western is clear in his assertion that social conditions generate such problems (e.g. post-traumatic stress disorder is a defined mental illness caused by contextual and social conditions). His framing also makes a strong case to disrupt imaginary differentials between victims and offenders, when in fact, offenders are also often victims. Although the acknowledgement of such harms is important, the reader walks away with an account of formerly incarcerated people as a contingent of individuals steeped in desperation and helplessness that has broken them or rendered them 'frail.' Such characterization implies that the criminalized are easily broken. Such a depiction is problematic in that it denies formerly incarcerated people's agency, perseverance, luminosity, creativity, wisdom, and power as champions for social justice and success in their own lives.

I explained Western's account of human frailty and how he casts his own participants in that light. Then, I asked activists what they thought about that framing and use of the term "frail" to describe themselves. We discussed a tendency of contemporary criminology to cast criminalized groups as victims (All of Us or None n.d. ; Maruna 2017). Largely, the formerly incarcerated activists in this study agreed that they have vulnerabilities, life has been hard for them, they have reverberating traumas, and social conditions have battered them in compounding ways. However, most were not fond of the 'frail' language or victim-casting depictions. In fact,

some activists were insulted by the insinuation that they were frail. Despite the traumas of multiple oppressions and state violence they have endured, activists cast themselves as “fighters” and “warriors,” rather than frail.

Not Frail

In general, most participants simply said they would not use the word ‘frail’ to define themselves. Deedra says, “I don’t think I’m frail, I came out stronger, to each their own, but I’m not frail, not me.” Kelly said, “Activism is very empowering, we get that feeling for ourselves.” Brooklyn was even offended, “I’m not fucking frail, I’m a beast, I’m a warrior.”

Brooklyn elaborated extensively on her thoughts about the inaccuracy of the “frail” description, but also questioned academic theorizing from people who have not “been there.” She continues,

> I’m not fucking frail (Laughs). I was beaten down, but that didn't make me frail. It made me a beast. It made me the opposite, and it made me realize that people don't want us to reenter. Right? Once someone locks you up, they want you to stay there. If they wanted us to truly reenter, we wouldn't have to check a box. No one would have to know that we've even been there – And we would've served our debt and we would be able to move on with our lives and go on and have a place to live. You know, shit like that, it makes you fucking crazy – Not frail. Crazy because of the rejection, because of the ostracizing that happens. Frail, it makes you, you think of something that's easily broken. But in order to make it, like you can't be frail. You can't be. How can you? Like you would completely crumble after the first person told you, “No, I don't want to hire you you're an ex-con.” So no, I don't agree with that (Brooklyn).

Brooklyn exhibited her dislike for the language of human frailty, she goes on to criticize empiricism that is not rooted in experience.

> See, like in academia, and even in government, I hear so many people making ‘guesstimations’ is what I'll call them—because they're not observations, because you can't truly observe something you haven't been a part of. You have not walked through those doors, you haven't had the door close on you at night, you haven't had all of your rights, your dignity taken—you have not suffered from that. So, you cannot make an observation, you can just guess. We're both women [the researcher and Brooklyn] and we both were incarcerated. There is a difference of a black experience versus a white experience, definitely yes, but it's a lot different than a man telling us about our

> experience. So, we aren't homogenized. It really pisses me off when people are making decisions about reentry, and they ain't never even been locked up! Like how could you describe my experience like that for me? Wouldn't you think that the best person to decide on something like that would be somebody that's formerly incarcerated, somebody that has been impacted by it? Yes, but most times they don't. Right? Yes, it's a real problem (Brooklyn).

Brooklyn speaks to the problems of researchers who have not experienced incarceration having the power to wield their voices to shape and to frame formerly incarcerated narrative. Although the researcher was formerly incarcerated, there are obstructing limits to what that shared experience means (Collins 1986; Haraway 1988; Puar 2012). She is clearly not a fan of the term 'frail' and she senses that non-impacted people driving such framing is a broader issue in criminal justice theorizing and reform that needs to be addressed.

Madelena would not describe formerly incarcerated people as frail either. She says,

> Frail. that's a word I could not use as someone coming out, who's experienced mass incarceration. I think you have to be one of the strongest people in the world! Because look I understand like the trauma can break us, but we've also learned to use that as a tool to make us stronger. If I was told that, I would say, "if you'd gone through what I just went through, no, it's not frailty"….It's like I just came out of a war you know, it's like, I walked out of Hell. So, no I'm not frail, I'm a warrior (Madelena).

Wanda does not identify with the language either. When asked if she would describe herself as frail, she said. "Hell naw, no. no, no, no (Laughs). Not at all." Brandi also rejects the frail term. She replies,

> I don't think we're frail. I can't really put my hand on a word, but frail is not it. Because I came home still in survival mode. Now I feel like I had to survive even more coming out than I had to survive on the inside. Being out here where things have changed after 15 years, you know everything from money to cell phones that we didn't have, I mean we didn't even have text messaging, you know, like you're trying to like send a message over the beeper!! I had a pager, you know (Laughs)…I don't see it as being frail. To me, I think, I think we're warriors coming out (Brandi).

Deedra, Kelly, Brooklyn, Madelena, Wanda, and Brandi are describing how in the face of overwhelmingly bleak prospects for reentry, many formerly incarcerated people have a fighting

streak, that helps them to persist. They acknowledge the harms and traumas of the social conditions that impacted them, but they prefer to describe themselves, as warriors. They argue, that it is not only formerly incarcerated activists who have earned the 'warrior' label, but anyone who has been pummeled by the carceral state who continues to fight against the social barriers of a criminal label, who also deserve recognition. Soldiers are created in the daily negotiation of carceral citizenship, being faced with, and surviving, seemingly endless challenges.

Frailty describes some, not others

There were certain participants who did not see all returning people as warriors, rather, they reserved that label for only a select few who could handle the trials. They reported how some directly impacted people stay unrelentingly apathetic to fight, or who simply give up when the struggle gets too hard. Participants reported that they "can see" how ongoing oppression and unfair systems generate human frailty. Interestingly, however, these participants, when asked if they would describe themselves that way, resolutely declared that they would not. Aven says,

> Some people they may be [frail]. The world matures, technology continues to improve, people that were friends, they mature, they grow. In prison you sit there and you think about society, you're stripped away from society, now where everything else is growing, you're at a standstill. You go into prison the same way you go out, unless you willingly take that step to keep up. You stay up on the technology, you improve yourself, but it takes self-growth to do it, otherwise you just waste time, watch the days go by. I don't think I'm frail because my transition is amazing because I actually understood this early. I understood a way to counter it. That is building yourself mentally, staying up on things. Now I get on a phone, it's not hard for me to find things. Look at Malcom X, he didn't come out frail. Prison can be a fool's playground, or a smart man's scholar (Aven).

Aven remarks that he took steps to empower himself that others did not, particularly by keeping up with technology and reading to "build himself up mentally."

Shana, a black non-binary identifying person's response echoes Aven's, "Some of us come out stronger. You know what I'm saying? I don't like that word. It created – Like it created

some warriors." Garret also said he would describe others that way [as frail], but not himself. Our conversation illustrates this,

> P: I would certainly describe [some people] as being beaten down, especially when it comes to like being labeled as a sex offender. You know, I think there's a lot of shame when people are trying to reintegrate, and I think that that shame is very toxic in a lot of different ways and I think that's sort of heightened when you have a sex offense, and that has global impacts on people's ability to just, you know, to reintegrate.
> I: Well, would you describe yourself as frail?
> P: I—that's a good question, I think I used to be. I think before I started doing this work and before I started being public and talking about my story, I think I was. I was really afraid and I lived a pretty small life. Then, when I started doing this work, that began to change and I don't think I would describe myself that way anymore. I mean I know that I have, you know, I committed a crime and I have a criminal record that's very accessible from Google, so all those are just like facts of my life but I don't let them define me anymore. Like I don't let them tell my story….I think that for people who are just coming out or really just kind of getting accustomed to it, you know, maybe that's the right way to describe them. But I think that once you become involved and you take ownership of your story, I think that becomes less true. Ronald Simpson-Bey, with JustLeadership, said that "I refuse to be a victim of a prearranged destiny," To me, like that's kind of my attitude, and I don't think that's the attitude of a lot of people who have been held accountable for some kind of a crime and then they use that as a way of, you know, as a way of bettering themselves and their communities and, and not as necessarily a liability. And when people do that, I don't really think I'd consider them to be frail –or defined by fragility. I think I consider them to be quite, quite strong, actually You know, to rise above that (Garrett).

Garret suggests that being "beaten down" is the condition of most people reentering. However, his activism helped him to become something stronger. He confirms that people with sex offenses are particularly vulnerable to harm, but they can overcome limitations when they "use [their experience] as a way of bettering themselves and their communities." In these ways, he suggests that some people can let [labels] define them and leave them in a frail state, while others, who get "involved," become "quite strong."

Lance also agrees that some people can fall victim to human frailty, but he attributes his ability to overcome to his lessons in activism.

> If I hadn't undergone all the coaching and mentorship and everything else, and leadership training and everything else that I've undergone over the last 20 years, I could certainly

> walk through my day feeling really frail and really just like there is nothing for me…I couldn't even get a job at a gas station, now…I'm an empowered activist (Lance).

Garrett and Lance attribute the strength they have acquired, to their work as activists. Price likewise acknowledges how some people walk in a state of human frailty, or they allow those conditions to dictate what is possible for them. Price, like Garret and Lance, would not describe himself in that way, as frail. Being a black man who was raised in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty riddled with pressures into criminality, he credits his political education and his mentors for helping him to overcome his past.

> About being frail? Okay, it might have some legitimacy depending on who the individuals are. I don't know if that's a position that you can say with regard to everyone. We're not monolithic, it's not how you can define everyone as a totality. I can understand that sense of frailty though, because there's a system that's set up that hinders you from being successful. So – Yes. So why would you -*not* be frail because you know, when we're talking about someone who goes to prison there's a lack of opportunity and you come out and then you got all of these barriers. But then you have that group that says, "I'm not going to allow these forces to hinder me from being successful." See, I've been fortunate. Even if I didn't have the jobs that I had, because of my critical education early when I went to prison- I think that helped me because it really instilled in me that belief of my ability to do whatever I wanted to do. I had mentors, okay. I had two, actually. When I think about those two mentors one that gave me the Malcolm X book and then the guy, the white guy that got me on the academic career. Those were two I think critical points in my development that I think that made me very comfortable with who I am and strengthened me (Price).

Price suggests that those who do not receive "critical education" may remain weakened. Garret, Lance, and Price all agree that some directly impacted people are subject to a human frailty that can overpower one's life. Their stories, however, give credit to political education and training that helped them surmount the perils of human frailty.

Gendered constructions of self and others' frailty

Women seemed to disagree with the frailty term on first mention, more so than men. Women consistently denied that "frail" was an accurate descriptor for them, or anyone who has had to surmount the hurdles of reentry. They commonly responded as if they were offended by

the term. Women also used the words “we” and “us” in their discussion of the limitations of the human frailty concept. They said things like “fragility does not define us,” “we are not frail,” or “we are survivors, we’re not frail.” Their use of the term ‘we’ in this context seemed to indicate that they believed that their own experience of being ‘not frail’ was also descriptive of other carceralized women, and other gender identities, as well.

Some men, on the other hand, would say things like, “I can see that.” They agreed that the harms of racial and carceral inequality could make ‘people’ vulnerable and even ‘frail.’ They often reported that they thought the word was a useful descriptor for “some people.” However, when I prodded further, asking, “Would you describe yourself as frail?” They often retorted, “No” or even, “Who me? Hell no, I’m not frail!” This indicated a perception of difference whereby they envisioned that some men succumb to the pressures of disadvantage, and other men do not. Women, on the other hand, tended to identify with each other. Additionally, men, even if they agreed that some men could be “vulnerable” or “hurt,” were not a fan of the ‘frail’ language, saying, “I don’t know if I would use the term frail” or “I’m not sure if frail is the right word.” But they indeed acknowledged weaknesses of “some men,” but not necessarily themselves.

Overall, gender differences in reaction to the “human frailty” concept were categorized by either a separation of oneself from others, which men and non-binary participants tended to do, or highlighting connections between oneself and others, which women tended to do. Women activists were quick to discredit the “frail” word as descriptive of themselves, or any other formerly incarcerated woman, man, or transgender person; and men sometimes accepted the frail concept, but in ways that often cast “others” in that manner, but fervently not themselves. These dissimilarities may be related to gendered experiences of social supports post-incarceration, men

having more negative support and women more positive (Pettus-Davis, Veeh, Davis, and Tripodi 2018). It could also be that social psychological forces result in women liking other women more than men come to like other men (Rudman and Goodwin 2004), which might explain women's tendency to identify as a group. Perhaps formerly incarcerated women activists have come to highly identify with feminist thought which make them more likely to think of themselves in terms of a group (van Breen, Spears, Kuppens, de Lemus 2017), or androcentrism can explain the likeliness of men to divide themselves into "frail" and "not frail" groups. Since men and masculinity are normative to the criminalized category (Belknap 2014), they are the only available standard against which they can base their comparisons against -- one another. Their within-group comparison, can tend to invisibilize women and trans people. The social valuing of masculinity could lead women to view all formerly incarcerated people, particularly other women, in positive lights, like "warriors," or "survivors" rather than as "weak" or "frail." To know this, a more thorough analysis is needed to understand gendered, and racialized, constructions of the self and others' power, agency, or frailty as well as what implications those labels have on life chances post-incarceration.

Although the participants of this project largely reject being defined by human frailty, their own experiences align with many of Bruce Western's assertions. My own participants certainly corroborate Western's findings regarding how formerly incarcerated people's lives have been marked by constellations of social ills, state violence, racism, gendered struggles, and marginalizations which have intertwined and compounded to generate perilous circumstances. However, the 'frail' term, from my participants' perspectives, implies a weakness, brokenness, and helplessness. Such narratives, they argue, are imprecise and incomplete. In the face of such incredible harms, reentering people can actually exhibit an incredible degree of agency and

perseverance as they strive to transform those oppressive institutions that unleash abuse. Western himself argues that efforts to right those wrongs will be necessary for restoring individual well-being (2018). I argue that formerly incarcerated people are not waiting to be *saved* or *fixed*, but rather, by their own power, they persevere in their unique struggles for institutional reforms and justice. The 'frail' formerly incarcerated story does not define them, and says little about their incredible determination against unimaginable odds that they have repeatedly exhibited.

In summary, my interviews illustrate how formerly incarcerated activists can become well stocked in social capital and occupational skills, as well as immersed in activities that facilitate personal and political change. Their involvement with social movements has resulted in media attention and feature-stories that highlight their amazing transitions from engaging in crime into meaningful political action aimed to improve social conditions, which are arguably favorable shape-shifting narratives.

RE-CASTING THE SELF AND STAYING DANGEROUS

Activism no-doubt positively impacts formerly incarcerated people's identities, aids their personal growth, and improves their life-chances as I have illustrated thus far. However, activism can also be a source of stigma, particularly at times for black and brown men and non-binary identified people. Despite those troubles, activists mainly cast themselves as people living with purpose, who contribute to the health of society, and are engaged in the work of "heroes."

Participants articulated how their activism is a pro-social activity, that they have replaced with their "anti-social" one(s). They articulated that they are now "do(ing) good," much like Shadd Maruna's (2001) participants described. However, my participants did not use the language of "redemption" as Maruna's did to describe "helping" work. Regardless, the translation of my participant's new behaviors produce a powerful re-storying of themselves that

aids them in their desistance journeys. Greg explains, “Activism engages us with community focused action to improve society and people who engage in pro-social activities, have better outcomes.” Deedra adds, “That person is making a change and doing something positive for the community, they are trying to make a change in society, instead of going out there trying to commit crimes. Society looked at me as a problem, now I’m improving it.” Lance says, “it [activism] is like my anti-crime, it’s like my new like passion.” Greg, Deedra, and Lance describe the positive impact of activism that constitutes a replacement for activity that had negative impacts on society, their community, and themselves.

Activism also simply feels good and provides personal purpose and healing. Aven says,

> If I just help you, I’ll wait for the next person to help. But when I’m targeting the masses, then I’m helping make a better society, it’s a good feeling. I would not be satisfied working one on one, because it’s not enough, you have neighborhoods over the millions suffering because of what they don’t know [the law], you want to help as many as possible… When you’re doing something you believe in, it makes you feel good (Aven).

Activism creates supportive and healthy communities that are correlated with healthy outcomes for people. Gwen articulates,

> There are so few opportunities for directly impacted people to engage in work that’s really meaningful and that contributes to social change. So the creation of positive communities where we are doing work, is done in a way that is really positive for establishing relationships, which is really the predictor for a person staying out. There is a really high recidivism rate in this country, so it’s not just a job that keeps people out, it’s not just housing that keeps people out, it’s something more. And our answer to something more is that people need community. So, we help folks with the opportunity to create that community of support to make sure that they don’t go back into the system (Gwen).

Greg explains, **“**You can improve the entire social environment to be conducive to not returning to prison…you get to be a part of eliminating these damaging obstacles that are inherent all around us, so by eliminating those obstacles, you become a part of your own success and the success of others.” Both Gwen and Greg articulate the relationship between community making, their own success, and increasing the chances for others.

Activism was also understood for its societal reintegrative effects. One reason for engaging in crime was being socially isolated says Lance. He explains,

> Putting people away reinforces the broken-down connection with people. They need to engage with their peers. Yes, they may have been creating harm and there's a big move to expose sex offenders, but I can put up flyers and try to connect with people….I feel empowered when I do that. I am trying to progress… showing people that I've changed. I mean a great way to change things is to show people I can change, if I keep going out there. I'm not perpetuating the idea of the Other, you know. I keep doing poetry and I keep putting myself out there and these stigmas may go away (Lance).

From Lance's perspective, "showing people" that he has changed by "doing poetry," "putting up flyers," and "trying to connect with people, helps him build his new identity.

Participants argued that criminality, in some ways, can *be* activism. Scarlett, a sex-worker rights advocate argues, **"**Sex-work is a form of activism, it is non-violent civil disobedience." Scarlett argues "Jefferson said, it is our duty to break laws that are immoral. It is our duty to break laws that infringe on our rights." But few participants, like Scarlett, believed that their criminal pasts were carried out in the interests of justice. Most acknowledged that their past behavior was harmful in one way or another, even though they, to varying degrees indict social ills as drivers of their past offending. Participants believe that their activism is a way of highlighting those connections between social ills and individual acts of harm.

Another way that activists write new identity scripts are by aligning themselves with the work of great historical fighters for change and justice, who also happened to be criminalized. Although activism can be considered "criminal," participants acknowledged that there are significant differences between the harmful crimes of their past, and political behavior that gets treated as misconduct. Sloan asks, "Would you rather me follow in the footsteps of the drug dealer down the street, or Martin Luther King?"

Renewed as "rebels," they re-frame their "criminal" identity as stylistically nonconforming, in a positive way. Specifically, rebelliousness and nonconforming behavior are deeply tied to the legacies and narratives of heroes. In their spirit, activists claim those characteristics, and garner respect for themselves and from their communities. Sloan describes,

> In many ways everyone we look up to in history was that rebellious person, whether it's MLK, or Ghandi or the founding goddamn fathers of this country, breaking a bunch of laws…Jesus! Is there one person we can think of that we aspire to be like because they didn't do shit? Is there one person? (laughs) We are taking our passion, our conflict, our resentment and turning this into being rebellious in a righteous way. We are re-defining ourselves, to be rebels with a cause (Sloan).

There is a conceptual alignment that activists make between themselves and heroes who "rebel." He continues,

> I'm respected, people are proud to be my friend. I can't say that was the same when I was—you know back in the day. I'm viewed with legitimacy, people look at me as someone that influences at least a small segment of my community's thinking. Not in a total way, but people who are busy with life and don't have the time to do this work, look to me to know what's the right side of an issue (Sloan).

He describes how being rebellious in this new way affords him respect and legitimacy in his community.

Jessie echoes this "rebel with a cause" sentiment. He says, "The same commitment I had toward the gang and getting in trouble, is the same commitment I have to activism right now. So, I'm perceived as being radical and unrelenting." Jessie claims his newfound radicalness with pride. Additionally, Lance likes to remind his formerly incarcerated friends engaged in social justice work to "stay dangerous." Formerly incarcerated people in a struggle for dignity, cast their own narratives and connect themselves to deeper legacies of social change in a light that helps them achieve their own definitions of greatness.

CONCLUSION CHAPTER 6

In this chapter, I demonstrated how participants activism helped them to manage stigma and build capital. These endeavors varied in their utility across race and gender, but formerly incarcerated activists generally report that their change-work has been useful for their well-being and life chances. Activists disassociate themselves from narratives of fragility, casting themselves as resilient warriors. Participant's also acknowledge the historical, social, and personal trauma that has been violently imposed on their life, yet in the face of incredible barriers, they thrive.

CHAPTER 7
CHANGING THE SOCIAL AND CHANGING THE SELF: HARMONIOUS PARADOXES IN TRANSFORMATIVE INTERVENTION

I have argued thus far that the criminalized class of carceral citizens is an oppressed group who becomes legible, through meaningful social-change work, in their claims to recognition as a collective with a *right to have rights*. I have illustrated also that there is significant personal value to engaging in activism, as formerly incarcerated people are able to recast themselves by managing stigma and acquiring capital that improves their life chances. Arguably, to achieve healing and justice, change is required in both the realms of the social and the self.

In this chapter, I draw on participant's self- and social-change work experiences to explore how individualized self-change or personal-reform work, which is focused on carceral citizens changing themselves or helping others to change via their peer-mentoring work, is both differentiated from and intertwined with their social-change work, which takes the form of activism. I find that formerly incarcerated activists do not participate in individual level change-work from a conventional interventionist logic, rather they engage with a transformative logic whereby both their distinct and differentiated social, peer, and personal change-work are woven together in their broader pursuits of justice and self-determination for criminalized people.

I first review the literature and compare conformist, individual approaches to self-change with transformative approaches that integrate self- and social change. I then briefly report the themes of racialized, gendered, sexed, and classed social problems that contributed to participants' offenses and explore how participants understand their roles as peer mentors in the

context of such injustices. Participants assert that both self-based personal reform (representing an internal locus of change) and social activism (representing an external locus of change) are necessary to achieve goals of personal success and social justice and that they personally would not be satisfied with engaging in only one or the other. Participants eloquently describe how personal-reform work and social-change work intertwine in harmonious paradoxes, whereby micro-level change (via peer mentoring and self-care) occurs alongside, above, below, within, through, in contradiction, and in harmony with, but always imperatively tied to macro-level social-change work. Activist work and spaces are shaped by raced and gendered realities that crosscut their collective mobilization as carceral citizens. I address these contentions in the last segment. Formerly incarcerated activists understand all of the forms of change work to be uniquely enacted but inextricably connected.

SELF AND SOCIAL CHANGE

A formerly incarcerated individual's desistance, healing, and thriving post-incarceration involves more than just personal or individual change (Currie 2012; 2013). Desistance, in fact, should be considered a social movement (Maruna 2017). This is because we are becoming increasingly aware of broader social problems that contribute to crime and recidivism. The material barriers to employment (Pager 2003; 2008; Uggen et al. 2014), housing (Fontaine, Roman, and Burt 2010), and education (Runell 2017) are some of the social structurally rooted forces that shape incarceration patterns (Shannon and Uggen 2012). These obstacles place communities at deep risk for instability and crime, particularly as they are experienced in conjunction with diminished citizenship rights (Clear 2007; Manza and Uggen 2006). In such a context, the denial of full citizenship rights contributes to cycles of ongoing subjugation and

failed reintegration. Therefore, the creation of opportunities for criminalized people to thrive will require some degree of social-level change (Currie 2012; 2013).

Sociological insights "from Goffman, Mead, Garfinkel to Simmel, and countless others, remind us of the mutual integration of self and social structure" (Adams 2007:12). Yet the carceral practitioner, policy, and even scholarly approaches to crime reduction have focused much more on addressing personal problems than taking serious issue with the widespread poverty, hunger, homelessness, racism, sexism, and repression that embodies and drives harm, including crime (Henry and Milovanovic 1991; Quinney 1991). Social theory suggests that emancipatory politics have historically and meaningfully helped human beings secure increasing social control over their own life circumstances (Giddens 1991). Thus, it seems logical to examine how structural-change work, or activism, carried out by subjugated carceral citizens will impact both the social realm and the self.

Transformative Intervention: Carceral Citizen Consciousness, Solidarity, and Hope Building

Elliot Currie, in his keynote address at the 2012 Critical Criminology and Justice Studies Conference, asserts three mechanisms that he believes have profound effects on successful re-entry in a model of "transformative intervention": 1) An increase in consciousness of how systemic deprivations lead to the criminal experience; 2) A sense of solidarity with the community rather than with an individual; and 3) Hopeful action to change social conditions perceived as destructive. Transformative interventions seek to shift the reforming offender's gaze from internal to external conditions, to make meaningful connections with others who have shared experiences, and to then take meaningful action to change social conditions. He argues that the fostering of those behaviors provides better chances for long-term desistance via a transformative model of justice involving simultaneous self- and socially focused change.

However, in many ways, Currie's model runs counter to conventional re-entry programs, which send messages to criminalized people to look inward, to fix oneself, and to adapt to harmful social realities (Carlen 2013; Currie 2012; 2013; Fox 1999; Maruna 2004).

Conformist Intervention: Rendering Unconsciousness, Inward focus, and Lowered Aspirations

The rhetoric of traditional, or conformist, re-entry programming delivered by treatment providers and criminal justice practitioners (and is the dominant model in much criminological research), demands that criminalized people take responsibility for their faulty behavior regardless of social circumstances. They ought to remain willfully blind toward life-shaping social forces, and they ought to focus their gaze inward and downward - to be obedient and find acceptance amidst shattered opportunities (Currie 2012:19). The rhetoric of such conventional programming logics claims that criminalized people who accept personal responsibility for their behavior will enjoy positive outcomes (Carlen 2013; Currie 2013; Maruna 2004; Hackett 2013). By extension, those facing incredible structural barriers in life must be molded and twisted to fit into an unjust system in order to be considered a *success* (McNeill 2014). In other words, an offender's rights to social restoration are contingent upon their ability to contort themselves into and overcome the odds in an unreasonably oppressive system (Maruna 2017).

Take, for example, correctional institutions' use of risk assessment tools that characterize critiques of the law or criminal justice as *criminal* or *risky* (Hannah-Moffat 2018). Such actuarial methods of governance are in wide use today (Robina Institute 2016), with many containing c*riminal orientation* and *criminal thinking* sub-scales (Eaglin 2017). Such measurements markedly conflate the risks of a subject reoffending with their external locus of blame. The Criminal Sentiments Scale-modified (CSS-m), for example, specifically equates a subject's criticisms of the "law," "police," and "courts" as "risks for recidivism." Subjects must agree that

"laws deserve our respect," that "courts are fair," and that "police are honest" to be considered non-criminally orientated (Shields and Dimourd 1991).

Also, the Psychological Inventory of Criminal Thinking Styles (PICTS) requires subjects to "resist blaming past and present criminal conduct on external factors like family, poverty, or the government." They must stop "externalizing blame" and start taking "responsibility for their actions," and refrain from "superoptimism" (Walters 2016) in order to demonstrate change from a criminal thinking style. Instruments such as these represent the conformist intervention logic involved in carceral governance. They require people who have been directly impacted by social harms to self-pathologize and deny the influence of social harms in their lives. These logics underpin the surveillance, punishment, and coercive therapeutic practices of carceral regimes

Prison-based and transitional treatment models also tend to reify logics of individual pathology that justify punitive responses and call for individual submission by focusing on cognitive restructuring, thinking modification, and decision-making alterations (Andrews and Bonta 2010; Fox 1999; LeBel, Burnett, Maruna, and Bushway 2008; Maruna 2004; Maruna and LeBel 2002;). From such rehabilitative technologies and control projects, psychological oppression is extended (Foucault 1991; Foucault 1995[1977]; Hannah-Moffat 2001; McCorkel 2013; Perry and Hackett 2016; Rose 1999; Schept 2015; Whetstone and Gowan 2017). This pathologizing approach encapsulates each individual's potential in "regimes of truth" (Foucault 1980) and frames any individual accounts of offending that reflect on social context or conditions as merely "cognitive distortions" (Fox 1999; Maruna 2004). Disregarding the insights of criminological research that convey a wide range of social problems driving offending, correctional institutions and re-entry practitioners cling to individualized pathological *evidence-based* programming mainly involving offender-focused treatment (Bazemore and Boba 2007)

that have failed to contextualize offending and have been largely ineffective in changing behavior or criminalized people's circumstances (Currie 2012; 2013; Maruna 2004; 2015; 2017; Fox 1999; 2010; 2015; 2016).

To address the growing understanding of structure's role in driving offending, modern re-entry programming has begun to frame barriers to social resources as actuarial measures of *needs*. Unfortunately, such acknowledgements have failed to initiate system-level change. Instead, barriers to life chances, communicated as *needs*, become translated into criminogenic, individual-level *risk* (Hannah-Moffat 2015; 2018; Maurutto and Hannah Moffat 2006; Ward and Maruna 2007). Via this *risk* logic, problems rooted in the social structural (i.e. housing, education, employment, health, and social support vulnerabilities) become understood as problems compounded in carceral subjects that also demand carceral management. Such practices push *responsibilization* logics of corrective programming and redirect attention away from socio-cultural complexities that drive crime and re-embody risk into the deficits of carceral subjects (Arrigo 2004; Hannah-Moffat 2001; Maruna 2004). Thus, social controls are deployed to manage these *risks* rooted in social deprivation via new forms of surveillance and governance assembled to extend carceral control and subjugation (Arrigo 2013; Hannah-Moffat 2018; Maurutto and Hannah-Moffat 2006).

Conformist versus Transformative Intervention Logics

Conformist and transformational interventions are, as described, significantly different from one another in particular ways. I have used Elliott Currie's words and the literature reviewed to generate a brief comparison of the two models of intervention. In Currie's three dimensions of change, conformist logics ask subjects to remain unconscious to social conditions, to look inward, be submissive, and to lower their expectations for life. While transformative

intervention logics asks participants to see and understand harmful social conditions in solidarity with others similarly impacted, to resist them with aspirations of collective liberation (Table 5).

Table 5. Comparison Conformist and Transformative Intervention

Dimension	***Conformist Logic***	***Transformative Logic***
Consciousness	Unconsciousness	Consciousness
Solidarity	Individual work – inward, submission	Collective work – inward and outward, resistance
Hope	Low expectations	Collective aspiration

These are two different paths to criminalized people's achievement of well-being. To simplify these two comparable interventions, Figures 21 and 22 illustrate the envisioned relationship between social conditions and self within each intervention model.

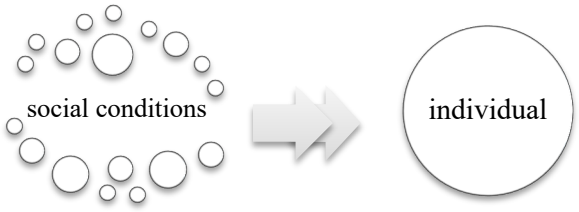


Figure 21. Conformist Intervention: Self and Social Relationship

Conformist intervention occurs in a manner that requires an individual to change regardless of social conditions. As described, individuals are often the subject of social forces and are required to contort and adjust to them, rather than work to change them.

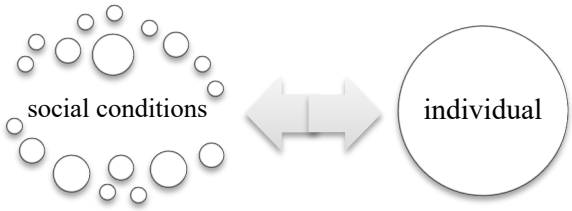


Figure 22. Transformative Intervention: Self and Social Relationship

Transformative intervention is accomplished in a manner that engages individual in social change and/or helps individuals change for the broader goals of social transformation. The individual can be changed through concerted efforts to modify or revolutionize social conditions. The crux of this project has been to illustrate that social change work can be an integral part of personal and individual level change that is often ignored in conventional programming. The participants in this chapter, as I will illustrate, engage in peer and individual work with different logics than conventional programming. They, as I argue, engage in personal level change with broader visions of justice. Thus, their social change work, and their peer-work is conducted with a transformative interventionist logic.

Agency, Community Engagement, and Desistance Trajectories: Literature and Empirical Puzzles

Contemporary desistance scholars examine how carceral subjects' agentic moves make them active participants in their own life restructuring. Understanding that social conditions offer little more than a bleak future for returning people, conceptualizing the role of individual agency has allowed criminalized agents to arise as creators, at least partially, of their own destiny (Farrall and Bowling 1999; Giordano et al. 2002; King 2013; Laub and Sampson 2001; Maruna 2001; 2011). But power structures always condition the possibilities for criminalized people, and agency has rarely been conceptualized in criminology as an engagement in emancipatory politics (Arrigo 2004; Brown 2014; Currie 2012; 2013). Little attention has been given to how carceral citizens' activism is expressly connected with desistance (Flores 2018; LeBel 2013). Political inclusion, defined in numerous ways, however, has been shown to relate to carceral citizens' reentry success (Bazemore and Stinchcomb 2004; Fox 2010; 2015; 2016; Maruna 2011; Rossner and Bruce 2016; Uggen, Manza, Behrens 2004; Uggen and Manza 2004). But we have not disentangled whether any form of civic engagement will generate that effect, or if specific forms

of change-work shape reentry trajectories and experiences in particular ways. How desistance is constructed can best be understood via the foundational sociological traditions of self and social change (Adams 2007). That is, in a way that indicts both the self, and the social, when examining the cessation of offending. How a criminalized *self* achieves success, can only be understood with an understanding of the social context within which its achievement is shaped.

As I explained in chapter 2, scholars have not considered how the self or social change logic behind the various ways that formerly incarcerated individuals' can politically or socially engage in civic life relates to their well-being and life chances. Civic engagement has scantly been specified or defined by desistance scholars, however notions of it have been invoked. For example, Shadd Maruna (2001) argues that ex-offenders forge prosocial identities and re-biography their lives in positive ways vis-à-vis mechanisms like finding a new calling or purpose, which can include civic engagement activities. Similarly, Kathryn Fox (2010; 2015; 2016) examined Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA), a restorative reentry approach that relies on offender community involvement. Christopher Uggen, Jeff Manza and Angela Behrens' (2004) research also provide strong support for speculations that civic roles may support long-term desistance. Bazemore and Stinchcomb (2004) assert that identity changes coming from restorative community service work, transforms identity and repairs harm. These social integrative, identity transformation model-based studies make strong cases for civic participation as a positive force in reentering people's lives. They do, however, only loosely define community engagement, civic roles, or participation. From these perspectives, peer-work as well as activism, or picking up trash along a highway, or running for mayor could all be considered one in the same. These models are also heavily focused on social supports and less on the externalization of blame incumbent in social reform work and activism. Although their research

makes the crucial connection between carceral citizen's well-being and their civic integration, there is more to know about what that work entails and how various forms of change -work impact people's lives post-incarceration. It is likewise important to consider how their work impacts broader social conditions and what type of work is most viable for disrupting the harm continuum that many have found themselves entangled.

Voting has been a way to more precisely define a type of civic engagement and it has been shown to relate to reductions in offending (Uggen and Manza 2004). Studies that conceptualize political participation primarily as voting behavior narrows our understanding of what participation means (Owens and Walker 2018; Uggen, Manza, and Behrens 2004; Uggen and Manza 2003). Although this evidence of a relationship between vote casting and desistance is telling, other forms of political participation's effect on reentry are somewhat of a mystery. In an effort to disentangle that Owens and Walker (2018) explain that passive forms of participation, like voting, remains low for carceral citizens, particularly in communities of color who have historically remained disenfranchised (Shannon and Uggen 2012; Uggen, Larson, Shannon 2016). They find that political behavior is more likely where civil society organizations are present in criminalized communities. Their research advances our understanding of carceral citizens' political participation, as they observed carceral citizens' work being "less about individuals and more about their communities in the name of universal improvement and community development" (Owens and Walker 2018:1005). They make a formidable case for reframing the narrative of the political collective capacity of formerly incarcerated people, as their quantitative findings illustrate that communities with high carceral activity also have high rates of citizen involvement in politics beyond voting. Their focus, however, is on democratic functioning and the presence of civil society organizations in communities, not the experiences

of those involved or what the work means in their lives. They call for deeper qualitative explorations of the effects of such political involvement on individual pathways by way of their carceral system contact, which is what my current project aims to do.

I found that when formerly incarcerated people engage in activism, they view themselves as agentic creators of their life chances through a politics of recognition (the identity field described in chapter 2) and liberation (the social justice field described in chapter 2) whereby they thrive and become imbued with hope, from which extends meaningful social and political reform and community justice projects. Their activism is valuable for themselves, and their work aligns with the growing conventional trope that "those closest to the problem, are closest to the solution" (Just Leadership n.d.). Indeed, those with intimate experience of the crushing harms of historical and carceral traumas are boasted to be best suited to drive change (Arrigo 2004; Brown 2014; Just Leadership n.d.). This engagement inspires hope that reaches beyond the physical and psychological condition. "Hope entails political, didactic, and performative ways to envision freedom" (Gamez 2015).

So, if the best social change projects are led by the directly impacted, and the directly impacted personally benefit from such engagement, indeed, we have evidence of an intervention that generates personal and social safety and justice. If stories are indeed evidence (Maruna 2015), then the participants' experiences ought to serve as such. Sociological understandings of the relationship between the social and the self, combined with evidence of the utility of activism for the most marginalized, should inform future intervention logics that aim to improve the circumstances and lives of formerly incarcerated people. Their activist work reconciles the reigning disjuncture between treating the deviant and treating the social context that casts them as such. Sociological theorizing posits that "flows of influence emanate outward from

individualized choice upon institutions to reconfigure them…but profound social changes also have to be understood as occurring dialectically in relation to power and self-identity" (Adams 2007:48). In that regard, social theory provides the theoretical foundation upon which activism as a transformative intervention is justified.

To explore the relationship between individual change-work and social change-work in the lives and contextual circumstances of re-entering people, I sought out people who engage in both. This investigation is interesting in that way, because I have the ability to question directly impacted people who emulate the transformative intervention model: they have received critical education, they articulate a categorical solidarity with other impacted people, and they are taking meaningful action toward creating liberatory social conditions. But they have also had to contend with their own personal traumas and hurts to forge pathways of success for themselves, and they have also helped others to do the same under the conditions of oppression and subjugation. The participants' valuable experience of engaging in self-change, peer mentoring, and social change allows us to explore understandings of individual change as accomplishable under the conditions of oppression and explore how the insurgent politics aimed at changing those conditions can be useful for themselves and others. The participants are painfully aware of and active in confronting social ills, but they must also negotiate the same structural limitations and help others to, as well. I first report the social causes of participants' crimes, followed by their understandings of the limitations and possibilities of self-change under such bleak conditions. Then, the participants explain the ways in which engagement with meaningful social change facilitates their hope and determination. They report that self-change and social change are inextricably, harmoniously, and paradoxically linked.

SOCIAL FACTORS THAT SHAPE CARCERAL SYSTEM INVOLVEMENT

Participants believed that social problems were, at least in part, drivers of their offending behavior. Every participant answered "yes" to the question, "Do you believe that there are issues within society that contributed to your crimes?" With this foundation, I asked them to elaborate on their understanding of self-change in the context of social injustices. Figure 10 depicts the themes that emerged from their explanations of those social contributors.

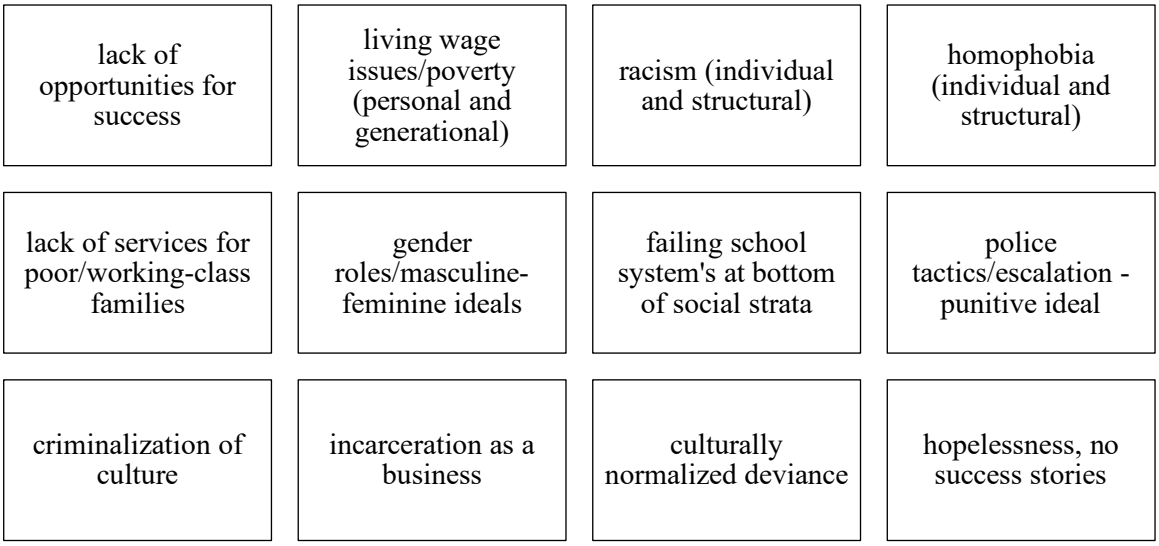


Figure 23. Social Contributors to Participants' Offending

Many of the participant narratives echoed contemporary research findings that race, gender, and class positionalities make collisions with the criminal justice system more likely. Some of the participants meaningfully connected their experiences of poverty to their offending, which is in line with prior criminological research (Travis, Western, and Redburn 2014). Participants of color often illuminated the harmful policing of their communities (Carbado 2017; Edwards, Lee, and Esposito 2019), systemic racism and failing education systems (Western 2006), and lack of opportunities as drivers of their crimes (Travis, Western, and Redburn 2014).

For example, black women participants like Deedra, Shana, and Barbi all pointed to the lack of resources epitomizing Beth Richie's (2018) explorations of black women's experiences with resources in violent and racist contexts. Women of color are more likely than white women to be steeped in communities of violence, there are fewer resources for them, and the resources available are less useful for black and brown women's particular life circumstances, thus leaving them behind and setting them up for criminalization. White women like Lilly, Piper, and Taylor highlighted the struggles of living up to feminine ideals, like using meth for weight loss or hustling to put food on the table, which exemplify gendered strain driven offending (Piquero and Sealock 2004). Women participants also alluded to offending being enactments of power and agency under the tensions of gendered expectations and gendered inequalities (Anderson 2008). Additionally, women participants, across racial lines, related their experiences of family violence to their offending, reinforcing the well-documented pervasive relationship between women's offending and prior violent victimization (Salisbury and Voorhis 2009).

White men were not immune to the pressures of gender and class either. Criminological research and theory tell us that class status is related to crime, and this is certainly true for white men (Irwin 2005). Participants explained how being a "real man" often catalyzed their acts of violence, or how "blocked" economic "opportunities" and working-class masculine ideals drove their property or drug-related crime.

Participants also pointed to the role of mass incarceration's profit logic as a driver of the criminalization of their communities and contributor to the barriers to reintegration that impacted their personal trajectories. Marie Gottschalk (2016) and James Kilgore (2012) have both concluded that society's reliance on punishment and its privatization determines where and how financial resources are invested into carceral projects. These investments rarely result in safer

neighborhoods, but rather increased social instability and crime. Participant's agreed that the criminal justice system is a "business" that was "designed to fail people."

The "criminalization of culture," is a phenomenon thoughtfully discussed by my Latinx participants, who described the criminality interpreted from their brown skin, language, and material and symbolic Latinx culture. This phenomena has been indicated in the work of Victor Rios (2007) who traces criminal justice involvement back to the prejudicial treatment of Latinx youth in educational settings.

My participants pointed to the normalized deviance that permeated their communities and how the dark economy players were held up as role models in their neighborhoods. Incarceration becomes a normalized life experience (Clear 2007; Western 2006), thus creating further pressures for young people of color to get caught up in crime. Participants describe crime as what "everyone around them engaged in." In essence, my participants' stories unfolded along the lines of what criminology has long been informing us.

With all of these socially rooted drivers of offending and obstacles to overcoming one's troubles, what can be the true utility of individual-focused efforts to enact change? Micro-level efforts to address personal problems one at a time are hardly going to make a dent in the broader structural problems faced by criminalized people. So, although contemporary scholarship has been exploring the valuable experience of one impacted person helping another, such as in "wounded healer" (LeBel 2007; LeBel, Richie, and Maruna 2015; Maruna 2011; Mobley 2014) or other peer-support models (Clone and DeHart 2014; Fox 2010; 2015; 2016; Marlow, Grajeda, Lee, Young, Williams, and Hill 2015), these practices are unlikely to dismantle, by themselves, the structures of oppression that permeate criminalized people's lived realities. The complexities of what peer-mentoring entails are discussed in the sections below.

Although individuals do receive benefits from individualized work, self-help narratives perpetuate the idea that criminalized people are broken-but-repairable given the right peer relationship while leaving repressive social structures intact and unchecked. Projects that incorporate legislative advocacy, community safety, and efforts at contextual and social change can be effective (Mobley 2011; Re-framing Justice n.d.; Leading with Conviction n.d.; Pinto, Rahman, and Williams 2014; Women on the Rise n.d.), but, by virtue of the logics of sociology, one-on-one peer mentoring cannot be the long-term game, because social sources of crime are omnipresent. Social problems, as we know, are not solved with punitive, carceral, or even mutual support approaches.

This project considers self-change and social-change as separate and distinct, but interrelated, work. The participants support a philosophy that one-on-one work is unique, and that activist work is also unique. However, in their performance, these forms of work intertwine, and both are viewed as absolutely necessary for the realization of justice.

CHANGING THE SELF AND THE SOCIAL IN HARMONIOUS PARADOXES

Scholars have indicated that community, political, or civic re-integration (Bazemore and Stinchcomb 2004; Uggen and Manza 2003, Uggen, Manza, and Behrens 2004;) "making good," (Bazemore and Boba 2007; Maruna 2001), volunteering (Maruna and LeBel 2002), being other-centered or altruist (Maruna, LeBel, Mitchell, and Napes 2005) are related to successful re-entry, although few scholars have specified the differences between those types of work (Bazemore and Stinchcomb 2004; Clone and DeHart 2014; Fox 2010; 2015; 2016; LeBel, Richie, and Maruna 2015; LeBel 2007; Marlow et al. 2015; Maruna 2004; Mobley 2014). We cannot assume that all practices of "giving back" or community activism are the same. In chapter 2, I differentiated forms of activist work in which formerly incarcerated people engage according to their locus of

change (whether change must occur within a person or outside) and the targets of change (within the community or toward the state).

Activists in my sample confirmed the sensibility of the typology, noting clear differences between the type of work directed at external factors and work directed at individuals. What was not expected was the depth of the self-change work *integration* (both for themselves and their peer mentees) with the social-change work experienced by the participants. I call these themes "harmonious paradoxes" because of the inherent contradictions in their loci of change. One could question, after all, "Why change oneself when the world is so unfair? Isn't it the world that needs changing?" The difficulty is in reconciling that both need attention.

In the following analysis, I present the findings that surround the seeming contradictions between formerly incarcerated work directed at self- and social change. All the participants confirmed, by way of the screening questions, that they had engaged in both activism and peer mentoring. Incidentally, I met many peer mentors who never engaged in activism while in the field, but I met no activists who hadn't mentored or personally supported other formerly incarcerated people.

Personal Change: Self-Change and Peer Mentoring

I entered the field expecting that I had a solid definition of peer mentoring: a relationship between individuals that was primarily focused on "fixing" pathologized individual traits. I found, however, that there were different forms of peer-mentoring that my participants engaged in via a range of formal and informal pathways. Some mentors engaged outside of any formal organization by way of referrals from friends or acquaintances from their activist work. Formal mentoring relationships were created via a paid or unpaid position that had particular requirements, limitations, or expectations in the mentoring work. Many of the formerly

incarcerated people I spoke with had landed paid, professional positions working with other formerly incarcerated people, so they spoke from both types of experience. Mentoring activities might have been carried out by the same person at different times and across different contexts, or participants might have been limited to one kind of peer mentoring. Formerly incarcerated people's one-on-one work comprised one or a combination of these four types of activities: helping someone get to where they are at, generating behavioral change, mapping resources, or providing and seeking legal advice.

Helping one get to where I'm at

Participants generally conceived of working one-on-one with other formerly or currently incarcerated persons or those at risk of incarceration by sharing their own experiences so that the mentored individual could gain insights about how to advance their own journey toward success. Lilly's formal work exemplified this method of mentoring, "I pull people in to talk to people about my experience and give advice for how they may be able to accomplish their own goals." Deedra's informal work also included this form of helping, "Being able to be that example, that 'if I can do it, anyone can do it.' I'm not special. To be that example is important for the other person and for us to realize our own journey and growth." This type of peer-mentoring could involve helping others to personally change, or to help peers navigate resources in similar fashions that the mentor did, or just to be a presence of success that peers could be inspired by.

Behavior-change

Participants were, at times, focused on helping modify the behavior of others; this was accomplished by taking an approach emphasizing an internal logic of change. In this approach, external conditions were generally framed as something to be overcome. Jack informally guided people through drug use recovery, helping people abstain from drug use "by sponsoring through

[a] 12-step [program].” Price mentored in a formal employment capacity “doing work in high schools to encourage change in their [students’] behavior.” Twelve-step programs and gang exit and prevention programs all have components of behavior change support within them (Currie 2012; 2013).

Resource mapping

Participants also engaged in helping others obtain needed resources. They did this informally, by making suggestions as a peer, and in formal ways, via their professional capacities, by providing directions, making phone calls, or even giving direct referrals for resources like housing, education opportunities, job openings, healthcare, childcare, transportation, licensing, or any other host of resources that others needed. Zoey engaged in resource mapping in a formal capacity, “I help them get connected to resources, especially in my work with the organization I’m with.” Brandi, on the other hand, engaged in resource mapping informally: “I can help them get in touch with people who can work with them to access things they need given their criminal record, because of [my] being around and connected to others.”

Legal guidance

Some participants used their informally or formally garnered expertise in law to help others individually in formal contexts or through informal advice and guidance. Terrell describes his formal work, “I work with people from that legal frame of mind. I was a jailhouse lawyer, now a paralegal.” Aven engages informally, helping “people out of their legal binds, help[ing] people learn the law.”

	BEHAVIOR CHANGE	RESOURCE MAPPING	LEGAL GUIDANCE	GET TO WHERE I'M AT
FORMAL	Treatment or behavior modification models in a structured setting	Helping people connect with resources in a structured setting	State or organizationally authorized legal assistance with cases	Can be a combination of behavior change, resource mapping, and/or legal guidance in a structured setting
INFORMAL	Treatment or behavior modification in non-structured setting	Helping people connect with resources in a non-structured setting	Non-state/non-organizationally authorized legal assistance with cases	Can be a combination of behavior change, resource mapping, and/or legal guidance in an unstructured setting

Figure 24. Types of Peer Support

Mapping resources and changing behaviors were different types of support, in that mapping resources often generated a sense of "working the system," while behavioral change involved changing one's personal behavior to align with the system. Some of these overlapped, but in the context of differentiating external from internal locus of change, it seemed appropriate to also think about peer mentoring itself as a multifaceted practice that can include both helping another person to change and heal internally, as well as ensuring that an individual's material needs are met. Regardless of the locus of change, peer mentoring is referred to throughout this project as individual-level change because change hinges on the actions of the individual.

Participants' personal journey and self-change work, as well as peer mentoring work, are both regarded as individual-level changemaking. Social-change work, on the other hand, refers to the work the participants are doing to transform systems of power. I expected these to be

distinct from one another going into this project; what I find is that they are inextricably interwoven, distinct yet mutually constitutive.

HARMONIOUS PARADOXES

Participants referred to powerful and inextricable relationships between internal locus of change (via self-change and/or peer-change work) and external locus of change (social-change work). That is, they acknowledged different, but interlocking, individual-rooted solutions (whether in oneself or in another) and societal-rooted solutions. Notably participants in my sample approach individual level change, and social change, from a transformative interventionist perspective, in that their work is carried out with broader visions of justice. Their individual change-work is non-conformist and connects meaningfully to Currie's dimensions of consciousness building, solidarity, and hope that thread through formerly incarcerated people's change-work. Below are the participants' descriptions of the assemblages of peer-work and activism, self-change work and activism, or the alliance of all these elements their lives. The titles of the themes were their own words. Most activists, when confronted with the question "Would you be satisfied with peer mentorship only?" said emphatically that they would not be; their reasons are outlined below in their own words. Activists were then given an opportunity to provide a sales pitch for activism. When confronted with that question, their answers spoke directly to the heart of this project's research question. They explain, quite directly, the value activism has in a formerly incarcerated person's life, drawing upon powerful and articulate metaphors to support their claims. The themes, categories, and codes are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6. Transformative Intervention Harmonious Paradox Comparison of Individual-level-change and Social change

Dimension of work		Individual-Change Transformative Interventionist work	Social-Change Transformative Interventionist work
Tactics	Style of labor	*Heart-work*	*Head-work*
	Communication	*Listening*	*Talking*
	Characteristics engaged	*Patience*	*Power*
	Combativeness-level employed	*Gloves-off*	*Gloves-on*
	Code adherence	*Personal*	*Professional*
	Education	*Unlearning*	*Learning*
Theory of change	Direction of change envisioned	*Building up*	*Trickling down*
	Priority for change	*Personal healing for activism*	*Activism for personal healing*
Experience	Waiting period	*Instant results*	*Delayed results*
	The view	*Mirror inward*	*Panoramic view outward*
	Time travel	*Past*	*Future*
	Emotions	*Subtle rush*	*Intense rush*
	Battleground	*Unique terrain (e.g. reveal cards)*	*Unique terrain (e.g. withhold cards)*
	Lighting	*Light from within*	*Light upon*
	Recovery focus	*Recovering relationships with self and others*	*Recovering relationships with the world*
	Functions of collaboration	*Co-healing*	*Co-learning*
	Getting fed	*Gumbo ingredient (1,2)*	*Gumbo ingredient (3)*

The Individual change and Activism Relationship

Participants articulated the interconnected, yet paradoxical, experiences of working one-on-one helping others and the activism they engage in. The individual-change-work and activism

relationship is harmoniously paradoxical in the way that each require different, but related, tactics (e.g. head/heart work, listening/talking, patience/power, gloves off/gloves on, personal/professional code adherence, and learning/unlearning educational approaches). Each is conducted with different theories of how change occurs (e.g. building up/trickling down and what should be prioritized in change-work). Also, individual level change and activism are experienced differentially, but interrelatedly (e.g. waiting periods vary, the views are different, the terrains, time travel, emotions, the lighting, the focus, the functions of collaboration, and how personal and social change feed us, like "stew" and like "gumbo" all differ).

The Tactics: Comparison of self and social change work

Participants' peer-mentoring tactics differed, yet complimented, their activist tactics. First, the style of labor that their activism requires can be thought of as head-work, while their peer-mentoring requires heart-work. Sloan explains,

> How do we win victories for everyone in the community, rather just one person? That one-on-one mentorship is so important, but it doesn't create systemic change. Would there be a way to do that peer-to-peer mentorship while also having a component which pushes people to work on social issues? There's not a successful model that I'm aware of, but it's a shame people have to choose between the two. The most successful campaigns focus on narratives; we need the head to follow the heart. So, the personal work is rooted in the heart, but for the policy and macro work we need the mind to make the connections to the broader issues (Sloan).

The advocacy and social reform work require a distinct opening of the mind and challenging of the intellect to understand how social institutions, structure, and policy all connect; while the peer-mentoring work calls for an opening of the heart that asks the mentor to empathize and emotionally involve themselves with the person they are trying to help. The two are not entirely distinct. Invoking a sociological imagination (Mills 2000), that is seeing the intersection of history and biography, can increase empathy, and empathetic appeals can also drive social change.

Communication tactics also vary across types of change-work. Peer-mentoring requires listening, while activism requires more talking. Zoey explains her process for taking in the messages from the directly impacted people that she works and communicating it through her legislative advocacy.

> Personal reform work is more in the receiving, and the community level work is the giving. I get clear on what individuals' needs are through working with them one-on-one. Then, I'm able to convey that to whoever I'm reporting it back to. Say I'm meeting with legislatures. I'm using that voice that people gave me in the one-on-ones to now present that to the people that are making these changes with the law and other social justice issues. One side is the listening, and another side is the talking (Zoey).

Formerly incarcerated people's communication in one-on-one work may involve much more listening and receiving of information. While the act of listening is helpful for relationship-building and social connection, it is also a manner of documenting the needs of directly impacted people for higher purposes. Thus, peer-mentoring is carried out with a commitment to taking individual concerns and talking about them in community and policy change efforts.

Formerly incarcerated people must take varying levels of combativeness into each form of work. Activism requires "putting the gloves on," and peer-mentoring necessitates "taking the gloves off." Deedra describes this harmonious paradoxical duty to put her boxing gloves on to fight and be a hero for her community, and then a duty to remove them in order to sit compassionately with peers, hear their concerns, and relate.

> When I'm out fighting for rights for women, I'm like superwoman. I'm powerful. She gets things done, and she fights for people. That's how I am. I play hardball! I have to put my cape on. When I'm one-on-one, I'm just me. I have to take my gloves off, and I'm giving to the person. I'm giving them who I was and letting them know they can make the same changes I do. So, when I'm encouraging people [peers] make a change, it's different than when I'm talking to senators and I gotta bring Wonder Woman out. It's not their community that's being affected. It's mine. But when I talk to people in my community, they're my people, and I let them know that I understand them (Deedra).

Brooklyn echoes Deedra's distinction that there is a certain empathy needed for the one-on-one work, and then a necessary toughness called for in activism.

> As an activist, I'm a straight beast. Because I feel like you can't be delicate with these people who have taken your power. So, I feel like when I'm in those spaces, I'm taking power. But when I'm with my peers, I'm on a compassionate front. I'm sympathizing, I'm empathizing, because it is me - because I'm in need of some of those services as well. So, like, I have a compassionate hat on, versus a lack of compassion with the folks who are taking away our breadcrumbs. So, like, one-on-one, I'm making sure my sister or my brother's needs are met for the moment, that the hunger pangs go away, that we can help find jobs and, you know, like that's when I'm kissing the twins and I'm hugging or I'm supporting, or I'm crying with, or crying for someone. But, when I'm in the trenches, I'm in a different way. When I'm stepping in front of City Council, I'm putting on war paint, because…it's a war (Brooklyn).

The individual-change work and helping-work give impacted people the opportunity to connect in solidarity with others, while the activism provides them an opportunity to use their fighting skills.

The personal characteristics and practices that one must employ also differ across self- and social-change work. Specifically, one-on-one individual change can involve the practice of patience, while the work engaged in the political arena requires one to step into power. Frida explains, "When I am helping another person one-on-one, I learn patience, because I am working with people that are on all different levels. And then, with activism, I learn power." Formerly incarcerated people hone their patience skills more with peer-mentoring and reclaim their power in activism. Although not mutually-exclusive, and arguably policy work can require as much patience as power, carceral citizens' work in these domains require more or less patience and power in their efforts of change.

Additionally, formerly incarcerated activists must adhere to codes of professionalism in their activist work, and peer-codes as a mentor. These formerly incarcerated activists, who also engage in peer-mentoring, find themselves code-switching, alternating between two varieties of

language and conversation. One is distinctive to peer-work, and another is distinctive to social reform work. Marcos talks about the code-switching required to operate successfully in both the mentoring and legislative spheres. He notes that he is uniquely situated to do this as a man of color who has had extensive practice code-switching in other aspects of his life.

> Like, I could be talking to a formerly incarcerated person and joking about something other people may not even get, because they don't know. It's an inside joke. Now, I can code-switch to work in activism. I've learned to be professional and engage in academic vernacular. Then, I can turn around and describe what I'm doing with peers to them in a way they can understand (Marcos).

Marcos asserts that his black male positionality advantages him to vacillate between policy-work and mentor-work because his life experience has made him a master liaison. Black men may spend their life needing to hear and speak in two varieties of languages, that of their minority group affiliation, and that of the dominant group. He argues that the language and behavioral norms he invokes for peer-mentoring versus those other he invokes for activist work, are akin to the sets of codes he has historically had to switch between. The code of carceral citizen peer-work versus the code of social-change-work are fodder for future research. However, what is indicated here is that there is a distinct code required to engage in carceral citizen mentorship work that involves mannerisms, language, and speech that indicates one has been where the other is at. Then different codes useful for activist work, like linguistic styles that mimic the dominant group and match their norms of attire and includes mannerisms that communicate personal characteristics, like professionalism.

Finally, a tactical difference between individual and social change-work is how education is carried out. Educating can be an important tactic to bring about change. Sloan said that activism requires the "learning" of things and individual healing requires the "unlearning" of things.

> A crisis of moral priority is in your bones: racism, homophobia, xenophobia, classism. It's part of our collective consciousness, part of our culture. So, in some ways, I think that the personal recovery stuff is more focused on unlearning things as opposed to getting new information. It's about growth through subtraction, as opposed to learning some new thing. It applies to the work I do. I might have to unlearn something, but my activist work is growth through the addition of understanding new concepts, and personal growth is letting go of a bad idea (Sloan).

Transformative change requires one's beliefs assumptions, practices, and values to be challenged. Unlearning these things are a part of individual level change, while learning new information is weighted, in this example, more heavily in activism.

Theories of Change: Comparing self and social change-work

Formerly incarcerated people, when engaged in change work, come at it with philosophies about how change occurs and what must be prioritized to meet their particular goals. Changing individuals can increase the well-being of one formerly incarcerated person and that one person may be more likely to become involved in the movement (i.e. building up). Changing policy, on the other hand, can free more people from the rotating door of incarceration and increase the numbers of people able to be mobilized (i.e. trickling down).

Shaping others' capacity to be fighters for social justice is a change logic that involves a vision of change that builds from the bottom up**.** Participants remarked on how individual-level change-work, like peer mentoring, helps people to become soldiers in fights for justice. There was a clear differentiation between helping people in their individual lives and addressing broader social issues via activism, but even the logics of self-change for formerly incarcerated activists were not embodied merely for the purpose of self-change as an end in itself. Participants, rather, engaged in peer mentoring through a social-change logic.

> In our own personal journey, one-on-one personal time with people we're helping can be used to connect them with others who are doing this [activist] work. We lift each other up. Then, from that perspective, we can see how the system is developed and what needs to happen in terms of next steps. Then we encourage each other to take those next steps.

> We don't do this to just blame the system, but to have directly impacted people educate those who can effect change (Zoey).

Sloan says, "Peer mentoring does have a place in these movements for change. To be able to build personal belief in oneself, to believe they can change - it does have a place in this."

Aven also sees self-change (in education and knowledge) as empowering people to achieve social change. He talks about this through his work educating individuals in black communities about their rights.

> Learning one's rights and the constitution is critical. People need to know freedom of speech, freedom to a jury trial, equal protection, due process, right to public assembly, rights to grievance. People need to know their rights from the First Amendment all the way to the Fourteenth. Nothing is going to change unless you recognize where the violation's occurring. You have to first recognize where your own individual rights are being violated, if we want equality for all. To bring justice to neighborhoods, we have to start understanding what our privileges are in this country. White people talk about this all the time, but people in black communities need to understand these are their rights as well. Each person must know their rights. Why was the Revolutionary War fought? Why do we praise George Washington, Jefferson, Hancock? Why is Mt. Rushmore so important? You cannot understand these things without knowing the rights we received by them. We can't understand why Martin Luther King is so important to this history unless we can understand what we receive from him personally. When I look around at inner cities, I realize that people get convicted because they don't know their rights. No one should be placed in confinement for three days just because the police put them there; then I learn that the police can't do that. People think they can't stand where they want to stand if the police tell them to move, but that's a violation of their rights. Helping people understand their rights is a way that they learn how to be strong advocates for themselves, and, as we start to assert our rights, we will see things change (Aven).

Aven asserts that empowerment of individuals, by understanding their rights, can lead to wide-reaching changes. Likewise, Gwen works closely with directly impacted individuals with a broader vision of change. She helps them to frame their story, to face their own traumas, to lead, to research, to build community, and to contend with power.

> The work that I do is building and pouring into the leadership capacity of directly impacting people by resourcing folks with the tools they need to step powerfully into advocacy work or activism. The project I founded is helping directly impacted people to lead this movement work. So, really it is inspiring people to think about themselves outside the frame of how the punishment system views us and treats us or the rest of our

> lives. Women are leaving with a different set of tools than the way they went in. I'm not a therapist. I'm not a priest. But I can see them in a particular way, and I can expose them to new ways of thinking…to become critically conscious (Gwen).

Peer mentoring, for Gwen, is enacted with a broader purpose of abolition, thus movement building from the ground, up. For Aven and Gwen, self and social change are distinct but interlocking struggles; growth in one struggle occurs by virtue of growth in another. In this way, they are inseparable.

A converse direction of change is understood in terms of a trickle-down effect, whereby more people come to need peer mentors as policy changes result in the release of more people from carceral settings. Terrell predicts that the need for more peer mentors will rise as system-level change rolls out. Changing systems, changes individual circumstances, which changes the capacity needed to address the individual needs. Terrell says, "Working on system-level change…leads to more people coming out, being decarcerated, [and] that leads more people to needing help one-on-one." He points to the utility of ensuring macro-level changes make social conditions more conducive for formerly incarcerated people to get involved.

Additionally, change-makers might allow different theories to drive the prioritization of their work. Specifically, directly impacted people may determine that personal healing is a priority to activism, or they may determine that bringing social change actually provides personal relief. Both were indicated by various participants. Direction of change, bottom-up or top-down, seemed to be a matter of perspective.

Scarlett describes the personal healing that comes from being vocal and active in social change, but she also notes that her participation requires ongoing vigilance in her efforts to stay healthy.

> In the moment that I speak up for things, I recover. It starts with service. Then comes self-healing by inventorying myself. I can get out into activism, but then have to get back

> to self-healing, because I'm likely to get angry about the system. I have to then step out and get right with myself again so that I can get back… I was getting sober on revolution. My first years of being sober were on revolutionary music, zines, and activism., I felt that if I [were to] pick up drugs, then I am participating in the system that is trying to kill women (Scarlett).

Formerly incarcerated activists conversely acknowledge that they have to engage in a high-degree of self-care, to remain beneficial fighters for justice. Taylor explains, "I have to care for myself, so that I'm not carrying a mess into the world." Participants spoke of "self-care" being essential to carrying out activist work, and that activism was also crucial to their sense of well-being.

The Experiences: Comparing self and social change-work

Peer-mentoring and activist-work are experienced differently. Carceral citizens fields of vision differ in each form of work, the terrain they navigate is different, the wait-time for results may vary, their need to reflect upon or forecast events differ, the emotions that arise are particular to the work, the functions of their collaboration can be distinct, and each form of work constitutes crucial ingredients in recipes for success.

One of the ways that peer work constitutes a different experience than activism is by the view one has from the particular sphere in which they are engaged. Peer-work is like looking into a mirror, and activism is like catching a panoramic view**.** Different work is conducted with a different field of vision. Terrell sees personal-change oriented work, through mentoring peers, as a way for him to see himself in others and to connect with his own past. While the social-change work, on the other hand, helps him envision big pictures and see the larger reform landscape that he aims to impact.

> Working with one individual is like a mirror. This person here is myself… a lot of conversation involves me listening to them, and, in listening to them, it has a mirror effect, because, at one time or another, I have been through that. So, then, working on the

> system-level stuff… I have to have a panoramic view. I have to see and understand how things operate on a bigger scale (Terrell).

Another way that activism experiences differ from mentoring experiences is in the wait-time for results. Impacts can be observed sooner in peer-work than in activism, and participants might acknowledge that their reform-work is a long-term game as the wheels of social justice grind slowly. It can be wearisome and tough to not feel demoralized waiting for broad change, but the peer-work, arguably, provides a quick encouraging boost. They get an immediate personal and emotional connection, and they might get to see some positive results of their intervention in another individual's life rather quickly. Greg explains this distinction,

> With one-on-one work, you can see the results of the impact more quickly or more directly. With massive policy changes and activism, the process is slow and grinding and never-ending. It can be frustrating… It is frustrating dealing with police chiefs, sheriffs, concerned citizens, educational leaders, policy makers, dealing with a bunch of conservative wackadoos to deal with racial disproportionality… So, the feelings are drawn out and frustrating, but when you do achieve some successes, you feel powerful and you feel like you really did something. It's a feeling of major accomplishment…It's more powerful knowing that you helped society. They're both good feelings, but one-on-one [effort] is more direct, and you see results more quickly, and the macro is slow (Greg).

Lilly similarly describes the experience of activism as long-term, ongoing resistance, while the individual work is experienced in rapidly sequenced victories and emotional connections.

> Those are different forms of work, but it can also be together, even if it's separate, it think it's connected… Activism is like the long-term game, and sometimes you are in it for years working on a campaign or a bill or whatever the thing that you're trying to change is. Sometimes you win, and that is time well spent, and sometimes you have to keep fighting until you do win, who knows when that will be. Peer mentoring is the value of connecting with human beings immediately (Lilly).

Both Greg and Lilly explain social reform as long-term games and peer-work as work that provides some rapid results. Although these tables can be turned and wait times certainly vary within each form of work, broad-based social change was associated with longer wait times.

Diversifying their work in such ways, allow formerly incarcerated people to engage in ongoing projects, while gaining the benefits of "boosts" of encouragements along the way.

The terrain of self-change and social-change-work also differ. Distinctions between activist-work and peer-work can be understood as two terrains, with particular topographies, rules, variables, and conditions all within one war. Jessie understands self and social change-work as two environments, requiring different tactics to be applied in each unique space.

> Nothing is what it appears to be… You got to understand the terrain. I utilize all the principles of the *Art of War*. You got to know the ground and the variables, know who you're talking to and what motivates them. With peer mentoring, it depends on where they're at in their will to change… It's understanding your terrain, and, since your terrain can take on different aspects, you can't fight these battles the same way… If I'm in the political terrain, there's laws that go with that. There's things that you should do and should not do. You should not reveal all your cards. If you're working with someone individually, you have a different terrain, but it's the same war (Jesse).

In the social reform space, one encounters certain variables, particular battles, and distinct rules for engagement that differ from those encountered in the peer-reform space. Using the lens of the *Art of War*, we can understand that there are particular looks and feels of the work that are also guided by sets of best practices. This makes for astute explorers of the world and all its various terrains.

Activism and peer work can also be experienced as "time travel," each requiring a carceral citizen to remember, or envision, various moments in time. Jesse describes himself as a "time traveler" and Tyson describes himself similarly.

> The work with returning citizens I do is like a time machine. It's like I can speak to myself. I'm saying to myself what I needed to hear back then. The work is different when I work with a legislator and political individuals. I'm educating them of what they really don't know. I help them advocate for me inside of government. They might want to help people, and I can help them know make situations better in the future (Tyson).

This time travel could be understood as how one thinks about historical events that led to the social conditions of individuals today and how those inform the needed future of social change.

Or, time-travel can be understood as the recalling of one's past to connect with a peer and envisioning a future that changes those conditions for others yet to tread the same path. Whatever the destination of travel, the peer work and the activist work require unique, but complimentary trips through time. Recalling the past can be painful or pleasant, cathartic or nostalgic. While envisioning the future can bring hope or anxiety, anticipation or dread. Whichever direction in time they find themselves voyaging to, they must skillfully balance self-care with facing whatever challenges those memories, or anticipations, may bring.

Peer mentoring and activist experiences can be like two differing "highs" that invoke different emotions and different "rushes" of various intensities.

> When we get big wins through our activist work, the feeling is better than any high you'll ever get off any drug. It's like rush that goes all the way through my body. It's so empowering to know that we are actually moving and changing the system. I get a similar rush, like when one of my women I'm working with gets a job. You know, we prepped for the interview, they get the job, and we're like jumping up in joy and tears are coming down from my eyes. Helping one person change their life is a huge win. It's kind of like that feeling when I'm moving legislation. But changing the system feelings, and the rush, is a little more intense, because I know I just helped so many more people than I'll ever meet (Kelly).

The neurochemicals associated with the intense emotions experienced in peer versus activist work are beyond the scope of this project. However, euphoria, happiness, relief, and joy are clearly a part of the journey of mentoring peers and engaging in activism. The exact chemical reaction set-off when a peer crosses a milestone in their life-journey, versus the reaction initiated when a bill passes the legislature are possible topics of future research. According to Kelly, there is a uniquely felt "rush," with each. For Lance, he says "activism is my anti-drug." Perhaps some criminalized people gain more healthy and invigorating ways to get high, on change.

The lighting is also different, in the two spaces. Taylor explains, "I'm trying to turn that light to shine onto the problems in society. So that those can be changed, and maybe yield some

joy and freedom for myself and others. My mentor-self is trying to help that one person shine from the inside, so their light beams out." Social change work is experienced as showing social injustices, casting lights on them; while individual change work is experienced as a lighting from within, helping the individual to shine.

The focus of what needs "recovering" also shifts across the types of work. "Recovering relationships involve self-care, care for others, and the world" (Scarlett). She describes the necessity of personal recovery for her activism and the similar necessity of activism for her personal recovery. She argues that working one-on-one is a part of personal healing as well. The basis of her peer mentoring is providing service to others by way of twelve-step recovery programs, which involves guiding other people through the process of how they, themselves, achieved recovery. Sponsors, as they are called in twelve-step communities, are not professionals, but ordinary people who help others by sharing their own experiences so that with others can draw upon the connection and knowledge provided by the mentor. She explains, in the course of her mentoring, that activism is a part of her recovery, and peers can take that as a suggestion to take action on or leave it. She illustrates to other directly impacted people that activism, self-care, and sponsoring others have helped her to recover her relationships.

> Women in conventional programming are asked to admit powerlessness, but I use a feminist interpretation when I work with other women. My approach incorporates systems of power. The people I work with can find they have the power in themselves… It's ever shifting. The primary purpose is to help myself, to help others, and the primary purpose is to help the situation, but it's a process whereby I go back and forth, sometimes through… To me what personal recovery means is the recovery of relationships: first the relationship with self, then with others I can help, and then the relationship with the world. So, when asked if I would be satisfied without doing activism, oh no, activism is necessary for personal recovery, so is personal recovery necessary for activism (Scarlett).

Formerly incarcerated activists are contending with healing from interpersonal, intimate, as well as social and historical traumas. They are working to contend with facing their oppressors then

also facing the harms they themselves may have committed. The activist is being constantly called to shift the focus of the work in accordance with their own assessment of where they are at emotionally, physically, or spiritually. Their comfort, the protection and support of others, as well as their call to action must be adjusted accordingly to prevent problems like burn-out, explained later in this chapter. It may seem daunting, but formerly incarcerated activists are growing and learning how to survive and thrive in the world by immersion in the tensions of recovering the social and the personal.

Formerly incarcerated activists collaborate with varying purposes depending on whether they are wearing their peer hat, or their activist hat. Co-learning and co-healing arguably both occur through activist work, but co-healing is strongly related to personal and peer healing, while co-learning is more a function of coming to understand the social conditions that impact people's lives. To illustrate this, Gwen cites Octavia E. Butler, an Afro-futurist feminist science fiction writer who centered black women in her writing. The main character from her work *Kindred* illustrates black women's legacy as it is tied to slavery, but Butler casts the character as an agent of change for her own destiny as well for the destinies of other black women during that time. Gwen draws on Butler's famous quote, "everything we touch, we change, and everything that we change, changes us." Gwen continues: "I created what I wish existed for me. The questions that led to my awakening, I then asked of other people going through the system. So, we are involved in kind of co-learning and co-healing as we continue to refine our responses and to and think critically about the activist-work we engage in." Gwen describes a "de-storying and re-storying" of oneself that occurs in the context of struggle for justice. Illustrating a harmonious, yet paradoxical experience of the two.

Finally, the self, peer, and activist work have been described as different, but vital, ingredients in a life-nourishing meal. Brooklyn refers to the traditional Cajun dish "gumbo" as a metaphor for the variety of her change-work.

> I think in order to be successful, I think we have to be able to come from different angles. I don't think that we would experience enough success just one-on-one, because one-on-one, you're fixing the right-now need. But then what about tomorrow? And what about the day after? So, you have to change, you have to do direct services, you have to do policy, and you have to mobilize, you have to do demonstrations. It's kind of like...gumbo. Like, one-on-one would be like the shrimp, right? Like, policies would be like the roux. So, they're all needed. Like, the crawfish - it's different parts that are needed to make a successful gumbo. You can't have one without the other, roux without the water, you know - gumbo (laughs) (Brooklyn).

Social change and personal change ingredients are separate, but related components needed to make one whole. Gwen called it a "stew." Jessie says, "In order for anything to grow you have to have contradictions, this [self-change] may contradict that [social change], but that contradiction facilitates growth. Contradictions are a good thing." These analogies speak to the importance of each type of work in their journey and how they constitute well-being supportive nutrition for life.

CARCERAL CITIZENS' CHANGE-WORK NEEDS

Although formerly incarcerated activists differentiate their activism from their peer- and personal-change work, they would not be satisfied with engaging in work with a strict focus of helping only one individual. Many of the participants agreed that they felt great satisfaction knowing that they are doing something to change social conditions. Even participants who thought they could live without activism argued that they would not work one-on-one if there was not a mission of doing so for the purpose of making a broader societal impact.

"No, I wouldn't be satisfied."

Zoey says, “I did one-on-one [peer work] forever, and I never considered myself a policy person until recently. We spoke with legislators here, and it just opened my eyes to a different world. So, I don’t think that I could go back to only doing the peer mentoring, because I feel like I have a lot to offer on the other side as well.” Zoey came into an awareness of the process of policy-making and understood the impact she could have on solving social problems with the carceral system. That awareness motivates her to continue with her activism, and, now that her eyes are “open,” it would be difficult to not participate in the change that she can see is needed and that she can affect.

Greg says, “I feel sad that people won’t be able to make it because social factors will diminish their opportunities for success, so I don’t think I’d be satisfied not doing the activist work.” Greg increases his personal satisfaction with his work by acknowledging that the decks are stacked against criminalized people and being aware of the ways in which mentoring people under those conditions would generate negative feelings, specifically “sadness.”

Reginald says, “No. Because I know that, that, you know, even in a best-case scenario, if I can help an individual transform himself or herself, they've still got to live in the world, and that world around us is oppressive and filled with systems that neglect their humanity and opportunity to thrive, that’s a problem.” He articulates that helping one person change who has to live in a world that is oppressive would not be satisfying, and a “problem.”

One-on-one, only, for social justice purposes

When activists indicated that they if they had to choose peer mentoring rather than a combination of mentoring and social activism, they clearly stated that their peer-work would be invariably fused with a broader mission of justice. Jessie says, “That one person I help - I don’t

know who they're going to touch [or] what they're going to do. Maybe they'll get out there and change things." Social change is embedded in their peer-mentoring missions. Vasco similarly claims: "I can and do help people connect with services, and I think if that's all I could do, I know that if I help others, like, obtain a degree, that it will open more doors for other people." Vasco is similarly motivated by the social changes that peer mentoring could accomplish.

STRUGGLES ARE REAL

Trauma and personal sustainability

In their fight to change social conditions, formerly incarcerated individuals find healing and justice. However, the social sources of crime are also traumatic events. Participants note the importance of attending to their own healing because of the challenges inherent in applying mentoring and activist precepts in their personal lives as they work with others and fight for social justice.

> As organizers and activists….frequently it's trauma that brings us into the work in the first place. And to be effective and powerful and resilient contributors to vibrant movements for freedom, I think that we have to attend to those rushing currents in our own lives. Like, in order to win, I think the practice of healing in our own lives, like, in order to really do that, we need mentors and we need guides that are standing in the gaps and alongside us as we move in the world and in the work (Gwen).

Lilly and Samuel warn that formerly incarcerated people who become involved in activism can become "overwhelmed "or "get burned out." They advise formerly incarcerated people coming into activism to learn self-care.

> I don't dissuade people who want to jump out from the gate and get started. I think it's too easy to get swept up, and I don't want to be responsible. [I[] take special care with people who are newly released to make sure they're not compromising themselves for the whole. I started right away, but I was blessing of a home, bills paid, food in the house. Most people don't start with that (Lilly).

Samuel adds that he has to remain conscious of what is happening in his personal life and maintain a commitment to attending therapy sessions.

> Like, I have all this trauma that I've been carrying and coping but not really healing from, and that has been triggered by being a part of this movement in a way that I didn't realize. And I was taking it home, and it's cost me, you know, my marriage. So, I have to go back to therapy and try to be more intentional in my self-care and more conscious of how I speak and do things in my personal life. I think that I went, like, a little overboard with it(laughs). My activism was interpreted by my wife like it was more important to me than even my family and my children. And I never wanted it to be that way. I always thought that I was doing it because I wanted to be a part of making things better, even for them (Samuel).

Samuel and Lilly were both heavily involved in activism, and both of them are employed full-time in the field of social justice leadership. They warn that formerly incarcerated people need to engage in self-care while acknowledging this need as an intertwining of individual change and social change. The problems of activist burnout can threaten anyone involved in social justice movements (Chen and Gorski 2015). Leadership training and self-care communities are important components of making activism a fruitful pathway to re-entry success.

Formerly Incarcerated Activists Negotiate of Multiple Identities

I may not have reached sufficient saturation on some of the issues of raced and gendered contentions that arise in formerly incarcerated people's collective struggles for social justice, but the issues are nonetheless important to point out.

Racism and sexism in carceral reform movements

It is probably no surprise to social scientists that women, even in activist circles, experience being ignored, underrepresented, and viewed as powerless. This is especially true for directly impacted women seeking recognition in carceral reform movements, which are often overwhelmingly populated with men and imbued with masculine logics of crime control. Women participants reported that they had at times been silenced and they attribute this to a tendency of reformers to ignore women since they make up such a small segment of the carceral citizen population.

> Women have been pushed out [of the close the jail campaign]. Men are mostly talking about the particularities of the release of men, they get the executive positions at the table, they are called on first, and there are more of them to organize the jail release. We [women] are seen as the other side of the campaign, as a separate small project. I am saying that we can go ahead and release all women from the local jail, because releasing women is a part of the bigger project to release all people, not two separate projects. Historically most of the conversations continue to be around men (Kelly).

A racialized form of sexism also emerges in carceral citizen activist spaces. Indeed, female activists of all races remarked throughout the interviews, "we get talked over," "mansplaining shows up," and "our voices get silenced." However, women of color more often experience this intensely problematic behavior in these spaces than do white women. Zoey explains, "I'm pretty much low on the totem pole. I could be saying the same thing, but it'll be [recognized as] a man or a white person's idea, not mine."

Such marginalization within movements is further exacerbated for trans people. Brooklyn, a black woman whose work supports a movement that began as a black trans sex-worker led initiative, explains the intersecting struggles of legitimation in carceral reform projects.

> Like, transfeminine women, forget it. They have no narrative. They're not even included in the sentence. Black women, we might be a period; white women, you might be a parentheses. But trans women, they get completely left out of the equation. Black trans women are getting killed. That's their contribution: their blood. They are impacted most and get heard least (Brooklyn).

Although the lack of recognition for these problems was rare, the disregard for them was clearly happening. In response to an inquiry about these gender-based concerns, one male participant dismissed the importance of gender. in these spaces. He says, "I'm a male so my experience is different from a female. Of course, I'm different; I'm straight up. I'm just not willing to roll with that stuff. So, I could care less to be honest with you. I'm just about helping humans." An

examination of the disregard of women's concerns in carceral citizen mobilization is clearly called for.

It is also important to note that I found that women referenced their gender much more than men did. By running a comparison of the number of times the words "women" and "men" came up in participant's transcripts and by reflecting on the interviews, I found that women in my sample elaborated on their gender identity more than men did, often explaining how their experiences and their activist work frequently centered on women's particular issues with the carceral state.

Emotion rules for formerly incarcerated black men in activist spaces

Formerly incarcerated activists report that their activist work is conducted alongside, within, and through non-profits, non-governmental agencies, corporations, and local and national political entities. Navigating these professional spaces can be difficult for the formerly incarcerated and can be difficult to traverse across race and gender normative behavior expectations. Different fields are structured by different feeling rules (Hochschild 1983), and these feeling rules are gendered and racialized (Wingfield 2010). Black men, for example, are discouraged from participation in some joking exchanges, particularly when the conversation turns sexual. Black men also need to appear as non-threatening as possible, which discourages them from expressing annoyance or agitation and can lead to feelings of social isolation (Wingfield 2018). Black men who have also been incarcerated who find themselves in these professional environments may be more at risk for such strains. Perceptions of discrimination and stigmatization leave them with heightened feelings of vulnerability while enduring unsettling interpersonal encounters.

Jessie, a black man, reports being sexually harassed while engaging in paid criminal justice reform projects. He admits that he's not been harassed in his activist circles, but it was quite rampant in a social work office where he became employed.

> The place I worked at were mostly all white women. I just have to listen to a lot of it [talking about black men's bodies]. One said she would hire them if they were cute. I'm telling you: it's a major barrier for black men. Being involved in this work, we're over-sexualized. It's dangerous for us. Our reactions to that behavior can be interpreted some kind of way. I have watched multiple black men come in and struggle with being approached.

Jessie made clear that this wasn't experienced in his activist work. He said, "People who are activists usually don't act like that."

Black men's experience of sexual harassment is largely invisible, but such advances in the workplace by white women in positions power upon formerly incarcerated black men, doubly disadvantaged, create a precarious work environment. There is a professional "ex" phenomenon (Owens 2009) whereby formerly incarcerated people turn their past into viable careers, however this field of employing formerly incarcerated people (particularly black males) to work on reform projects may be less of a safe haven than their activist communities.

More research is needed to fully understand the experience of formerly incarcerated black men's employment as social work professionals, particularly when they move out of their social justice movement work into those paid positions. Explorations should focus on individual preparedness for tokenization, harassment, or exposure to sexualized racial banter in these spaces. Preparing formerly incarcerated people for workplace environments - which can be very different from activist communities - is important for safety, emotional well-being, and even re-entry success. Further research on the experience of these experiences for black men is needed, and even more so for black men who have criminal records and are even more vulnerable.

Privilege lending

Since I am interested in how multiple oppressions are addressed in collective carceral reform movements, I paid attention to the ways that formerly incarcerated activists, privileged by either race or gender, spoke about their efforts to include women, trans individuals, or voices of color. Greg, as a cisgender white male says he is "likely to step up" and says he will "refrain from center-staging" himself. He says he works to be "mindful and to not force [his] way into being the expert" just because he's formerly incarcerated. He says, "I have to continuously acknowledge my own biases and privileges and work to be a better activist." Kelly explains that being a formerly incarcerated white woman affords her many carceral reform issue speaking invites. She explains the work she puts in to bring women and men of color to those podiums:

> I get more of the invitations to the city legislature, but people of color are the ones who should be in these rooms. Like, I don't need to be talking on solitary confinement. [I'm] not saying that women don't experience that, but there's a black man that did who should be talking here. So, I have to make sure that there's a panel on solitary confinement that includes various experiences. If I've been asked to speak and I cannot get approval for a panel that also forefronts black men, I may even have to flat out say it and call panel organizers out on their racism. I use the terms white supremacy and patriarchy, [telling them] "Obviously you would come to me first." I would call them out and say no. I might even ask forceful with it.

Research seems unclear on an agreed-upon *right* way to do activism across compounding and multiple axes of oppression, but it is clear that the collective mobilization among people similarly oppressed along one axis of oppression often struggles to contend with important concerns of members oppressed along other axes (Brown 2013; Richards 2005; Ward 2008; Zajicek 2002). Carceral citizens' rights, reform, and abolitionist movements must work to ensure that the particular racialized and gendered experiences are heard and that systems of oppression and marginalization are being dismantled within the movements themselves. Criminology and penology scholars are attentive to the differential impacts of carceral systems on women and women of color (Belknap 2014; Britton, Jacobsen, and Howard 2017; Brown and Bloom 2009;

Covington 2003; Coyle and Schept 2017; Daly and Chesney-Lind 1988; Davis 2011; Edwards, Lee, and Esposito 2019; Gamez 2015; Giordano et al. 2002; Hannah-Moffat 2001; McCorkel 2013; Morash 2006; Richie 2018). However, few (if any) scholars have investigated the incorporation of goals as specified by women and trans individuals - Latinx, black, and white - of carceral reform movements to change those conditions. It seems important to understand how minority concerns are deprioritized or sidelined within carceral reform or abolitionist movements. If practitioners and scholars are at all concerned with ensuring that multiply marginalized carceral citizens are represented, validated, and included in shaping meaningful carceral reform, exploring social movements led by formerly incarcerated people is an appropriate point of departure.

Though the threads of racism and sexism illuminated above seem like damning critiques of movements led by formerly incarcerated activists, they are not meant to be translated that way. Despite their collective struggles across categories of difference, formerly incarcerated activists forge meaningful communities of mutual support in the midst of a common struggle, and they appear to be working to shape meaningful reforms in ways that lift and embrace distinction. This illumination of the race- and gender-based struggles of directly impacted-led carceral reform movements is not meant to disregard the importance, utility, and vitality of their work but to delineate areas of needed attention. Participants largely consider activism a safe space for all carcerally oppressed people, and there is no avoiding contention across our multiple identities in any meaningful social change project. Current struggles against the carceral state are underway, and, within them, carceral citizens are working to build across these lines of division within their own movements. There is a deep awareness and acknowledgement of these issues among activists, and it’s hardly realistic to expect them to be “doing activism” perfectly.

Intersecting contention is expected, as “there is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single issue lives” (Lorde 1984).

I feel it important to note here that there is a growing number of women- and trans-led contingents of color across the nation that support and center multiply marginalized carceral system-impacted people. I feel that mentioning one organization might exclude other groups’ important work. For that reason, I would invite readers to explore trans women-led transformative justice organizations that prioritize women’s unique disadvantages and explore creative and community solutions rooted in their particular ways of knowing. So, although activist movements can mirror the broader society, marginalizing women and trans people of color, there are growing collectives popping up across the US and bridging other nations to address the gendered, racialized concerns that crosscut carceral reform and abolitionist movements.

CONCLUSION CHAPTER 7

Formerly incarcerated activist success stories are marked with distinct yet conjoined projects of self- and social change. When directly impacted people enact social change efforts in the spirit of justice, they are changed; in their own transformation, they shape what is possible for criminalized people in the social imaginary and their own lived realities. They provide vital support for one another and also commence, shoulder to shoulder, in active revolt and solidarity against limitations, controls, inequalities, and injustices. The consciousness of and resistance to harmful social conditions reside in them simultaneously with the cultivation of personal accountability and healing. In so many ways, they animate Elliot Currie’s vision of themselves and others vis-à-vis their work that casts them beyond limiting cultural understandings of what is possible for criminalized people.

Formerly incarcerated activists contradict the conventional logics of how [mis]recognized offenders change their lives. For them, pro-sociality takes on an insurgent meaning. Their subjugated knowledge indicates to us a different way of conceptualizing the meaning of social reintegration, which, for them, is to transform the structures that deliver and perpetuate harm.

Conformist logics wither in the shadow of activists enacting change and discovering healthy and hopeful trajectories of personal well-being in the movement of barriers and meaningful social policy that eats away at unjust social conditions. This process loops back to provide social reliefs for others and themselves. In the process of mobilizing publicly, they change the narratives of what is possible for directly impacted people and unleash their potentiality. The personal, including one-on-one interaction, is a meaningful intervention practice, but so is the insurgent work toward abolition of material deprivation, social subjugation, and political estrangement that has defined their lives. Indeed, individuals ought not self-contort to accommodate social conditions, nor social conditions contort to fit them. Instead, the impacted ought to reflexively, powerfully, and self-determinately step into creation of *the change they wish to see*.

In thinking about systemic social reforms and their impact on criminalized people's lives, the paradox of coming to be at peace with untenable social conditions for one's survival while simultaneously fighting for penal reform and abolition is a question needing ongoing exploration. We may be wondering how a small group of transformed individuals could succeed in transforming the harms of carceral regimes. And how can a carceral regime be transformed by those who justify its very existence? Many paradigms for understanding the shaping of and the being shaped by social arrangements enacted and experienced by the criminalized can be found in sociological understandings of the self and society. By exploring the linkage of private

troubles with public issues as a central logic of helping people move beyond their immediate problems and to challenge social arrangements, directly impacted activists embody this tenant of transformative justice: “the inner and the outer are the same….the transformation of ourselves and the world becomes our constant practice” (Quinney and Wildeman 1991 as cited in Wozniak, Brasswell, and Vogel 2008:117).

CHAPTER 8
CONCLUSION

Decades of empiricism have established that the carceral crisis amounted to a failed response to enormous and deep-seated structural problems that has corrected little and barred many criminalized people from justice, freedom, and dignity. Therefore, understanding reentry as an individual endeavor is incomplete, in that it makes little sense to expect one individual caught up in overlapping cycles of social and criminal harm to forge a life worth living against those odds. Individually directed coercive responses to harm in pursuit of responsibilizing an imagined pathologized subject are not working at best, and engineering social divisiveness and despair at worst. Propagandizing criminalized people as the major purveyors of harm, legitimates their categorical oppression, and in its wake, resource barriers, social isolation, depoliticization, and failed intervention models create, in essence, a carceral apartheid.

Moving forward, scholars ought to heed the suggestion of Shadd Maruna, and seek to understand pathways into healthy existences for formerly incarcerated people. Maruna (2017) suggests that this requires nothing less than a social movement. Humans are not determined by power relations, rather, genealogies of human resistance show that institutional and cultural practices can be re-shaped by collective human insurgence (Berger, Kaba, and Stein 2017; Fung and Olin-Wright 2003; Reitan 2007; Richie 2012; Rodriguez 2018; Richards and Gardner 2013; Tarrow 2011). Thus, it is reasonable to believe that when directly impacted people organize in transformative praxis, they benefit people, the communities that people live in, the schools they attend, the economies they contribute to, the families that need them, the religious and political arenas they occupy, and in doing so, they thrive.

As a scholar interested in the well-being of people victimized by harm, in all its forms, I was compelled to study how people who are the most intimately impacted by carceral calamity organize against it, in the forms it takes *out there* as well as in the harm it delivers *in here*. This project illuminates some ways that formerly incarcerated people defy technologies of punishment and reframe logics of what "correcting" harm means, both personally and socially, through their emancipatory struggle.

Knowing that the drivers of harm are deeply rooted in our social structure and institutions, I argue that it is imperative to look at how carceral citizens are mobilizing to change those conditions. I further assert that more scholarly attention in needed not on how well carceral citizens learn to contort into socially harmful conditions to demonstrate "rehabilitation," but rather how they can abolish those same conditions. Because formerly incarcerated people's life chances are dependent on the social conditions which have limited them, I sought to elucidate what mountains they can (and do) move out of their own way.

Summary of the project

The creation of a classification of carceral citizen change-work allowed me to isolate the state- and community-directed change-work from individualized logics of change that carceral expansionary work is embroiled in. This differentiation allowed me to explore the former as a model of transformative intervention to reentry "success." Also, I argue that carceral citizenship is much more than just a criminal record, but rather is a status position within a deep-seated system of oppression and privilege that is constituted through carceralist regimes. This allows me to articulate how through insurgent politics, FIAs are able to expand cultural understandings of what is possible for them. This paradigm was the lens through which I related to my participants as a directly impacted scholar-activist.

I found that activism has immense personal value for [them] carceral citizen activists in the way of transforming stigma and building capital that bolsters their resiliency against stacked odds. They expressed that their activist efforts were distinct from personal reform-work, although both are inextricably linked. In that sense, carceral citizen activist work arises as a crucial component of a model of transformative intervention whereby self and social change efforts coalesce to bring healing to themselves and their siblings in struggle while restructuring social conditions to make space for their own self-determination.

Critical social connections, education experiences, and moments of direct action-taking mark the paths of FIA identity-recasting, from selves seeped in harm, into selves who confront it. Raced and gendered oppressions are multiplicative and compounding forces that modify, revise, and transfigure these experiences, mandating their inclusion in any vision of change. Below, I expand on these findings, emphasizing implications and future research directions.

Chapter by Chapter Findings

In Chapter 2, I defined formerly incarcerated activism through a content analysis based on the organizational missions of groups that my social connections and part of my formerly incarcerated seed sample worked with. I made a case to support differentiating social justice focused action from reforms that embody conservative, quid-pro-quo, and responsibilization logics. Separating out the different forms of work formerly incarcerated people can engage in is important because personal change approaches to reentry will be unlikely to have any kind of meaningful impact on the social conditions which generate the problems of the carceral state's erosion of social life. The framework shaped my entry into the field in the larger project. I interviewed only people who had experience with both activism (social-change logics) and peer mentoring (self-change logics).

The methodology of this project is rooted in feminist standpoint epistemology, social harm, and the notion that stories can serve as evidence. My diverse sample (by race and gender) captured the experiences of people who have served anywhere from a few days to a few decades behind the walls, and/or have spent at least one year to life on paper and have endured extended criminalization and violent collisions (both real and symbolic) with the carceral state. The particularities of their history represent an array of criminal charges and their involvement with activism that span from a year to decades of action. Making use of my own hard-won experience as a directly impacted scholar-activist, I was gifted the opportunity to be in the presence of, record, and immerse myself in these stories of tragedy and triumph from which I present the themes of this project.

Participant narratives in Chapter 4 highlighted how critical moments mark turns onto new rebellious paths of possibility and purpose. Connections, education, and direct action had profound impacts on their life-course. New routes of brimming possibilities and sustained social engagement emerged before them as they stepped into their own incredible success stories. More research on the life-course trajectories of carceral citizen activists are necessary to know how those vary, or persist, across race and gender lines. More contextual and historical data that line the formerly incarcerated pathways are needed. Understanding what, if any, themes beyond their connections, education, and action-taking catalyze carceral citizens into activism. Such funded research projects exploring the conditions that draw them into activism may be best led by directly impacted people.

In Chapter 5, I argue that carceral status is a system of oppression and privilege that is rooted deep in our culture of hyper-incarceration. I wove together established scholarship and participant narratives to assert carceral status as a positionality within that system of oppression.

Acknowledging that all of us are criminals, but only some of us become marked as such is the foundation upon which this framework is built. Understanding criminality as a social construct, that at least to some degree is an illusion, allows us to recognize the carceral citizen, that stands in contrast to the illusionary constructed, privileged conventional citizen. In this way, I re-appropriate the "carceral citizen" phrase of Miller and Stuart (2017) to understand carceral citizens as not made legible only by a criminal record, but as a group of people shaped by a host of carceral technologies that inscribe criminality on its subjects. The carceral citizen comes to life in the social imaginary as they are portrayed in moral panics perpetuated by crime shows, news stories, and a dizzying array of humiliating media depictions, but they can also become something else in their role as social reformers and abolitionists.

I show that carceral citizens who engage in activism take the political stage, show up to the negotiating tables, trend counter-carceral messaging on social media, direct documentaries, run for mayor, guide research, tell their stories, and construct visuals of opposition that all disrupt the commonsense carceral logics that have defined their life. Through these insurgent sites of re-framing, the carceral citizen exceeds their category. In light of my findings, more research of, language around, and attention to the conceptualization of carceral citizenship as an oppressed category is in order. In addition, the construction of criminality needs to take a front stage in future criminological theorizing and conceptualizations of social stratification. Gendered theories of the carceral experience are also needed, since what it means to be a criminalized man is considerably different than what it means to be a criminalized woman, trans, or non-binary person. Additionally, understanding the way that criminality is inscribed into what it means to be black or brown should be ever-present in punishment research and carceral reform or abolitionist projects.

Realizing that the carceral state and its rationalities intimately impact people's day-to-day lives, I show in Chapter 6 that activism in the spirit of reforming, dismantling, or abolishing carceral regimes, affords people valuable skillsets (i.e. public speaking, writing, leadership, teaching, research, team-building, campaigning, fundraising, negotiation); generates influential social connections (public officials, advocacy leaders, business execs, media representatives, and even pro-sports and Hollywood stars); builds symbolic stock (success stories and personal achievement narratives) that results in some tangible economic capital, vis-à-vis, their work. In these ways, carceral citizen activism shows up to creatively re-shape their life chances. Activists also re-make their meaning as 'warriors' rather than offenders or victims. They garner skills and social networks that catapult them into another dimension of living than what the carceral state had destined for them. Scholars of desistance should reflect on how their own knowledge products have played a compensatory role in limiting directly impacted people's potentiality by studying how they can merely get by, rather than how they can thrive. The ongoing exploitation of formerly incarcerated activists should also be avoided. Their presentations, research, action, speaking engagements, and other forms of social-change-work should be funded when possible.

A number of exploratory race and gendered realities emerged in coding for capital and stigma. For one, the dangers of *coming out* through activist work can be uniquely situational and intersectionally problematic across lines of race and gender. The *angry black* persona can endure for black activists and black, brown, and trans people's social movements can be at pronounced risk of police violence, which can vary considerably across political philosophy (e.g. abolitionist versus reformist). Further examination of how the confrontation of stigma and the building of capital differs for women, trans people, and men involved in activism is also needed. The current project suggests that activism helps women of all races gain deep senses of personal power, and

this is very important to them. Black and brown men and non-binary people of color, on the other hand, very much desire, yet struggle at times, for social legitimacy or to achieve desired perceptions by others. These differences are not meant to be interpreted as actual effects, but rather important clues to what is important in formerly incarcerated activists. These findings make useful fodder for future research.

As I describe in Chapter 7, participants agreed that differentiating their civic engaged work into categories of personal change and social change was valid. However, participants assert that their personal, peer and self, change practices, and their social, activist, practices are inextricably linked and necessary in their lives. They eloquently described these as paradoxical strands of work that intertwine, combine, coalesce, and interrelate to shape unique civic engaged schemas. The individual level work and their activism have different meanings and varied influences on their vitality and sense of purpose. The individual level change work and the social change work were described as harmonious paradoxes: Like two terrains, like past versus future time travel, like head work versus heart work, and like mirrors versus panoramic views. Self-change work was described as requiring listening, while activism involved talking, where boxing gloves are needed to be put on to enter political spaces, they need to be removed to sit in empathetic connection with peers. Activists also described honing their patience in peer-work, but stepping into power in advocacy. The self-change and social-change works were described as two kinds of highs or two necessary ingredients in a meal. Where social reform work calls for the learning of things, personal reform required the unlearning of things. Helping individuals change versus changing systems are understood to be different ways to recover relationships with one's self, with others, and the world. Their self-change and their social-change works are contradictory, yet complementary.

These paradoxes challenge conventional ideas about how formerly incarcerated people change. Their lives are evidence that personal change can be constructed through creative mobilization for systemic reform: that a focus on external forces is not a denial, growth-inhibiting behavior rationalization, nor some clinical expression of criminal orientation, in fact it can be quite the opposite. A system-focus can be a powerful basis of solidarity and purpose that drives people to act in ways that contribute to the health and vitality of society by loosening the carceral grips that have limited their creative social expression and self-determination.

Notably, however, as participants describe the social conditions that shaped their collisions with the state, they point out that activism is no sanctuary from those forces. Sexism and racism still show up in these spaces and burn-out is ever-looming for people differentially situated in the social strata (i.e. mothers and the working poor). However, activists train one another, they learn to team-build across boundaries of raced and gendered oppressions, they privilege lend, and un-invisibilize repressive emotion rules in order to commence across difference to fight and win. They are still learning to be effective and attentive to their differing needs. Directly impacted black women and trans led research ought to be conducted to consider how leadership and ally training can be effective for addressing these raced and gendered realities and to build effective movements for change.

Applied research is needed to understand how transformative intervention models that embrace insurgent forms of civic engagement can be implemented more broadly. More research is needed to decipher the relationship between formerly incarcerated civic engagement and their success post-incarceration, and the role of the logics of those various types of political integration needs stronger conceptualization. Differentiating activism from direct service

expansion work, from peer-mentoring, from general volunteerism, and from voting participation needs categorization and specification.

Special attention ought to continue to be paid to the type of change work that directly impacted people engage in does not merely reproduce carceral forms and sensibilities that further their own oppression, but to the kind of work that disrupt social systems. It would be useful to understand more about the kind of work that engages carceral citizens work that enlivens their spirit and calls them to action. Activism can be recast as criminality in another sense, and activists made it clear that they stand in the shadow of great social changers who broke unjust laws before them. In light of this conflation of activism and crime, it's important for criminologists to re-think the way they measure successful reentry, being careful not to re-entrench people in discourses of criminality. They ought to disrupt the equation of system blame attitudes with criminal orientations.

Carceral Citizen Activism as Transformative Intervention

All of these chapters serve as evidence that activism can be a transformative intervention for criminalized people. It's rooted not in conventional oppressive logics, but in indigenous and black feminist ideals of how transformation occurs. Participants' responses echoed this sentiment from GenerationFive, (a transformative justice organization with a mission to end sexual abuse of children within five generations). "Without a just world people cannot find healing and safety….individual justice and collective liberation are equally important, mutually supportive and fundamentally intertwined, the achievement of one is impossible without the achievement of the other." (GenerationFive 2017). Participants responses echoed that sentiment.

Elliott Currie's work, which draws on those ideals, asserts a useful, even imperative model of intervention, that participants in this study confirmed. Consciousness of harmful social

conditions that are experienced, and resisted in solidarity and hope, through an understanding that freedom for the individual stems from freedom for the group, is individually and socially transformative. Carceral citizens commence to help one another in common struggle against systemic carceral oppression recognizing and moving across boundaries of similarity as well as raced and gendered difference. Through their carceral status they work to understand one another's experience of multiple oppressions or privileges. Their hard-won tragedies and triumphs fuel their action and they finally begin to see ends to intolerable circumstances. As collective strategizing and action taking commence, hope arrives.

Participants reflected on the effectiveness of engaging in personal reforms without the social. Personal-reform, when conducted with a broader logic of justice, would be satisfying for some, but the majority however, believe that their social justice activism work is personally vital. The transformative capacity of the self is expanded paradoxically through social change work, they are inextricably connected, imperative, and urgent for reconfiguration of the social, this logic ought to inform future criminological theorizing. We all have a stake in carceral reform because all of society is impacted by carceralism's social distortions, directly and indirectly. It is our own neighbors, family members, co-workers, friends, teachers, peers, and colleagues who are impacted by mass incarceration and its wide-reaching corrosive effects on social life. May practitioners, scholars, and activists be inspired to fearlessly fight for abolitionist justice and – "stay dangerous" (Lance).

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APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHIC, INCARCERATION, AND LIFE HISTORY QUESTIONNAIRE

Demographics

Race (w/b/l/a/o)
Sex (m/f/i/o)
Gender (w/m/t/o)
Sexual Orientation (open identification)
SES (poor, working, middle, upper/o)
Education level (1-20)
Age (#)
Georgraphic region (ne/nw/se/sw + r/u/s/o)

- *Incarceration experiences*

Number of offenses (#)
Number of years under correctional control (#)
Number of years inside (#)
Number of years under community corrections (#)
Number of years since last arrest (# has to be >1)
Any arrests for political involvement? (#)
How long have you been off-paper or out from under correctional supervision?
Types of crimes over life time? Summarize generally what most arrests were for primary and secondary (e.g. mostly drugs, mostly violent, mostly property, mostly political related, etc…)

- *Activism*

Years you've been involved in activism (#)

- *Life history*

Family abuse (y/n)
Years of homelessness (#)
Drug use history (# of years where you felt that it was a problem)

APPENDIX B: SCREENING AND INTERVIEW GUIDE

Screening questions

1) Are you at least18 years of age or older? (must say yes)
2) Have you been incarcerated and are you involved in activism currently? (must say yes)
3) Have you desisted from all crime (with the exception of an activism-related crime) for at least 1 year? (must say yes)
4) What change-work are you involved in (must fit in the boundaries of FIA work)
5) Do the criminalized have rights that are being diminished? (must say yes)
6) How does your work address restoration of rights? (must relate work to social change not personal responsibility)
7) Have you been involved in some type of one-on-one peer-mentoring in your life as well? (must say yes)

Interview guide

(statements in quotation to be stated for ease of finding data in text later- word searches)

"Regarding responses to the survey(s)"
Ask about anything interesting or what the participant wants to discuss regarding the surveys.*

"Regarding system"
First, do you believe that there are issues within society that contributed to your crimes or incarceration? (ask about later in the interview)

"Regarding lifecourse pathways into this kind of work"
How did you get woke *? (Later,* What contributed to your critical awakening?*)*
What were some significant factors that led you into this work – how did you get involved?
(After the person answers –consider probing about any of the following)
(potential prompts – only after the person responds)

- *Social role changes*
- *Relationships*
- *Periods of economic prosperity or joblessness or homelessness?*
- *How did education impact the trajectory*
- *Religious experienes*
- *Drug use pattern changes*
- *Incarceration experiences*
- *Abuse history impacts?*

You stated (if they did) that ____ was a social reason for your crime. Was there ever a time in your life that you were 'not' aware of the social-based reasons for your crimes, (or problems staying out of institutions if multiple arrests)? When did that view change and why?

"Regarding your activism" (define aloud)
Tell me about your activist work
(try and get names of organizations, missions, nature of their involvement, level of involvement)

"Regarding personal reform (fixing broken people) versus social reforms (fixing a broken system)"
Tell me about your personal-reform work (ie peer mentorship, sponsoring, helping people 'behave' better).
How has helping individual people reenter been different for you from trying to change "the system"?

"Regarding activism vs personal reform type work"
Contrast for me, peer mentoring versus activism.
How have correctional officers or other institutional actors received this work?
How do you think they should perceive this work you do?

"Regarding (habitus) logics"
Are there invisible forces that you contend with being a formerly incarcerated person doing this work? Like what? Does what you do go against the grain? How so?

"Regarding stigma" and discrimination" (that 'a criminal label in this case is an attribute that is deeply discrediting on this assumption, varieties of discriminations effectively, if often unthinkingly, reduce one's life chances" Goffman 1963, used in LeBel 2012)

Has activism changed the way people perceive and treat you compared to your time under corectional supervision or shortly thereafter? Compare now to then.
There is an understanding in reform philosophy – that people should focus on what they've done wrong and amend that, rather than an activist philosophy which is more a focus on amending system issues, is there something that your activism tells society about who you are that is different than what just being a peer-mentor tells society?

"Regarding forms of capital" (social assets)
Has activism provided you with valuable skills or no? Like what?
Are your interactions with people different because of your activist status (say from between the time you were incarcerated and getting involved in this work?) In what ways?
Would you say that the experience of doing this work has been useful for helping you achieve some financial stability or no? Explain
Has activism changed your social network in useful ways or no? How so?
Talk about what it's like to have an activist community post-incarceration.

"Regarding Criminal Orientation"
Do you think there's such a thing as a criminal orientation? Explain
(show them the modified criminal orientations instrument and have them look it over)
Do you think the questions are relevant for uncovering a criminal orientation? Explain

"Regarding gender"
In what ways do you think your experiences differ from (other genders) or are gendered?

"Regarding race"
In what ways do you think your experiences differ from (other races) or are racialized?

"Regarding other aspects of identity"
Is there any other aspect of identity that makes your experience unique do you think? How?

"Regarding social change"
How do you perceive that you are contributing to social change?
What do you think is important about the work your doing for society?
Are the problems of incarceration and criminalization relevant for everyone do you think? Why?
What would you like to say about your work?

(Final repetition)
Describe your activist self
Describe your role in personal peer mentorship
Does your activist role have a unique value to you in your post-incarceration life that is different from your peer mentorship role? Describe.