

India to Incarceration: Multicultural Education and why Perspective Matters

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Abstract

This participatory action research strives to understand the affects of multicultural educational values in the classroom of incarcerated young men at Camp Afflerbaugh- Paige, a detention high school located in La Verne, California. Our course curriculum, constructed equally between myself and the young men I was engaged with, analyzes issues of social justice and positionality, and engrains them in conversations of urban life. Through the narratives, writings and discussions that flourished in the classroom, I find that the presentation of multiculturalism instigates a development of self, community and global consciousness. Such a consciousness is necessary to the discussion of rehabilitation.

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level. I owe you everything, especially now the perspective and prerogative I carry forth with leaving Pitzer. Thank you for your tireless work, organization and support.

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Introduction

“The academy is not paradise. But learning is a place where paradise can be created. The classroom, with all its limitations, remains the location of possibility. In the field of possibility we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom.”¹

As stated by the visionary thinker bell hooks, education holds a space where freedom can be created. Education holds the power to transgress societal structures and confined spaces. However, this process, which could potentially present a path to freedom, both physically and mentally, is contested. After three years of interning at Camp Afflerbaugh-Paige (Camp AP), a juvenile detention high school located in La Verne, California, I understand the many contradictions of the California juvenile justice system. The camp's mission statement reads,

The fundamental objective of the Residential Treatment Services Bureau's camp program is to aid in reducing the incidence and impact of crime in the community by providing a residential experience that introduces to each ward effective life skills. The camps provide a valuable intermediate sanction alternative to probation in the community and incarceration in the California Youth Authority.²

¹ bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as a Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994) 207.

² Los Angeles County Office of Education. 5 April 2008 <<http://www.lacoe.edu/org/774/index.cfm>>

Through programs funded by the Center for California Cultural and Social Issues (CCCSI), I entered this confined space and realized characteristics of institutionalization- dis-empowerment, racism, and inept curriculum--that inhibited the process hooks describes. This thesis explores a program of empowerment that utilizes the camp environment in search of answers to these contradictions.

In my participatory action research, I co-created an urban studies workshop at Camp AP with the young men assigned there. Together, we developed a multicultural curriculum that inspired development of self knowledge and global understanding of social justice issues. Multicultural education is an ideology "reflecting the cultures of various ethnic, cultural, and language groups, the national culture, and the global community" in which "students study a spectrum of cultures in order to become effective participants and decision makers in a democratic multicultural nation and in a global world".³

Prior to my research, I theorized that in an incarcerated high school setting, a multicultural educational perspective would centralize the discussion issues of race, class and inequality. As educational researcher Kelly Watson revealed in his 1985 study, learning is more effective when new ideas are related to prior knowledge and are

initially taught in ways familiar to students.⁴ This study suggested how culture shapes human behavior, attitudes, and values and how human behavior results from a process of socialization. In addition the sociological work of Chistine E. Sleeter and John U. Ugbu reflected the relationship between students' identity development and the discussion of race. Ugbu theorized that ignoring this discussion in the classroom hindered students' development of identity. In the institution of Camp AP, the discussion of race and identity is tied to processes that influenced rehabilitation and empowerment.

This connection, between personal identity and learning, should be included in creating the curriculum of Camp AP. I postulated a strong correlation between the process of self realization, identity and the goals of rehabilitation. Using a framework of engaged pedagogy as outlined in bell hooks' *Teaching to Transgress*, my research involved establishing a free space where students of Camp AP critically analyzed issues of inequality and injustice affecting today's youth. I sought to introduce political education that reflected values of social justice and activism and asked the young men I worked with to plan the workshops' curriculum. Thus, the primary purpose of my participatory action research discovered the effect of a multicultural curriculum on incarcerated youth at Camp AP and explored the role of

³ James A. Banks, *Cultural Diversity and Education Foundations, Curriculum and Teaching*. (Seattle:

how students' participation acts in tandem with projects of rehabilitation.

At this stage in the research, the presentation of urban issues through a multicultural perspective can be defined as a tool that encourages the ideology of global citizenship, social justice and to questioned individual position and attitudes. The process of empowerment needs to begin in the Camps with a multicultural paradigm of education, which more adequately addresses the population of young men incarcerated at the Camp.

I will continue to base my analysis on a survey of the young men and teachers I worked with at the semester's close. Because the purpose of my research is not quantifiable, I will compare my findings with the long term and short term research goals and research questions I formatted in the beginning. My short term goals, to introduce the young men to alternative, multicultural perspectives of thinking and to present an interest in alternative fields of academia, will be addressed. My long term goals and purpose of my qualitative research, to assess the effectiveness of multicultural education as a venue for empowerment inspiring a process of global citizenship, are more complex to compartmentalize. Furthermore, attempting to

Pearson Education, 2006) 121.

⁴ Banks, 125.

understand my findings in relation to a global context of political abandonment will be another challenge.

Literature Review

Overview

The body of literature relevant to my particular research is complicated. To contextualize my findings I looked at research in the following areas: youth and incarceration, multicultural education, theories of prejudice, language, culture and success and rehabilitative studies.

Understanding the relationship between youth and incarcerated provided a platform to address Camp AP as a social institution. Race and class emerged as crucial topics to consider in the evaluation of my research, as well as the relationship of language, culture and success.

“Multicultural education” is a loaded term as it is theoretically perceived in many different ways. I introduced multicultural education in U.S. school systems through a discussion of theory and research. Leading multicultural education researchers, specifically James Banks, John U. Ogbu and Sonio Nieto, addressed the complex nature of multi-educational paradigms focused on the implementation of social justice issues and democratic values. Educational researcher Christine Bennet

emphasized the historical context of multicultural education and its political roots. This body of research served to critique mainstream educational systems that resonated with the normalization of whiteness, subsequently subordinating low income and minority students.

Research on multicultural education, specifically in the Juvenile Justice System is sparse. However, several useful lessons emerged from studies set in other educational settings that allowed a greater understanding of the effects of multicultural education in the setting of a prison camp high school. The majority of the available literature on youth rehabilitation focused on physiological disorders and treatment. However, researchers, Paul Kivel and Elizabeth Kleinfeld, offered alternative paths of rehabilitation that emphasized empowerment, humanism and resistance, and ultimately provided a strong body of literature upon which to base this project.

Background on Incarcerating Youth

Camp AP is part of a residential probation program orchestrated by the Los Angeles County Probation Department. Youths are sentenced to time in camp as an alternative to supervision in the community or detention in a California Youth Authority facility. While

incarcerated youth are supposed to receive an education adequate to California State standards- often aimed at receiving a high school diploma, known as the GED. The average stay for a court ward to remain in probation camp placement is 163 days (23.7 weeks) - a long and costly sentence for teens often incarcerated for minor, non-violent crimes.⁵

The rehabilitative effectiveness of California Juvenile Justice System is complex to understand. The process of individual rehabilitation calls for the development of empowerment inside and outside of the prison setting. Although an incarcerated person may be motivated to remain free from crime, individual desire is seldom enough. The state of incarceration begins with the state of a society constructed in complex racial hierarchy. A recent report on the 19 probation camps in Los Angeles County reveals that 86% of the juveniles in the camps are men, and 52 % are Hispanic/ Latino, 33 % are African- American, 15 % are white and 2 % Asian and Pacific Islander making Hispanic males the majority of the camp system.⁶

The Los Angeles County Children's Planning Council's 2006 study, *Youth in the Los Angeles County Juvenile Justice System: Current Conditions and Possible Direction Change*, contrasts the mission statement of the camps. This 2006 study revealed

⁵ Jaquelin McCroskey, "Youth in the Los Angeles Juvenile Justice System", March 2006, Los Angeles

inadequacies in education, mental health services, and fair treatment, described as “reflected in impartial and unbiased decision making, measured by reduced racial disparities and access to qualified counsel.”⁷ The narratives and writing of the youth I worked with further substantiated this study’s findings in their expression of isolation, discrimination and antagonism.

As outlined in Steve Macek’s *Urban Nightmares: the Media, the Right and the Moral Panic Over Cities* youth, specifically Black and Latino/a, are among the most stigmatized social groups.⁸ The institutionalization of neoconservative rhetoric--inherently racist public policy popularized in the 80’s--and the media’s framing of inner city communities of color create a stratified population. These forces work against youth of color, systematically oppressing their access to power and feeding the prison industrial complex with young black and brown bodies. Likewise, in the same communities greatly affected by incarceration, educational and social institutions suffer poor funding and political attention. This situation leads to a state of political abandonment, i.e., the exclusion and suppression of select underserved communities exacerbating poverty. Sustainable economic restructuring and grass roots organizing solidifies powerful opposition

Public Health, 7 April 2008, <<http://probation.co.la.ca.us/scripts/RTSB.html>>

⁶ McCroskey,15.

⁷ Ibid, 33.

to this oppression and could prevent incarceration and re-incarceration at its roots. Likewise, reforms in education are essential in negating societal limitation and creating power.

There is a widespread disconnect between students, their communities and the educators who serve them. The inequality that is pervasive in societal norms and politics reflects the framework of US educational systems. Specifically, the structure of an incarcerated high school that is based upon enforcement and suppression resonates with neoconservative fear of today's youth of color. Statistics from the National Council on Crime and Delinquency's report, *And Justice for Some*, echo how "minority youths are being significantly more likely than white youths to be arrested, jailed, brought to trial, and convicted...48 more times likely to be imprisoned for a drug offense than a white juvenile with no record".⁹ The suppression of minority youth is abundant in public policy, the media, and mainstream education.

Multicultural Education

In the 1980's multicultural research became popular. Educational theorists formulated a culturally responsive pedagogy maintaining that discontinuities between educational success and low-

⁸ Steve Macek, *Urban Nightmares: The Media, The Right and Moral Panic Over Cities*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006) 2-32

⁹ " And Justice for Some," January 2006, National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 1 April 2008, <http://www.nccd-crc.org/nccd/pubs/2007jan_justice_for_some.pdf>

income students as important factors in trends of low academic achievement. The theory of multicultural research claimed academic achievement of students from low-income communities would increase in schools if teachers are changed so that they reflect and draw on their cultural and language strengths.¹⁰ Cultural differences theorists used various methods of qualitative research to discover the relationship between languages, dialects, learning characteristics and home cultures of low-income and students of color and how receptive they are to the teachers presentation of materials and methods. John Ogbu's article *Adaptation to Minority Status and Impact on School Success* articulated that a combination of community factors (the cultural model of a minority group, the cultural and language frame of reference, the degree of trust or acquiescence and the educational strategies) shape educational success, rather than micro factors, such as the individual or school¹¹. Ogbu's research of educational paradigms, based on inclusion and exclusion, provided an overview of the inter-connected value of language, culture and success and explores the transaction of culture, learning and space. Studies, such as Ogbu's, revealed the necessity of policy reform that incorporated a

¹⁰ Banks, 7.

¹¹ John U. Ogbu, "Adaptation to Minority Status and Impact on School Success" (*Theory into Practice*:1992) 287-295.

spectrum of teaching styles and interactions conscious of classroom power dynamics and diversity.

Other educational researchers sought to position multicultural education in contemporary social paradigms. Christine Bennett, James Banks, Ricardo Garcia, Sonia Nieto, Geneva Gay, Christine Sleeter, Carl Grant, and Margaret Gibson are among the leaders in the field who developed models for implementing multicultural education and the possible outcomes. Substantial research findings were limited due to the complex nature of quantifying the educational process, specifically in regards to culture, education and language. However, the majority of research on multicultural paradigms over the past twenty five years focused on defining the conceptual parameters in the field, documenting cultural characteristics key to developing sample curricula and instructional strategies for classroom practice.

Researchers Kochman, Nerisser, Shade and Treuba focused their research on identifying and analyzing culturally pluralistic variables and their effect on personal processes of education within various ethnic groups. Other researchers, specifically Banks and Nieto, discovered positive relationships between a multi-cultural framework that changes socialized racial constructions, language and learning.

The current system, reflecting a hegemonic cultural perspective and teaching style, is negligent of the complex nature of diverse populations. Such a unilateral approach automatically affords privilege to certain groups and negates the needs of others. Multicultural education is not primarily an ideology of anti-racism, but rather an ideology that negates monocultural ways of confronting discrimination based on race, religion, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity. Multicultural education aims to empower these silenced groups by helping students develop knowledge, attitudes, and skills to participate effectively in their cultural communities and within their civic culture of the nation-state. A multicultural system would foster diversity in school systems, including diversity in staff, along with a diversity in lesson plans and even school lunch options. Notoriously racist, systematic tracking that pushes white students into AP and honors programs while neglecting students of color would be abolished. The conventional curriculum should be completely overhauled and to include histories, viewpoints and insights from a wide range of perspectives.

Theories of Prejudice: Interpreting Research

An infinite body of literature is pinpointed at understanding the causes of prejudice and theorized ways to attack prejudice on both micro and macro levels. Racial stigmatization in the educational setting is often found to begin on the individual level, teacher to student.¹² Research by multicultural expert, James Banks, showed many teachers displayed negative attitudes and behaviors toward low-income students and students of color, both in subtle and overt ways. Banks found that some teachers communicated negative feelings to students of color and had a disproportionate number of negative verbal and nonverbal interactions with them. Youth of color are faced with immense opposition engrained in hierarchical inequality.

In the 1950's, researchers such as Simpson, Yinger, and Frenkel-Brunswik attributed the development of prejudice to personality types, rather than considering structural influences. In the 60's, Blumer, Saenger, and Gilbert introduced social structure theories of prejudice, theorizing solely about social setting rather than racial attitudes as the prime detriment of behavior. Contemporary theories of discrimination are more holistic and posit that personality, socialization, and structural forces are responsible for the perpetuation of prejudice.

¹² Banks, 192.

Research that questions the relationship between structural changes and the racial attitudes of students is minimal. However, in smaller case studies, research has found concrete strategies to reduce racist ideologies. In 2004, Stephan Vogt examined children's reactions to visual teaching material and their effects on racist attitudes of the students. He found that students exposed to a multicultural spectrum of visual material expressed more positive racial attitudes and those exposed to an ethnocentric curriculum developed more negative racial feelings. Another significant study conducted by Litcher and Johnson in 1969 investigated the relationship between the introduction of multi-ethnic readers to a group of white students. They discovered that those students who used the multi-ethnic readers had positive attitudes about African Americans. Likewise, a study by Ijaz and Ijaz in 1981 discovered that the introduction of four multi-ethnic plays into a racially diverse New York City middle school resulted in a significant reduction of racial prejudices among the student body. A multicultural curriculum can therefore be understood as a tool to implement anti-racist and anti-prejudice ideologies.

Language, Culture and Success

In addition to adopting a national multicultural curriculum, a restructuring of teaching and presentation of material must be addressed. The pedagogies that teachers employ are as imperative as the information they are presenting. A teacher needs to understand their positionality in regards to race, class and culture. If a multicultural perspective is not already present, one should re-examine her approach to teaching and education, in order to be sensitive to a diverse student body. Addressing the relationship between the presentation of material, teaching methods and how various ethnic groups respond to such materials is essential to effectively reaching a range of students. Boykin's 1994 research showed that African-American students tend to be more action-oriented and expressive in their learning styles than the Anglo-American students, and thus demand a different teaching style. In a 1994 study Valenzuela addressed ways teachers could reform their teaching methods, through a mixture of interactive and visual lesson plans, to enhance the academic achievement of Mexican American students.

However, as Ogbu argued in his 1982 article, *Cultural Discontinuities and Schooling*, deeming the widespread difficulty of minority and immigrant students as a result of contrasting school and

home cultures is problematic. He theorized that the educational institution often served as a space where cultural identity was challenged and shaped. The cultural discontinuity hypothesis resonated with a failure to recognize the difference between primary and secondary cultural differences.¹³ He urged educators to consider the values students already possessed when entering the classroom, and how those values conflicted or conferred with their surroundings. Students who felt rejected from the educational system they were immersed in could develop feelings of inadequacy, distrust, hopelessness and overall rejection. He discussed how the value of acquired cultural characteristics in minority or immigrant groups-- that developed as a reaction to being subjugated by mainstream white culture—effected educational success and failure. This study pinpointed complex relationship between primary and secondary cultural influences on minority and immigrant students and revealed the problematic nature of defining culture because it is subjective.

Ogbu suggests the current educational system based on exclusion and inequality reflects dominant hierarchies based in global society. His ideology points to how educational restructuring could symbolically combat global structural inequality. Yet, as the provincial

¹³ John U. Ogbu, “ Cultural Discontinuities and Schooling,”(Anthropology & Education Quarterly: 1982) 290-307.

educational system is a mere reflection of hierarchical inequality, finding the starting point is difficult. However, teachers, on an individual level, can create this possibility.

Rehabilitative Studies

In 1967, the President's Commission of Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice recommended that the juvenile justice system practice judicious nonintervention and avoid incarceration of children and adolescents. The emphasis was on rehabilitation, not retribution.¹⁴ However, current research suggested that claims were never realized. As a contrast to social, liberal movements of the 1960's and 70's, politics of the 1980's were conservative. Neoconservative rhetoric, abundant in popular media and news sources, fueled moral panic over youth of color and inner-city communities. This public internalization of fear reflected in massive budget cuts for inner city social services and educational programs and an increase in policing and surveillance. The Three Strikes Law and Bill Clinton's legislation in 1994 placed the decision on police, rather than the judicial system, to

¹⁴ Andrew Coyle. *The Prisons We Deserve* (London: Harper Collins) 1994, 34.

decide if children should be tried as adults, causing the 13-18 male group to explode in US prison systems.

Currently, state budgets continue to emphasize building prisons over schools and the incarceration rates of persons of color remain visibly unequal to whites. Addressing such tremendous inequality, however, seems exempt from popular dialogue. Researching rehabilitation and empowerment of those incarcerated, specifically regarding Black and Latino males, is more critical than ever.

Copious amounts of literature framed the development of violence in youth, delinquency and the negative effects of incarceration. As Armstrong articulated in a 2002 study, "Specific pains of imprisonment caused by deprivation include the loss of personal security, material possessions, social acceptance, personal autonomy... causing depression, suicide".¹⁵ Although such findings were widely known, circumstances have not improved, and continued to worsen. What needed to be discovered was positive ways for the time spent incarcerated to have positive effects. In terms of education, I found a limited, yet solid, amount of literature that explored educational venues for rehabilitative purposes.

¹⁵ Elizabeth Kleinfeld, *Growing up Post Modern* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishing) 2002, 89.

Elizabeth Kleinfeld's 1993 case study of twelve male prisoners focused on the development of literacy while incarcerated and spoke to this very crisis. She found the prison industrial complex prioritized slave-like labor instead of education and literacy programs. The twelve case studies revealed that literacy for those incarcerated was a way to deal with isolation and gain control in their lives. Another study from the National Prison Association found education for prisoners was constructive because of its ability to enhance self-respect and make prisoners better citizens. Likewise, a 1990 study of pen pal programs for incarcerated men concluded, "Each of these men began to see literacy as empowerment and resistance".¹⁶ Kleinfeld's research furthermore concluded that the curriculum in prisons that did have literacy programs did not have any curriculum designed specifically for prisoners. These findings pointed to an area of research lacking attention—creating curriculum aimed at those who will be learning it; if curriculum is engaging, it would be more effective.

Despite the positive correlation between literacy and a decline of recidivism rates, programs were not being prioritized. A study by Newman in 1993 found many of Maryland's county jails did not offer educational opportunities to juveniles and in several of the jails that

¹⁶ Kleinfeld, 28.

did provide classes, juveniles in administrative segregation were not allowed to attend classes. He also found that some of the jails did not have “books in their libraries other than Bibles”.¹⁷ This body of literature suggested educational systems within incarcerated settings can be understood as inept and under-serving.

Yet, funding for prison literacy and education programs continues to be cut, thus putting the responsibility on researchers to examine the rehabilitation processes, drawing attention to injustices and ultimately spurring policy change. Researchers are asked to create a voice for those incarcerated, isolated and often without access to minimal forms of freedom.

Qualitative Methods

Participatory Action Research

Classic action research, as defined by sociologists Bodgan and Biklen, is “the systematic collection of information that is designed to bring about social change”.¹⁸ Action research allows the researcher to

¹⁷ Ibid. 92.

¹⁸ Mark Smith, “ Action Research” (the Encyclopedia of Information Education) 13 April 2008
<www.infed.org/research/b-actres.htm>

participate in the process of research, paying substantial attention to a process of self- reflection and critique. Classic action research allows a researcher to create and change their research according to problems and weaknesses they realize in their research during the process of self-reflection.

A classic action framework is essential in this paper, as the inspiration for my research came from realized weaknesses of my previous research at Camp AP. During the fall 2007 I was active in a theatre program that involved the reading, discussion and acting of classical theatre, primarily of Shakespeare. While presenting my research from the theater program, I was criticized by a fellow student who had researched the lack of multicultural education in diverse, local high schools. She stated that my curriculum resonated with the normalization of Eurocentric, white education and asked why I thought the young men I was working with, who were primarily Black and Latino, related to our material. When I responded that I looked at theatre books that deemed Shakespeare a classic, a good place to start, I realized my naivety. Her criticism spawned a transformation of how I reflected on the theatre program, and I realized the inherently problematic nature with the class in general. When I contextualized what a classic meant- to what group of people and why- my process of

a racial awakening began. I realized that being white and simply believing that I was not racist, was not enough. I had to learn about white privilege and socialized constructions of whiteness so I could fully reject them, promoting the diversity and equality that I stood for. When I began to realize my whiteness I was shocked and horrified and I soon realized what being an activist truly meant- challenging myself and at times taking shame and turning it into something revolutionary. I wanted to continue my research at Camp AP, but this time, with a completely shifted perspective.

I began researching multicultural education and normalized elements of whiteness in mainstream US curriculum. Upon reading *Multicultural Education as Social Activism* by Christine E. Sleeter I was educated on how silenced a multicultural perspective was in mainstream education. The fact that none of the young men I worked with ever said anything about how the majority of plays we read were from white authors is telling. Perhaps they felt uncomfortable saying something to me about it, or perhaps they did not notice themselves as the majority of the Camp AP curriculum is based in a Eurocentric framework. Perhaps none of the young men voiced concern over the curriculum because they were used to not projecting their opinion

about what they were learning in the classroom, and many other topics for that matter.

Furthermore I felt my negligence in the past to address the racial dynamics in the classroom. Comparing the ethnic breakdown of the Camp AP students with the Claremont tutors complicated these relationships. When a group of majority white college students went into a governmentally confined classroom of majority Black and Latino students to 'help', a voyeuristic and white-savior model could be evoked. That is why it is imperative for Claremont tutors to understand their privileged position, regardless of race or class. I had never been in a classroom where Claremont and Camp AP students' together discussed structural inequality, including dynamics of race, class or gender. It was hard to have such intense and personal conversations, especially in the confined space of Camp AP.

Articulating personal identity and perspective was a complex process. Perhaps this reality reflected why white students often refrained from the dialogue of race. Reflecting on these dimensions, I tried to incorporate the discussion of uncomfortable issues in the urban studies workshop, aimed to bridge this gap and bring myself to a level of equality to the young men I was worked with. Action research allowed for this equality and ownership of voice to occur.

The creation of the urban studies workshop aimed to deconstruct the naivety and Eurocentric power I previously propagated. The new urban studies workshop had a curriculum the young men had agency over and offered a free, creative space where we discussed issues pertinent to our lives. I wanted to create a space where the young men could empower themselves through decision-making and discussion and engagement in processes of identity development. The young men of Camp AP were involved in every stage of my research, from its inspiration for my research, to later assessment of the programs strengths, weaknesses and effectiveness. Their imperative role in my research further reflected a classic action research ideology. Action research gave me the opportunity to attempt a rare phenomenon: I asked incarcerated youth how to empower themselves. In a sense, the young men I worked with became their own action researchers.

Limitations

The examination of dynamics of power within this action research revealed limiting aspects. Over three years I was involved with various programs- an orality to literacy program, a poetry and spoken word workshop, a theatre program and a multicultural urban

studies workshop. My involvement with the young men at Camp AP was an interaction on a personal level, a humane level--something foreign to those confined to the prison complex and high school. Paulo Freire and bell hooks helped me to understand my engagement at Camp AP. Having a heightened awareness of my position of privilege, in relation to the population of incarcerated youth I worked with, was essential while engaged in and reflecting on my research.

In grappling with the issues of voyeurism and tokenization, I understood my personal pedagogy as rooted in genuine humanism and optimism. I strived to be actively involved in the process of self-actualization that promoted the well-being of the young men at Camp AP in a manner that empowered them. However, I realized the limiting nature in hypothesizing that I had the power to effectively empower a group of students over four months, most of who had been disempowered the majority of their educational experience.

When I addressed my positionality in the classroom a range of potentially limiting considerations occurred. As theorized by Stanley Aronowitz in his introduction to Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of Freedom*, a teacher, specifically a white liberal needs to be hyper-aware of the dialogue of race. It is crucial that whiteness be studied, understood and discussed, so it can be fully reversed. Multicultural education is

based on instilling anti- biased thoughts and tactics and values of democracy. When educators negate the dynamics of class and race they presume benevolence towards a particular subordinate group that has been labeled "at risk." Without accepting their privileged position, white educators are part of the social order that created the very reality of the oppression they are engaging in.

I have to accept that being a white woman did influence the effectiveness of my action research that involved the experience of incarcerated youth of color. Each of the young men I was engaged with carried previous experience with white women that resulted in varying levels of trust. Although I attempted to reject negative or racist pedagogy, revealed to be common in white educators, I can never be fully aware of how I was perceived or what I stood for. Because I am not an incarcerated, male, youth of color, I am an outsider to my research, which greatly impacted its success.

Another limitation of the program was the irregular nature of our meeting schedule. The nature of the Camp AP schedule was conducive to constant cancellations and time shifting. State mandated testing and conflicts with the supervising teacher limited our meeting time and caused the workshop to start a month late. I wanted to work with particular teacher, Mr. Reyes, who I have previously worked with,

because of his progressive stance and perspective. Other teachers would not allow a class that discussed complex issues of identity, race, class or inequality for fear the discussion would promote gang violence or inner-ethnic conflict. I wanted the discussion of identity to be acceptable and encouraged. The limiting aspect of working with Mr. Reyes is that he was extremely busy, simultaneously teaching and working on his PhD in night school. He often cut the class short or cancelled it for various reasons, most of which were out of his control. Reflecting on the workshop, I saw Mr. Reyes involvement as essential and conducive to the ideology and perspective I attempted to project.

Likewise, understanding the relationship between multicultural curriculum and the improvement of writing was limited due to the nature of the class. Because the class was not created according to writing and reading levels, the young men presented a wide spectrum of ability. It was difficult to track overall improvement or development of writing skills because class attendance was overall erratic, with the exception of four young men that remained in the program the entire time.

Ethics

As a college student, I had the opportunity to enter a space closed to other members of society. In my findings, I was able to

reflect on the power and privilege that education afforded me. If the family members of the boys incarcerated at Camp AP did not have the ability to enter and leave the compound as they pleased, what gave me this privilege?

The very fact that I have freedom, and furthermore am receiving a college level education- something I was tracked for since before my birth- speaks to larger systematic cycles of privilege and oppression. Being hyper aware of my position in a historical context is crucial to understanding my involvement with at-risk populations. If this dialogue is not a crucial part of my part of my discussion of ethics I " will change nothing and will serve no one, but will succeed on finding moral comfort in malaise".¹⁹

I refer to the students of Camp as young men or youth, not to negate their personal experiences by a measurement of age but rather in comparison to my age. The language some of the teachers at Camp AP use in describing the population of students is very problematic. To them, they are wards, inmates, and criminals, disenfranchised youth, marginalized peoples, gang bangers and fuck ups--the very lexicon the young men internalized to identity – and at times empower-- themselves. I feel these sorts of labels run counter to what my

¹⁹ Banks, 59.

research attempted to do: to instill humanity and vocation in a place where it was denied.

The solid relationship between myself and the young men that developed allowed for an honest space. In interviews and writing, I asked the young men if I could use their ideas and input to write a paper discussing the learning environment of Camp AP. All their names have been changed in an attempt to protect them. This research could be potentially harmful to the students of Camp AP if the administrators who read it, disregard its worth, ignoring the opinions and writings of the class. Although the actual young men I worked with will not feel the benefits of change in their time at Camp AP, I hope this research will challenge the perspectives of the teachers and administrators who read it.

Research Goals

I entered into this research with the following questions: What would happen if there was a creative free space in the incarcerated educational facility where the young men could address issues pertinent to their lives and the lives of other youth globally? Would a multicultural formatting of urban issues (urban meaning issues of city life) instill a sense of global citizenship, perhaps become venue for the

discussion of racism and prejudice in society generally and in their lives? I aimed to find the answers to these questions through this action research project.

On an everyday level the multicultural urban studies workshop provoked and encouraged discussion and thought of critical issues-- such as identity, inequality and racial stigmatization. The young men deserved this, if only for four hours a week- a space where they decided what material we worked with and what issues interested them the most. From the first class, the young men were given agency over planning the workshop's curriculum. Using film, literature and discussion as a jumping of place, I attempted to prompt critical thinking, activism and creativity into the classroom.

Essentially I conveyed to the young men that this classroom was a creative space where they would have the agency to dictate what we learned. In order to assess how interested the young men were in the proposed topic of the workshop, we each completed a worksheet about our idea of urban life- problems and benefits, the way the media portrayed cities and aspects of global urbanism. I wanted to know if this was a topic they were interested in or cared about. My aim was to present urban issues, both globally and locally through film and literature reflecting a range of perspectives. I was prepared to change

the entire concept of the workshop if the young men didn't seem interested, but soon realized any stimulation outside of state mandated curriculum was popular, to some extent.

Reciprocity

On a personal level, the basis of my relationship to the young men over the past three years is a balance of teaching and learning, a reciprocity striving to challenge institutional barriers of incarceration. I try to be there for them as a person and a resource, and they try to be there for me, by responding to the material we use and engaging in our writing and discussion. As captured by Friere "To learn, logically precedes to teach, there is no valid teaching from which there does not emerge something learned and through which the learner does not become capable of recreating and remaking what has been thought; in essence, teaching cannot be taught".²⁰ By allowing me into their lives, through their writing and words about personal issues of community and self, the young men have given me an infinite amount of knowledge.

My research painted a critique of the overall structure of Camp AP. As part of the tenets of action research I plan on submitting my

²⁰ Friere,32.

research to the staff and teachers of Camp Afferlaugh Paige, lobbying for curriculum reform. I will also polish a solid curriculum for this multicultural urban workshop to be passed on in CCCSI programs, in hopes that the lesson plans and ideology will be implemented in future programs.

Methods of Data Collection

CCCSI granted me funding and support for the program. In formatting my idea for the workshop, I submitted a mission statement to the teachers at Camp AP, and hoped one would support my idea and allow me to utilize their time and classroom space. The statement I submitted read as follows,

This workshop would give students the opportunity to experience aspects of life and culture from multiple- perspectives. As a starting point, case studies from India and Los Angeles would be used in this discussion-based workshop to begin the exchange of ideas. The incorporation of multi- media (film, art, photography, literature, and music) would further evoke thoughtful discussion, writing and expression regarding issues of urbanism and urban life. What is similar about culture and people trans-globally? How and why is cultural understanding important? As a class the discussion of certain aspects of the urban experience would be explored and ultimately presented in writing, poetry, spoken word or dance. All aspects of the urban experience- family, gender roles, music, religion, architecture- could be included. The most important element in this workshop would be the voice of the students- what they wanted to learn, how they wanted to learn it? Which areas of the world and different aspects of culture did they want to examine? . This workshop could also serve as a introduction to different areas of academia

(Sociology, Anthropology, Media Studies, Urban Studies). This work-shop would really serve as a free space for exploration and inspiration and would be shaped according to the desires of the students.

I wanted the young men to exercise their voice in the spirit of action research. Not wanting to seem biased, I left the discussion of implementing multicultural education out and focused on the strong global- local comparison with the workshop would be surrounded upon.

My research occurred in the classroom of one of Camp AP's most well known teachers, Mr. Reyes. My research was conducted Mondays, Tuesdays and select Fridays afternoons from 3-5pm, in an optional afterschool program. Mr. Reyes selected students he felt would be most motivated to participate, as well as mature enough to handle such personal material. Tania Gomez, the Urban Fellow of CCSI was also involved in the program, greatly aiding the discussion and writing in the classroom. The class fluctuated from 12 to 16 young men each class. I collected my data through conversation, informal interviews, writing prompts and discussions. Furthermore, I had one formal interview with Mr. Reyes but was unable to schedule interviews with any other Camp AP teachers. My method of data recording--field notes, interpreting writing and informal discussions, provided a large body of material to analyze.

Observations

In interpreting the results of my research, I looked at five main aspects of the workshop: lesson plans, writings, discussion, informal interviews and formal interviews. Each of these methods contributed to my overall findings.

Lesson Plans

In the spirit of action research, I based my interpretation of lesson plans on how well the material was received in class discussion, writings, and informal interviews. Each lesson took anywhere from two to four class sessions to complete and we made changes to the curriculum accordingly. The lesson plans reflected aims of the multicultural urban studies workshop created space for discussion of issue, otherwise negated by standard curriculum. The first lesson, a general introduction to the purpose of the class, was well received. As a teacher figure, I sought to include a range of materials, presenting narratives from around the world, as tool to instigate discussion. Pulling from various theories and studies of multicultural education, I placed emphasis on multiple perspectives, social justice and making global-local comparisons.

Aside from the first lesson plan, I developed as an introduction, the young men helped choose the topics and media we worked with. In the first lesson I presented *Born into Brothels*, a documentary capturing the experience of the children of sex workers in the Red Light District of Calcutta, India. I chose this as an interesting beginning point to present one narrative of urban life. I wanted the young men to think about life through the perspective of the children portrayed in the film and thought this powerful story would attract the attention of the young men, as it had the first time I viewed it- although I wasn't sure if they would be interested in the slightest. This emotional film served as an effective tool to begin the workshop. The next two films we watched *Bowling for Columbine*, a documentary that addressed a range of societal issues in the U.S. and abroad, and *City of God*, a film that explored life in the slums of Brazil, were selected by the young men. Furthermore, a letter writing campaign to local media articulating our opinions about the issues we discussed was the idea of the young men.

After the lessons were completed, I incorporated back into them new questions the young men invented in discussion. We would discuss at the end of every session how we wanted to start the next session. In selecting media and film, I would present varying

suggestions, and the young men would decide what media we wanted to use. Our only guideline from Mr. Reyes was that we had to practice general reading and writing skills. Throughout the course, the discussion and writings that developed reflected heavily upon the experience of incarceration and of being a minority of immigrant student in mainstream US education. Bringing the discussion of inequality into the classroom had been a primary focus of this multicultural urban curriculum. In our discussion, writings and informal interviews- political abandonment emerged as a major theme. Contextualizing political abandonment on a local global scale helped me to seek the topics relevant to the co-creating of a multi cultural curriculum.

Discussion

The emotional and personal dynamic that developed in the classroom was a privilege to be part of. I was shocked at first to watch leadership and discussion in the classroom, something I had never experienced so visually at Camp. I believed the young men felt at ease in the workshop because it is an after-school program and Mr. Reyes, is extremely relaxed and respected from his students. There was a high level of maturity beyond what I had imagined. I found

myself leading the discussion for only the first bit of class, as the young men would take over. They seemed empowered by the material- perhaps because they related to it- and facilitated powerful class discussion. I realized after the first class that I truly didn't need to teach the young men anything they weren't already keenly aware of. Some of the young men already embraced a critique of inequality within the U.S. government and media and drew connections to structural inequality on local and global scales.

Writings

The writing process in the class was unique to each of the young men. One of the young men, a developing English speaker, had trouble formatting sentences, so we worked on structure and grammar. Another, who was quiet and shy in discussion, wrote page after page of poignant and organized writing. As a class, we worked on new vocabulary words (reference Lesson Two) to articulate the emotional and intense topics we discussed and wrote about. The vocabulary lessons were fun as the young men loved learning new words, claiming they would help them flirt with girls. As we discussed after watching *Born Into Brothels* one of the young men claimed, "Miss Miss, add *firme* to the list. (*Firme* is Spanish slang meaning

something is cool/ interesting) See you teach us words, we teach you words." We wrote a long list of new vocabulary in our notebooks, so as they wrote, the words were easy to reference.

We wrote about a variety of topics and in an array of styles, from short responses and free writes to structured paragraphs and a persuasive essay. Analyzing these writings helped me understand the effectiveness of the course material, enhancing what I observed from class discussion. Reading the writings of the young men allowed me to understand their perspectives and encouraged a relationship of trust between us. In my inclusion of the young men's writings I have not changed language or grammar to reflect their voices and writing styles.

Informal interviews

Informal interviews strengthened my action research because they helped to track the effectiveness of the class. The interviews occurred naturally in the classroom, mostly during one on one writing session or if someone asked for individual help. It was in these times that I was able to ask more personal, detailed questions, as well as receive critical feedback about the program, encouraging a participatory action environment. As we would talk and I would ask

questions and jot down key words and phrases on scrap paper. I explained to the young men in the program that I was doing research aimed at making Camp AP curriculum more interesting and fair. I asked if I could re-use examples of their writing and they all agreed, although I have changed all their names. I have comprehensive informal interviews with three students, Ricky, J and Randy, each occurring over the course of two months.

Ricky is 16 years old and participated in the workshop for its entire duration. At first he was quiet and shy, apprehensive to articulate his thoughts in English, his second language. During the writing process he liked Tania or I to sit with him, helping with structure and word choice. Throughout the process of the workshop I observed his confidence improve drastically. He was a positive force in the classroom dedicating his effort to improving his writing.

When we first started talking about our letter campaign he was extremely excited stating over and over again that I had to bring in the paper when we received it. In working one on one with him I asked him about his life, and the way the coursework reminded him of hardships his family went through. Ricky connected the critique of the welfare system Michael Moore presents in *Bowling for Columbine*. He said how hard it was for his mother to pay for him and his brother and

to keep up with the rent checks. He said she gets “ caught” for the rent and how it is hard on the family because they have to move around.

When I asked Ricky what he school was like in his life he explained he was not very interested and didn't go very much. He explained how even though the teacher spoke to him in Spanish, the school work was in English, leaving him frustrated and dis-interested. When I asked him what he liked about our class he told me he felt comfortable and liked what we were studying. When I asked if the topics we had been addressing affected his perspective on any part of his life he answered that it feels good to know people are making solutions to these problems, like Michael Moore. When I asked how he could change Camp AP to make it a better experience for incarcerated students he said better teachers and learning about things that happen in real life.

A second informal interview, with J, occurred in three parts- twice during class time in February and once before class in April. From the first class J was enthusiastic, always with a huge smile. He was quick to share his perspective on a subject or personal experience. He was constantly reflecting a budding level of maturity and I found his upbeat attitude inspiring.

I interviewed J about the strengths and weaknesses of our workshop. He told me he liked being able to watch movies and learn about issues effecting him and his community. He said it felt good to talk about racism because it made him relate to people better. " When we talk about racism it is good because we all experience it. Everyone, it's a big problem." When I asked what else he liked about the class he said he liked writing the letters and that " It feels good to get my story out there." He said he liked the *Born into Brothels* because he learned about India, a place he had never thought of before. He liked *Bowling for Columbine* because it was funny and taught him a lot about the media, fear and gun control. " I like this class because we talk about things I otherwise wouldn't get a chance to talk about, its good for that," he stated. He told me he wanted to do more poetry in the class as well and that the poetry he wrote had a lot to do with a lot of the experiences we talked about. When I asked him if he felt the entire class responded to the program he told me " Those who want to learn, learn a lot and those who don't want to learn, who come anyways to watch movies and stuff, learn too." When I asked him he discussed the issues we talked about in our class, in other classes he said no and offered that teachers weren't enthusiastic. When I asked him if teachers incorporated current events he responded, " Not really, but

Mr. Reyes does. Other teachers talk to you for five minutes and give you worksheets.”

I informally interviewed Randy twice in class while I was helping him with a writing assignment. Randy was quiet but always cooperative. He seemed distracted when we were writing our persuasive essays and I asked him what was up. He said he didn't want to write a letter because nothing would change and that was the way things are. He said that youth are young and crazy now running the streets and that they would calm down when they had babies and needed to get a job. He said it seemed pointless because nothing was going to change. I told him that he didn't have to write a letter but asked him “ Doesn't knowing about the structural inequality and racism make you mad?” He said it did but felt like that was the way it was, there wasn't much hope.

We then started talking about his family, his experience growing up in the San Fernando Valley and how he hated school. He joined a gang in middle school because he said it was so easy “ There are guns and drugs everywhere.” I asked him if his experiences related to any of the movies or discussion we had been doing. He said that it did and it felt good in a way to know he wasn't alone.

He then recalled how said it made him to watch *Born into Brothels*- how it was hopeless how " In the end the kids parents don't even let them go to school." Then I asked him what he thought the point of the film was, to make you feel hopeless? He said no and I asked him if he thought it was to make you think and look at life from a different perspective and he said " Yea, I guess. I did like the guy who took all the pictures." I asked him what issues were important to him that we had been taking about. He said gun control because he was going to be a father one day and wanted the streets to be safe for his kids. He said he worried about getting a good job and wanted to provide well for his children. I then asked him if it was important to be an advocate, a person fighting for social change, a similar idea to him wanting the experience of poverty to dissimilate. He said yes recalling *Bowling for Columbine*, " Learning about the gun industry and the NRA, how those people are horrible and cruel, makes me not want to buy into it. Its bullshit Miss." He then went on to write his letter about gun control and why it was important to have a better screening process.

Formal interviews

I had one formal interview with Mr. Reyes, the teacher I was

working with taking place in his classroom before class started in March 2008. This interview allowed me to gain insight on structural questions about Camp AP, as well as a grounded perspective on the reality of what my research aimed to uncover. Another interview, with Tania Gomez, the co-coordinator of the program occurred in early April 2008 over e-mail, and provided me with a broader base of knowledge about the different institutional programs Camp AP offered.

Analysis

As I analyzed my participatory action research, a few central themes emerged: multicultural education related to the process self-realization, social justice, rehabilitation and empowerment. All four of these findings were inter-connected and built on the same core values of the philosophy of multicultural education.

The Process of Self-Realization

The process of self-realization was multi-faceted and included understanding global and local issues, and how one related to them. I introduced a multicultural perspective in the first class through the discussion of urban life. I spoke about my experience abroad in India

and what life and culture was like there. We discussed as a class what “urban” meant and characteristics of urban life. When I asked what cities look like, the class responded by describing visual aspects of urban areas--lots of buildings, concrete, stores on every corner and Gabriel even drew a picture. We talked about how the media and film portrayed such places and Leo contributed that the nightly news only focused on violence and criminals, never anything positive. When asked about the way the urban city was constructed in the media, Tony wrote,

Usually the cities are portrayed by being dangerous, drug infested and just bad places. Yes, I live in a city. What I like about the city is that there is a lot going on in the city. Yes there are problems, crimes and violence. The youth walk around the cities and pick up things from the street.

This common connection between youth and the urban setting was very relevant, as the majority of the young men in the workshop came from cities and understood complex community dynamics on intimate levels. When asked to explain urban culture one student, Jason wrote “The city is crazy and wild and everybody is in your face. The suburban area is more peaceful and quiet.” The young men were excited to speak about urban life and issues because they could relate to them.

When the conversation shifted from local experiences to ideas of global urban life, the young men observed deep-rooted connections. Davis wrote "Global- yes, some similar things of the cities is- the traffic, the street life people live everyday. Yes I have thought of the global cycles of the oppression and some of them are very depressing." In a general discussion about global issues the young men were engaged and asked me specific questions about India. I spoke about elements of Nepali culture I experienced--religion, festivals, gender roles as well as the extreme poverty, political isolation and drug problems that resonated with Kalimpong. I asked the young men to think about positive and negative elements of the culture they were apart of. We then did a writing exercise in our notebooks including our definition of culture and what culture meant to them.

We then moved on the film, *Born into Brothels*, the reactions from the young men were contemplative and moving. Enrique wrote,

What I think about the movie is that it is sad. It makes me feel lucky to be here and have all these opportunities we have. In other countries things are really bad and we take for granted the things we have. It makes me think twice about the things I do. It kind of touched me in a way that I want to do good now. It is nice how the people in the movie want to help the kids have a better life. I feel grateful to have the things I have.

Another student wrote, "My thoughts about the brothels is that it showed me that I have an opportunity to go to school and to be a better person. The bad thing about this movie is that the way these children live. Their moms are prostitutes in the Red districts. It is sad to know the little girls could be walking the line next. The kids might become bad." How this young man commented on the female perspective presented in the film is extremely perceptive. These two responses reflected how the film could potentially inspire the process of self realization. They began to consider global issues and their relationship to them.

Some of the young men did not know the words to express how this film made them feel. In response we did a vocabulary exercise learning new words to express sadness, hope and despair. The intensity of the film pulled the young men into discussion and writing, impressing me with their keen insight and willingness to be vulnerable. Jose wrote "There should be more people in the world to help people who don't have an education. If there is more people that kind in the world there will be more hope." His reflection on hope is interesting as other members of class found the film hopeless. Using *Born into Brothels* as a tool to frame urban life and present the discussion of a multi perspectives was a success.

The young men drew comparisons between aspects of the film and their observations and experiences in the US. Mike's writings compared the materialism of the U.S. with the poverty in India. In another young man's reaction to the film he expressed how lucky he felt to live in the US and how great things are here. When I asked him to explain further, he said that " India is so dirty and how fucked up for those kids." This glorification of the U.S. was another response to the film I found interesting. *Born into Brothels* is a visually and thematically intense film and caused a range of reaction.

Similarly, in comparing the film to our own lives some of the young men wrote about how the film's messages made them reflect on their experiences. Another student Tony wrote,

What I think about the movie is that there life style is way different than ours. There mothers was prostituting and the children have to work just to make a little money. Some had wanted to go to school but, there parents wouldn't. and it is funny to me because we go to school, but we're not in school. Were all out running the street, gang banging etc. It really sad to, to sad to see that.

The film caused a range of responses because it was something new to their educational experience, resonating with multicultural values aimed to urge students to assess their global and local positionality. Some of the young men found the educational access afforded in the states compared to what was presented in the film as

shocking. One student articulated, " It just seems unfair. Here we are locked up and we are getting an education we don't even want these kids would give anything for one." I observed an overwhelming notion of guilt and empathy in the classroom. In seeing what an intense tone this film created, I am not sure I would choose it again as an introduction. I was not trying to make the young men feel guilty or sad, but rather to implement curiosity- curiosity of the material of the film and connections to our own lives. This dialogue resonates greatly with multi-cultural framework as tool to implement the discussion of issues of social justice.

My research showed how a multicultural presentation of issues is an effective venue for challenging and shaping one's self perception. A unique space was created through the use of relevant materials. I can postulate a positive effect between looking at critical, global issues through a spectrum of media, literature, discussion and writing and the educational experience of the young men at Camp AP. The young men engaged in reflection on moral and political issues in discussion and writing. The issues of privilege, at times internalized as guilt, became apparent. In discussion other young men voiced feeling inspired by the film, and recognized that they could play a role in implanting change. Using different forms of media to construct

knowledge seemed to be effective because it kept the questions, comments and connections flowing.

Multicultural education is not primarily based on an ideology to negate racism, rather it is an ideology to negate a monoculture way of understanding things and confronting discrimination of race, religion, gender, sexuality or ethnicity and seeking to create a more socially aware generation of students. Looking at world issues through a range of perspective formulated in film, I found a positive relation between image and racial attitudes) through observation and the young men's' writings.

The progression of our class throughout the four months showed a development of perspective. As we began to consider issues from multiple-perspectives and learned about cultural groups different from our own, issues of social justice arose in conversation. Understanding societal inequality through the eyes of the children of the Red Light District in Calcutta, those affected by gun violence in America and the youth of the City of God in Brazil have allowed for this. We discussed the idea of perspective in the classroom and the importance of relating to a perspective foreign from your own.

Being exposed to a range or ethnic and cultural groups is an effective tool for opening a persons mind.

Multicultural Education and Social Justice

The inclusion of topics otherwise silenced in the classroom is essential for the students to develop a sense of social and cultural positionality. Social and cultural positionality creates critical thinking, instilling a sense of democratic values, activism and citizenship. Social justice is introduced through a variety of perspectives, teaching styles and curriculum. As captured by Sonia Nieto, “When their (the students) pronounced sense of justice is not channeled appropriately, the result can be anger, resentment, alienation or dropping out of school physically or psychologically”.²¹ When a sense of justice is ignored from an educational setting, it can be understood as a factor suppressing students creating mistrust of educational institutions. Nieto has found that being active in issues of social justice will likewise introduce students to the process of democracy and what it means to be an engaged citizen. The manner in which the Camp AP curriculum silenced these issues can be understood as negatively affecting their students developing process of realization, causing alienation and frustration.

²¹ Sonia Nieto, *Affirming Diversity* (New York: Longman) 1992, 335.

Likewise James Banks extrapolated that the main goal of multi-cultural education is to help students develop decision-making and social action skills. According to Paulo Freire, education for liberation is one of a “transforming action” ultimately empowering students through their cultural perspective and social position.²² A major part of a multi-cultural paradigm involved not only discussion of complex social and political issues, but empowering the students with decision-making skills and a sense of social justice to combat hierarchies of inequality. Social action pedagogy is reflected in the second lesson, which included watching *Bowling for Columbine* and writing persuasive letters to local media addressing misrepresentation and inequality.

As Banks explained, the breakdown of the decision making process should reflect a scale of value inquiry and social inquiry as a means for students to mobilize actions.²³ Once students are introduced to issues reflecting our vulnerable multicultural society—immigration rights, segregated housing, affirmative action and discrimination--they could begin to perform research, both through literature and in their own communities, through surveys and interviews. With a strong understanding of the issues reached, the students could determine

²² Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy and Civil Courage* (Oxford: Rowman and Litterfield Publishers) 1998, 1-12.

²³ Banks,143.

appropriate paths of activism for change. This paradox is revealed in how many of the young men reflected a conception of being part of the problem and part of the solution. For instance "I think they should change the government and also some of the laws because some art too soft on us." Another young man responded to *Born into Brothels* explaining, "They want education so bad and we are in prison and getting one for free that we don't even want."

After watching *Bowling for Columbine*, I attempted to mimic Banks' idea in asking the young men how they felt we should respond to such injustice. They decided on a letter writing campaign to be sent out to local media to voice their opinions and policy suggestions about the pivotal issues we were discussing. In constructing persuasive letters as a class, I was captured by the young men's ideas. At first some of the students reflected self-doubt suggesting their writing skills and societal placement weren't adequate and "Miss, I cant even write a paragraph and "who is going to listen to us about gun control? We are gang bangers." Eddie articulated this socialized doubt, commenting "I think they should change the government and also some of the laws because some laws are too soft on us." Here Eddie reflected a socialized construction of his social and cultural identity, as part of the problem and potentially part of the solution. In one regard,

he has separated himself from mainstream society and public space. On another, he has recognized the structural problems beyond himself. I observed the beginnings to the process of self-realization. I wondered how a multicultural curriculum effected ones development of identity, and if any empowerment resulted. Mr. Reyes stated,

I have noticed that my best students are those who are confident in themselves. Guys like this know who they are and that their world is not narrowly defined. They may not know much but they're confident that they can make things happen that are necessary to happen. I guess these guys do feel identity and empowerment.

As the workshop progressed, I observed the young men beginning to feel more comfortable because our relationships had strengthened. A sense of perspective became apparent in our writings. J started his letter, "Dear the people that's in our business for no reason" commenting on these heightened dynamics. We made a huge flow chart on the wipe board brain storming problems and solutions we had been discussing. Each person chose three main ideas they wanted to write about. Gun control, racism, discrimination, education reform and the misrepresentation of Black and Latinos in the media were heavily contemplated ideas. The letters showed an intricate connection between individual positionality and understanding of structural forces, as well as a vision of change for the future. For instance,

My name is Edgar ruiz. I am 18 years old. I was born and raised in Pasadena. I have no Mom or Dad, I was raised by my Aunt

and Uncle. The reason I am writing this topic is because I feel there is lots of discrimination going on in the world around us. I also feel that there is no gun control.

I am writing about gun control in this topic. The reason I am going to talk about gun control is because I think it's a problem because too many people are dying over guns. The reason I know this is because there are people going into schools and shooting people for no reason and also to many gang murderers. I also think that there is no gun control because there are places where they sell guns and bullets in walmart-banks and also barber shops.

On the next topic I am going to talk about discrimination and racism. There is many discrimination and racism going on in the world. For example people wont hire Mexicans of African Americans because of racism.

Another letter reads,

I want to change the laws. I think they should sell guns to older people, not children. I want the government to create more jobs for people. I want them to have more freedom. My name is Michael and I am 16 years old. I worry about my Mom and brother because she pays for the rent. She goes to buy food for my little brother and my family members.

I think there should be more gun control. There are also many misrepresentations of minorities and violence in the U.S. I also think that innocent people get shot because they do not do anything bad. If there was more gun control we would not have to worry about crime and violence.

A lot of people die due to violence. People go crazy because they cant control themselves. People don't have an education and don't respect each other. People don't care they discriminate each other. If people cared more and had respect for each other there would be less violence.

The letter writing campaign reflected critical thinking as formatted by bell hooks and the social justice paradigm articulated by Banks. The ideas the young men had for solutions to these complex,

structural problems were creative and resourceful, reflecting critical thought.

The letters reflected an ideology of literacy as resistance- resistance to societal oppression and resistance to the atmosphere of silence while incarcerated. Through literacy, their voices transcended prison walls and are currently somewhere in the mailroom of the *Los Angeles Times*, waiting to be realized. As articulated by Blake,

The 'culture of refusal' has taken a strong hold on these adolescents. They have been rejected from school and school literacy and have found ways, in dropping out and forming allies both in and out of jail, to survive. Can 'rehabilitative education' change this? If we were to begin to implement a curriculum that is not focused on low- level skills but rather is focused on the local literacy's of these young men, would we be more successful in helping them to navigate mainstream society?²⁴

A multicultural education as a formula to empower incarcerated juveniles to navigate mainstream society is a beautiful and profound idea. In my policy position, I would urge even more relatable and pertinent knowledge, such as practical life skills-- filing for auto-insurance, registering to vote, attaining health care-- as the young men suggested. In my continuing curriculum suggestions I reflect this desire in the formation of more applicable life skills lesson plans.

Multicultural Education as a Form of Rehabilitation

²⁴ Blake,55.

This writing reflected the nature of inclusion and exclusion notable in mainstream U.S. education, as well as societal attitudes towards today's youth. This writing depicted a person greatly affected by the issues of justice and the inequality our workshop aimed to deconstruct, and in another sense, a self deemed propagator of societal problems. This self- othering of spoke to the exclusion common to the experience of urban youth of color, effectively pushed out of unsuccessful education systems and again pushed out of public space through hyper policing and a fearful public. As captured by Brett Elizabeth Blake in *A Culture of Refusal*,

Adolescents who are shut out from public space that most of us operate in on a daily basis, who are "demonized" by a society that believes that minority youth, in particular, will take over entire cities, leaving destruction in their wake- those adolescents who are shut out of their central public space in which they are supposed to be equal participants in their social and literate selves- school- find their own public space in which live and become literature. These public, cultural spaces in alternative culture- the culture of refusal.²⁵

The culture of refusal speaks to societal attitudes limiting and confining the success of youth of color in attaining power, causing defense paradigms such as the development of hyperbolic sub- culture and sub- society. Many of the young men separate themselves from

²⁵ Elizabeth Brett Blake, *A Culture of Refusal* (New York: Peter Land Publishing) 2004,1.

mainstream societal systems because they are normalized to this distinction. This projection of self- othering might be a reaction to perceived subordination of factors limiting their voice and power. Mainstream education, which in its very nature is exclusionary and repressive, speaks to this construction. A hyper visible street culture- which many of the young men from the workshop identify with-- could be understood as a sub-culture reacting to the limited, narrow and stigmatizing ideology of US school systems. The negligence of a multicultural perspective in educational pedagogy perpetuates systems of subordination.

One informal interview I conducted reflected this perspective. While working with one student on his persuasive letter, my researcher bias became apparent. Randy told me how sad he felt writing this letter because he did not care- he felt nothing would change. He stated, "Miss, I don't really care. It's because we are young and crazy. Just running around having fun...when you get serious, is when you have babies, get a job and shit. This shit just makes me feel bad because we are part of the problem." Thus far in my research, I had been so thrilled by the positive reaction of the young men to the course material that I had not focused on how intense the experience of internalizing such information could be.

This interview allowed me to understand my research in a different light than classroom discussion, adding complexity to the purpose of what my research aimed to uncover. I asked myself, what was the purpose of discussing inequality with a group of students who experienced inequality every day? The hopelessness which can accompany learning about inequity and injustice--“Nothing will change” and “this is the way things are, they don’t change”—is something I simply did not have the answers to. Yet, these very conversations speak to the effectiveness of an engaged pedagogy that inspires critical thought. The willingness of the young men to consider overwhelmingly oppressive issues on personal levels suggests the effectiveness of humanity in a place it is most often shunned. Regardless of my ideological examination of multicultural education, a significant effect of conversation and interaction can be realized.

Multicultural Education and Empowerment

When I asked if the young men had ever heard of multicultural education, they said they had not. Tania, the workshop co-coordinator explained, “If we are learning about one culture, wouldn’t food and music from that culture make you understand more? Teaching

information through the lens of many different cultures.” The students agreed, reflecting their acknowledgment of current singular, cultural systems. I asked if the young men had experienced multicultural perspectives in Camp AP or previous schools. One expressed feeling racially discriminated against in a previous classroom and how more teachers of color were needed. We all agreed and discussed how students have access to power and change within their school systems. I asked if the class felt more comfortable to speak in this workshop than in regular class and they said it did. Currilo exclaimed, “If school was like this on the outs I would go every day!” The room chuckled with laughter, but I observed how a multicultural perspective positively engaged everyone in the classroom. The multicultural perspective allowed an open platform for discussion, critique and policy reform to occur. It promoted creative, engaging dialogue shedding light to the possibility that the young men could be part of the democratic, solution making process.

In our media selection, the critique societal inequality was important, and inspired critical thinking and writing. We sought to analyze representation and perspective, specifically in relation to its effect on youth of color. One student leading conversation spoke about how Black and Latinos were always to blame and how blame resulted

in more policing. Another student wrote how misrepresentation was unfair, causing violence and the breakdown of family structures. In analyzing the media and how minority groups are used as scapegoats, Eddie proposed "We need some gangbangers on the news... they wont tell a lie," perceiving the need for diverse media and multi perspectives. He then suggested that more people of color need to be working in the news for this pattern of blame to subside-- a suggestion with which urban sociologists and anthologists would agree.

When we compared the relevance of guns in *City of God*, to *Bowling for Columbine* the discussion of social justice was furthered. The critique of gun control laws and the commercialization of violence was an important theme that some of the young men expressed throughout the program. One student wrote, "I am Mario Logan. I am a teenage father trying to raise my kids in a positive manner. The loss of gun control can have an effect on infants growing up in more ways than one." Another student suggested that they should have age restrictions on guns so they would not be as accessible. He wrote "How people bring guns to school. How people buy in Kmart. People from Kmart they don't care. How a 6 year got kill. He ask the owner if couldn't have guns," touching on the consumer nature of the US and how violence is propagated as a result. Jose commented on how this

consumerism fuels inter-ethnic conflict writing "It's the stupid people with a gun that kills people. It is also that racism kills people. People think that it's Mexicans and Blacks who are the ones. In order to stop the violence, is to stop selling weapons." Another student wrote about marginal communities seeking power through violence after watching *City of God* writing "I think that the laws in the government need to change people many people are being killed in the streets. Black and brown communities are treated unfairly, and the only power is in guns." The discussion of how gun control issues affected mainstream racial discourse was a poignant connection.

Resonating with *Born into Brothels*, *Bowling for Columbine* and *City of God*, education was an issue we critically addressed in the program, coming up with a variety of reform suggestions. The young men articulated the abandonment of educational systems in India, Brazil and Los Angeles. For instance James spoke that "In the red light district, it is easier for kids not to go to school then to go to school. The scene with the lady trying to get papers for the kids, those huge piles." Other students were shocked by the rampant violence of children projected in *City of God*, and J wrote, "it was crazy how that was real. All them lil kids was dying everyday and killing. It wasent even until the end when they started talking about not being able to

write." These reflections showed a developing scene of global positionality and recognition of global issues. Marquise provided a comparisons resonating with education in Los Angeles is his narrative for his film prompt. It reads,

My perspective in the film is about going to Crenshaw high school, is very corrupt. Going there starting at the 9th grad, fifteen years old is very dangerous because there are lots of gangs around the area. As in the Rolling 60's, Rolling 40's, Rolling 50's, Van Ness Bloods. So of them gangs are rival and so close to each other, so you wouldn't know which gang came through. The chance of joining a gang going to Crenshaw high school is very high, because when a person has been around violence, so long as see things that seem fun increase the chance if joining a gang.

His writing showed a similar connection between a lack of solid education systems, the prevalence of gang identities, and an increase in violence.

In class discussion we brainstormed solutions to reform the failing state of education. A common expressed desire was the need for teachers who actually cared about the students and wanted to be there. One student expressed, "We need more teachers like Mr. Reyes, bringing in current events and stuff. Just reading shit in the text book from our parents' parents' time don't do anything. We need to know about now." Furthermore, the young men voiced similar notions of educational reform, reflecting the needs of a diverse student body. Greg suggested that schools need "Real life skills, like how to file auto

insurance...how to be independent. To live independent, to think independent." Eddie continued, "We need to know survival skills, like how to survive in the woods." I found this fascinating and pointed out how we all need survival, mental survival. I placed my hand on the board we were writing two lists on-- one column of problems, one of solutions and pointed to the long list of problems saying, "We need to know how to survive against all these forces, don't you think? Look at what our government and our society is doing to us!" The classroom grew heated and the conversation continued until the last minutes of class.

In this light, an engaging multicultural curriculum can be understood as an effective tool for survival- keeping students engaged and actively developing critical thinking and literacy. As shown in a 1990 study of pen pal programs for prisoners, those incarcerated began "to see literacy as empowerment and resistance".²⁶ My research shows a positive relationship between multicultural education and classroom engagement, effectively proposing that multicultural education could potentially create a space for empowerment and resistance to begin.

Findings

²⁶ Kleinfeld, 93.

Interpreting my analysis and assigning meaning to my research was a fluid process centered upon continual reflection of the data. My body of fieldwork continued to grow in complexity as the workshop progressed, and I was able to create many links to contemporary literature and theory. The workshop reflected how multicultural education is engaging and critical in nature, and caused the young men to question their social and cultural positionality, on a local and global scale. A multicultural framework facilitated a diverse and relatable curriculum, instigating processes of self realization and racial awareness. This multicultural curriculum, an alternative approach to education and empowerment of students, called for a comprehensive curriculum reflecting the needs of a versatile student body. This multicultural format allowed a discussion of traditionally silenced constructions, such as race, class and inequality that effectively fostered a critical understanding of societal oppression. An introduction of social justice values was powerful in moving beyond the acknowledgment of inequality and presented a platform where activism, consciousness and citizenship were discussed. This is evident in the policy reform apparent in the workshops writings and class discussion.

A multicultural curriculum is effective to teach more students, as it speaks to many perspectives and learning styles. Multicultural coursework is effective because it centers on real issues affecting our society- issues we need to be educated about to “survive.” I observe how this level of engagement is positive regarding the development of articulation, expression and writing in the classroom. When writing and reading about issues which matter, students will flourish, committing themselves to reading and writing, composing thoughtful and structured essays and paragraphs.

In the real of multicultural educational issues, perhaps most importantly, the position of teachers needs to be addressed. When speaking with the young men about educational reform, they voiced the need for caring teachers. I cannot pass judgment on the entire teaching staff at Camp AP, but I observed a lack of mutual respect and care in some instances. Even more so at Camp AP, a juvenile detention high school, care should be seen as a part of a rehabilitative system. A multicultural paradigmatic shift could revitalize the process of rehabilitation and education in its entirety if those subjected were included and celebrated. It is imperative for “Teachers to critically examine the cultural backgrounds and social formations out of which their students produce the categories they use to give meaning to the

world. Teachers are dealing with individuals whose stolen memories, narratives and readings of the world are inextricably related to wider social and cultural formations and categories. The issue here is not merely one of relevance, but one of power".²⁷

A multicultural curriculum stresses equilibrium of power within the classroom, transcending normalized meanings of a teacher/student relationship. When a teacher realizes the significance of a multicultural experience for their students, inequality becomes part of the dialogue and the process of self-realization and citizenship follows. Working with Mr. Reyes was essential to the success of this workshop because he is a unique figure, someone who is passionate and *does* care. When I asked him his opinion on the general relationship between the young men and the teachers he claimed, "Like everything else some teachers are better at "relating" to our students than other teachers or staff. I feel that all the teachers try hard at educating students but as with all things some are better at educating than others" acknowledging this dynamic. He also explained however that as teachers, they have no background in counseling, possibly explaining this disconnect. I can suggest that teachers working with

²⁷ Blake,113.

incarcerated youth should possess specific attitudes and curriculum ideas geared formatted for the population they are working with.

The politics of abandonment framed in *Born into Brothels*, *Bowling for Columbine* and *City of God* became a successful tool for explorative discussion specifically understanding the power dynamics inherent in the construction of space. In the classroom, one of the students commented on the similar geographic spread out of the ghetto in *Born into Brothels* and *City of God*. "Just like South Central. I am from the ghetto too," one student claimed. In our reflecting on what urban experience was like worldwide, the young men touched on varying conceptions of inequality. One student wrote "In the city all the poor people are kept together in the ghetto. The ghetto is for drug dealing guns and gangs." Another student commented on government policies and how they do nothing to help those worse off. He then wrote about the failures of welfare and how this resulted in the school shooting of a six year old. The construction of space and political abandonment was a connection the young men made throughout the semester.

Conclusion

The relationship between the construction of space-- who or what is included, who is limited, who is stagnant, who is oppressed--

brings forth questions of power in society. For human beings, space is a critical resource. Without space in which to exist, how and where can existence occur? When space is contested, the experience of powerlessness occurs. Discussing issues of powerlessness and abandonment with a group of incarcerated youth- essentially people disempowered themselves- has been a tremendous learning experience. For the young men at Camp AP, the space of an incarcerated classroom with a Eurocentric model of learning is a space of repression. In order for true rehabilitation, growth and learning, the young men at camp need a nurturing space, one in which multi-perspectives are granted and cherished.

CCCSI programs challenge inequality using words, thoughts, theatre, movements and writing to create a space where empowerment can flourish. As Paulo Freire suggests, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, "Only the oppressed have the true power to humanize their oppressor." The products of these programs- often writings of Camp AP's students, are often used in student research lobbying for policy reform, embodying the crucial importance of reciprocity in participatory action research. Frantz Fanon theorized a similar power dynamic in *The Wretched of the Earth* declaring,

The collective struggle presupposes a collective responsibility at the top. Yes, everyone must be involved in the struggle for the

sake of common salvation. There are no clean hands, no innocent bystanders. We are all in the process of dirtying our hands in the quagmire of our soil and the terrifying void of our minds. Any bystander is a coward or a traitor".²⁸

The voices, thoughts and experiences of those subjugated are those that need to be heard. The implementation of a multicultural curriculum, one that resonates with the issues affecting their lives, would begin the process of undoing this educational abandonment. In a sense, a non multicultural education framework can be internalized as yet another form of abandonment from the classroom, reinstating society's disregard. Young men are suppressed into the post- industrial urban ghetto, suppressed into silence, and suppressed into incarceration. Simple acts of humanity, reciprocity and community, as shown in my action research, can begin to change such deeply rooted and chronic issues. A diverse educational framework does make a difference- I have seen it in the progression of the young men I have been engaged with, from their willingness to express themselves to their profound and important writings. Holistic education focused on partnership and change- a small factor of a major issue- is the first step in ceasing these cycles of violence, neglect and hate. Camp AP, and our greater educational system, must take this first step towards reform and modification.

²⁸ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press) 1961, 140.

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Appendix

Lesson 1- an Introduction to Urban Studies:

First introduce myself, my history and the reason for this class, explain that everything we do in the class will have input from the young men.

Part One: Writing exercise:

1. When you think of urban life- living in a city, what images come to mind?
2. When you have seen cities portrayed in the media- film, the news, music- how are they constructed?
3. What does culture mean to you?

4. Do you think culture is different in urban and suburban areas? If so why?

5. Do you live in a city? What do you like or dislike about it? Are there problems? How is the cities youth effected?

6. Have you ever thought about your city (the positive and negative aspects) and how they could be similar to other cities globally? What similarities do you think might occur? Have you ever considered global cycles of oppression?

Part Two: Discussion

(Prompt) Does learning about cities in India, Brazil and California interest you? If so, what aspects:

Collective Brainstorm of urban issues:

Youth cultures

Media

Social revolution (Los Angeles Uprisings, etc.)

Crime

Violence

Ethnic relations

Urban history- development of cities, migration patters

Immigration

Music

Architecture

Literature

Photo

Oppression

Racism

Judicial System

Education

Political Systems

Grass- roots movement (community-based people's movements)

Food

Availability of food

Gender Roles

HIV/AIDS

Education systems

Economy

Religion

Poverty

Activism
Welfare systems
Police Brutality
Riots
Non- Violent social change
Drug- trade
Drug addiction
Conservative political rhetoric
Politics of abandonment

After compiling this list, we discussed as a class which aspects the young men would be interested in exploring. HIV/AIDS, immigration, poverty, racism and police brutality were among the most popular.

Part Three: Read/ Discuss writing prompts- discuss the construction of the urban slope in the media and what urban life means to the class

Part Four: Read highlights from *Urban Nightmares* Chapter four discussion the portrayal of urban crime and life in the news

Lesson Two- *Born into Brothels*, India vs. California:

Part One: introduce my experience in India, living in Kalimpong and studying educational systems, tell them about the boys high school in Kalimpong where I conducted research

Part Two: Watch *Born into Brothels*

Part Three: Free Discussion (general opinions, reactions, feelings about the film, about India, any connection to their own lives, comparing India and California)

Part Four: Vocabulary and Writing- as we discussed the heavy material of *Born into Brothels* some of the young men has trouble articulating their thoughts and emotions. As a suggestion by Mr. Reyes, the next day we did a vocabulary and writing exercise about the film.

Dismal: [afflictive](#), [black](#), [boring](#), [cheerless](#), [cloudy](#), [dark](#), [depressed](#), [depressing](#), [desolate](#), [despondent](#), [dim](#), [dingy](#), [disagreeable](#), [discouraging](#), [disheartening](#), [dispiriting](#), [doleful](#), [dolorous](#), [dull](#), [forlorn](#), [frowning](#), [funereal](#), [ghastly](#), [gruesome](#), [hopeless](#), [horrible](#), [horrid](#),

inauspicious, joyless, lonesome, lowering, lugubrious, melancholy, miserable, monotonous, morbid, murky, oppressive, overcast, sad, shadowy, somber, sorrowful, tedious, tenebrous, troublesome, unfortunate, unhappy

Optimistic: Pollyannaish, anticipating, anticipative, assured, at ease, blithe, buoyant, calm, cheerful, comfortable, confident, content, eager, elated, emboldened, enthusiastic, expectant, expecting, faithful, high, hoping, inspirited, lighthearted, reassured, rosy, sanguine, satisfied, serene, trustful, trusting, unflagging, upbeat

Corrupt: base, bent, bribable, crooked, debauched, double-dealing, exploiting, extortionate, faithless, fixed, foul, fraudulent, inconstant, iniquitous, knavish, mercenary, nefarious, open, padded*, perfidious, praetorian, profiteering, racket up, reprobate, rotten, shady, snide, tainted, treacherous, two-faced, underhanded, unethical, unfaithful, unprincipled, unscrupulous, untrustworthy, venal

Oppression: abuse, abusiveness, autocracy, brutality, calamity, coercion, compulsion, conquering, control, cruelty, despotism, dictatorship, domination, fascism, force, forcibleness, hardness, harshness, injury, injustice, iron hand, maltreatment, martial law, misery, overthrowing, persecution, severity, subduing, subjection, suffering, torment, tyranny

Overwhelmed: affected, beaten, blown away, bowled over, buried, conquered, defeated, moved, overthrown, run over, speechless, swamped, taken, taken down

Part Five: Discuss new words and write each one in a sentence relating somehow to the film or reflections on it, then share and discuss.

Part Six: Follow up on lesson, get feedback and discuss what the class wants to do next week.

Lesson Three: *Bowling for Columbine* and the Media

Part One: *Watch Bowling for Columbine*, introduce concept of satire and social critique

Part Two: Free discussion, observations, likes, dislikes, what we could/ could not relate to, specific scenes of information which was striking-

Things to consider:

- * What was the population of the United States when the Second Amendment was drafted and how did most Americans live?
- * Compare this life to the current living conditions (both urban and rural) of the United States.
- * What dangers (personal and social) did people face then compared to now?
- * Consider the language of the Second Amendment. Do you think it refers to the individual right to possess guns or to the collective right of the people?

Part Three: Paragraph responses

1. What issues and themes does the film present?
2. What questions about the United States are raised in the film?
3. Brainstorm examples of short-term solutions vs. long-term solutions.
4. Is it your responsibility as an American to support gun rights or have modern weaponry and living conditions made the Second Amendment obsolete?
5. An underlying theme in the film is the issue of white racism and how this racism has spawned fear. Using specific examples from the film as well as other research, agree or disagree with the concept that racism in our country leads to fear.
6. When young people commit violent acts, who and/or what is to blame?
7. In our democratic society, what is the media's responsibility to the American public?
8. Does the media play on our fears or create new messages? Why/why not?

9. Take a position and support it: Do you believe the U.S. media is reliably reporting what is happening around the world?

10. Moore uses various editing styles throughout the film (dramatic, humorous, shocking, satirical, etc.) to convey his messages. Describe and explain as many of them as you can. What point is the filmmaker trying to make? How/why are these effective or not in your view?

11. According to filmmaker Michael Moore, the number of household guns in a country does not necessarily equate the degree of gun violence in that country. If it's not the number of guns, what factors do contribute to the violent nature of a society?

Part Four: read article " Killer Kids" by Barry Glassner, Introduction of the 'Culture of Fear' Why Americans are Afraid of the Wrong Things

When we are not worrying about deadly diseases we worry about homicidal strangers. Every few months for the past several years it seems we discover a new category of people to fear: government thugs in Waco, sadistic cops on Los Angeles freeways and in Brooklyn police stations, mass-murdering youths in small towns all over the country. A single anomalous event can provide us with multiple groups of people to fear. After the 1995 explosion at the federal building in Oklahoma City first we panicked about Arabs. "Knowing that the car bomb indicates Middle Eastern terrorists at work, it's safe to assume that their goal is to promote free-floating fear and a measure of anarchy, thereby disrupting American life," a New York Post editorial asserted. "Whatever we are doing to destroy Mideast terrorism, the chief terrorist threat against Americans, has not been working," wrote A. M. Rosenthal in the New York Times.

When it turned out that the bombers were young white guys from middle America, two more groups instantly became spooky: right-wing radio talk show hosts who criticize the government-depicted by President Bill Clinton as "purveyors of hatred and division"-and members of militias. No group of disgruntled men was too ragtag not to warrant big, prophetic news stories.

We have managed to convince ourselves that just about every young American male is a potential mass murderer-a remarkable achievement, considering the steep downward trend in youth crime throughout the 1990s. Faced year after year with comforting statistics, we either ignore them-adult Americans estimate that people under eighteen commit about half of all violent crimes when the actual

number is 13 percent-or recast them as "The Lull Before the Storm" (Newsweek headline). "We know we've got about six years to turn this juvenile crime thing around or our country is going to be living with chaos," Bill Clinton asserted in 1997, even while acknowledging that the youth violent crime rate had fallen 9.2 percent the previous year.

The more things improve the more pessimistic we become. Violence-related deaths at the nation's schools dropped to a record low during the 1996-97 academic year (19 deaths out of 54 million children), and only one in ten public schools reported any serious crime. Yet Time and U.S. News & World Report both ran headlines in 1996 referring to "Teenage Time Bombs." In a nation of "Children Without Souls" (another Time headline that year), "America's beleaguered cities are about to be victimized by a paradigm shattering wave of ultraviolent, morally vacuous young people some call 'the super predators,'" William Bennett, the former Secretary of Education, and John DiIulio, a criminologist, forecast in a book published in 1996.

Instead of the arrival of superpredators, violence by urban youths continued to decline. So we went looking elsewhere for proof that heinous behavior by young people was "becoming increasingly more commonplace in America" (CNN). After a sixteen-year-old in Pearl, Mississippi, and a fourteen-year-old in West Paducah, Kentucky, went on shooting sprees in late 1997, killing five of their classmates and wounding twelve others, these isolated incidents were taken as evidence of "an epidemic of seemingly depraved adolescent murderers" (Geraldo Rivera). Three months later in March 1998 all sense of proportion vanished after two boys ages eleven and thirteen killed four students and a teacher in Jonesboro, Arkansas. No longer, we learned in Time, was it "unusual for kids to get back at the world with live ammunition." When a child psychologist on NBC's "Today" show advised parents to reassure their children that shootings at schools are rare, reporter Ann Curry corrected him. "But this is the fourth case since October," she said.

Over the next couple of months young people failed to accommodate the trend hawkers. None committed mass murder. Fear of killer kids remained very much in the air nonetheless. In stories on topics such as school safety and childhood trauma, reporters recapitulated the gory details of the killings. And the news media made a point of reporting every incident in which a child was caught at school with a gun or making a death threat. In May, when a fifteen-year-old in Springfield, Oregon, did open fire in a cafeteria filled with students, killing two and wounding twenty-three others, the event felt like a continuation of a "disturbing trend" (New York Times). The day after the shooting, on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered," the criminologist Vincent Schiraldi tried to explain that the recent

string of incidents did not constitute a trend, that youth homicide rates had declined by 30 percent in recent years, and more than three times as many people were killed by lightning than by violence at schools. But the show's host, Robert Siegel, interrupted him. "You're saying these are just anomalous events?" he asked, audibly peeved. The criminologist reiterated that anomalous is precisely the right word to describe the events, and he called it "a grave mistake" to imagine otherwise.

Yet given what had happened in Mississippi, Kentucky, Arkansas, and Oregon, could anyone doubt that today's youths are "more likely to pull a gun than make a fist," as Katie Couric declared on the "Today" show?

Part Five: follow up, discussion, reactions about film and article, what does the class want to do next

(In the class the young men decided they wanted a way to get their voices and opinions about some of the issues we have been learning about. We decided to work on persuasive letters to send out to local politicians and media outlets)

Lesson Four: Persuasive Letter to local media/ governor/ politicians

Part One: Draw web or diagram of essay ideas, words, topics

Part Two: Introduce format for persuasive essay

Part Three: Talk about Background Information- introduce idea of positionality (who we are, where we are from, our social and cultural identity, why we are writing this letter and why our voices are important)

Persuasive Essay Organizer

Introduction Paragraph

Topic Sentence _____

Background Information

- _____

- _____
- _____

Thesis Sentence/Statement

State your position _____

State Point 1 _____

State Point 2 _____

State Point 3 _____

Three Body Paragraphs

Paragraph on Point 1

Topic Sentence _____

Evidence + Ways to Persuade **Point #1**:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Conclusion Sentence _____

Paragraph on Point 2

Topic Sentence _____

Evidence + Ways to Persuade **Point #2**:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Conclusion Sentence _____

Paragraph on Point 3

Topic Sentence _____

Evidence + Ways to Persuade **Point #3:**

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Conclusion Sentence _____

Conclusion Paragraph

Restate Your Position _____

Restate the most compelling evidence

- _____
- _____
- _____

Conclusion Sentence _____

Lesson Five: *City of God* – perspective, construction of space, personal narrative

Part One: Watch *City of God*

Part Two: general discussion

What are your general reactions to the film- what did you like and what did you dislike?

What parts of the film struck you- visually, music, narrative, specific scenes?

Why do you think this film is called *THE CITY OF GOD*?

How does the film represent space in the favela? What is private? What is public? Visually how did it appear? Does it remind you of anything else?

Part Three: Writing Exercise about perspective

City of God

1. Define: perspective:
2. What is the point of this film? Who is telling the story? What is their perspective? What influences perspective? What do you think the point of the film is?
3. Can you relate to the perspective of the story teller? What are the benefits from looking at life through perspectives different from your own?
4. How does *City of God* relate to *Born into Brothels* or *Bowling for Columbine*? In comparing the films representations of India, the United States and Brazil, what similarities occur? What differences?

Brazil United States India

Part Four: Personal Narrative

You are directing a movie about your life- what perspective would you want to project? What story would you tell and for what audience and point? What issue or effect would your film seek to address?

5. Draw out a time-line or scene of your movie.

Lesson Six: Continuing Education

Suggestions for Further Lesson Plans:

1. Real Life Skills

- Make a list together of what practical skills the young men would like to know (filing auto- insurance, health insurance, how to find out about local colleges and vocational schools and how to apply, how to find out about local community organizations and get connected). Use this list to decide future class curriculum and what you all seek to learn.

2. Media

- Bring in a newspaper for every member of the class and go through it together highlighting central themes and ideas. Perhaps ask each class member to write down a few sentences about what they observed. Consider layout, sections, photography, placement of information, captions, headlines, etc.

3. Social Movements Models

- Instigate a general discussion about social movements see what the classes reactions are- is there a particular movement of time period the class is interested in. Bring in media (literature, film, photography) of the selected time period. In follow up discussion/ writing see if any connections can be made to now.

4. Visual Representation

- Consider the way photographs frame time and place. Ask the class what they think about photography and if they have any interests in specific time or place. Bring in materials and use them as prompt for writing and discussion.

Formal Interviews

Interview With Mr. Reyes, social studies teacher at Camp Afflerbaugh- Paige- March 10, 2008

1. How long have you been teaching at Camp AP?

It will be five years in July

2. What lead you to such a profession?

Teaching is my third career (apparently I was not all that good at my first two) I did realize that teaching is something I could do well. In all the schools I've ever taught at I've been assigned to classes with the most "at-risk" students. So that I find myself in a probationary setting is not all that remarkable.

3. What is your understanding of the California Juvenile Justice System holistically?

I can only offer an opinion. I have heard that the camps have a 77% recidivism rate. That number would seem to say that the system is broken. However, it's not just the system that's to blame. I see its client on a daily basis and a great number of these minors live, breathe, and eat being a gang member. They seemingly celebrate the lifestyle. Camp, to them, is a status of having made it. I feel it is hard for a system to be successful when its clients are not looking to change.

4. What do you believe are essential aspects of rehabilitation? Is rehabilitation possible?

Being a teacher is a whole lot different than being a therapist so I'm not really schooled in the area of rehab. I do think that in order for rehab to work the client must be looking for help and most of our students are not looking for help like that. Those students interested in help usually find it. Those who are not take up the time of the people responsible for rehab, frustrating the people trying to help thus minimizing their effectiveness.

5. Overall, how would you define the relationship between teachers and staff of Camp AP and the boys?

Like everything else some teachers are better at "relating" to our students than other teachers or staff. I feel that all the teachers try hard at educating students but as with all things some are better at educating than others.

6. Do you believe the curriculum at Camp AP is conducive to a multi-cultural system of learning? What do you think the value of a multi-cultural framework of learning could be?

I teach social studies and our curriculum is CA content standards based and they are well written and include multi-ethnic views and experiences. How we instruct our students is where the different facets of multi-culturalism come to play. Every student learns

differently (Gardener's multiple intelligences theory) This is the area that we as a profession have to work on, fortunately we are beginning to see research that is guiding future professional development to help us work with the diverse student group we face.

8. How does AP address racial tensions between the boys? Are there any anti-racist programs in existence? Why or why not are contemporary social issues (race, class, gender) a part of the discussion in the classroom?

This is a topic of concern for us because of the types of students we have. Some people are of the opinion that the tension between our students are more gang related than racial, but I personally do not believe that, I feel racial creates a lot more tension then we are willing to acknowledge.

Bringing that discussion into the classroom is very, very tricky. This is the type of discussion that requires mature or at the very minimum students who are willing to think beyond the immediate reaction. You start this conversation and you're working with a group of people who are always reacting emotionally and not cognitively.

When we get into the subject of the history of civil rights, the Latinos tend to turn off because they feel it's only about the African-Americans. It is hard to get our guys to think about what the struggles have done for themselves much less the value of having equity among different people.

9. In your experience, do identity and empowerment have any correlation in the process of rehabilitation?

I do not know about rehab but I have noticed that my best students are those who are confident in themselves. Guys like this know who they are and that their world is not narrowly defined. They may not know much but they're confident that they can make things happened that are necessary to happen. I guess these guys do feel identity and empowerment.

Interview with Tania Gomez via e-mail April 16, 2008

1. How long have you been involved at camp AP?

Since June 2007. im there from about 8:30 am - 3:30pm sometimes until 5pm.

2. What is your general understanding of the relationship between the students, teachers and staff?

Some teachers are respected. Mostly those who show respect to the guys. The teacher who lose their "cool" by yelling or disrespecting the guys get a lot more trouble in their classroom. the guys will refuse to do their work or start side conversations etc.. In terms of the staff relationship with the guys that's a bit different. Most of the guys do not trust nor respect the probation staff. i think it's mostly because the probation staff are in control of every little thing the guys have to do. Most of the guys hate to be told what to do and probation yelling and demanding things of the guys doesn't make anything better. The guys are also aware that any probation officer can have an influence on whether they are released early, re-filed or sent to the box. Knowing that automatically influences their relationship from the start.

3. How would you describe camp life?

I am not sure about camp life but during school hours the guys don't seem to be learning. their is little room for discussion or lecture from the teachers. Most teachers base their curriculum on standard book work/worksheets. Some of the guys have told me that camp life is boring and too routine.

4. How would you describe the teaching staff and educational philosophy?

In theory LACOE has good educational goals. the problem is that most of the teachers do not have proper training on how to implement those goals. Or if they do, the curriculum is hard to implement because the students are moved from one group to another. Most teachers try really hard to have the students learn some material of substance.

5. Are there any programs that you know of which are focused on empowerment of the young men and processes of self realization?

LACOE has a program called Project Citizen with focuses on leadership skills. I am not sure how effective it is but the guys seem to like it because they get to wear collar t-shirts and ties, and read daily

announcements among other things. i do not know details about the actual leadership training they are receiving in this program.

6. Do you find the discussion of social justice issue- race, class and gender- is incorporated in the standard curriculum?

No, not in the standard curriculum.

Informal Interviews

Ricky

Ricky is 16 years old and one of the students in the workshop for the entire duration of time. At first he was quiet and shy, as it he sometimes apprehensive to articulate his thoughts in English, his second language. Throughout the process of the workshop I have seen his confidence improve drastically. When writing, we work together to format sentence structure and grammar. He is a positive force in the classroom dedicating his effort to improving his writing.

When we first started talking about our letter campaign he was extremely excited stating over and over again I had to bring in the paper when we got it. In working one on one with him I learned about his life, and the way the coursework reminded him of hardships his family went through. When Ricky was in elementary school immigrated into the states with his mom and dad from Mexico. Since being here is dad has left, leaving his mom with the task of caring for himself and his smaller brother. Ricky thought heavily on the critique of the

welfare system Michael Moore presents in *Bowling for Columbine*. He said how hard it was for his mother to pay for him and his brother and to keep up with the rent checks. He said she gets "caught" for the rent and how it is hard on the family because they have to move around.

When I asked Ricky about his educational experience growing up in east Los Angeles he explained not being interested and never going. He explained how even though the teacher spoke to him in Spanish, the school work was in English, leaving him frustrated and disinterested. When I asked him what he liked about our class he told me he felt comfortable and liked what we were studying. When I asked if the topics we had been addressing effected his perspective on any part of his life he answered that it feels good to know people are making solutions to these problems, like Michael Moore. When I asked how he could change Camp AP to make it a better experience for incarcerated students he said better teachers and learning about things that happen in real life.

J

From the first class J was an overly engaged in our coursework. He was quick to share his persepective on a subject or personal

experience. He is constantly reflecting a budding level of maturity and I find his upbeat attitude inspiring. Originally from the south, J moved to South Central, Los Angeles as a small child with his single mother. He explains his experience growing up in LA as fun and exciting but also hard. He says he started fucking up in middle school and cutting classes. He is not in a gang rather was with some friends who were when he got arrested for the first time at the age of 14. Once he gets out of the camps he plans to finish up his senior year at his high school because he wants to go to the prom. He plans to attend culinary school or school for sports medicine.

I informally interviewed J about the strengths and weaknesses of our workshop one day when he was early. He told me liked our class because we talked about new things, things he didn't learn about in other classes. " When we talk about racism it is good because we all experience it. Everyone, it's a big problem." When I asked what else he liked about the class he said he liked writing the letters and that " It feels good to get my story out there." He said he liked the *Born into Brothels* because he learned about India, a place he had never thought of before. He liked *Bowling for Columbine* because it was funny and taught him a lot about the media, fear and gun control. " I like this class because we talk about things I otherwise wouldn't get a chance to talk about, its good for that," he stated. When I asked him if he felt

the entire class responded to the program he told me " Those who want to learn, learn a lot and those who don't want to learn, who come anyways to watch movies and stuff, learn too." He said it felt good to talk about racism, to know it was something that people everywhere experienced- something common. He said it was good to talk about in the classroom because it made things "feel better." I asked J what could be improved in the class and he said he wanted to do more poetry workshops and that the poetry he wrote had a lot to do with the topics covered in our class. He said he loved the movies and how they reminded him of " Everything I don't know." He also said that normal Camp life was boring and hard and that this was something different. He commented that because what we discussed and learned about was interesting, he felt like people liked coming to class.

Randy

Randy was a quiet, soft spoken member of the class. He was hesitant to share his readings and often kept to himself. I informally interviewed him through a series of extra help sessions during class. He grew up in San Fernando Valley and joined a gang in middle school because he said it was so easy " There are guns and drugs everywhere." I asked him if his experiences related to any of the

movies or discussion we had been doing. He said that it did and it felt good in a way to know he wasn't alone.

He seemed distracted when we were writing our persuasive essays and I asked him what was up. He said he didn't want to write a letter because nothing would change and that was the way things are. He said that youth are young and crazy now running the streets and that they would calm down when they had babies and needed to get a job. He said it seemed pointless because nothing was going to change. I told him that he didn't have to write a letter but asked him " Doesn't knowing about the structural inequality and racism make you mad?" He said it did but felt like that was the way it was, there wasn't much hope.

He then recalled how said it made him to watch *Born into Brothels*- how it was hopeless how " In the end the kids parents don't even let them go to school." Then I asked him what he thought the point of the film was, to make you feel hopeless? He said no and I asked him if he thought it was to make you think and look at life from a different perspective and he said " Yea, I guess. I did like the guy who took all the pictures." I asked him what issues were important to him that we had been taking about. He said nothing again and that he really didn't care. I told him he didn't have to write a letter, but to try

to free write about anything that came to mind. I then asked him what he wanted to write about and what he cared about. We looked at the long list of topics and he then projected " Guns and violence Miss."

He said gun control because he was going to be a father one day and wanted the streets to be safe for his kids. He said he worried about getting a good job and wanted to provide well for his children but that it was hard because he knew the streets. I asked him how he thought situation of violence could be undone. He said he wasn't sure and I asked him if it was important to want change, to fight for change. He said yes recalling *Bowling for Columbine*, " Learning about the gun industry and the NRA, how those people are horrible and cruel, makes me not want to buy into it. Its bullshit Miss." He then went on to write his letter about gun control and why it was important to have a better screening process.

Sarah Zellweger is a student at Pitzer College in Claremont, California. This paper was written in fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor's Degree in Urban Studies.