Navigating the Hood Mentality: Exploring the Influence of Neighborhood Effects on At-Risk and FormerlyConvicted Youth

Honors Thesis

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Abstract

While rates of juvenile crime have declined nationally in recent years, the urgency to eradicate the factors leading to juvenile crime remains. Juvenile crime almost invariably leads to adult recidivism, which in turn plays a critical role in the potential of justice-involved youth and their relationship to their neighborhoods. Neighborhood effects research suggests that disadvantage can serve as a predictor of social disorganization and neighborhood crime. Meanwhile, mechanisms of poverty such as educational disparity and neighborhood cohesion can serve as predictors of youth crime. However, few studies have observed how these social mechanisms manifest themselves in qualitative ways. Are there differences in the ways certain populations experience their neighborhood that influence youth outcomes? Drawing on 18 semi-structured interviews, this study examines how at-risk and formerly convicted youth offenders in Los Angeles, experienced their inner-city neighborhoods. Data was analyzed through multiple passes of inductive and deductive coding and analytic matrices. Main findings of this study include similarities in respondents’ identification with “hood mentality” – a socialized framework of increased awareness toward the neighborhood around them, and differences in the way domestic and after-school support networks influence the extent to which youth partake in activities. Finally, it highlights how placement in a group home or congregate care influenced youths’ engagement with peer networks. Findings from this study seek to inform city stakeholders on youth’s neighborhood experiences and their perceptions of safety in inner-city neighborhoods to motivate stakeholders to develop policy change that could improve youth outcomes.
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“Too many juveniles do not think about the real consequences because they have come into the system that on too many occasions has only said, ‘naughty boy’… There must be immediate and drastic consequences… Overhauling the juvenile justice system will defuse the juvenile crime time bomb that is waiting to go off.”

- District Attorney Gil Garcetti, The Los Angeles Times, 1996
Preface

In the summer of 2017, I worked with Fostering Media Connections, a journalism non-profit that covers issues of child welfare and juvenile justice. As a junior reporter, I was tasked with writing research articles and profile pieces on youth and stakeholders that are creating innovative solutions to the system’s challenges. My first piece was about Taylor, a young man who was about to graduate after multiple trials with the justice system. When interviewing Taylor, who had just been released from a juvenile camp a couple of months before, I was incredibly moved by his account of feeling like he was born into “gang life.” Taylor expressed that gang activity surrounded him and became something he began to do with his peers. His story of how he was part of a war that did not belong to him is what motivated me to do this project. How does a zip code decide someone’s fate? How do we as a society treat some of our most vulnerable youth?

The research I conducted was funded through a Stanford Undergraduate and Advising Research grant. I lived in Los Angeles for two months and worked with The RightWay Foundation, a non-profit that helps current and former foster youth and previous youth offenders find employment and housing. My summer consisted of getting to know the youth and their stories as well as going to their “Operation Emancipation” boot camp where together we would learn about emotional intelligence and self-sufficiency. Being present at these programs allowed me to understand where these individuals were in their lives and trajectories. Moreover, this insight allowed me to know about the informal acronyms and “reputations” of the different transitional housing programs and social services Los Angeles offers. This knowledge helped tremendously when conducting the interviews because I was acquainted with the programs and the thoughts individuals had about each program. I hope that this research will help inform stakeholders in the foster care and justice systems of the complexities of youth crime so that they
can provide services that address underlying issues in both systems rather than driving youth into a life of delinquency or recidivism.
Chapter I: INTRODUCTION

Escalating rates of juvenile crime in the 1970s and 1980s marked a period of fear surrounding youth and violence. Cities like Los Angeles and New York saw jail incarceration rates double and triple in size over a ten-year period (Kang-Brown 2015). Heightened public concern regarding crime grew not only because of increasing crime rates, but also because of predictions from criminologists like John J. DiIulio Jr and William J. Bennett, who in their 1993 book *Body Count*, predicted that crime would triple by the year 2010 (“The Criminals of Tomorrow” 1996). DiIulio, now a political scientist at Harvard University, gained fame not only for this prediction, but also because of his heavily racialized term “superpredators,” which characterized youth who commit crime as “radically impulsive, brutally remorseless,” "elementary school youngsters who pack guns instead of lunches," and who "have absolutely no respect for human life“ (DiIulio 1996). The term superpredator would largely influence the public’s perception of what juvenile crime looked like and where it occurred in the late 1990s, and ultimately led to voter-initiated campaigns and policy reforms that were tough on crime and that sentenced youth as adults.

Twenty years later, DiIulio’s predictions do not hold true. Juvenile crime has fallen by over 50 percent in the last twenty years, and multiple states have adopted progressive policy reforms that shift program goals from retribution to rehabilitation. Yet, the publicity and narrative behind his research played a significant role in characterizing crime in inner-city neighborhoods. While DiIulio’s findings were only one public explanation for crime in neighborhoods, academic literature provides an abundance of neighborhood studies that provide an understanding of how neighborhoods affect youth outcomes of delinquency. In fact, a considerable amount of literature suggests linkages between concentrated disadvantage and
juvenile crime. Neighborhoods with concentrated disadvantage are those with high percentages of residents in poverty and are at times racially segregated.

Research on neighborhood effects explains the relationship between neighborhood structures such as community trust and institutional resources, and the well-being of its residents. Literature on neighborhood effects holds that neighborhoods with low socioeconomic status, ethnic heterogeneity and residential mobility have a strong correlation with higher levels of social disorganization, a theory that refers to the inability of a community structure to realize the common values of its residents and maintain effective social controls (Shaw and McKay 1942; Bursik 1984; Sampson and Groves 1989). Moreover, research on neighborhood effects finds multiple mechanisms that influence the array of choices youth grow up with through their social context, that in turn can serve as indicators of youth crime. Few studies in this field, however, have observed how social mechanisms manifest themselves in qualitative ways. Though many children live in impoverished neighborhoods, only some engage in delinquency. Why do youth from the same socioeconomic status and neighborhood reach different life outcomes? Are there differences in the ways certain populations experience their neighborhood that influence youth outcomes?

My research seeks to address this gap by answering the question: How do at-risk and formerly convicted youth experience their inner-city neighborhood in Los Angeles? With 18 semi-structured interviews of at-risk or formerly convicted youth, my thesis seeks to understand the lived neighborhood experiences of youth offenders and at-risk youth. For the purposes of this study, at-risk youth were youth who were formerly in the foster care system. In addition, my interview methodology allows respondents to define their neighborhoods in hopes of adding nuance to the activities, places and interactions youth engage in. Further, by allowing youth to
define their own neighborhood my research seeks to understand how residential instability can play a role in the way youth identify with a neighborhood.

This thesis uncovers the importance of social networks and institutions in shaping the heterogeneous pathways youth take in offending vs. not. In particular, this study led to three major conclusions on the social context of the neighborhood encompassing neighborhood environment, social networks, and domestic living context. I find that 1) at-risk and formerly convicted youth experience their inner-city neighborhood in similar ways by having a magnified sense of precaution toward the world around them. Participants perceive their neighborhood through the “hood mentality,” a socialized awareness of how gangs create informal order and impose territoriality in inner city neighborhoods. Residents know to tailor their actions in response, being careful about where they hang out or who they associate with. 2) Youth experience heterogeneity in the types of support systems available to them and the activities that they engage in with those support systems. These support systems critically shape whether youth spend time in places or with people that make it more likely for them to offend; youth from this study who were former youth offenders had either no support network or networks that were engaged in crime therefore facilitating their engagement with crime. 3) Youth’s attraction to these networks can be affected by the different placement types in foster care that heterogeneously affect access to support networks and the way that youth engage with said networks.

I begin this thesis with a review of the literature on neighborhood effects and juvenile crime. I follow by describing the methodology I used to conduct interviews focused on a youth’s social context and the analytical methods used to develop an answer to my question. I then identify key similarities and differences between the two groups of people I study, specifically
regarding their hood mentality and support systems, as well as the mechanisms that facilitate those support networks. Last, I discuss my findings and study limitations, and propose directions for future research.

**Explanations for Juvenile Crime**

Juvenile crime has troubled researchers for years. Explanations for juvenile crime have spanned from family dysfunction, lack of opportunity and sexual abuse (McCord, Widom, Crowell 2001). Other recent explanations for juvenile crime have sought to understand the way in which racism and policing could account for high rates of delinquency. Indeed, Michelle Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow* finds that an increase in crime rates could have arisen as a result of the racist criminalization of neighborhoods of color (Alexander 2010). However, the observation that juvenile crime rates and concentrated disadvantage are associated with certain neighborhoods has led many researchers in recent decades to focus on “neighborhood effects” as an explanation. The comprehensive approach of neighborhood effects includes many aspects of residential and after school activities have allowed for researchers to explore multiple facets of a neighborhood’s influence on juvenile crime. Previous literature leads us to question why do youth in certain neighborhoods commit crimes? Researchers have found various answers.

Literature on the “neighborhood effect” has focused on understanding the outcomes of living in disadvantaged neighborhoods, characterized by high poverty or high violence (Harding and Hepburn 2014). Such literature has found that structural factors such as concentrated poverty, residential mobility and racial-ethnic heterogeneity are linked to higher rates of juvenile delinquency due to the neighborhood’s social disorganization (Shaw and McKay 1942/1969). Factors of social organization have been linked to adolescent deviance, including weak social
connections within the neighborhood and low levels of informal social control (Elliott et al. 1996).

Existing quantitative studies on neighborhood effects have primarily focused on three mechanisms through which neighborhoods affect social disorder: collective efficacy (the process of activating social ties among neighborhood residents to achieve collective goals such as public order), institutional resources (neighborhood organizations and youth centers) and social ties and local interactions (the local interpersonal networks of friends and neighbor exchanges) (Sampson 2010, Harding 2010, Delbert, Bursik 1988). The frameworks produced by this research on the social context of neighborhood effects produce consistent patterns. Studies in Chicago observe collective efficacy, social ties and local interactions through indicators of reciprocal exchange, the intensity of interfamily and adult interactions with respect to childbearing, intergenerational closure, the degree to which inequalities in neighborhood environments persist across generations, and neighborhood community surveys (Sampson, Morenoff, Earls 2001). Sampson, Morenoff and Earls find that reciprocal exchange combined with residential stability and low population density contribute to higher levels of collective efficacy. Moreover, studies on collective efficacy and crime find that the social cohesion among neighbors in a neighborhood to intervene for the common good can have a mediating impact on crime rates and concentrated disadvantage in a neighborhood.

Research on a neighborhood’s institutional resources makes an additional contribution to the study of neighborhood effects by revealing the positive influence of nonprofit institutions in a neighborhood. In a 2017 study, Sharkey, Torrats-Espinosa, and Takyar analyze the effect of community nonprofits on social control in New York City. They find that for every 10 additional organizations focusing on crime and community life in a city with 100,000 residents, there is a
nine percent reduction in the murder rate and a six percent reduction in the violent crime rate (Sharkey, Torrats-Espinosa, Takyar 2017). More importantly, their findings suggest that institutional resources focusing on anti-violence reduce the likelihood of crime. This study expresses a need to further understand the spatial dynamics that is, the spatial dependence of neighborhoods on each other, of institutional resources and their proximity to youth. Though this study focuses on all crime, it gives us an insight to the potential influence of neighborhood institutions on crime.

Many of these studies link situational outcomes and juvenile crime by quantitative measures. These studies quantify neighborhoods into numbers and measure the effect of each mechanism on outcomes of juvenile crime. However, neighborhoods exemplified through census tracts or other administrative boundaries as other social mechanisms are difficult to fully understand through quantitative measures. While these quantitative measures of context cannot be documented for each neighborhood, interviews can provide an insight to the daily activities of at-risk youth and the amount of exposure to these activities that could impact a youth’s life—a question unanswered in previous literature. Harding and Hepburn (2014) find that cultural processes are key mechanisms by which neighborhood disadvantage is translated into social organization, or lack thereof. These cultural mechanisms in neighborhood effects are the product of neighborhood poverty (or some other form of neighborhood disadvantage such as high rates of unemployment) that affect individual outcomes of neighborhood residents. Cultural mechanisms explain how the composition of the neighborhood (who lives there, and the particular positions they occupy in neighborhood hierarchies) affects the cultural context of the neighborhood (the cultural social environment experienced by residents) as well as how that cultural context affects individuals.
An important theory regarding cultural mechanisms of neighborhood effects is deviant subculture theory. Deviant subculture theory holds that individuals in disadvantaged neighborhoods characterized by high unemployment or non-marital childbearing engage in behaviors that are different than those of residents of more advantaged neighborhoods because they are in and responsive to a different culture, one that values certain behaviors or outcomes (Harding and Hepburn 2015). This theory assumes concentrated poverty and racial or class segregation generates social isolation that can create a distinct culture, such as “the ghetto.” Further, it assumes that this culture consists of values and attitudes that lead youth to the outcomes they strive for. Elijah Anderson’s books Streetwise and Code of the Street, further contribute to the idea of the “ghetto” and its values, through the glamorous seduction of “ghetto” street culture. He finds that such street culture can seduce adolescents into participating in criminal activity by promising its followers the opportunity to be “hip” and popular with “cool” peers on the streets or near the neighborhood school (Anderson 1990). Deviant subculture theory is relevant in developing an understanding of the ways youth respond to the culture of their neighborhood and their dependence on street and stylistic neighborhood norms.

Cultural heterogeneity provides an alternative framework for observing agency in a neighborhood. Cultural heterogeneity claims individuals can develop higher amounts of agency within the culture of a neighborhood. In his survey study of 150 middle schools and high schools, Harding (2011) finds that disadvantaged neighborhoods, rather than being dominated by a subculture that devalues schooling, are characterized by greater heterogeneity of cultural models for schooling. This theory argues that poor neighborhoods contain a mix of competing and conflicting cultural elements and influence blocked opportunities. This theory acknowledges that cultural resources come from multiple sources, (family, school, church) and larger social
institutions (the media, politics, or religion) and that they can provide an amount of heterogeneous moral values. These heterogeneous values can lead to the weakening or strengthening of positive social norms and informal social control.

Perhaps the material most relevant to my interview data comes from urban ethnographies on neighborhood culture. In “Cracks in the Pavement: Social Change and Resilience in Poor Neighborhoods,” Martin Sánchez-Jankowski observes two neighborhoods in Los Angeles and three in New York City and establishes a model of the interplay between neighborhood institutions and neighborhood culture. He demonstrates how commonly-overlooked institutions—housing projects, grocery stores, barber shops and hair salons, gangs, and local high schools—integrate the “value orientations” of the community, establish hierarchies, elaborate and maintain social order, and facilitate day-to-day survival under conditions of material scarcity (Sánchez-Jankowski 2008). His findings do not rely on a subculture of deviance theory, but rather describe how the efforts of low-income individuals in this neighborhood create a different type of cultural affirmation. The main difference he finds is that ethnic groups hold two main worldviews that shape a youth’s identity. These worldviews are security-maximizing and excitement-maximizing that respondents used in deciding their actions. Such security-maximizing perspective emphasized avoiding risky situations and saving money to secure stability against predatory elements of the social environment. In contrast, the excitement-maximizing perspective emphasized the chance of living comfortably in the present environment and finding as much excitement as possible in one’s conditions. The above literature focuses on more macro-level mechanisms that influence youth’s daily life in the neighborhood, but recent studies have shifted to observing micro-individual youth activity such as daily time-use interactions.
Activity Spaces, Exposure Effects and the Egocentric Neighborhood

A more recent body of work seeks to gain a nuanced understanding of social networks, collective efficacy, social institutions, and neighborhood culture while using a broader conception of defining the neighborhood. This literature focuses on some of the factors that influence both qualitative and quantitative studies, such as youth’s exposure to the neighborhood, the egocentrism of the neighborhood, and the non-static neighborhood that can represent the instability some youth experience in moving to multiple neighborhoods.

Recent studies have argued that activity spaces—the set of locations and settings to which residents are regularly exposed—and their associated social ties influence neighborhood effects. Because studying situational influences on adolescent outcomes can be elusive, we know little about the routine activities or behavioral settings of youth. Ecological network processes—the collective structure of shared activity-space exposures—link neighborhood socioeconomic characteristics to dimensions of social control or social organization (Browning, Soller 2014). Activity spaces and their daily structure in the form of ecological networks, networks that link residents through spatial overlap in routine activities, can also aid research in measuring exposure of the neighborhood. What is particularly innovative about Browning and Soller’s research is that it does not primarily depend on the administrative boundaries of the neighborhood determined by census tracts or city zoning. For instance, while we know that areas of high collective efficacy have lower rates of crime even when youth have high levels of unstructured time, we do not know if this unstructured time is being spent in the neighborhood (Sampson 2003). If youth are not spending time within the administrative boundaries of the neighborhood, then the social mechanisms which we use to determine the quality of a neighborhood do not have as strong of an effect. The lack of qualitative, egocentric studies—that
is, studies that focus on the individual’s personal activity spaces— inhibit our understanding of the spatial link between neighborhoods and a youth’s tendency to commit crime. Egocentric studies, where youth decide how to define their neighborhood, are essential to understanding the neighborhood exposure and neighborhood processes that are relevant to the youth’s development. Respondent centered approaches can thus put in question the notion that non-residential areas may matter more than residential neighborhoods. A respondent-centered approach to my study is central to helping me understand the nuances and differences in the experiences between youth with high and low residential mobility and captures the comprehensiveness of what they view as their neighborhood.

**Residential Mobility and Neighborhood Outcomes**

Previous literature has found that residential mobility is correlated with juvenile delinquency and other negative youth outcomes such as drug abuse. Particularly, the tumultuous effects of severing friendship ties, navigating a new environment and moving to neighborhoods of greater or less concentrated disadvantage have proven to influence youth outcomes.

A broader type of literature explains that selection bias also has a significant impact on the effects of mobility on anti-social behavior. Results from this literature have found that mobility and delinquency are spurious once unobserved differences for mobile and non-mobile youth are controlled. (DeLuca and Estacion 2009 and Vogel, Porter, McCuddy 2017) That is, it is difficult to find a clear relationship between mobility and delinquency, because youth experiencing residential and school change are likely to have many other risk factors for delinquency and other problems. Decisions to move could be the result of a change in family structure or the current demographics of a neighborhood a family is currently in. This research indicates that mobility is difficult to predict due to the number of individual familial and
ecological factors that influence the risk of mobility. In foster care, the reasons for a new placement is thus also spurious as it can result from a problem inside of the home, from the reconnection between the youth and kinship care.

A key issue with most prior research on residential mobility however, is its differentiating among individuals who have high amounts of mobility. That is most research compares individuals with no mobility and individuals with mobility and does not distinguish what might be affecting individuals with moderate and high mobility. My research aims to shed light on the mobility of youth and those impacts on outcomes.

**Neighborhood as Non-Static Feature**

Through this research, I respond to David Harding’s call to action of understanding how youth are affected by their environments not just their residential neighborhoods, which requires researchers to conceptualize and analyze the features of the environment that are most salient in different aspects of children’s lives. That is, one should see the neighborhood not as a static feature that contributes to youth outcomes, but rather as one that is interactive and that changes as youth move into and out of different systems (Harding 2014). In his review of neighborhood effects literature, Harding finds that contexts influence the lives of residents through institutional mechanisms, peers and networks, exposures to incidents of violence or polluted air, and through proximity to risks and access to opportunities. This is particularly true and important in studying a population whose residential mobility and exposure to their neighborhood is largely dependent on their foster care placement and the resources available to them.

By extending beyond the traditional notions of neighborhoods as defined by geographic tracts and focusing on the neighborhood boundaries as defined by the respondent, my research builds on and extends previous work. Through interviews, I examine community trust and social
ties as reflected through spatial interactions. By taking an egocentric approach, my study can also observe issues of residential mobility more clearly. Because my research study in particular works with youth who are residentially mobile, it can demonstrate how neighborhoods influence individuals to varying degrees and help observe a limitation in the neighborhood effects literature that some youth might not have a neighborhood they particularly identify with or influenced by. My research seeks to directly question youth about their activity spaces and neighborhood activities to better understand what mechanisms might be facilitating or shaping the presence of juvenile crime in impoverished neighborhoods and to better understand the heterogeneity in cultural mechanisms.

The Foster Care System in California

As of 2018, there are over 400,000 foster youth in the United States and over 30,000 foster children in Los Angeles County (Youth Law Center 2016). Foster care placements are a temporary, safe place to live for children who are unable to live with their family. Foster youth represent children who do not have a safe place to live. Children who enter the system come from a variety of multiple adverse childhood experiences and trauma, stemming from sexual abuse, poverty, and unsafe housing conditions.

A path in the foster care system if it does not begin at birth, begins with a report to child protective services from a mandated reporter for concerns of any type of child abuse or neglect. Children are removed from the home if child protective services find an imminent risk of harm towards the child in the home. Children are then placed in family foster care or kinship care. Once children are placed in care, they become wards of the court and county jurisdictions can then make choices of where the child will live or be moved to. Due to the overwhelming need for foster parents, children in dense cities like Los Angeles are often put in shelters or group care.
The objective of foster care is to ultimately facilitate reunification. Foster homes are meant to be a temporary home until birth parents are provided with services that can support reunification with their children. Last, the influence of foster care on the experiences of youth in care means my participants experienced a significant amount of neighborhood mobility.

Children enter the foster care system by court order for reasons of abuse, neglect, juvenile delinquency or because they are in need of supervision. That is, a youth can commit an offense and be ordered to enter into a group home for increased supervision. Below shows the various types of maltreatment and proportion of children who enter the system for those types of maltreatment according to the Administration on Children, Youth and Families:

<table>
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<th>Maltreatment Type</th>
<th>Percent of Children with Maltreatment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>61 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Abuse of Parent</td>
<td>34 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caregiver inability to cope</td>
<td>14 percent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inadequate housing</td>
<td>10 percent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent incarceration</td>
<td>8 percent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alcohol abuse of parent</td>
<td>6 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse</td>
<td>4 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (child drug abuse, child disability, relinquishment, parent death, child alcohol abuse)</td>
<td>6 percent</td>
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The various types of care placement include being in a foster care home, kinship care, specialized or therapeutic foster homes, residential or group homes. Below is a breakdown of the different type of placements: 

1) **Kinship care:** In kinship care, children are placed with a relative or family friend that has become certified foster parents. However, it can also encompass families who have a child placed with them but choose not to enroll in the certification process.

2) **Foster care:** Children in a foster home are placed with certified foster parents who have volunteered to become parents. Foster parents typically receive limited training and minimal education. Foster parents receive a foster care subsidy for the care they provide.

3) **Residential or Group Homes:** In general, congregate care facilities provide services to older children and adolescents, often who have mental health or behavioral problems. Group homes provide professional supervision with trained staff. Quality varies substantially in these homes as there are non-regulations for each facility. A lack of foster homes for adolescents also forces that state to rely on group care. The diversity in backgrounds of group homes. Because group homes serve as an option of last resort and often have a mix of people who are in them.

Understanding foster care is a critical insight to this study because foster care has been a proved determinant to someone’s role in the justice system. For example, a common status offense of “running away” is directly linked to youth running away from residential shelters or group homes.

*The Juvenile Justice System in California*

According to the National Institute of Corrections, the purpose of the justice system is “to confine only those youth who are serious, violent or chronic offenders…pending legal action.” In recognition of this purpose the justice system is intended to emphasize guidance, treatment and rehabilitation over punishment. The California Department of Juvenile California works with
youth through county probation departments and juvenile courts that engage with other social service agencies such as child welfare and behavioral health departments.

Youth can be arrested for a multitude of offenses including a felony, misdemeanor, or status offense. When a youth commits a delinquent act, a petition is filed to the state by a probation department or District Attorney’s office. There are two main types of petitions, 601 and 602. 601 petitions are concerned with status offense cases and are filed by a probation department. Status offense cases represent actions that are only illegal because a youth is underage. These offenses include five main categories: running away, truancy, breaking curfew, incorrigible or acting disorderly and “other” which encompasses offenses of disobeying parents or failure to obey a juvenile court order. 602 petitions are filed when a child did something that would still be a crime if they were 18 or older. Such actions could include a misdemeanor, like assault or drunk driving or a felony, like car theft, drug sales, rape, or murder. Once a child is found to have committed a crime, they will receive a notice, or if they are incarcerated thereafter, their parents or legal guardians will receive a notice. When a judge decides that a petition is true, the child is considered a delinquent. According to the Department of California, about 58.2 percent of juveniles were arrested for a misdemeanor, 29.7 percent were arrested for a felony offense and the remainder, 12.1 percent were arrested for a status offense (Hoshino, Tidwell Cantil-Sakauye 2017).

At a youth’s deposition hearing, the judge can order from six options. A child can be asked to stay at home with probation supervision for up to six months, ordered to go home with formal supervision from a probation office, be out on probation and sent to a probation camp or sent to the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. The probation office can then try to get youth involved in school and community programs, job training or counseling.
The system works to try to support and rehabilitate youth offenders by providing
diversion or wrap around services. Some juvenile programs offer wraparound services to youth
which include a continuum of services to youth involved in the justice system. When a youth is
accepted into a Wraparound program, they are assigned a wrap rehabilitation counselor who
works with the youth and their family to address their unique needs.

METHODOLOGY

Typing & Justification of Study Methodologies

This study uses a qualitative research design with 18 semi-structured interviews of 8
former youth offenders and 10 at-risk youth who grew up in Los Angeles, California. 6 of these
youth were dual-status youth, which meant they had engagement with both the foster care and
justice systems. The study was designed to compare the time-use and neighborhood social
interactions of both at-risk and formerly convicted youth to understand the variance in their
experiences residing in disadvantaged neighborhoods that led to different outcomes. The use of
interviews encouraged participants to provide their unique perspectives without prescribing
boundaries of what places to discuss or focus on. Moreover, the semi-structured interviews
provided me the flexibility to be responsive in my questioning and to probe participants when
necessary, in ways that surveys do not allow (Corbin and Strauss 2008). Moreover, interviews
are ideal for this study because interviews provided me opportunities to gain insight not only on
their lived experiences but also on the ways they perceived and approached the neighborhood
they came from (Sanchez-Jackowski 2014). Interviews further allowed for rich, descriptive and
stimulating narratives of participant experiences.

I spent eight weeks from July of 2018 to August of 2018 in Los Angeles conducting the
interviews with The RightWay Foundation, an organization in South Los Angeles focused on
transitioning youth from the foster care or juvenile justice systems into adulthood and self-sufficiency. Prior to conducting my interviews, I visited The RightWay Foundation three to five times a week for four weeks. During this time, I became familiar with the area, met the organization’s staff, and began to meet some of the youth. This step was intentional so that the youth knew and recognized me, but also so that I could gain some knowledge about transitional housing and the variance in youth background and upbringing. I used this time to gain an understanding of the social dynamics and impact efforts of the organization and to talk to long-standing members of the staff including the executive director, chief operating officer, therapist, case manager, and interns. The goal of volunteering with the organization was to aid my research while building rapport with participants.

For the purposes of this study, at-risk youth are designated as those involved in the foster care system and not in the justice system. Youth involved in both foster care and justice systems were classified as dual-status youth. This decision allowed me to properly compare former youth offenders to a group that had similar engagement with my host organization. While foster youth have significant differences in their residential mobility when compared to youth with a relatively stable home, it did not critically affect my study. Foster youth were a good at-risk comparison group to former youth offenders because foster youth have a higher likelihood of being involved in the justice system. Nearly 70 percent of individuals in the justice system are, or were, involved with the foster care system (Herz 2012). Therefore, it is likely that even if I worked with an organization that does not work explicitly with foster youth, I would encounter the same population. Both foster youth and youth in the justice system received services from The RightWay foundation and were working towards their goal of transitioning from these systems and into their future. For the purposes of this study I will be referring to youth who were
convicted of a crime as former youth offenders. This label, however, does not suggest that the two population groups in this study are inherently different. Nor does it imply that, simply because one is labeled convicted and the other is not, that all were or were not responsible for committing a crime. For the purposes of this study, “former youth offender” is solely being used to differentiate the two population samples I interviewed.

**Research Setting**

This study was conducted in the large, racially and socioeconomically diverse city of Los Angeles. According to 2017 US Census data, Los Angeles is 28.4% White, 48.7% Latinx, .2% Native Hawaiian, 11.7% Asian and 9% African American with an average income of $54,432. (Census 2012) The region’s racial and economic diversity allowed me to collect results from a representative sample of a city with multiple inner-city neighborhoods and to interview youth with as much variability in their backgrounds as possible to illicit a variety of narratives and produce rich interview data (Mattys, Noens and Evers Baeyens, 2018). Los Angeles is both a unique city for this study that provides the potential for similarities with other neighborhoods not in other cities. As the Los Angeles School finds, Los Angeles is distinctive in its dispersal and car-dependence. Because of the distribution of space in Los Angeles, one “pocket of the city” when compared to the other, can show different influences on a youth that findings from Chicago’s concentric city model cannot (Dear 2002).

Further, with 22 detention halls in the County, Los Angeles provided a wide enough sample of data to pull from. Los Angeles not only has a high crime rate in comparison to other cities, but also experienced an immense increase of youth crime in the 1980s. The neighborhoods with high levels of crime are inner-city neighborhoods, which are the locations of interest in this study. In addition, as a Southern California native who has lived in Los Angeles during the
summers of my undergraduate career, I felt most confident in studying this region because of my familiarity with the space and the people, and the knowledge I had gained in working for a journalism non-profit on the issue of juvenile justice as it related to Los Angeles. A map of the neighborhoods in Los Angeles is presented in Figure 1 below.
Figure 1. Map of the City of Los Angeles with Research areas (Research areas from left to right are: Baldwin Hills/Crenshaw, South Los Angeles, Boyle Heights, Southgate and Compton) Source: Los Angeles Almanac
Recruitment and Sample Selection

I reached out to individuals through partnership with The RightWay Foundation. The two population samples I focused on were former foster youth and former youth offenders. Former foster youth were defined as youth who were part of an untraditional or unstable family background that required the youth to be placed in foster care home or placement such as group homes, residential care facilities and emergency shelters with licensed caregivers. Former youth offenders were participants who were convicted of a crime during their high school years, ages 13-17. These population samples were chosen because they allowed me to learn about the experiences of youth from disadvantaged backgrounds after they had enough time to process their experiences with these systems. Additionally, youth involved with the foster care and justice systems were a protected class of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Stanford University and thus are not easily accessible to novice researchers. My study’s interview procedure was approved by IRB.

Participants were recruited through word of mouth via the organization’s staff. In addition, flyers were created to put up on various doors of the organization’s office. A small and purposive sample of 18-24-year-old participants who had previous experiences with foster care or the justice system was selected. Due to methodological limitations, the sample only consisted of individuals who had the means to travel to The RightWay Foundation. Each participant was 18-24 years old at the time of the interview and grew up in an inner-city neighborhood of Los Angeles. Participants came from the neighborhoods of Boyle Heights, Compton, South Los Angeles, Southgate and the Baldwin Hills–Crenshaw neighborhood. The table in figure 5, summarizes each neighborhood’s economic and racial demographics.
Each interview lasted 30-60 minutes and took place in the organization’s two offices, located in the Baldwin Hills-Crenshaw neighborhood and Boyle Heights. The organization provided a confidential and quiet space for me to facilitate these interviews and was also accessible to participants during their general visits at the center. Further, there was a therapist on-call at the center that provided support in the case of any emergency. Participants were compensated a $15 gift card for their time. Interviews allowed me to conduct the interview with therapists and support individuals nearby whom the individual had a relationship with. Samples of youth who were ages 18-24 were chosen to ensure the retrospective interviews were as recent as they could be. The sample consisted of seven Hispanic participants, nine African American participants and one White respondent. This sample reflected the current demographics of the juvenile justice system. Further, nine youth had a relatively low residential mobility while 8 participants had a moderate to high amount of residential mobility. Figure 2, 3 and 4 below show the racial breakdown of the participants I interviewed and the residential mobility they experienced over their time in foster care or until the age of 21. Figure 4 shows some the median income and racial breakdown of the neighborhoods observed for this study. Data on the table was taken from a mapping tool on the Los Angeles Times website that provides demographics and census information for each neighborhood in the county.
Figure 2. Breakdown of Racial/Ethnic Backgrounds Among Participant Sample in Study

Figure 3. Residential Mobility Among Former Youth Offenders in Study
Figure 4. Residential Mobility Among At-Risk Youth in Study
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Median Household Income</th>
<th>Racial Composition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boyle Heights</td>
<td>$33,235</td>
<td>• 94% Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 1% Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 2% White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 2.4% Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• .7% Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compton</td>
<td>$43,157</td>
<td>• 56.7% Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 39.8% Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 1.4% White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 0.8% Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 1.2% Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Los Angeles</td>
<td>$31,236</td>
<td>• 60.5% Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 36.8% Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 1.3% White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 0.3% Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 1.0% Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southgate</td>
<td>$48,312</td>
<td>• 92.1% Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 0.6% Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 5.9% White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 0.9% Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 0.5% Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baldwin Hills -</td>
<td>$37,948</td>
<td>• 17.3% Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crenshaw</td>
<td></td>
<td>• 71.3% Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 3.3% White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 4.7% Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 3.4% Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5. Neighborhood Characteristics of Neighborhoods in Study
Data Collection

The method of data collection was semi-structured interviews. Interviews were audio-recorded through an iPhone voice memo application, each interview ranged in length from 30-60 minutes. All interviews were conducted in English. Interviews were conducted between July 24 to August 30. I took notes as participants spoke regarding the locations of their neighborhoods and any hand gestures youth made during the interview to explain a concept or an experience that required spatial understanding.

Because the key independent variable in my study focuses on the experience of the neighborhood social context, my interview questions focused on spatial questions relating to where youth spend their time, and the social ties youth created in these spaces. My research questions focused on theoretical social constructs such as collective efficacy but also questioned the ways youth feel about the places and individuals in their neighborhood, and their sense of limited and unlimited horizons. Some themes my interviews focused on were: where youth spent their time in their daily activities or extra-curriculars (including how long), who this time was spent with (family, peers, non-family adults), what the nature of these social interactions were and whether they were already engaged in crime. When questioning youth about their experience with crime, I also focused on similar indicators of where the crime was committed, and with whom. Interviews were pre-tested with youth who worked with The RightWay Foundation but were older than 24. These pre-tested interviews were conducted in July, a week before data collection.

Data Analysis

Interviews were transcribed non-verbatim to increase the overall readability of interview transcripts. Non-verbatim transcription included the removal of any redundant noises such as
“um”, “ah,” and “uh” as well as stutters or interruptions during interviews such as phone calls or restroom breaks. The use of non-verbatim transcription did not alter the meaning of any responses or ignore the importance behind the repetition of specific words.

The process of data analysis began when I traveled back to Stanford in September of 2018. Data were analyzed through multiple passes of inductive and deductive coding. While I designed my interviews with three major mechanisms of collective efficacy, social networks and activity spaces, I used an iterative process of deductive and inductive coding to distill new themes that were salient or frequent (Mattys, Noens, Evers, Baeyens, 2018). Second-pass codes allowed for the creation of in vivo codes that incorporated participants’ language to use as an analytic structure when creating themes (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2014). Such in vivo codes include “running the streets,” and “the hood mentality” that expressed ways in which youth approached and perceived the actions youth engaged with in their neighborhood. Further, coding categories were organized through a coding chart that organized thematic and descriptive codes. Techniques during coding included open coding, axial coding and concept mapping with the help of post-coding matrices. Broader themes identified included: “support systems”, “neighborhood environment,” and “community trust.”

Coding was tested for inter-rater reliability with other novice researchers and was further supervised by multiple professors with expertise on qualitative methods. I further wrote analytic memos and jotted emerging thematic ideas onto transcripts throughout the coding process to keep track of potential interpretations of the data. Data analysis continued through the spring of 2019.
Validity

This study recognizes the drawbacks that come with the research design such as its small sample size and the influence of social desirability bias. Additionally, it does not ignore that these interviews are retrospective, and that such a method is limiting in nature. However, steps were taken both by the staff at The RightWay Foundation and I to create a relationship with these youth before interviews were conducted, and to encourage youth to be honest. Retrospective interviews allowed me to interview a population of recently convicted youth that was accessible by IRB standards and that respected the time needed for youth to process some of the experiences they faced. Because all respondents were involved with the non-profit, I am aware that their answers could vary from a study that might not have been associated in partnership with an organization, but I believe respondents’ experiences were not affected, as the organization did not provide any incentive for respondents to answer positively or negatively about the foster care and justice systems. In fact, they were encouraged to be honest and reminded that anonymity would be preserved in every step of the research process.

The original design for this study sought to interview 18 - 24-year-olds from the same neighborhood. However, the lack of reach by the organization to gather enough youth changed the focus of this study to instead observe participant’s egocentric neighborhood experiences. This change allows me to learn about the boundaries that youth perceive in shaping their neighborhood. Though I do not have a controlled neighborhood in which I analyze youth’s experiences, the egocentric aspect of this study allows me to make exploratory findings for future systematic research.

Though this study has such limitations, I still believe this project exhibits a high amount of interpretive validity. Measures were given to maximize validity during the coding process.
The use of In Vivo codes allowed me to use participant’s words as an analytic structure, to understand their meanings and describe them accurately, as well as to honor their narratives (Miles, Huberman, Saldana 2014). Further, because I partook in an inter-rater reliability process and found consistency within my coded transcripts with other novice researchers, there is a high likelihood that these findings are interpreting the data accurately and that this study could be replicated in similar contexts.

This study gathered rich and meaningful narratives that directly answer the question regarding youth experiences in inner-city neighborhoods. The use of member-checking, also known as participant or respondent validation, in further steps of this study will serve to increase the validity of this study’s research findings. Though neighborhoods were not controlled, this project sets out to study what it intended to in a purposeful way and makes claims supported by raw and captivating evidence regarding neighborhood experiences in disadvantaged areas.

Reflexivity Statement

As a student at an elite and wealthy institution, I find it critical for me to address my positionality in this research, as it influences the way that I interact with respondents and view their lived experiences. Throughout the research process I tried to be mindful of my positionality as a lighter-skin, cisgender, Mexican-American woman. During my childhood, I attended public schools that were predominantly Hispanic and grew up in a Spanish-speaking household located in a low-income, urban neighborhood in San Bernardino, California. This city is located approximately 60 miles east of Los Angeles. Moreover, as a daughter of formerly undocumented parents, my experiences with the police have been ones of avoidance and fear that have shaped a cautionary bias around the justice system. My identities and upbringing naturally affected how I viewed the world and how my respondents viewed me during my research. My previous
knowledge with the juvenile justice system was formed by my experiences interviewing youth and other stakeholders such as judges and school superintendents in the Los Angeles justice and education system and writing for a separate non-profit in Los Angeles, Fostering Media Connections. Throughout this role I wrote briefs and articles on the foster care and justice systems’ challenges. Though I have had this significant secondary knowledge on the justice system, I have never personally been apprehended by the justice system or have experienced any negative altercations with the police. Additionally, I have never experienced homelessness or been in foster care. My upbringing leaves me in a position of immense privilege that my participants did not afford. However, I believe working with The RightWay Foundation before I conducted my interviews helped respondents to trust me and answer truthfully to my questions.

The next sections document the study’s findings on residential mobility and participant’s hood mentality and distrust in approaching their neighborhood. Further findings also address differences among the two groups support networks as a means to engaging or disengaging with crime in the neighborhood. Moreover, I find that placement type play a critical role in influencing youth’s neighborhood experiences. Last, the conclusion identifies contributions of this study on further research of the neighborhood social context.

Chapter II: THE HOOD MENTALITY

Both at-risk and former youth offenders have a magnified sense of precaution about the world around them. Almost all participants express having a “hood mentality,” a socialized awareness of how gangs or violence create informal order and impose territoriality in inner city neighborhoods. Residents know to tailor their actions in response, being careful about where they hang out or who they associate with. These findings are pertinent in reflecting how youth
experience their neighborhood similarly yet react in different ways by removing themselves from situations of potential danger or in participating certain actions to secure their safety.

Both at-risk and former youth offenders identified an informal power structure in their neighborhoods that cultivated their hood mentality. Almost all participants in my study reported a social neighborhood structure influenced by gang violence and at times, segmented by gang territories. Moreover, youth described why they took precautions in their neighborhood. In doing so, youth refrained from using words like “danger” or “violence” to describe their neighborhood, and instead used phrases like “hectic,” “unfunctional,” “not a good environment to be a better person,” and “the neighborhood was hot.” (“Hot” meant that the neighborhood had a high death count for a day or week). Conversations about their hood mentality often reflected that it was something youth learned and became aware of by growing up and being insiders of their neighborhood. For individuals like Nia\(^1\), a 20-year-old former foster youth, their hood mentality was in fact familiar and engrained by the experience of growing up in Los Angeles. She says:

> I was born and raised in South Central LA. So, I'm very accustomed to… I'm very familiar with the way just like the streets running like the gangs and like, you know, like a hood mentality if you will. So, it was not always, it wasn't always a dangerous place, but it's definitely not somewhere you want to be caught slipping.

To Nia, the neighborhood and “running the streets” was something she became aware of and normalized to, through experiencing and witnessing gang activity in her streets. But she also reveals some ambivalence and hesitation about categorizing the streets of her neighborhood as fully dangerous. Instead, Nia’s quote suggests that she expects one to use their hood mentality to

\(^{1}\) Participant anonymity is preserved through the use of pseudonyms. Names of youth in this paper do not reflect their identities in real life.
adjust their actions. In fact, she ends her statement saying, “it’s not somewhere you want to be caught slipping” to mean one should not be “messing around” in the wrong area at the wrong time. Nia does not blame her neighborhood for its danger or for the antisocial culture that scholarly literature would characterize it by, instead she suggests it is up to the residents to make good or safe choices suggesting an internalized sense of responsibility to approach the neighborhood with caution.

The agency and responsibility about making good choices was echoed by most participants, and is what makes the hood mentality so critical to a youth’s viewpoint on their “hood.” While many respondents reported similar experiences about normalizing gang activity through their hood mentality, some have normalized this activity to the extent that they find it has no impact on them. Specifically, it is practicing the hood mentality since birth that eventually transfers the responsibility of navigating a neighborhood to the individual. When asked how she felt about the safety of her neighborhood, Kiara, a former foster youth living in Compton, shares:

It’s honestly so funny because I don't really think it had an impact on me. I don't know that it impacted me because I was born in it, legit born in it. I was used to it in a way like, you know? But it was traumatizing, you know? Those times when I had to run home from school and middle school because they were shooting on the street that I had to walk down … somebody coming through shooting and I don't know what building it is coming from I just don't want to get hit so I'm running for my life to get home. And so it was scary. You know, it was constant. I'm always looking over my shoulder always looking at every car that passed by.

Though Kiara has had experiences of running home because of violence, and even describes that the experience as traumatizing, she does not believe the neighborhood had an impact on her as
she grew up. More importantly, she dismisses such an assumption. Rather, it is her responsibility to move to a safer location. While she was traumatized, she refuses to say the neighborhood affected her. Her experience reflects a form of internalized oppression of the neighborhood on her actions. Her mention of trauma shows it is possible for agency and fear to co-exist because trauma does not paralyze her from making choices that remove her from a specific situation, nor does it confine her to always be in and responsive of a certain culture. Youths’ expression of agency is important in highlighting critical features of Harding’s theory of cultural heterogeneity which assumes a high-level of individual agency. Agency is communicated even in direct terms with some youth who express, “[the neighborhood] is bad to a certain extent, it's all about how you put yourself in [the neighborhood’s] predicament.” This interviewee highlights that while youth are given an array of choices, they have the agency to decide how much their culture and networks will reflect what actions they will partake in. While they are responsive to a certain culture they are not paralyzed from being confined to that predicament.

**Community Trust**

The hood mentality negatively influenced perceptions of trust in both groups of participants and can explain the lack of social control or cohesion in the neighborhood. Residents felt uncertain in trusting their neighbors due to anonymous acts of crime that left individuals feeling that their security could only be guaranteed on their own. Kiara, for example, who lived in the projects, found it difficult to differentiate the difficult circumstances that people in her building underwent from her direct engagement with them. When asked if she trusted her neighbors, she admitted:

I did, but I didn’t because I know who they are. You know what I mean? Like I don't trust nobody where I grew up because everybody else is careless and everybody out for
themselves, but at the same time that was still my neighbor, you know what I mean? I don't trust nobody so no, I don't trust nobody but that don't mean that I'm not going to deal with you or talk to you because I don't trust you know what I mean? I don't know it probably was just because I saw everything happening around me and how people act.

Kiara distinguishes the act of engaging with her neighbors from trusting the individuals within it. Trust does not stop her from maintaining relationships with her neighbors. Indeed, she signals to a connection and commitment to respecting her neighbors because they are part of the neighborhood unit and consequentially part of a wider community she knows she is a part of. Kiara’s differentiation between trust and engagement reflect nuances of social capital, that current literature on social capital does not fully address through levels of intergenerational closure and social interactions.

In the previous quote, we see Kiara’s trust did not stop her from engaging with people in her neighborhood. On the other hand, Nia, finds it difficult to make this kind of distinction. After experiencing a drive-by shooting in her home, Nia finds it difficult to trust her neighbors. She says:

This is where the mistrust between neighbors came about, because it was questions about like who knew about this, like who did it, and like why nobody didn't say nothing. It was crazy because the people was like, calling and checking up out of on us and stuff like that somehow was involved on it. So it was just like, it was one of those times where I was just like everybody just thinking to themselves. Since then like our family situations like our neighbor relationships, like nothing's been the same.

Nia’s anecdote shows that such experience could not allow for trust building because there was an inaction from their neighbors and a sense that anyone could have known about or partaken in
the act. The inaction of her neighbors to offer help during the shooting demonstrates a general carelessness neighbors had about her safety during a moment of trauma and potential death. Once she found out that someone had lied about their involvement in the drive-by, her family refrained from engaging with the neighborhood. Nia’s experience contributed to her hood mentality because it heightened her awareness about the violence of her neighborhood and it made her disengage from her neighborhood. She further solidified her belief that everyone is “out for themselves,” suggesting that the hood mentality is a self-preserving tactic in the neighborhood. The informal structures of gang violence play a salient role among all residents in their neighborhoods because they are strongly intertwined with safety. Participant’s hood mentality affects an individual’s choices to stay in or out and their need to continuously check that they are not a target of violence.

Portia, a former youth offender, explains that exposure to crime in the neighborhood alone makes it easy to become influenced to engaging in or with people who commit crime:

It was not safe at all, because you're so like so easily influenced to like hang out with like a wrong crowd. I witnessed people doing drugs. I witnessed people getting beat up. I've witnessed girls still selling their bodies. I've witnessed crazy people. I witnessed people go to jail. I witnessed somebody get shot before.

Her testimony of safety correlated to what she saw and what the influences of the neighborhood could bring to her. Her narrative makes it easy to outline the array of choices youth are exposed to in their neighborhood and question the agency youth have to be influenced by gangs.

**Neighborhood Experiences**

This thesis seeks not only to look at the way in which youth perceived their neighborhood, but also to describe what activities youth engaged in their neighborhood. Youth
had three main activities that they described partaking in: smoking marijuana, “running the streets” and being involved in after-school institutions. Which activities youth partook in depended largely on their support networks, and their own agency. Before defining and discussing “running the streets” and after school institutions, it is important to address the common activity youth did share when hanging out in their neighborhood.

**Smoking Marijuana**

A common activity among all youth was smoking marijuana, also known as “smoking weed.” Respondents shared that smoking weed was a fun thing to do with friends to destress. The only difference among the two groups was that participants who were convicted were caught with marijuana in school. However, the importance of this finding lies in the connectivity between networks that smoking weed brought to participants as a communal form of recreation. In some instances, youth like 19-year-old Xavier, a former youth offender, would ditch school to smoke weed with friends. Xavier remembers:

[I would] go hang out with friends, go smoke weed have fun you know? that was my mindset back then you know like? that's all that I wanted to do. Go hang out with friends, smoke weed, have fun, ditch school, try to fit in. We’d hop the gate, go to the donut shop, go to the park, that was our routine every morning, meet up with the homies at school everybody you know?

We can see that smoking weed is not just a communal routine that Xavier engages in with his friends every morning, but something that gives him a support group and the mobility to explore the neighborhood. Xavier’s narrative describes that of other respondent’s as well where youth associated the act of smoking weed and interlinked it with community. Moreover, the fact that
Xavier prioritizes ditching school to smoke weed with friends, suggests that the community and comfort Xavier finds when smoking weed might not be available for him at school.

Xavier’s experience smoking weed was mostly in the school and neighborhood setting as a communal activity. This activity was not too different from the experiences of non-convicted youth Jasmin who would also smoke with her friends while hanging out. She says:

I was smoking weed with some of them. I was just like hanging out. The ones that hang on the back street was fighting all the time. Like I wouldn't fight but I would be there just in case they needed me for backup, a loyalty syndrome that I had. So I was just be doing all types of crazy stuff. Like I was man, yeah running the streets.

Jasmin reveals differences about going to the back streets. We also see Jasmin say a new phrase: “running the streets.” What did running the streets mean? Participants described running the streets as hanging out in the neighborhood. Often to hang out they would sit on their front porch, hang out by cars and smoke weed. Other participants define it similarly as being with “the wrong” or “bad” people who were involved with selling drugs and gangbanging. One participant added that the definition also included not going to school. Though these actions are pretty stationary activities, the core of running the streets is suggested as having ownership of the streets. Running the streets emphasized taking control of the streets. Moreover, running the streets served as a front of defense in the case of a situational threat to the neighborhood gang or crew. Defense against any intruder or threat included fighting and calling on friends for backup. This type of support among the neighborhoods is common even with youth who were not previously convicted of a crime. This notion of “running the streets” also leads to some of the key differences between youth who had solid support systems or networks and youth who did not.
The previous section sought to explain the viewpoint of youth on their neighborhood. I find that a hood mentality strongly influences youth’s perceptions of safety and trust in a neighborhood. This section adds to extant scholarship in identifying the nuanced mechanisms of fear and agency that come with living in a neighborhood with gang-affiliations and crime. I identify the ways in which youth place the burden on themselves to stay out of trouble and how wanting to stay out of trouble also means reevaluating the trust the individuals have with their neighbors. I extend our knowledge on collective efficacy and identify some nuanced narratives of what influences individual’s trust with their neighbors. This extends findings from quantitative studies that associate concentrated disadvantage with lower collective efficacy.

**CHAPTER II: THE ROLE OF SUPPORT NETWORKS IN YOUTH’S NEIGHBORHOOD EXPERIENCES**

Past findings suggested similar experiences of both formerly convicted and at-risk youth through the hood mentality. Despite these similarities, there were key differences in the experiences of these two groups specifically, with their support networks that in turn influenced youth’s activity spaces. I identify four groups of support network types that emerged from the data that caused youth to gravitate to and away from crime. The first two groups compose the group of youth who were not convicted of a crime. They were: 1) youth who had a solid support system that intentionally encouraged the use of after-school institutions during leisure time 2) youth who did not have a support system but had a mentor or social worker that facilitated a relationship with after-school institutions and could keep track of a youth’s level of engagement with after-school programs. In contrast to youth who found meaningful relationships and activities of leisure in after-school institutions, former youth offenders had two main types of relationships with their support systems and networks. These relationships included 1) youth
who looked for a support system in gangs when they did not have one and engaged in crime 2) youth who had a support system that engaged in crime, and thus engaged in crime.

**Support Networks of At-Risk Youth**

Support networks and guardians were critical to deciding where youth spent their time. Through most of my interviews I found that one either had to work around the neighborhood or within it. That is, to be physically present and engage with the neighborhood social ties which could result in violence, or to not be in the space where such activity could take place. Non-convicted youth describe how their family’s parenting styles emphasized a need to be removed from the physical space of the potentially harmful neighborhood. In her interview, Nia mentions her foster mother keeping her in after-school activities so she didn't have to see or be involved around it. Parents assume not seeing or being involved in it will reduce their child’s likelihood of committing a crime. Moreover, the “security-maximizing” worldview of her parents focuses not only on her stability and security but also on Nia’s investments in her future through school activities. Her parent’s assumption proved to be true in deterring Nia from committing a crime or being convicted.

In Kiara’s case, it was her mentor and after-school activities that kept her away from the physical space of the neighborhood. She had someone who was directly tied with the program and consequently had a diverse set of things to do. She said:

I was lucky because my mentor that I co-founded my festival with, was the director of the after-school program. So I got involved in the EduCare Beyond the Bell program, which was at the school. It was all different type of things that you can be involved with, you can learn how to play guitars or you can go to tutoring or you can go do acting they had
like an acting class and video production thing. They had the leadership team where you learned about leadership and put together events and stuff for the school.

Kiara was involved in these activities to be away from the neighborhood. It should also be noted that the potential that her mentor saw in her propelled Kiara’s success beyond her high school years to co-found a film festival. Kiara’s mentor introduced her to a new set of opportunities she hadn’t learned about through her foster home or in the projects. These findings are significant because they reflect not only the heterogeneous experience she has in comparison to her peers, to have someone adding after-school school activities, and adding to that array of choices. Kiara’s cultural heterogeneity actually provided a positive array of choices that allowed her to choose from other potential negative choices in her neighborhood. These choices were key to providing Kiara with an option that does not partake in delinquency in her neighborhood.

**Support Networks of Former Youth Offenders**

In contrast to those who actively avoided the street, those who were involved in gang or criminal activity reported having support networks that could keep them safe. They still experienced a hood mentality that gave them a heightened sense of awareness but also experienced a sense of acceptance and protection that allowed them to feel relatively safe. For some youth involved in gang activity, their gang was a support system. Eduardo, for instance, lived from hotel to hotel and sometimes faced homelessness. He joined a gang to feel acceptance and found a family. His narrative demonstrated that he did not value a specific culture or action that the gang partook in, but the actions taken with the gang valued the support the gang brought that he didn’t have on his own. Eduardo said:

I mean, it was a very difficult experience, well not only because like it's a hard lifestyle to live, but because I'm going gay too, so it’s hard to like live that kind of lifestyle and be
that kind of way. So, I mean I went through everything but I always tell people the reason why did everything I did, was for acceptance. I was finding a way to fit in somewhere because I didn't really have family or anything. So, I mean drugs all that good stuff. I always had morals though, when I was like in that whole life, and one of them was not to hurt people or to kill them.

Eduardo expresses that gang life was a difficult lifestyle to be a part of because of his need to ironically hide who he was in front of the group. His story shows a potential contradiction in feeling alone because of his sexual identity but feeling accepted and supported when conforming to the identity of the gang he was a part of, and in engaging with the group’s activities. In some ways, any acceptance overrode any sense of discomfort. Eduardo conforms to the gang’s norms and finds that drugs provided an avenue or alleviation from being anything. His mention of morals also demonstrates that he differentiates their actions from his desire of community. His desire for community, is what ultimately caused him to be involved in crime. His experience differentiates from at-risk youth because he had a heightened need for acceptance that influenced his decision to commit crime. Moreover, his narrative contradicts literature on the culture of poverty, Eduardo differentiates his actions from his desire for acceptance yet, we still do find his experience to align with deviant subculture theory, in that he is in and responsive to, his neighborhood’s culture. Eduardo’s sexual orientation may have been a factor, and due to the limitations of this study, is difficult to disentangle or to compare to.

But it was not only support that the community of a gang provided. For Diamond, a 21-year-old formerly incarcerated youth, who grew up with her brothers in the justice system, gangs provided support and protection. When asked what support a gang brought them, a young woman, Diamond, expressed that gang life brought her protection and other types of mobility.
The gang-affiliated men provided her a protection that powerfully extended kinship lines, in ways, in place of her older brothers. She said:

My brothers were always incarcerated themselves. So like the guys from my area I would always be able to call on them or whatever, you know let them know what’s going on. So then they go they try to talk to someone or either they end up fighting someone like, you know, but however, like as far as protection, you know as far as if I needed a ride, or something. They were I guess the only friends that I really had, so they kind of had no choice but to be supportive but I don't think that they were the best friends that I had, like, you know, they basically were only my friends just being a part of the gang. So, you know, they weren't much of support but they were there when I needed them.

Diamond’s anecdote shows the nuance regarding the specific support friends in her gang gave her. This support was by no means perfect emotional and physical support, but it was the only support system she had. Diamond acknowledges both the weakness of the emotional support she received from her friends as well as the loyalty of their presence and physical protection at all times. The friendship ties she has built through the gang though not by choice might not provide as much support as she needed them to but the gang as a social institution forced and bonded individuals that were part of it to be there for her when she needed them.

Both of these youths had a big gap at home – in one case, because the brothers were incarcerated, in the other, because of alienation and overcrowding. And both found similar solutions – a group of peers that supported them, even if imperfectly and with lots of “bad” behavior. It should be noted, however, that having a weak network that did not provide support to a youth can almost be equated to not having a support system. In these situations, we see the foster care system play a critical role in shaping a youth’s desire of finding new networks. In situations where individuals found an “empty” support system or struggled to feel like their
group home or familial home were enough, youth ran away to escape. Carlos was one such youth who ran away from his familial home and his different group homes multiple times because of the alienation he felt and the overcrowded apartment he lived in. When he found a support network at school, Carlos normalized escaping home and was joined by the belief that everyone was trying to run away from home. He saw popularity through who he rereferred to as “bad” kids. While he acknowledged that what the “bad” kids did was not good, he justified it by feeling like everybody is trying to run away from something. He said:

So like I started getting popular too and like it was cool. Like I was trying, meeting people from down the street. I started meeting other bad kids and like I guess that's not a good thing right, but like I don't know it was cool. It was a good experience. I guess like that I learned quick. Like everybody's into something bad, all the kids always trying to run away from something.

While Carlos knows hanging with bad kids is not a good thing, it is the first time he is feeling a good experience, it was an escape from the loneliness. Further, he believes that everyone else is doing this as an escape to run away from something. This allows him to feel community in his own pain. This quotation of popularity differs largely from Anderson (1999)’s findings about popularity of a glamorous seduction to “ghetto” street culture. Anderson finds that such street culture can seduce adolescents into participation by promising its followers the chance of being “hip” and popular with certain “cool” peers on the streets or near the neighborhood school. (92) In this scenario, Carlos cares more about feeling better and feeling included than being hip or being “something.” Carlos is aware that his friends were not resources or role models and that he did not want involvement with the justice system. While he accepted opportunities of engaging with these social networks, it did not mean he valued them.
Upon initial review, these set of findings might reflect themes of deviant subculture theory, which holds that individuals in disadvantaged neighborhoods engage in behaviors because they are in and responsive to a different culture that values certain behaviors and outcomes (Harding 2008). To some extent, youth have no choice but to respond to the violence of their neighborhood. Youth’s culture is decided by a hood mentality, it is unlike the lived experiences of youth where social order is socially accepted through government regulations and laws. My data further suggests a distinction from Harding’s argument in that valuing certain behaviors or outcomes cannot be equated to youth partaking in the negative culture their neighborhood brings. All participants expressed awareness that what they were doing was wrong, and expressed not wanting to be involved such activity although they did. The gang activity provided protection, support, and mobility, making it in some instances, necessary. This need to partake in such activity reflects what Sanchez-Jankowski sees as resilience in the face of scarcity, whether physical or emotional.

The past section identified four ways in which youth’s different (or lack of) support networks shaped their youth outcomes. My findings extend literature that has identified that social support networks are strongly related to delinquent behavior, by explaining how networks facilitate or prevent youth from engaging in crime.

Residential Mobility in this Study

The narratives my interviewees provided rely on residential mobility features that highlight the non-static aspects of the neighborhood. My findings confirm much of what quantitative and qualitative literature have found about residential mobility making it difficult for youth to maintain a support system or making new friends. The mobility in fact is a deterrence for youth to making new friends.
Participants indicate that high mobility affected their standards for creating new friendships. In most cases youth actually anticipated the move. Xavier, a former youth offender, shared:

I didn’t really have many friends, so in a sense it didn't bother me that much. I resorted to a mentality of not connecting myself to people to not get too attached because I was sure that I was going to end up moving anyway, so why get attached to someone or be connected to people when I know I'm not going to know them for very long. Me moving didn't bother me it became the norm for me. So, it was easy to move. I'll grab my stuff put it in the car or whatever and go, that would be it, you know, it was normal.

Xavier’s quote reinforces the idea that mobility is associated with youth feeling deterred from being connected to others or being too attached, because they anticipated a move. With the normalization of not becoming attached to others, came the normalization of not looking to make long-term friendships.

Some individuals like Terence, an at-risk youth found that he only made friendships with people who understood his situation and were available to hang out instantly rather than it being a friendship that would be invested over time. He said:

Well as far as friends, I don't really hang out with people unless we’re on the same page. I pretty much kick back relax probably go golfing or something like that. I'm pretty chill person. I don't really do much. I don't go out clubbing. And the few friends that I still talking they don't do nothing either, go to work kick back. Normally. I'll be out of work, just living.

Though this quote does not directly mention residential mobility this was Terence’s response to coping with moving often. I found his response on his friends being on the same page to be
compelling, because it might suggest that he does not make friends with people who see a long-term relationship out of that and might not invest in those types of networks.

In contrast, the direct influence of selection bias was a motivating factor for Lanel, a former youth offender and his relationship to crime. When asked about how long he spent at his placement, he highlighted the influence of his probation’s officer in stopping him from going back to his neighborhood. Lanel said:

My PO kept me in placement, like, she didn't want to rush me back home she didn't want to just because like my sister like she would basically keep me home, she knew if she put myself back in that environment she knew what was gonna happen so she kinda like put me away from that, if you know what I’m saying.

This quotation embodies and exemplifies the role of selection in the process of mobility. Though foster youth for the most part do not have the ability to control where they will be placed next, the knowledge of this PO officer, to know how dysfunctional Lanel’s neighborhood was like was critical to changing his future outcomes, where he chose to stop being involved in crime.

Though my findings affirm much of the literature on residential mobility, my study presents the idea that youth who face such high mobility do not identify with a neighborhood and extends on neighborhood effects literature that may not address this variety.
CHAPTER III: THE INFLUENCE OF PLACEMENT TYPE ON JUVENILE CRIME

The previous chapter observed the hood mentality and the ways in which different social networks and mentors influence how and what parts of the neighborhood youth experience. The following chapter focuses on the underlying mechanisms behind youth’s decisions in choosing the networks they do. Consequently, the review of the literature strives to communicate what extant literature reveals about the way family and home characteristics affect youth’s susceptibility to neighborhood effects. I begin by discussing sociologist David Harding’s hypothesis of effect heterogeneity, to outline the way family backgrounds can influence the “dose” that youth experience of their neighborhood or the way in which youth respond to neighborhood characteristics. I move into discussing what different mechanisms are identified among the youth I interviewed such as after school activities, group home experiences, and kinship care. In situating the literature of both effect heterogeneity and the varying effects of placement types in foster care, we can move toward discussing the underlying mechanisms found in my data that influence juvenile delinquency.

The Impact of Domestic Ties on Effect Heterogeneity

Different components of neighborhood effects have various impacts on youth outcomes. Though insightful, sociologist David Harding identifies a need for neighborhood effects studies to recognize the diverse types of family structures that influence a youth’s ability to cope, navigate, and decide where their time is spent (Harding et al 2008). He argues that “effect heterogeneity” – neighborhood effects of different direction or magnitude for different youths, is created by differences in the vulnerability or susceptibility of youth such as family income, family structures, number of children, parenting decisions and family resources. This variation can explain how individual and family characteristics make some youths more or less susceptible
to neighborhood effects mechanisms. Harding’s hypothesis is critical to this chapter because foster care placement types inherently change these family characteristics and structures. The following section focuses on discussing what extant literature has found on the effects of different foster care placements on juvenile delinquency to explore how foster care placements can serve as different family structure types.

While very little qualitative research has been done to engage with the experiences of youth in group care who become involved with the justice system, we know that group homes are identified as options of last resort and that adolescents likely to be in a group home are male, racial and ethnic minorities, and are more likely to be involved in the justice system.

Extant research has identified a significant relationship between foster home placement types and juvenile delinquency. At large these studies have found that children placed in kinship care, care that places a youth in a home with a relative, have fewer behavior problems than those placed in traditional care or group care (Rubin, Downes, O’Reilley, Relonnen, Luan & Localtio, 2008). Though the mechanisms for this relationship are obscure, some characteristics hypothesized to contribute to this correlation are placement instability and the potential negative effects of peer contagion.

Studies have shown group homes are positively correlated with juvenile delinquency. An example of such research is a study carried out by scholars from the University of Pittsburgh in 2014, where the study found that in a sample of over 20,000 families, youth in group care placements faced higher delinquency rates than that of a single-family home (Kolivoski, Shook, Goodkind, Kim 2014). Multiple studies have both confirmed and further specified these results indicating that a relative risk of delinquency is 2 times higher for adolescents with at least one group home placement (Ryan, Marshall, Herz and Hernandez 2008). Moreover, a study by the
Department of Justice found that youth in group care during the ages of 17-18 commit 80% more crime than the average for others in traditional foster care (Cusick, Courtney, Havlicek, & Hess, 2010). Though these studies have found a correlation they have failed to identify the disparities in foster care placements and the effects of such care on neighborhood effects.

A possible mechanism that studies have pointed to as serving as an explanation for the correlation between group homes and delinquency is peer contagion. Literature identifies peer contagion as a mutual process that occurs between an individual and a peer and includes behaviors and emotions that potentially undermine a youth’s development or cause harm to others (Dishion, Tipsord 2011). Some scholars argue that peer contagion is particularly relevant as it brings similarly challenged youth together in a home and can produce negative peer contagions (Barth 2005; Leve and Chamberlain 2005) Close associations between peers might produce increased, rather than decreased, delinquent or criminal behaviors such as drug use and depression.

This chapter seeks to explain the way group homes might influence the susceptibility of youth to create or to not create networks. This literature extends Harding’s work in considering the heterogeneity in family and home structures to affect the way youth experience neighborhood effects. Moreover, it adds to further research of understanding the mechanisms in group homes that influence the way youth see the world.

**Youth Domestic Experiences**

The domestic environment of youth-offenders and non-offenders has a strong influence on their relationship with others. In general, I find that youth with strong family ties reside in kin care placements and single-family homes while youth with weak family and mentorship ties, reside in group homes. In fact, all participants who were placed in a group home showed a lack
of family ties or ties with mentors. These different family ties are the basis for how I define the varying family characteristics of each youth and is one of the factors Harding recognizes as establishing effect heterogeneity. In particular, when observing the experiences of youth placed in group homes, I find that the data reflects what previous literature has found regarding the influence of group care on delinquency, over half of youth places in a group home throughout their foster care experience were justice-involved youth. This chapter will focus on the differences of individuals living in group care and those living in a foster home or kinship placement in order to explore what mechanisms facilitate susceptibility in engaging or disengaging with networks, as described in Harding’s theory.

I begin by exploring how youth who lived in a group home experienced weak ties and an array of experiences that consequentially shaped a youth’s path to the system or to networks involved in the justice system. Findings show that group homes presented an incredibly difficult environment for all youth. Many participants cite having a lack of personal space and not getting along with peers due to hygiene. Moreover, there is a general theme among some youth, that people do not “like” them. For some like Terence, a former foster youth, the overwhelming structure of group homes felt carceral. When comparing his experience of moving from kin care to a group home, he finds that the freedom and agency in doing simple tasks was a freedom he lost when living in a group home. He says:

I was free about what I was able to do. I didn’t have to share a room with a stranger, a bathroom, you know what I’m saying. Hygiene is everything to me. So, you know, I don’t like filthiness, we can't even share a bathroom…So, a lot of people do not like me, so I didn't really like that but like then the programming, watching TV you can only watch TV at this time or whatever. They feed you at a certain time. It's like why can't I
just walk to the refrigerator and feed myself? I wouldn't do nothing because I couldn't really do much. I would need approval or just in general I was kind of on lock down.

Terence’s mention of feeling on lock down, shows a significant lack of agency. As opposed to general rules that kids have, this excerpt in Terence’s interview suggests that negotiation with staff at each center lacked a sense of intimacy and that permission was needed for every element of their living situation. The carceral feeling of being in a system was further solidified by testimonies of other participants. Some youth recall that their least favorite memory was having to write numbers on their clothes to identify their garments while doing laundry. This testimony suggests a lack of individual support due to high demand.

Other youth found that it was not just simple tasks of everyday life that were controlled, but also where people could go after-school that was controlled. Xavier, a former youth offender who lived in a group home for six years, noted that he often found himself doing nothing or when he could, riding his bike. When discussing his favorite after-school activities, he noted that he could only ride his bike at specific group homes and that after-school activities that took place in the school were not an option offered to him. He said:

I would’ve done all the after-school stuff, but they never let us do that… the group home system, DCFS as a whole, doesn't allow after school programs. I would have loved to do all that after school stuff. I think that would have significantly bettered my life… if more kids were in after-school programs, they might end up being trusting of someone in that after-school program whether that be a teacher, a coach, a fellow student. Someone could be connected to that that youth that they might talk to then like say if it's the kids getting beaten by a foster parent.
Xavier associated engagement in after school activities with an agency and freedom that could have bettered his life and given him someone to trust. Deterring youth from such involvement and from making such meaningful connections, his group home stopped not just Xavier but other respondents from having anyone to share things to and further contributed to a guardedness towards making new networks. The limiting aspects of the structure in group homes was reflected upon 6 participants, reflecting all individuals who were in a group home at some point during their time in foster care. Xavier indirectly touches on a core part of the effect heterogeneity hypothesis, in that outcomes are inherently connected with the potential for building networks and trust through institutional after-school activities.

**Lack of Expectations**

Participants found group homes to provide baseline services they needed to live. However, individuals like Terence had no awareness of the opportunity or the familial love associated with parental support. When asked about what support systems he had growing up he said:

> I guess they offer to pay for our clothing which wasn't really much. I mean but at the end of the day they basically did the same thing our parents should have did even if we felt like it wasn’t perfect, it was like another form of a parent in general. You just go to school. Nobody helps you with your homework. That's the only difference. You have shelter. Get food, I guess that's about it. It's just control basically and structure, something you have to follow otherwise, you’re not gonna like it.

This quote is critical is explaining the difference in outlooks for individuals who would be involve in the system. Some individuals like Terence and Dietrick who we will read about later,
created low expectations for mentors or caregivers, but others like Jose, and Xavier would find this lack of support as a reason to run away.

The data suggested that group care can serve as a constant reminder to youth in foster care that their experience is atypical in comparison to those of other children who live in traditional or semi-traditional nuclear family households. When talking to Portia, a former youth offender, who experienced both group care and living in a single-placement home, she explained her hesitations about group care. These hesitations have significant influence on a youth’s decision to run away or commit other crime. She said:

I prefer to be in foster care before a group home... I feel like with a foster home it’s more like based in a normal neighborhood and they speak to you like a normal kid. Yes, you have restrictions. Yes, you have a curfew, but you're able to live a normal life and I feel like we're with a group home it’s just so many personalities you have to deal with so many different people that come to group homes with problems already and like it could kind of overwhelm you too. And I feel with a foster home, you're more able to, you know, just focus on yourself and live a normal life.

This quotation exposed a finding among other interviews that youth offenders did not feel fully normal and that group care exacerbated the realities of youth in congregate care and with high residential mobility. Portia later on in her interview explains that she went “AWOL” meaning that she ran away without letting anyone know. I found her mention of AWOL particularly interesting because she was one of multiple youth who used this term that is an acronym for “Absent Without Official Leave,” an acronym used in the army. This term and her experience echo the experiences of other youth in care who left group care for its restrictions and for the multiple personalities are indicative of the army-like structure of group homes. Running away
would inherently also mean that if youth wanted care again, they would have to turn themselves in at a police station.

**Going AWOL**

A few participants who lived in group homes discussed going AWOL, which meant running away from a group home. When a participant first expressed it, I thought it was ironic, due to the origin of the phrase in the US military: “Absent Without Official Leave.” The indirect subtle comparison of group homes to the military reflects the overtly structured aspects of group home. Though this finding does not directly answer my question, I found it relevant to discuss because of the way going AWOL facilitates youth interactions and contact with the justice system when a youth decides to come back to a group home. When a youth decides to come back to a group home after running away, they are asked to go to a police station and to turn themselves in if want to be under group care again. At times, this involves being charged of a status offense. Portia, whom we heard about before who was a dual-status youth, explained what AWOL meant. She described:

> When you AWOL you run away, they then report you back to the police station and they encourage everybody to go back to the police station to turn yourself or you can go back to your placement.

Though her narrative does not express anything about her neighborhood, it does highlight the ways in which the justice system is so intertwined with the foster care system. This subtle finding further emphasizes the way foster youth experience much more contact with the justice system than youth who live in a single-family home. In some regards, just the act of trying to run away from the situation could result in contact with the justice system.
\textit{Sticking to Themselves}

Participants who had no, or weak family ties showed a significant sense of independence guardedness, and degree of separation from others. When comparing Terence and Dietrick to Xavier and Carlos, two former youth offenders, it is clear that they both did not like the group home. They both struggled sharing, they both had a lack of trust for the people inside the group home and felt controlled. However, Terence and Dietrick experienced a strong sense of separation and desire to work on themselves. For Dietrick, a positive outlook allowed him to be separate from and avoid the control of the people whom he disagreed with. He said: “you learn a lot about yourself being around a group of different personalities that you can't control, you learn how to be, how to boost your self-esteem. You learn how to make how to make friends out of them.” This quote shows remarkable positivity in meeting people and a separation from their actions to your experiences. Dietrick does not allow himself to be weighed down by his experiences with others.

In comparison, Terence shows a distinction from Xavier and Jose in that he kept to himself. When asked about his friends or neighbors his response was that he “doesn’t associate with a lot of neighbors.” This lack of association with others extended to his school and neighborhood relationships. He said:

I wouldn't hang out with people. I would just probably chit chat, well not chit chat, just greetings, hi and bye type things, just based on how I carry myself, it didn’t really matter, it didn’t bother me. Even if they was doing things around the neighborhood or stuff that shouldn't be going on if it was at school, after school, down the street, on the block, everywhere I’d be around just pretty much I just stand my ground and I don't, I don't
worry about it. I don't pay attention to it. I don't fear it, pretty much, used to being on my own, just feeling the way I feel, just not having parents.

Terence suggested that because he did not have parents, he was meant to be alone and continuously feels alone. His quote also revealed that he does not find much value in forming any relationships. To be engaged in neighborhood or school crime would mean involving himself with other people and that itself was a boundary. His guarded framework helped him maintain self-sufficiency and to some extent an emotional stability associated with having an absence of expectations on others. When asked about other parts of his high school experience he continued to associate high school with a negative influence on parental relationships: “High school wasn’t really for me because I never had parents, so there’s a difference between that I guess. It bothered me but then it doesn’t bother me it's like I’m used to it,” he said. I highlight this because his acceptance of growing up without his parents impacts the way in which he approached crime.

*Youth Experiences of Fighting*

In contrast to Dietrick and Terence, Xavier who was in a group home for 6 years, discussed how he was reported for fighting when his foster parents sought help from a therapy hotline. When asked about how he got involved in the justice system, he states that it was due to fighting in school, and a continuous surveillance of his future activities. He said:

Fighting in school, the foster parents called the hotline asking if they can get a therapist. They called the police, then they came out to investigate and decided to take me… they decided to put me under juvenile justice supervision. Pretty much like minor’s probation. They didn't charge me with anything official, but they put me under their probation system just to watch me, that type of supervision ended when I was 17.
The group home facilitated the surveillance that resulted from this fight and contributed to the
group-home’s carceral characteristics. Moreover, the implications of this specific moment
contributed to Xavier’s hesitance in communicating with others to get support. The
inconsistencies in this situation versus those reported by other youth of fighting with individuals
in the group home show that most if not everyone was part of the justice system because of their
circumstances in the group home that facilitated contact with the justice system.

Similar to Xavier, Jose also indicated that he used to fight with other boys during his time
in group care. He describes it was difficult to interact with people of different backgrounds. He says:

It was like a lot of kids from different background and a lot of kids like were raised
differently and I think some kids were raised like different, I don't want to say nothing
bad… one kid specifically I had six altercations with him because he likes to talk a lot
and I didn't like talking and then was like being disrespectful and I didn't let him
disrespect me and like a lot of people got into the same problems with the same kid.

Unlike Dietrick and Terence, Jose found it difficult to stay to himself, under similar conditions.
Our findings show that even within group homes there is the potential for effect heterogeneity.

Youth in Kinship Care

In contrast to youth who lived in group care, youth who were in a placement with a
family member found themselves connected to their family history. This history as well as their
ties with other family members ultimately contributed to their life outcomes. My first example is
about a former foster youth Beatrice. Beatrice’s story shows how the loss of her relationship with
her mother actually influenced her and her aunt who became her foster mom to disengage from
any criminal or drug activity. Her experience living with other family members and also having
younger siblings instilled in her a solidarity, responsibility and expectation to engage in school activities. She did not experience any significant difference in the amount of physical or financial support she was given in comparison to other youth in group care but continuously being reminded of her family history and what she should not be involved in, allowed her to focus on specific after school activities and networks and be less susceptible to networks or activities that diverged from that. When talking about such experiences she said:

I was put as the oldest in the house to make sure like all the younger ones up under me was straight. So most of my time was spent like babysitting my brother and babysitting my nephew or like just cleaning up the house making sure they straight and then focusing on school making sure I was passing grades and like I was saying earlier like my mom [aunt] always tried to keep us in like extracurricular activities and like keep us like at school just so we didn't have to see that and we didn't have to be involved around it.

Beatrice’s foster mom placed responsibilities and goals for her to not only do well but to ensure her brothers were doing well. Because she was aware of the danger of her neighborhood, she took agency and responsibility in ensuring that her brothers were not in the activity spaces that could shape a potential path to crime. Because of Beatrice’s awareness of the neighborhood and her mom encouraging after school activities, she was actively working against any susceptibility that her or her brothers could feel to keep them away from crime. She said:

I was like highly into martial arts like very into martial arts. I still like so then we like go and practice and stuff. I was also like waiting for homecoming and like prom and like, you know, the whole senior activities stuff.

Beatrice’s involvement with after school activities gave her something to be excited about when going to school and allowed her to feel emotions linked with senior year.
Another emerging contrast found among youth involved in kinship care as opposed to group care was that kinship care allowed youth to feel an overall sense of familial community. Janelle, a former at-risk youth, expressed that she built relationships with people in the neighborhood through her foster mother, “people came over to gossip with her all the time” she said. Visitors is something individuals in group homes did not have, they did not have the ability to build strong outside relationships with anyone. Moreover, kinship care allowed individuals to stay in contact with their biological parents. Janelle also discussed this, she said:

My mama never left my life. Even when I was in the system. She still was there, still showed up every holiday every birthday but yeah, I'm very close with everybody. Well my biological brothers and sisters and my big momma’s kids.

Therefore, kinship care distinguished itself from foster care through its ability to sustain familial relationships. This largely contrasts Terence’s experience mentioned earlier, where he described that he had no one. The lack of opportunity he had to learn and spend time with his own biological family was in part impeded by the group home structure.

**Youth in a Single-Family Home (Non-Foster Care)**

In contrast to youth who had weak family ties, youth-offenders who had strong family ties and were not involved in the foster care system discussed engagement with crime to secure funds or items with those funds. Two youth who I interviewed that were not involved in the foster care system engaged in crime associated with stealing and expressed economic hardship in trying to buy specific items. I begin by discussing how incarcerated youth with weak family ties got involved in the foster care system. Of the eight respondents in this study who were justice involved, three had some significant family ties, two of which were not in foster care and therefore had direct contact with their parents. Jose, a youth offender who lived with his family
discussed how he was his own support system, and the lack of money his family had played a role in him seeking other means to secure financial stability. He said:

My support system was like myself. I would like try to do it for myself as much as I can because I didn't like asking my parents for anything. when I was growing up my dad like usually bought me a whole bunch of stuff, but after a while like I just didn't like asking for money. So just try to get it myself, I’d go and I’d steal, and like would sell stuff and stuff like that...We didn't really like have a lot of money to be asking or like spending, just money for the house and stuff like that. Just my friends just coming up with better ideas of trying to get money. Like go hit a liq or something like that, better ideas of coming up with money.

The class status of Jose’s family created a framework for Jose to be self-sustainable, beginning in his young years. The quote reveals that the ways in which he engaged in being self-sustainable is built on by the ideas of others and his relationship with friends in the neighborhood.

Throughout this chapter I find that there is strong heterogeneity in the array of experiences that result from each placement type. These placement types align with Harding’s hypothesis of effect heterogeneity. Youth have different experiences of their neighborhood based on their group care or foster home experiences that either allow them to engage or disengage from the neighborhood. Moreover, these experiences were associated with a lack of trust and desire to build any new networks. I also find that the youth in group homes are not so different, particularly in the struggles they experience. A change in framework about accepting their situation allowed some youth to avoid crime, however, to some extent all participants had fought with other in their group home. Youth who live in a single-family home or kinship placement feel a stronger sense of familial community and are encouraged to be in after-school institutional
activities. Last, this chapter reveals a subtle yet surprising finding that youth who were not in the foster care system were also involved in crime largely resulting from economic need. Because of the dataset of this study, this finding in particular cannot be generalizable but can be explored in further research.
CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

This thesis explores youth’s inner-city neighborhood experiences to better understand the relationship between neighborhood effects and juvenile delinquency. Moreover, this thesis demonstrates how social networks and placement type play a role in the lives of youth who are in disadvantaged neighborhoods shaping the heterogeneous pathways youth take in offending vs. not. In particular, this study led to three major conclusions on the social context of the neighborhood encompassing neighborhood environment, networks, and placement type. The data reflected many similarities among respondents regarding their hood mentality and heightened awareness of the world around them, that then impeded any trust among neighbors. Moreover, this study found that experiences are shaped not only by the activities youth choose to engage in and with whom, but in the way participants feel about their neighborhood. Last, this study found youths’ home situation and placement type strongly shaped how they felt about such interactions with others. Key differences between the group of youth offenders and at-risk youth are the presence of “security-maximizing” support networks, defined under Sanchez-Jankowski, that influenced the participants who did not commit a crime to engage with the after-school institution and that provided a positive environment for youth to learn. Youth with no support systems at home valued their neighborhood networks as the support system they did not previously have.

Some of the nuanced findings in this study showed the lack of detail of major constructs like social capital and social organization that cannot measured by quantitative studies. In particular, findings from this paper show that youth can distinguish their emotions of distrust in their neighborhood from their actual engagement with neighbors, suggesting that social cohesion cannot be so easily quantified and that these constructs are worthy of further qualitative
observation. More broadly, this study highlights the difficulty and challenge of capturing a youth’s neighborhood experiences when they are residential unstable. These findings contribute to the literature in that while youth have an array of choices that they are exposed to both in the neighborhood and at school, these choices largely depend on their placement type. The hood mentality also questions the dichotomy of security-maximizing and excitement-maximizing perspectives as found by Sanchez-Jankowski. A youth could be serving a "excitement-maximizing" life in order to maximize security in their neighborhood.

**Limitations**

While informative, this study faces significant limitations. Limitations include the fact that I am observing a small sample size over a short period of time. I further do not have a controlled neighborhood in which I analyze youth’s experiences. These factors pose specific drawbacks to the study in that some youth might have experienced changes specific to their neighborhood. However, the egocentric aspect of this study makes exploratory findings for future systematic research. Future studies could address limitations in this study by producing a mixed-method approach and interviewing a larger sample size.

Though this study faces limitations, this thesis exhibits a high amount of internal validity. Measures were given to maximize interpretive validity during the coding process. The use of InVivo codes allowed me to use participant’s words as an analytic structure, to understand their meanings and describe them accurately. Further, because I partook in an inter-rater reliability process and found consistency within my coded transcripts with other novice researchers, there is a high likelihood that these findings are interpreting the data accurately and that this study could be replicated. The use of member-checking in further steps of this study will serve to increase the study’s internal validity. Though neighborhoods were not controlled, this research project sets
out to study what it intended to in an intentional way and makes claims supported by raw and captivating evidence surrounding neighborhood experiences in disadvantaged areas. This research encourages others to explore neighborhood experiences across urban cities to improve youth outcomes for all communities.

**Directions for Further Research**

This study calls for further qualitative research on inner-city neighborhoods and youth’s time-use interactions. Longitudinal studies that could track and report on a specific neighborhood’s youth experiences over time could be insightful in reducing the limitations of retrospective interviews and allow narratives to guide the research, in a true grounded theory approach. Additionally, my research has implications on research methods themselves and in the way in which researchers observe neighborhood effects. The foster care system provides a type of heterogeneity that though challenging to research on, should be further explored. Because an estimated 50 percent of youth referred to juvenile court have had involvement with the child welfare system, future researchers should be aware that some studies are not reflective of the type of mobility and change that many youth in the U.S. face.

Though I focused on a small set of interviews, my research design allowed for an in-depth analysis of respondent’s narratives that can offer future researchers new constructs to study quantitatively. My contrast between former foster and convicted youth provide important areas for future scholarship. This research highlights that placement type decisions and heterogeneity in placement types are crucial for youth who are in the foster care system. Meanwhile, it is common for youth who live in foster care to grow up in neighborhoods of poverty. Further research should aim to identify why there is an association between foster care and poverty and develop interventions to enhance economic mobility for youth so as to avoid foster care and the
justice system altogether. My research provides a valuable foundation and basis to the complexities in the system and the heterogeneity of placement types and institutions that can explain causal or correlated relationships.

This study holds significant real-world implications. The data indicating that youth removed themselves from dangerous parts of their neighborhoods suggest that the quality of our justice systems and safety of our neighborhoods can be significantly improved. This improvement can further occur in ways that do not invalidate the informal structures of gangs or crews that are creating positive community ties or support groups in the neighborhood to certain individuals. Additionally, because most of the youth in this study were involved in the foster care system, these findings have tremendous implications in conveying the importance of support networks and support systems to youth who have unstable or untraditional backgrounds. The findings of this study on the effects and restrictions of group care should also be taken with immense precaution. My study identifies key issues with the ways group care influences youth well-being, self-perception and association with delinquency. The foster care system can begin addressing this issue by providing foster youth a team of mentors or by creating support groups in schools or being less restrictive on youth’s after-school activities. Findings from this study convey a need for local policy actors to establish a sense of safety in inner city neighborhoods, that can involve and engage the community without invalidating current structures of neighborhood ownership, crews or gangs. Only by addressing the inequality in neighborhoods and understanding the relationships between youth and their networks, can we begin to develop a solution for juvenile crime.
APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Coding Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>NOTES TO SELF</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crime (Cr)</td>
<td>Engaging in illegal activity</td>
<td>“We ended up going to go do a robbery”</td>
<td>Process</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster Care (FC)</td>
<td>Involved or engaged in the foster care system</td>
<td>“I got into the foster care system at 14”</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-traditional housing</td>
<td>Housing that does not conform to nuclear family</td>
<td>“I grew up in a group home”</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(NTH)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict (Con)</td>
<td>Disagreement with the system</td>
<td>“she wasn’t an abuser”</td>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Environment</td>
<td>Neighborhood environment and atmosphere as felt by individual</td>
<td>Victim of her environment</td>
<td>Interpretive</td>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(NE)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Neighborhood</td>
<td>Physical characteristics of description of the neighborhood</td>
<td>“Walking down the street there are a lot of curves and small streets and dead ends”</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment (PNE)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family (Fam)</td>
<td>Mention of immediate family members or biological ties</td>
<td>“I grew up with my mom and her biological daughter”</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentorship (M)</td>
<td>Mentorship: connections with positive support system</td>
<td>“She was my teacher and she believed in me, and picked me up from home to see different places in LA”</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Mention</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Score</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networks (SN)</td>
<td>Friends and connections with people in the neighborhood</td>
<td>Loyalty to friends</td>
<td>Descriptive/Emotional</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After-School Neighborhood Environment (ASNE)</td>
<td>Engaging in neighborhood activity after school</td>
<td>“We would hang in the backstreets, and alley ways”</td>
<td>Descriptive, Process</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After School Institution (ASI)</td>
<td>Engaging in after school programs such as sports or Think Together</td>
<td>Think Together, basketball</td>
<td>Descriptive, Process</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsafe (US)</td>
<td>Lack of safety, feelings of danger</td>
<td>“it’s scary, it’s not the right place to be”</td>
<td>Interpretive, Emotional</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Parenting (G.P.)</td>
<td>Good parenting in perspective of child</td>
<td>“she always took care of us, bought us anything we wanted for groceries”</td>
<td>Emotional, Interpretive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad parenting (B.P.)</td>
<td>Bad parenting in perspective of child</td>
<td>“she didn’t discipline me as much as I needed it then”, “he was not around”</td>
<td>Emotional, Interpretive</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access (-) (Acc)</td>
<td>No access to basic needs such as food, housing and transportation</td>
<td>Expressions of lack of transportation or resources</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distrust (Dist)</td>
<td>Feeling that they cannot rely on individuals in their social networks or guardians</td>
<td>“I didn’t because I know who they are. You know what I mean? Like I don’t trust nobody where I grew up because everybody else is careless and everybody out for themselves”</td>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Quote</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Weight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>--------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-sufficiency (SS)</td>
<td>Wanting to be independent; not depending on others for sustenance</td>
<td>“I wanted to see if I could do it on my own”</td>
<td>Thematic</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Struggle (Str)</td>
<td>Severe suffering</td>
<td>“it was pretty hard, I ran away and hid”</td>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territorial (TR)</td>
<td>Relating to ownership of an area in neighborhood</td>
<td>“so it’s one hood on this side of the street and one on that side, you’re on our side”</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspirations (Asp)</td>
<td>Aspirations for the future</td>
<td>“I want to be a child therapist”</td>
<td>Interpretive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gang Activity (G)</td>
<td>Gang Interaction, Gang Involvement</td>
<td>“that was part of the little gang life I had caught myself being in”</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting (F)</td>
<td>Violence, intergroup fighting or altercation</td>
<td>“they end up fighting someone as part of protection”</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Efficacy (CE)</td>
<td>Neighborhood Cohesion</td>
<td>“we were like family, when you see somebody everyday and you know their kids”</td>
<td>Interpretive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unity (U)</td>
<td>Acting or working as a unit</td>
<td>“knowing that they do it and knowing that it’s something that we do or that they do and you do with them”</td>
<td>Interpretive</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice (-/+</td>
<td>Words of Advice</td>
<td>“He would tell me, just worry about yourself and get your stuff together”</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loneliness (L)</td>
<td>Feelings of loneliness or isolation</td>
<td>“I went to the restroom and hid, and just”</td>
<td>Thematic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Example</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Score</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support (Supp)</td>
<td>Feeling supported, comforted</td>
<td>“my uncle took me under his wing and gave me a job”</td>
<td>Interpretive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting “Straight” (ST)</td>
<td>Slang word for leaving illegal activity or not being engaged in illegal activity at all</td>
<td>“As the oldest I had to make sure the younger ones under me were straight”</td>
<td>Interpretive</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Use (Drg)</td>
<td>Use of drugs or interactions with drugs</td>
<td>“my biological struggled with drug addiction and they found her using”</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence (V)</td>
<td>Behavior involving physical force or intent to hurt or kill someone</td>
<td>“they ended up shooting up my house”</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2. Interview Schedule

DESCRIPTION: You are invited to participate in a research study on juvenile justice and neighborhood experiences. You will be asked to describe your experiences in your neighborhood, the places you spent your time, who you spent time with, and what you liked to do in your free time. Apart from describing your experiences, you will be asked to draw a map of your neighborhood. Your answers will be audio recorded. The recordings will be discarded after the research findings are published.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: Your participation will take approximately 60 minutes.

PARTICIPANT’S RIGHTS: I would like to remind you that your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. The alternative is not to participate. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

Thank you for making some time to let me interview you.

Intro Questions:
1. How are you doing today?
2. Can you walk me through your daily routine or daily schedule this week?
   a. Where do you go to school? What are you studying?
   b. Where do you work?
3. Where are you currently living? How long have you been living in X?
4. Is X the same area you grew up in?
5. Who do you live with currently?
   a. Do you have any siblings?

Placements (For Foster Youth Only)
1. Do you live in the same area as your last foster care placement?
2. How old were you when you entered the foster care system?
3. What type of placements did you live in? (i.e. group home, kinship care, foster home)
4. How many placements did you have?
   a. Where were your multiple located?
5. How far away were these placements from each other?
6. How did changing homes affect your network of friends?
7. Did changing placements ever cause you to change schools? How many times?
8. How did these changes affect what you did in your free time?
9. What means of transportation did you use to get around? Did this change from placement to placement?
10. Did you prefer any placements over the other? Why?

Activity Spaces and Networks
1. I want you to think back to when you were in high school, on a regular week during your senior year. How did you generally spend your time after school?
2. Can you name two of your favorite hangout spots?
3. How far were these from your neighborhood?
4. How did you get to these places?
   a. Did you prefer some modes of transportation over others? Why?
5. Did (insert activity space) feel far or close from where you live?
6. Who did you spend time with when you were hanging out?
   a. How long have you known them?
   b. How did you meet them?
7. Can you name three people who were your support system at the time?
   a. What did X (insert name of individual) do in their free time?
   b. What type of support did X offer you, might still offer?
   c. Did X live close to you?
8. Did you ever hang out outside in your neighborhood?
   a. What types of things would you do? If not, why didn’t you like to spend time there?
9. Did you feel safe in your neighborhood? Why?
   a. What type of activity did you witness there?

School and the Neighborhood:
1. How did you get to school?
   a. How long was the commute?
2. Were you a part of any school clubs or sports?
3. Can you tell me about your time in X club?
   a. How many hours did you meet or practice per week?
4. Did you have any mentors who helped you in school?
   a. Would you see these mentors outside of school?
   b. Did they live close to you?
5. Think back to when you were in high school again. If I had asked you what you would like to be doing at the age of 21, what would that teenager have told me?
6. How do you feel your experiences now align with that? What obstacles did you see in the way?

Community Trust in the Neighborhood
1. Can you describe your neighborhood?
   a. What would you say were its borders? Where did the neighborhood end/begin?
      (Allow them to draw their neighborhood, usually play this by ear and ask them when there’s a reasonable transition to it)
2. What type of housing did you live in?
3. How was your neighborhood structured? Single-family homes, residential, business?
4. Can you describe a person who you would typically see in your day to day, walking through your neighborhood?
5. How often did you talk to people who you saw lived by you?
6. Did you know your neighbors?
   a. Were you close to your neighbors?
   b. Did you trust them?
7. Did they offer you any type of support? (If they are close, inquiring if the demographics of their neighborhood changed?)
8. Did your neighborhood ever have any community events?
9. Did you ever hangout outside of your home in the neighborhood?
10. Did you feel safe in your neighborhood? Why?

Crime and Possible Influences (For Youth Offenders Only)
1. Can you talk to me about how you got in contact with the justice system?
   a. How old were you?
   b. How long did you spend in the justice system?
2. Would you be able to walk me through the day you were arrested?
   a. Where did it occur?
   b. Where you with anyone?
   c. How did you meet X?
3. Can you walk me through the day you were convicted? When was that?
4. Did you return home after finishing your time at the detention center?
5. Did you have any restrictions upon returning home?
6. What was your transition back home like?
7. Did you receive any additional resources after you were incarcerated?

We have almost reached the end of the interview. I’m just going to ask you a few quick questions now.

Sex:
Age:
What school did you go to?
School lunch?
Race/Ethnicity?
Children?
Zip Code? Cross Streets?
High School Diploma?
Appendix 3. IRB Approval Letter

STANFORD UNIVERSITY
Stanford, CA 94305 [Mail Code 5579]

Penelope D Eckert, Ph.D.
(650) 723-2480
CHAIR, PANEL ON NON-MEDICAL HUMAN SUBJECTS

Certification of Human Subjects Approvals

Date: August 23, 2018
To: Marisol Zarate, Urban Studies and Political Science/Junior, Political Science
   David S Pedulla Sociology
From: Penelope D Eckert, Ph.D., Administrative Panel on Human Subjects in Non-Medical Research

eProtocol Title: The Path to Neighborhood (In)Justice: Understanding the Relationship between Neighborhood Effects and Juvenile Crime in Los Angeles

eProtocol # 45951 IRB 2 (Registration # 349)

The IRB approved human subjects involvement in your research project on 08/23/2018. 'Prior to subject recruitment and enrollment, if this is a Cancer-related study, you must obtain Cancer Center Scientific Review Committee (SRC) approval, and if a contract is involved, it must be signed.'

The expiration date of this approval is 03/31/2021 at Midnight. If this research is to continue beyond that date, it is your responsibility to submit a Continuing Review application in eProtocol. Research activities must be reviewed and re-approved on or before midnight of the expiration date. The approval period may be less than one year if so determined by the IRB. Proposed changes to approved research must be reviewed and approved prospectively by the IRB. No changes may be initiated without prior approval by the IRB, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects. (Any such exceptions must be reported to the IRB within 10 working days.) Unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others and other events or information, as defined and listed in the Report Form, must be submitted promptly to the IRB. (See Events and Information that Require Prompt Reporting to the IRB at http://humansubjects.stanford.edu.) Upon completion, you must report to the IRB within 30 days.

Please remember that all data, including all signed consent form documents, must be retained for a minimum of three years past the completion of this research. Additional requirements may be imposed by your funding agency, your department, HIPAA, or other entities. (See Policy 1.9 on Retention of and Access to Research Data at http://doresearch.stanford.edu/policies/research-policy-handbook)

This institution is in compliance with requirements for protection of human subjects, including 45 CFR 46, 21 CFR 50 and 56, and 38 CFR 16.

Approval Period: 08/23/2018 - 03/31/2021
Review Type: EXPEDITED - MODIFICATION
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