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Resisting Criminalization through Moses House: An Engaged Ethnography

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Resisting Criminalization through Moses House:

An Engaged Ethnography

by

Lance A. Arney

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
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College of Arts and Sciences
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Dedication

This work is dedicated to all the Sulphur Springs children and youth who generously shared their lives and stories with me over the last five years. I hope that my work through Moses House comes close to adequately giving back for what all of you have done for me. To Granddaddy Taft and Uncle Harold: I am truly honored to have been allowed to be a part of Moses House. I hope that the work I did, in some measure, has lived up to your expectations. There is so much more to do.
I would like to gratefully acknowledge all the nurturing support I received from my dissertation committee, who were always encouraging yet critical. My intellectual and professional development is the result of your generously given guidance. To my mentor and advisor, Susan Greenbaum, I owe very special thanks. Your support for this work has been unwavering from start to finish, and your infinite wisdom has saved me from making many errors, as a scholar and an activist. I thank all the children, youth, and families in Sulphur Springs who welcomed me into their community and shared countless hours of their lives with me. Some of you have become great friends, and some of you have become family. This warmed my heart with comfort when the solitude of academic life seemed unbearable. Finally, I thank all my wonderful colleagues in the Anthropology Department and elsewhere at USF—you all know who you are—for fostering vigorous intellectual discussion about common interests and passions, and for sharing your time to simply have fun. You provided me with motivation when I lacked it and aid when I needed it. I hope that one day I can fully reciprocate, if I have not already.
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Abstract

Neoliberal restructuring of the state has had destructive effects on families and children living in urban poverty, compelling them to adapt to the loss of social welfare and demolition of the public sphere by submitting to new forms of surveillance and disciplining of their individual behavior. A carceral-welfare state apparatus now confines and controls the bodies of expendable laborers in urban spaces, containing their threat to the neoliberal socioeconomic order through criminalization and workfare assistance, resulting in a new symbiosis of prison and ghetto. The resulting structures of punishment, police surveillance, and criminalization primarily surround African Americans living in high poverty and low income urban neighborhoods. Criminalization intrudes into the everyday lives of African American youth as well, pushing them out of school and into the criminal (in)justice system at an early age. This process may appear natural and inevitable to those experiencing it, but it is really the result of political, economic, historical, and social forces, including institutional discourses, public policies, and investment in law enforcement at the expense of community development and social welfare.

This dissertation presents the results of five years of engaged ethnographic collaborative research with African American youth while I was volunteer director of Moses House, a community youth arts organization based in Sulphur Springs, a high
poverty neighborhood of Tampa, Florida. Grassroots nonprofit organizations such as Moses House are often created and guided by dedicated community leaders, but social marginalization can prevent them from securing resources and labor necessary to sustain an organization. Engaged anthropologists can use forms of community engagement to leverage university resources, social networks, and student service-learning to assist grassroots organizations, in the process learning firsthand about the political, economic, and social forces that produce and reproduce the injustices against which such organizations and their communities struggle. As a doctoral student in an applied anthropology graduate program, I was able to assist the organization in revitalizing itself and applying for IRS nonprofit status, as well as to advocate for the very existence and viability of the organization itself in opposition to a variety of antagonistic forces.

Through the process of doing social activism on behalf of the organization, I was able to establish solidarity with people in the community who were socially networked through Moses House. As an outsider to a community rightfully suspicious of outsiders, especially ones who are white, gaining the confidence of residents was a prerequisite for doing engaged research that intended to explore how African American youth living in a high poverty neighborhood experience marginalization and criminalization, and how they can communicate their experiences through their own production of creative media. In a variety of mentoring, advocating, and parenting roles, I was able to build empathic, trustful relationships and observe how various policies, procedures, practices, and institutional discourses are criminalizing African American youth in nearly all aspects
of their everyday lives. Accompanying Moses House youth through various educational, recreational, and governmental agencies and institutions, I learned with them not only how they were being seriously harmed by the policies of the carceral-assistential state, but also how they were able at times to resist or avoid the system to their own advantage. Using critical dialogue while in conversation with Moses House youth, I nurtured an ongoing analysis of their everyday reality in order to reveal what is criminalizing them and constraining their agency, in the process collaboratively constructing transformative activities, practices, and educational programs that were based on the youths’ own aspirations toward social justice, personal success, and community betterment.

In establishing social justice based approaches to improving community well-being, grassroots organizations such as Moses House can be understood as spaces that foster and support critical dialogue, social activism, and cultural production and as sites of collective struggle against racism, poverty, and criminalization. University–community engagement can shed light on these social problems, provide research and analysis that is not only rigorous but meaningful and relevant to the community, offer technical assistance for nonprofit leadership, management, and fund development, as well as assist in designing and implementing community-based alternatives and solutions to community-identified problems.
Chapter One: Introduction

Establishing Relationships for an Engaged Anthropology

This dissertation is based on five years of engaged ethnographic fieldwork and advocacy. It describes my collaborative research and community based learning with African American children, youth, parents, and elders who have lived in and become attached to Sulphur Springs, a neighborhood of Tampa, Florida. I met specific members of the Sulphur Springs community through a grassroots organization called Moses House, to which I was eventually appointed executive director by its two cofounders, Taft and Harold Richardson. Through the familial and social networks of the Richardson brothers, I soon became acquainted with several extended families, their children, and their children’s friends and neighbors. Over the course of the next five years, I would have the privilege of learning from many of them about certain aspects of everyday life in Sulphur Springs, in particular the challenges of growing up in a high poverty neighborhood lacking in resources and opportunities.

I learned about Taft and Harold Richardson and Moses House from my faculty advisor Susan Greenbaum, now Professor Emerita in the Department of Anthropology at the University of South Florida. In June of 2007, Greenbaum hosted at her house a small party for the research team that had worked with her on completing a multi-year, National Science Foundation funded study of the impacts of relocation on low-income
families and individuals as they were “de-concentrated” from public housing complexes to subsidized rental units in “mixed-income” neighborhoods (Greenbaum, et al. 2008). After the party was over, Greenbaum showed me a feature article that she had cut out and saved from the *St. Petersburg Times* (now the *Tampa Bay Times*). It was a story about Taft Richardson’s bone sculpture artwork and Moses House (Klinkenberg 2006). The article painted an intriguing and compelling portrait, especially concerning the grassroots social activism that Taft and his allies carried out through Moses House.

At the time (summer 2007), I was finishing writing my master’s thesis about a nongovernmental organization in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil that, based in the critical pedagogical praxis of Paulo Freire, uses citizenship education and art education to politicize street youth into personal and social transformation. I was looking for possible dissertation research projects that I could pursue in Tampa along similar or related topics. I was interested in doing engaged ethnographic research about the marginalization of children and youth living in urban poverty and how such populations could organize to resist marginalization through artistic and cultural expression, social justice education, participatory action research, and neighborhood social activism. Susan Greenbaum, an applied urban anthropologist with decades of accumulated knowledge and expertise on ethnicity, neighborhood history, community development, poverty, and public policy in Tampa, suggested that Moses House might be the closest thing to what I was looking for in a local community partner. She soon arranged a meeting with Moses House co-founders Taft and Harold Richardson, two brothers who had grown up
together in Spring Hill, an African American community in Tampa that had been segregated from white society during the Jim Crow era.

On a hot June afternoon, protected from the scorching sun by the shade of a pavilion, Greenbaum and I sat together with Taft and Harold on a picnic table in Spring Hill Park. The Richardson brothers talked very emotionally about something they referred to as Moses House Museum, a community-based African American museum and youth arts organization that they had founded in 1984 after their mother passed away. Greenbaum introduced me as one of her graduate students and said that perhaps I could work with Taft and Harold at Moses House, which was now in Spring Hill after having been based in East Tampa for about fifteen years. Around 2001, Moses House Museum had been reinstalled in a house on Skagway Avenue where Taft also lived. Greenbaum and I met Taft and Harold there before we all four came to the park, which was right around the corner from Taft’s house. In the outdoor area around the house, there was an assorted variety of potted plants and works of art, meaningfully arranged and well kept. The significance of it all was not immediately obvious. At the front of the house, facing the street, a large wooden sign was propped up among some of the plants. In hand-painted letters, it read: “Doretha’s All Children Work Shop Gallery: A Moses House Museum Inc. Out Reach Program.”

After we got comfortably seated on one of the picnic tables in the park, Taft and Harold told us that they wanted to expand their programming and work with more children at the neighborhood recreation center, known simply as “the Rec.” Greenbaum noted that USF Anthropology already had a good working relationship with the Rec and
that two of her graduate students had done educational programming with neighborhood children there only a few years prior (Hathaway and Kuzin 2007). I also explained that I had worked with a nonprofit organization in Salvador, Brazil that uses art education and citizenship education with children and youth, mostly Afro-Brazilian, living in a street situation (Arney 2007). At that moment, I was not sure how I could be helpful to Moses House. Taft and Harold were probably not sure either, but they seemed to welcome the possibility that I might be helpful in some way or other. As a form of background research to my dissertation proper, I agreed to get involved with Moses House and learn more about what the Richardson brothers had done, what they were currently doing, and what they were ultimately trying to do. Little did I know that Moses House, despite more than two decades of existence, needed much work and indeed was struggling to remain operational.

Over the course of the next five years, I would learn much more about the many struggles of Moses House: the sporadic support it received from the local African American community; the attention Taft Richardson’s bone sculptures (see Chapter 5, below) received from folk art fans, art educators, and art historians from outside Tampa; and the general disinterest and disregard shown to Moses House by the art community in Tampa. It would be insinuated to me numerous times by college educated, middle class persons, white and African American alike, that the Richardson brothers simply did not know how to run a nonprofit organization because they lacked education, were driven by irrational artistic inspiration, not good managerial sense, and wasted too much time waiting for God to guide them about what to do next.
I may have ended up believing such assertions or have adopted similar opinions had I not chosen to construct my dissertation research project around community-based engaged research and learning with Moses House. For woven into the story of Moses House are the threads of class oppression, white privilege, institutionalized racial discrimination, and a socially pervasive, hostile prejudice toward black people living in urban poverty. Indeed, the decades-long struggle of Moses House must be understood in this context, which I only learned about during my ethnographic field research by listening to the stories of those who had been, and are being, marginalized; and by witnessing firsthand some of the very processes that have marginalized, and continue to marginalize, them.

Collaboratively Identifying the Research Problem

The idea of developing a research and action project on criminalization emerged through initial conversations with Moses House founders and participants. Program participants and members of the Moses House founders’ extended families voluntarily shared with me stories about the criminalization and incarceration of people they know or even of themselves. Child and youth participants in Moses House activities spoke freely about incidents that took place at their school, involving the school resource officer, or in the streets, involving the police. They recounted trips to the “JAC” (Juvenile Assessment Center), time spent at “W.T. Edwards” (a juvenile detention center), and the names of this or that judge and his or her relative harshness in the juvenile court. One Moses House participant even shared with me a journal of poetry she had written while
in prison. Very early in my work with Moses House, I learned that most people in Sulphur Springs have had contact, or know people in the neighborhood who have had contact, with the criminal or juvenile justice system.

When I would go to Sulphur Springs to meet with the Richardson brothers or Moses House youth, I often observed instances of what appeared to be excessive policing and surveillance by the ever-present police officers. I soon found myself under surveillance too: one day, as I was talking to Taft’s teenage grandchildren and some of their friends in the yard of their house, two police cruisers and an unmarked car swarmed up on us. Not knowing what to do, I did what everyone else around me did, which was pretend to ignore all the police cars a few yards away from us. After running my license plate number through the system—one of the police had pulled right up behind my car, and we could see him looking at my license plate—the police apparently did not find me suspicious enough to proceed with whatever their next steps might have been, and they all drove off without ever having gotten out of their cars.

I jokingly asked one of the guys why the police did not get out and mess with me the way the police usually mess with them. “You legit,” one of them replied, explaining, “They ain’t got nothin’ on you in the system.” I asked if they were interested in documenting incidents like this. They said they had already begun to do that, using their cellphones to take pictures or videos of the police when they came and messed with them, which was quite frequently.

Adolescent and young adult males, especially those who socialized outside and were thus more visible, were very easily put under surveillance, whether or not there
were probable cause. Near popular hangout spots, I would learn, police simply pull up in their cars and sit there, sometimes video recording groups of young people for lengths of time, or directing verbally abusive language at them through the PA systems in the police cruisers. If it were nighttime, they might shine their searchlights into the faces of everyone until they got annoyed enough to go inside or go to another location. Part of the intent of the police seemed to be to provoke a confrontation. If one or more of the youths happened to object strongly to the harassment, they could end up being arrested for “opposing a police officer.” Such a practice was just one of many in a repertoire of actions and procedures that police could use to criminalize youth for the most minor of offenses—or, indeed, no actual offense at all.

I vividly remember discussing these matters with the Richardson brothers when I first began working with Moses House. They and Moses House youth asked me on several occasions what could be done about the criminalization of young people in their neighborhood. Thus began a continual dialogue that soon turned into plans for a collaborative research project. Moses House youth, and Sulphur Springs youth more generally, wanted to tell their story. They wanted people to know what life was like growing up in the “hood” and that police harassment figured prominently and oppressively in their everyday lives. I offered to help document incidents that they felt were significant and to record their narratives in digital audio and video.

Taft proudly told me that many of the youth were talented at poetry, spoken word, free styling, and rapping, and that these were preferred forms of expression for communicating their experiences and perspectives about life in the hood. I agreed with
him that Moses House should help develop creative capacities through activities that were meaningful to the youth and that they enjoyed doing. There was the persistent hope of Taft and Harold that cultivating young people’s artistic talents would empower them for social activism and transformation. I hoped too that what I might learn from Sulphur Springs youth would contribute not only to shedding some light on the details of their individual struggles but also to a critical analysis of the larger forces that they, and other youth in similar circumstances, in other cities and around the country, are up against.

As an anthropologist viewing human beings through the lens of social and cultural history, I know that an individual’s story is never mere personal biography. Human beings are not discrete individuals, but social and cultural beings living in the world with other people. In order to understand what people say and do, and how they make sense of what goes on in the world around them, we need to understand the historical context in which they exist, the political structures and processes that affect their lives, the economic systems in which they labor, the social organizations and structures that limit or enable their agency, and the cultural values and belief systems that they draw upon to make sense of their reality. The stories of marginalized people, especially their perceptions and experiences of structural violence, have inestimable political value. It is, I believe, an ethical obligation to make these stories known to the world, revealing the larger structures of domination that are responsible for instances of everyday violence and its patterns. Engaged research is a public good; it can be productive of new knowledge and contribute to theory—and it can have value beyond...
the academy as social critique and for the contributions it can make toward constructing a more just and humane world.

My understanding of engaged ethnography draws upon theoretical sources (e.g., Gow 2008), several years of professional practice building university–community engagement at the departmental and institutional level, and a synthesis of theoretical writings on social justice and praxis (e.g., Freire 1993[1970]). I define engaged ethnography broadly as a mutually beneficial and respectful relationship through which a researcher conducts long-term fieldwork research that is designed with community members to investigate issues or problems arising from the community’s struggles, in which the researcher participates and in which the research is based.

**Research Objectives and Justifications**

This dissertation investigates criminalization in the everyday lives of African American male youth living in Sulphur Springs, a high poverty, densely populated urban neighborhood in Tampa, Florida. In Sulphur Springs, there are 5,724 people living in one square mile (U.S. Census 2010b); nearly half (47%) of them live below the poverty level. Two out of every three (65%) children under 18 years of age live below the poverty level (U.S. Census 2010a).

This study is focused on understanding criminalization from the experiences and perspectives of African American youth in Sulphur Springs, what they are able to do to resist criminalization, and what they recommend be done to address poverty, which they identify as the root cause of most of the problems in their lives. Additionally, this
dissertation explores how Moses House, a small grassroots nonprofit organization with university partnerships but limited resources, can provide social justice based alternatives to criminalization in collaboration with African American children, youth, parents, and elders who have lived in Sulphur Springs and are familiar with the effects of poverty.

*Criminalization* is used broadly to refer to the processes by which actions and persons are made into crimes and criminals (Michalowski 1985:6). These processes ultimately involve the law, but they can occur in legal or non-legal domains of social reality. Criminalization in the lives of Black and Latino youth has been defined by Victor Rios as “the process by which styles and behaviors are rendered deviant and are treated with shame, exclusion, punishment, and incarceration” (2011:xiv). In his ethnographic study of policing in the lives of black and Latino male youth, Rios found that “criminalization occurred beyond the law,” “crossing social contexts and following young people across an array of social institutions, including school, the neighborhood, the community center, the media, and the family” (xiv). The criminalization of black and Latino male youth, Rios argues, “is fueled by the micropower of repeated negative judgments and interactions in which these the boys [are] defined as criminal for almost any form of transgression or disrespect of authority” (xiv). More precisely, he concludes, this ought to be called *hyper*criminalization because these youths’ “everyday behaviors and styles [are] ubiquitously treated as deviant, risky, threatening, or criminal, across social contexts” (xiv). As a result, they experience continual punishment, which leaves them “feel[ing] stigmatized, outcast, shamed, defeated, or hopeless as a result of
negative interactions and sanctions imposed by individuals who represent institutions of social control” (xiv). It is in this sense that criminalization is used in this study.

The objectives of research project were: (1) to examine and understand the criminalization of African American youth living in a high poverty neighborhood; (2) to collaboratively investigate criminalization with a group of such youth in order to produce transformative knowledge that could enable them individually and collectively to build resistance to criminalization; and (3) to explore how a community-based organization could create a space for the avoidance and resistance of criminalization of youth.

The main research questions that guided this research were:

- What is criminalization and what are its larger causes?
- Where does the criminalization of youth take place, and what institutions and/or people are involved?
- What are the perspectives and experiences of youth regarding criminalization processes in their everyday lives?
- Can the production of transformative knowledge, through participatory research and social justice education, enable them to resist criminalization? Can a community-based organization create a space for avoidance and resistance of criminalization of youth?
- How can anthropological approaches be used to guide meaningful collaboration with a small grassroots nonprofit organization in order to develop community-based research and learning that is respectful of local history, cultural practices
and heritage, and the perspectives and accumulated knowledge of community members?

The criminalization of African American and Latino youth living in situations of poverty has become a national crisis (Children’s Defense Fund 2007a). Based on the incarceration rates for the United States in 2001, one in three African American males and one in six Latino males born in 2001 can expect to go to prison during their lifetimes, compared to one in 17 white males born in 2001 (Bonczar 2003:1). Numerous quantitative studies conducted during the last several decades have consistently shown the overrepresentation of minority youth, especially Black youth, at most stages of the juvenile justice system (e.g., Pope, 1990 #4466; Pope, 1990 #4467; Pope, 2002 #4465).

Given the overrepresentation of minority youth in the juvenile and criminal justice systems, it is important to advance a critical understanding of criminalization processes, especially as experienced and perceived by minority youth. Research and social activism has identified some of the policies that are contributing to the increase in the criminalization of youth, but the everyday practices through which these policies are implemented, and the ideologies and theoretical paradigms that are behind them, have not been studied extensively and repeatedly enough to produce generalizable conclusions. On the other hand, an abundance of quantitative studies have shown the results of criminalization and have contributed various hypotheses toward explaining the overrepresentation of minority youth in the criminal justice system by focusing on correlations between disproportionate minority contact—or “the disproportionate number of juvenile members of minority groups who come in contact with the juvenile
and various factors in the lives and personalities of minority youth. Nevertheless, theory about the processes of criminalization in everyday life remains underdeveloped.

In order to advance theoretical understandings of the everyday processes of criminalization and the policies and practices that are responsible for such criminalization, what is needed are long-term ethnographic studies that focus on the views and lived experiences of African American and Latino youth living in situations of poverty. From a social justice perspective, also needed are interventions that reveal, critique, and offer recommendations for changing or eliminating the policies and practices that are unfairly criminalizing these youth.

This study intends to offer empirically based knowledge about the everyday processes of criminalization of African American male youth living in urban poverty. Furthermore, it aims to contribute to discussions about criminalization and its larger causes. Engaged research with Moses House youth was expected to produce ethnographic knowledge about criminalization processes as well as recommendations for changing or eliminating the policies and processes that criminalize them. The engaged nature of this research was also seen as having the potential to understand and, when and where possible, prevent and alleviate a serious social problem affecting the immediate and future welfare of African American youth.

A proposed benefit of this study was that the methodological approaches were centered on the expression of the experiences and perspectives of criminalized African American youth, a population whose voice is silenced by society and virtually silent in
the research literature. This study provided youth participants with opportunities for talking about their experiences and presenting their perspectives on criminalization.

**Overview of Findings**

The findings presented in this dissertation are based on five years of engaged ethnography, advocacy, and community-based research and learning undertaken while I was director of Moses House, which was founded as a community cultural arts organization nearly thirty years ago by two brothers who had grown up in racially segregated Sulphur Springs during the Jim Crow era. Through the Moses House co-founders, I recruited ten youth study participants, all African American males between the ages of 15 and 29, to form the core of a collaborative research and critical dialogue group. Based on initial findings that were produced with this group, I designed and employed ethnographic interviews and informal conversational interviews to gather perceptions and experiences of criminalization from about 20 other African American males between the ages of 9-29 and who were living in the neighborhood at the time the research project was being conducted.

In a variety of mentoring, advocating, and parenting roles, I was able to build empathic, trusting relationships and observe how various policies, procedures, practices, and institutional discourses are criminalizing youth in nearly all aspects of their everyday lives. Accompanying Moses House youth through various educational, recreational, social service, and governmental agencies and institutions, I learned with them directly how they were being seriously harmed by policies ostensibly designed to help them.
They are regarded as “the problem” at best, “gang members” at worst, by nearly everyone around them except their families and friends. The police formally label many of them the “worst of the worst,” which is the name of a special program created in 2005, the Worst of the Worst Initiative, aimed “targeting those juveniles who [have] lengthy arrest records” (Tampa Police Department 2009:11). Sulphur Springs male youth feel that continual police harassment and criminalization await them nearly everywhere they go. The juvenile and adult criminal justice systems treat them as enemies of the state rather than citizens with rights, and police tell them it is their mission to “clean out” the neighborhood by sending them all to state prison.

Five years of engaged ethnography through Moses House also produced findings about the local fields of education, social services, nonprofit organizations, juvenile delinquency prevention, and community engagement, and how these fields are structured by political economies of funding and ideologies of race, class, and culture. Sulphur Springs is the poorest neighborhood in Tampa; it also has the highest concentration of children. Sixty percent of families with children under 18 live below the poverty level (U.S. Census 2010a). For school year 2010-2011, 100% of children attending Sulphur Springs Elementary received free or reduced lunches (Florida Department of Education Office of Education Information and Accountability Services 2011). These dire statistics indicate the percentages of families and children who are struggling to survive from one day to the next, with very few monetary resources.

Ironically, poverty statistics themselves are potentially worth money. There is funding available from a variety of sources, including government grants and private
foundations, for organizations and agencies to offer programming and services that attempt to alleviate poverty, improve the lives of the “economically disadvantaged,” and enrich the lives of “at-risk” youth through “positive development.” In the course of my duties and responsibilities as director of Moses House, especially during my efforts to help reorganize, revitalize, and sustain the organization after the passing of one of its co-founders in 2008, I encountered or learned about a variety of nonprofit organizations that were coming into Sulphur Springs, and other low-income neighborhoods in Tampa, in order to provide services related to poverty alleviation. Most of them were not located or based in Sulphur Springs, but the poverty statistics there made their organizations eligible for grants and other monies directed at organizations that provide services to poor people.

Additionally, I was able to gain a general sense of some of the different views of youth held by concerned adults—adults from various agencies, institutions, and organizations whose missions were somehow concerned with youth from low-income backgrounds, especially youth who have had contact with the police and juvenile/criminal justice system, or who were at risk of having such contact. While I accompanied Moses House youth through various parts of the juvenile/criminal justice system, I made passive observations of public behavior in public places, at public meetings, and at public presentations and public court hearings. The interests of concerned adults varied, but there was a striking consistency in their approach to poverty in general and youth development in particular. To them, cultural deficit theory explained the causes of poverty: the deficient, dysfunctional, and pathological “culture”
of the poor is what creates poverty. The historical continuity of poverty is explained as 
“generational poverty,” meaning that one generation of poor people teaches the next 
generation the bad habits and values that supposedly cause poverty.

I also found that neoliberal ideology was used to justify programmatic 
approaches to alleviating and eliminating poverty: individuals living in poverty needed to 
take personal responsibility for being poor by weaning themselves off dependency on 
government and learning how to make self-interested choices based on entrepreneurial 
values. Finally, most concerned adults held an unforgiving “get tough on crime and send 
them all to jail” attitude toward anyone, of any age, who recalcitrantly held on to their 
“hood” or “ghetto” roots, refused to aspire to white middle class cultural lifestyles, and 
deviated from the illusory neoliberal path that promised to lead them out of poverty. 
Indeed, cultural deficit theory and neoliberal ideology have become hegemonic in the 
field of social service providers and nonprofit organizations whose mission is to combat 
poverty. Nonetheless, concerned adults and self-appointed community developers in 
Sulphur Springs never discussed, at least not in my presence, the ongoing expansion of 
the carceral-assistential state as a larger societal entity composed of punitive political, 
economic, and social structures and processes.

On a larger scale, the state of Florida is very much a part of the U.S. South. The 
animosity of self-declared white supremacists toward Blacks has deep historical roots in 
Florida, which had the highest lynching rate of any state (Ortiz 2005). Racist notions of 
black inferiority and deviance still pervade Floridian society and its institutions. Indeed, 
the very equation of Black people with criminality has a long history in the U.S.
(Muhammad 2010). The racist belief that Black people are more likely to be criminals, or are simply born with innate criminal tendencies, seems to find quick confirmation in the statistical overrepresentation of African Americans in the criminal justice system. Such facile explanations can only be maintained, however, by ignoring the overabundant evidence of structural and societal forces that have been, and are still being, directed precisely toward criminalizing African Americans disproportionately in relation to the rest of the population. These forces of criminalization, and the processes through which they work, may appear natural and inevitable, but they are really the result of specific configurations of political, economic, historical, and cultural power, including institutional discourses, public policies, and police surveillance.

Structure of This Dissertation

In Chapter 2, I review research relevant to developing a historical and theoretical understanding of the political, economic, and social forces that result in criminalization processes. I also review some of the research related to social justice pedagogy and transformative knowledge, as well as community engaged research. Throughout, I discuss the relationship between poverty, the state, and nongovernmental organizations. Chapter 3 explains my decisions in choosing research methods. Chapter 4 describes the fieldwork setting in which I conducted this study. Chapters 5 and 6 present a selection of findings that resulted from the research, and Chapter 7 provides overall conclusions and recommendations.
Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Criminalization, Critical Paradigms, Radical Criminology, and Criminal Anthropology

According to Raymond Michalowski (1985), criminalization is “the process by which behaviors and individuals are transformed into crime and criminals” (6). As a lens with which to review the literature, the present writer adopts the conflict theory paradigm (Collins 1994) and the perspective of radical criminology, which “frames the problem of crime in terms of the sociological forces of class, race, gender, culture and history” (Lynch and Michalowski 2006:1).

The conflict tradition in the social sciences focuses on and analyzes how conflict is created through competition between social groups over power and resources, and how certain people or groups of people, brought together by common interests in power and resources, dominate and exploit other groups. Conflict theory is based on the premises that the social world is characterized by inequalities in power and economic resources, that powerful groups tend to use their resources to solidify and enhance their power over others, resulting in social stratification, and that increases in inequality generate social conflict and societal change (Collins 1994).

Such a framework entails that criminalization processes—the production of crime and criminals—are ultimately explainable with reference to social conflicts and class stratification. However, poststructuralist and postmodernist admonitions against
reductionism and totalizing theories have provoked major revisions in radical criminological theory in that the significance of race, ethnicity, culture, and gender must be incorporated into the explanatory framework (Ferrell and Sanders 1995). While criminalization is always related to the distribution of power in a society, and while power is ultimately derived from a relationship to wealth and the processes of production, criminalization cannot be reduced solely to that relationship alone. Power must be understood as multidimensional and exercised through historically and culturally specific categorizations of persons as “criminals.” Likewise, the historically and culturally specific consent or resistance to such categorizations shapes the reproduction or transformation of power relations and the objective material arrangements of production on which power relations are based and in which the categorization of subjects as “criminals” takes place and is made culturally meaningful or even hegemonic.

In order to properly understand criminalization, what is needed is a definition of power that is grounded in the materiality of particular productive arrangements in specific historical contexts. Further, it must also explain how the social relations that take place within such arrangements are controlled through cultural definitions of class, race/ethnicity, and gender that, in turn, become embodied as sociocultural identities during and through the everyday practices of individuals in such arrangements. In other words, the power to control productive processes exists in a relationship with the power to control cultural definitions of categories of persons (such as “criminals”) and their presumed productive or destructive capacities. Class is therefore not simply economic class or an objective relationship to the means of production, as some Marxists insist.
Similarly, criminalization is not reducible solely to economic class or the relationship of persons to the means of production.

On the other hand, the excesses of postmodernism ought to be avoided, especially the insistence that everything is socially constructed through language and discourse, and therefore reducible to text. Explanations of social phenomena, such as criminalization, need to be critical in the German sense of critique (*Kritik*), which also means unveiling in the sense of unveiling the hidden structures of reality: the things, processes, and relationships that are not apparent to, or directly observable by, the senses. Epistemologically and ontologically, therefore, it is necessary to subscribe to some version of critical realism (Archer, et al. 1998; Sayer 1992; 2000), which posits a world that is independent of our immediate experience or knowledge of it, because social constructions (Berger and Luckmann 1967) in the present and immediate context just might have causes in the past and elsewhere. While people may believe that they perceive and know the social constructions of the present through certain words and metaphors (e.g., “thugs,” “criminals,” “juvenile delinquents”), the correct objects of inquiry need to be the structures and processes that are the sources or causes of the phenomena we are observing. Such structures and processes (and events and relationships), while not immediately knowable through the raw senses, are nonetheless real in that their consequences are real. Their existence is independent of our perception of them.

Thus, the phenomena of “criminals” and criminalization are ultimately an ontological question: a question of being, a question of what things and categories of
things exist in the world, and which structures and processes caused them to come into existence. Therefore, theories of criminalization need to explain successfully how “criminals” come into being in the first place. “Criminals” are not merely social constructions. They are historically produced and constituted through particular configurations of social relationships and the political control of power and the means of production. There is thus an ontological realm to which theories of criminalization can be judged for how well they explain the causes that bring “crimes” and “criminals” into being. According to Marx, social and material realities are historically constructed, and the existence of human beings is their real existence, activities, and life processes.

Marx’s realist, materialist method of the study of human beings is premised on “real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity” (Marx and Engels 1970[1932]:42). A realist approach proceeds from a study of “individuals, not as they may appear in their own or other people’s imagination, but as they really are” (46).

This approach originates from Marx’s critique of Hegelian idealism, a philosophy postulating that being originates in the realm of the ideal—pure ideas, above, beyond, and prior to the existence of real human beings and the historically constituted consciousness of human beings. Marx and Engels (1970[1932]) offer the philosophical foundations of a methodology for studying human beings “from the ground up,” a precursor to the inductive methods of anthropological ethnographic field research (see Harris 1968, especially Chapter 8; 1979:30-31; Ross 1980). Accordingly, the proper study of the criminalization of youth, for example, ought to begin with the study of real
children and youth, the history of their coming into being, and the material conditions under which they live—*not* with ideal, abstract philosophical concepts, such as “childhood,” or orthodox criminological terms such as “juvenile delinquents” and “gang members.” The wrong place to begin is with abstract conceptions of “child and adolescent development,” its norms and deviations—wrong because the concept of child development, especially normative childhood, has specifically come to embody the ideology and values of the white middle class (Mintz 2004).

Given these philosophical arguments and foundations, ethnographic fieldwork conducted from a reflexive, critical anthropology oriented by the conflict paradigm is an appropriate methodology for producing empirically based critical studies of criminalization in general and of marginalized racial and ethnic minority youth in particular. The discipline of anthropology, however, has produced surprisingly few substantial or relevant studies along these lines. I will say more about this below. Within the discipline of criminology, however, a branch known as radical or critical criminology has identified, from its inception, the proper theoretical foundations for studying criminalization (Greenberg 1993), but it has been resistant to, or slow to adopt, qualitative methods such as ethnographic fieldwork (Ferrell and Hamm 1998).

Lynch and Michalowski (2006) write that prior to the theorization of radical criminology in the 1970s, “most criminological inquiry was devoted to identifying what was wrong with the ‘kinds of people’ who commit crime or discovering what was amiss in the ‘kinds of communities or groups’ that had high proportions of these people” (3). Radical criminology brought about a paradigm shift by (a) rejecting the positivist claim
that criminological (or any social science) research is value-free and objective, and (b) “reject[ing] the idea that the real causes of crime could be found in either defective individuals or disorganized communities” (3-4). Radical criminologists proposed instead that (a) definitions of crime and punishment always reflect the distribution of power in a society and (b) crime is always “sociologically situated,” meaning that patterns of crime and punishment always reflect the social structure of a society (3-4). Therefore, “the behavior of individuals, groups and organizations must be understood in the context of their connection to broader economic, social, political, cultural and historical factors that provide the structures for social life” (4). Because most radical criminologists have been concerned with criminalization in capitalist societies, such as the United States, they have drawn heavily from Marxist theory, which provides a ready framework for explaining how criminalization is situated within the social structures produced by “forms of domination, exploitation, inequality and class conflict characteristic of capitalist political economies” (4).

Radical criminology is thus fundamentally distinct from orthodox criminology. The latter has roots in positivism (Beirne 1993), nineteenth-century racial determinism (Gibson 2002), and the early-twentieth century eugenics movement (Rafter 1997). Michael Lynch (2000) has described the history of criminology as a “science of oppression” that developed with the rise of capitalism. Criminology served (and continues to serve) to “legitimize and place into practice principles that justified the oppression of the dangerous classes,” who were viewed “as the primary threat to the ‘rational’ societies based upon capitalist social, economic and political relations” (152).
According to Preston and Perez (2006), “much of the mainstream criminological literature still tends to focus on causes and control of criminal behavior,” “represent[ing] deviant groups in pathological terms, while overlooking the criminalization of the groups in question” (45). Such a depoliticized, functionalist theoretical orientation is “rooted in a consensus model that views criminal justice and successful acculturation of diverse groups as essential social processes that function for the benefit of the social system” (45). Radical criminology, on the other hand, is explicit in “emphasiz[ing] the role of the state and criminal justice systems in maintaining the capitalist social order through official definitions of crime, and the criminalization of certain behaviors and groups, in favor of capitalist interests” (46). Significant works from radical criminology will be discussed below.

If the history of criminology is the history of the science of oppression of the dangerous classes, the history of anthropology is that of the study of the exoticized or colonized “Other” (Adams 1998; Fabian 2002[1983]; McGrane 1989; Pandian 1985). Until the major paradigm shift brought about in U.S. anthropology by the historical particularist tradition developed by Franz Boas and propagated by his students in the early twentieth century, anthropology, like most of the social sciences and humanities, was dominated by racial determinism and racist views of human evolution such as social Darwinism (Baker 1998; Harris 1968; Hofstadter 1992[1944]; Stocking 1982[1968]). While the Boasians would champion cultural relativism and culturalist explanations of differences and similarities between human groups, racist anthropology attempted to explain human differences and similarities with reference to race and biology, especially
the perceived physical differences between groups of human beings that, historically, had been geographically separate for long periods. Trends in racialist anthropology around the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries converged with criminology during the same period, leading to the development of “criminal anthropology” in Europe, the United States, and Latin America. Criminal anthropology was largely based on the seminal theoretical works of European criminal anthropologists such as Italian Cesare Lombroso (2006[1876]; Lombroso and Ferrero 2004[1893]), who believed that criminality was hereditary and that certain persons were “born criminals” (Gibson 2002).

Criminal anthropologists believed there were essential differences between the “races” and that non-European peoples were racially inferior and had much greater tendencies toward criminal behavior than did Western Europeans. Criminals were seen as atavistic regressions to the level of primitive humans or savages. One of the premises of criminal anthropology was that the “civilized races” instinctively knew and obeyed morals and laws, which were believed to be products of the more highly developed minds of the civilized. Uncivilized, primitive races of people, it was argued, were evolutionarily “inferior” and, because they were believed to have inferior brains and lower intellectual capacities, they were therefore believed incapable of abiding by the higher moral codes or obeying the complex laws of the civilized races. Consequently, whenever the inferior races would come into contact with “civilization,” they would inevitably break its laws and violate its moral codes (Gibson 2002).

Furthermore, criminal anthropologists believed that members of the civilized races could degenerate or revert to previous types lower on the evolutionary scale—that
is, become criminals by regressing into criminality (see, for example, Gould 1996, especially Chapter 4). In criminal anthropology, crime is equated with evolutionary degeneracy (recapitulation to ape-like morphology). Influenced by positivist beliefs in improving society through scientific study and rational planning, criminal anthropologists attempted to develop scientific methods of identifying and describing criminals and explaining their criminal behavior, with the goal of reducing their threat to the social order. Because many criminal anthropologists believed that criminality was innate, they thought that nothing could be done to cure or rehabilitate born criminals. They often worked in collaboration with police and conducted studies of criminals held in detention or incarcerated in prisons. Criminal anthropologists employed anthropometry (the measurement of the physical body’s dimensions, especially skull shape and size), endocrinology, sexology, and even psychoanalytical theory in their analyses of criminals, criminal personality characteristics, and criminal biotypes.

While Lombroso (2006[1876]) and others documented how criminality was supposedly expressed in graffiti, tattoos, slang, and handwriting, other criminal anthropologists, such as Raimundo Nina Rodrigues (1932; 1938[1894]) in Brazil and Fernando Ortiz (1906) in Cuba, produced ethnographic descriptions of African-descended populations in their respective countries, claiming to link African ethnic cultural practices and religions—and African bodies—directly to crime and criminality. In its development as a profession and an academic field, criminal anthropology at its origins was focused primarily on studying newly-freed blacks (and to a lesser extent, Indians and “mixed race” persons) in order to figure out how to control them and
contain the threat they were believed to pose to white civilization (Corrêa 1998; Palmié 2002).

For example, in what became one of the foundational texts of criminal anthropology in Brazil, *As raças humanas e a responsabilidade penal no Brasil (The Human Races and Penal Responsibility in Brazil)*, Nina Rodrigues argued that the white race, whose population in Brazil was a numerical minority, was responsible for defending the social order, indeed, Brazilian society itself, “against not only the anti-social acts—crimes—of its own representatives [i.e., crimes by whites], but also against the anti-social acts of the inferior races,”¹ mainly blacks (1938[1894]:219). It should not be surprising that “the Negro question” would preoccupy someone such as Nina Rodrigues in that particular geographic area of, and at that particular time in, Brazil. Nina Rodrigues was based at the nascent School of Medicine in Salvador, in the state of Bahia, which had the largest population of descendants of Africans and was also considered to be the heart of African culture in Brazil. Likewise, it was not mere coincidence that *As raças humanas*, first published in 1894, appeared only a few years after slavery was officially abolished in Brazil in 1888. Students and disciples of Nina Rodrigues took on professional posts in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, where they further developed criminal anthropology and biotypology (the purported “science” of racial profiling). Some of them became consultants to police departments, advising them how to study, surveil, and control blacks, who, because of their presumed racial inferiority, were believed to be

¹ Portuguese to English translation by the author.
incapable of understanding the moral and legal codes of white civilization (Corrêa 1998; Cunha 2002).

During the early twentieth century and up to World War II, criminal anthropology in many parts of Latin America became dominant in the professional institutionalization of anthropology as an academic discipline (e.g., for Brazil see Corrêa 1998), with direct institutional ties to forensic detectives and police departments (in Brazil, Cunha 2002). In the United States, however, criminal anthropology during the same period was more closely associated with the eugenics movement (Rafter 1997). Nonetheless, Lombrosian theories of born criminals and the identification of criminal anatomical traits were propagated by such prominent figures as Harvard physical anthropologist Earnest Albert Hooton (1939a; b). The rise of Boasian cultural relativism in anthropology in the 1930s and 40s, and the revelations of the horrors of Nazism exposed during and after World War II, discredited the legitimacy of scientific racism, criminal anthropology, and eugenics. By the dawn of the Civil Rights Movement in the early 1950s, anthropology had helped shift the racial categorization of African Americans merely from “savage” to “Negro” (Baker 1998). After long regarding African American culture in the U.S. as unworthy of study or preservation—such interest was invested in Native American culture—anthropologists eventually recognized its diversity and importance, but only within and through a racial politics of culture (Baker 2010) and a racial politics of knowledge (Gershenhorn 2004). In the meantime, within the field of anthropology in the U.S., the embarrassing history of criminal anthropology has been conveniently forgotten.
African Americans, Urban Poverty and Crime, and the “Culture of Poverty”

The historical continuity of the relentless criminalization of African descendants in the Americas, from the “scientific racism” of a century ago to the racial profiling, surveillance, and mass incarceration of today, is striking. In the U.S., the linking of blackness with criminality was also very strongly related to the development of modern urban society, especially in Northern cities (Muhammad 2010). Beginning in the 1890s, when national census data and prison statistics indicated that African Americans were 12 percent of the national population but 30 percent of its prisoners (Muhammad 2010:4), a new discourse emerged to explain how, one generation after the abolition of slavery, so many “free” African Americans were living in poverty and resorting to crime. Especially in Northern cities to which they were beginning to migrate from the South in large numbers, blacks were seen by social scientists and Progressive era reformers alike as racially and morally inferior to whites for not being able to prosper as were the new waves of European immigrants not long after their arrival in the “Land of Opportunity.”

What is more, liberal reformers and conservative politicians alike believed they now had the statistics to show a strong connection between blackness, criminality, and urban poverty, a statistical correlation that lent the appearance of scientific objectivity to racist urban policy concerned with social welfare and crime (Muhammad 2010). What is worse, a “New Jim Crow” has been designed by legislators and policy makers from the Reagan administration era onward, resulting in the hypercriminalization of African Americans and their consequent loss of civil rights due to felony convictions—allowing
for legal discrimination based on felony status rather than race or color (Alexander 2010).

Whether implicit or explicit, racist explanations of such statistical correlations continue to this day, only to be interrupted occasionally by culturalist explanations, such as the “culture of poverty” theory, which claimed that cross-culturally the poor adapt to poverty in similar ways. Ironically, it was the Boasian cultural paradigm that led anthropologist Oscar Lewis, who trained under Boas, to propose that poor people perpetuate poverty and vice among themselves by enculturating their children with pathological cultural traits and criminal behaviors (Lewis 1966), thus maintaining a culture of poverty as though it were custom or tradition. Political conservatives eventually took this to mean that poor people were to blame for being poor and that government intervention would not alleviate poverty but only create dependence on welfare assistance. A sociological version of the culture of poverty theory was also put forth by Lee Rainwater ([2006]1970), who studied African American families living in public housing in St. Louis.

The culture of poverty theory was quickly criticized by Lewis’ contemporaries and other anthropologists (Leacock 1971; Valentine 1968), and the hypothesis that African American families living in poverty were disorganized and dysfunctional (Moynihan 1965) was rejected by the participant observation fieldwork of Carol Stack (1997[1974]). In the early 1980s, historian Manning Marable (2000[1983]) explained how capitalism had underdeveloped “Black America,” and more recent critiques of the culture of poverty theory include Goode and Maskovsky (2001a), O’Connor (2001b), Kelley (1997,
especially Chapter 1), and Rigdon (1988). Yet the “culture of poverty” concept persists as a popular explanation for the continued existence of urban poverty in the United States, where social mobility is believed to be the inevitable reward for anyone who merits it through individual achievement, perseverance, hard work, and overcoming the odds against them (e.g., Tough 2008). This suggests, among other things, (1) a pervasive lack, or willful ignorance, of a basic understanding of the links between capitalist economies, politics, public policy, and structural inequalities, as well as (2) the ideological strength of fundamental capitalist ideals such as the free market, individual entrepreneurialism, self-reliance, and white middle class family values (O’Connor 2001b).

Surprisingly little new or original long-term participant observation ethnographic fieldwork of inner-city poverty and crime has been conducted since the 1970s. Philippe Bourgois (1996) blames this on: (1) the polemics against Lewis’ work, which “have dissuaded anthropologists from centering ethnographies around [sic] the politically and emotionally charged topic of inner-city poverty” (250); (2) anthropology’s continued obsession with studying the culture of “exotic others” in faraway places—or, as Di Leonardo would add, with exoticizing cultural “others” at home (1998); and (3) the rise of postmodernism and textual analysis in the 1980s and 90s. Like other critics of academic postmodernism, Bourgois contends that it has produced much intellectual chic posturing while allowing academics to disengage from urgent social issues and meaningful political struggle, and retreat into the superficiality of “cultural studies,” textual analysis, and the shelter of class and white privileges entrenched in institutions such as universities.
While Bourgois and critical anthropologists such as Paul Farmer (2004; 2005) believe that “a primary goal of anthropology should be to identify the structuring of inequality—and pain—across race, class, gender, sexuality, and other power-ridden categories” (Bourgois 1996:250), many postmodernist anthropologists seem content with celebrating the open-endedness of textual interpretation, the play of cultural symbols, extreme moral relativism, and the micropolitics of Foucauldian discourse analysis. Such work “shields them from having to sustain direct and uncomfortable contact with human beings experiencing social misery across the violent, apartheid-like divides of the United States,” and “their politics, like their subjects, remain textual, removed from drug addicts, street criminals, angry youths, or any other flesh-and-blood embodiments of social injustice” (250). If anthropology is to remain relevant in contemporary society, it needs to position itself on the “front lines” of social issues (MacClancy 2002), become an agent of transformation, and decolonize its relationship to the reified Others of the capitalist world system (Harrison 1997; Stavenhagen 1971). An indirect way for anthropologists to study urban poverty and criminality has been to conduct ethnographies of inner-city schools; but safely studying classroom practices and discourses within the protective confines of school buildings has taken priority over venturing out into the perceived insecurity of the inner-city streets and housing projects (Bourgois 1996:251).

Bourgois’ own ethnography of crack dealers in East Harlem (2003[1995]) has been praised for explaining how political economy, societal structures, institutions, and public policies have criminalized the poor and socially marginal in New York City during
the 1980s and early 90s. Yet Bourgois’ intent not to romanticize the poor nor sanitize the social misery they suffer may have led him to focus too much on the gory details of everyday inner-city violence at the expense of constructing more solid links between everyday violence and structural violence. The inclusion of long excerpts from interviews goes a long way toward “giving voice” to the marginalized and criminalized, but the content on which Bourgois focuses, and the manner in which he presents it, often gives the book the flavor and style of pornography rather than social analysis and critique. Indeed, how successfully Bourgois manages to reject the culture of poverty as an explanation is questionable; he reveals that while he was doing fieldwork he himself oftentimes struggled with wanting to blame the poor for inflicting themselves with misery and violence (2003[1995]:16-18).

Similarly, the work of sociologist Elijah Anderson (1999) has been hailed by mainstream intellectuals for its vivid portrayals of inner-city violence and the cultural logics behind the codes of respect that govern criminal behavior on the streets of Philadelphia. It has also, however, been condemned by critical anthropologists for its culture of poverty orientation and for reading more like journalism than ethnography. According to Anderson, pathological cultural traits and self-destructive behaviors plague the black, urban poor, while the praiseworthy few are the self-interested individuals who realize the “American dream” of middle class self-sufficiency by escaping the ghetto and abandoning obligations to their families and communities.

On the other hand, a few years prior to Anderson (1999), historian Carl Nightingale (1993) had blamed poor black children in Philadelphia for taking the
American dream too seriously. Based on fieldwork among inner-city African American youth and an historical analysis of the archives of social welfare agencies, Nightingale claims that “the increasing presence of mainstream American cultural forms in inner-city life offers the best explanation for why urban African-Americans’ experience of poverty, joblessness, and racial exclusion … has been so filled with changing families and so tragically filled with violence in the years since World War II” (1993:12). Poverty and the social exclusion resulting from poverty, Nightingale argues, have resulted in the proliferation of inner-city gangs and criminal lifestyles that do not so much oppose as embrace the core cultural ideals and values of late twentieth century mainstream America. The glorification of male violence and the conspicuous consumption of consumer goods, ubiquitous in the mass media and advertising, psychologically compensate inner-city youth for the social humiliation of parental joblessness and poverty (10-11).

This does not take us much beyond Merton’s strain/anomie theory, which explained the relationship between culturally defined goals and the legitimate means to attain them. Merton argued that some people, due to their position in the social structure, do not have access to or simply reject the socially legitimate ways to achieve the American Dream. They therefore deviate from accepted behavior and resort to whatever means are at their disposal to get money and the things they want. Likewise, Nightingale claims that the black inner-city poor perpetuate poverty, crime, and violence by wanting too much to be like white middle class Americans. In order to generate the wealth to support such an investment in material gain, black youth must resort to street
crime and drug dealing because the urban-based industrial and manufacturing jobs their parents and grandparents relied upon have “disappeared,” and the social capital, economic support, and mentorship provided by middle class African American role models have fled to the suburbs (3, 8).

This is the thesis, elaborated by sociologist William Julius Wilson (1987; restated in Wilson 1996), that deindustrialization created an inner city “underclass.” Wilson’s attention to economic structures and policies is well taken, and despite the title of his 1996 book When Work Disappears, he does acknowledge that jobs did not simply vanish—they were outsourced. Based largely on survey data and quantitative analysis, however, his work lacks historical depth, political sophistication, minimizes the significance of race, and displays a bewildering ignorance of the everyday lives and experiences of inner-city residents. Following in the footsteps of E. Franklin Frazier (1939; 1949) and the Chicago school of sociology, Wilson echoes the view—which was earlier echoed by Moynihan (1965)—that the urbanization of African Americans in Northern U.S. cities resulted in social disorganization, a dissolution of family structure, and a descent into moral depravity and crime.

More than a decade earlier than Wilson’s The Truly Disadvantaged (1987), Carol Stack (1997[1974]) had shown that while African American family and kinship structures may not resemble the two-parent nuclear family household ideal of the white middle class, they are not “disorganized” or “broken.” Through long-term ethnographic field research conducted while living in a low income, African American community in the Midwest, Stack revealed how the maintenance of extended kinship networks and
complex community ties among African American families living in material deprivation was a rational response to the overwhelming difficulties of living in poverty. Kin and community could provide the social and material support needed to endure day-to-day hardships, sudden emergencies, discrimination in the workplace or lack of employment, and the endless bureaucratic obstacles of social welfare agencies. Extended kinship networks and the reciprocity of mutual aid that circulates through them are seen as dysfunctional and self-defeating only when viewed through the lens of middle class values such as self-sufficiency, individual competition, and private accumulation of wealth. More recently, anthropologist Steven Gregory (1998) has challenged the “socially disorganized” view of black urban communities by ethnographically studying political activism and community organizing in a working class and middle class African American neighborhood in New York City. Nancy Naples (1998) has also offered an historical-biographical account of “activist mothering” undertaken by African American, Puerto Rican, and white women, who contributed substantial labor, often unpaid, to community and political organizing efforts in low-income neighborhoods in New York City and Philadelphia during the War on Poverty.

To his discredit, Wilson’s first book (1978) had wrongly predicted a decline in the significance of race for African Americans in their relation to social institutions in the U.S. Dismissing race or ethnicity is precisely the wrong move to make in attempting to account for the existence of ghettos, not just urban poverty. As Loïc Wacquant (1997) explains, “a ghetto is not simply a topographic entity or an aggregation of poor families and individuals but an institutional form, a historically determinate, spatially-based
concatenation of mechanisms of *ethnoracial closure and control*” (343, emphasis in original). The ghetto is a form of racial domination, a socio-spatial formation created by the relegation of a stigmatized population into a separate, bounded territory in which parallel institutions are developed “as a functional substitute for, and as a protective buffer against, the dominant institutions of the encompassing society” (343).

Furthermore, the institutions of the dominant society—welfare agencies, schools, hospitals, police, philanthropies, etc.—must be recognized for not only maintaining the ghettoized in a state of structural dependency (343), but also for “contribut[ing] powerfully to organizing the social space of the ghetto in particular and particularly destabilizing ways” (347). Contrary to Wilson and others, Wacquant argues that the ghetto is not *disorganized* but instead is “organized according to different principles, in response to a unique set of structural and strategic constraints* that bear on the racialized enclaves of the city as on no other segment of America’s territory*” (346, emphasis in original). Life in the ghetto must be understood as a response to the constraints of economic necessity, material deprivation, diminishing prospects of employment, limited opportunities, physical and social insecurity, failure of public services, racial discrimination and class prejudice, territorial stigmatization, and political abandonment (346-347). Since the election of Ronald Reagan as president, the urban ghetto in the United States has been reconfigured according to a constellation of political, economic, social, and cultural principles known as neoliberalism.
Neoliberal Governance of the Urban Poor through Criminalization

Neoliberalism is a set of beliefs, practices, and public policies regarding the proper role of individuals and government in society and the economy. Neoliberalism has roots in, and shares many features with, classical economic liberalism, which developed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Based largely on economic theory espoused by Adam Smith in his magnum opus *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, first published in 1776, classical liberalism advocated individual self-interest, free markets, limited government, and free trade among nations. According to Smith, nations accumulate wealth and their societies improve when individuals, guided by an “invisible hand,” pursue their own gain (Smith 1976[1776]).

Neoliberal political economic theory was devised in Europe and the United States in the decades following World War II. It developed largely out of the concern that during the twentieth century, government regulation of the economy and business, international trade restrictions, increased public spending on social welfare, and gains made by labor in relation to capital had resulted in the limiting of economic freedom, and therefore political liberty (Friedman 1962; Hayek 1960). However, neoliberal policies, in various formations in different countries, would not begin to be instituted until the 1970s and 80s, facilitating the globalization of powerful capitalist corporations, creating uneven economic development (Smith 2010), and restructuring the state in the interests of the “free market” (Harvey 2005).

Neoliberal “development” was supposed to help eliminate poverty; instead, it spread poverty, increased income inequality, and concentrated even more wealth and
power in private, for-profit corporations. Neoliberalism was brought to nations in the
global South through fiscal austerity and structural adjustment policies as conditions of
economic development loans made through the World Bank and the Inter-American
Development Bank. Public money that would have otherwise been invested in social
welfare was required to be redirected toward repaying loans. Political power residing in
state governments was decentralized, ceding national autonomy to foreign governments
and multinational corporations that were mostly unaccountable to local populations.
State-owned industries, resources, and services were privatized. Financial operations,
workers’ rights, and environmental protections were deregulated, allowing capital to be
more globally mobile, make riskier investments, and more easily exploit the labor of
local populations, pollute and destroy natural environments, and deplete local natural
resources. Trade was liberalized, opening national and local markets to competition and
domination by industries based in the global North that could mass-produce goods more
cheaply, often with government subsidies.

In Europe and North America, neoliberalism went from the fringe to becoming
mainstream governmental policy with the elections of Margaret Thatcher in England in
1979 and Ronald Reagan in the United States in 1980. It has since been associated with
right-wing political ideology, although in the U.S. it has guided the social and economic
policies of Democratic and Republican presidential administrations alike, from Reagan,
through George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama. In the U.S.,
since Reagan, “free market competition” has been touted as the desired force for
decentralizing the power of government regulations and bringing about economic
growth and development better, supposedly, than state planning can. Private, for-profit business is hailed as more efficient and less expensive than the state for providing essential services, and the privatization of public resources, publicly financed infrastructure, and basic governmental services is touted as a way to cut “spending” and “waste,” in theory saving tax payers money and getting “big government” out of their lives.

Social inequality and structural violence have been depoliticized, and disinvestment in general social wellbeing and the common good is offered as the solution to weaning low-income, underemployed, and unemployed persons off their “dependency” on government welfare. The free market is believed capable of solving these and all other social problems, and individuals are encouraged to assume moral and economic responsibility for their low socioeconomic status and start making better, self-interested “choices” in order to realize their full entrepreneurial potential on the globally competitive labor market. Indeed, in late twentieth and early twenty-first century neoliberal United States, self-realization comes through individual entrepreneurialism and the very meaning of life is to be found in the market.

David Harvey (2005) defines neoliberalism as “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (2). Under neoliberalism, “the role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices” (2), entailing the creation and defense of profitable
markets in the interests of concentrated capital and corporate power, to the detriment of public welfare, democratic process, and the social and economic rights of people (see also Bourdieu 1998a; Chomsky 1998; Giroux 2004; 2008). What has been created under neoliberalism is an ethic of market exchange modeled on the temporary “contractual relations in the marketplace” (Harvey 2005:3). Neoliberalism “seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market,” destroying “divisions of labor, social relations, welfare provisions, technological mixes, ways of life and thought, reproductive activities, attachments to the land and habits of the heart” and the social institutions that once safeguarded these (3).

Neoliberalism has had major impacts on processes of urbanization (Hackworth 2007), especially in the inner city and on the governance of urban populations; it has also been a driving force behind the destruction of public space (Low and Smith 2006), public housing, and the social capital of the urban poor (Greenbaum 2008). Critics of neoliberal ideology have been quick to point out that simultaneous with government disinvestment from the public sphere, unprecedented amounts of welfare and tax breaks have been provided to private corporations, investment banks and firms, and the military defense industry. Neoliberalism has not freed but rather further marginalized low-wage earners, migrant laborers, the unemployed, and people living in poverty. Neoliberal globalization of the economy, including capital flight and outsourcing of manufacturing and service sector jobs to countries with less expensive laborers and fewer workers’ rights, have left large segments of the population with fewer prospects of gainful employment. The results of neoliberalism in the U.S. have been “new” poverty
(Goode and Maskovsky 2001b), increasing inequality and income disparity, and the erosion of democracy (Collins, et al. 2008; Giroux 2004).

The space for marginalized groups to make demands on the state keeps shrinking (Bourdieu 1998a), as concentrated power in private, unaccountable corporations reconfigures the state to serve exclusively the class interests of the super-wealthy (Chomsky 1998) and to dispose of people whose labor is no longer needed (Giroux 2008). As Pierre Bourdieu has written, the politics of neoliberalism is destructive toward “any and all collective structures that could serve as an obstacle to the logic of the pure market” (Bourdieu 1998b). Faith in the free market led to continual deregulation of the banking and financial industries, ultimately triggering a global financial crisis after the housing market collapsed in 2007.

As the fiscal crisis worsened and property values plummeted, tax revenues dwindled at the local level. County and municipal governments began cutting basic services or converting to fee-based and privatized approaches. The poor and working class began to be barraged with an array of unaffordable usage fees for accessing public facilities and services, increasing the likelihood that they would make even less use of these diminishing resources already being lost to privatization or eliminated altogether.

Neoliberal restructuring of the state has had especially destructive effects on families and children living in urban poverty, compelling them to adapt to the loss of social welfare and demolition of the public sphere by submitting to new forms of surveillance and disciplining of their individual behavior. The liberal War on Poverty has been replaced with the neoliberal governance of poor people through criminalization—
processes that turn actions and persons into crimes and criminals. A carceral-assistential state apparatus now confines and controls the bodies of expendable laborers in urban spaces, containing their threat to the neoliberal socioeconomic order through criminalization, punitive public assistance, and increasingly privatized but diminishing social services, resulting in a new symbiosis of prison and ghetto, the “hyperghetto” (Wacquant 2000; 2001a). The resulting structures of punishment, police surveillance, and criminalization intrude upon youth as well, pushing them into the criminal (in)justice system at an early age.

The Carceral-Assistential State and the Ghetto–Prison Symbiosis

The dramatic increase in the criminalization and hyper-incarceration of African Americans, males in particular, that has taken place during the last four decades should be understood, Wacquant contends, from a historical and sociological framework that explains the “deadly symbiosis” (Wacquant 2001a; 2002b) of prison and ghetto in the post-Civil Rights United States. The ghetto–prison symbiosis itself is a phenomenon that cannot be properly understood apart from the rise of neoliberalism and the penalization of poverty (Wacquant 2001b; 2008). Historically, “the task of defining, confining, and controlling African Americans in the United States has been successively shouldered by four ‘peculiar institutions’: slavery, the Jim Crow system, the urban ghetto, and the novel organizational compound formed by the vestiges of the ghetto and the expanding carceral system” (Wacquant 2001a:97-98, emphasis in original). Slavery, Jim Crow, and the urban ghetto served “to recruit, organize, and extract labor out of African
Americans, on the one hand; and to demarcate and ultimately seclude them so that they would not ‘contaminate’ the surrounding white society that viewed them as irrevocably inferior and vile because devoid of ethnic honor” (99).

However, “when the ghetto was rendered inoperative in the sixties by economic restructuring that made African-American labor expendable and mass protest that finally won blacks the vote, the carceral institution offered itself as a substitute apparatus for enforcing the shifting color line and containing the segments of the African-American community devoid of economic utility and political pull” (103). This fourth “peculiar institution” is a symbiosis of ghetto and prison, through which the two institutions have not only come to resemble each other but also work in tandem. The result includes the institutional solidification of the association between blackness and criminality (117), the depoliticization of the expanding prison system, which is justified as a common sense, “get tough” law enforcement response to street crime (118), and civic and social death to persons caught in the criminal justice system (119). Wacquant’s analysis is compelling, but it does not account for the increased criminalization and incarceration of other groups such as Latinos and undocumented immigrants (on Latinas/os and U.S. prisons, see Morín 2008).

The complexity of the phenomenon of criminalization in the neoliberal United States is not accurately captured by the phrase “prison industrial complex,” which was popularized by investigative journalist Eric Schlosser in a 1998 article in the *Atlantic Monthly* (Schlosser 1998). Schlosser defined the prison industrial complex as “a set of bureaucratic, political, and economic interests that encourage increased spending on
imprisonment, regardless of the actual need” (54). Capitalist interest in exploiting the
criminal justice system for profit is certainly a major factor behind the growth of the
prison system and the domination of the poor through criminalization (Parenti 2008). A
number of researchers have studied and documented the relationship between big
business and prison profiteering, as well as the role of the prison system in the U.S.
economy (Dyer 2001; Herivel and Wright 2008; Lichenstein and Kroll 1990), and Michael
Hallett (2006), using a critical race perspective, offers a critique of the for-profit private
prison industry and its exploitation of the labor of primarily African American prisoners
(see also Price 2006).

However, the growth of the prison industrial complex has taken place in the
context of neoliberal reforms and various regional economic crises triggered by
globalization, as Gilmore (2007) demonstrates using California as a case study.
Furthermore, the relationship of crime and punishment to the political development of
the United States has a long history, and the construction of the carceral state has
involved a variety of special interest groups, has been supported by liberal and
conservative politicians alike, and has encountered surprisingly little political opposition
until recent years (Gottschalk 2006).

The dismantling of the welfare state has been accompanied by the spectacular
growth in power and extension of the carceral state, the apparatus of state power
concerned with monitoring and controlling populations, and punishing and incarcerating
those who threaten the social order by committing crimes, as defined by the state
(Gottschalk 2008). The carceral state now “exercise[s] vast new controls over millions of
people, resulting in a remarkable change in the distribution of authority in favor of law enforcement and corrections at the local, state, and federal levels” (Gottschalk 2008:236). Indeed, in the U.S., total direct expenditures on criminal justice functions (police, corrections, and judicial) for all levels of government combined (federal, state, and local) have increased from nearly $36 billion in 1982 to more than $204 billion in 2005 (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2007b)—nearly a six-fold increase over the last two decades (see also Hughes 2006). Rather than merely address legitimate threats of crime, the carceral state allows the state to govern through crime, as explained by David Garland (2001a) and Jonathan Simon (2007). Simon’s central claim is that “the American elite are ‘governing through crime’” by “using crime to promote governance by legitimizing and/or providing content for the exercise of power” (4, 5).

The growth of the carceral state in the U.S. and elsewhere is not about making society safer by getting tough on crime, but about managing and confining segments of the population that are considered “risks” to the emerging neoliberal social order. Under such a logic and structure of governance, the rehabilitation or treatment of those who have become criminalized has become meaningless, and there is no longer any need to even claim that the purpose of incarceration is the “transformation of the prisoner through penitence, discipline, intimidation, or therapy” (Simon 2007:142). Indeed, “the distinctive new form and function of the prison today is a space of pure custody, a human warehouse or even a kind of social waste management facility” (142). The idea of the prison as a warehouse for the poor or dangerous classes has appealed to a number of writers and activists (e.g., Herivel and Wright 2003; Irwin 2004). What is
more, governing through crime concerns not merely the poor and minorities, but disciplines the middle class as well by creating new kinds of spatialized class divisions and class-based practices. While the poor and minorities are being warehoused in prisons, the middle class has begun to make choices about where to live, work, and send their children to school based on fear of crime risk rather than actual crime (Simon 2007:6), barricading themselves inside the confines of gated communities (Blakely and Snyder 1997; Low 2003) and fortified enclaves (Caldeira 1996; 2000a).

Market deregulation, privatization, individual responsibilization for social welfare, and the destruction of the New Deal and post-WWII social contracts will necessitate the strengthening of the carceral state and the penalization of poverty in order to contain and control the increasing numbers of those pushed to the bottom of the social structure, especially during times of economic crisis (Parenti 2008). Wacquant argues that what weds “the ‘invisible hand’ of the deregulated labor market to the ‘iron fist’ of an intrusive and omnipresent punitive apparatus” is not the prison industrial complex (2001a:97). Rather, the neoliberal social order is supported by a “carceral-assistential complex” whose purpose is “to surveil, train and neutralize the populations recalcitrant or superfluous to the new economic and racial regime according to a gendered division of labor, the men being handled by its penal wing while (their) women and children are managed by a revamped welfare-workfare system designed to buttress casual employment” (97). In the research literature on these issues, similar explanations have already been offered by such scholars as Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward (1993[1971])—who, unlike Wacquant, have also studied the political agency of the poor
(Piven and Cloward 1979)—and Jeffrey Reiman (2006[1979]), who argued that the class ideology behind the criminal justice system allows the crimes of the wealthy to go unpunished, permitting the rich to get richer, while “the poor get prison.” However, what Wacquant contributes, having conducted sociological ethnography of urban poverty in Europe (Wacquant 2007), is a comparative perspective, and a fresh look at the more recent transformations of capitalism, class, the state, and society enabled by neoliberalism and globalization.

Quantitatively, the sheer numbers of persons in the U.S. who are in prison or jail or on probation or parole is staggering. Although the U.S. has only about 5% of the world’s population, it has around 24% of the world prison population (Burd-Sharps, et al. 2008). According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics at the U.S. Department of Justice, at the end of 2006 the total federal, state, and local adult correctional population in the U.S. reached more than 7.2 million men and women, or 1 in every 31 adults (about 3.2% of the adult population) (Glaze and Bonczar 2007:2). In 1980, the total federal, state, and local adult correctional population was only 1.8 million (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2007a). The incarceration rate (number of inmates incarcerated in federal or state prisons and in local jails) grew from 139 per 100,000 persons in 1980 to 501 per 100,000 in 2006 (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2006). The total adult incarcerated population in 1980 was 503,586 persons (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2007a). The total adult incarcerated population at the end of 2006 in the U.S. reached 2.26 million persons (Sabol, et al. 2007:4). Males accounted for 93.1% of the total population in federal and
state prisons at yearend 2006; females accounted for 6.9% of this total (Sabol, et al. 2007:6).

At yearend 2006, the largest proportion of male prison inmates was for Blacks (38%), followed by Whites (34%) and Hispanics (21%) (7); the prison incarceration rates for 2006 are one in every 33 Black men, one in every 79 Hispanic men, and one in every 205 white men (8). At yearend 2006, the largest proportion of female prison inmates was for Whites (48%), followed by Blacks (28%) and Hispanics (17%) (7). Various researchers have documented and commented upon the many forms of racial/ethnic overrepresentation, disparities, and discrimination in the criminal justice system, from police surveillance, to jury selection, to sentencing and imprisonment, and criminalization in general (Cole 1999; Kennedy 1997; Marable, et al. 2007; Peterson, et al. 2006; Walker, et al. 2006).

Some have attributed the rise in incarceration rates to the “War on Drugs” (e.g., Gordon 1994; Provine 2007; Tonry 1995). Contrary to popular memory, it was President Richard Nixon, not President Ronald Reagan, who, in 1971, first declared a “War on Drugs.” Nixon also created the Drug Enforcement Agency in 1973. Nevertheless, Nixon’s War on Drugs was directed primarily at marijuana and heroin, and during his presidency, most of the funding for this effort went to the treatment—not punishment or incarceration—of drug offenders. Some researchers argue that what Nixon and other political leaders did was bring about a more punitive shift to the maintenance of “law and order” rather than to a War on Drugs per se. Some see Nixonian law and order politics as a racialized reaction to the urban-based militant political upheavals of the
1960s (Beckett 1997) or as outright repression of political dissent (Oliver 2008). Others characterize it as a politicized cultural obsession with attributing street crime to flaws in pathological individuals rather than to structural flaws in a pathological society (Scheingold 1991), or as a conservative backlash against the Civil Rights Movement and the social welfare programs created by President Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society and War on Poverty (Flamm 2005; Parenti 2008). A singularly revealing clue can perhaps be found in the diaries H.R. Haldeman, who was Nixon’s chief of staff up until the Watergate scandal. On April 28, 1969, Haldeman wrote that Nixon “emphasized that you have to face the fact that the whole problem is really the blacks. The key is to devise a system that recognizes this while not appearing to” (Haldeman 1994:53, emphasis in original).

In 1986, President Ronald Reagan signed into law the Anti-Drug Abuse Act, which included funding for building new prisons and created mandatory minimum sentencing for drug-related offenses, specifically those involving the possession or sale of heroin, powder cocaine, and crack. In 1970, the number of adult arrests for drug abuse violations was 322,300 (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2007c). When Reagan was elected president in 1980, the number had risen to only 471,200. By 1988, the last year of Reagan’s second term, the number of adult arrests for drug abuse violations had skyrocketed to 1,050,600. This peaked in 1989 at 1,247,800, then fell to 931,900 in 1991, after which it began to rise steadily each year (except 2002), reaching 1,693,100 arrests for drug abuse violations in 2006—about 5.3 times the number of such arrests in 1970. An excellent analysis of drug policy and its effects on incarceration rates, especially the incarceration of African American males, is Mauer (2006; see also Miller 1996). Jordan-
Zachery (2003) discusses the criminalization of African American women, especially in association with the “crack mother” stereotype that circulated through the media during the Reagan years.

**Class, Power, Discourse and the Study of Prisons, Crime, and the Media**

The spectacular growth of the carceral state along with the prison industrial complex over the last thirty years is reason to retain a Marxist framework for understanding and explaining criminalization (see for example, Greenberg 1993), especially in that criminalization has become central to class domination and class reproduction in the neoliberal United States. Marx argued that class formation and class conflict have the widest explanatory applicability in accounting for the structuring of inequality and for motivating historical change. He theorized how capitalist ruling classes exercise power through the ownership of the means of production, the organization of social relations for the exploitation of labor, the domination of the working class, and the control of the state (Marx 1967[1867-1894]; Marx and Engels 1970[1932]; 1985[1848]). In explaining criminalization, it is important to emphasize these aspects of the Marxist framework because many social theorists have turned to Michel Foucault instead, especially to his *Discipline and Punish* (1995[1975]), and they seem not to be aware of some of the fundamental incompatibilities between Marx and Foucault.

For Foucault, power is always connected to knowledge. Foucault argues that power does not (contra Marx) come only from the dominant economic class, nor does it (contra Weber) reside solely in the hands of the state. According to Foucault, power is
diffused throughout the social world, not simply concentrated in capitalist accumulations (Marx) or in state bureaucracies and high status or charismatic individuals (Weber). Power is everywhere. It is something that is exercised, not something that one possesses. Power is exercised, for example, through the classification and categorization of things and people. Power is exercised through institutions—such as clinics (Foucault 1994[1963]), asylums (Foucault 1988[1961]), and prisons (Foucault 1995[1975])—operated by knowledge experts who put people into categories and exercise power through discursive practices. Such institutions “invisibly” exercise power, Foucault claimed, through surveillance, disciplinary practices, and expert knowledge.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault states that “it is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination; but, on the other hand, its constitution as labor power is possible only if it is caught up in a system of subjection …; the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body” (1995 [1977]:26). Foucault then proceeds to argue, contra Marx and Weber, that power is exercised in all social relations, “down into the depths of society” (27), operating through “political technologies of the body,” which “cannot be localized in a particular type of institution or state apparatus” (26). If, as Foucault claims, “power is exercised rather than possessed,” then this means that the techniques of power, or the “microphysics of power,” are utilizable in any relation in which certain people are, or can be, subjected by other people (26). The subjection of persons is predicated on their categorization by power-knowledge, a field of knowledge that constitutes, and is constituted by, power relations. Power/knowledge always objectifies and subjugates the
“object of study”; power/knowledge inherently contains political technologies of control and dominance. According to Foucault, producing knowledge about something always produces the exercise of power over that something. Therefore, power/knowledge is always an exercise of control, order, oppression, and violence.

There is much to be gained from Foucault’s insights into the microphysics of power, as well as his explanation of the subjection of individuals by and through the discursive practices of power/knowledge—e.g., how individuals are subjugated to power by being categorized as “criminals” by the discursive practices of the criminal justice system and the discipline of criminology. However, capitalism, class, and the state virtually disappear in Foucauldian analysis. The exercise of power/knowledge needs to be connected to the state and ruling class formations. In whose interests is it to criminalize certain classes or racial/ethnic groups of people? Who wields the technologies of power/knowledge and in whose interests are these technologies exercised? Foucault is not helpful in answering these questions. Foucault was correct in describing how the techniques of disciplining bodies and populations would diffuse throughout society from their birthplace in the institution of the prison; but he was wrong in predicting that the institution of the prison would decline in significance. Those interested in understanding the history of the construction of the carceral state in the United States now have Marie Gottschalk’s *The Prison and the Gallows: The Politics of Mass Incarceration in America* (2006), an outstanding work of political and historical scholarship.
The influence of Foucault on anthropology and other social science disciplines is troubling. Just as ethnographers, save for a few notable exceptions (a recent example is Vargas 2006), generally have avoided long-term participant observational study of the ghetto or inner city poverty from the ground up, as noted by Bourgois above, they have also avoided directly studying the prison and other institutions of the carceral state. As Wacquant (2002a) observes, “a survey of the recent sociology and anthropology of carceral institutions shows that field studies depicting the everyday world of inmates in America have gone into eclipse just when they were most needed on both scientific and political grounds following the turn toward the penal management of poverty and the correlative return of the prison to the forefront of the societal scene” (371). In the U.S., the anthropology of prisons abounds with Foucault-inspired calls to analyze the discourse about prisons; for Lorna Rhodes, for example, “the most pressing need for the study of prisons is to challenge the terms of the discourse that frames and supports them” (2001:75). Rhodes’ review article on the anthropology of prisons (2001) demonstrates the paucity of empirically-based ethnographic studies of prisons—a mere handful.

A recent review article on the anthropology of crime and criminalization by Schneider and Schneider (2008) underscores the point that anthropologists have been reluctant to engage in fieldwork on these topics in the U.S.: the only two book-length ethnographies by anthropologists that are cited are Bourgois (2003[1995]) and Sally Engle Merry’s *Urban Danger* (1981). The latter is still one of the best descriptive ethnographies of the role of the fear in the everyday criminalization of strangers.
Merry’s book is now close to thirty years old but remains a key work in showing how the ambiguous category of “criminal” is socioculturally constructed in the everyday lives of different groups of people. Residents of a multi-ethnic public housing project perceived their own neighbors as dangerous and potentially criminal, particularly if their neighbors were strangers. Merry found that the differences in how some residents perceived other residents as dangerous or even criminal depended not only on their own race/ethnicity and the race/ethnicity of the other residents, but also on the context or place in which the residents encountered each other.

The other anthropological literature cited by Schneider and Schneider concerns social, cultural, and political complexities of crime and criminalization in other countries, or, in the tradition of Bronislaw Malinowski (1972[1926]), the differing cultural meanings of crime in non-Western contexts and how cultural customs for dealing with crime function to maintain the social order (in the culturalist vein, see also some examples in Parnell and Kane 2003). Schneider and Schneider seem to want to go the Foucauldian route and reduce criminalization to discourse, hence “Our Times: Apocalyptic Crime Talk” (2008:366) as the header of the concluding section of their review.

Some scholars have studied the role of the media in framing public discussion about race/ethnicity, class, and “crime” and in shaping perceptions about which groups of people are most likely to commit crime (Gilliam 1992; Page 1997; Potter and Kappeler 2006); others have studied the connections between news media and ruling class ideology (Barak 1994). Steve Macek (2006) has written about alarmist, right-wing conservative attacks on the urban poor and working class that were taken up by political
pundits in the news media as well as the mass media in general, especially television and
the movie industry. The media collectively manufactured a racialized moral panic about
the inner city that has been very real in its consequences, if false in its assumptions (see
also Gilens 1999). Entman and Rojecki (2000) explain the “black image in the white
mind,” or the reproduction of racist and classist stereotypes through the news media, by
employing an institutional analysis and political economy of the news media, as well as
by offering cognitive and cultural explanations for the appeal and efficacy of racial
prototypes and stereotypes.

Demonstrating the links between racial stereotypes and ideology is important;
believing in racial stereotypes—for example, that Blacks and Latinos are naturally
inferior or born criminals—is not simply a matter of ignorance or personal prejudice. It is
not that some people are simply “obsessed” with race—that is, that they have a
psychological illness that compels them to think constantly about race. The source of
racialized thinking is racial ideology, which is so all-pervasive and hegemonic that it has
permeated into all aspects of everyday life. Racial stereotypes are deeply entwined with
ideologies of racism, which have long histories and which are used to hold in place the
racial hierarchies of societies, justifying the domination of subordinated groups by those
in power (Gregory and Sanjek 1994; Smedley 2007).

Entman and Rojecki’s analysis of media and race in the U.S. concludes that the
processes that reproduce negative stereotypes about African Americans (78-93) and the
poor (94-106) are so entrenched within institutional structures and political frameworks
that it is nearly impossible to change them without changing the institutions and
political economy of the news media themselves. Entman and Rojecki also argue that only elites, particularly elites with political power or capital, set the news media agenda (103). As such, the media function as purveyors of ideological propaganda, as explained by Jacques Ellul (1973) or, much earlier, Edward Bernays (1928): “The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country” (1).

However, the mass media and mass culture do not have a uniform, deterministic effect on people, as argued by Horkheimer and Adorno (2002[1947]); people have agency to construct alternative, negotiated, or even oppositional meanings from a message or text, rather than accept the preferred or official meaning (Hall 2002[1980]). But the media do important work in building hegemony, which, as defined by Gramsci (2005[1971]), is the consent, never total or complete, of the dominated to the intellectual and moral leadership of the powerful (see also Kurtz 1996).

Stuart Hall et al. (1978), adding a Gramscian twist to Stanley Cohen’s theory of moral panics (Cohen 2002[1972]), theorized that one way in which the media serve an ideological tool of the powerful is in the media’s creation of moral panics around such issues as street crime. In exaggerating the threat or prevalence of crime, the media may influence the public to consent to increases in policing, surveillance, and other forms of social control by the state in order to “police the crisis” (Hall, et al. 1978). This is not conspiracy theory, but institutional analysis: because the mass media are owned by large
corporations, the very institutional structure and political economy of the mass media will compel them to serve the class interests of their owners (Herman and Chomsky 2002[1988]).

An analysis of criminalization in the mass media needs, therefore, to go beyond the “cultural studies” approach, which indulges in semiotic textual analysis and the celebration of the play of images and simulacra (Baudrillard 1994). The role of the media in the criminalization of African Americans and Latinos in the U.S. (and elsewhere) is real and is linked to the political economy of the carceral state. In examining the mediated processes that frame Blacks and Latinos as criminals, we must look not only at images and narratives of criminality—images and narratives that become commodified and fetishized through the workings of the capitalist market and culture industry. We must also reveal the real social relations that are obscured by the mediated spectacle of such images and narratives, as well as the political economies that structure such social relations and produce real consequences (e.g., criminalization and incarceration) for real people (e.g., African Americans and Latinos). Guy Debord’s Marxist-inspired insight that “the spectacle is not a collection of images; it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images” (2005[1967]:7) is very relevant here.

In summary, the study of criminalization entails the study of the neoliberal carceral-assistential state, which

is trained primarily on the destitute, the disreputable and the dangerous, and all those who chafe, in the lower regions of social space, at the new economic and ethnoracial order being built over the rubble of the defunct Fordist-Keynesian compact and the dislocated black ghetto: namely, the colored subproletariat of the big cities, the unskilled and precarious fractions of the working class, and those who reject the “slave jobs” and
poverty wages of the deregulated service economy and turn instead to the informal commerce of the city streets and its leading sector, the drug trade. (Wacquant 2002a:382)

A critical anthropology, borrowing the insights of a Marxist radical criminology, can study criminalization by studying the everyday practices of the carceral state as experienced by real people at a multiplicity of sites and contexts. This includes an exploration of how the boundaries and representations of the carceral state, and its categories of criminalization, are socio-culturally constructed (Parnell and Kane 2003) in and through particular spaces and institutions (on the anthropological study of the state, see Sharma and Gupta 2006). In addition, cultural anthropologists who study culturally affiliated groups of people and communities are well prepared to study holistically how the carceral state and criminalization, especially incarceration, negatively impact local communities and families in neighborhoods that are already poor and disadvantaged. This is a topic of research that is only beginning to be rigorously explored (Clear 2007; Garland 2001b; Mauer and Chesney-Lind 2003; Pattillo, et al. 2004; Travis and Waul 2003; Western 2006). A recent and well-received ethnographic study of the deleterious effects of incarceration on families and communities is by anthropologist Donald Braman (2004).

Disparities in the Criminalization of Racial and Ethnic Minority Youth Living in Poverty

In a recent national report entitled America’s Cradle to Prison Pipeline, the Children’s Defense Fund (2007a) declared that “the most dangerous place for a child to try to grow up in America is at the intersection of poverty and race” (4). Identifying
structural violence, economic inequality, and racial ideology as the culprits behind criminalization, the CDF report likens “poor children of color” to “canaries in America’s deep mines of child neglect and racial and economic injustice” (15) whose “accumulated and convergent risks form a Cradle to Prison Pipeline, trapping these children in a trajectory that leads to marginalized lives, imprisonment and often premature death” (15-16). Racial and ethnic disparities for imprisonment are striking: “a Black boy born in 2001 has a 1 in 3 chance of going to prison in his lifetime; a Latino boy a 1 in 6 chance; and a White boy a 1 in 17 chance” (15). The criminalization of youth is popularly described as a “school to prison pipeline,” but the “cradle to prison pipeline” in the CDF report title proposes that more than schools are implicated in the criminalization process.

In order to construct a general picture of the marginalization and criminalization of racial and ethnic minority youth living in poverty, it is necessary to first look at national-level data on these processes. Evidence that ethnoracial minority youth are criminalized to a greater extent than white youth can be found in the overrepresentation of the former in the juvenile justice system. There are two recent national-level reports, to which any other local- or regional-level report can be compared: (1) the CDF’s *America’s Cradle to Prison Pipeline* (2007a), which is based on various government datasets; and (2) the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s recent *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 2006 National Report* (Snyder and Sickmund 2006), the most comprehensive quantitative analysis to date of such national-level data.
The central argument of the CDF report is that a child’s entrance into the “cradle to prison pipeline” is related to certain “accumulated and convergent” (15) risk factors that are caused by, or associated with, poverty (the greatest risk factor) and that lead to marginalization and criminalization. Children who are more likely to be caught in the cradle to prison pipeline are those who:

- live in poverty,
- experience disadvantages in health care,
- lack early high-quality education,
- live in foster care,
- experience abuse or neglect,
- are not provided with schooling that teaches them to read and write at grade level,
- drop out or are suspended or expelled from school,
- are misdiagnosed as needing special education services,
- do not receive treatment for mental health problems,
- experience parental absence or have incarcerated parents,
- and live in violent neighborhoods (15).

However, more research needs to be done in order to determine the effects of class and race/ethnicity relative to each other in processes of criminalization occurring among populations characterized by different configurations of class and race/ethnicity. Furthermore, culture should not be excluded from such investigations. In theorizing about criminalization, it is important to look at how youth from any race/ethnicity—including whites—who construct their identities from elements of urban street culture are perceived and treated by educational and correctional institutions.

There are racial/ethnic disparities for the above risk factors. For example, during 2006, the number and rate of children living in poverty in the U.S. were 3,776,153 Black children (35.3% of all Black children), 4,112,200 Latino children (28.0% of all Latino
children), and 4,506,802 White, non-Latino children (10.8% of all White, non-Latino children) (Children’s Defense Fund 2007a:30). From 2000 to 2005, the number of children living in extreme poverty (less than half the poverty threshold) increased for Blacks (from 1.6 million to over 1.9 million) and Latinos (1.2 million to 1.7 million) (205).

Compared to a White child, a Black child is twice as likely to live with a single parent and three times as likely to live with neither parent (206). Latino children are three times more likely than White children to be uninsured; Black children are 0.7 times more likely than White children to be uninsured (206). Among children in the fourth grade, 41% of White children are reading at grade level; for Latino children the figure is 16% and for Blacks it is 13% (208). Among eighth graders, 39% of White children perform at grade level in math; this is 13% for Latinos and 9% for Blacks (208). The rate of suspension or expulsion during grades 7-12 is 14.6% for White students, 38.2% for Native Americans, 35.1% for Blacks, and 19.6% for Latinos (208). Black children are two times more likely than White children to be placed in special education programs, and two-thirds more likely to be placed in programs for emotional disturbances (208). Black children are 16% of the population, but 32% of children in foster care (209); White children in foster care are four times more likely to be reunified and two times more likely to be adopted than Black children (209).

In Florida, 1 in 3 Black children, 2 in 9 Latino children, and 1 in 10 White children live in poverty (Children’s Defense Fund 2007b) (1). Among fourth graders, 87% of Blacks, 75% of Latinos, and 61% of Whites cannot read at grade level (2). The overall suspension rates are 16.7 suspensions for every 100 enrolled Black students, 6.6 for
every 100 Latino students, and 6.8 for every 100 White students (2). In 2003, the estimated number of youth in residential placement (resulting from juvenile delinquency offenses) was 8,208; 47.4% were Black, 43.9% were White, and 8.2% were Latino (2). Florida spends 3.1 times more money per prisoner as it does per public school student (2).

A broad picture of the criminalization of youth, and the overrepresentation, disparities, and discrimination experienced by racial/ethnic minority youth in the juvenile justice system, can be constructed from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s (OJJDP) *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 2006 National Report* (Snyder and Sickmund 2006). In 2003, there were 2.2 million arrests of persons under age 18 reported by law enforcement agencies (125). Of these, 71% were male, 29% female. Of the total juvenile arrests, 68% were juveniles ages 16-17 (125). (In these data, Latinos are categorized as White, so it is not possible to state the percent of total juvenile arrests in categories of race/ethnicity.) The juvenile violent crime arrest rate in 2003 was actually the lowest it has been in more than twenty years (132); the same is true of the juvenile arrest rate for murder (133). The total juvenile delinquency caseload, however, has gone up from 1.1 million in 1985 to 1.6 million in 2002 (157). In 2003, a total number of 96,655 juvenile delinquency or status offenders were held in residential placement in the U.S. (211). Of these, 15% were female, 85% male (206); 37,347 were White (39% of total), 36,740 were Black (38% of total), 18,422 were Hispanic (19% of total), 1,771 were American Indian (2% of total), 1,462 were Asian (2% of total), and 913 were “other/mixed” (1% of total) (211). In sum, non-Whites accounted for 61% of the
juveniles held in custody in 2003 (211). Nationally, in 2003 the custody rates for juveniles (age 10 through upper age of jurisdiction in each state) were 190 per 100,000 White juveniles, 754 per 100,000 Black juveniles, 348 per 100,000 Hispanic juveniles, 496 per 100,000 American Indian juveniles, and 113 per 100,000 Asian juveniles (213).

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) itself has conducted reviews (Pope and Feyerherm 1990a; b; Pope, et al. 2002) of the research literature on disproportionate minority contact within the juvenile justice system, concluding that more than three decades of research has demonstrated that minority youth, especially black youth, are overrepresented at most stages of the juvenile justice system (Pope, et al. 2002:5). Nonetheless, the OJJDP offers no clear explanation for racial/ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system: “the causes and mechanisms of these disparities are complex. Important contributing factors may include inherent system bias, effects of local policies and practices, and social conditions (such as inequality, family situation, or underemployment) that may place youth at risk. Further, overrepresentation may result from the interaction of factors. Also, the most significant factors may vary by jurisdiction” (5).

However, these two reports (the CDF report and the OJJDP report), like many other research reports (Christle, et al. 2005) on the criminalization of youth or the overrepresentation of racial and ethnic minority youth in the juvenile justice system, give a macro-structural view of the cradle to prison pipeline in terms of predictive factors as well as a quantitative analysis of government agency reporting data. Nearly absent from the research literature are empirically based studies that explore how racial
and ethnic minority youth living in poverty experience criminalization processes in their everyday lives. Racial and ethnic minority youth are also criminalized based on non-legal processes in addition to the official categorizations of criminality upon which the above two reports depend. That is, they may be viewed, perceived, or treated as criminal or potentially criminal in their everyday lives by people and institutions that are not part of the juvenile justice system or any law enforcement agency. Therefore, it is necessary to ask where and how the criminalization of youth takes place, as well as what institutions and people are involved.

Taking the above research literature on criminalization into consideration, to limit the analysis of the criminalization of minority youth to a single institution (such as the juvenile justice system or to the public school system) or to one social space (such as streets) is inadequate for understanding both criminalization as an everyday process and how criminalization is linked to larger political, economic, and socio-cultural structures and processes. Meiners (2007) offers a book-length survey some of the theoretical and research literature relevant to understanding the criminalization of minority youth of color, but without empirical grounding it is not possible to evaluate the explanatory potential of theoretical claims. More detailed and comprehensive ethnographic studies of day-to-day criminalization processes as they occur in multiple institutions and social spaces are therefore needed in order to better understand the complexity of the problem of the criminalization of minority youth, as well as to propose theory that can better explain it.
Processes of Criminalization in the Lives of Youth

As noted above, research on the deindustrialization of the urban core, neoliberal governance and the destruction of the welfare state, and the political economy of the prison industrial complex suggests that local, everyday criminalization processes are linked to even larger political, economic, historical, and sociocultural processes (Dolby, et al. 2004; Garland 2001a; Polakow 2000; Simon 2007; Wacquant 2001a; 2002b). The criminalization of racial and ethnic minority youth living in poverty is therefore not due merely to fear of inner-city youth gangs or Latino immigrants, or moral panics (Cohen 2002[1972]) caused by sagging pants, or white middle class prejudice against the culture of hip-hop and lower class youth (Giroux 2003). Public schools are no longer just ideological state apparatuses (Althusser 1971) or sites for the social reproduction of class inequalities (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Bowles and Gintis 1976).

The criminalization of school discipline and the enforcement of educational policy such as No Child Left Behind are the more recent manifestations of a class and race war led by neoconservatives, justified by neoliberal principles, and reinvigorated by the deregulation of corporate accountability and greed (Apple 2006; Giroux 2000b; 2004; 2008; Kumashiro 2008; Lipman 2004). The result has been increasing poverty and inequality (Burd-Sharps, et al. 2008), irrespective of race, the replacement of the welfare state with the carceral state (Gottschalk 2006; 2008; Wacquant 2001a; 2002c), and racist “culture wars” against racial and ethnic minorities (Kelley 1997) as well as an ideological onslaught against the multiculturalism movement itself (e.g., Schlesinger 1998). Schools have become places where lower-class and racial/ethnic minority youth “learn to do
time” (Nolan and Anyon 2004). Studies of criminalization processes therefore need to move beyond discourse analysis or labeling theory and consider the historical, political, economic, and social structures and processes that criminalize some youthful members of the population but not others.

In The Child Savers: The Invention of Delinquency, Anthony Platt (1977; Platt and Chávez-García 2009) challenges the conventional view that the historical development of the juvenile justice system in the United States in the latter half of the nineteenth century was driven by the Progressive ideals of “child savers” who “made an enlightened effort to alleviate the miseries of urban life and juvenile delinquency caused by an unregulated capitalist economy” (xiv). The rhetoric of the child savers and the juvenile court did indeed echo the seemingly benign ideals of humanitarianism, that is, “protecting children from the physical and moral dangers of an increasingly industrialized and urban society” (4). However, the reality is that the child savers movement was motivated by the values and class interests of upper and middle class reformers “who were instrumental in devising new forms of social control to protect their power and privilege” (xx). They succeeded in establishing punitive—not rehabilitative—social institutions to regulate and control the lives of lower-class urban youth, “creat[ing] a system that subjected more and more juveniles to arbitrary and degrading punishments” (xvii).

According to Platt’s historical analysis, “the child savers shared the view of more conservative professionals that ‘criminals’ were a distinct and dangerous class, indigenous to working-class culture, and a threat to ‘civilized’ society” (xxviii).
Furthermore, “the child-saving movement tried to do for the criminal justice system what industrialists and corporate leaders were trying to do for the economy—that is, achieve order, stability, and control, while preserving the existing class system and distribution of wealth” (xxii). The first juvenile court was established in 1899 in Chicago, which had been experiencing intense urban growth, industrialization, and immigration during this era. Gittens (1994) has also written about how the historical development of the juvenile court and juvenile justice system in Illinois was deeply entangled with that state’s treatment of the poor, especially poor and abandoned children.

The current juvenile justice system continues to embody these historically constructed ideologies of social, political, and economic exclusion. In Our Children, Their Children (Hawkins and Kempf-Leonard 2005), a team of researchers argues that the overrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities in the increasingly punitive juvenile justice system persists because middle and upper class whites, the dominant socioeconomic classes in the United States, believe that the system is designed, not for their own children, but for the children of the poor and of racial and ethnic minorities. On the other hand, Feld (1999) argues that Progressive-era reformers did create the juvenile justice system as a rehabilitative social welfare institution, but that during the last four decades the juvenile court has been transformed into an institution of social control of racial/ethnic minority youth by criminalizing them as juvenile delinquents rather than rehabilitating them. However, Feld’s analysis ignores class and focuses almost exclusively on race. Rios (2008) examines the “racial politics of youth crime” and how recent “get tough” juvenile justice legislation in California “targets Black and Latino
youth specifically” and “generates support by playing on public anxieties about race and crime” (97).

The concept of “juvenile delinquent” itself is fluid and imprecise. Its use dates back to at least the pre-Civil War days in the U.S. (see Mintz 2004: 155-156). Yet, while the term “juvenile delinquent” has been given different meanings at different times in different contexts, a basic historical continuity in its usage is that it has referred to any youth or behavior of youth that deviates from a perceived norm. The term gained new social and institutional currency during the Progressive Era, especially through the establishment of the juvenile court system (Mintz 2004: 176-178; Platt 1977), as discussed above. After World War II, the juvenile delinquent moved to the center of public attention once again, and public discourse about juvenile delinquents proliferated. In A Cycle of Outrage, James Gilbert (1986) writes that the juvenile delinquent is an “episodic notion” (4) that reappears during periods of social anxiety and rapid change. Gilbert argues that profound changes in economic opportunities and urban landscapes during the late 1940s and 1950s created societal fears about the security and stability of basic middle class institutions such as the family, church, school, and local community. The “juvenile delinquent” became a scapegoat of sorts, a symbol not only of the threat of lower class and immigrant populations to the hegemony of white, middle class culture, but also a focal point for parental anxieties about the increasing intrusion of commercialized mass culture and media into the everyday lives of children and youth (on the framing of youth as scapegoats for society’s ills in the 1990s, see Males 1996; 1999).
What Gilbert contributes is a social and cultural history of “America’s reaction” to the juvenile delinquent in the 1950s, showing how the interconnection of ideology, individuals, and institutions responded to this perceived social crisis. Revealing these interconnections is the major strength of Gilbert’s study, which compellingly describes and analyzes the historical, political, economic, cultural, and social relationships between institutions and industries as disparate as the FBI, the Children’s Bureau, special government committees and subcommittees, academia, the film industry, the comic book industry, and the marketing and fashion industries. More accurately, however, the history Gilbert tells is not “America’s reaction” to the juvenile delinquent, but the history of reactionary forces in U.S. society toward novelties and changes in youth culture. Gilbert concludes by stating that the youth culture of “juvenile delinquents” of the 1950s became more acceptable, or less of a threat, after it was commercialized and domesticated by capitalist entrepreneurs in the 1960s and beyond. By becoming integral to the prosperity and growth of the national economy, youth culture was less politically contestable than it had been during the 1950s when youth culture was still novel and misunderstood. This is not unlike what happened with the rap/hip-hop culture of African American urban youth: forms of expressive culture that were initially perceived as deviant and dangerous by the mainstream were later domesticated and commodified by capitalist interests (Blair 1993). The criminalization of racial and ethnic minority youth takes place simultaneously with the commodification of their urban culture, reaping enormous profits for the culture industries as well as
entrepreneurial entertainers who have figured out how to make themselves and their musical products appeal to mass market consumerism.

School is the primary social institution in the lives of children and youth, and it is becoming evident that the criminalization of youth has increasingly taken place in and through schools (Devine 1997; Kozol 2005; Meiners 2007). Hirschfield, for example, defines the criminalization of school discipline as “the shift toward a crime control paradigm in the definition and management of the problem of student deviance” (2008:80). Hirschfield cites Simon’s analysis of “governing through crime” (Simon 2007), which “extends the concept of criminalization into the symbolic realm, arguing that non-crime problems such as school failure can become criminalized in political contexts through the use of crime metaphors in framing the problems and through embracing solutions that share the structure and logic of crime control” (Hirschfield 2008:81). Hirschfield acknowledges that criminalization is not limited to schools, but part of a larger societal and political trend toward governance through criminalization.

The research literature offers very few ethnographic studies of the criminalization of minority youth. Additionally, in these qualitative studies of criminalization processes, disagreement exists over where, and through which processes, criminalization takes place. Rios (2007; 2011), who conducted extensive ethnographic interviews with Black and Latino youth in the San Francisco Bay Area, offers the most holistic, ethnographically rich understanding of everyday criminalization processes. Rios’ careful analysis of youth perspectives and experiences shows how criminalization processes occur not only through contact with the criminal justice
system, but also in schools, community centers, the streets, and even in the homes of youth of color, as the expectation that these children will go to jail is normalized as early as preschool. Taking a critical approach, Rios connects the day-to-day processes of criminalization to structural processes, such as the political economy responsible for mass incarceration.

Ferguson (2000) argues that the criminalization of Black male youth is made not by the juvenile justice system, but “in and by school, through punishment” (2), discursive practices, and labeling: “school labeling practices and the exercise of rules operated as part of a hidden curriculum to marginalize and isolate black male youth in disciplinary spaces and brand them as criminally inclined” and “bound for jail” (2). Ferguson (2000) dismisses the role of the criminal justice system and argues that the criminalization of Black male youth takes place through teacher-student relationships in schools. Ferguson presents a vivid narrative portrait of the everyday processes of punishment, exclusion, and criminalization in a school setting; but by taking a Foucauldian-inspired symbolic interactionist approach, her analysis of the data reduces criminalization to labeling, discourse, identity, and performance. Ferguson’s observations of interactions between school personnel and pre-adolescent Black males reveals how the belief of school personnel that Black males are criminally inclined by nature and “bound for jail” leads them to focus their efforts on punishing, rather than educating, Black students. However, Ferguson makes no substantial effort to connect racial discrimination, discursive practices of criminalization, or negative labeling to larger systems or structures of social, political, and economic inequality.
Sewell (1997) makes an interesting cross-cultural comparison. Through ethnographic research conducted in an inner city school for boys in London, Sewell shows how African Caribbean males negotiate the complex intersections of race, class, gender, and ethnicity in relation to academic underachievement, survival strategies, and conformity and non-conformity to the requirements of schooling. However, based less in critical intersectionality theory and more in the sociological functionalism of Robert Merton, Sewell employs Merton’s typology of deviance to categorize students’ adaptive responses to schooling and racism. Sewell attempts to deconstruct the popular belief that all Black males are rebellious, destructive, anti-school underachievers who have replaced the “legitimate” goals and means of schooling with their own criminally based agendas. Sewell gives a nuanced analysis of the role of gender and sexuality in influencing views of deviance, rebellion, criminality, and criminalization, but criminalization involves more than just the negative labeling of perceived deviance from a cultural norm.

Devine (1997) offers a compelling account of how police officers and electronic surveillance have taken over New York City’s high schools and rendered the education of their students a non-issue. However, Devine’s reliance on Foucauldian analysis of discursive practices, microphysics of power, and panopticism lead to indecipherable writing and vague conclusions that undermine the descriptive power of his narratives—such as, power is an “absence of gazes” (126), or “marginalized inner-city institutions called schools [have] become reconstructed into a new and scarcely recognizable category that I have hesitatingly dubbed ‘schools’” (45). Simply putting quotes around
words becomes, in Devine, a substitute for critical analysis. Ironically, Devine ends up essentializing inner-city youth as violent and concludes that what is destroying schools is the “culture of violence” that students bring with them from the streets into the school corridors. In stark contrast to Devine, Casella (2006) uses a political economy framework to explore how high-tech security equipment has become a common fixture in schools, not through panopticism, but through lucrative business deals, school policies, and federal funding. Lewis (2003) combines Foucault and political economy to explain the “surveillance economy” of post-Columbine schools, without commenting on the contradictions between the two approaches.

Simon (2007) theorizes that the “governing through crime” paradigm has effected “a legal ‘leveling’ of the space between education and juvenile delinquency” (209). Simon explains that it was the passage by Congress of the Safe Schools Act of 1994 that created a national model for the crime governance of schools (215). “In the early 1990s,” he writes, “most schools remained highly protective of students, avoiding sanctions like suspension or expulsion that would genuinely disadvantage their educational prospects, generally distinguishing school discipline from that meted out by the police and court system” (218). Such policies, however, were deemed ineffective in diminishing the wave of violent crime that was supposedly sweeping through the nation’s schools, so the Safe Schools Act was welcomed. In order to qualify for funds under the Safe Schools Act, “the school district must already have written policies detailing a) its internal procedures, b) clear conditions under which exclusion will be imposed, and c) close cooperation with police and juvenile justice agencies” (218).
means that under this Act, schools must put together a detailed plan to combat crime and violence, with specific goals and the identification of expertise and resources to be utilized. Future funding is then “contingent on measureable progress in implementing a plan (not necessarily in achieving true declines in crime)” (218).

The consequence of this policy is the practical elimination of the barrier between school and the juvenile justice system (220), as school districts enact “zero tolerance” policies that send students to the police rather than the principal’s office for the most minor of disciplinary problems. Modeled after “zero tolerance” drug policies, what came to be known as “zero tolerance” school discipline brought increased security surveillance, police presence, and violent and exclusionary punishments (e.g., corporal punishment, suspension, and expulsion) to schools, resulting in the criminalization of students for having committed, or being suspected of intending to commit, any of a wide array of disciplinary offenses, including minor or inconsequential incidents. An analysis of U.S. Department of Education data has revealed that school districts with large populations of African American and Latino students are the ones most likely to have zero tolerance policies (Advancement Project and Civil Rights Project at Harvard University 2000). A number of studies, most of them quantitative, have shown that zero tolerance policies not only do not make schools any safer; they create a “school-to-prison pipeline” by criminalizing minority students and removing them from public schools and thus from the opportunity of achieving meaningful citizenship through education (Advancement Project, et al. 2005; Ayers, et al. 2001; Casella 2001; Lyons and Drew 2006; Reyes 2006; Skiba and Noam 2002; Skiba, et al. 2006; Wald and Losen 2003).
However, as noted by Fine et al. (2003:144), there has been little study of how youth experience and perceive zero tolerance.

**Youth Experiences and Perspectives on Criminalization**

An extensive research literature does not exist for youth perspectives on criminalization processes in their everyday lives. Holley and vanVleet (2006) note that most studies focus on quantitative analyses of racial disparities in the juvenile justice system, and that there is a void in the literature regarding the perspectives of youth in the juvenile justice system on racism, classism, and white privilege within the juvenile justice system itself. Holley and vanVleet conducted focus groups and interviews with 135 youth of color, the majority being Latina/o, who were in a state juvenile justice system (in Arizona apparently; the specific state is not identified) (46). Most of the youth in this system were White; only 31% were of color (51) at the time of the study. Of the youth who participated in the focus groups, 89% perceived that they were discriminated against due to their race or ethnicity (55). Holley and VanVleet write that

Youth who perceive that racial bias exists said that racial stereotyping occurs at multiple points in the system (e.g., police, judges, intake workers, probation officers, staff at correctional/secure facilities). One Latino youth said, “The police think we’re all drug dealers. They’re always driving by our neighborhoods.” Another youth said, “[Police] rough us up,” due to their race. These youth perceived that they are stereotyped by system staff as being “gang members” and as being “more violent” than white youth. (55)

Regarding white privilege and class privilege in the juvenile justice system, 72% of the youth in the focus groups perceived that “white youth receive privileges not available to youth of color,” that “whites receive more trust, respect, and opportunities than youth
of color,” and that “white youth from higher socioeconomic groups receive the most privileges” (56).

Michelle Fine et al. (2003) report on a street-level survey conducted with nearly 1,000 youth (age 16 to 21) in New York City regarding their perspectives of surveillance by police, security guards, and other adults in positions of authority in schools and communities. They found that urban youth “express a strong sense of betrayal by adults and report feeling mistrusted by adults, with young men of color most likely to report these perceptions” (142). While “youth across race, ethnic, and gender lines report adverse interactions with and low trust in adults in position of public authority” (154), “African American and Latino males have the highest rates of adverse interactions and mistrust of the police and feel least safe in the city” (155). African American males worried twice as much about being arrested than did White males (155). Another component of this study was an in-depth telephone interview for gathering narratives from some of the youth who were surveyed. Black and Latino youth often spoke about being harassed by police, and youth of color related stories of being put under surveillance when they enter stores (153). The phone interviews also revealed that “almost 40% of those interviewed reported that adults in positions of authority often equate young persons who wear contemporary urban clothing (e.g., baggy jeans, durags, etc.) with being a ‘thug’ or criminally inclined” (154). The work of Michelle Fine and Lois Weis has been significant in giving voice to urban youth and young adults and the general marginalization they experience in schools and society, especially at the

A quantitative study of race, ethnicity, and youth perceptions of criminal injustice was conducted by Hagan et al. (2005) by using Chicago public high school survey data. The total number of students in the sample was 18,251 ninth- and tenth-grade students, half of them African American, more than one-third Latino, and about ten percent White (387). They found that African American youth were the most vulnerable to police contact, followed by Latinos, then Whites (381), and that African American youth scored significantly higher than Latinos and Whites on questions relating to getting into trouble at school (390). They also found that “when structural sources of variation in adolescents’ experiences are taken into account, minority youth perceptions of criminal injustice appear more similar to one another, while remaining distinct from those of white youth” (387).

Burton (1997) reports on an ethnographic study of the meaning of adolescence in nine “high-risk” neighborhoods in an unspecified city in the Northeast. These were “residential communities characterized by high crime and poverty rates, environmental hazards, geographic isolation, residential instability, inadequate housing, low-quality schooling, and scarce social service and economic resources” (209). The study included life-history interviews with 186 African American youth and their families. Burton writes, “families involved in the ethnographic study reported high numbers of deaths and ‘jailings’ of teenage and young-adult relatives and friends” (210). Furthermore, “in each of the 186 families interviewed, at least one male relative or friend under age 21 had
either been incarcerated or killed during the course of the study” (210). Among African American male youth, the perception of living an “accelerate life course” was prevalent: “a significant percentage (86 percent) of the teen males interviewed did not expect to either stay out of prison or live past the age of 21” (210-211).

**The Social Reproduction of Class Inequality through Schooling**

Social reproduction theory applied to education (Morrow and Torres 1995:28) has consistently concluded that schooling is a process that reproduces social and class inequalities (Apple 1982; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Bowles and Gintis 1976). Racial and ethnic minorities, as well as students from the lower class, are the principal victims of school practices, policies, and curricula which maintain the privileges of white, middle and upper class students, but which exclude minority students and lower their potential for academic achievement. The public school is still widely idealized as the “great equalizer of the conditions of [people]” (the quote is attributed to Horace Mann, one of the earliest proponents of equality of educational opportunity for students through a public school system in the United States). The reality of the public school system is generally acknowledged by historians (Katz 1971; Spring 2007; Tyack 1974) and educational researchers to be inherently inequitable, although there is disagreement about the actual structures and processes that produce inequitable outcomes (Breen and Jonsson 2005; Jencks 1972; Jencks and Phillips 1998; Kao and Thompson 2003; Lareau 2003).
Nation-wide systemic reforms initiated at the federal level, such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, while ostensibly intended to improve academic achievement and attainment, have exacerbated existing inequalities in schooling (Meier and Wood 2004; Sadovnik, et al. 2008). There is long history of “tinkering toward utopia” (Tyack and Cuban 1995)—that is, attempting to make society more equitable by enacting reforms to the existing public school system rather than fundamentally changing its structure. Education policy makers in government tend to demonstrate a remarkable ignorance of the ways schools work (DeMarrais and LeCompte 1999) and of the history of schooling in the U.S. Although there has been a general trend toward more inclusion and greater equality of opportunity, school in the U.S. has nonetheless functioned as a “sorting machine” (Spring 1989) whose purpose is to structure inequality by tracking students (Oakes 2005 [1985]) into socially and economically stratified career paths. School prepares children of the upper and middle classes for leadership or managerial positions and children of the lower class to be their obedient manual laborers (Bowles and Gintis 1976), thus solidifying class divisions through schooling.

For example, the current national debate about standardized testing and “accountability” has been de-historicized and de-politicized, precluding any discussion of the origins of standardized testing in the “scientific racism” and eugenics movement of the early 20th century. Standardized testing originally was designed to “scientifically” prove that white students were racially and intellectually superior to students from other races and ethnicities (Gould 1996; Selden 1999; Winfield 2007). The belief that IQ tests can be used to prove inherent racial differences in intelligence levels, and thus
account for correlations between race and class in U.S. society, has not lost its appeal among white supremacists, conservatives, and even “liberal” intellectuals, as witnessed by the lavish public praise heaped upon Herrnstein and Murray’s *The Bell Curve* (1994).

*The Bell Curve*'s critics are fierce but perhaps not as numerous (Fischer, et al. 1996; Gould 1996; Montagu 1999).

As the principal social institution in the lives of youth, schools in contemporary U.S. society have become either a doorway to better futures or a pipeline to prison. However, the failure to produce equality of opportunity through *schooling*, the formal process of pedagogical socialization that occurs through the institutional context of schools, is not cause to abandon *education*, more broadly conceived. What is needed are pedagogies that can catalyzes the transformative potential of education by empowering oppressed people to critically investigate their reality in order to transform it (Fals Borda 1979; Freire 1993[1970]). More recent mainstream research in educational anthropology has focused on how schooling produces certain kinds of “educated persons,” subjectivities, and identities through power and discursive practices in classrooms and schools (Levinson, et al. 1996). Perhaps due to positivist or conservative research paradigms, much of the anthropological research on education up to the 1990s has been about studying cultural differences in educational or enculturative processes during childhood and adolescence (e.g., Levinson, et al. 2000; Spindler 1997). Linguistic anthropologists working in the field of education have also directed some of their efforts toward conducting salvage ethnography of “disappearing cultures” in order to preserve indigenous languages and revitalize them through educational programs. Overall,
however, studies of schooling and criminalization processes are largely absent from the research literature in educational anthropology.

**Multicultural and Anti-Racist Education**

One obvious way educational anthropology can contribute toward the greater inclusion of racial and ethnic minority youth in schools is through multicultural education. Multicultural education is “a transformative process that goes far beyond cultural and linguistic maintenance” (Nieto 2004: xxvii). Multicultural education is a pervasive process and important for all students, not just minority students. Curiously, however, interdisciplinarity between education and anthropology has been stunningly underdeveloped in the U.S. Gloria Ladson-Billings (2006) has commented on how the field of education is dominated by psychological paradigms and that “the perspective that is least likely to be evident in teacher preparation is that of anthropology” (104). Nevertheless, Ladson-Billings frequently hears prospective and novice teachers using the word *culture* “randomly and regularly” to explain “everything from school failure to problems with behavior management and discipline” (104).

Culture is what people do and make, a form of production through which human beings exercise agency. Education is mediated through culture and language, and the lack of a cultural understanding of education results in an incomplete view of human beings, their agency, and creative potential. Education cannot be separated from culture, for it is the result of cultural practices of social groups, in which the processes of teaching and learning reveal the group’s particular enculturative practices. In the
classroom, individual and group experiences mix together in a space in which students and teachers bring their respective cultural and biographical baggage, establishing a dialogue through which emerge exchanges, negations, and reaffirmations of cultures.

Therefore, it is crucial to propose pedagogical actions that assist teachers in the careful study of the culture of a people in different spaces, inside and outside schools, but without reifying “cultures” as bounded entities or assuming homogeneity among all members of an ethnic group. Critical anthropology has much here to offer multiculturalism (Roseberry 1992), particularly in decoupling the universal human capacity for culture from its equation with ethnic identity politics and in offering to multiculturalists a more anthropological and “praxis-oriented notion of culture as the realization of a collective human potential for self-production and transformation” (Turner 1993:426). The potential contribution of anthropology to a human rights-based emancipatory cultural politics (Turner 1997) should not be overlooked by the multiculturalism movement or educational multiculturalists. Indeed, because culture is how class is lived in particular social contexts, culture is therefore a site of educational and political struggle (Giroux 2005[1992]; Gramsci 2005[1971]). It is imperative, however, not to “culturalize” class by reducing it to a mere description of differences in meanings, beliefs, and practices. Class, in the Marxist sense, is a concept that explains the roots causes of inequality with reference to exploitative social relations of production (Crehan 2002; Kelsh and Hill 2006).

Comprehending education as a cultural phenomenon, pedagogical methods ought to be directed through the cultural resources of a community. Placing education
within a cultural framework catalyzes the transformational potential of education, thereby avoiding a reduction of education to the mere transmission of information, values, and meanings of an already existing culture, and making possible dramatic contestations, reconstructions, and transformations of the information, values, and meanings themselves through the cultural agency of the learners. An epistemological emphasis on how knowledge is produced replaces the “banking education” model, as Freire (1993[1970]) called it, by which pre-fabricated content knowledge is merely deposited into what are believed to be passive and empty minds. In the Freirean approach, content emerges through the process of the continuing investigation of reality, critical thinking, and dialogue between educators and learners. By valuing and incorporating local and popular culture into curricula, education can be made to be multicultural with content that is culturally relevant to students (Duncan-Andrade 2004; Gay 2000; Ladson-Billings 1995).

Multicultural education is explicitly anti-racist and politically committed to the creation of a pluralistic society based on democracy, freedom, and social justice (Banks 1996b; Kanpol and McLaren 1995a; Ladson-Billings and Gillborn 2004; May 1999). The mainstream has attempted to depoliticize multicultural education (Gorski 2006b) into an occasional celebration of feel-good, caricaturized versions of other cultures, but multicultural education is about much more than greater inclusion of minority cultures into school curricula or more mindful intercultural communication between teachers and students (Delpit 2006). Multicultural education is a form of resistance to oppression (Sleeter 1989) and therefore a form of empowerment (Sleeter 1991) and social activism
(Sleeter 1996) that goes “beyond heroes and holidays” (Lee, et al. 2006). It attempts, through critical race theory, to understand the social, political, economic, and historical contexts of different groups of people and how they came to occupy the stratified positions in society they now occupy (Crenshaw, et al. 1995; Delgado and Stefancic 1999; 2001; Leonardo 2005).

Multicultural education must therefore question the power and privilege of dominant groups (on white privilege, for example, see Bush 2004; Lipsitz 2006; Roediger 2007; Rothenberg 2004), not just describe their oppression of subordinate groups. Multicultural education entails that white teachers need to become cognizant and critical of their own racial, class, and cultural positionings, not just learn about the cultural differences of the students in their classrooms. As Bell (2002) notes, after white teachers critically examine their unearned white privileges, “they are better able to examine structural and institutional features of racism, critically analyze curriculum texts and materials, and develop pedagogical practices that create inclusive and just classroom communities” (242). By so doing they can “begin to truly see and appreciate other racial perspectives and experiences and are thus in a position to enter diverse communities respectfully and interact in more conscious and mutually reciprocal ways” (242).

Without reducing race and ethnicity to class, multicultural educators have a responsibility to expose, critique, and dismantle racism and institutional discrimination, not just eliminate personal prejudice. Multicultural social justice education uses critical race theory, or racial formation theory, to reveal and critique how everyday school
practices, such as teacher–student interaction, are sometimes based on the false assumption that the physical traits of students represent immutable racial differences (Dixson and Rousseau 2006). Physical variation in humans does exist, but it is not due to “race.” Race, as explained by Smedley (2007) and others (Gregory and Sanjek 1994), is the meaning people ascribe to these physical differences.

These meanings have changed through time, even though the main beliefs of racial ideology or racial thinking have persisted. These beliefs are: (1) humans are naturally divided into discrete, exclusive groups, (2) these groups are ranked into superior and inferior categories, (3) physical appearance corresponds to innate capabilities, (4) these innate characteristics are inheritable, and (5) these “racial” characteristics are fixed and unchanging (2007). The consequences for educational attainment if students, teachers, and others subscribe to a racial ideology will be that certain groups of students—“racial” or ethnic minorities—will be seen as innately having less intellectual capacity (because of their “race”) than students from dominant groups in society. Here we can see one of the functions of racial ideology: to justify the domination of society by the dominant groups, who claim that such hierarchies are simply the natural order of things.

As Omi and Winant (1994) argue, race is not an objective condition (there is no scientific evidence that race is a biological fact), but nor is race entirely an ideological construct. Because race is perceived and believed to be real, it is also real in its consequences—the famed Thomas theorem in sociology (Thomas and Thomas 1928:572)—and therefore it has real effects in structuring social institutions, organizing
social life, and forming identities and subjectivities. Therefore, reducing race to ideology alone cannot account for how racial meanings and identities are continuously reproduced and recreated in everyday life. While persons are subjected to race ideology by being interpellated (Althusser 1971), race is also performed and reconstructed in day to day social relations and given subjective meanings by individual and group actors.

Omi and Winant (2004) offer what they call “racial formation” theory, which draws attention to “the continuing significance and changing meaning of race” (7). Race is about power and politics, and its effects can be seen in racial projects, or “efforts to institutionalize racial meanings and identities in particular social structures, notably those of individual, family, community, and state” (11). Racial projects are never completed, but are always in formation. Race is given significance and meaning through the process of its continuing construction and reconstruction. Racial formation theory attempts to account for multiple racial projects that come from different groups and sectors of society, not just the ruling class; furthermore, it is an anti-reductionist position that attempts to prevent race from being reduced to other phenomena such as class, ethnicity, or nationality. This is important in that with the ending of colonial regimes and through processes of globalization, race increasingly permeates borders and creates new power dynamics in varieties of contexts around the globe.

What Omi and Winant have done is draw upon the departures from Marxist theory taken by Antonio Gramsci (2005[1971]). Gramsci theorized how institutions such as schools and families, as well as popular culture and mass media, can socially and culturally reproduce dominant ideologies and hierarchies of power. In other words,
consciousness is not determined solely by material conditions, as Marx claimed (Marx and Engels 1970[1932]). Gramsci used the concept of cultural hegemony to refer to the processes by which the dominant classes rule the dominated not through coercive force but through the consent of the dominated themselves. Dominant groups achieve cultural hegemony when their ideology permeates society and the everyday lives, practices, and social relations of the dominated groups, who come to accept the moral leadership of their dominators and internalize the dominant ideology as common sense. Gramsci argued that those wishing to make structural changes in society must also construct “counter-hegemonic” projects.

Counter-Hegemonic Resistance to Deficit Theory and the “Culture of Poverty”

Multicultural education is not so much about culture as it is about politics, economics, history, and social structures and institutions. It proposes that structuralist explanations of inequality need to replace culturalist explanations that blame academic failure on the values, attitudes, and behaviors of individuals and their cultures, rather than on structural conditions beyond their individual or group control (Nieto 2004). If multicultural education is to achieve its larger goals, it must construct counter-hegemonic projects (Giroux 2001; Gramsci 2005[1971]), which, through collective social action, transform unfair or discriminatory school policies and deconstruct the racial and class ideologies that justify such policies as being in the best interests of everyone. One example is “zero tolerance” school policies, which tend to disproportionately suspend, expel, and eventually send “disruptive” Black and Latino youth off to jail in the name of

It might be more productive to first review some of the critiques that critical multiculturalists have launched at popular theories of minority academic underachievement. As discussed by Nieto (2004:255-274), there are competing theories of academic underachievement. Some argue that underachievement is caused by deficiencies in students themselves, others argue that students’ homes and communities are responsible for their underachievement, and still others argue that cultural incompatibilities between home and school or the very structure of the school itself cause underachievement. For some racial and ethnic minorities, achieving academic success is often seen as entailing the abandonment of one’s cultural or ethnic identity and becoming or “acting white” (Ogbu and Fordham 1986).

Or, even worse, as argued by John Ogbu (1978), “involuntary minorities” or “caste-like minorities” may perceive no rewards at all for pursuing academic success in school because they see no evidence that school achievement has helped any of their peers succeed in achieving social mobility through education. As a result, they might end up creating an “oppositional culture” or engage in everyday resistance, both of which can effectively seal their fate as “academic failures” and reinforce their tracking into very low-wage, working class jobs or a life of street crime (MacLeod 2008[1987]; Ogbu 1978; Willis 1977). From the perspective of teachers, certain racial or ethnic groups,
intersecting with gender and sexual identities, may seem to embody the very essence of rebellion and underachievement (Noguera 2008). It is then a short step to stereotyping: for example, viewing all black males as deviant, anti-school and anti-education gang members, threats to the very order of school and the processes of education (Sewell 1997).

Deficit theory (Valencia 1997), which posits that students’ home environments and communities are lacking in educational resources, has much in common with the theory of the “culture of poverty” elaborated by Oscar Lewis (1966). The “culture of poverty” theory ignores the social, economic, and political processes that produce and reproduce poverty while locating the results of these processes in the supposedly “pathological” behaviors, attitudes, and culture of “the poor.” The results of complex social, economic, and political processes are essentialized as characteristics or traits of individual persons. The effects of structural violence on people are thus seen as the causes of structural violence: poor people cause poverty, and their supposed pathological behaviors cause their own failure, such as academic underachievement. The acceptance of the culture of poverty as valid explanation leads to the psychiatrization of social, political, and economic problems, as well as the belief that the solution is to implement interventions designed to change individual behavior, psychological attitudes, and feelings, such as self-esteem.

Pathologized groups or individuals are blamed for causing social problems such as failing schools, and the institutions and discourses of psychiatry are brought to bear on resolving such problems through counseling, therapy, psychological cures, behavior
modification, or management and redirection of psychological “development.” The psychiatric discourses of school psychologists or “guidance counselors” dominate decision-making (Mehan 2000), especially regarding the tracking of minority students or students from low-income families—those who are “at risk.” The category “at risk” has been shown to be a racist and classist social construction (Lubeck and Garrett 1990; Sleeter 1986; Swadener and Lubeck 1995a). Swadener and Lubeck (1995b) have called the “at risk” category “a 1990s version of the cultural deficit model which locates problems or ‘pathologies’ in individuals, families, and communities rather than in institutional structures that create and maintain inequality” (3). In earlier decades, these students had been labeled “backward” (Franklin 1994).

Special curricula for “working with” students from the “culture of poverty” claim that success in raising academic achievement comes through classroom instruction practices that help (usually white, middle-class) teachers to be more sensitive and understanding about the “differences” between their own culture and the “culture of poverty” of their students—what Ruby Payne calls the “hidden rules of class” (2005). The selling and marketing, through speaking tours and workshops, of these curricula earn big profits for their authors, such as Payne, while reinforcing and perpetuating the oppression of the poor and racial/ethnic minorities, and mis-educating teachers about the causes of poverty (see Bohn 2007; Bomer, et al. 2008; Gorski 2006a; c; Gorski 2008; Ng and Rury 2006; Osei-Kofi 2005). Paul Gorski, in particular, has been a vocal critic of Payne, exposing her entrepreneurial “peddling poverty for profit” (Gorski 2008) and the
classist and racist stereotypes that parade as evidence in her books and as anecdotes in her teacher training workshops (Gorski 2006c).

Meanwhile, no matter how sensitive or understanding educators may make their classroom teaching styles or techniques, the fact is that at the end of the day, poor students in low-achieving schools still go home to poor homes and impoverished communities. Teachers cannot fix poverty from within the classroom, and, if they want to join in any effort to combat the effects of poverty on their students, they first need the correct sociopolitical, economic, and historical understanding of the contexts, causes, and consequences of poverty (Books 2004) that turn urban schools into “factories for failure” (Rist 2002[1973]). As Jean Anyon (1997) has written, “until the economic and political systems in which the cities are enmeshed are themselves transformed so they may be more democratic and productive for urban residents, educational reformers have little chance of effecting long-lasting educational changes in city schools” (13).

Attempts to make teachers more culturally sensitive about racial and ethnic minorities or poor students (in many areas, these are the same groups of people)—or attempts to make individual students more psychologically “resilient” (Ungar 2005) against the everyday violence of poverty (Jarrett 1997) and self-defeating oppositional culture (Gayles 2005)—will do little to reduce the overrepresentation of low academic achievement in minority groups. If barriers to achievement are systemic and structural, then changes in individuals’ attitudes, character, or self-esteem are not going to change the educational system and structures that cause low academic achievement (Katz
Each new cohort is going to have to confront the same barriers and fight the same battles, which are caused by structural conditions beyond individual control. Solutions to academic underachievement must be systemic, institutional, and political—not individual. Individualistic approaches are fundamentally flawed as strategies to alleviate poverty or improve low-achieving schools whose low achievement is rooted in poverty. Additionally, individualistic approaches reproduce and maintain, rather than transform, the value system that promotes individualism and self-sufficiency.

The problematization of reality (Freire 1993[1970]) can lead to a critical understanding of schools as built environments and school policies as cultural phenomena involving ideological assumptions, values, and meanings whose universality and legitimacy are often unquestioned or unquestionable in the dominant discourse. Through such critical analysis, oppressed people can become more aware of the extent to which their reality is socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann 1967) as people interact with one another in specific places and follow socially and culturally scripted guidelines and policies created by those in power. Becoming aware of the social constructedness of cultural reality through critical pedagogy is a powerful way for minority youth to learn how to deconstruct racial and ethnic stereotypes (Cruz 2001). This is significant in that these stereotypes are what often fix them, in the minds of their teachers, themselves, and their peers, as genetically and intellectually inferior and therefore incapable of achieving the same levels of academic success as students from the dominant classes of society (Duncan-Andrade 2007b; Morrell 2004; 2007).
Critical Pedagogy and Transformative Knowledge

According to Nieto (2004:344-365), multicultural education is explicitly antiracist and employs critical pedagogy for social justice. Critical pedagogy interrogates the relationship between knowledge, power, politics, and education (Freire 1985; Giroux 1988; McLaren 2007), and social justice entails the practice of democracy and the reduction or elimination of social inequalities (Giroux 2001). Critical pedagogy confronts the authoritarianism of mainstream schooling by questioning who can produce legitimate knowledge in the first place. Through multicultural education based on critical pedagogy and social justice, marginalized youth themselves can produce transformative knowledge that opposes the dominant ideologies and paradigms of education and learning, thereby resisting processes of marginalization and criminalization attempting to change existing school practices and policies—for example, practices and policies that criminalize poor youth of color, inside and outside of schools.

In terms of epistemology, methodology for knowledge construction, and the very purpose of knowledge, there are fundamental differences between “transformative academic knowledge” and “mainstream academic knowledge”—or “official knowledge” (Apple 2000). As contrasted by James A. Banks (1996a), mainstream academic knowledge is assumed to be “neutral, objective, and uninfluenced by human interests and values.” On the other hand, producers of transformative academic knowledge assume that “knowledge is not neutral but is influenced by human interests, that all knowledge reflects the power and social relationships within society, and that an important purpose of knowledge construction is to help people improve society” (16).
As explained by Banks (1996b) and others (Foucault 1980; Freire 1973; 2004[1992]; Ladson-Billings 2000), whereas intellectuals from the dominant classes of society tend to produce knowledge that justifies their position in the social class hierarchy, people at the margins of society form their own “epistemological communities” by learning different ways of knowing and perceiving the world based on their experience of oppression. Indeed, subjugation often occurs at the intersection of multiple axes of oppression (Anzaldúa 2007[1987]; Crenshaw, et al. 1995; Davis 1990; Hancock 2005; Hill Collins 2000; Lorde 2007[1984]) or by someone having crossed geographical, political, and cultural borders (Delgado Bernal, et al. 2006; Freire 2004[1992]; Garza 2007; Giroux 1993; 2005[1992]; Gómez-Peña 1993; 1996; 2000). Significantly, racial and ethnic minorities have produced much, or perhaps most, of the educational literature on transformative knowledge.

Dylan Rodríguez (2006) has argued that the prison is an overlooked site of the production of radical political discourse and transformative or “insurgent” knowledge, citing the work of Angela Davis (e.g., Davis 1974; Davis and James 1998) and others (Jackson 1972) who became radicalized intellectuals, or even more radical as intellectuals, after having been incarcerated. Rodríguez’ book focuses on those who were imprisoned in the U.S. since the 1970s, but we should not overlook the imprisoned radical intellectuals of other places and times—such as Antonio Gramsci (2005[1971]). Also, Joy James has edited two anthologies of writings by imprisoned intellectuals (James 2003; 2005), and the Africana Criminal Justice Project (n.d.) at Columbia
University has compiled an annotated bibliography of Black intellectual perspectives on criminal injustice and the intersection of race, crime, and justice.

When the tacit knowledge of oppression is made explicit through collective consciousness-raising, oppressed persons can understand how larger societal structures produce and reproduce inequality, violence, and oppression in their everyday lives, and they can, through action and reflection on this knowledge, begin to transform what previously had been perceived and experienced as natural and inevitable (Cammarota 2008; Freire and Macedo 1987; Leistyna, et al. 1996; Solorzano and Delgado-Bernal 2001). For racial/ethnic minority students, the construction of transformative knowledge is crucial to their ethnic survival in that the history of the education of dominated cultures in the U.S. has been one of “deculturization” (Spring 2006). Critical epistemologies recognize and enable ethnic minority students to be creators of transformative knowledge (Delgado Bernal 2002). It is important as well to recognize that “funds of knowledge” already exist in the languages, everyday practices, life experiences, and collective histories of local communities (González, et al. 2005). A key to critically transforming the educational process is educating teachers to be critical intellectuals (Giroux 1988) and cultural workers, preparing them and their students to do critical research about topics or questions that are important and meaningful in their own lives (Freire 2006[1993]).

According to Freire (1993[1970]), isolated individuals with individual problems do not exist. Every person is a person in the world with other people. Humans are social beings, and the personal is political. Historically dynamic processes of power and politics
structure all aspects of everyday human existence. Politics is not a distinct realm of social life; rather, the political is a dimension of all human affairs. For Freire, education is never politically neutral (1985). Educators and learners must therefore constantly reflect on theory and practice in order to co-construct relationships that mutually liberate, while simultaneously guarding against the reproduction of relationships that oppress.

“Education as the practice of freedom,” as Freire also called the pedagogy of the oppressed, is explicitly political because it problematizes power in human relationships, especially relationships in which certain groups of people have power over other groups of people. The pedagogy of the oppressed thus questions the legitimacy of political relationships, structures, and institutions, all of which are made to seem natural and inevitable through ideology and culture.

Education as the practice of freedom is praxis that is constantly rethought, revised, and remade. It is a dynamic process, involving a continuous synthesis, through action and critical reflection, of theory and practice. Critical pedagogy is grounded in, and therefore emerges from, the everyday struggles of real people in concrete situations of oppression, and in their questioning the historical, political, economic, and social processes that have made, and continue to make, their everyday reality what it is. Political organizing and politicized action for liberation must be pedagogical and work through consciousness-raising, otherwise it risks the danger of reproducing authoritarianism or creating new relationships of oppression between “liberators” and the “liberated.” The objective of “consciousness-raising” (Freire 1973) is to provoke people to become critically aware of, and motivate them to transform, historically
produced configurations of power and politics that constrain human agency and structure oppressive human relationships—especially relationships of domination and oppression that are socially and culturally reproduced through schooling.

Consciousness-raising is a shared social process that takes place through the collective and organized efforts of people struggling against concrete situations of oppression in their everyday lives. Through dialogue, critical reflection, and action, liberation from oppression can begin when the oppressed realize that the reality of their everyday lives is the result of complex historical, political, economic, social, and cultural structures and processes. Their origins and workings may remain outside of common sense understandings even though the everyday effects of such structures and processes may be felt, lived, and experienced as the unchangeable and taken-for-granted realities of everyday life. These processes, Freire tirelessly repeated, are produced and reproduced by and through human practices and, as such, can be changed.

**Social Justice through Multicultural Education and Critical Pedagogy**

Multicultural social justice education attempts to make structural changes and construct counter-hegemonic projects. Multicultural education is education for social justice in that it addresses issues of power and inequality in society, educates students about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in a democracy, and creates opportunities for them to participate in democratic social change and to use knowledge and research, action and reflection, to transform themselves and their communities. A number of books have collected curricula, instructional strategies, lesson plans, readings
and classroom activities for teaching multicultural social justice, or “teaching to change the world” (Adams, et al. 2007; Adams, et al. 2000; Au, et al. 2007; Oakes and Lipton 2003; Schniedewind and Davidson 2006).

Multicultural social justice education attempts to deconstruct racial projects in everyday school practices of teaching and learning (Pollock 2008). This can be done, for example, by conducting social justice-driven research on urgent issues in public education (Ladson-Billings and Tate 2006), such as standardized testing and zero-tolerance policies, by conducting social action and social justice activities in elementary level classrooms (Wade 2007), or by applying critical race theory to the teaching, professional teacher training, and curricular design of specific content areas such as social studies (Ladson-Billings 2003). With specific regard to curricula, Yosso (2002) has written about how critical race theory can be used productively to

1. acknowledge the central and intersecting roles of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of subordination in maintaining inequality in curricular structures, processes, and discourses; 2. challenge dominant social and cultural assumptions regarding culture and intelligence, language and capability, objectivity and meritocracy; 3. direct the formal curriculum toward goals of social justice and the hidden curriculum toward Freirean goals of critical consciousness; 4. develop counterdiscourses through storytelling, narratives, chronicles, family histories, scenarios, biographies, and parables that draw on the lived experiences students of color bring to the classroom; and 5. utilize interdisciplinary methods of historical and contemporary analysis to articulate the linkages between educational and societal inequality. (98)

Yosso used critical race theory to write a book of counterstories of Chicana/Chicano students’ experiences along the “educational pipeline” (2006). Solorzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) also have theorized how critical race theory and, more specifically, Latina/Latino critical race theory, can be used to construct Chicana/Chicano student
counterstories in order to build “transformative resistance” against the “oppressive conditions and structures of domination” of urban schools (319). Pizarro (1998) has written about how Chicana/Chicano researchers can use critical race theory as an epistemological and methodological framework in qualitative social justice research intended to positively transform Chicana/Chicano schools and communities.

Improving educational outcomes for racial and ethnic minority youth, who often live in situations of poverty, is at the heart of a social justice-based multicultural education. As explained by Banks and Banks (1995), the broad aim of multicultural education is “to create equal educational opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, social-class, and cultural groups” (xi). This entails the goal of social justice: “to help all students to acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function effectively in a pluralistic democratic society and to interact, negotiate, and communicate with peoples from diverse groups in order to create a civic and moral community that works for the common good” (xi). Furthermore, multicultural education “draws content, concepts, paradigms, and theories from specialized interdisciplinary fields such as ethnic studies and women studies (and from history and the social and behavioral sciences)” (xii). It then “interrogates, challenges, and reinterprets content, concepts, and paradigms from the established disciplines,” applying “content from these fields and disciplines to pedagogy and curriculum development in educational settings” (xii). As such, there is much ambiguity in the literature about the specificity of multicultural education as practiced in particular contexts.
From a research standpoint, this makes it difficult to assess the precise benefits of doing multicultural education. Because of the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary frameworks from which multicultural education derives its theory and practice, it has been difficult for educational researchers to make comparative assessments of its outcomes. In a review essay on research in multicultural education, Bennett (2001:172, 175) identified twelve multicultural education “genres,” which she grouped into four clusters:

I. curriculum reform: (1) historical inquiry, (2) detecting bias in texts and instructional materials, (3) curriculum theory;
II. equity pedagogy: (4) school and classroom climate, (5) student achievement, (6) cultural styles in teaching and learning;
III. multicultural competence: (7) ethnic identity development, (8) prejudice reduction, (9) ethnic group culture; and
IV. societal equity: (10) demographics, (11) culture and race in popular culture, (12) social action.

Thus, what one educator calls “multicultural education” may not be the same thing as what another educator calls “multicultural education.” Without precise definitions, to compare examples of multicultural education and its outcomes is to risk making the error of comparing what is actually incommensurate. Nonetheless, Bennett cites research on multicultural education that either demonstrates positive impacts or claims that multicultural education can have potentially positive impacts on educational outcomes. Similarly, positive outcomes or their potential are cited across a variety of multicultural education genres in the massive Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education (Banks and Banks 2004), now in its second edition and containing 49 chapters (more than one thousand pages of double-column text), making it the single most comprehensive volume of research literature reviews on multicultural education.
On the other hand, there is a singular lack of empirical research on the outcomes of combining critical pedagogy, multicultural education, and social justice in schools. Bennett notes that in the “societal action” genre of multicultural education research, “classroom intervention research remains thin” (2001:206). On the lack of research on multicultural education and social action, North (2007) has commented that “although theories on anti-oppressive education abound, few scholars have conducted empirical studies of anti-oppressive educational curricula to test the alignment of theories—constructed largely by university scholars—and practices carried out by K-12 educators and students” (73).

There is an excess of theoretical texts that indulge in philosophizing on critical pedagogy, multicultural education, social justice and, for example, Paulo Freire (Fain, et al. 2002; McLaren 2000; McLaren and Leonard 1993), democratic social change (Allman 1999; Giroux 2003), capitalism, globalization, and/or empire (Allman 2001; Fischman 2005; McLaren 2005; McLaren and Farahmandpur 2005), postmodernism (Giroux 1991; 1996a; McLaren 1995; 1997), difference (Giroux 1993; Kanpol and McLaren 1995a; Sleeter and McLaren 1995; Trifonas 2005), literacy (Lankshear and McLaren 1993), the media, popular culture, and/or cultural studies (Buckingham 1998; Giroux 1994; 1997; 2000a; Giroux and McLaren 1994; Giroux and Simon 1989; Macedo and Steinberg 2007), and race (Giroux 1996b; Leonardo 2005; May 1999). Despite the overabundance of theoretical texts, “very little empirical work has been done that theorizes the possible translation of principles of critical pedagogy into practices, and even less work has been done that evaluates the outcomes of these practices in pushing forward the
development of grounded theories of practice” (Duncan-Andrade and Morrell 2008:105). Indeed, as Duncan-Andrade and Morrell remark, “the connections between critical pedagogy, racial identity, and academic achievement are under-explored” (21).

This is troubling and contradicts one of the fundamental tenets of critical pedagogy: that theory without action and, likewise, action without theory, are never sufficient for social transformation (Morrow and Torres 2002). The work of critical pedagogy is done through praxis, an action-reflection dialectic. The collection by Kanpol and McLaren (1995a) is a typical example of excessive theorizing and self-congratulatory exhibition. The various essays all contain insightful social critique and commentary, but they are alienated from the everyday work of teaching and educating. The editors observe that while critique by the educational Left has greatly matured, “it remains the case that the brute facts of mass poverty and exploitation still haunt its emergence as a voice of mature expression and shape the contours of the struggle that needs to be waged” (Kanpol and McLaren 1995b:2). Kanpol and McLaren’s recommendation: more theory (2).

Many of the North American “radical pedagogy” theorists seem to think that they can change the world merely by theorizing about changing it—or changing how they theorize about changing it. Most of Peter McLaren’s books fit this category, and many of his edited volumes cited in the previous paragraph are transcripts of “critical educationalists” interviewing each other. McLaren, along with Henry Giroux and others, just keep writing the same book or article over and over again. One of the best book-length studies of Freirean-inspired critical pedagogy remains Ira Shor’s Empowering
*Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change* (1992). In flowing, jargon-free text, Shor details how he implemented Freire’s pedagogy of the oppressed in a public school classroom in New York City. The goal of critical pedagogy is not for an educator to become another elite theorist, but to liberate the agency of students. Empowering education is activist learning directed toward individual and social transformation so that teachers and students become “change agents in school and society” (Shor 1992:143, emphasis in original).

If multicultural education is to achieve its social justice aims and goals, it must create counter-hegemonic projects that expose deficit thinking and culture of poverty theory, combat racial discrimination in classrooms, schools, and communities, and support economic policies that can provide all schools with the resources necessary to offer equality of educational opportunity for all students. At the structural level, the radical possibilities afforded by critical pedagogy and transformative knowledge are realizable through social activism, political mobilization and organizing, and linking local grassroots efforts to national social movements (Anyon 2005; Oakes, et al. 2006). At the local level, to enable racial and ethnic youth living in poverty to resist processes of marginalization and criminalization, teachers need to be prepared to be effective multicultural social justice educators (Duncan-Andrade 2007a; Ladson-Billings 1994) who teach their students how to investigate reality in order to transform it. By strengthening their students’ resistance to oppression and improving their academic achievement, they are more likely to succeed through the educational pipeline (Jackson 2007) rather than be tracked into the school to prison pipeline.
This takes us beyond critical pedagogy, which openly analyzes the relationship between knowledge and power in teaching and learning, to participatory action research (PAR), through which participants are empowered for individual and social transformation by learning how to produce new knowledge themselves. Participatory action research for social justice also takes us outside schools and into communities, where structural violence and poverty have made everyday life so precarious and difficult that attending school and focusing on academic coursework are no longer priorities. Indeed, for some racial and ethnic minority youth living in poverty, school is perceived as a hostile institution, especially when it suspends or expels them for relatively minor disciplinary incidents, or treats them as worthless and therefore not worth the time, energy, and human resources necessary for an investment in their education and personal development. Some youth stop going to school because what it has to offer is simply not meaningful or relevant for understanding and dealing with the immediate challenges of day-to-day life in high poverty communities. This does not entail that their learning has to stop, as long as there are individuals or organizations dedicated to engaging the intellectual curiosity of such youth in opportunities to study the everyday challenges and social structures that limit their agency, with the goal of overcoming adversity and transforming their communities.

**Community Engaged Participatory Action Research and Activist Anthropology**

Participatory action research (PAR) critically investigates reality in order to transform it, requires authentic political commitments by researchers, values local culture and local meanings, and recovers the history of oppressed peoples (Fals Borda
The pedagogy of the oppressed is a form of participatory action research that takes place among educators and learners (Freire 1993[1970]). Through this research epistemology and methodology, not only is access to specialized knowledge democratized, but also by involving communities and participants in the research process itself, the very production of knowledge is democratized (Fals Borda and Rahman 1991). PAR based in critical theory (Kincheloe and McLaren 2005) is explicit in positing a dialectical relationship between theory and practice. PAR is similar to advocacy research, but it takes empowerment a step further by engaging people as participants in the research process, from identifying problematic issues, formulating research questions, designing research methodology, collecting and analyzing data, and interpreting results (Herr and Anderson 2005; McIntyre 2008; Reason and Bradbury 2008).

Through the collaboration of community stakeholders with social scientists in the design and execution of research, the formal distinction between “the researcher” and “the researched” is thereby reduced or even eliminated. PAR therefore breaks with positivist models of doing “value-free,” “detached,” and “objective” social science in which research results are reported to the academy and scientific community without consideration of benefit or significance for the “objects of study” (Greenwood and Levin 2007). PAR offers the opportunity to counteract traditional or mainstream research practices in which data are taken from the study of a target group merely to satisfy theoretical ends—research in which data run in one direction, from the public to the academy. PAR brings the tools of research to oppressed communities and leaves them
there instead of taking them back to the university after the research is completed; PAR is an ongoing process that continuously generates new questions and lines of inquiry.

The elementary questions behind PAR are questions about the directions in which knowledge flows, where and with whom knowledge is produced, and the purposes for which knowledge is utilized. The social sciences are viewed as disciplines of knowledge to be used to politicize social problems in order to attempt to reduce inequities for those living in situations without rights or privileges. PAR politicizes social problems and recognizes that all knowledge production is political and involves power. PAR is a methodology for analyzing issues involving marginalized communities and their struggles against social and political inequality, and then proposing a realizable plan of action with the goal of attaining practical and meaningful results. The PAR process itself socializes the transformative knowledge that PAR produces; through the participatory and democratizing processes that produce transformative knowledge, the knowledge itself becomes the shared property of the participating group, collective, or community (Smith, et al. 1997). Indeed, PAR puts the means of production of knowledge, of transformative knowledge, into the hands of marginalized people.

Anthropology and PAR intersect in a number of ways. Most obviously, PAR borrows some of its methods, particularly the cluster of methods that fall under the “ethnography” umbrella (Schensul, et al. 1999), from anthropology. But at a more philosophical level, both PAR and anthropology share respect for multiple perspectives, acknowledgement that humans are socio-cultural beings, a preference for exploratory, inductive research, and the belief that local cultural knowledge is valuable. It is
surprising that more anthropologists do not do PAR and that more people who do PAR do not know about anthropology and how it can enrich PAR praxis. One of the major community-based institutes for PAR, the Institute for Community Research in Hartford, Connecticut, was founded by anthropologists; but this instance seems unique. More specifically, activist anthropology and PAR intersect in significant ways, especially regarding, as noted above, the acknowledgement of the role of subjectivity in knowledge construction and social interactions, and the importance of self-reflexivity in evaluating the power and positionality of the researcher.

Charles Hale (2007; 2008c) and others (Hale 2008a) argue that engaged work with social activist organizations can be especially productive for activist anthropologists and other activist researchers. Hale writes that “research that is predicated on alignment with a group of people organized in struggle, and on collaborative relations of knowledge production with members of that group, has the potential to yield privileged insight, analysis, and theoretical innovation that otherwise would be impossible to achieve” (2008c:20). Activist anthropology, he explains, can yield better results than conventional anthropology, and the ethical-political and practical-political contributions of activist anthropology, while necessary to its praxis, need not be the main arguments for an activist anthropology when making its case to academic colleagues and gatekeepers (2007:118). However, this is obviously not an either-or proposition. Activist research can contribute new knowledge and theoretical insights to academic disciplines and be relevant to those most impacted by the social problems about which and with whom the research is being conducted.
Activist anthropologists have much potential for realizing meaningful and enduring social transformations for marginalized persons and groups by studying communities, the social structures that pattern their activities and practices, the institutions that control and administer their resources, and the ways in which relevant stakeholders politicize culture to resist or solidify power (Greenbaum 2002b; Hale 2007; 2008b; Nagengast and Vélez-Ibáñez 2004). Anthropology is particularly well-equipped with the necessary methodological, theoretical, and critical tools (Schensul and LeCompte 1997) for exposing social injustices and investigating how historical, political, and economic systems or institutions exert control and domination over persons or groups of persons (especially oppressed minorities) in specific geo-political contexts (Marcus and Fischer 1999; Thomas 1993). Activist anthropologists (Lyon-Calloatlo 2004) are prepared to critically study material realities and ideological constructs, challenge the unquestioned privileges of dominant groups (class privilege, white privilege, male privilege, etc.), and construct counter-hegemonic projects that expose and deconstruct the ideologies of the dominant and ruling classes—ideologies that serve to justify and naturalize the oppression and exploitation of dominated groups.

Given the discipline’s central concern with meanings and values, anthropologists are poised to study policy-related social problems by analyzing the relation between the policy process and the systems of values of various stakeholders, especially problems in social domains that involve the interaction of local communities with state governmental entities and institutions (Shore and Wright 1997a). Activist anthropologists ought also to work to change unfair or unjust practices by offering critiques, counter-proposals, and
radical alternatives based on the principles of solidarity and social and economic justice. For example, instead of doing research on “poor people” or “the poor,” activist anthropologists ought to do research with people living in situations of poverty about the social, economic, and political causes of poverty (Lyon-Callo and Hyatt 2003).

Activist anthropologists ought to critically engage (Angel-Ajani and Sanford 2006; Speed 2006) oppressed groups and persons as active participants in human rights-based research processes that are political and pedagogical, and through which the oppressed become personally empowered, are provoked to think critically about the world in which they live, are mobilized to construct networks of social solidarity, and are organized politically to transform the structures and processes that oppress them. Indeed, as Arjun Appadurai (2006) writes, the world’s oppressed ought to claim the right to research as a basic human right: “the right to the tools through which any citizen can systematically increase that stock of knowledge which they consider most vital to their survival as human beings and to their claims as citizens” (168).

Anthropologists need to historicize the social phenomena they are studying, as well as historicize their research methodology and make explicit their positionality, ethics, and politics. Marginalized and criminalized racial/ethnic minority youth in the U.S. are the contemporary inheritors of a historical legacy that has long excluded poor, urban children of color from mainstream society. Seeing these youth through, for example, the eyes of the white middle class would be a flawed approach—accepting the dominance of the white middle class as an inevitable outcome of history, and using its values as a lens through which to perceive and analyze the ethnographic evidence.
Besides choosing the proper theoretical research paradigm, anthropological fieldworkers must also consider issues surrounding representation, representativeness, the politics of identity, and subjectivity—especially one’s views on who can represent whom, what counts as representative of a group of people, how power is expressed, displayed, and constituted through identity, and how one’s own subjectivity is involved in these issues (Best 2007).

**Participatory Action Research with Youth**

Social justice PAR projects that engage youth with public policy and educate them to become social change agents in their schools and communities (Schensul and Berg 2004; Sydlo, et al. 2000) have been in existence for some time, although the potential of youth PAR to effect social change through research and activism has received rigorous academic study only recently (Cammarota and Fine 2008; Duncan-Andrade and Morrell 2008; Ginwright, et al. 2006). The challenges to doing youth PAR projects are many, especially when such work is seen as dangerous or threatening to the status quo. Youth PAR projects may take place in “formal” educational places such as schools, or they may take place in “informal” spaces outside of schools, such as community cultural centers or youth organizations (Checkoway and Gutierrez 2006). It is not certain whether social justice youth PAR projects are more successful if based inside or outside schools; the results have been mixed (cf. Ginwright, et al. 2006).

In the specific context of education and schooling, multicultural social justice PAR with youth not only rejects dominant theories of academic underachievement by racial,
ethnic, and class minorities; it offers alternatives and solutions. Countering deficit
theory, PAR begins with the view that minoritized families and communities already do
have strengths and resources, or “funds of knowledge” (González, et al. 2005), even
though such strengths and resources are negated or ignored by mainstream educational
practices. Youth social justice PAR projects recover and validate the erased histories of
oppressed groups while developing critical thinking and social science research skills
among minoritized youth. PAR is based on premise that the deepest learning occurs
through direct, situated learning experiences (Lave and Wenger 1991), through learning
by doing in meaningful social contexts and in collaboration with supportive others.

PAR can address the challenges posed by cultural incompatibility theory, the
theory that academic failure results from home learning culture being incompatible with
school learning culture. Through PAR, students can participate in research processes that
investigate how their own culture came to be what it is, why and how it is similar or
dissimilar to the dominant culture, and what these similarities and dissimilarities mean
in terms of power, privilege or lack of privilege, and challenges and opportunities in
formal schooling. By valuing and incorporating local or popular culture into PAR
curricula, such as a critical literacy curriculum (Duncan-Andrade 2004; 2007b), the
educational experience of participating youths can be made to be multicultural rather
than monocultural and assimilationist. PAR rescues the history of oppressed peoples,
questions what knowledge is legitimate and whose realities matter. PAR can produce
knowledge that can make education and schools more socially relevant to students
(Cammarota 2007b).
Further, PAR challenges the authoritarianism of mainstream schooling by questioning who can produce legitimate knowledge in the first place. Participants in PAR projects can learn that they need not simply accept the knowledge that is transmitted to them as “facts” by their teachers in school. Youths themselves can produce knowledge about the world. By producing “transformative knowledge,” which opposes or challenges the status quo and the dominant ideologies and paradigms regarding education and learning, minority youth can attempt to change and transform existing educational policies and practices (Cammarota 2007a).

Most of the rigorous research literature on multicultural social justice youth PAR in the United States is quite recent. For example, the edited volumes Beyond Resistance!: Youth Activism and Community Change: New Democratic Possibilities for Practice and Policy for America’s Youth (Ginwright, et al. 2006) and Youth Participation and Community Change (Checkoway and Gutierrez 2006) were published in 2006. Revolutionizing Education: Youth Participatory Action Research in Motion (Cammarota and Fine 2008) was published in 2008. While research on PAR and more nebulous objectives such as “community development” or “empowerment” have been published for decades, research that specifically studies the effects between youth participation in PAR projects and changes in academic achievement are just beginning to appear. The results seem to be very encouraging in some respects, but less promising in others. A lack of consistency in defining key terms or explaining measurements such as “academic achievement” or even “social justice” (Sutton 2007) makes comparisons difficult.
What seems to be the trend is that while multicultural social justice youth PAR projects do succeed in raising academic performance levels of the participating students, such projects are less successful in actually changing school or public policies. One of the objectives of social justice education is for youths themselves to attempt to change unfair or discriminatory policies, but the barriers to doing so are monumental and time-consuming. A common learning experience of some of the more recent social justice youth PAR projects is that it takes great effort and social and political commitment to change public policy—especially the policies of schools, institutions which tend toward conservatism and maintenance of the status quo. The point is that unless the system is changed, it will keep reproducing the same inequalities (inequality of opportunity, inequality of outcome) on future cohorts of students. The small numbers of students who do enter PAR projects may collectively empower themselves to become academically successful, but what about the students who do not participate in social justice PAR projects?

For example, Morrell (2006) describes a social justice youth PAR project with students in Los Angeles as being successful in raising the academic achievement and life expectations of the participating youth; however, attempts by the youth PAR group to get an educational bill of rights passed through the California legislature ultimately failed. Morrell concludes that “the short-term successes lead me to be much more optimistic about the impact of the [youth PAR project] on the life chances of students than I am about necessarily transforming urban schools” (125). The PAR project did not succeed in changing public school policy, but it did personally empower individual
students. Obviously, that is important for those particular students, but, again, what about next year’s students that might not have the chance to participate in the PAR project—if it gets funded again.

Likewise, Cammarota (2007b) reports that the social justice youth PAR project that he directs with students labeled “at-risk” of failing in the Tucson Unified School District in Arizona was successful in increasing individual Latina/o students’ academic achievement above national averages for Latina/o students, but not successful in implementing changes in local school policy. According to Cammarota, 88% of the at-risk students in his social justice education youth PAR project ended up completing high school and 58% enrolled in college (95). The national average for Latina/o students as reported by the U.S. Census for 2003 (the year of the PAR project) is that 59% complete high school and only 26% enroll in college (94). Students who participated in the PAR project presented their findings to “the school board, district superintendent, principal, teachers, university faculty and students, and community members” (90). Their findings included recommendations for “better media relations with students of color,” “improving multicultural education,” “expanding critical thinking in education,” and “preventing racism and stereotyping.” However, Cammarota notes, “few, if any, of the adults listening to these recommendations took heed” (90). So, again, while the project did succeed in empowering individuals students, it did not succeed in making intended changes to school policies.

Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) led a summer critical literacy PAR project with high school students in a city in California. The project achieved positive results: “In
addition to increasing students’ academic skill development across multiple core content areas, participatory action research also increased student motivation and student engagement in intellectual work” (127). They state that by becoming participatory action researchers, the students “are more likely to want to read complex and relevant texts, they are more likely to exert energy in the data collection and data analysis phase when they are conducting research that matters to their own lives and the lives of people they care about, and they are more likely to want to take their products through this process because they want their work to be solid, rigorous, and valuable to the process of remaking the world” (128). However, these potentials disappear once the program is over and the students no longer have access to the institutional supports that provided the context and materials for the summer PAR project.

Social justice education youth PAR projects have, at least theoretically, some of the highest potential to effect positive social change—more specific to the discussion here, to increase academic achievement through changes in school policy and practices. Yet isolated PAR projects face enormous challenges in attempts to make changes at the structural or systemic level. PAR projects that target only the educational policies of a single school or even a school district have little chance of producing macro-level changes in the larger structures that are the true root cause of low-achieving schools. The larger war is lost by focusing on the smaller battles. PAR projects need to join with more broad-based, national social movements in order to increase the possibility of achieving the lasting structural changes that can improve academic achievement for
minorities in schools across the country, not just a small group of students that are fortunate enough to get into a local youth PAR project.

A special themed issue of *Community, Youth and Environments* (Vol. 17, No. 2) on youth PAR highlights the wide-range of topics and issues to which youth PAR can be directed: youth-led social change and youth leadership development (Varney 2007; Youth Speak Out Coalition and Zimmerman 2007), community-based planning and urban development (Breitbart and Kepes 2007; Driskell 2007; Lessard and Torres 2007; Perri 2007; Ramasubramanian and Gonzalez 2007; Senbel 2007), school violence (Stoudt 2007), urban schools and education (Cammarota 2007a; Kilroy, et al. 2007; Suess and Lewis 2007), community organizing (London 2007), gay-straight alliances in public schools (Johnson 2007), civic engagement (Cooper and Hays 2007; Kara 2007; Torres 2007), university-community partnerships (Kirshner 2007), community-based gardening (Lekies, et al. 2007), environmental learning (Rottle and Johnson 2007), yoga (Palgi 2007), juvenile justice (Wright 2007), program evaluation (Krenichyn, et al. 2007), and media representation and stereotypes (Truchon 2007). Most of the articles report some kind of positive impact in terms of process or outcome learning. For example, Cooper and Hays (2007) report that a youth PAR project on local civic action “improved the future outlook of participants, their career goals, their self-confidence and their sense of political efficacy and trust” (440). Additionally, not only did “it increas[e] their participation in, and attention to, civic affairs and reduc[e] their intended and actual substance use,” participating youth reported that “the program had helped them pass a state-mandated government test in school” (440).
A themed issue of *American Behavioral Science* (Vol. 51, No. 3) was recently devoted to the topic of youth activism as a context for learning and development. These articles (Ginwright 2007; Hamilton and Flanagan 2007; O’Donoghue and Strobel 2007; Rogers, et al. 2007; Watkins, et al. 2007) describe activism itself is a special kind of context in which youth learn “collective problem solving, youth-adult interaction, exploration of alternative frames for identity, and bridges to academic and civic institutions” (Kirshner 2007:368). The success of these youth activist projects is attributed to Vygotsky’s theories of social learning: “activism groups engage young people’s *zone of proximal development*, which refers to the distance between what a person can do alone and what she or he can do in collaboration with peers or an experienced adult” (370, emphasis in original). Perhaps most importantly, using Ginwright’s article (2007) as an example, by using activism to connect Black youth to Black community organizations, marginalized Black youth can increase their “critical social capital,” or “intergenerational ties that cultivate expectations and opportunities for Black youth to engage in community change activities” (403).

Basically what distinguishes social justice youth PAR projects is that their politicized focus on citizenship education, with the explicit intent to empower youth as social change agents and participative members of society. The philosophy behind social justice PAR is that youth who have been marginalized by society should be engaged with a potential-driven approach, not a problem-driven approach (Ginwright, et al. 2005). Social justice PAR projects provide citizenship and human rights education that prepares such youths for being active citizens, engages them with public policy and governmental
decision-making, and allows them to participate in society as citizens now (Checkoway and Gutierrez 2006), rather than at some future point after which they are supposed to automatically become citizens. This is important in that collective social action by an engaged citizenry is needed to carry out change.

Recently conducted radical pedagogical interventions based on multicultural social justice education with groups of youth have demonstrated promising results in moving poor youth of color off the criminal justice track and on to more promising futures (Cammarota 2007b; Ginwright, et al. 2006). Social justice youth activist groups have been successfully in resisting and overcoming criminalization processes. For example, from 2001 to 2003 a multiracial coalition of youth of color successfully campaigned to stop the construction of a super jail for juvenile offenders in Alameda County, California (Kwon 2006). Some civil rights organizations have even produced “action toolkits” for use by youth activist organizations who want to research criminalization processes in their local community and attempt to fight them through action, advocacy, and changes in policy (e.g., Advancement Project 2005; New York Civil Liberties Union 2007). Another example is that of Youth Rights Media, based in New Haven, Connecticut, a social justice youth activism organization that used video documentaries of local injustices to not only change school suspension policies (which lead to criminalization), but also to close a juvenile detention facility (Youth Rights Media 2004; 2005).
**NGOs, the State, Neoliberalism, and Development**

Common sense perceptions of NGOs see tireless and idealistic individuals sacrificing personal gain in noble dedication to the disadvantaged, marginalized, invisible, and forgotten. NGOs are considered a solution to the failure of the state to provide social welfare or other public services to these populations. In some places, NGOs are reputed to do better work than the government. NGOs that emerge from the grassroots can get closer to the concrete, everyday realities of the people they serve than can the official, and oftentimes impersonal, institutions of government. Unlike federal, state, and even local level governmental administrations, the activities and activism of NGOs, it is often assumed, are not hindered by slow-moving, Kafkaesque bureaucracies. Finally, the idealism and self-sacrifice of NGO staff are thought to keep NGOs as organizations immune to corruption (Edwards and Hulme 1992).

Not for profit philanthropic organizations that attend to those on the economic, social, or political margins of society have been around for more than a century (see O’Connor 2001a), working generally in urban contexts ostensibly to ameliorate the inhumane inequities produced by industrial capitalism. However, the large-scale implementation of neoliberal economic policies in many countries across the globe beginning in the 1970s, and more recently in the U.S., Great Britain, and China in the 1980s (Harvey 2005), resulted in the proliferation of an unprecedented number and type of NGOs. This growth, or some might say “explosion,” of NGOs and a “third sector” of society (not for profit and non-governmental), can be explained partly by the need to provide services that the state no longer provides and partly by the will of the
dispossessed to mobilize political opposition against the neoliberal state and compel changes in public policy, especially regarding the provision of basic services such as health, education, welfare, and municipal infrastructure.

David Harvey defines neoliberalism as “in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (2005:2). Under neoliberalism, “The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices,” which basically means that the role of the state is to secure the functioning of free markets and, through deregulation, privatization, and withdrawal from the public sphere, to create markets where none existed before. The central assumption is that free markets driven by private profit motives are better at solving all human problems and social issues than any amount or type of state intervention. What has been created under neoliberalism is an ethic of market exchange that, modeled on the temporary “contractual relations in the marketplace,” “seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market,” destroying “divisions of labor, social relations, welfare provisions, technological mixes, ways of life and thought, reproductive activities, attachments to the land and habits of the heart” (3) and the institutions that once safeguarded them.

Again, in many localities across the globe, but especially in the so-called “Third World” or “developing world,” NGOs have been founded to fill in where the state has withdrawn or was absent to begin with. The more recently-created NGOs often have as
their central mission the provision of social services or welfare (social and economic rights). The older generation of NGOs, which often sprang out of social and political movements, are seeing their original agendas (political and civil rights) being distorted by neoliberalism, which transforms them into becoming substitutes for the state: providing basic services for neoliberal “citizens” who effectively have few or no political and civil rights. “The rise of advocacy groups and NGOs,” writes Harvey, “has, like rights discourses more generally, accompanied the neoliberal turn and increased spectacularly since 1980 or so. The NGOs have in many instances stepped into the vacuum in social provision left by the withdrawal of the state from such activities. This amounts to privatization by NGO. In some instances, this has helped accelerate further state withdrawal from social provision. NGOs thereby function as ‘Trojan horses for global neoliberalism’” (177).

As such, NGOs might be seen as unwitting agents of neoliberal globalization. That is, given that funding for local NGOs may come partly or even largely from international donors, NGOs must compete with each other in a global market of funding and resources. In the process this (1) ties local issues, agendas, operations, and the very agency of NGOs to do their work with persons in local communities to the globalizing capitalist world system (Hulme and Edwards 1997) and (2) redirects accountability away from local constituents toward far-away donors or funders (Edwards and Hulme 1995; Fisher 1997: 454). This compromises the capacity of NGOs to provide locally sustainable solutions and creates “funding dependency” (Fisher 1997:453-54). In short, a well-meaning NGO in a remote corner of the globe may unsuspectingly become the portal
through which neoliberalism enters, destroys the reciprocity and solidarity of traditional
social life and relations, and begins restructuring all human activities to conform to
market logics and profit motives. It is questionable whether the construction of political
and civil rights is even compatible with the defense of social and economic rights within
neoliberal regimes, in which “rights” may merely refer to the “right” to enter the market
as an entrepreneurial individual. More to the point, can NGOs work toward transforming
the marginalized and excluded into politically active and engaged citizens at the same
time as neoliberal globalization compels them to prepare individuals to develop the
human capital necessary to enter capitalistic structured workforces in an increasingly
competitive neoliberal global marketplace?

Here we must look at the shifting nature of the social contract and the state
under neoliberalism, as well as question whether the likewise increasingly global “civil
society,” within which NGOs are integral entities, can effectively challenge and change
the state or neoliberalism itself. As Harvey notes, NGOs and grassroots organizations
have “giv[en] rise to the belief that opposition mobilized outside the state apparatus and
within some separate entity called ‘civil society’ is the powerhouse of oppositional
politics and social transformation. The period in which the neoliberal state has become
hegemonic has also been the period in which the concept of civil society—often cast as
an entity in opposition to state power—has become central to the formulation of
oppositional politics” (2005:87). According to Harvey, in theory

the neoliberal state should favor strong individual private property rights,
the rule of law, and the institutions of freely functioning markets and free
trade.... The legal framework is that of freely negotiated contractual
obligations between juridical individuals [a category that includes
corporations] in the marketplace. The sanctity of contracts and the individual right to freedom of action, expression, and choice must be protected. The state must therefore use its monopoly of the means of violence to preserve these freedoms at all costs. Private enterprise and entrepreneurial initiatives are seen as the keys to innovation and wealth creation. Continuous increases in productivity should then deliver higher living standards to everyone. Under the assumption that “a rising tide lifts all boats,” or of “trickle down,” neoliberal theory holds that the elimination of poverty (both domestically and worldwide) can best be secured through free markets and free trade. (64)

At the level of society, what this all means is that the social contract is no more and the public sphere should disappear entirely. At the level of the individual, what this means is that not the state but “each individual is held responsible and accountable for his or her own actions and well-being” (65) so that “[i]ndividual success or failure are interpreted in terms of entrepreneurial virtues or personal failings … rather than being attributed to any systemic property” (65-55). Thus new forms of “governmentality” (Foucault 1991) come into being under neoliberalism, producing enterprising, self-governing, seemingly autonomous individuals in whom the de-centered power of the state operates through internalized “technologies of the self” (Barry, et al. 1996; Burchell, et al. 1991; see also Cruikshank 1996; Martin, et al. 1988).

The cooptation of true empowerment by neoliberal governmentality is facilitated by the confusion generated by similarities in the discourse. Whereas the social and civil rights movements born out of the activism of the 1960s empowered communities through collective action, political organization, and social solidarity, the empowerment touted by neoliberalism is depoliticized self-help or self-improvement for increasing an individual’s competitive edge in the job market or the business arena. The rallying calls of unions (“workers of the world, unite!”), liberation theologists (“a preferential option
for the poor”), charities and philanthropies (“give to those in need”), and progressive grassroots organizations (“do good”) are deafened by the neoliberal battle cry of “There is no alternative: let the market decide!” in a neo-Hobbesian war of all against all. Given that the minimal role of the neoliberal state is merely to protect free markets and the institutional arrangements that preserve them, Hobbes might indeed describe the neoliberal world as “uncivilized.” He need look no further for evidence than the sudden and steep rise in urban violence that has accompanied neoliberal reforms across the globe (Davis 2006:165).

We may see in the above overview, which relies heavily on Harvey (2005), the general contours of the direct relationship between NGOs, neoliberalism, and the state; but the terrain of social welfare and public services in the world of neoliberal globalization is more complex, and hopefully less pessimistic, than such an abstract, theoretical view allows. An anthropology based in history and political economy (Marcus and Fischer 1999) can reveal the macro in the micro, contextualizing and illuminating current and local issues within a comparative cross-cultural and larger, world historical perspective by showing how local practices have been influenced and altered by global flows for centuries (Wolf 1982). Ethnography, the defining methodology of anthropology, is based on participant observation of real people in the concrete realities of their everyday lives, and, as such, can collect data on and produce new knowledge about the impacts of neoliberal globalization in specific localities. Such new knowledge has the potential to challenge conventional wisdom about the processes of neoliberalism and globalization, as well as to show where the cracks are in a wall of change that many
believe to be monolithic. No system is ever totalizing. Ethnography can also describe and
document the exercise of agency or resistance by local people against the processes of
neoliberal globalization, showing where and how local people incorporate imported
beliefs, material goods, practices, and ideologies, and then re-shape or indigenize them
according to local understandings and value systems.

Indeed, anthropology can no longer study local communities as if they exist as
isolated entities, outside of and unconnected to the world system (Wallerstein 1974;
Wolf 1982). Shore and Wright (1996; 1997b), for example, offer an “anthropology of
policy paradigm” that conceptualizes a “policy community” as “an empirically grounded
political phenomenon, not [merely] a rhetorical space” (1996:477). A methodological
requirement of the anthropology of policy paradigm is that “by focusing on policy, the
field of study changes. It is no longer a question of studying a local community or ‘a
people’; rather, the anthropologist is seeking a method for analyzing connections
between levels and forms of social process and action, and exploring how those
processes work in different sites—local, national and global” (1997b:14). In sum,
ethnography can provide detailed, ethnographic studies of specific NGOs in specific
times and places, and, as a result, can offer empirically-based critiques of accepted
generalizations about NGOs and the neoliberal state (Lewis 1999; Markowitz 2001). As
such, ethnography has the potential to challenge the “there is no alternative”
assumptions behind the presumed inevitably of neoliberalism by looking at how local
people may resist neoliberalism or even implement anti-neoliberal alternatives.
Resisting neoliberalism through social movement-based NGOs may still be a viable strategy.

A review that covers the research literature on anthropology and NGOs up through the mid-1990s is William F. Fisher’s “DOING GOOD? The Politics and Antipolitics of NGO Practices” (1997). Fisher argues that ethnographic studies of NGOs, “by focusing on fluid and changing local, regional, national, and international processes and connections,” rather than conceiving of NGOs “as a set of entities” or things, can contribute toward conceptualizing more precise definitions and understandings of the “rich ideological and functional diversity of NGOs” (449), as well as of other related concepts such as civil society, “participation, empowerment, local, and community” (442). According to Fisher, NGOs are basically forms of organizing characterized by a “fluid web of relationships” constructed through “multiple translocal connections” through which flow the “funding, knowledge, ideas, and people that move through these levels, sites, and associations” (450). Studies of NGOs that are focused only on the beneficiaries of a particular NGO’s work will miss the importance of relationships with “intermediaries, governments, constituencies, communities, leaders, elites, municipalities, state institutions, other local, national and [international] NGOs, social movements, and NGO coalitions” (450). Anthropological approaches, while providing knowledge about NGO activities in specific times and places, need to look beyond the immediate context and place local phenomena into larger frameworks of understanding in which patterns can emerge and anomalies be detected (see also Markowitz 2001).
What is surprising is that, at least according to Fisher (1997), anthropology has contributed relatively little to the literature on NGOs and has offered “few detailed studies of what is happening in particular places or within specific organizations, few analyses of the impact of NGO practices on relations of power among individuals, communities, and the state, and little attention to the discourse within which NGOs are presented as the solution to problems of social welfare service delivery, development, and democratization” (441). Lewis (1999) and Markowitz (2001) likewise note the lack of substantial ethnographic studies of NGOs. Since the time of Fisher’s writing (mid-1990s), a number of well-received book-length ethnographies of NGOs and development have been published; see below. The extant anthropological literature on NGOs as solutions to social welfare service delivery do not depart significantly from what was said above.

The anthropological literature on development and NGOs falls into two basic camps. The first “views contemporary development processes as flawed but basically positive and inevitable” (Fisher 1997:443), with NGOs mediating and ameliorating the worst aspects of development by working from the bottom up. This position is open to acceptance of neoliberal agendas, especially because NGOs are seen as helping to provide human capital training and prepare individuals to compete in markets (444). The second camp takes a very critical view of development and neoliberalism, looking toward NGOs to facilitate “alternatives to development, rather than development alternatives” and to “politicize issues that were not formerly politicized or that were ironically depoliticized through the discourses of development” (445). This camp is more likely to see NGOs as capable of radically transforming state and society, and to understand the links NGOs
might have with social movements—a highly significant relationship given that “NGOs often initiate or sustain social movements ... or are the institutional vehicles that articulate protest and collective action” (451).

People desperate for social change often expect nothing short of miracles from NGOs (Edwards and Hulme 1992; Fisher 1993), given that by definition they are nongovernmental and not for profit, and therefore presumably outside politics and lacking in profit motives. In light of the above analysis, however, we see that that is not necessarily the case—or at least that the reality of NGOs is not that simple. The growth of a nongovernmental sector, or “civil society,” might be an indication that the state or government is not fulfilling its purpose. For nongovernmental actors, even the most idealistically motivated, to step in and relieve the government of its duty is not necessarily a good thing in the immediate or long term. The broader implications of the dismantling of the welfare state, and the realization that the efforts of nongovernmental actors are limited in scale, capacity, resources, and sustainability, are emerging belatedly as paradoxes or catch-22 situations. Paul Farmer writes:

As states weaken, it’s easy to discern an increasing role for nongovernmental institutions, including universities and medical centers. But it’s also easy to discern a trap: the withdrawal of states from the basic business of providing housing, education, and medical services usually means further erosion of the social and economic rights of the poor. Our independent involvement must be quite different from current trends, which have non-governmental organizations relieving the state of its duty to provide basic services. We must avoid becoming witting or unwitting abettors of neoliberal policies that declare every service and everything to be for sale. (2005:244, emphasis in original)

The paradigm shift for which Farmer argues—a human rights-based approach to the solution of global inequities, with social and economic rights and a redistribution of the
world’s wealth as core recommendations—would require the power of states to implement. The state needs to be de-privatized and re-publicized, not abandoned to the control of private corporations and other manifestations of concentrated wealth and power.

What are reasonable expectations of NGOs? The expectation that NGOs can fill in for the state in providing social welfare and public services is perhaps ultimately unrealistic and unrealizable, given the magnitude of the work involved and the resources it would require. If NGOs are to be successful as radical change agents, it will be in the realm of political and social activism, provoking critical analysis of social problems, mobilizing political will and economic resources, and demanding changes in public policies that can bring societies closer to realizing the ideals of human rights and social justice. In his review of anthropological literature on NGOs, Fisher concludes that

the objective of empowerment or “liberty” may not be served by institution building or perpetuating existent organizations, and may even be undermined by bureaucratization. It may be inappropriate to regard the fluidity of the NGO field as a weakness or the impermanence of any given NGO as a failure. Rather, we might look for permanence in the rebellious process from which many NGOs emerge and within which some NGOs remain engaged. NGOs and social movements may come and go, but the space created in their passing may contribute to new activism that builds up after them. (1997:458-59)

The very existence of NGOs reveals many of the contradictions and injustices inherent in neoliberal approaches to government and economic policy, and NGOs themselves are paradoxically emblematic of hope and transformation as well as futility and fatalism.

What can anthropology contribute toward the study of the relationship between NGOs, the state, neoliberalism, and development? Ethnographic studies of NGOs as
forms of organizing can provide on the ground descriptions of what is actually happening and thus produce knowledge and analysis that can challenge and correct the homogeneity of generalized theoretical abstractions as well as common sense understandings, which may not consider or comprehend larger processes such as neoliberalism and globalization. Anthropological studies of NGOs as forms of organizing, rather than as discrete entities, can reveal the networks and connections that tie local issues and struggles to higher levels of networks, organizations, institutions, and forms of government. With a theoretical base in history and political economy, anthropological studies can also contextualize and locate particular issues within a cross-cultural, world historical perspective, showing how local people have reacted across space and time to the impact of forces and processes impinging upon them from the outside. Social impact studies of NGOs can serve as warnings, in the case of misguided failures, or suggest possible solutions and models for replication, in the case of successes. Anthropology can also insist on the critical importance of culture and discourses about “culture,” which can be used to provide better understandings of local processes and possible resistance to progressive change in the name of “tradition,” just as discourses about culture can be used by dominant groups to maintain hegemonic control of power, resources, and institutions through reactionary conservatism.

Ethnography focused on the micropolitics of NGOs can produce much-needed “systematic analyses of power relationships within the groups and associations of civil society and the forms and channels of participation that affect power relationships” (Fisher 1997:465). The dynamic life force of social movements is susceptible to sure
death if NGOs attempt to routinize, bureaucratize, or institutionalize the transformative forces of activism, ending up reproducing within and through themselves the very social problems they are attempting to eradicate, as the evidence from my fieldwork presented above demonstrates. Anthropologists, as distanced, outside observers—or “professional strangers” (Agar 1996)—can process and synthesize the competing perspectives of multiple stakeholders, pointing out internal contradictions not apparent to those too close to or too involved in the everyday work of the organization. As such, anthropologists have much to contribute as program and policy evaluators (Butler and Copeland-Carson 2005).

More recently, following Arturo Escobar’s call for alternatives to development along with an “anthropology of development” (1995) to provide critical discourse analysis of the politics and pragmatics of development anthropology (for example, Nolan 2002), a number of outstanding book-length ethnographies have examined how anthropologists have studied, practiced, participated in, and critiqued development in various places around the globe, with a focus on NGOs, the state, and civil society in the context of globalization and neoliberalism (see below). Processes of ever-expanding and intensifying movements of people, means of production, goods, money, ideologies, ideas, information, images, and media across national borders, as well as the political restructuring of globally interconnected economies under neoliberal principles, have resulted in rapidly changing migratory and urban demographic patterns. There is more frequent interaction now than ever before in local, as well as virtual, contexts between people from different social and cultural backgrounds (Appadurai 1996). Wealth has
become concentrated in upper class suburbs, gated communities, and the fortified enclaves of the super-rich (Caldeira 2000b). Poverty and misery have spread among marginalized ethnoracial populations and exploited classes of laborers living in inner city ghettos and sprawling urban slums (Davis 2006). Global markets shift and centers of production move, requiring laborers to be flexible and willing to relocate (Ong 2006). New conflicts over environmental and material resources, exacerbated by global climate change, are reconfiguring the geopolitics of violence (Parenti 2011).

Development during the present period of globalization and neoliberalism has reproduced, and is reproducing, old forms of dominance and resistance that resulted from exploitative relationships between centers of global power and peripheral regions in the world economic system constructed through conquest and colonialism (Cobb and Diaz 2009; Portello, et al. 2010; Wallerstein 1974; 2004). Yet development during the present era is not only reconfiguring the relationships between the state, the economy, politics, civil society, and individuals and populations within and between nation states; it is also creating new relationships, contradictions, and desired futures, transforming the meanings of progress, modernity, civilization, citizenship, and rights (Edelman and Haugerud 2005). In addition, multinational corporations, nongovernmental organizations, and international development agencies are challenging the sovereignty of national governments, in many instances undermining local political processes, economic sustainability, and social welfare, as well as creating or solidifying forms of structural violence. The imposition of structural adjustment policies, fiscal austerity, and “free trade agreements” by the global North on the global South in the name of
development has resulted in the lowering of real wages for workers, increases in 
inequality, privatization of public resources, reductions in social services and education, 
deterioration in the health and well-being of the general population, migration from 
rural agricultural areas to urban slums, environmental degradation, and halting of 
economic growth in the South while concentrating wealth in the North (Black, et al. 
2003).

“Development means making a better life for everyone,” write Richard Peet and 
Elaine R. Hartwick in the Introduction to their book Theories of Development: 
Contentions, Arguments, Alternatives (Peet and Hartwick 2009:1). In the abstract, 
“development” has been, and continues to be, a desired goal of millions if not billions of 
people, yet development as it has been understood in the modern sense over the last 
several centuries clearly has not made life better for everyone. Development projects 
often fail to live up to their stated goals, resulting in underdevelopment, uneven or 
unequal development (Smith 2010), dependency, and sometimes social, cultural, and 
economic and environmental devastation.

Who decides what “development” is and how it gets to be imagined, planned, 
and implemented? Why is development desired for people and by people, from differing 
class positions and diverse cultural backgrounds, in different societies the world over? 
What is the relationship between development and poverty? What are the major 
theories that have been offered to explain what development is and what it is supposed 
to accomplish? Whom has development benefited and whom has it harmed? How and 
by whom has development been rejected, resisted, or appropriated, and to what ends?
How should particular histories of development in specific places be understood? What are the historical, political, economic, social, and environmental contexts in which development is claimed to be needed or said to be wanted? How can ethnography and other anthropological research methods aid our understanding of development, its problems, failures, and successes? Should anthropologists engage with development, and if so, which ethical values ought to guide them?

Anthropologists traditionally lived in faraway places to study small-scale societies, such as tribal or village communities. As the world has become increasingly urbanized and globalized, more anthropologists are turning their attention to the study of the political, economic, historical, and social complexities of contemporary life and culture in locations closer to home, along transnational routes, or even in major urban areas, in which the forces of globalization and localization have concentrated impacts. An anthropology of development has begun to offer a more critical understanding how and why people in different parts of the globe have engaged, and are engaging, with development projects in the present era of globalization and neoliberalism.

Anthropology is capable of using global, comparative, and historical perspectives to study the causes of poverty and the contradictions and impacts of development. By using anthropological perspectives, ethnographic fieldwork methods, and critical theory, anthropologists can study how the forces of globalizing capitalism and neoliberalism are impacting the culture, livelihoods, and well-being of humans at the level of local communities. Ethnographic fieldwork methods allow anthropologists to understand the experiences and perspectives of real people as they go about living and making meaning.
out of their everyday lives in specific societies that have been produced, and are
reproduced, through particular economic systems and political structures of power and
governance. Additionally, anthropologists can analyze the extent to which political
organizing and activism among populations in localized contexts can create viable and
socially transformative alternatives to the dominant forms of development. Increasingly,
anthropologists are exploring the extent to which they can work with local community
organizations as well as with national and transnational social movements to develop
and implement programs, projects, and public policies that address development from a
social justice perspective and aim to decrease the disparities and inequalities produced
by particular configurations of power and class stratification.

Some of the more recent anthropology of development includes studies of
national sovereignty, privatization of natural resources, multinational corporations, and
indigenous opposition (Sawyer 2004); migrant labor, socioeconomic stratification,
transborder spaces, and cultural heritage (Stephen 2007); public health, international
humanitarian aid, and development after disaster (Farmer and Mukherjee 2011); ethnic
rights, citizenship, collective land ownership, and natural resources (Asher 2009);
globalization, global society and membership, modernity, inequality, and social justice
(Ferguson 2006); governmentality, practices, agency, and the politics of top-down
interventions (Li 2007); indigenous peoples and priorities, local knowledge, development
plans, and modernities (Gow 2008); free markets, microenterprise, entrepreneurism,
social networks, NGOs, and the state (Elyachar 2005); the environment, political ecology,
transnational processes, and the cultural construction of development (West 2006);
rural to urban migration, gender, domestic labor, subjectivity and desire (Yan 2008); and social services, community development, social capital, civil society, and the state (Hearn 2008). It would be instructive to compare these recent ethnographies of development in the global South with anthropological studies of development inside the United States during the last two decades. A resemblance in the discourse of neoliberalism and development is not unlikely. Indeed, a historical study of community development in the U.S. and ideas about poverty, community, foreignness, and liberal reform during the Cold War era has demonstrated interesting comparisons with international development initiatives in other parts of the world during the same period.
Chapter Three: Research Methods, Data Collection, and Analysis

Research Objectives and Potential Benefits

The objectives of research project were: (1) to examine and understand the criminalization of African American youth living in a high poverty neighborhood; (2) to collaboratively investigate criminalization with a group of such youth in order to produce transformative knowledge that could enable them individually and collectively to build resistance to criminalization; and (3) to explore how a community-based organization could create a space for the avoidance and resistance of criminalization of youth.

*Criminalization* is used broadly to refer to the processes by which actions and persons are made into crimes and criminals (Michalowski 1985:6). These processes ultimately involve the law, but they can occur in legal or non-legal domains of social reality. Criminalization in the lives of Black and Latino youth has been defined by Victor Rios as “the process by which styles and behaviors are rendered deviant and are treated with shame, exclusion, punishment, and incarceration” (2011:xiv). In his ethnographic study of policing in the lives of black and Latino male youth, Rios found that “criminalization occurred beyond the law,” “crossing social contexts and following young people across an array of social institutions, including school, the neighborhood, the community center, the media, and the family” (xiv). The criminalization of black and Latino male youth, Rios argues, “is fueled by the micropower of repeated negative
judgments and interactions in which these the boys [are] defined as criminal for almost any form of transgression or disrespect of authority” (xiv). More precisely, he concludes, this ought to be called hypercriminalization because these youths’ “everyday behaviors and styles [are] ubiquitously treated as deviant, risky, threatening, or criminal, across social contexts” (xiv). As a result, they experience continual punishment, which leaves them “feel[ing] stigmatized, outcast, shamed, defeated, or hopeless as a result of negative interactions and sanctions imposed by individuals who represent institutions of social control” (xiv). It is in this sense that criminalization is used in this study.

The main research questions that guided this research were:

- What is criminalization and what are its larger causes?
- Where does the criminalization of youth take place, and what institutions and/or people are involved?
- What are the perspectives and experiences of youth regarding criminalization processes in their everyday lives?
- Can the production of transformative knowledge, through participatory research and social justice education, enable them to resist criminalization? Can a community-based organization create a space for avoidance and resistance of criminalization of youth?
- How can anthropological approaches be used to guide meaningful collaboration with a small grassroots nonprofit organization in order to develop community-based research and learning that is respectful of local history, cultural practices
and heritage, and the perspectives and accumulated knowledge of community members?

This study had two overlapping methodological tracks: an exploratory ethnographic track conducted by me and a youth PAR track co-conducted and co-designed by me and a core group of youth participants. Both research tracks attempted to understand the criminalization of African American urban youth by exploring (1) how criminalization is experienced and perceived in their everyday lives and (2) how criminalization happens through policies, practices, and discourses in specific social and institutional contexts. The youth PAR track also included critical pedagogy and social justice education in an effort to provide youth PAR participants with the means of producing transformative knowledge that can enable them to build resistance, individually and collectively, to criminalization.

Ethnography is the open-ended study of patterned sociocultural phenomena and the causes of such patterns in the everyday lives of cultural groups. Ethnography relies on qualitative research methods—mainly participant observation, interviewing, and conversation—conducted through day-to-day immersion in real-life contexts in order to provide the ethnographer with access to the thoughts, feelings, and actions of people as they go about living their everyday lives (Bernard 1998; 2002). As such, ethnography is a “way of seeing” (Wolcott 1999) through which the ethnographer, through long-term fieldwork, can better describe, understand, and explain the sociocultural patterns that emerge among the actions, activities, practices, interactions, discourses,
communications, values, beliefs, and feelings of the people about whom, and with whom, the research is being conducted (Spradley 1979; 1980).

Ethnography can and does employ quantitative methods (Bernard 2002; Madrigal 1998) as well as a variety of other research methods (Schensul and LeCompte 1997); but its primarily qualitative approaches, based in long-term participant observation fieldwork, are what is appropriate for gathering the kinds of data that can best respond to the primary research questions of this project. Further explanations of research methods and their uses in this study can be found below.

The original research plan, which included an acknowledgement that the plan would likely change over time given the participatory nature of the project and the dynamics of the field setting, was based on a one-year timeline. Due to a variety of uncontrollable circumstances and unpredictable events, the timeline ended up extending over four and a half years. As such, the overall research project allowed me to develop long-term involvement in Moses House as well as in the lives of Moses House youth. This resulted in richer ethnographic data, deeper engagement with the Sulphur Springs community—including helping to establish stronger university engagement with Sulphur Springs—and, above all else, the opportunity to observe over a longer period of time what was happening in the lives of Sulphur Springs youth as they aged from teenagers to young adults. Moreover, because ethnography and PAR are open-ended and iterative, the very process of ethnographic inquiry suggested and generated additional but related topics that were investigated in more detail during the study.
The exploratory ethnography track of this study was expected to contribute new empirically-based generalizable knowledge about the everyday processes of criminalization of African American male youth living in urban poverty. This study was also seen as having the potential to better understand how and why youth experience involvement with law enforcement and therefore to propose youth-centered recommendations for alleviating some of the negative consequences of this involvement, which is a serious social problem affecting the immediate and future welfare of African American youth. The youth PAR track was designed to propose social justice oriented interventions that could reveal, critique, and offer recommendations for changing or eliminating the policies and practices that are responsible for unfairly criminalizing youth in Sulphur Springs and throughout cities in the U.S.

I anticipated that empirical and theoretical knowledge about criminalization processes would be produced and that perhaps even a youth-created theoretical model of criminalization would result. Youth PAR participants were encouraged to propose recommendations to change or eliminate the policies and processes that criminalize them. The principal investigator also intended to connect youth participants to other youth rights and civil rights organizations as well as legal advocates working on juvenile justice issues.

Another proposed benefit of this study was that the methodological approaches were centered on the expression of the experiences and perspectives of criminalized African American youth, a population whose voice is silenced by society and virtually silent in the research literature. This study provided youth participants with
opportunities for talking about their experiences growing up in Sulphur Springs as well as their perspectives on youth involvement with law enforcement.

**Participant Inclusion Criteria, Recruitment, and Sampling**

The inclusion criteria for youth participants were: any male child, ages 9-17, or young adult male, ages 18-29, from low-income, African-American families that were living in the Sulphur Springs neighborhood of Tampa, Florida during the study period, or had recently lived in the Sulphur Springs neighborhood up to ten years prior to the commencement of the study period (i.e., as long ago as 1997). These criteria allowed me to select research participants who lived in Sulphur Springs and therefore might be familiar with or knowledgeable about the kinds of challenges faced by youth growing up in that neighborhood, challenges such as involvement with law enforcement. In terms of ethnicity and gender, African American male youth were recruited because, from what I had already learned from the community, young African American males were the ones most likely to be experiencing criminalization in the neighborhood in which this study was going to be conducted.

I recruited eight youth participants, all African American males between the ages of 15 and 29, to form the core of the youth PAR group. This recruitment took place through established contacts with several youth who had already expressed interest in the project and been identified as potential key informants during my initial work with the Richardson brothers in revitalizing Moses House. In my original research proposal, I had estimated that a core youth PAR group of five to seven members would be sufficient
to establish a small cohesive group with whom critical discussions and basic research into criminalization processes could be coordinated by me.

I relied on my existing contacts and networks in the neighborhood in order to recruit the core group of youth PAR researchers as well as other youth who I hoped might participate by allowing me to interview them and by them wanting to tell me their stories. From semi-structured but open-ended conversational interviews with the youth PAR researchers, also my key informants, I designed an ethnographic interview (Spradley 1979). Given my limited resources, it was not possible to randomly sample all youth in Sulphur Springs. Therefore, snowball and opportunistic/convenience sampling was used to select potentially information-rich participants (Johnson 1990) for the ethnographic interviews. Snowball sampling, which relies on research participants to indicate other potential participants from their own social networks (Johnson 1990), was an appropriate sampling method for this field site given that most of the youths in this neighborhood already know each other.

About 20 youth between the ages of 9 and 29 were thus recruited in order to explore, through a maximum variation sample based on age, a range of perspectives regarding criminalization, as well as to better represent variation in the length and amount of experiences of criminalization. Maximum-variation sampling, which selects a small sample of diversity, is appropriate for the objectives of this study in that “[a]ny common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central shared dimensions of a setting or phenomenon” (Patton 2002:235). Additionally, this sampling method “yields high-
quality, detailed descriptions of each case, which are useful for documenting uniquenesses” (235).

Thus, in addition to the eight youth PAR participants/key informants, this study used ethnographic interviews (Spradley 1979) and informal conversational interviews to gather perceptions and experiences of criminalization from about 20 other African American males between the ages of 9-29 and who were living in the neighborhood at the time the research project was being conducted. More than 320 separate interview recordings (totaling more than 190 hours of interviews) were made over a span of four and a half years of fieldwork. It would have been instructive to recruit females into the study in order to explore the relationship of gender to criminalization; however, I did not have the necessary resources or time to be able to do that. Future research could address the variable of gender.

As part of the exploratory ethnography track, I intended to interview at least 15 “concerned adults,” ages 18-75, selected through snowball sampling and opportunistic sampling. Concerned adults are basically people who are directly or indirectly involved in, or somehow affected by, the criminalization of youth in the neighborhood in which this study took place (Sulphur Springs, Tampa). Concerned adults include persons from various agencies, institutions, and organizations whose missions were somehow concerned with youth from low-income backgrounds, especially youth who have had contact with the police and juvenile/criminal justice system, or who were at risk of having such contact. Due however, to the depth of my involvement in working with Moses House youth, and the time spent working on revitalizing Moses House as an
organization, I lacked the time necessary to recruit concerned adults to participate in formal, recorded interviews. Nevertheless, opportunities to learn about concerned adults’ views arose while accompanying Moses House youths to, and observing their interactions with, various educational, recreational, and governmental institutions and agencies. Through passive observation of public behavior in public places, at public meetings, and at public presentations and public court hearings, and without collecting any identifying information, I was able to gain a general sense of some of the different views that various concerned adults hold about youth who have or had contact with the police or juvenile/criminal justice system, or who were at risk of having such contact.

Concerned adults include, but were not limited to:

- parents;
- police;
- teachers, guidance counselors, principals, and school resource officers at public schools and alternative schools for children classified as having emotional/behavioral disorders;
- coaches and staff at public recreation centers;
- staff of a variety of youth serving nonprofit organizations;
- neighborhood organization members;
- judges, public defenders, prosecutors, and bailiffs in juvenile court and adult criminal and civil court;
- personnel at juvenile detention centers and juvenile assessment centers;
• probation officers at Department of Juvenile Justice offices and Department of Corrections offices;
• private attorneys and bail bondsmen;
• personnel at video visitation centers at the county jail;
• personnel at social welfare agencies (the Social Security Administration, food stamp programs, service provider resource centers);
• staff at workforce alliance programs;
• and psychiatric counselors and psychological evaluators at community mental health centers and private practice offices.

Institutional Review Board, Confidentiality, Anonymity, and Informed Consent

This study received expedited approval for initial and continuing reviews by the USF Institutional Review Board (IRB), and was approved by the IRB as research not involving greater than minimal risk. Through my prior work with Moses House, which involved research with human subjects and received IRB review and approval (Greenbaum and Arney 2008-2009), I had already discussed certain issues related to criminalization with some of the youths who would continue to be research participants in the present study. They did not demonstrate discomfort during previous interviews and conversations with me or during group discussions in which these issues spontaneously emerged as discussion topics. On the contrary, the youths seem pleased to have a sympathetic adult listening to them. Moreover, youth in Sulphur Springs tend to regard criminalization as part of the reality of their everyday lives growing up in their
neighborhood. Therefore, this study was classified as minimal risk because the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research were not greater in and of themselves than what is ordinarily encountered in daily life.

Data collection methods used with participants took place at a neighborhood location convenient to the participant and adequate to maintain a sufficient degree of comfort, privacy, and confidentiality. I made every effort to protect confidentiality and anonymity of participants. In obtaining informed consent from research participants, I followed procedures that were approved by the USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the study. I also adhered to the professional codes of conduct of the America Anthropological Association and the Society for Applied Anthropology.

I ensured that individuals’ privacy was not breached during the recruitment process. For youth participants, snowball and convenience sampling was used from among my existing contacts and networks among youth in the Sulphur Springs neighborhood in order to identify potential participants. However, I was the one who initiated contact with potential participants who had been identified to me through snowball sampling; and I was also the one who invited potential participants to actually participate in the study. No recruitment materials were used, and no compensation or other incentives were offered to others for the identification or recruitment of participants. Additionally, out of respect for privacy, I did not inform anyone whether or not any specific individual actually participated in the study.

I did not disclose identities of research participants to anyone, and interviews were conducted in locations where the privacy of participants would not be
compromised. The identities of participants were protected by assigning alphanumeric
codes during collection and recording of initial data in field notebooks and other
documentation, and by using pseudonyms in this dissertation as well as in any future
reports, publications, or presentations that might originate from this research.
Pseudonyms were used in the transcripts and during data analysis. Confidentiality of
participants was protected by not sharing information about them to others and by not
using their real names, or any other information that could personally identify them, in
any publicly available results of this study, nor including any sensitive information or
information that could potentially put research participants at risk. Likewise, no
information voluntarily given to me about a participant’s personal contacts was shared
with anyone; the names of contacts and all information about them was also kept
confidential.
I implemented an IRB-approved informed consent procedure before asking or
allowing anyone to participate in this study. I explained who I was, the purpose of the
research and the procedures involved, why I was requesting the person to participate in
the study, and possible benefits and risks for those who participated. I explained how I
would protect the anonymity of a participant’s identity throughout the research process,
including the publication of the results of the research, so that no one would know
where the information came from and that any information that he or she did not want
shared would be kept confidential. I asked permission to audio record the interview,
informing the participant that only I would have access to the recording and that only I
would listen to it. I described how I would make a typed transcript of the interview, using pseudonyms to protect individual’s identities, and then erase the recording.

I then explained that participation in the study was voluntary and that he or she could refuse to participate or discontinue his or her participation at any time without penalty or loss of rights, privileges, and services if he or she was a participant in Moses House programs. I also explained that participants were free to refuse to answer any questions or discuss any topics during any interview. At times, participants may not have wanted to share information about themselves or their experiences, and I made every effort to recognize and acknowledge any discomfort participants may have had with questions. I stopped an interview or conversation whenever a participant requested to do so.

For participants who were minors, permission from at least one parent was obtained (at the discretion of the IRB, minimal risk studies can require the signature of only one parent). I asked potential participants who were minors to inform me when I could meet with their parent(s) at their residence or other convenient location in order to explain the study and the informed consent process. Children ages 9-11 were asked to verbally assent after I read and explained the assent form to them in the presence of their parents.

Youth who participated in an audio recorded, formal interview received a cash incentive payment of $10.00 per hour of interview immediately after the interview was completed. Each person who agreed to participate in an audio recorded, formal interview was asked to volunteer for at least one interview. If, during the interview, an
individual appeared to be a potentially rich source of information relevant to answering the research questions, he was asked if he would like to volunteer to participate in one or more follow-up interviews. Sometimes, after certain significant events had occurred, or when research participants wanted to update me on the progress or ongoing nature of something of special importance in their lives, they would voluntarily contact me and request to do additional interviews.

Methods

This study used a variety of qualitative and quantitative ethnographic research methods (Bernard 2002; Schensul and LeCompte 1997). The research was discovery oriented and exploratory, involving “approaches [that] are used to develop hypotheses and more generally to make probes for circumscription, description, and interpretation of less well-understood topics” (Johnson 1998:139). The exploratory ethnography track utilized participant observation, key informant interviews, informal conversational interviews, ethnographic interviews, oral histories, and focus group discussions, as well as document analysis of arrest reports and court records, school records and discipline reports, letters from jail/prison, prison poetry, and newspaper articles.

The observation and analysis of activities in field settings used participant observation methods designed by Spradley (1980) for describing and classifying observations and by Lofland et al. (2006) for analyzing social settings and categorizing human activities and interactions. It should be emphasized that at no point during this
study did the principal investigator observe or participate in any criminal acts or behaviors. Observation took place while I accompanied youth to:

- court appearances (adult and juvenile court);
- educational and recreational institutions (schools, recreation centers, GED programs);
- social welfare agencies (social security administration, food stamp programs, service provider resource centers);
- mental health service providers (community mental health centers, psychiatric counselors, psychological evaluators);
- the criminal (in)justice system (police, courts, public defenders, lawyers, jails, video visitation centers, “weed and seed” centers, juvenile assessment centers, juvenile detention centers, probation officers, bail bondsmen);
- job searches and workforce alliance youth programs;
- and hospital emergency room visits.

Ethnographic interviews (Spradley 1979) were designed and conducted after a sufficient amount of participant observation fieldwork allowed the principal investigator to better contextualize the research topics and issues within the world of experiences and cultural meanings shared by youths living in the neighborhood in which the study took place. Oral histories (Angrosino 2008; Denzin 1989) were recorded from key informants. Focus group discussions (Morgan 1997; Schensul 1999) were conducted with the youth PAR group.
Interview questions with Sulphur Springs youth focused on the following topics: demographic data, residential data, family, sources of income, neighborhood conditions, street activities, attitudes toward police, involvement with law enforcement, arrests, detention, court proceedings, incarceration, probation, school, social services, parks and recreational facilities, nonprofit organizations, desired changes to the neighborhood, life goals, opportunities to achieve goals, and how others view Sulphur Springs youth.

Data Storage

All research data and audio recordings were stored on the computer hard drive of the principal investigator’s computer, which was kept in a locked office used only by the principal investigator at an undisclosed location. Access to the files on this computer requires a username and private password known only to the principal investigator’s. IRB consent forms signed by study participants as well as notebooks containing field notes were stored inside this office in a locked filing cabinet. Signed informed consent documents were kept in a different drawer separately from other research records in the filing cabinet. The principal investigator will retain the complete signed consent and assent documents and all IRB research records for at least five years after the final IRB approval period has expired, after which time these materials will be destroyed by shredding the documents.
Data Analysis

From May 2011 through December 2011, I listened to recorded interviews, transcribed selected interviews, coded and analyzed field notes, analyzed documents, and re-reviewed relevant research literature. Qualitative data were analyzed using the methods for description, analysis, and interpretation outlined by Wolcott (1994). This involved (1) writing descriptions of settings, activities, and events; (2) making initial codes while reading interview transcriptions, field notes, and miscellaneous documents; and (3) analyzing and interpreting themes and patterned regularities. I used an inductive approach for systematically analyzing the data and generating codes that emerged out of varying levels of specificity and abstraction during analysis (LeCompte and Schensul 1999:67-83). For analyzing activities in field settings, I used the method proposed by Lofland et al. (2006) for categorizing human activities and interactions. I used content analysis (Bernard 1995:339f; Bernard and Ryan 1998: 611f) for analyzing document data.
Chapter Four: Fieldwork Setting

Social History and Geography of Sulphur Springs and Spring Hill

Sulphur Springs is a historic neighborhood of Tampa, and it has witnessed many dramatic changes over the years. In the early twentieth century, it was a popular resort, which developed around a natural springs swimming pool and related tourist attractions close to the Hillsborough River. Sulphur Springs now has some of the highest rates of poverty and housing foreclosures in Tampa. Lingering segregation and white supremacy as well as class-based conflicts of interest between homeowners and renters have made cohesive neighborhood organizing difficult. Research into neighborhood history and social problems has the potential to either exacerbate or alleviate these tensions (Jackson 2009; 2010), depending on the approach taken by researchers and the kinds of alliances formed with their community partners.

Geographically, the eastern boundary of Sulphur Springs is demarcated by railroad tracks, the southern boundary by the Hillsborough River, the eastern boundary by Nebraska Avenue, and the northern boundary by Busch Boulevard. Its geographic

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area covers approximately one square mile. With a population of 5,724 in 2010 (U.S. Census 2010b), Sulphur Springs is a densely populated neighborhood. Its population is 9% less than what it was (6,309 persons) in 2000 (U.S. Census 2000). This is most likely due to the collapse of the housing market toward the end of the last decade; as a result, many homes in the neighborhood went into foreclosure, and on some streets, houses still remain vacant with For Sale signs. In 2008, during the height of the foreclosure crisis, 15% of real estate property in Sulphur Springs was in foreclosure, compared to only 5% for Tampa (Hillsborough Community Atlas 2012).

The Sulphur Springs Museum and Heritage Center is working to preserve and celebrate the history of Sulphur Springs, primarily the history surrounding its community landmarks, historic structures, and natural resources. The Museum is partnered with the Heritage Research and Resource Management Lab, which is housed in the Department of Anthropology at USF. Part of the Heritage Research Lab's mission is to recover and preserve the social history and cultural heritage of diverse groups of people who have been, and continue to be, excluded from mainstream historical accounts and representation in present-day heritage preservation efforts. The Lab has been working collaboratively with local community members to research and preserve the history and heritage of African Americans in Spring Hill and Sulphur Springs. For a short chronology of important historical events in the Sulphur Springs and Spring Hill communities, see

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3 See [http://www.sulphurspringsmuseum.org/]..
4 See [http://heritagelab.org/].
According to historical research (Jackson 2009:8), Tampa residents were coming to the natural springs to picnic as early as the 1880s-90s. The land around the springs was first deeded in 1881; it was purchased in the late 1890s by John Mills, who opened it to the public a few years later as Sulphur Springs Park. It now had a swimming pool and bathhouses; blacks were not allowed. Josiah Richardson (no relation to Taft and Harold Richardson), bought Sulphur Springs in 1906, and in 1908 a trolley line connected it to Tampa. During the 1920s, Richardson enhanced the springs into an amusement park with amenities, such as a restaurant, walking paths, a gazebo, and an alligator farm, attracting an increasing number of tourists. He also built the Arcade and Sulphur Springs
water tower, both completed in 1927. The Arcade was a shopping mall, with a resort hotel, bank, and other conveniences. Richardson’s investment was ruined when the Arcade and Sulphur Springs were flooded after a dam on the Hillsborough River collapsed in 1933. In 1937, tourists from Michigan and Ohio founded a whites-only club, which became the Harbor Club located on the Hillsborough River. The Springs Theatre was built close to the Harbor Club in 1944 (Hillsborough County Property Appraiser 2012b). To the dismay of Sulphur Springs and Spring Hills residents old enough to remember the Arcade, what was left of it was torn down in 1976 when it was sold to Tampa Greyhound dog tracks (Jackson 2009). The Harbor Club building is now dilapidated and not in use. The water tower, a cylindrical concrete structure 214 feet tall (Klinkenberg 2003), still stands and has become the iconic symbol of Sulphur Springs. It looks more like a lighthouse than a typical water tower. In 2002, the City of Tampa purchased the tower and the area around it, transforming it into River Tower Park. The City had also built a large public swimming pool, known as Sulphur Springs Pool, in 2000. Its long-term residents describe Sulphur Springs very affectionately.

During the 1910s, African American families began living in what became known as Spring Hill, an area a short distance to the north of Sulphur Springs. By the 1920s, Spring Hill already had a church, within which was a school for the community’s children. The school was later moved to its own location on a different street, and by the mid-1940s, it had close to 100 students, grades 1-9 (Jackson 2009:9). The Spring Hill School was replaced by Dillard Elementary, which was torn down in 1968 when the construction of Interstate 275 (then I-75) tore through Spring Hill. African American children in the
area then began attending Sulphur Springs Elementary, which had remained a whites-only school until desegregation in 1966-67. The Spring Hill School site, which was on Okaloosa Avenue, now lies underneath I-275. Many houses and African American businesses were demolished in order to make room for constructing the interstate, which, in the words of one of the Moses House co-founders, “destroyed everything.”

Spring Hill is described by its eldest residents as having been a largely self-sufficient community with extended kinship networks and a strong ethic of mutual aid. African American ethnic heritage helped define a proud sense of identity and rootedness for residents of Spring Hill, as in other African American local communities, while Jim Crow racial segregation and outright white hostility prevented blacks from accessing the resources and privileges that whites took for granted in other parts of Tampa. Over time, the city of Tampa grew and spread, annexing Sulphur Springs in 1953 as a neighborhood. As the Sulphur Springs neighborhood expanded north, Spring Hill became enveloped by it from the south and by Tampa from the west and north. While the Spring Hill and Sulphur Springs communities were once quite distinct, and thrived in their own ways, their combined area is now generally known simply as “Sulphur Springs.”

Taft and Harold Richardson, the two brothers who founded Moses House, grew up in Spring Hill. Until desegregation, whites in Sulphur Springs could legally exclude blacks, and they did so quite shamelessly. The Moses House co-founders have shared with me vivid recollections of the racial and class conflicts between the Spring Hill and Sulphur Springs communities. East Waters Avenue, which splits present-day Sulphur Springs in half, was the borderline between the black neighborhood to the north and the
white neighborhood to the south during the days of segregation. The two communities have since grown together into one neighborhood, though not without tensions. There is evidence of continuing social practices of racial separation, and surprise when those boundaries are crossed. For example, in July of 2009, as I was walking out of a busy convenience store on Waters Avenue in Sulphur Springs after having bought the latest issue of the *Florida Sentinel Bulletin*, an older African American man heading into the store stopped in his tracks as he passed me. Doing a double-take, he said that it was the first time in his life he had “ever seen a white person buy the black people’s newspaper.”

Sulphur Springs’ African American population increased in 1999-2000 after many public housing residents from East Tampa were relocated from East Tampa to houses and Section 8 rental units in Sulphur Springs through a Department of Housing and Urban Development HOPE VI program. African Americans are now the majority (62%) in Sulphur Springs (U.S. Census 2010b). Around 2001-2002, Moses House was relocated from East Tampa into Spring Hill, where it operated for about ten years, before being relocated again to Mann-Wagnon Memorial Park, a jointly owned county and city park along the Hillsborough River in the southeastern part of Sulphur Springs. Mann-Wagnon Park is a mere minutes’ walk down the street from the natural springs, the historic Springs Theatre, and the Harbor Club (built in 1925, Hillsborough County Property Appraiser 2012a), all of which were closed to blacks during the days of Jim Crow.

While Sulphur Springs had been a flourishing tourist mecca during the first half of the twentieth century, by the last several decades of the century, the neighborhood had earned the reputation as a place to avoid because of crime, drugs, and prostitution.
Preliminary land analysis research by Ruiz (2007) suggests that the building of cheaply constructed duplexes in the 1970s (90 duplexes built) and 80s (229 built) (Ruiz 2007:24)—which resulted in the majority of housing units being occupied by renters (1268 in 1990), not owners (961 in 1990) (Ruiz 2007:16)—lowered property values, causing the neighborhood to decline. Ruiz argues that, ironically, it was an “urban renewal” program, the federally funded Neighborhood Strategy Area (NSA) Program, that allowed the City of Tampa to use code enforcement violations to evict low-income property owners from older houses. They were demolished and replaced with duplexes, which developers sold at inflated prices to buyers who mortgaged the properties largely through Savings and Loans banks (23, 25). Absentee landlordism has been a problem ever since, and housing units have become dilapidated due to lack of maintenance on the part of the owners and also the low quality original construction.

Nevertheless, the decline of the neighborhood is often attributed to the influx of low-income African Americans who began moving into rental properties in Sulphur Springs in the 1980s (Ruiz 2007:27). This attribution persists to the present and was expressed during a speech given to me by a police officer on how it was not safe to be around black people in Sulphur Springs. He said “they don’t care about the neighborhood” and that they were lazy, did not work, lived off public assistance, and were “destroying private property owned by tax payers.” When I later relayed this depiction to an African American youth who had grown up in Sulphur Springs, he disputed it, arguing that property owners in Sulphur Springs have found renting their houses to be quite lucrative. “Landlords in Sulphur Springs,” he explained, “will charge
really high rent to people with criminal records. They don’t do a background check, and they don’t make them sign a lease.” He brought up the duplexes and claimed to know of landlords who owned ten or more rental properties. “They don’t ever fix ’em up. They just come by once a month to collect the rent money.”

During the last decade, an accumulation of initiatives by government agencies, social service providers, and nonprofit organizations has focused on alleviating poverty and fostering community development in Sulphur Springs. Efforts intensified after Sulphur Springs Elementary received an “F” school grade (based on Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test scores) two years in a row, for school years 2006-2007 and 2007-2008; it had consistently been a “C” school since school year 2001-2002 (Florida Department of Education 2012). In 2009, the YMCA established a “community learning center” at Sulphur Springs Elementary in order to improve student academic achievement and increase parental involvement with the school. Also in 2009, the United Way began operating a “resource center” across the street from the elementary school in order to connect adults to social services and life skills development programs.

Hillsborough County funded the construction of the first public library in the neighborhood, the Norma and Joseph Robinson Partnership Library @ Sulphur Springs, named after two Sulphur Springs residents and neighborhood organizers who have devoted nearly twenty years to the redevelopment of the community. Completed in 2010, the library was built as an expansion to the Sulphur Springs Elementary School Media Center. In 2012, the City of Tampa finished the construction of the Springhill Park Community Center, a new, $2.5 million state of the art facility (Steele 2012a; b). For
decades, the heart of community life in Sulphur Springs had been the George Bartholomew North Tampa Community Center, built in 1958 (Hillsborough County Property Appraiser 2012c). Despite its popularity and the dedication of its staff and coaches, “the Rec,” as it is known, was long lacking in resources and programming due to disinvestment by the City.

Sulphur Springs also has a handful of churches, which are attended mostly by people from other neighborhoods. A few discount and convenience stores are located along the main thoroughfares bordering (Nebraska Avenue) and running through (Waters Avenue) the neighborhood. Other nonprofit organizations that offer programs and services to children and youth in Sulphur Springs include Community Stepping Stones, a community arts learning center. All Nations Outreach Center, a place of worship, offers faith-based programs. The R.I.C.H. (Resource In Community Hope) House, started by Weed and Seed funding and operated by the Tampa Police Department, provides neighborhood safety and afterschool programs. The Tampa Police Department is ubiquitous, maintaining a visible presence in and around Sulphur Springs. Marked police cars and unmarked vehicles constantly patrol the area, and the police are quick to respond to calls for service. At night, the loud air-shredding sound of the police helicopter hovering over the neighborhood mixes with the occasional advancing and receding low-bass vibration of hip hop music from passing cars.

Visually, the neighborhood of Sulphur Springs has many natural features—lush semi-tropical flora, old trees, a winding river—that enhance its beauty and pleasantness. Besides Waters Avenue, its streets are very narrow, and its residents enjoy socializing
out of doors. Children play in the streets despite the traffic. A strong sense of community unites many of the residents; others desire to be quietly left alone. Housing styles are quite eclectic, ranging from modest cabin-like dwellings to uniquely decorated one-story houses to drably colored, featureless multi-occupancy units. The recent subprime mortgage crisis hit the neighborhood hard; abandoned, unoccupied, and boarded up houses litter the landscape, along with “For Sale” and “For Rent” signs. Some areas of the neighborhood are clean and well kept; others have trash strewn about, along with old mattresses and piles of used or broken furniture.

**Demographic Statistics**

In 2010, children under the age of 18 comprised 35% of the population of Sulphur Springs, compared to 23% of the population of Tampa as a whole (U.S. Census 2010b). For Sulphur Springs, this is a decrease in the percentage of children since 2000, in which children under the age of 18 comprised 41% of the population (U.S. Census 2000). In 2010, 45% percent of households in Sulphur Springs have one or more people under 18 years, compared to 30% for Tampa (U.S. Census 2010b). In 2010, 62% percent of Sulphur Springs residents were African American, compared with 26% of the total population of Tampa (U.S. Census 2010b). That is a slight increase since 2000, when African Americans were 59% of Sulphur Springs (U.S. Census 2000). For Tampa as a whole, the percentage of African Americans remains unchanged since 2000, when it was also 26% (U.S. Census 2000).
Average per capita income in Sulphur Springs was estimated at $13,171 in 2010, compared to $28,362 for Tampa (U.S. Census 2010a). This represents an increase in average per capita income since 2000, when it was $10,592 in Sulphur Springs and only $22,010 for Tampa (U.S. Census 2000). However, the percentage of the population living below the poverty level has also increased. Nearly half, or 47%, of the population of Sulphur Springs lived below the poverty level in 2010, compared to only 20% for Tampa (U.S. Census 2010a). In 2000, only 43% of the population of Sulphur Springs lived below the poverty level, compared to 18% for Tampa as a whole (U.S. Census 2000). In 2010, 12% of households in Sulphur Springs received Supplemental Security Income benefits, compared to 4% for Tampa; 12% of households in Sulphur Springs received cash public assistance income, compared to 3% for Tampa; and 28% of households in Sulphur Springs received Food Stamp/SNAP benefits, compared to 12% for Tampa (U.S. Census 2010a).

The socioeconomic characteristics of Sulphur Springs indicate a number of risk factors for children. In 2010, 60% of families with children under 18 in Sulphur Springs lived below the poverty level, compared to 23% for Tampa (U.S. Census 2010a). This is an increase in Sulphur Springs since 2000, when 56% of families with children under the age of 18 in Sulphur Springs lived below the poverty level, but a decrease for Tampa, in which 37% of families with children under 18 lived below the poverty level in 2000 (U.S. Census 2000). In 2010, 65% of children under the age of 18 in Sulphur Springs lived below the poverty level, compared to 29% for Tampa (U.S. Census 2010a). Seventy percent of families with a female householder with related children under 18 and no
husband present live below the poverty level, compared to 42% for Tampa (U.S. Census 2010a). For school year 2010-2011, 100% of children attending Sulphur Springs Elementary received free or reduced lunches, up from 98% for the 2009-2010 and 2008-2009 school years (Florida Department of Education Office of Education Information and Accountability Services 2011). One hundred percent of teenage participants in Moses House programs have had contact with law enforcement (Arney, fieldnotes).
Chapter Five: Engaging with Moses House

This chapter recounts the history of my work with Moses House, beginning with my initial involvement in the revitalization of Moses House in 2007 up to the fall of 2012.

Prior History of USF Community Engagement in Sulphur Springs

Community engaged research by USF faculty and students has a long history in Tampa neighborhoods (e.g., Bird and Stamps 2001; Briscoe, et al. 2009; Ersing, et al. 2007; Greenbaum 1986; Greenbaum and Rodriguez 1998). This research includes a study of the impact of the federal policy HOPE VI (Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere) on public housing residents after their relocation from public housing to “mixed-income” neighborhoods where they had to pay market-rate rents, subsidized by Section 8 vouchers if they were eligible to receive them (Feldman and Hathaway 2002; Greenbaum 2002a; 2008; Greenbaum, et al. 2008; Spalding 2007). The USF Department of Anthropology in particular has a more than decade-long relationship with the Sulphur Springs neighborhood; this partnership encompasses community activism, service-learning (community service integrated with academic course curriculum), engaged research, scholarship, consultation, and public service (e.g., Greenbaum and Arney 2008-2009; Hathaway 2005; Hathaway and Kuzin 2007; Jackson 2009; 2010; Jones, et al. 2002).
In the summer of 2007, a partnership was created with Moses House, a grassroots youth arts nonprofit organization co-founded in the mid-1980s by bone sculptor Taft Richardson and his brother Harold Richardson. Led by Susan Greenbaum, USF anthropologists who were studying the effects of HOPE VI relocations in Sulphur Springs had encountered the Richardson brothers and Moses House in the early 2000s. An interest in helping to maintain and revive Moses House, especially after the passing of Taft Richardson in 2008, gave new impetus to the efforts of the USF Anthropology Department to build an institutional relationship with the organization (Arney, et al. 2009), as the Department had done with the Sulphur Springs Museum and Heritage Center (Jackson 2009) and the George A. Bartholomew North Tampa Community Center (Hathaway and Kuzin 2007; Jones, et al. 2002).

Taft and Harold Richardson had also been participants in Antoinette Jackson’s heritage research projects in Sulphur Springs; they contributed oral history interviews about what it was like growing up in Spring Hill, an historic African American neighborhood that is now part of Sulphur Springs (Armstrong 2007). Indeed, the best source of scholarship on the social history and cultural heritage of Spring Hill and Sulphur Springs is the work of Jackson and her research associates at the Heritage Research and Resource Management Lab, housed in the Department of Anthropology at the University of South Florida. Jackson offers a graduate seminar on Issues in Heritage Tourism every fall semester at USF. During the fall of 2006, Jackson and her heritage tourism students initiated the Sulphur Springs Heritage Project in collaboration with the
Sulphur Springs Museum. Some of the results of this project include an Oral History Database and an Ethnographic/Ethnohistorical Profile of Sulphur Springs.

Sulphur Springs is only about seven miles from the USF Tampa campus. This proximity has made it convenient for a variety of USF faculty, instructors, and students to conduct research, offer service-learning courses, participate in the operation of nonprofit organizations, and direct or advise community engaged learning projects with various nonprofit organizations, schools, government agencies, and social service providers in Sulphur Springs. For example, Robin Jones (Department of Geography, Environment and Planning), has partnered her undergraduate *Introduction to Urban Studies* course with the Sulphur Springs community for the past five years, from 2007 through 2011 (Office of Community Engagement 2011). The long-term involvement of USF faculty in Sulphur Springs has created ongoing community engaged projects in which students can participate in research and service-learning in a more structured, coherent way and with stronger implications for social action.

![Figure 2: A Google Map indicating the geographical proximity of USF to Sulphur Springs.](image)
Gaining Access to the Community

In the summer of 2007, when I first met Taft and Harold Richardson, the two brothers who co-founded Moses House in 1984, I had no idea that my participation in their struggle to keep Moses House alive would become as engaged and enduring as it ended up becoming. I was finishing my Master’s thesis, which was about Projeto Axé’s “street education” program that politicized street youth in Salvador, Brazil into transformative action through Freirean critical pedagogy, artistic creativity, and citizenship education. I had wanted to pursue similar work for my doctoral dissertation research, which I was planning to do in Tampa. Susan Greenbaum, my advisor, suggested that Moses House might be the closest thing to what I was looking for in the Tampa metropolitan area.

She introduced me to the Richardson brothers after we had arranged to meet in a park near Taft’s house. There, the Richardson brothers talked with us about the history of Moses House and explained what they had been doing recently. We four discussed how I might get involved and whether or not they would even want that. They seemed receptive and welcomed me aboard, with the same openness that, over time, I would see them demonstrate toward anyone who expressed interest in helping out. I offered to bring to Moses House what I had learned from working with Projeto Axé in Brazil, and I expressed my hope that in the process I might do some preliminary investigation into the social and economic problems faced by children and youth living in urban poverty in Tampa. We shared the understanding that it could be a mutually beneficial relationship;
that is, in exchange for me helping out Moses House in whichever ways I were able to, I would be laying down the groundwork for my dissertation research project.

In subsequent meetings and dialogues, the Richardson brothers and I further discussed how through such a reciprocal arrangement it might become possible for my dissertation to be based in the community, constructed through my work with Moses House, and designed to collaboratively research problems or issues of concern identified by Moses House and its participants. We also agreed that it might even be possible to conceive courses of action based on the results of the research and building upon the organization’s previous history of social activism. As I learned more about Moses House, its organizational history, previous work, and the difficulties it overcame in the past, I felt more and more encouraged to be involved as well as a growing commitment to investing myself in Moses House and its mission.

The work that needed to be done, as well as the work that could be done, turned out of course to be much more than what I alone could accomplish. Despite more than two decades of existence, Moses House had reached a point at which it needed much care and attention in order to remain viable. Fortunately, over the course of my five years with Moses House, I was able to enlist the support of many others who became drawn to Moses House and its mission. A significant number of them were and still are students and faculty from the University of South Florida. Their involvement resulted from personal interest and learning opportunities made possible through various community engagement initiatives, about which I will have more to say below.
The purpose of Moses House, as I came to understand it from working closely with Taft and Harold, was to cultivate positive transformation by developing a critical and holistic understanding of the world, fostering community-based learning and social activism, and relentlessly nurturing the creative and productive potential of children and youth who had been discarded by society. I soon saw the genius of Taft Richardson in focusing his creative work on the theme of resurrection, which became embodied in his meticulously crafted bone sculptures. From them, the aesthetic of resurrection emanates and infuses all of Moses House’s work. Taft rescued decaying skeletal pieces of once living things, made ugly through death, and reworked and recombined them into beautiful creatures and objects, animated with new meaning and purpose. The Moses House mission, as envisioned by its founders, is to resurrect the wounded, dying souls of children who are being brutalized by poverty and racism.

Figure 3: An early article about Taft Richardson’s bone sculptures. From the Tampa Tribune, August 29, 1977.
Volunteered Labor, Class Solidarity, and Commitment to Social Justice

My work with Moses House spans nearly five years as of this writing (from summer 2007 to fall 2012). During that time, I devoted, on average, about 20 hours a week to Moses House in the form of volunteered, unpaid labor. My work hours approached 30 and sometimes up to 40 or more hours a week during periods in which Moses House projects and activities, such as a building renovation project and an afterschool program, required intensive amounts of supervision, coordination, and physical labor. Moses House did not have funds to pay a director, nor any staff for that matter. Indeed, at no time during its nearly thirty-year history, has Moses House had funds to pay wages or salaries to any of its staff.

Taft and Harold Richardson, and all the others who have volunteered for Moses House during its existence, did the work they did simply because they believed, religiously, that it had to be done. God, they said, inspired them with a vision, a mission, and a message, and they gave as much of their lives as possible to purposefully and tirelessly fulfilling His work. They were truly driven by the principles of selfless charity and universal love, and practiced them as acts and deeds guided by the teachings of Jesus. One gives to others in need because we are all brothers and sisters who can demonstrate our love for one another through caring acts that, at the very least, help to alleviate each other’s suffering. They were also interested in understanding the structural causes of inequality and had a carefully thought out social justice based critique of capitalism, materialism, and the exploitation of human labor. I regret not talking with Taft more about the intellectual development of his philosophy before he
passed away. It would have been illuminating to learn more about the spiritual traditions or intellectual genealogy, perhaps traceable to Black liberation theology of the 1970s (e.g., Cone 1990[1970]), that may have informed the work of Moses House through its founders and their colleagues.

While I do not claim to have the divine inspiration and sense of spiritual mission that drove Taft and Harold, nor do I have any affiliation with any religious organization or institution, I nonetheless share a philosophical affinity with the principles of social justice embodied in their work. I find inspiration in a Marxist, humanist liberation theology (e.g., Boff and Boff 1987; Gutiérrez 1973) that is committed to social justice for those oppressed by poverty, racism, and other forms of structural violence and discrimination. I do not consider my work to be a form of charity, although I sometimes perform acts of charity in the context of doing work in the community. I think of my work more as an expression of class solidarity, of uniting in collective struggle around class position in order to construct solutions to common problems. I grew up in rural poverty and lived my entire adult life oscillating between poverty and low-income as a member of the working class (most recently as a graduate student academic laborer, surviving semester to semester on part-time graduate assistantships). My biography allows me to understand the effects of poverty on a deeply personal level, making it easier for me to empathize with others living in poverty than if I had grown up in, say, a middle class family, with all the class privileges that entails.

I worked various low-wage jobs while I was completing my undergraduate education, supplementing my income with student loans, food stamps, and
opportunistic enterprises. My graduate education has been financed semester by semester through graduate student assistantships and student loans. This has usually meant that I have been surviving paycheck to paycheck and often have had to borrow money from others whenever financial emergencies suddenly arose or unpaid bills piled up, threatening disconnection of electrical service, eviction from rented housing, suspension of my driver’s license, and other stressful situations. When I first became involved with Moses House in the summer of 2007, I did not own a car. I got to where I needed to go by riding my bicycle, taking the bus, or asking friends to give me rides. Having lived without a car in other cities with excellent public transportation systems, such as Boston, Massachusetts, I was not prepared to deal with the very inadequate bus system in Tampa. There is an expression that only poor people take the bus—but in Tampa it is not because they want to or enjoy waiting 45-50 minutes in the hot sun for the bus to arrive, and then another 45-50 minutes waiting for the connecting bus. It is not unusual for a trip that takes 15 minutes by car to take two and a half hours by bus.

Indeed, there were periods during which I was not earning that much more than some of the working class and low-income individuals and families I came to know in Suphur Springs. We frequently shared tips with each other on how to “flip” our pocket money and make our money stretch further by learning where to buy food and other necessities at the cheapest prices. (Flip meaning to make money off something, including making more money off a lesser amount of money.) This made me recall many similar experiences I had living in Salvador, Brazil while I conducted fieldwork research in support of a Master’s degree in Applied Anthropology. I learned and shared with others,
in similar or worse financial conditions, many ingenious ways to budget money, save pennies, and borrow cash in order to purchase food, pay the phone bill, keep the electricity from being turned off, and come up with rent money in time to avoid getting evicted. Such forms of solidarity, reciprocity, and mutual aid allow people living on low or no income to survive on a day-to-day basis.

Nevertheless, the cost of living in Tampa is high, and there were many periods during which my insufficient income allowed me to buy only the lowest quality of food, and I was often ill due to malnourishment. During these phases, when I would encounter persons who made decent salaries working at other nonprofit organizations, I often regretted not receiving a salary, even a half-time salary, for working at Moses House. I would do calculations in my head about how I could live a little better with an extra paycheck, or what I could eventually do if I were to save the extra earnings. For example, had I earned a modest half-time director’s salary of, say, $20,000 a year, I would now have $100,000 (minus federal income taxes) after five years of work—enough to pay off a large portion of the student loan debt I accumulated in graduate school. Even a smaller salary would have been very welcomed.

However, the value of all that I learned while working at Moses House is immeasurable. Likewise, there is no way to calculate in monetary terms the worth of all the friendships I formed and family I gained through Moses House. I think, moreover, about Taft and Harold Richardson and if they had been getting paid for all the hours of work they put into Moses House over several decades: they could have retired early as millionaires. There have been and still are many others who have volunteered and
continue to volunteer their labor to help Moses House fulfill its mission. I find immense reassurance in that. Caring about others and a commitment to social justice can still trump economic self-interest. The motivation to make a positive difference in the lives of others is not merely emotional or spiritual. Individuals can rationally choose to do things for the greater good when they have an intellectual understanding that others might be at a disadvantage or even that it is not fair for everyone the way things are. Indeed, evolutionarily speaking, our survival as a species has depended on giving, sharing, and mutual aid.

**Building Trusting Relationships through Share Experience, Empathy, and Advocacy**

As discussed in earlier chapters, I was able to do engaged research and pedagogical activism around the problem of youth criminalization in Sulphur Springs because of the relationship I built over time with Moses House. It is highly unlikely that I could have simply gone to the neighborhood, appearing to its residents out of nowhere, and just started asking people questions about encounters with the police. Not only are many people in this neighborhood suspicious of outsiders, especially well-educated white males, such as myself, who are from powerful institutions, such as the university, that are often perceived to be linked to other social institutions that they feel are oppressing them. I could have very well been a police detective working undercover. Over the course of five years of work in Sulphur Springs, several persons who did not know who I was have indeed accused me of being “the police.” On such occasions,
people who I did come to know would come to my defense saying, “No, he ain’t the police. He’s working with Jamar’s granddaddy and Moses House.”

My work with Moses House, as well as my demonstration of respect and empathy with its participants, helped me build rapport and trusting relationships among people in Sulphur Springs, especially with a particular group of young people who were friends with, or relatives of, Taft’s grandchildren. They also all knew each other from having grown up together and gone to the same schools. It took time to establish not only trust, but also to demonstrate the sincerity of my commitment. People in Sulphur Springs are used to outsiders coming into the neighborhood and making promises about doing educational and mentoring work with its children. Many of them, however, do not return after a few weeks because they soon feel that the work is too challenging, or because the kids do not show up when the adult wants them to. Rather than understanding that there are other things going on in the kids’ lives, or realizing that perhaps the kids did not like how they were being treated, or were not interested in what was being offered, the adult rejects the kids so as not to feel rejected.

While doing Moses House programming at the “Rec” over the course of two years (summer 2007 through summer 2009), a number of disappointed nonprofit service providers who volunteered there have told me that they are not going to “waste” their time on kids “who aren’t interested in making themselves better.” Ironically, after coming to the Rec for two or three weeks, then giving up, and leaving, they accuse the neighborhood kids of being transients. “They don’t show up ’cause they’re probably living in some other neighborhood. You know how they’re always moving around.” This
is part of the discourse about “unstable,” “unstructured,” and “dysfunctional” Black families, a racist discourse that has a long history and that became notoriously codified in public policy language in 1965 in the alarmist “Moynihan Report,” The Negro Family: The Case for National Action (Moynihan 1965).

I too had my share of frustrations going to the Rec and sometimes waiting in vain for teenagers to show up to participate in activities that they themselves had wanted and scheduled. My experience with Projeto Axé’s street educators in Salvador, Brazil had taught me the Freirean principle of paciência pedagógica, or “pedagogical patience,” of understanding that not only is learning a process, but that building the social relationships and commitments necessary for learning to take place is also a process (Arney 2007; Freire 1987). I felt that it was up to me to provide a consistent presence before expecting anyone else to. Two years into my Moses House work at the Rec, one of the Moses House youth shared with me what one of the Rec Center coaches had told him. He observed that my co-workers and I showed up week after week, month after month: “[Coach Jones] told me that you all were consistent. You all are consistent in coming back every week at the same time, and he likes that.” Our dedication to offering Moses House programming at the Rec was important for making connections. “[Coach Jones is] the one that introduced me to you all. He wanted me to come in there and talk with you. [He] already knows what I was doing with [wanting to help other youth]. If it wasn’t for him, I wouldn’t have met the Moses House.”

Sometimes I would also go and get some of the kids when they did not feel like walking to the Rec. As simple as it might sound, some of the kids later explained to me
that this showed we cared for them personally and wanted them to be at the Rec rather than the streets. Additionally, by demonstrating my commitment to revitalizing Moses House and investing much of my time and energy into its reorganization and restructuring, including co-directing operations and programming of Moses House with its founders and participants, I was able to gain a degree of respect, especially after one of the Moses House founders, Taft Richardson, passed away from cancer. I began to be viewed as someone who was helping to carry on Taft’s work and mission.

Moses House youth told me that, at one point, the police began questioning some of them about my presence in the neighborhood: Who was I buying drugs from, the police asked, according to the kids, and how much money was I spending on drugs each week? The police have designated Sulphur Springs as a high crime neighborhood, and it has the exaggerated reputation of having armed and dangerous black drug dealers making transactions out in the open in broad daylight. To the police, one of the primary reasons a white person would dare to go there would be to satisfy a drug addiction.

After some of the police in Sulphur Springs had become aware of my presence, through an incident I describe below, I was suspected of coming to the neighborhood to buy drugs. “They asked me if I was selling you drugs,” one of the youth recounted. “I told them hell no, you don’t even drink alcohol. But they kept asking me who you buying drugs from and how much money you spending.” Being seen in the company of Sulphur Springs youth was enough to raise suspicion about me being involved in illegal activity. By ethnographically studying the everyday processes of criminalization, I myself began to be criminalized.
One incident in particular solidified my standing in the minds of the older Moses House youth and earned me a good deal of “street cred.” While I was standing in the driveway of a house with a group of about five or six Sulphur Springs youth, at a point in a focus group interview where they were telling me about police harassment, four police vehicles (two cruisers, one K-9 unit, and a white, unmarked car) suddenly pulled up and surrounded us. Police officers jumped out of the vehicles and aggressively confronted us with questions, claiming that a nearby resident had called them reporting “suspicious persons” and “drug use in progress.” As the police interrogated us, the drug-sniffing dog from the K-9 unit was brought out and led around us to see if it could detect the smell of drugs on us or on the ground where we all were standing.

The police asked me repeatedly how I knew the young men I was talking with and what I was doing with them. I gave my reason for being there, explaining that I was from USF and I was interviewing young people about what it was like for them to have grown up in Sulphur Springs. One of the police officers laughed loudly and mockingly at my explanation. The guys I had been interviewing defended me, saying that all I had been doing was talking to them. The police then accused them of smoking marijuana, claiming that the K-9 dog had located the remains of a marijuana cigarette on the ground nearby, but no evidence was collected. When I said that I had been standing out there for nearly two hours and had not seen any one of the guys smoking marijuana, the police became even angrier. Malcolm, who was in his late twenties and had studied law while previously in prison, asserted that without any evidence, the police could not
arrest us, and without reasonable suspicion, they had no authority to detain us or be there questioning us like that.

“Why you always harassing us? Is it because we black?” he added. “Shut the fuck up!” the lead officer yelled and then threatened to arrest Malcolm for “corruption of minors” because one of the youths, Antwon, was under the age of 18 and the officer had found an empty plastic cup, which he said had the smell of alcohol in it, a short distance from where we all had been standing. The lead officer noticed the clearly visible digital sound recorder I was holding in my right hand. He asked what it was and I told him it was a recorder. He then grabbed it out of my hand and pressed on various buttons until it turned off. This made some of the youths irate. “Did you see what he did? He took that man’s recorder!” Malcolm yelled. The officer walked over to one of the patrol cars and put my recorder on its roof. “Give that man his recorder back!” demanded Malcolm. The police ignored him.

After about twenty minutes of questioning and arguing with us, the police finally decided to order us off the property and write us trespass warnings, pointing to a “No Trespass” sign on the side of the house. The youths were refusing to leave, saying that the person who stayed there had given them permission to be there. After the police threatened to arrest them for opposing a police officer, they complied. I asked the lead officer if I could have my recorder back. He ignored me. I then asked the officer who wrote me the trespass warning citation if I could have my recorder back. He went over to the lead officer, who took the recorder off the roof of his car and began pressing buttons on it again before returning it to me. After I left and checked my recorder, I discovered
that he had erased all the recordings on it—about four hours’ worth of interviews that I had just recorded that day, including about two hours’ worth with these particular youths.

After all the guys I had been with had left the location, the police interrogated me for about fifteen minutes, asking me what I was doing around “dangerous gang members.” “They don’t care about this neighborhood,” he declared. He said that the police were the ones who cared about the neighborhood and had made it safe for me to be there. Before the police had “cleaned it out,” he emphasized, it would have been too dangerous for me to be there. He started giving me a lecture about how if I wanted to learn what it was like to live in Sulphur Springs, I should buy a house and live in the neighborhood—“and see what it’s like when they break in and steal your property.” He then offered to allow me to ride around with him and his partners in their police cars so that they could show me what the black people in the neighborhood were like. “They live like animals,” he assured me. “Those people,” he said, referring to the African American youths I had been interviewing and who had in fact grown up in the neighborhood or still lived there, “don’t know anything about Sulphur Springs and don’t even live here.” They ordered me never to come back there, adding, “If you want to talk to these dirt bags, take them to USF and do it there.”

Eventually they said I was free to go, and I got in my car to leave. As I was doing so, I noticed that the police officers were standing close together and talking in low voices to each other. Moments later, they ordered me to roll down my window and wait. The lead officer came right up to my car and stuck his face in my window. He said that it
was okay for me to come back and talk to “those people” during the daytime. “But,” he explained, “there’s only one house where it’s safe to park your car and you won’t be trespassing.” He asked me if I knew where Mike lived, which was a multi-family apartment just a few buildings down the street we were on. I replied that I did in fact know Mike as well as where he lived. The officer told me the house number three times to make sure I would not forget it. “That’s where you should go if you want to come here and talk to them.” I thought it was strange that the officer, who minutes ago had told me never to come back to Sulphur Springs, was now trying to be helpful and inviting me to return.

When I told some of my research participants about this when I saw them during the next few days, they reacted with surprise, saying, “The police is tryin’ to set you up! They is settin’ you up!” The kids informed me that the address the police were trying to get me to come back to, park my car at, and do interviews with Sulphur Springs youth was a rental property that the owner had given the police orders to arrest anyone on the property who was not one of the renters on the lease. I later sought confirmation from Mike about the trespasser arrest orders; he said it was true. What I infer is that the police were intentionally trying to get me to park at Mike’s house so that they could arrest me—and perhaps whomever I would happen to be interviewing. I discuss the matter of excessive trespassing in more detail in Chapter 6.

What was important to the Sulphur Springs youths I was interviewing, however, was that I stood by their side and did not betray them when the police arrived. The fact that the police harassed me, too, signified that I had personally experienced something
that they frequently go through in their own lives. I could authenticate the experience to others by showing them the written trespass warning I had received. It were as though by being harassed by the police I had in some small way been initiated into life in the hood. “See,” Jamar, among others, told me, “now you know what it’s really like.” They had witnessed the police treating me how the police treat them. They were also extremely angry that the police had erased their interviews from my recorder. What the entire incident showed them, in ways I could have never convinced them with mere words, was that I was sincerely their ally. They retold the incident to their friends in the neighborhood, some of whom, when I saw them at various times over the next several weeks, would excitedly congratulate me as if I had gone through a rite of passage. Dante seemed almost glad when I told him what had happened. “Now you see for yo’self how the police be tryin’ us [provoking us]!” I had never anticipated that direct experience of police harassment would be helpful in overcoming difference and gaining the confidence of participants in a research project.

I sought to make this research project community based and not merely community placed. That is, I intended for the research to be about issues that were important to members of the community, not just have the research take place within the community, and I attempted to enlist their participation and collaboration to the extent that they were willing and able. Furthermore, I attempted to engage in some of the struggles of my research participants. This occurred primarily in two overlapping and interrelated social fields: (1) the struggles of youth to resist criminalization and (2) the struggle of Moses House to remain a viable grassroots nonprofit organization. As argued
by Hale (2007), Speed (2006), Gow (2008), and others, by being more engaged with—and not just participating in or observing—the struggles of a group of people, an ethnographer can produce richer empirical data and more detailed knowledge about everyday violence and structures of domination. I will discuss the struggles of youth to resist criminalization in more detail in Chapter 6. The present chapter is devoted to my engagement with the struggles of Moses House.

From the earliest stages of my research with Taft and Harold Richardson, I learned about aspects of everyday race relations and class discrimination in Tampa that I, a white male with the cultural capital of a university education, would otherwise not know from my own experience. For example, while I was helping the Richardson brothers procure assistance in reorganizing, reincorporating, and funding Moses House, I observed that when all three of us went to a resource center in order to formally inquire about their services, the person who ended up attending us ignored the Richardson brothers and approached me directly. She walked out into the waiting room area, looked around, looked right at the Richardson brothers, and then looked at me, hesitantly inquiring if I were with Moses House. Afterwards, I asked the Richardson brothers if they had witnessed what I had. “Yeah, that’s what they do,” Harold calmly told me in a tone of voice that suggested he were, through decades of experience, used to this custom that socially stratified people and their interactions by race and class.

Taft and Harold were old enough to have lived through racial segregation while it was legal; however, even decades after the Jim Crow laws had been overturned, many of the social practices that characterized society in the U.S. South during the Jim Crow era
remain. Advocating for Moses House gave me deeper understanding about why the organization had struggled for so long to build its capacity and even operate. Over time, I developed greater admiration for the Richardson brothers’ two and a half decades of perseverance in spite of discrimination and apparent disinterest in African American art and cultural traditions.

**Moses House Museum**

I gradually learned more about the history of Moses House through conversation with Taft and Harold as I worked with them on Moses House organizational matters and programming. Moses House began as Moses House Museum, which Taft and Harold founded in 1984 after their mother passed away. They cited their family upbringing and African American heritage as what had taught them to nurture and care for those in the community around him, especially the children. Friend and fellow artist Kenny Dickerson soon joined Moses House. Their goal was to help young people in their community to develop their talents, especially artistic and creative talents, and to appreciate their history and cultural heritage. They also saw Moses House as a way to keep kids out of the streets and focused on their development as individuals and as members of a community. With the support of a group of friends and relatives, Moses House Museum became a small oasis of art, learning, and meaningful social and cultural activity.

Moses House Museum was established in an 860 square foot house on East 33rd Avenue in East Tampa. In my conversations with Harold, he was not able to recall the exact year in which Moses House moved into the building. The real estate was owned by
Festus Moses, Jr., and he allowed Moses House to occupy the property. According to Harold, this man’s last name is the source of the name of the organization, along with the resonance that the mission of the organization had with the Biblical Moses, a man sent to lead his people out of slavery and into freedom. The location of Moses House Museum was north of the College Hill and Ponce de Leon public housing complexes, only a few minutes’ walking distance away. Moses House offered artistic and educational programs and activities for children living in those complexes.

Figure 4: Artistic depiction of Moses as an African American with the power of creativity residing in the hand. From Moses House Museum collection. Image courtesy of Folkvine.

Moses House Museum operated in East Tampa from the mid-1980s up until about 1999, when the City of Tampa began demolishing the housing after being awarded $35 million in HOPE VI project funding by the Department of Housing and Urban Development for replacing College Hill and Ponce de Leon with new housing and mixed-income “housing opportunities.” Up until that time, the Moses House Museum
served as a place for African American children living in urban poverty to exercise their creative agency and explore their cultural identity and heritage under the mentorship of caring adults. The Museum also exhibited many of Taft Richardson’s bone sculptures, as well as a growing collection of African American art. Lush trees and plants surrounded the building. There was nothing else like it in Tampa.

Figure 5: Taft Richardson, Kenny Dickerson, and Harold Richardson inside the Moses House Museum in East Tampa. Photo courtesy of the Tampa Tribune (May 1993).

Public support for Moses House Museum was sporadic but very welcomed when it did come. In 1992, letters began arriving in the mail notifying the Museum that the building in which it was installed was going into foreclosure. A campaign was launched to save the Museum from foreclosure. It caught the attention of newly-elected Florida State Representative Lesley “Les” Miller, Jr., whose Tampa office helped the Museum legally incorporate as a charitable organization and successfully file for 501(c)(3)
nonprofit, tax-exempt status with the IRS (Fitzgerald 1993). Enough money was raised
for the Museum to buy the property in 1993. Moses House Museum was then able to
devote its attention once again to artistic and educational programming, concentrating
on the themes of resurrection, Christian spirituality, African and African American
culture and history, and work skills development through teaching young people how to
make artistic products.

After the City of Tampa demolished the College Hill and Ponce de Leon public
housing complexes, the Moses House Museum moved to Spring Hill, the historically
African American neighborhood in North Tampa in which Taft and Harold Richardson
grew up. Spring Hill is a small community, geographically consisting of only a few streets
and a number of small blocks. As surrounding neighborhoods expanded, Spring Hill
became part of Sulphur Springs. Waters Avenue, a main thoroughfare that cuts Sulphur
Springs in half from east to west, remained the line of racial division, with Sulphur
Springs to the south and Spring Hill to the north. A small park in the neighborhood is
named Spring Hill Park, and a newly constructed recreation center has been named
Spring Hill Community Center. For the most part, however, only the community’s elder
African American residents still refer to the area as “Spring Hill.” The area is otherwise
generally considered part of the neighborhood of Sulphur Springs. Many of the families
of the children that had participated in Moses House Museum programs in East Tampa
were relocated to Sulphur Springs.
Taft, Harold, and family set up Moses House Museum in a small house on East Skagway Avenue. Art and gardening classes were offered in the house and yard until the fall of 2007 when Taft became too ill to lead the classes. By the time Moses House had moved to Spring Hill, Taft’s bone sculpture artwork had caught the attention of folk art historian Kristin Congdon, Professor of Philosophy and Humanities at the University of Central Florida (UCF). Congdon studied and interpreted the meaning of Taft’s bone sculptures and the spirituality and philosophy they embodied, and published several scholarly articles on his artwork and community activism (Congdon 2010; Congdon and Bucuvalas 2006). The principal themes of Taft’s work were resurrection, transformation, and spiritual healing and liberation inspired by the teachings of Jesus. Resurrection, as Congdon has explained, takes on a number of meanings in Taft’s work, from the making of life-like works of art out of the skeletal remains of dead animals, to the Biblical...
resurrection of Jesus, to the renewal of hope and uplifting of children’s spirits. There is a profound social message in Taft’s work: that those who have been marginalized and discarded by society can work together to construct positive personal and social transformations out of the broken and thrown away pieces.

Figure 7: Bone sculpture representing the crucifixion of Jesus, by Taft Richardson. Courtesy of Folkvine.

In 2004, Congdon and the Folkvine Group at UCF launched a beautiful interactive website (http://folkvine.umbc.edu/richardson/) that virtually exhibits images of Taft’s bone sculptures, placing them in the context of Taft’s life and emphasizing how his work, including Moses House, is strongly rooted in his own community. In recognizing and celebrating Taft’s work, Congdon and the Folkvine Group have performed a valuable service for Taft and his community, and Taft and Harold often told me how grateful they were.
When I met Taft and Harold in June of 2007, they wanted to expand their programming to reach more children in the neighborhood. In terms of existing facilities in the neighborhood, the most logical place to do that was in the North Tampa Recreation Center (the “Rec”), which had multiple activity rooms as well as a very large multipurpose room. I began meeting there with Taft and Harold, and we had a number of discussions about what sort of artistic and educational programming might bring more young people to the Rec.

What also emerged from these discussions was that Moses House had no funds and few resources. Taft, Harold, and the others who had helped Moses House along its way for the last twenty years had done their work out of charity, and had relied on donations and volunteered labor. They were interested, however, in constructing a more durable organizational structure and in applying for grant monies to fund programs, buy supplies, and pay staff and operating expenses. They also desired to have their own
building in Sulphur Springs in which they could exhibit all of Taft’s work as well as the Moses House Museum art collection and original artwork by neighborhood children. The house on Skagway Avenue was not large enough to do that; it was only approximately 700 square feet.

Moses House Museum had been determined to be a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization in 1993 by the IRS. The Tampa office of State Representative Lesley Miller had helped Moses House file the necessary paperwork for that determination. After only a few years, however, the tax-exempt status was revoked for failure to file the requisite yearly paperwork with the IRS and the State of Florida. When I began working with Taft and Harold in 2007, the East Tampa property belonging to the Moses House Museum was not being utilized, and it had accumulated several years of delinquent property taxes. Therefore, some important items of business that needed to be resolved were the reinstatement of the 501(c)(3) status and deciding what to do with the East Tampa property. Taft and Harold were not sure how to go about resolving these matters; nor was I at the time. I promised, however, to research what our options were and to ask for the advice of others who might be able to guide us.

**Reorganizing and Revitalizing a Grassroots Nonprofit Organization from the Ground Up**

Taft and especially Harold were always against the idea of allowing another nonprofit organization take over the affairs of Moses House. Since I first began working with him, Harold has told me repeatedly that he never wants Moses House to be under the control of another organization or the government. “When you’re under somebody else or somebody else’s organization,” he would say, “you have people telling you what
to do, and you lose your freedom to do what you want to do.” Consolidation was out of the question, and previous efforts at collaboration had engendered mistrust: “You’re the one who does all the work, and then someone else ends up taking all the credit.”

I was content with starting from scratch in terms of organizational restructuring and filing documents with the government. I was interested in learning what needed to be done in order to legally establish a nonprofit organization, as well as what knowledge and skills were required to complete all the required steps. The mission, values, pedagogy, and history of Moses House were already there to build on. Taft, Harold, and others had been doing Moses House programming for more than twenty years by the time I became involved. What was needed at this time was more formal and structured organizational leadership and management, as well as a realistic assessment of Moses House’s current strengths and shortcomings. If the organization were to continue to be sustainable, it needed to get its affairs in order, better document and publicize its work and achievements, and engage with government agencies, private foundations, and the general public in ways that would generate support, financial and otherwise.

Moses House was founded and operated at the grassroots level by African Americans who had lived through legalized racial segregation, the Jim Crow era in the U.S. South, and had had direct experience of racial, class, social, and cultural discrimination. Compared with many other leaders of inner city organizations, they understood what it is like for younger African Americans growing up in a society in which racial segregation and discrimination still exist, even though such practices are no longer explicitly sanctioned by law. The Moses House founders also had a critical understanding
about how our society is stratified by class through the exploitation of human labor and the unequal accumulation of money and capital. Over the course of my five years working with Harold Richardson, I was often amazed by how clearly he articulated a class-based explanation for how poverty and wealth are not only interrelated but also produced and reproduced through control of the means of production and the social domination of certain groups of people who are categorized as different and considered inferior. I do not know how comfortable he felt in discussing these ideas with others; he once told me, “If people hear you talking like this, they’re going to call you a communist.” Harold also had an anthropological understanding of “race,” despite, ironically, not accepting the theory of evolution. I had many discussions with him about human diversity, and he always declared that there is only one human species; that different groups of people live and make meaning differently because of cultural differences, not “racial” differences; and that racial categories as well as the very idea of race were created by people in power in order to divide, control, and pit groups of people against each other. These understandings came from Harold’s own experience and intellectual development.

In addition to critical understandings of race and class that informed the work of the founders of Moses House, they also believed that African American history and cultural heritage should be woven into their educational programs. There was a sense that these topics were not being taught in the public school system, or were only being introduced in a very superficial way during Black History Month—or worse, that all the kids were learning about their history was a very crude story about how they were once
slaves, but now they are “free.” Part of the core mission of Moses House was to teach young African Americans that they had a rich history and cultural heritage of which they should be proud and that, moreover, their ancestors had origins on the continent of Africa prior to their forced relocation and enslavement in the Caribbean and North, South, and Central America. The Moses House founders believed that African Americans should reject negative and degrading identities and that children, especially, should be taught how to construct their identities based on positive aspects of their own ethnic history and culture.

As the above suggests, the founders of Moses House were, in the Gramscian sense, organic intellectuals (Gramsci 2005[1971]) who emerged out of the lived experience of racially segregated, working class life in urban Tampa. Moses House Museum in East Tampa was a place in which they could freely engage in critical dialogue. Kenny Dickerson, one of the artists who was instrumental in establishing Moses House Museum, has recounted to me transformational nights at Moses House when they would stay up all night making art while talking and analyzing what was going on in the world. The Moses House founders also understood what it was like to live under police harassment and to experience police officers as agents of social control who represent the dominant class of white society. Harold has told me he still vividly remembers the days when if more than two or three black people were seen together in public, the police would approach them and tell them to “break it up.”

As I learned more about the history of Moses House and the social and historical context in which it was constructed, I realized that an abundance of critical knowledge
and wisdom had accumulated along with the material works of art that had been produced and collected at the East Tampa location, and now in Sulphur Springs. The Moses House founders intended all this to be for the enrichment and transformation of their community, not for personal gain or selfish interests, and they did not get paid, nor would accept being paid, for their work. Taft liked to exhibit his work, but he refused to sell any of it. Moses House was a grassroots nonprofit organization supported by charitable giving. An ethic of care, mutual aid, sharing, and solidarity undergirded its works. Its educational philosophy and approach was what educational theorists and scholars would call an anti-racist, social justice based, and culturally responsive critical pedagogy.

All of this, I felt, needed to be sustained, supported, and enhanced. My previous fieldwork research and study of the ethnographic literature on grassroots social activism had solidified in my mind the importance of community-based organizations. This is not to idealize or romanticize “community,” for every community is neither homogenous nor free of conflict; but as a generalization, people at the level of community are much more capable of identifying what is meaningful and relevant to them than are people from outside the community. Furthermore, people at the level of community know through direct experience what is constraining their agency and causing them suffering. They might not always know or be able to explain what the larger, structural causes are; but they have direct experiences of the effects, which they can learn how to analyze so as to trace effects back to their causes.
I began doing some research on the legal aspects of creating a nonprofit organization in the hope that I would discover a quick and easy way to reorganize Moses House and reinstate its 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, so that we could move forward in building its capacity to offer more programming. I met with Taft and Harold a few times to discuss my initial findings. I let them know that the work was going to be more complicated and costly than what we had anticipated, and that we should explore all our options. Neither of them were discouraged, defending Moses House as “the snail that can’t be stopped.” They said that the dedication I had shown to working with them over the summer and my initiative in attempting to figure out the procedures for filing the proper organizational paperwork with the state of Florida and the IRS was evidence enough to appoint me director. They said no one had ever shown either one of them how to manage a nonprofit organization and that they were not that interested in serving in that capacity. I am no enthusiast of paperwork, filing cabinets, legal documents, and bureaucratic structures; therefore, I was not that interested either in being an organizational director or manager.

Nonetheless, I figured that if no one else wanted to do it, then I would because it needed to be done. Furthermore, I reasoned, understanding nonprofit organization, leadership, and management could be part of my overall learning as a graduate student studying nongovernmental organizations. I knew that the USF Public Administration program offers a graduate certificate in nonprofit management and that thus there were a handful of courses on operating nonprofit organizations. My faculty advisor Susan Greenbaum recommended that I contact Professor Joan Pynes, the director of the...
program, who advised me to enroll in Nonprofit Leadership and Management that fall. It was also recommended that Moses House contact the Judge Don Castor Community Law Center at Bay Area Legal Services in order to get legal and technical assistance, which the Center provides free of charge to eligible nonprofits serving low-income communities.

It was good that I could take the graduate level nonprofit course at the university; considering that the course met for an entire semester, the cost per credit hour was much less expensive than if I had taken a dozen or so separate courses at a nonprofit training center. Likewise, Moses House had no money to pay for legal assistance, so without the help of Bay Area Legal Services, we would not have gotten very far in terms of dealing with the legal aspects of the reorganization of Moses House. A lawyer at the Community Law Center provided us with all the basic information we needed to understand what our options were. One of her most important recommendations was for us to consider reincorporating as Moses House rather than Moses House Museum. Although exhibiting artworks and artifacts was part of the Moses House mission, having the word museum in the name of the organization could limit our funding eligibility, and Moses House was no longer able to serve as a museum.

Additionally, the lawyer matched us up with a team of local attorneys specializing in corporate law. They agreed to offer pro bono legal services to Moses House for the purpose of reestablishing it as a legal corporate entity and filing for tax-exempt recognition with the IRS. Their services were indispensable; the process of creating articles of incorporation, bylaws, and preparing IRS Form 1023 required expertise that
no one at Moses House had. Due to some complications relating to Moses House Museum record keeping, inactivity of past members of the board of directors, and the real estate property in East Tampa, it took additional time to sort out matters so that we would achieve the most advantageous results. Therefore, we were not ready to file articles of incorporation and bylaws with the State of Florida Division of Corporations until May 2008. We were not ready to send the IRS our application for tax-exempt status as a 501(c)(3) public charity until December of 2009; part of the delay was coming up with money to pay the $750 application fee. It was approved in February of the following year, and the effective date of exemption was retroactively set to May 16, 2008, the day the Florida Division of Corporations received and filed Moses House’s new articles of incorporation.

In the meantime, I had completed the Nonprofit Leadership and Management course, learning much about the everyday management of a nonprofit organization as well as the nonprofit sector itself. The course was very beneficial, and I was able to apply just about everything I learned to the leadership and management of Moses House. I was also able to translate the knowledge I had gained into easily comprehensible explanations of nonprofit organization, operations, and management whenever Moses House had a meeting regarding its organizational affairs. One of the things I remember most from the course was when Professor Pynes stated that incorporating as a nonprofit organization and filing for tax-exempt status were the easy part and that the real work was operating and sustaining an organization. For Moses House, incorporating and filing with the IRS were not without delays and difficulties; and yet, that the effort put into
those tasks would be the “easy part” turned out to be prophetic. All the work that came afterward was indeed more labor intensive and exhausting than any of us could have imagined.

**Moses House at the Rec Center**

Taft and Harold had wanted to start a very basic arts and crafts class once a week for elementary school children in the afterschool program at the North Tampa Recreation Center (the “Rec”). This was set to begin in the fall of 2007. Only a few weeks into the program, Taft suddenly became very ill and was not able to continue as the lead instructor. I was able to enlist other USF student volunteers to help Harold and me offer the class. We were all very concerned about Taft’s health, but he wanted us, as Harold put it, “to take Moses House as far as we could take it.” From the fall of 2007 to the fall of 2008, things moved along incrementally. In addition to activities at the Rec Center, I was spending a good deal of time working on the organizational affairs of Moses House, as well as reading and researching how to make small nonprofits more sustainable and successful. This time was important in that it allowed Moses House to build a relationship with the Rec Center staff and children, as well as with other organizations in the neighborhood, and, moreover, learn more about the neighborhood itself. I also began meeting more of the teenagers who would become participants in my research on criminalization.

The Rec Center was a place where teenagers and young adults in the neighborhood would go in the early evenings on weekdays. It was built in 1958 and
located in the northwest quadrant of Sulphur Springs, very close to the Spring Hill area. The Rec, with its plain design, forbidding concrete block structure, and gray chain-link fence surrounding the premises, had the appearance of a detention compound. Despite its lack of resources and stark appearance, it was a very popular and busy place to be during the evenings, especially Friday evenings. The parking lot was usually overflowing with cars, the outdoor basketball courts were bustling with athletic activity, the outdoor picnic tables were full of people chatting and socializing. A mix of cheers, laughter, and loud and lively conversation filled the air. On the inside, one could hear intermittent metallic clanking sounds coming from the weight room, the sharp cracking sound of billiard balls colliding on the pool table in the game room, and the dull thud of feet stomping rhythmically on the floor from the step dancers in the large activity room. The Rec was a vibrant center of neighborhood social and recreational life. Indeed, it was the only public place in the neighborhood available for such functions.

However, the Rec also had other functions, some of them punitive. On school days, during school hours, the Rec was one of the sites for Hillsborough County Public School’s (HCPS) Alternative To Out of School Suspension (or ATOSS) program. According to the HCPS’s website, ATOSS is a “voluntary” program “for students who have been suspended from school as a consequence for inappropriate behavior” (Hillsborough County Public Schools 2012). Rather than being suspended from school, missing schoolwork, and having the absences due to suspension count against them, ATOSS “provides behavioral and academic help for a period of one to ten days” (Hillsborough County Public Schools 2012). Upon successful completion of the program, a student’s
time in ATOSS will count for full attendance and they may make up the missed
schoolwork when they return to their school (Hillsborough County Public Schools 2012).
I had been at the Rec a few times while ATOSS was in session. Held in the large activity
room, the program was composed mostly of males, who sat at tables quietly and apart
from each other while they obediently read, wrote, or filled in worksheets. A sheriff’s
deputy was present in order to enforce order and discipline, and a deputy squad car was
parked outside.

Around this time, spring of 2008, was when middle school students at the Rec
told me about “school resource officers.” Up to that time, I had never heard of such a
professional position. “They’re the police inside the school,” I was told. “Why do they
need police in the schools?” I asked. I had never heard of such a thing. I graduated from
high school in 1991, and I cannot recall any instance during my entire experience in K-12
public schools the police ever having come to the school—let alone be stationed inside it
on a daily basis. Middle and elementary school kids at the Rec explained to me that the
police broke up fights and took kids to the JAC (Juvenile Assessment Center) “when they
were bad.” I wondered why police were needed. During my time in K-12 school, there
were plenty of fights and physical altercations, as well as times when some kids acted
very badly, but school personnel always dealt with disciplinary issues within the school.
Why are there police in the schools nowadays, I pondered, and since when has law
enforcement become so involved with discipline inside schools?

Male teenagers at the Rec also told me that police had begun showing up at the
Rec more often, especially around closing time in the evening, when the boys would
finish playing basketball and walk home. Police cars would be waiting nearby, and they would slowly follow the boys down the street to their homes, sometimes shining their searchlight on them, sometimes verbally harassing them, and sometimes writing them traffic citations for jaywalking or for failure to use a sidewalk—even when they were walking down streets without sidewalks. It seemed to me very odd that police officers were being employed to carry out such tactics. I had observed police cars parked around the perimeter of the Rec on several occasions while I was there to do Moses House programming or meet with people. Why the surveillance of children and youth at a recreational facility? Why police presence if there were no calls for service? Prompted by Moses House founders and participants, I would begin to learn more about the experiences and perspectives of Sulphur Springs youth regarding police surveillance.

All Moses House activities at this time (fall 2007 onward) were taking place at the Rec. Shortly after Taft fell ill in the fall of 2007, the property on East Skagway Avenue where Moses House had been operating was sold, and Taft moved in with one of his daughters and her children, all of whom helped take care of him. Moses House had become homeless. Were it not for the Rec, there would have been no publicly available and community accessible space in Sulphur Springs for doing Moses House programs, which we continued to hold at the Rec until the fall of 2009.

By the fall of 2008, Taft’s health had deteriorated dramatically due to his body’s battle with cancer, and he was hospitalized. On Sunday, November 30, 2008, at the age of 65, “Granddaddy Taft,” as he was affectionately called by those closest to him, passed away. The last time I saw him was when I visited him in the critical care unit at St.
Joseph's Hospital on the afternoon of that same day. By then he was already on life support and was sedated, so I did not have the opportunity to talk with him one last time. After I left the hospital, only a few hours later, I received a call from one of his granddaughters, who informed me that he had passed on peacefully. Funeral and burial services were held on Saturday, December 13. His family asked me to say a few words at the funeral service in tribute to his memory and his Moses House work. In honor of Granddaddy Taft and his family, I include here an excerpt from the written text I prepared and read at the service.

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I first met Taft and his brother Harold during the summer of 2007. I was introduced to them through one of my professors at the University of South Florida. I still remember that first meeting, sitting on a picnic table in Spring Hill Playground, under the shade of the pavilion on a hot, sunny day in June. Mr. Taft talked very passionately about using art to create opportunities for neighborhood children and youth to explore what was going on in the world around them and to reconnect themselves with their cultural heritage and the history of their own people. I share a similar interest in art and social activism, and so I asked Mr. Taft and Mr. Harold what I could do to contribute to their work. There began my involvement with the Moses House, the art museum and community organization that Taft and Harold had started more than twenty years ago....

Optimistic, hopeful, and even visionary, Mr. Taft nonetheless had a very clear understanding of reality, and he was always well aware of what was going on around him. During our conversations, which were too few in number, Mr. Taft spoke very knowledgeably and perceptively about social problems. He was very concerned about poverty, racism, and other forms of injustice in society. He was troubled deeply by the ways our society is criminalizing its youth, it’s very future. And talking about these subjects always brought him to tears. I don’t know if I have ever met someone who was as sensitive to the suffering of others as was Mr. Taft. I also greatly admired his firm belief that the pain and anger one feels at witnessing injustice and wrongdoing can be turned into something positive, creative, and personally and socially transforming.

The social activism of Mr. Taft took place through his undying love for others, which he expressed most concretely through his many
extraordinary works of art. Mr. Taft’s words and actions communicated care and respect for others with a degree of authenticity that is increasingly difficult to find in people. In my conversations with Mr. Taft, he wasted no time in getting to a genuine level of meaningful dialogue. This for me is the essence, the soul of Mr. Taft: authentic, meaningful, open dialogue. He never imposed his own ideas or beliefs, and he was always interested in hearing other points of view. He was very curious about how others perceived and experienced reality, and very eager to share his own experiences and perceptions. This was evident in his work and in his philosophy of art. “In all of my work, is a message,” Mr. Taft once told me. “And if you come and view my work, you’ll see a message in there that you can gather and take back with you.” I believe I speak for many of us when I say that in Mr. Taft’s life and work, we each found a message—many messages, whose truth will continue to inspire us till the end of our days.

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**Taft Richardson Tribute Project**

With Taft gone, the future of Moses House was uncertain. After Taft’s funeral, there was talk of closing Moses House. Harold believed that God had decided that Taft’s work here on earth was done, and he was not sure if he were able to continue the mission of Moses House without Taft around. Deeply saddened by their loss, Taft’s family requested help with preserving his legacy and memorializing his importance. They also wanted to hold a public event in his honor at the Rec Center in Sulphur Springs. The idea of producing a memorial DVD emerged. I enlisted the aid of Mabel Sabogal, one of my fellow graduate students in the anthropology doctoral program at USF. Coincidentally, she was enrolled in Professor Elizabeth Bird’s *Visual Anthropology* graduate course, which required students to do a visual anthropology project. Mabel already had professional experience with video filming, editing, and production. The previous semester (fall 2008), Mabel had completed a service-learning project for Moses House through the *Issues in Heritage Tourism* graduate seminar offered by Antoinette
Jackson, Associate Professor of Anthropology at USF. In consultation with me, Mabel created the design and structural organization for the first website of Moses House.

Mabel and I had discussions with Harold and Taft’s close family members how they wanted to memorialize Taft and his work. We decided to video record interviews with family members, friends, and admirers of Taft—some of the many people whose lives had been touched by his caring personality, spiritual vision, and artistic gifts. We first recorded a focus group composed of some of Taft’s closest family members, and
then separately video recorded interviews with three university professors who knew Taft personally. Then, on April 3, 2009, at the North Tampa Community Center (the “Rec”), in Taft’s own neighborhood, the USF Department of Anthropology, Moses House, and Taft’s family co-hosted a public event in his honor. The tributes that had been recorded prior to this event were presented to the live audience in the hope of eliciting more reminiscences and tributes. Moved by the recorded tributes, members of the live audience offered more in the form of performances dedicated to Taft and reminiscences about how he had touched the lives of all who had known him. These additional tributes and performances were also video recorded.

The Taft tribute event was well attended; we estimate that well over 100 people attended. The event was covered by the local press, including the *Tampa Tribune* (Steele 2009a) and the *Florida Sentinel Bulletin* (Crews 2009b), the latter being Tampa’s only African American owned newspaper. In the following weeks, Mabel and I viewed the all recorded video footage, and then edited it into a 53-minute video containing excerpts from the interviews with family members, friends, and admirers, as well as the tributes, reminiscences, and performances that were dedicated to Taft at the public event. We showed the video to Harold Richardson, Taft’s closest brother, in order to get his approval before making the final cut. In late spring of 2009, Moses House was able to release the DVD, entitled *In Honor of “Granddaddy Taft”: Resurrecting a Community Artist through Tribute and Remembrance* (Arney and Sabogal 2009). Copies were given to Taft’s closest family members and supporters. The DVD and community celebration of Taft and his work received collaborative support from Kristin Congdon and the Folkvine
Group at the University of Central Florida, Antoinette Jackson’s Heritage Research and Resource Management Lab, and Taft’s close family, who prepared and served a banquet of food at the conclusion of the tribute.

Figure 10: Case cover of the Taft tribute DVD. Profile image of Taft Richardson courtesy of the Heritage Research and Resource Management Lab, Department of Anthropology, University of South Florida. Cover design by Lance Arney.

The process of recording the remembrances and tributes, as well as the community event in tribute to Taft, helped those involved to mourn their loss. Additionally, it helped to revitalize or, to borrow the major theme of Taft’s own work, resurrect an interest in Moses House and a collective desire for it to continue its work. Taft may be gone, but his vision, spirituality, philosophy, and social activism continue to inspire the work of Moses House. Soon after the tribute event on April 3, Moses House was already expanding its programming and building collaborative relationships with a variety of supportive community partners.
Street Music Workshop

In inviting people from my social networks to the Taft tribute event, I had contacted James Kuzin, a colleague and graduate of the USF Applied Anthropology Master’s program. Along with Wendy Hathaway, another Applied Anthropology graduate student, James had done research and educational outreach in Sulphur Springs in the early 2000s (Hathaway, 2007 #6124; Hathaway, 2005 #6571; Jones, 2002 #6572). James is well connected to people in the Tampa Bay creative community, and he wanted to see if he could interest some local DJs in offering a creative workshop on hip-hop music, turntables, and recording original creative vocal work in the form of rap and freestyle. He introduced me to Carlos “DJ Chang” Corcho in early April of 2009. Carlos understood the importance of music and cultural relevance in the lives of people, as well as the need for self-expression through art and creativity. Carlos and I discussed some of the parameters of a possible collaboration, and then we met at the Rec with some of the youth I knew in order to discuss with them whether they would be interested in a weekly hip-hop based music and turntables workshop. They were not only interested, they were enthusiastic and let us know what they wanted to get out of the workshop.

Based on these meetings and discussions, Carlos and I then articulated the following, and admittedly ambitious, goals and objectives of the workshop, which Carlos named the “Street Music and Turntables Workshop,” in reference to the urban street origins of the genre of music as well as to the street as a site of struggle and social protest. The general goals of the workshop were:

- To provide a supportive educational outlet for neighborhood youth to express their musical talents, lyrical creativity, and poetic gifts.
To construct a positive social space in which neighborhood youth can critically discuss community issues while enhancing their abilities to artistically represent such issues.

To advance the multicultural and social justice education potential of artistic and cultural activities in the neighborhood.

The specific objectives of the workshop were:

- To successfully develop, produce, and record the musical, lyrical, and poetic talents of youth participants.
- To finish songs, raps, and poetry that have already been created by youth participants, with the objective of releasing a mix tape or compilation CD of their work.
- To promote, sell, and release finished works to friends, the community, and the general public in order to raise money to support workshop participants’ artistic endeavors as well as the continuation of the workshop.
- To plan a talent show for the local community and general public for the purpose of performing the participants’ creations after production has been finished. All proceeds and donations from the talent show will go toward furthering the workshop participants’ education.
- To design a standards based learning curriculum that matches culturally relevant knowledge and practices to applicable Florida Department of Education Next Generation Sunshine State Standards.

The workshop also had several publicity and promotions objectives:

- To develop an online presence to promote the music being developed out of the workshop to the community, world, and the music industry. This includes the use of MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, Vimeo, Twitter, and a variety of music forums and blogs.
- To create documentary videos of the workshop sessions as well as low budget music videos to promote the participants’ work.
- To garner local, national, and international media coverage of the music through CD reviews, artist interviews, and news articles.

After receiving permission from the Rec, we began holding the workshop on Wednesday evenings in the Art Room. I bought some used sound equipment and speakers from a Salvation Army store. Every week I would bring this equipment, which we would hook up to Carlos’ laptop and microphone. A friend of Carlos, DJ James West,
started loaning us his turntables and then soon volunteered to help conduct the workshop. Two other graduate students from the Anthropology Department volunteered as mentors and instructors. This soon became Moses House’s most popular program among Sulphur Springs male youth, many of whom could find release from the pressures of everyday life in the freestyle rapping sessions scheduled into the workshop. We also soon found that the workshop also offered opportunities to improve literacy (participants would consult dictionaries when writing down their lyrics), encourage social activism, and develop positive leadership skills in the local community. It also brought together different age groups, from younger children to older teens and young adults.

Figure 11: DJ Chang with Street Music Workshop participants. Photo by the author.
The Moses House Street Music Workshop even garnered the attention of the local press. In August of 2009, a *Tampa Bay Times* (formerly the *St. Petersburg Times*) reporter visited the workshop. She wrote an article entitled “In Sulphur Springs, Teaching Kids the ABCs of R-A-P” for the *tbt* (a weekday digest version of the *Times*), about the workshop’s efforts to provide a supportive, nurturing social space in which Sulphur Springs youth could have fun developing their rap and free-styling talents while simultaneously improving their literacy skills (Colón 2009b). A shorter version also appeared in the *St. Petersburg Times* (Colón 2009a). The Workshop participants were thrilled to see themselves featured in the newspaper. To young people with high aspirations, the attention brought to them by this *tbt* coverage reaffirmed their creative talents and potential. The following month, a broadcast journalist for Bright House Network’s Bay News 9 visited the Street Music Workshop to film the workshop and interview participants for a segment called *Life Under 21*, which features interesting stories about positive activities in which young people are engaged in the Tampa Bay Area. Workshop participants and other youth in the neighborhood were overjoyed to see themselves on television (Belusky 2009). The media coverage received by the Street Music Workshop was greatly appreciated. Whenever I showed the newspaper articles or *Life Under 21* video segment to Sulphur Springs youth, they usually responded by saying, “Finally, something positive in the news about Sulphur Springs,” or a similarly phrased expression.
The Street Music Workshop also spawned a community event that was organized by the workshop participants and Moses House, who partnered with the Rec and the Boys and Girls Clubs to host the first-ever Sulphur Springs Summer Slam Jam on August 7, 2009. Neighborhood kids, teens, and young adults showed off their athletic and musical talents through participation in basketball contests and live musical performances, spoken word, and dance. Coaches from the Rec and the Boys and Girls Club refereed and supervised basketball tournaments and contests. DJ Chang deejayed, keeping the music playing throughout the entire event. A festive mood infused everyone and a party atmosphere prevailed, despite the approaching storm clouds and light drizzle. Moses House served free food to everyone in attendance, giving out $750 worth of food and prizes to Sulphur Springs youth.

The Street Music Workshop and the Summer Slam Jam were also instructive in providing a wider understanding of criminalization in the context of everyday life for youth in Sulphur Springs. Some Rec Center staff expressed concern that we were
“promoting gangs” or a criminal lifestyle. One staff member from another organization that operated, at the Rec threatened to call the police to shut down the workshop when she overheard some of the youth using mild swearwords. This happened again toward the end of the Summer Slam Jam. On that occasion, she confiscated the microphone and disconnected the power cord to the sound system. Another youth services staff who was at the Summer Slam Jam approached afterwards and stated she was impressed by how many young people we were able to attract to the event. She gave me her card, and asked me to schedule a meeting with her because her non-profit wanted to “learn how to work with gangs.” As she said the word *gangs*, she motioned widely with her arm at all the youth who were still present.

Figure 13: Flyer advertising the Sulphur Springs Summer Slam Jam. Design by James Wester.
Prior to the Summer Slam Jam event, during our planning meetings with the Rec staff, we were told that we would have to hire off-duty police officers as “security” in case things “got out of control” or if “gangs from other neighborhoods” came to cause trouble. For that reason—so that rival neighborhoods would not come—we were not allowed to advertise the event in the local newspaper. We had wanted to put an ad in the Florida Sentinel Bulletin, the “Black newspaper,” which many people in Sulphur Springs read. We were instructed that we had to tell people it was an “in-house” event, intended only for Sulphur Springs youth. We did not hire any police, although the police did in fact come to the event at the beginning and then left later on. It was festive, but very peaceful. There were no fights, altercations, or anything requiring the police to intervene in order to maintain law and order.

The youth of Sulphur Springs were predominantly seen as a problem or potential problem serious enough to require police surveillance. These youth are usually characterized as lacking in a sense of community and incapable of civic action. However, they had co-organized and promoted the most well attended event at the Rec that summer—an event about which they still reminisce with gratification and desire to hold again. Instead of seeing what these youth were capable of doing for their community if provided with positive support, some at their “community center” viewed them with suspicion, fear, and anxiety. Policing and surveillance were practices of governance and social control that now extended into everyday recreational life. One Rec coach explained to me later that fall, referring to their relationship with the police, “We work with them, and they work with us.”
Another plan that resulted from the Taft tribute project was to teach more of the younger children in the neighborhood about Taft and his artwork. We were considering ways we might do that at the Rec, but in the meantime there emerged the opportunity for doing programming at another location, one which promised to reach even more kids than we could at the Rec. That spring, the Tampa Metropolitan YMCA had established at Sulphur Springs Elementary what it called the “Community Learning Center” (or CLC), which would serve as a hub for afterschool programs, including program offerings by other organizations in addition to the YMCA’s own afterschool programs. I thought that Moses House should look into the possibility of partnering with the CLC, and I scheduled a meeting for Harold Richardson and I with the YMCA Community Initiatives Program Director at Sulphur Springs Elementary.

The central idea behind the Bone Sculpture Workshop grew out of this meeting. After Harold and I explained significance of Taft Richardson and his bone sculpture artwork to the Program Director, he suggested that Moses House could participate in the YMCA Community Learning Center’s Summer Camp by offering an art-based academic enrichment program through which elementary school children could arrange plastic skeletal bones into sculptures of their own creation. Besides the fun the children could have playing with bones, we all agreed that the program would also be a way to teach the neighborhood children about local history and cultural heritage through its focus on the life and work of Taft Richardson, the inspiration behind the Bone Sculpture Workshop.
The workshop was held during the 2009 YMCA Summer Camp, and then again during the first half of the 2009-2010 school year. During the Summer Camp, the workshop was offered to four groups of children, kindergarten through third grade. The workshop met twice a week for fifty minutes each session. There were an average of 25 kids in each group, totaling around 100 in all. The Workshop was conducted by me, who served as lead instructor, and two undergraduate student volunteers from the University of South Florida (USF). I made a small monetary gift to Moses House in order to purchase plastic bones that would be used in the workshop. For the fall-winter offering, we had one group of twenty-five children. I served as lead instructor again and was assisted by two different undergraduate student volunteers from USF. 

At the beginning of the Workshop, I explained to the kids that they could have fun making things out of plastic bones, and that we would also be learning about local

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5 I would like to thank USF students Kenny Renaud, Jessica Henderson, Helmut Melhorn, and Krystle Shepheard for volunteering as assistant instructors in the Bone Sculpture Workshop. The workshop would not have been as successful, or fun, without their help.
history, cultural heritage, neighborhood identity, biography, language, and storytelling. I presented a map that showed where in the neighborhood Taft had lived, in relationship to landmarks that were familiar to the kids (see image below). Taft’s former residence was just a short walk down the street from the elementary school. Although Taft had passed away in November 2008, a few of the kids from the higher grades were old enough to remember meeting Taft and visiting his house and bone sculpture garden. One of them even wrote Taft an appreciation letter, which I said I would give to his brother Harold.

![Map of Spring Hill showing Taft's former residence](image)

Figure 15: An area of Spring Hill. Image courtesy of Google Maps.

I also showed two video documentaries (Folkvine Group 2005; Mason, et al. 2005) of Taft talking about his work and explaining the process of making the sculptures out of animal bones he found. The videos had images of Taft’s finest creations. Quite impressed by his work, the children seemed to feel uplifted by learning about someone
from their very own neighborhood who had made wonderful objects of beauty. This made them very eager to play with the plastic bones and make things of their own out of them. Over the course of the workshop, they were able to exercise their artistic imaginations and construction skills by putting together anatomically correct human skeletal bones into sculptures of animals, geometric shapes, letters, and words. The children were also encouraged to write stories about their sculptures, as well as to give them creative names.

Figure 16: A bone sculpture of a spider. Photo by the author.

The Bone Sculpture Workshop provided opportunities for children to develop multiple intelligences through intellectual, tactile, and social activities. A human skeleton anatomy sheet with names of the bones was passed out during the initial weeks of the workshop so that the kids could learn how to correctly identify the bones by their scientific names as well as learn where the bones are located in the human body.

The task of assembling individual bones into larger structural units allowed the kids to develop construction and engineering skills. Arranging bones into numbers and geometric shapes provided opportunities to enhance mathematical intelligence.
Spelling words and names with bones, writing stories about their sculptures, and giving titles to their work afforded the opportunities to improve their linguistic skills.

By exercising their sensibility and perception through a fun and meaningful creative activity, the kids could develop their aesthetic intelligence. Through exploring their own imaginations and creativity, the kids could expand their intrapersonal intelligence. By learning how to share bones with each other and work together in groups, they could improve their interpersonal intelligence and social skills.
Because their creative work drew upon their everyday lives and neighborhood, they could reflect on their ethnic identity, as well as the cultural meanings and values held by the people living around them. The workshop also contributed to reinforcing pride in their school. During the fall-winter 2009 session, the kids devoted many of the workshop meetings to designing representations of their school mascot, the tiger (see image below).

Figure 19: Children play-acting with bones. Photo by the author.

Figure 20: Bone sculpture of a tiger, the school mascot of Sulphur Springs Elementary. Photo by the author.
Overall, the kids learned through their own first-hand experience that human beings are creative and re-creative, and that they can make and remake their world. This is significant in that the kids growing up in Sulphur Springs face many difficult challenges. We hoped that the workshop would help the children learn more about themselves, the world around them, and how they can direct their creativity toward positive ends, with a larger goal being that they would feel more capable of transforming their community into whatever it is they would like it to be.

During the workshops, digital photographs were taken of the kids and their sculptures. 6 Fall-winter session recorded videos of the kids making them; also interviewed kids talking about what they made. Eventually, short slideshow movies showcasing the children’s work were produced by students as part of a service-learning project in Urban Life and Culture, an undergraduate anthropology course I taught during the spring 2010 semester at USF. 7 The videos were then uploaded onto Moses House’s YouTube Channel so that they could be viewed by the children’s families, the community, and anyone with access to the internet.

Because of the dedication and number of hours volunteered by Moses House staff during the 2009 YMCA Summer Camp, on August 14, 2009 the Tampa Metropolitan Area YMCA Community Learning Center at Sulphur Springs Elementary awarded Moses House its 2009 Partner of the Summer Award. Moses House was presented the award at

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6 All photographs are by Lance Arney, with the assistance of Kenny Renaud, Jessica Henderson, Helmut Melhorn, and Krystle Shepheard.
7 I would like to thank my former students Jessica Groom, Elizabeth Guilliot, Sheena Simmons, and Angela Turner for making the slideshow videos.
the Toulou Awards, the YMCA’s end-of-Summer Camp celebration that took place in the historic Springs Theatre on Nebraska Avenue in Sulphur Springs. It was a festive evening, with awards going to Camp Counselors and many of the outstanding Summer Camp kids, some of whom entertained those in attendance with spoken word, step dancing, and a moving rendition of the song “Stand by Me.” I brought Harold Richardson to the award ceremony, and we both felt very honored that Moses House received the Partner of the Summer Award, especially because the Bone Sculpture Workshop had been inspired by the artwork of Taft Richardson, Harold’s brother.

Figure 21: Partner of the Summer award, resting on top of YMCA Summer Camp t-shirt. Photo by the author.

In a press release, published on the Moses House website, I wrote about winning the award: “The YMCA Community Learning Center at Sulphur Springs Elementary deserves abundant praise for providing a summer full of challenging learning opportunities and character building activities for the Summer Camp kids. Jason Grooms, the Community Learning Center’s Director, deserves a long and loud round of applause from the community for his dedication to the kids of Sulphur Springs and his
non-stop work in making the Summer Camp such an enriching experience for everyone involved.” Moses House received some press coverage about the Partner of the Summer Award. An article on the award appeared in the *Florida Sentinel Bulletin* on August 21, 2009 (Crews 2009a).

Harold and I both were very happy that Moses House was part of the Community Learning Center’s (CLC) summer camp and afterschool programs; we continued to partner with the YMCA CLC through the summer of 2010. We saw our programming as a way to build collaborative community partnerships, as well as a way to bring culturally responsive educational programming to the elementary school in a way that respectfully honored neighborhood history and cultural heritage. Indeed, one of the highlights of the Bone Sculpture Workshop occurred when Harold and his sister Sheila Richardson brought one of Taft’s actual bone sculptures, entitled *Thank You, Lord*, to the workshop and put it on display for the children to see.

Figure 22: Bone sculpture entitled *Thank You, Lord* by Taft Richardson. Photo by the author.
The children were mesmerized by it, as witnessed in the photograph below.

Figure 23: Children viewing bone sculpture made by Taft Richardson. Photo by the author.

The Bone Sculpture Workshop drew attention to the potential of Moses House as a grassroots, community based organization to make a positive and culturally enriching impact on the children of Sulphur Springs. A staff reporter from the *St. Petersburg Times* visited the workshop and talked with some of the kids about their bone sculptures, allowing them to discuss their creative work on the pages of the *St. Pete Times*. The article was entitled “Moses House Waits for a Home” (Morales 2009), pointing out that Moses House was still homeless, but also, given the content of the article, implying that the organization deserves much better and that the Tampa Bay community should step forward and contribute something to Moses House for all it had contributed, and continues to contribute, to the community. Fortunately, and quite surprisingly, a collaborative effort by two other community-based organizations in Sulphur Springs,
along with Moses House, to procure space for all three organizations’ programming was about to become successful.

Moses House waits for a home
By Ileana Morales, Times Staff Writer
In Print: Friday, August 14, 2009

From left: Tyquan King, 7, Jibreel Quinones, 7, Berthine Louis and Corey Kyrick, 7, talk about making different creations from bones during a YMCA Summer Camp held at Sulphur Springs Elementary School in Tampa. Moses House is an organization designed to give kids from low-income families a place for arts.

Figure 24: Screenshot capture of online version of St. Petersburg Times article on the Bone Sculpture Workshop.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed how I gained access to the community, how I positioned myself in relation to the work I did as director of Moses House, how I built trusting relationships with Sulphur Springs youth, what was entailed in reorganizing and revitalizing Moses House after the passing of a co-founder, and a selection of programming that I developed in collaboration with Moses House youth and other community partners.
Chapter Six: Resisting Neoliberalism and Criminalization through Moses House

A New Home in Mann-Wagnon Memorial Park

Moses House had been offering its programs at the North Tampa Community Center and Sulphur Springs Elementary since from the summer of 2007 to the early fall of 2009. On October 1, 2009, the City of Tampa instituted a new policy that increased the fees for using the Rec facilities and enrolling children in its afterschool programs. A new site supervisor at the Rec strictly enforced this policy, and most children and youth, or their families, refused to pay any fees in order to be at the Rec. They simply stopped going. This issue will be covered in more detail in the next section, but for now it is important to note that the result for Moses House was that it had to suspend its program offerings at the Rec. The children and youth who were participating in the popular Street Music Workshop no longer came.

Furthermore, the new policy also required organizations that did programming at city community centers to pay a rental fee, which was waived for nonprofit organizations. At this point, although Moses House was registered with the State of Florida as a corporation organized exclusively for charitable, educational, and scientific purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, it was still, however, in the process of filing for 501(c)(3) tax exempt status with the IRS. Therefore, it was questionable whether the City of Tampa Parks and Recreation
Department would approve a waiver of the new facility rental fee. Moses House decided, like the children and youth who had been participating in its programs, to stop going to the Rec and to suspend its programming there until further notice.

In the meantime, the prospect of Moses House occupying a new space of its own was slowly forming. Since the fall of 2009, Moses House had joined the Sulphur Springs Museum and Heritage Center and Community Stepping Stones, two other grassroots nonprofits based in Sulphur Springs, in an effort to develop neighborhood programming and explore the possibility of acquiring buildings and facilities for each organization. At the time, only Community Stepping Stones had a building, called the “Art House,” which it believed it had already outgrown. Attention was drawn to the complex of six buildings in Mann-Wagnon Memorial Park on East River Cove Street, along the Hillsborough River at the southwest edge of the Sulphur Springs neighborhood. These buildings and the park space have an interesting and complex history behind them. Most recently they had been occupied by administrative offices of the Hillsborough County Parks, Recreation and Conservation Department, which had moved out of Mann-Wagnon Park at the end of 2008, leaving the buildings vacant. The Mann-Wagnon Park property itself is co-owned by Hillsborough County and the City of Tampa.

Over the course of 2009, negotiations took place with County and City officials and the three nonprofit organizations over the proposed use of the buildings and surrounding green park area. The Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners approved a formal proposal to allow the nonprofits to occupy the buildings under rent-free leases in January of 2010. The City of Tampa approved the proposal in early
February. The Arts Council of Hillsborough County was given the responsibility of acting as overall manager of Mann-Wagnon Memorial Park. A considerable amount of press coverage was given to the process of negotiating and deciding the future of the park and how it could be used (Clear 2009; Steele 2009b; c; d; e; f). USF faculty and students from the College of The Arts and the Anthropology Department, along with their allies, played important roles throughout the entire endeavor.

Figure 25: The “new” Moses House building, prior to painting and renovations. Photo by the author.

Moses House signed a lease agreement in February 2010 for occupying one of the Mann-Wagnon Park buildings. Moses House selected a small building at the westernmost edge of the park. We deemed that the building would have adequate space (almost 725 square feet) for a business office and program activities after removing some of the non-load bearing walls inside the building. From February through April, Moses House staff, children and youth, and other volunteers began renovations on the building. We were also finally able to liquidate Moses House’s East Tampa property, with the pro bono help of realtors who were acquaintances of one of Moses House’s volunteer DJs. After delinquent property taxes and other fees were paid, the small
amount of profit that was left was spent on costs associated with renovating the new building and buying basic supplies and furniture, such as folding tables and chairs.

During the spring of 2010, Mabel Sabogal, who had been appointed Associate Director of Moses House, helped me compile an itemized price list of other supplies we needed, and I submitted an application to the Children’s Board of Hillsborough County for a grant. The application was funded, and in June the Children’s Board awarded Moses House a $10,000 Technical Assistance Funds grant, which was used during July and August to purchase and install office equipment, office supplies, recordkeeping materials, and computer hardware and software necessary to establish a functioning administrative office. In March 2010, a mini-grant application I had submitted to Project Ahimsa, a Patel Foundation Cultural Initiative, was approved. The funds were used to purchase sound and recording equipment necessary to set up a permanent mini-studio in the new Moses House building. This would allow more youth to enroll in the Street Music Workshop, as well as benefit additional youth and community residents with open microphone events, freestyle sessions, live performances, and other related activities. Up to this point, the program was dependent on using loaned equipment brought to the workshop each week.

Selling the East Tampa property, receiving technical assistance funds from the Children’s Board, and being awarded a mini-grant from the Patel Foundation, could not have come at a better time. Prior to moving in and starting programming, each of the three nonprofits had to meet certain criteria specified by the Arts Council of Hillsborough County and the Board of County Commissioners. For Moses House, the
requirements included demonstrating that we had the capacity to renovate our building, the funds to finance organizational operations and programming, sufficient staff and volunteers to direct and assist with program activities, business and marketing plans for sustaining the organization and attracting community members to its facilities, and the ability to make utilities payments and cover our share of the grounds maintenance costs.

Figure 26: A video recorded walking tour of the inside of the “new” Moses House building.

Moses House children and youth played a central role in the renovation and remodeled interior design of the building. They also contributed innumerable volunteer hours in light physical labor helping to do the renovations and interior and exterior painting. They even made a short, unscripted promotional video of the interior of the new Moses House prior to renovations in order to solicit donations for the organization.\footnote{To watch the video, go to \url{http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1xUn4QgLjEU}.} They proudly said that “we’re doing this for Granddaddy Taft” and that “this is for the Springs,” as they led the viewer through a walking tour of the building. An in-house
recording studio for the Street Music Workshop program was perhaps the feature most
desired by the youth, and they indicated where the studio would be installed at the back
of the building. The color scheme of the paints used for repainting the exterior of the
building was chosen by Moses House youth.

Such direct participation in renovating and redesigning the building gave them a
sense of ownership that they still hold. To this day, I still hear them say, “The Moses
House is ours! We did all that work!” This contradicts the prevailing notion that Sulphur
Springs youth are deficient and incapable of doing anything for themselves without the
paternalistic aid of outsiders. They were perfectly capable of a major renovation project
that lasted nearly four months, once provided with the necessary resources and
sufficient guidance. Fortunately for Moses House, James Wester, one of its other
volunteer DJs, worked in housing renovation as his day job. Without his tireless labor,
creative know-how, and sheer dedication to helping Moses House, we never would have
completed the renovation project. Relatives of some of the Moses House youth also
contributed by loaning us tools and equipment we needed for the renovations.

We scheduled an open house event for Saturday, April 3, 2010, in order to give
ourselves a deadline by which to have major renovations completed. We were excited,
and the Moses House kids were especially eager, to show our “new” building (originally
built in 1920) to the community and invite them in to see how we had transformed it.
April the 3rd was chosen as the date for the open house because it was also the one-
year anniversary of the Taft tribute celebration we had organized in 2009. A short article
announcing the upcoming event appeared in the Florida Sentinel Bulletin (Crews 2010).
The community was invited to an afternoon of music, free food, and light refreshments, with the opportunity to learn more about Moses House, how to get involved, and how to help support its mission. We estimated that around 75 people visited that afternoon. The event was covered by USF News, which published a story describing how USF developed a community engagement partnership with Moses House (Miller 2010).

Moses House’s move from East Tampa back to Sulphur Springs made sense. By this time, the children from the families who were relocated from the East Tampa housing projects into Sulphur Springs had already spent most of their childhood growing up in Sulphur Springs and identifying themselves with the neighborhood. Some of them are old enough to remember Moses House in East Tampa, and others were participants in Moses House while it was located in Taft’s house on Skagway Avenue in Spring Hill. Being in leadership roles while establishing the new Moses House in Mann-Wagnon Park gave them a sense of well-earned importance that made the new Moses House meaningful to them in a way than it had not been before.

**Policing Strategies Targeting Youth**

Pam Iorio became the mayor of Tampa in 2003 and vowed to make the city safer. According to the police department, Tampa “had one of the highest crime rates for a city of its size” (Tampa Police Department 2009:3). Iorio appointed Stephen Hogue as Police Chief and ordered him to reduce crime. Hogue restructured and decentralized the police department, splitting the police grid into three autonomous districts and redistributing tactical resources within them; developed intelligence led policing and monthly police
performance effectiveness review; created proactive and preventative policing initiatives; and instituted community oriented policing, including significantly increasing the number of neighborhood watch programs (Tampa Police Department 2009). Entitled the Focus on Four Crime Reduction Plan, the police department focused on reducing the number of robberies, burglaries, auto thefts, and auto burglaries—the four most-often committed crimes (3). According to the police department, the Focus on Four plan steadily reduced crime in the City of Tampa by 64% between 2002 and 2011 (2012). According to the FBI Uniform Crime Reports, however, the overall crime rate at the national level has been gradually declining since its most recent historical high in the early 1990s (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2009).

Some of the plan’s key strategies focused on juveniles, perhaps overzealously. Additional patrols and school resource officers were placed in high crime areas and schools, and district specific plans were designed to target patterns of juvenile crime in particular communities (Tampa Police Department 2009:9). When analysis of crime data showed that the majority of auto thefts were perpetrated by juveniles and young adults, the Reduce Auto Theft (or RAT) program was created (9). The areas around the homes of known juvenile auto thieves were mapped for stolen and recovered vehicles, and on a weekly basis officers were supplied with analytical information including “suspect photos, locations, wanted information, patterns and any other useful information” suspected juveniles (9). Officers also enforced curfews and house arrests on convicted juvenile auto thieves (9). During the summer months when school was out and juvenile crime typically increased, resources were devoted to analyzing crime patterns and
formulating plans to target juvenile offenders in high crime areas. The police also hosted summer kick-off events, which had “job fair[s], life skills instruction, [and] food and games,” as well as information about “positive alternatives through Parks and Recreation programs and private partnerships” and reminders that the police had “zero tolerance” toward juvenile crime (9).

A new proactive and preventative policing initiative was created in 2005 after the police department realized that “while juveniles do not commit the majority of crimes, a significant percentage of juveniles were committing an inordinate number of offenses” (11). Dubbed the Worst of the Worst Initiative, “this program targeted those juveniles who had lengthy arrest records” (11), especially youth who were classified as gang members or associates.9 The “worst of the worst” juveniles were kept under

9 The Criminal Gang Enforcement and Prevention Act (Florida State Statute 874.03) defines “criminal gang,” “criminal gang associate,” and “criminal gang member” as follows:

(1) “Criminal gang” means a formal or informal ongoing organization, association, or group that has as one of its primary activities the commission of criminal or delinquent acts, and that consists of three or more persons who have a common name or common identifying signs, colors, or symbols, including, but not limited to, terrorist organizations and hate groups.

(a) As used in this subsection, “ongoing” means that the organization was in existence during the time period charged in a petition, information, indictment, or action for civil injunctive relief.

(b) As used in this subsection, “primary activities” means that a criminal gang spends a substantial amount of time engaged in such activity, although such activity need not be the only, or even the most important, activity in which the criminal gang engages.

(2) “Criminal gang associate” means a person who:

(a) Admits to criminal gang association; or

(b) Meets any single defining criterion for criminal gang membership described in subsection (3).

(3) “Criminal gang member” is a person who meets two or more of the following criteria:

(a) Admits to criminal gang membership.

(b) Is identified as a criminal gang member by a parent or guardian.

(c) Is identified as a criminal gang member by a documented reliable informant.

(d) Adopts the style of dress of a criminal gang.

(e) Adopts the use of a hand sign identified as used by a criminal gang.

(f) Has a tattoo identified as used by a criminal gang.

(g) Associates with one or more known criminal gang members.

(h) Is identified as a criminal gang member by an informant of previously untested reliability and such identification is corroborated by independent information.
surveillance, sometimes daily, by zone officers and school resource officers. Juveniles who were caught violating curfew or home detention were arrested by police officers and transported to the Juvenile Assessment Center, after which, depending on the assessment and original offense, they could be held in juvenile detention for up to 21 days. Prior to Worst of the Worst, it was solely the responsibility of juvenile probation officers, of whom there are many fewer than police officers, to check on juvenile curfew and house arrest violations. Additionally, through an arrangement with the county court, officers also now received notification when juveniles were scheduled for hearings so that they could make sure the juveniles appeared in court (11).

I knew several Sulphur Springs youth who said that police officers had told them their names were on something called “the worst of the worst list.” I never had a Sulphur Springs youth describe to me the procedural details of the Worst of the Worst Initiative itself, or express awareness that such a thing existed as a special proactive and preventative policing program. Nevertheless, many were familiar with the effects of the program while it was being implemented against them. For example, as Malcolm stated during an interview: “The sergeants and captains, they already target me, so they give the ones that they training the people’s names to target. These are the people that

(i) Is identified as a criminal gang member by physical evidence.
(j) Has been observed in the company of one or more known criminal gang members four or more times. Observation in a custodial setting requires a willful association. It is the intent of the Legislature to allow this criterion to be used to identify gang members who recruit and organize in jails, prisons, and other detention settings.
(k) Has authored any communication indicating responsibility for the commission of any crime by the criminal gang.
become the target.” I asked him to explain what it was like to be targeted. He responded that a particular law enforcement officer rides around in Sulphur Springs ... and he just, he bumps into me like when he see me. Like if he see me at the park, he’ll come around the corner, do about three or four circles around the block until he actually comes up to me. And then he see me walking down the sidewalk, he’ll pull his vehicle all the way on the sidewalk, talking mess, talking junk. Um, just following me all the time. He follows me. I mean he don’t really have no reason to be following me, he just always following me. And um, harassing me basically, ’cause he tells me, he say things and harass me in the type of manner that he says those things. It’s lack of respect, it’s just harassment. Every day, every time he see me, he harass me. He always harass me, he always do stuff like that.

After Malcolm finished saying that, I told him that several other Sulphur Springs youth have told me that the cops make threats to them such as, “We’re not going to stop arresting you guys until we’ve cleaned out the entire neighborhood.” I ask Malcolm if the police say anything to him like that.

Yeah, they said things like, yeah, all the time, all the time, “We gonna have all y’all in jail.” ... You’re not doing nothing wrong. When you’re just sitting there, you’re standing somewhere, or you on the block or on the street corner or you somewhere like at a friend’s house in their yard. These officers’ ego is big enough to just approach you like you a criminal and like they know you because they’ve been talking to other officers about you. And they want to arrest you and they want to get you and they want to criminalize you. They want to do this, they want to—and they don’t have reasons to, but they try to all the time.

Another youth, Dante, described to me how he began to be targeted by the police after he got out of a juvenile offender program when he was 14:

When I got out I went back to Sulphur Springs, and it was like all the police knew me. So every time one of them seen me they would harass me, take me to jail about dumb shit, talking about how I was walking on the wrong side of the road. One day I was at my friend house and it had a green sticker [a trespass warning notice; see below] on the house, so they [the police] jump out and then took me to jail, talking about I was
trespassing. So it got so bad that we would go to the park to hang out. They came to the park fucking with us. So my mama got sick of them fucking with me. She called [the police department’s] Internal Affairs but they still ain’t do nothing.... So when they start to come to our park, we left there. I hate the police.... When they would take me to jail, I would beat the case sometime ‘cause they was all lies.

A youth classified as a “gang member” by the police is, by virtue of that categorization, one of the “worst of the worst.” According to Sulphur Springs youth, they were liberally categorized as gang members by the police. “They say we all members of the Drak gang,” Dante told me. On Tampa Police arrest report forms, there is a box for “Gang member.” Whenever Dante showed me his arrest reports, I would notice that the police always checked off the box. When I asked Jamal who the Drak gang was, he replied, “Basically, the police, they say the Drak gang is everyone who live in the Springs.” This classification carries serious consequences, including enhanced punishment during sentencing if convicted of a crime.

From conversations I had had with African American male youths in Sulphur Springs, I learned that many of them believe their own visual appearance leads them to be profiled as criminals and more likely to be harassed by police. Not only their “black” phenotype but also their hip-hop cultural aesthetic (their style of clothing and how they wear it, their use of gold jewelry, and their ways of moving or posturing their bodies) is thought to lead to their categorization as “criminals,” “thugs,” or “gang members” by the local police and other adults. Jamar described to me how the police “said I was a gang member” when “they saw me lockin’ in,” that is, using a handshake that is popular among youth in Sulphur Springs. They also cited his tattoos and gold jewelry as indicative of being a gang member.
Listening to hip hop music is evidence enough of a criminal personality. Mike said he was called a gang member by the police “for playing hip hop real loud on the car stereo.” Antwon was considered part of the Drak gang “because they seen me with Malcolm,” who the police once described to me as a gang leader. According to the Florida gang statute (see note 9 above), associating with a known gang member and being observed at least four times in the company of a gang member is enough to be classified as a gang member—one need not even have committed any crime.

Sulphur Springs youth described to me in great detail encounters they had had with police; incidents of surveillance, detainment, questioning, being taken into custody, and arrest; as well as tactics and strategies used by law enforcement to claim probable cause for arresting them or alleging that they had violated the terms of their sanctions or probation. Sometimes, nonviolent crimes such as possession or sale of illegal substances, or property crimes such as robberies and burglaries, had in fact occurred and they were indeed guilty. Other times, youth were charged or ticketed for very petty offenses, such as jaywalking or riding too slowly on a bicycle, “offenses” which at times were used as probable cause for a search. There were also, according to how the youth described the incidents, many instances in which false arrests were made and “crimes” were reportedly fabricated or instigated by the police, and instances in which police used excessive force or violence for no legally justifiable reason.

The ordinary activities of walking down the sidewalk, crossing the street, and riding a bike were cause for traffic violations cited against Sulphur Springs youth. Walking down the street could be described by police as “failure to use sidewalk,” even
where there were no sidewalks, “obstructing traffic,” even when there were no cars on
the road, or “pedestrian traffic in the wrong direction,” if walking on the side of a
street—or sidewalk—in the direction counter to the traffic on that side. There are
numerous citations related to bicycle riding: riding without the use of hands, riding
without proper lights or reflectors, riding too slowly, failure to use arm gesture turn
signals, and failure to maintain proper distance from another vehicle. The accusation
could easily be made that a bike was one that had been stolen, and then it could be
confiscated. Traffic violations were often used as probable cause for a search, which, if a
pocketknife or cannabis cigarette, for example, were found on the youth, an arrest
would be made for possession of a “concealed/deadly weapon” or possession of
cannabis. Traffic citations are costly, and I know individual youth who owe thousands of
dollars in citations to the traffic court. Unpaid traffic citations make it impossible for the
youth to obtain a driver’s license if they do not already have one; unpaid citations will
lead to the suspension, revocation, or cancellation of a driver’s license if they already do.
This, in turn, can lead to future arrests—and jail time—for operating a motor vehicle
without a license or with license cancelled, suspended, or revoked if the youth are
caught driving a motor vehicle on the road.

Sulphur Springs youth also report illegal searches being made while they are in
the street or simply outside their houses. Police approach them saying that they have a
warrant for their arrest, and then search them as they “take them into custody.” If the
police find anything suspicious or illegal on their person, they then arrest them, after
which the police cheerfully admit that they made up the part about the arrest warrant.
Whatever the police may have found on the youth is then used as probable cause to make the arrest and conduct a search—the search that already took place. For example, one afternoon the police surrounded Keith as he was walking down the street in Sulphur Springs. He said they told him they had a warrant for his arrest. Two officers conducted a pat down search and discovered a handgun in his coat pocket. They then arrested him on the charges of “felon in possession of a firearm” and “carrying a concealed weapon.” Afterwards, he said, “the officer said he told me they had a warrant so I wouldn’t run” (for which they could have arrested him anyway; see below). “And after the polices arrested me, they wrote me a ticket for jaywalking so they could say that’s why they stop me and search me.” Keith contested the jaywalking citation in traffic court; I went to court with him and watched the judge laugh at and dismiss the charge. He later went to criminal court for the gun charge, to which he eventually plead out to three years in Florida State Prison after his lawyer advised him he was unlikely to beat the charge and could face up to 15 years in prison.

“Opposing a police officer with (or without) violence” is another common charge made against Sulphur Springs youth. The crime of opposing a police officer without violence can be alleged for not doing whatever a police officer tells a youth to do, whether or not he were observed engaging in suspicious or criminal activity, or has been taken into custody or arrested. Sulphur Springs youth have reported that police will approach them and verbally assault them, and if the youth yell back or make an offensive gesture, they get arrested for opposing a police officer—when in fact they had been provoked by the police into “opposing a police officer.” Sulphur Springs is
designated a “high crime” area by law enforcement, and because of this designation, anyone within the neighborhood automatically loses some of their basic civil rights, allowing, for example, the police to stop and search, under reasonable suspicion, any person who flees from the sight of their presence.¹⁰ Some Sulphur Springs youth, who have already had unpleasant encounters with the police, are fearful of being arrested on fabricated charges, so they run from the police if the police suddenly appear. Under Florida state law, fleeing from police at the mere sight of them is against the law in high-crime neighborhoods, even if one has not committed a crime. Fleeing in high-crime neighborhoods is considered reasonable suspicion to pursue and investigate someone and as well as charge them with “resisting arrest.” If the police happen to yell “Stop!” as someone is fleeing the sight of the police, they can add an “opposing a police officer” charge, which is probable cause for arrest. The police in Sulphur Springs usually chase down anyone who runs from them, and if they happen to tackle the person on private property, the police can also charge the person with “trespassing.”

Trespass violations are ways for the police to prevent Sulphur Springs youth from socializing or assembling, and, indeed, ultimately to banish them from the

¹⁰ The legal justification that allows police to arrest someone in a “high-crime” area on an “opposing a police officer without violence” charge merely for fleeing from the sight of police and disobeying a verbal order to stop is the Obstructing Justice statute (Chapter 843.02, Florida State Statutes), which states, “Whoever shall resist, obstruct, or oppose any officer ... in the lawful execution of any legal duty, without offering or doing violence to the person of the officer, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor of the first degree.” Law enforcement has interpreted fleeing from police while in a high crime area to be reasonable suspicion to conduct an investigatory stop, and if the fleeing person disobeys an officer’s order to stop, it can be interpreted as resisting or opposing a police officer. In 2009, the Supreme Court of Florida upheld this interpretation and application of the law in its decision in C.E.L. v. State of Florida, a case in which a 15 year old African American male was arrested in a high crime area near the University of South Florida in Tampa for fleeing from the sight of the police and disobeying their order to stop.
neighborhood. “They done trespassed me from everywhere,” as one youth told me.

There is a Florida statute that gives police the power to warn and then arrest a person for trespassing wherever a trespass warning notice is exhibited (see images below). The notice is printed on a large green sheet with adhesive backing so that it can be applied to a smooth surface on the exterior of a building. These notices are supposed to go up only after the owner of the property fills out a trespass affidavit form, declaring City of Tampa police officers to be “authorized representatives to enforce State Statute Section 810.09, Trespass, and to warn and direct persons to leave the property, and/or business”—including parking lots—located at the specified address. By signing the form, property or business owners are also acknowledging that they “will aid in the prosecution of those persons arrested.” The notices now appear on houses and buildings throughout the neighborhood; there are some streets in Sulphur Springs that have a trespass warning notice on almost every house.

Figure 27: Image of police trespass notice and a photograph of one of the notices that a landlord had put on the window of one of his rental houses in Sulphur Springs. Photo by the author.
I have been told that there were times when the police went around Sulphur Springs asking property owners and renters for permission to put up the notices, sometimes allegedly doing so even after being denied permission by the renters and/or owners. Creating conflict between renters and owners, police have persuaded some owners of rental housing to allow them to post the notices, despite the wishes of the renter. Therefore, even people to whom renters have given permission to be in their driveway or front yard can get warnings or be arrested by the police, unless the renter happens to be at home and can come running out to the police and inform them that they gave permission to the person to be on the property. The police still have the discretion to write a trespass warning or make an arrest. Police use the trespass statute to disperse people congregating in yards during block parties in addition to citing noise ordinances when loud music is being played. This happens so often that nearly every time I have listened to people plan a block party, they set a time when the party is supposed to start and then say it will go “until the police come and shut it down.” Most of the Sulphur Springs youth I have talked to have already received trespass warnings at multiple of locations in Sulphur Springs. A trespass warning can also be cause for charging a person with violation of probation, if he is on probation. A violation of probation automatically results in an arrest or an arrest warrant being issued.

The police treat trespass warnings and trespass violations as serious offenses, but also as convenient pretexts for making arrests. Sulphur Springs youth that I interviewed talked about how they had been threatened with arrest for trespassing after having been suspended for some other offense at school, such as swearing. Dante
explained to me that when he swore at the principal for searching his book bag, the principal told him he was suspended, and then the school resource officer informed him that he had to leave the school premises immediately or he would be arrested for trespassing. Dante ended up calling me to pick him up, and fortunately I was not busy at the time. He was being bussed to a school 45 minutes driving time away from where he lived. His family did not have their own transportation, and he had no way of getting home. He had to wait for me in the parking lot of a Walmart next to the school. When I got there, there was already a parking lot security vehicle circling around him.

Sulphur Springs youth, and even young children, also complained about receiving trespass warnings or being arrested for going through “cuts,” that is, shortcuts through vacant lots to get from one road to another. Some youth received trespass violation warnings while staying with extended family or friends. The police would say that if their name was not on the lease, then they had no legal right to be there and therefore the police were authorized to order them to leave the premises. I was told it was mostly Section 8 renters who were being targeted. The trespass statute was being used to prevent people from being together and ultimately to banish them from being in the neighborhood. At juvenile courtroom hearings, I have also witnessed police officers requesting the judge to ban specific kids—ones whose families had moved out—from re-entering Sulphur Springs.

Exclusion from public places within the neighborhood began to occur on a large scale after the City changed the Parks and Recreation Department’s fee structure, resulting in sharp increases in usage and program fees, effectively prohibiting children
from low-income families from frequenting or even being at the City’s community centers, recreation areas, and athletic facilities. Adversely affected, Sulphur Springs youth nonetheless resisted.

**Responding to a Fee Increase Policy at City Recreation Centers**

As noted above, Moses House used to offer programming at North Tampa Community Center (popularly known as “the Rec”), a recreation center operated and managed by the City of Tampa Parks and Recreation Department. In September of 2009, the City sent a memorandum letter to all Parks and Recreation facility locations announcing that on October 1, 2009, it was going to implement a fee increase policy, including new kinds of fees, for fiscal year 2010 (October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010). Moses House learned about the fee increase policy in September 2009 while it was offering its Street Music Workshop at the Rec. I remember the afternoon one of the coaches showed us the letter and explained the new fee structure and policy, which included the mandatory purchase of a “rec card” that would have to be presented in order to be permitted entrance into City community center facilities. Upon hearing this, the youth became irate.

The new fee structure included different fees for accessing the outdoor basketball court, the weight room, and the game room. Without a Rec card,  

neighborhood kids were even prohibited from entering rec center buildings to get a
drink of water or use the restroom. A site supervisor at the Rec was strictly enforcing the
policy changes. Later that fall, I learned that one of the Moses House kids had been
given a rec card (he never got an actual card, but he was put on the “allowed to come
in” list) for “being a good kid,” according to his explanation. When I asked him if he had
started going to the Rec again, he replied no. I asked why and he said, “Because my
friends still can’t go. I want to be with my friends.” Rewarding the “good kids” with rec
cards was also a way to separate them from the “bad” ones.

Most youth who had been going to the Rec every week soon stopped going.
Sulphur Springs is a high poverty neighborhood, and the children and young adults who
live there had been used to going to their recreation center for free. Most of them and
their families were unable to pay the Rec’s new fees, and some of them simply refused
to pay out of principle: they never before had to pay to be at the Rec, it is the
community’s recreation center, and they claimed they had a right to be there. The Rec
soon began to look abandoned. Due to dwindling attendance, Moses House decided to
suspend the Street Music Workshop and other planned activities at the Rec. Moses
House wondered what could be done to enable the kids to return to their weekly
activities at the rec center.

In the meantime, I began documenting in my field notes how the new fees policy
was affecting children and youth in the Sulphur Springs neighborhood. Brett Mervis,
another one of my faculty advisor’s graduate students, also began documenting the
effects of the new policy on children of families who had been dislocated during the
City’s demolition of the Central Park Village public housing in downtown Tampa, as part of his doctoral dissertation research (Mervis 2012). Our advisor, Susan Greenbaum, determined that the impacts of the policy change ought to be studied and made known to municipal governmental officials, as well as the public, in the hope that the City could be persuaded to re-examine the policy. In July of 2009, Greenbaum had been appointed founding director of the newly created USF Office of Community Engagement, whose mission is to support mutually beneficial university–community engagement. In the spring of 2010, Greenbaum scheduled a graduate seminar on community engaged research to take place during the summer at Moses House; the effects of the fee increase policy on community wellbeing in Sulphur Springs would be the focus. Moses House children and youth would participate in the research and in devising plans for action based on the results of the research.

Although unanimously approved by Tampa City Council, the new fee policy was widely unpopular throughout low-income neighborhoods in Tampa and at community centers frequented by senior citizens. The local press followed the story and reported on the effects the policy was having around the city. The changes to the fee schedule had drastically increased the cost for afterschool and summer camp programs, as well as other public services offered at the City’s Parks and Recreation Centers. City officials said that the fee increases were intended to help make up for a shortfall in Tampa’s operating budget (Wade 2010d) as well as to bring public parks and recreation fees closer to market rates (Wade 2009). The cost of afterschool programs increased from $12 a year to $25 a week (a more than 10,000% increase), and summer camp programs increased
from $70 for 10 weeks to $55 a week (a 785% increase). The fee increase policy went into effect on October 1, 2009, with little public discussion. Attendance soon dropped at recreation centers across the city (Steele and Wilkens 2010), and some recreational programs faced consolidation or elimination (Wade and Steele 2010). A sliding-scale fee reduction program was implemented for people living on low-incomes (Wade 2010d), but the application process was cumbersome and the program failed to significantly recover lost enrollment.

During the summer of 2010, I recruited a group of Moses House youth and children to participate in the study as co-researchers. Over the course of the last several months, I had already heard most of them complain about not being able to go the Rec anymore because of the fees. There was much work to be done in order to complete the research project within the intensive six-week seminar, and the labor was divided. Graduate students would analyze research literature, policy documents, newspaper articles, and transcripts of City Council public meetings called to discuss the policy. Moses House youth decided that they wanted to conduct a survey in the neighborhood and make a documentary video about the effects of the policy change on their everyday lives. Because they were the ones most directly affected by the fee increase policy, they felt that it was important for the general public and especially local policy makers to hear directly from them about the new fees. The main research question for the project was: How has the parks and recreation fee increase policy enacted by the City of Tampa impacted the community safety and well-being of children and families in our neighborhood? Some of the proposed actions were to publicize the results of the
research, attend City Council meetings, meet with Council members, and hold a community forum on budget cuts and reductions in public services.

Figure 28: A sample of ethnographic survey questions identified by Moses House youth. Photo by the author.

In addition to learning some of the basics of doing community-based participatory action research from USF anthropology graduate students, Moses House youths ranging from 10 to 19 years old learned how to conduct interviews, record observations, create a survey, film a documentary video, and plan how to make their research findings known to policy makers and the general public. With graduate students as research mentors, Moses House youth designed a list of questions for the survey and generated some concepts for the documentary video. Mabel Sabogal, doctoral student in applied anthropology and associate director of Moses House, used her professional expertise with video recording, editing, and production to teach some of the kids how to use a video camera and microphone to record a live interview. Some of the interviews were done at Moses House, and others were recorded on-site at the Rec as well as the Sulphur Springs Pool, which was then charging four dollars per person to use the public swimming pool. Mabel and I spent several afternoons working with the
kids on recording material for the video. They enjoyed using the equipment and interviewing each other on camera.

However, before the research project could be completed or turned into an action plan, in early July 2010 the Mayor of Tampa pledged to roll back some of the fees (Zink 2010c) in her recommended city budget for fiscal year 2011, following up on a promise she made in April 2010 to consider a rollback (Wade 2010c). The Citizen’s Budget Report, released by the Mayor’s Office on August 12, 2010, contained the following acknowledgement and recommendation: “For fiscal year 2010, we increased parks and recreation fees. Many concerns were raised regarding the impact on youth and senior participants. Therefore, for fiscal year 2011, fees for participants in the summer, after school, open swimming, and senior programs will be set at the same level as fiscal year 2009” (City of Tampa 2010:14).

While it is not known what finally persuaded the City Council and Mayor to seriously reconsider the policy, the announcement to roll back the fees (Zink 2010c) came shortly after the June 24th City Council meeting (Tampa City Council 2010), at which Moses House youth and their USF colleagues were present, along with angry seniors and others. At the request of Council Chairman Thomas Scott, Susan Greenbaum presented a prepared statement to Council that summarized some of the preliminary research findings of her students and Moses House youth (Greenbaum 2010). I brought with me three of the younger Moses House kids who wanted to go. Greenbaum’s presentation was video recorded by one of the youths, who also appeared on television alongside Greenbaum when they were both interviewed afterward by Bay News 9.
(Johnson 2010). ABC Action News and the St. Petersburg Times (Jayakrishna 2010) also covered the issue, citing Greenbaum’s comments to the City Council.

Figure 29: Moses House youth at the door of Tampa City Council Chambers. Photo by the author.

Moses House youth and their research colleagues from USF were part of a sustained public outcry (Zink 2010d) regarding the negative social impacts of the fee increase policy, especially on children and families living on low incomes (Wade 2010b). This chorus of disapproval included parents, seniors in South Tampa (Zink 2010a) and West Tampa (Steele 2010), community activists in West Tampa and South Tampa (Florida Sentinel-Bulletin 2010), and concerned citizens in East Tampa (Wade 2010a) and elsewhere, all of whom voiced their complaints about the fees to City Council, the City Parks and Recreation Department, or reporters from local newspapers. The Parks and Recreation Department also received criticism for firing lower-level staff but hiring top-level supervisors after going through reorganization in 2009 (Sokol 2009; Zink 2010a). Its Director later resigned at the end of 2011, after mounting public criticism from these
and other controversial decisions she made during her tenure since being hired in 2004 (Wade 2011a; b). The new mayor and new recreation director have rolled the fees back to where they were before the increases.

Moses House youth were active participants in a collaborative action research project involving collective learning and reflection as well as civic engagement. Along with their USF co-researchers, they found that public recreational facilities, such as the Rec and the Sulphur Springs Pool, serve many vital purposes in urban neighborhoods, especially in neighborhoods debilitated by poverty and lacking in resources. Recreation centers provide safe spaces in which neighborhood residents, in particular children and youth, can have fun participating in sports and other leisure activities as well as receive mentoring and academic tutoring from recreation center coaches and volunteers (see also Mervis 2012). Affordability is crucial for those children and families living on low incomes. City parks and community centers, the heart of recreational social activity for children and families of the inner city, have been drained of community life by neoliberal policies and budgetary austerity (Arney, et al. 2011). In the Sulphur Springs neighborhood of Tampa, the Rec was an indispensable social institution.

In Sulphur Springs, there is a high concentration of children, but few spaces outside of home for kids to socialize and have fun while under positive adult supervision. In terms of public programs, Sulphur Springs is one of the most underserved neighborhoods in Tampa. Without access to the recreation center, many children and youth were spending more time outside in yards and the streets, where they attract police and are vulnerable to sexual predators and other dangers. In other interviews I
conducted with Sulphur Springs youth, not being able to go to the Rec was cited as a major cause for an increase in contact with law enforcement and what they described as police harassment. “We’re in the streets,” as Jamar explained, “because we can’t go to the Rec, and there’s nowhere else to go. And now the police are harassing us more because we’re in the street more.” There were other dangers in the streets. A car hit and nearly killed one Moses House youth while he was biking around the neighborhood looking for another place to swim after the Sulphur Springs Pool began charging entrance fees. He was hospitalized, remained unconscious for several days, and received stitches and staples on his head where he had been lacerated from the impact with the car. Fortunately, he has since recovered.

The fee increases were rolled back for fiscal year 2011, but it was uncertain at the time for how long the fees would remain at pre-fiscal year 2010 levels. The video documentary was edited, finalized (Arney and Sabogal 2010), and then uploaded onto the Moses House YouTube Channel12 after the fees had already been rolled back. We felt that it was still important to share with the public the video as a testimony to the level and quality of work that Sulphur Springs youth could do through Moses House, given the proper respect, guidance, encouragement, and support. Moses House youth learned from direct experience that civic action and research on public issues have the potential to produce desired results, and that they had the right to be part of the political decision making process on issues affecting their own lives. In June 2010, when we took some of

12 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGz7an1z82I.
the kids to the formal groundbreaking for a new community center promised by the City to Sulphur Springs, they intrepidly approached the mayor to ask her questions.

Because of the success of the collaboration with other USF faculty and students, I felt that Moses House was ready to invite other service-learning classes from USF to work with neighborhood children and families on a variety of issues and research topics identified by the children and families themselves. Analyses of these service-learning partnerships and their results will appear in future writings and publications. The particular collaboration described above was basically about understanding urban poverty and the social and political agency of those who live in urban poverty.

Financial Literacy and Poverty

There exists a “financial literacy” of the poor that goes unacknowledged by misguided social service organizations who assume that people are poor because they do not know how to save or budget their money properly—which is to say, save and budget their money as if they lived on middle class incomes. In community centers, resource centers, and public schools in and around Sulphur Springs, “financial experts” are brought in to “empower the African American community to become financially literate and economically self-sufficient,” as one advertisement condescendingly put it. On another flyer, whose text could have used some grammatical empowerment, a Bank of America-funded financial literacy program boasted that it was focused on “the all too often norms [sic] about money and the fact [sic] that minority students are not learning enough about how money works.”
The program, which was advertised as being “for young teens focused on success,” would provide “hands-on experience by implementing the practices of investing using a virtual portfolio of $500,000 in a virtual stock market over a ten (10) week period.” On several occasions, I was encouraged by recreation center staff to recruit Moses House teens into this program; insinuations were made that if the kids learned the right way to manage their finances, they would be less likely to resort to illegal means to acquire money. The financial literacy program generously offered a whopping $1600 in “educational scholarship money” that would “be awarded at the end of the program based on participation, presentations, and the value of students’ virtual portfolio” (emphasis added). If participants did not learn how to invest their imaginary money the right way, they would not be eligible for the scholarship money—which could have gone to real use in paying tuition at an actual educational institution.

It was not clear how young teens were to have “hands-on experience” with virtual money, a virtual portfolio, and a virtual stock market. Nor was it clear why pretending that they had half a million dollars to play with was an effective means of teaching financial literacy to young people living in poverty. The real lesson, however, was ideological. Poor kids should adopt middle class values, even if they did not have, or would ever have, middle class money. If they could be persuaded to consent to the moral ideology of meritocracy and economic self-sufficiency, then the hegemony of middle classes values and the depoliticization of class inequality could continue to go unchallenged.
What is more, this “financial literacy” program, and others like it, conveniently leaves out the lesson about how Bank of America and JP Morgan Chase were directly responsible for increasing poverty and worsening material conditions in Sulphur Springs. Banks had mortgages “that were two or three times the market value” of the properties (Romero, in Zink 2010b), and during the financial crisis that began in 2007, many of the high-cost subprime mortgages on homes in Sulphur Springs went quickly into default, causing the neighborhood to have the highest foreclosure rate in the City of Tampa. The local media also downplayed or ignored the real causes of all the foreclosed and abandoned homes in Sulphur Springs and other Tampa Bay area neighborhoods, choosing instead to concoct lurid crime narratives with law enforcement agencies about how empty and abandoned homes had become “haven[s] for crime” and “place[s] for thieves to stash their stolen goods and for addicts to get high” (Van Sickler and Thalji 2010).

Never mind the criminal activity of major banks and Wall Street investment firms that caused the subprime mortgage crisis in the first place. As investigative journalist Matt Taibbi has pointed out, virtually none of them has gone to jail (2011). At the national level, the financial loss caused by the corporate, white collar crime of the subprime mortgage crisis has hit African Americans the hardest, estimated by some to be as much as $72-$93 billion—the greatest loss of African American wealth in modern U.S. history (Rivera, et al. 2008). For the nation as a whole, the loss of wealth due to street crime pales in comparison. For instance, the FBI’s Crime in the United States report for 2008 estimates the loss to victims of robberies at $581 million (Federal Bureau
of Investigation 2009). In conversations I had with Moses House youth, they frequently referenced the financial crisis that shook the United States and other countries around the globe. It was in fact the backdrop to many of our conversations. They were quick to point out the injustices in the disparities in punishment between white collar and street crime. It did not seem fair, they thought, that people they knew from their neighborhood had spent years in prison for robberies of a few hundred dollars or less, while corporate fraudsters could take in hundreds of millions, or even billions, of dollars and never spend a day in jail. “They lock a nigga up for a burglary,” Jermaine said dismayed, “when they won’t do nothing about those real estate investors who got people kicked out of their own homes.”

I eventually did see one and sometimes two young people at the financial literacy class at the Rec. This was not too long after the rec fee increase had made it disagreeable if not prohibitive for youth to be there. The coincidental timing of the scheduling of the course was therefore unintentionally ironic. Young adults who could not afford to pay miscellaneous usage fees at the Rec, including the membership fee required to be granted permission to enter the building, were prevented from participating in a course that required them to play financial investment games with an imaginary $500,000 and learn the proper way to budget their money so that they could lift themselves out of poverty. There is a false assumption here that one of the reasons “the poor” are poor is because they do not know how to make “a budget,” as if there were only one right way of budgeting money.
I have learned from adults, youth, and children alike in Sulphur Springs that they do indeed budget their money, what little of it they have, only it is a different kind of budgeting than what might be made in middle class households that are financially self-sufficient. Some of the families I know in Sulphur Springs do quite impressive budgeting with very small amounts of money or fixed incomes. For their own households, they pay down utility bills before services get turned off, manage to save enough money to pay rent before getting evicted, and buy groceries and personal items. In reciprocity with others, they pool money for rites of passage celebrations and parties, and loan or parcel out money to extended family and friends who had loaned them money (or let them “hold” it, as they say) over the course of the previous weeks or months.

Such forms of collective and participatory budgeting are either not seen as “budgeting” or are considered “crabs in a basket” budgeting learned from the “culture of poverty”: in attempting to climb over each other to get out of poverty, they unwittingly pull each other back in. The neoliberal logic that informs the design of financial literacy classes for poor people presumes that the world consists of nothing but lone individuals looking out for their own individual, private interests. As a corollary, each individual, in order to succeed in a market-based world of nothing but other competing individuals, must make a budget that is only for oneself, or at most, for one’s own family. Nonetheless, at a meeting to identify community priorities for service providers, an agency representative told the group that they had to help Sulphur Springs “one at a time.” For example, she said, if a young woman’s own mother was holding her down, “then perhaps she should forget her mother and move on.” In this twisted logic,
people living in poverty are instructed to rebuild their communities by abandoning social
ties and becoming more selfish as individuals. Those who disobey will be governed
through welfare assistance and excessive policing.

**Being Governed through Assistance and Policing**

In Sulphur Springs, and elsewhere in the Tampa Bay area, schools, service
providers, government agencies, and most nonprofit organizations express the view that
poverty can be eliminated by various types of “education” that would effectively teach
individuals to accept moral blame for being poor and to take responsibility for making
better choices that will allow them to escape poverty. Bad parents need to learn how to
be good parents. Dysfunctional families need “family literacy” to build healthy
relationships, “financial literacy” to learn how to budget money correctly, and etiquette
training on the proper way to eat at a table using utensils, not fingers. Civic engagement
in poor neighborhoods means volunteering to pick up trash. What poor kids need most
are motivational speakers to raise their self-esteem. Bad kids need stricter discipline,
behavior modification, and medications that sedate their “hyperactivity disorder.”
Exceptional student education (ESE) services that should assist their development, help
them reach their potential, and defend their right to equality of educational opportunity
instead stigmatize them, destroy their self-confidence, and exclude them.

The biography of Myron illustrates the psychological impact and educational
consequences of being labeled a “bad boy” and getting diagnosed with
“emotional/behavioral disorders” and “oppositional defiance disorder.” Myron is a young
man who started coming to Moses House to explore his personal development and receive academic mentoring for his college courses. He works close to full-time hours at a job he has held for several years, takes courses at the community college, and shares parenting duties taking care of his and his girlfriend’s newborn daughter. The school system had much lower expectations for him.

Nonetheless, he finished high school and got a job, where he encountered a mentor who encouraged him to discard the negative characterizations, such as “headed for prison” and “oppositional defiant disorder,” that had been ascribed to him by school psychologists. Myron wanted to understand how his personality had developed in response to how he was perceived and treated by the school system. He even went to the school district records office and obtained copies of his school discipline file for his entire K-12 career. One day he brought the file for me to read. It was hundreds of pages. He also shared with me the writing of an essay he submitted for one of the assignments in his college English composition course. Entitled “Why?,” it is an attempt to make sense of his elementary school experience as a “bad kid.” Now he sees things differently and wonders if part of the problem had been being bounced around among bad schools with bad teachers.

For every fifth grader, the fifth grade banquet symbolizes the celebration of all the accomplishments each one has made throughout his or her elementary school career. My fifth grade year, I never had the chance to celebrate my accomplishments. In fact, I really was not considered a fifth grader. Moreover, I was considered abnormal. It all began like this: I was given a PER (Psychological Evaluation Report) by a psychologist at Sunny Skies Elementary School. I was only in the first grade. After taking an umpteenth amount of tests, all in one day, psychologists reportedly found—that very same day—the proper diagnosis for my behavior. From that day on, I was legally considered by
teachers a delinquent in the Hillsborough County Public School System. Why?

As a young child, I displayed impulsive behavior frequently. Before being tested by psychologists, I had already attended four other elementary schools prior to attending Sunny Skies, with a reputation as a defiant, bullying, high-strung, disorientated, and restless student. I did not know why I acted that way, and I did not know why I needed to be tested. Compared to teachers, administrators, and other adults who understood the real consequences of the PER, I was only an infant not knowing the long-term effects of the evaluation. The diagnosis recommended that I be placed in ESE classes (Exceptional Student Education) for closer monitoring of my behavior. Consequently, I transferred—yet again—to another school, which offered the special services that were recommended by the psychologist.

For the third grade, I attended Sulphur Springs Elementary and had become very aware of the situation I was in through name-callings by peers, who frequently yelled “retarded,” “slow,” “stupid,” and many other names at me. It was a devastating point of my life. Also, living in a single-parent home and being the youngest of six children, I did not get much attention. My family never taught me how to express my emotions. Furthermore, due to inconsistency in prior years, I had no experience of a healthy relationship, nor any sense of trust. Therefore, I was forced to cope with my feelings and thoughts alone. Changes were needed quickly for me, even though all odds were against me. I knew something had to take place.

In the fourth grade, I began to make efforts to interact more with my peers. I attended the afterschool program at the Sulphur Springs Recreation Center (the “Rec”) in my neighborhood. I felt freer at the Rec than at school. At the Rec I was allowed to intermingle and play with the “mainstream students,” while at school I was limited to interacting with only the small number of other students in my ESE classes. I never understood at the time, however, why the teachers had separated the students in this way. But after I began to interact with the mainstream kids while at the Rec, I felt that there really was no difference between them and the ESE kids. Why, I asked myself, had I been placed in a separate classroom and told by my teachers that I was different from the other kids?

At the end of the fourth grade year, I enrolled in the summer programs at the Rec and participated in as many summer activities as possible. I felt that the more I was around the “regular” kids, the more I would become like them. I wondered what I could do to change my personality to be more like my peers. For example, I tried to be more sociable, friendlier and less angry. Being more social with the other kids definitely opened my mind to new ideas, new people, and helped me
become less angry. While I felt that I did lose the more aggressive side of my personality, I eventually found that there was nothing I could fundamentally change to be more like them. Nonetheless, I did cut down on play time and devoted more time to study sessions with the regular kids at the Rec.

Starting my fifth grade year, I began implementing the lessons and the social skills that I learned while attending the summer programs at the Rec Center. I enrolled in the flag football program and became a crosswalk guard. Yet, I was still not allowed to enroll in mainstream classes. I did not understand why. I thought I had made the significant changes that my teachers and psychologist wanted to see me make, but it seemed that my efforts were not enough. Because I was not seeing the rewards I wanted for my efforts, I began to reminisce about my past, which was full of lonely days with no one to talk to about my personal feelings and frustrations.

At this point, my quest to be a better student became more personal and less an attempt to please the staff members at my school. I really wanted to be put in the mainstream classes, not so much to please my teachers, but because I wanted to be with the mainstream kids. I had just spent all summer trying to be like them and making all kinds of new friends in the process. Why would I not want to be with them? They received better treatment than the kids in the ESE classes, and I felt that I deserved to receive the better treatment too: the field trips, the extra incentives for good behavior, the different awards given throughout the year, and so on.

During this period, I also thought more about other students I knew who were in ESE and who were trying to get into mainstream classes. One of my friends, [name removed], attended the summer programs with me at the Rec. He was also in ESE classes. The school decided to mainstream him, but after only one disciplinary incident he was told his behavior was unacceptable. He was sent back to ESE. The hope I had built up of becoming a mainstream student suffered a severe blow. I wondered if I would ever get mainstreamed. My friend was more intelligent than me, but we had about the same level of social skills. My dream of becoming a mainstream student began to fade as I contemplated how easily the gains I might make could be taken away from me.

Nonetheless, the opportunity to attend the fifth grade banquet was guaranteed. Or so I thought. The fourth grade students frequently talked about the fifth grade banquet during the summer programs at the Rec. I learned about this special event from them. At the fifth grade banquet, I was told, students got to dress formally, invite their parents, and celebrate the accomplishments they made throughout their elementary school years. I quickly realized that this was an event that every fifth
grade student should attend, even myself. After hearing all the kids talk so excitedly about it, I could not wait to attend.

Dressed in my finest suit the day of the fifth grade banquet, I walked proudly through the hallways in anticipation of this special afternoon. However, on my way to the cafeteria, where the banquet itself was being held, I was stopped by my fifth teacher and told that the celebration was only for regular students—and that I was a “special ed” student. In other words, I was not allowed to attend. The long-term effects of the psychological evaluation I had taken in first grade were becoming evident. Because of being categorized as a “special ed” student, I was not being allowed to celebrate the accomplishments I felt I myself had really made. Were they not getting recognized simply because of the psychological examinations I underwent as a first grader? I still ask, Why?

The harmful effects of poverty on children’s development and wellbeing are treated as individual “emotional and behavioral disorders” in schools and other youth-serving organizations, most of which are permeated by a behaviorist, psychological treatment model that regards the kids as pathological products of the “culture of poverty” and bad parenting. Zero tolerance policies in schools reduce “risk” by suspending and expelling students for minor offenses, and, if they become “oppositional,” school resource officers are there to arrest them for trespassing if they refuse to leave the premises.

Not only in Sulphur Springs, but also throughout Hillsborough County, the emphasis is on saving young children up to age eight. Few programs exist for middle school aged children, and even fewer for teenagers in high school or the ones who have been expelled or dropped out altogether. Worse than a “school-to-prison pipeline,” society has built for them a “cradle-to-prison pipeline” (Children’s Defense Fund 2007a), which is, more accurately, a poverty-to-prison pipeline. Indeed, older youth are summarily categorized as gang members, incorrigible thugs beyond redemption;
practically the only public resources directed at them are from law enforcement. If they oppose the police who are harassing them all the time, the court sometimes orders them to complete “anger management” treatment to deal with their inappropriate feelings.

At government-sponsored “community events” in Sulphur Springs, an assemblage of small, underfunded neighborhood nonprofit organizations\(^{13}\) are asked to promote themselves as “service providers” by setting up tables in outdoor market-like fashion. These same organizations compete for scarce funds with one another as well as with larger, well-funded nonprofit service providers.\(^{14}\) Ironically, “sustainability” is demanded of social programs meant to assist those in need, even as government and other funders cut off the flow of funds that once sustained the programs.

Free food and games for kids lure residents to community events that they might be otherwise disinclined to attend. Once there, youth are often treated with suspicion, and monitored closely to ensure they do not receive too many hot dogs, hamburgers, goodie bags, or free backpacks. Parents are required to present names, birth certificates, and social security numbers for each one of their children at a special registration prior to the actual community event itself, sometimes days or weeks in advance.

These events are a manifestation of the carceral-assistential state, for along with inadequate service providers, there is typically a show of force by a militarized police department with ample human and material resources for surveillance, tactical

\(^{13}\) With yearly operating budgets under $25,000.

\(^{14}\) With yearly operating budgets in the $20-40 million range.
response, and patrol: sometimes it includes tanks, helicopters, mounted patrols, police
vans, K-9 units (drug sniffing dogs), patrol cars, and crime scene investigation units.
Children are encouraged to play in or around some of these material resources, such as
the police tank, contributing to the banality of police presence and criminalization in the
neighborhood. Government sponsored community events are symbolic of the very
relationship that people living in poverty in Sulphur Springs and other Tampa
neighborhoods have with government. Their primary—and for many, their only—contact
with the state is through law enforcement, the criminal justice system, and public
assistance agencies. Access to the latter is now almost wholly online and over the
phone, and social services are being increasingly provided by a decentralized plethora of
nongovernmental organizations, which do not receive state funding or are underfunded
and unsustainable.

I was able to map and navigate the landscape of nonprofit organizations through
five years of ethnography while working as volunteer director of Moses House,
interacting with various other Tampa Bay area nonprofit organizations, schools, service
providers, and government agencies. As a doctoral student in an applied anthropology
graduate program at a major state university only a ten-minute drive from Sulphur
Springs, I was able to assist Moses House in many important ways.

Through the process of doing this advocacy work on behalf of the organization, I
built relationships with people in the community that were a prerequisite for doing the
kind of engaged ethnography on criminalization that my dissertation research entailed.
More importantly, this allowed me to construct transformative dialogues with Moses
House youth and mentor them toward achieving their own aspirations of social justice and success.

However, while a small grassroots nonprofit organization can help provide guidance and support, its operations can be limited by intermittent and meager funding as well as by the small number of people who are willing to volunteer as staff. Nonprofit organizations that try to sustain themselves through monetary donations and small grants are unlikely to build structures that can endure the neoliberal destruction of public funding and the very idea of the public good.

**Advocacy and Mentoring through Critical Dialogue**

Besides the leadership and administrative role I was filling at Moses House, I had also become an advocate and mentor. This came through being an instructor for Moses House programs as well as being a researcher investigating criminalization in the lives of Sulphur Springs youth. I did not begin my work with Moses House imagining that I would advocate and mentor in the ways in which I eventually did. Regarding mentoring, I accept the label of *mentor* reluctantly, for I feel that there is a certain degree of pretentiousness in claiming to be a mentor. To do mentoring, one must assume that one is a good example of something or has good advice to give, based on achieved status. Personally and professionally, I feel that I am only just beginning to achieve some of my life goals, and there is no shortage of people who could give better advice than I could—or who are more certain about their potential advice than I am about mine. Furthermore, mentoring requires one to be responsible for the results of one’s
mentoring. I do not want to carry the burden of responsibility for what happens in other people’s lives, especially if something goes wrong because someone listened to my advice or guidance.

Despite the above reservations, I soon found myself being referred to as a “mentor” by some of the Moses House youth, their parents, and many others in a variety of social contexts. My interactions with Moses House youth were based on respect, dignity, and empathy. The thing with which we could relate to each other the most was the experience of growing up in poverty and sharing some commonalities among the various stresses and indignities it caused in our lives, as well as some of the strategies we used for “getting by.” Oftentimes our conversations were about money, mostly about not having it or not having enough of it. I even began using some of their expressions for “being broke” when I was without money between paychecks. “I’m fucked up,” felt like a good way to express the feeling of having no money.

Moreover, many of the Moses House youth told me that they liked talking with me because I actually took the time to listen to and understand them. I did do that. Sometimes it was done as a conversational interview for research purposes, and many times these conversations lasted for several hours. Other times I listened as a friend or parental figure, or simply as someone who cared. This required a time commitment that I did not always have the luxury of affording, but I tended to make room by canceling or postponing other obligations. Usually they would talk for as long as I would listen or until they felt they had exhausted the topics of the conversation—or until some other activity more interesting than talking with me suddenly presented itself. I was truly amazed by
how the very people whom I had heard adults characterize as incapable of focusing their attention or having no desire to learn would demonstrate the most passionate interest imaginable in long discussions about things that were meaningful and relevant to them.

Again, however, my enabling of meaningful dialogue was seen for some reason as mentoring. I shied away from giving directive advice. Instead of giving out paternalistic commands of the “What you should do is ...” type, I employed critical dialogue. I did this to open up a thoughtful and self-reflective conversation on understanding what the issue was, determining which knowledge was relevant to the issue or if additional knowledge was needed in order to analyze the issue more thoroughly, specifying desired outcomes, identifying known constraints and options, and deciding which course of action to follow in order to achieve the best result—or the least worse result, as the case may be. This was not merely “thinking through” the issue in order for the individual to make his or her choices using abstract rationality. It was critical dialogue in the sense that it entailed making the personal social and political.

That is, constructing a greater awareness about one’s existence and position in the overall socioeconomic structure in order to better struggle for one’s own interests along with those who share those interests.

Critical dialogue is a form of problem-posing pedagogy that intends to lead to the discovery of why things are the way they are, to perceive the actual nature of the social, political, and economic reality in which one exists, rather than being led along by false notions propagated by those in power who wish to maintain the status quo. Critical dialogue is transformative in that it attempts to understand the nature of power in
human social relations and to know more about the social, political, economic, and historical factors that condition the possibilities of action. Rather than assume that social reality as it is experienced is simply the way things naturally are, critical dialogue interrogates why social reality is such as it is at this particular historical moment. By knowing more about that which constructs the structures in our lives—whatever orders, limits, or constrains our agency—we can educate our hopes and desires to do active, transformative work in the real world instead of experiencing them merely emotionally as passive longings for the unattainable.

There is much talk in social service programs about helping individuals make better choices, as if the problematic social realities in which people exist have been constructed by disempowered individuals making bad choices. This is the individualization of social problems: blaming disadvantaged individuals for creating the social conditions that oppress and marginalize them. To paraphrase an oft-quoted statement of Marx: People do make their own choices, but they do not make them just as they please; they do not make choices under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past.15 Through engaged ethnography, I understood more about why Sulphur Springs youth did what they did and how they made sense of their reality and their own actions within it.

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15 The original version is from The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte and has been translated from the German as, “Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past” Marx, Karl 1964[1852] The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. New York: International.
My ascribed role of Moses House mentor and as well as my chosen role of advocate for social justice allowed me to not only closely observe and learn about what life was like in the neighborhood but also to participate in some of the youths’ struggles to resist poverty and criminalization. I spent time with them at Moses House, visited with them and their families at their homes, and made appearances at social gatherings and parties. I accompanied them on errands, going grocery shopping, clothes shopping, and party planning. I followed their interactions with social institutions (schools, recreation centers, GED programs), social welfare agencies, charities, and resource centers (the Social Security Administration, workforce youth programs, crisis centers, etc.). I went along with them on job searches, emergency room hospital visits, dental consultations, and to appointments at community mental health centers. I took them to school and picked them up from school. I helped them file for food stamps, Supplemental Security Income benefits, and their income tax returns, and fill out applications for GED programs, workforce programs, and scholarships.

I was able to witness, and sometimes experience firsthand, the ordeals and frustrations, bureaucratic obstacles and delays, disrespect and humiliation, racism and classism, despair and fatalism they endured trying to survive, to make it from one day to the next, to obtain access to necessary medical and health care services, and to improve their education and opportunities for employment. I do not know how it would have been possible for them to be any more resilient than they are already. Yet the many anti-poverty programs that are heralded as solutions in Sulphur Springs preach the necessity of building resiliency, self-esteem, life skills, individualism, and entrepreneurialism.
However, even with inner strength, it is not possible for an individual to maintain a self-supporting existence if they lack a material base or source of income. Dante, for example, tried to live on his own when he turned 18. He managed to search out rental properties in Sulphur Springs until he found a one-bedroom apartment that was within his budget, which was set by his monthly Supplemental Security Income of about $700. He scraped up enough money to buy kitchen and cooking utensils, bathroom supplies, bed sheets, a mattress, and other basic items for a new apartment. However, within a few weeks of moving in, a letter from the Social Security Administration arrived informing him that his benefits were being canceled. While he was able to scrape up and borrow money from friends and family to stay in the apartment for more than half a year (primarily by charging rent to a number of other people for allowing them to stay with him), he eventually went broke and was evicted from the apartment for failure to pay rent. Moses House was in no position to help him financially by, for example, paying him wages to do work for the organization.

There were other ways, nonetheless, that I could provide some form of support to Moses House youth. As an advocate, I accompanied Moses House youth to courtroom appearances and on visits to the court clerk’s office, the public defender’s office, private attorneys when they could negotiate a payment plan, probation officers, “weed and seed” centers, drug treatment programs, and to psychiatrists’ offices when they were required by the court or Social Security Administration to undergo psychological evaluations. I picked them up from the juvenile assessment center, the juvenile detention center, and county jail when they were released from custody, and I
communicated with them through written correspondence, inmate calling, and video visitation while they were incarcerated. I stood in front of judges and spoke on their behalf, I defended them against police accusations, and I strategized with public defenders to get their charges reduced or dropped. I signed off on and vouched for the court-ordered community service hours they completed at Moses House as part of the terms of their probation, and I helped file for indigent status and early termination of probation. I kept track of and reminded them of upcoming court dates, appointments with probation officers, and helped them look up charges, arrest records, traffic citations, and court documents. I helped them write up formal complaints they wanted to make to internal affairs at the police department.

For example, one day I got a phone call from Malik. He said he needed to talk to me. He had just been released from jail on bond after having been arrested by Officer Smith the day before. He believed he had been a target of police harassment, and he wanted to report Officer Smith to Internal Affairs. He was asking for my help to write up the complaint. I scheduled a meeting with him at Moses House, where he said he would like to sit down at the computer and type up a description of the incident involving Officer Smith.

When we got together, he said he wanted to describe in as much detail how he had been treated and why he thought an officer of the law should not have treated him that way. He had also brought a copy of the police report to show me how the officer had described probable cause for arrest, which Malik contested. I asked him if we should first do some research on the best ways to prepare an official complaint; he said “yeah!”
and we searched through legal advice websites for guidance on how to file a complaint about police misconduct. We found several explanations and lists of tips, and then synthesized the guidelines that were relevant to the case.

Malik asked me to do the typing. I positioned the computer monitor closer to him so that he could more easily read what I was typing. Next, I opened up a new Word document and asked, “So what happened?” Malik began to describe to me in minute detail his version of the events. I asked him for clarification whenever something was not clear or ambiguous. He carefully chose every word, and I was impressed not only by his focus but by the nuances he distinguished in the meanings of closely related words. He was someone who had dropped out of school, but it was clear to me from working with him on preparing this complaint that he had not left school because of low intelligence.

After he finished recounting what had occurred between him and Officer Smith, we went through his account sentence by sentence to see how we could use the legal advice guidelines to add specific words and phrases that make Internal Affairs take the complaint more seriously.

For example, legal advice guidelines instructed that unless a specific request for a formal investigation regarding police misconduct were included in the complaint, Internal Affairs had no obligation to assume that the person filing the complaint was asking Internal Affairs to do any sort of investigation at all. Without the specific request for an investigation, the complaint could be treated merely as such: an expression of grievance, not a request for a course of action to redress a grievance. Therefore we added to the very top of the first page the phrase, “Request for a Formal Investigation
Regarding Serious Misconduct by Office Jim Smith.” We spent over two hours working on the complaint.

Malik went eventually went to court to fight the charges. When the public defender’s office was appointed to represent him, he gave them a copy of a complaint we had prepared. They told him not to file it while the case was still in progress because the police officer could use it against him. Malik plead not guilty and the case went to jury trial. He said he thought the public defender’s office did a great job defending him and exposing the falsehoods and contradictions during cross-examination of Officer Smith’s testimony. The public defender got the felony charge dismissed during trial, and the jury found Malik not guilty on the “assault on a law enforcement officer” charge. I asked Malik how it felt to beat the case. He responded:

I felt like a man. I felt like life was going to end right then and there [if I got convicted], [but it was like I had] a whole new life all over again. That’s how awesome it was. To see the expression on his [Officer Smith’s] face ... it felt priceless. And I wish it was like that every day. I could go there, and they say “not guilty,” and I could see his facial expression every day. When I wake up, I see his face like in that facial expression. And it make me proud, that’s how I get my day started. It motivates me to say, “Fuck Smith!”

However, after receiving the “not guilty” verdict, the public defender advised him that it was not necessarily over: “And the public defender was like telling me to watch out for him because they was going to harass me again cause I just beat him.”

Throughout my mentoring and advocating, of which the above is but one example, I was able to observe the processes of criminalization at work in the everyday lives of Sulphur Springs youth and learn from them how they perceived what was happening. At times, not only was I able to see how they resisted criminalization, I was
also able to participate with them in that resistance. I engaged with them in critical
dialogue in order to encourage them to form a more critical understanding of social,
economic, and political injustice and to produce transformative knowledge that could
guide them onto a different path than the one society had laid out for them—the path
to prison.

For some Moses House youth, my mentoring and advocacy has helped them to
enroll in educational and work skills development programs. It has also kept some of
them out of prison, gotten them out of jail, kept them out of juvenile detention facilities,
gotten their charges dropped, helped them meet the terms and conditions of their
probation and eventually have it terminated, and even kept them from being arrested.
For others, my mentoring and advocacy merely delayed their entrance into the criminal
justice system or merely reduced the number of arrests they would suffer.

Such work, however, represents only a fraction of what needs to be done merely
to resist criminalization, let alone to decrease it or diminish its reach into the lives of
youth. Law enforcement, get-tough-on-crime politicians, and the criminal justice system
have constructed a carceral apparatus that is awesome in its power to capture urban
black males in its system, and it will likely take a national social and political movement
to bring about the most basic and sensible reforms.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed how Moses House re-established its base of
operations in a small, leased building in a semi-public park in Sulphur Springs; how
criminality was projected onto Moses House children and youth; some of the primary strategies and tactics that police use to put Sulphur Springs youth under surveillance and to arrest them; a participatory action research project that focused on parks and recreation fee increases; how people living in poverty are governed through crime and assistance; and ways in which I was able to advocate for and mentor Sulphur Springs youth.
Chapter Seven: Conclusions and Recommendations

The multiplication of nonprofit/nongovernmental organizations over the last several decades is a result of the fiscal austerity policies and structural adjustment of government. The depoliticization of poverty (Lyon-Callo and Hyatt 2003) infiltrates the very language and institutional discourse of social welfare in the neoliberal world: poor people are no longer considered citizens with political agency and the right to make demands on the state, but merely objects called “customers” or “clients” to whom “providers” and “vendors” market their “services.” The very notion of an empathetic society based on the common good—indeed, the very notion of society itself—is intended to disappear as the complexity, humanity, and communality of meaningful social relationships is replaced by individualized, self-interested, profit-driven exchanges modeled on market transactions.

As tax revenues have dwindled at the local level, municipal and county governments chose to cut and privatize basic public services and resources, in many cases arguing that market forces would solve social problems, such as poverty, much better than government. Such a response to losses in revenue ends up penalizing the poor and working class by an array of unaffordable “market-rate” fees, increasing the likelihood that residents will make even less use of already diminishing public services—which gives government the justification for reducing services even further. Youth and
adults in high poverty neighborhoods such as Sulphur Springs now complain that it is only after they become incarcerated that they are provided with, or gain access to, some of the basic services they need, such as health education, dental care, counseling services, and GED programs.

These youth identify poverty as the major source of suffering and difficulties in their lives, and even the primary cause of criminal behavior, which they are well aware can result in a criminal record that will destroy their future life opportunities at a young age. They do not think that they have the same opportunities as others because of their socioeconomic background, the discrimination they experience due to racial prejudice, and the mere fact of their being “from the hood.” They believe they have a lot of talent and potential, but that no one wants to work with them or support them in developing it. Their general indignation is justified, they feel, because no one wants to advocate for them, the barriers preventing them from reaching their potential are nearly insurmountable, and life itself is a brutal day-to-day struggle to survive.

Despite such structural violence and all the unjust social forces working against them, they evince a very strong sense of community and solidarity, apparently care about each other, and want to help each other be successful. They are also eager to work collectively and politically to oppose and change the policies that are harming them. Through critical dialogue, we produced recommendations for a social justice based paradigm shift in public policy as well as transformative knowledge that helped them resist criminalization. They want committed mentors and teachers who treat them with respect; meaningful and enriching educational, recreational, and artistic activities
through which they can realize their potential as human beings; and they want the police to simply stop harassing them. They also want to tell their own story and are passionate about producing their own creative media, especially free styling, writing, and documentary video, to bring visibility to the social problems affecting their well-being. Above all else, they want legal sources of income and help in securing jobs that pay them well for work they enjoy doing. It is very clear to them that poverty is caused by low or no income, not low self-esteem. While criminal activity can be lucrative and in their minds justified by redistributive social banditry, it is full of too many risks, cannot substitute for a stable source of income, and engaging in it can ultimately limit their freedom and shorten their lives.

The children and youth of Sulphur Springs, and of any low-income neighborhood, need to be seen as potential to be cultivated, rather than a problem to be fixed. They need community residents, service providers, and government agencies to come together and build them nurturing systems of care, education, and development rather than structures of punishment and criminalization. Society fails its children when it does not provide them with the supports they need to ensure their health and well-being as well as to develop their potential as human beings. Through a combination of political, economic, historical, and social forces, inequality has become spatialized in built urban environments, with wealth concentrated in some neighborhoods and poverty concentrated in others. Anyone concerned about urban poverty needs to understand that the causes of poverty are rooted in the economy, the political system, society, and history, not in individuals. What is needed are programs, projects, and policies that
address urban problems from a social justice perspective and aim to decrease the social
disparities and inequalities produced by particular urban configurations of power and
class stratification.

Anthropological wisdom tells us that there is something vitally important in
working with people at the community level. Through long-term fieldwork, an
ethnographer can learn a great deal about, and variations in, the experiences and
perspectives of a group of people who are, or who imagine themselves to be, a
community. Ethnography is an iterative process that largely involves continuously asking
people open-ended questions in order to strive toward deeper and deeper
understanding of the complexities, patterns, and particularities of their lives. Although
anthropology has origins in colonialism, the purpose of ethnography should never be to
wield power over people, falsely claim to speak for them or represent them, or make
decisions for them. The goal is to learn, which requires questioning one’s own
assumptions and humbly admitting that one does not already know. People themselves
are already experts about their own lives, which is not to say that their own
interpretations and explanations are necessarily the only ones or even accurate
reflections of reality.

The point is that the practice of ethnography always involves relations of
knowledge and power, whether the knowledge and power are exercised by the
ethnographer or by those with whom the ethnographer is in a relationship. It is
therefore ethically imperative to be vigilantly mindful about the potential exercise of
power as well as the use of knowledge to justify decision making, especially about
decisions regarding the exercise of power over others. Anthropologists are rightfully suspicious of, and justifiably outraged by, “top-down” approaches to working with communities. Such arrogant presumption of expertise has proven fatal—literally and metaphorically—in many “community development” projects across the globe. The very notion that a powerful entity, be it a person, governmental body, or corporate organization, can rush into a community and make quick, consequential decisions about other people’s lives without their consultation or authorization, or even knowing much about them and their circumstances, is unacceptable and unavailing on political, ethical, intellectual, emotional, and other levels.

Grassroots nonprofit organizations such as Moses House are often created and guided by dedicated community leaders and activists, but social marginalization resulting from racial and class prejudice can prevent them from securing the resources and labor necessary to sustain an organization. Anthropologists can bring to a marginalized community’s struggle significant resources that include anti-racist anthropological perspectives, critical theory and analysis, ethnographic research methods, and social and cultural capital accumulated through a university education. Engaged ethnography with community members can establish empathy, solidarity, and a depth of intimacy in which silenced voices can be heard and the everyday effects of structural violence can be witnessed firsthand. Anthropologists can use forms of community engagement to marshal university resources, social networks, and student service-learning to assist grassroots organizations, in the process learning first-hand about the political, economic, and social forces that produce and reproduce the
injustices against which such organizations and their communities struggle. University–community engagement can shed light on urban problems and help develop community-based alternatives and solutions.

My university–community engagement through Moses House has helped make possible a variety of mutually beneficial community-based research, teaching, and learning opportunities for USF faculty and students. Under my leadership, and along with the invaluable assistance of the many students and faculty who volunteered their time and labor, Moses House has rebuilt its organizational capacity and secured the rent-free lease of a vacant county building, which Moses House kids and teens helped renovate into a new base for its nonprofit operations. I have helped to institutionalize community-based learning and culturally responsive pedagogy at Moses House through new educational programming developed collaboratively with Moses House participants and my colleagues, many of whom have been instrumental in helping develop supportive partnerships with a variety of community partners. We understand Moses House as a space for cultural production and social justice based approaches to improving community well-being. Through engaged research and learning, university students can become more meaningfully involved with their communities. Additionally, university–community engagement can bring to social problems, such as urban poverty, much needed critical perspectives that challenge the erroneous assumptions and fallacious reasoning that are causing additional harm to poor people rather than alleviating the poverty that makes their lives miserable.
However, university–community engagement is scarcely a replacement for the loss of social welfare and social services that has resulted from the neoliberal reconfiguration of the state. While urban public universities have much to offer surrounding communities that are struggling with cuts in basic services, part-time student volunteers do not make good substitutes for the full-time professionals whose jobs have been eliminated due to government budget cuts or changes in budgetary priorities. Faculty and graduate students might have an interest in developing long-term engaged projects, but most undergraduate student involvement lasts the length of a service-learning course: one semester. At Moses House, many undergraduate students have made substantial contributions (with proper guidance and supervision), but most move on after the semester is over.

There is also the matter of ensuring that beneficial collaboration from the university does not turn into control or cooptation. Moses House and community organizations like it need to remain in the hands of community, not become extensions of the university. The sustainability of human capital from the community and the matter of compensating labor volunteered by community members thus becomes a doubly important issue. Sulphur Springs residents want jobs, and the unemployment rate for African American youth in Tampa is twice that of white youth. With funds from a small grant, Moses House was able to pay a small number of children and youth to work part-time on its community garden project during 2011. Other than this, Moses House has not been able to pay any salaries to staff or wages to children and youth who have worked there voluntarily and in a variety of capacities. Moses House needs to build
organizational capacity to apply for larger grants and the entrepreneurial capacity to
generate its own income—without losing sight of its social mission by mutating into a
private, for-profit business.

Moses House is a place for critically understanding an unjust social reality in
order to transform it. Built on the wisdom of community elders and rooted in the
community, it has a different operational paradigm, philosophy, and approach, although
its general mission—to improve wellbeing in the community—is shared with other youth
serving organizations and agencies. Moses House has the potential to make a bigger
impact, but unless it can build capacity to be more sustainable, reach more children and
youth, and become a more influential player in the local field of youth services and
nonprofit organizations, then perhaps it is only a small oasis or refuge at best. However,
in the new landscapes of inequality (Collins, et al. 2008), small organizations such as
Moses House are not unimportant. Even though they are singlehandedly incapable of
remaking the state or dismantling structural violence, they can contribute to the larger
cause of social justice and work together with other groups and organizations to build a
more humane world. Sulphur Springs children and youth have told me that if it were not
for Moses House, they would be “homeless, dead, or in prison.” That it took a Moses
House to make radical changes in the lives of these kids is evidence that not only do
social justice based organizations have the potential to make meaningful, relevant, and
even dramatic transformations, such organizations are sorely needed where neoliberal
governance has pushed the urban poor to the very margins of society and the edge of
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