

Juvenile Delinquency in the U.S.: Deconstructing the Recipe

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Academic Setting

"A deepened consciousness of their situation leads men to apprehend that situation as a historical reality susceptible of transformation. Resignation gives way to the drive for transformation and inquiry, over which men feel themselves to be in control."
- Paulo Freire

The exploration of juvenile delinquency is a topic that is of both high interest, and of useful relevant inquiry for students. Additionally, this inquiry increases the potential for a teacher to do the kind of work for which most entered into the profession. Most educators profoundly desire to make a difference for humanity, and hope for the possibility of a "transformation" for students in the classroom. Spending a week in any urban, high school classroom in the country would reveal the immense challenge that teachers must confront on a daily basis. This is a challenge of tremendous complexity that is impacted by society at all levels. The students who walk through the doors of our classrooms embody this societal complexity coupled with little understanding of themselves or their context. They echo a growing sentiment of cynicism and helplessness fed to them by the media and the peers and adults in their lives. Social issues, especially youthful violence and crime, are both sensationalized and viewed as mundane. The encouraging element of this phenomenon is that the students have a compelling interest in exploring the topic of crime and violence. However, with few exceptions, the students are the products of an educational system that has given them little opportunity to delve beneath the surface of any topic or develop the tools to question and reflect. A further complication is that urban classrooms typically are inhabited by large numbers of students with inadequate levels of literacy (Kozol). Paula Freire's work in Brazil has shown that societal transformation and literacy are not mutually exclusive endeavors, but have far reaching effects that require educators and schools be supported, strengthened and valued. There are many of us vested and committed to the profession and its potential for improving humanity. Many now fear that the solvency of public education is seriously threatened by the drain from the growing needs of health, mental

health and most of all, corrections and prisons. Clearly recognized, education cannot solve the problems of society, but we do possess tremendous potential to mobilize critical numbers of citizens directed toward stemming the tide of children who pour into the correction systems and related agencies. Charged with this underlying intention, the development of this curriculum unit seeks to achieve the following:

- Provide relevant information to young people who are already engaged in risky behaviors regarding life choices and options to incarceration.
- Assist students in developing the tools to reflect, connect and integrate knowledge to their personal lives.
- Develop student understanding of human development and its connection to societal functioning.
- Develop an understanding of the multi-faceted causes of criminal behavior and its treatment.
- Develop the ability to recognize class and racial bias in media coverage of social issues.
- Address student learning through incorporation of state and district standards to achieve the "Graduate Profile" in:
 - Academic Skills
 - Employability
 - Human Relations
 - Personal Effectiveness
 - Thinking Skills

The population for which the curriculum unit is intended is comprised of working, and middle class learners of diverse racial and ethnic composition. The community has both stable and mobile groups. Standardized testing measures place the school in the lower quartile of the district. Special Education and English as A Second Language programs are sizeable and growing steadily. The school has a large team of security personnel with three professional city police officers. Frequent arrests are made on campus for drug related as well as violent activities. Although for one of the largest high schools in the state (2,400), the overall feel of the school is usually calm, but the presence of security is quite visible. Most teachers on campus have at least daily interruptions from probation officers who are supervising adjudicated youth. We loose many students in the school year to arrests and incarcerations both of a temporary and long-term nature. The students who avail themselves of the many extracurricular activities are relatively few. A great many of the students hold after

school jobs, some by choice, but many contribute financial support to their families. The high school is in a zone with a high level of gang activity that surrounds daily living. Government assisted income families can live within blocks of homes valued at half a million dollars or more. The diversity of the school community is vast, and the hedonistic attitudes of society make it difficult to combat the sentiment of immediate gratification and entitlement. The creation of this curricular unit is an attempt to address this challenge proactively.

This unit is designed for 10th and 11th grade English students. One of those classes will be for "reclassified" students who have failed at least once, but probably two or more times. They return to high school with a very fragile hope that they may succeed and graduate. For them, engagement is a critical issue. The themes and concepts of this unit will be especially important and relevant. The learning goals developed by the English department for all classroom activities in reading and writing, revolve around essential questions that incorporate Re-Learning Principles. The essential questions are the following:

- 10th Grade: How does an individual influence his/her community?
- 11th Grade: What important characteristics of Americans (U.S. citizens) emerge from our literature?

English Department goals and objectives have been aligned with state and district standards, as will those of this unit. Opportunities for developing skills in reading comprehension, listening, speaking and writing will be provided. It is expected that the unit would last one grading quarter, including the time frame for individual research projects and group presentations.

Context

The approach selected for trajectory through the intended content will follow a model devised by developmental psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner. Although this model emphasizes the role of social context in development, it will also provide a vehicle for seeing the interaction of nature (heredity) and nurture (environment). An additional goal of this unit is to inform and educate the students of the complex and multifaceted factors which come to be present in the formation of a child or juvenile criminal. It is hoped that this unit will serve the students both as future parents and as citizens and voters. It is critical that the students understand that addressing the social issue of crime in the U.S. simply through punishment and incarceration is expensive and ineffective. Reading selections will examine

components in the five systems that an individual interacts with in the course of modern living. Below is a description of how Bronfenbrenner describes his five environmental systems. These systems have been developed for use by educational and professional academic work, but can be utilized and adapted for high school study.

- **Microsystem:** Family, school, church, neighborhood,
- **Mesosystem:** The relations between system components.
- **Exosystem:** Experiences from other social settings wherein the individual does not have an active role such as neighborhood, the legal system, social services, job settings, and mass media.
- **Macrosystem:** The cultural behavior patterns beliefs passed on from generation to generation.
- **Chronosystem:** The patterning of environmental events and transitions over the life involving sociohistorical circumstances.

Implementation and Background Information

Literature interspersed with professional material, videos and guest speakers, will be the vehicle through which concepts of human development and social science will be examined. The unit will begin, as does Bronfenbrenner's model, with the individual. Biographical profiles of violent youthful criminals will be deconstructed. The profile chosen to begin the unit is one that exposes the elements of ambivalent and neglectful parenting, child trauma, alcohol and substance abuse. The next system, identified as the Microsystem, includes the components of family, school and neighborhood. Exosystem is the third contextual area to be examined. In it the social service areas and legal systems are the focus. The Macrosystem, the fourth system, allows an examination of the cultural belief patterns through which all humans make choices that determine the course of their lives. The fifth and final will be the Chronosystem which looks at the sociohistorical and political events that affect the lives of families and children. Here we are permitted a view of how juveniles are viewed and treated within society and how this is subject to influences in presidential and legislative elections. Each section will include:

1. Background: This is the academic content the students will need in the task of analysis in reflective writing responses and group presentations.
2. Reading Selections: The use of literature will enable the students to make that personal connection necessary in comprehending the academic material. Summaries of each selection will include source citations. Through literature the students will meet their Language Arts standards and be able to

see how the concepts presented in psychology and sociology are manifested in human behavior.

3. Lesson Description: This section will include vocabulary lists, reading guides, reflective and formal writing topics, and group presentation assignments.

The entire unit will progress through the five systems outlined by Bronfenbrenner, each needing approximately seven to ten days to complete. The culminating assignment will be a group research project that will require a presentation. It is estimated that the entire unit can be completed in a nine week period.

Unit Outline

Week 1: Introduction: Biographical profiles of John and Jeffery August provided to students, along with questions for written reflection. Discussion will follow. Background information will be provided through lecture on parenting, childhood trauma, developmental impact of alcohol and substance abuse. Students will be divided into three groups and assigned one of the three background topics listed above and will re-analyze the profiles, then report their findings to the class.

Week 2: Microsystem (family neighborhood). This section will begin with a guest speaker from Center for Domestic Violence to address issues relating to the children who have experienced violence in the home. Reading selections will be given to the students with a set of questions for written reflection. The literature selections are chapters from popular novels that are autobiographical descriptions of family experiences and also include descriptions of the school and neighborhood. The background materials presented to the students will cover family dynamics and some education data profiles on juvenile delinquents. The students will be asked to write an essay comparing the families.

Week 3: Exosystem (legal system and social agencies). In this section the students will be given a descriptive profile of George Trevino. This will enable the students to follow the life of a teenager deeply trapped in the juvenile legal system, having had the majority of his life dictated by California Children's Protective Services. Students will be provided with brief data on demographic trends in the juvenile legal system. We will examine the foster care system and have a guest speaker from child protective services. The students will be divided again into groups to read additional readings to analyze. They will be asked to extract the layers of contributing factors in the deviant lifestyles of the young people in the readings. Presentations of group

findings will culminate this section.

Week 4 and 5: Macrosystem and Chronosystem (generational behavior and belief patterns effected by culture). The systems of this section will be investigated together as they are seen to be interconnected to a considerable degree. Poetry, short stories and autobiography will be the genre of literary selections. In this section the class will be divided into groups once again. They will read selections representing a cultural group trying to uncover the basis for cultural attitudes and behavior as well as societal response patterns throughout the last century. Students will be assigned films that support the deconstructing of cultural, political and historical factors contributing to the creation of juvenile delinquency in the U.S.

Week 6 : Guest Speakers who provide care, management, treatment and care of juvenile offenders will be featured in this section. We will include a social worker, juvenile corrections officer, probation officer, police officer and personnel from a psychiatric treatment center for children and youth.

Week 7: Research projects will be chosen and assigned to small groups or individuals.

Weeks 8 and 9: Research findings are shared with classmates as presentations.

Lesson Plans and Background for Section I

Background Information

Parenting: This sub-topic will include some basic principles of development through the psychosocial theory developed by Eric Erickson. The goal here is to interrupt the human tendency that we parent essentially as we were parented (Terr). Related academic fields have documented the intergenerational transmission of abuse. A noted psychologist, D.O Lewis, has provided abundant evidence that violent criminals usually have been victims of chronic violence in the home. The need to educate prospective parents on these issues should be obvious. Through this model we are able to trace the personality developing with healthy and productive attributes or into socially incompetent, unproductive beings. Erickson identifies a major crisis at each stage that must be surmounted with parents providing guidance and support. The model further provides some very concrete discipline and guidance principles that parents provide to the individual that lead to later productivity or social dysfunction. Erickson's theory emphasizes development throughout the human life span. Those stages and crises are described as follows:

Trust vs. Mistrust (0 –1 yr.): Trust is feeling physical comfort, minimal fear, and engenders the expectation that the world will be a good and pleasant place to live. Children who are neglected or abused will expect that adults do not provide for their needs, and thus will expect that life will bring discomfort or even pain and suffering.

Autonomy vs. Shame/Doubt (1-3yrs.): An infant, who has gained trust, begins to discover they and their behavior are their own. They will assert a sense of independence (autonomy). As they realize their own will, self-inhibition will develop. The infants excessively restrained or punished too harshly will likely develop a sense of shame and doubt regarding their personal competence in confronting their world.

Initiative vs. Guilt (3-5yrs.): With a widening social world, greater challenges are encountered requiring active, purposeful behavior. A sense of responsibility is developing with regard to behavior, toys and peers. With responsibility grows initiative. Guilt is a response that results from shame and doubt from the prior stage, or is a resulting response from irresponsibility when children are feeling overly anxious. Erikson points out that guilt can be compensated for by creating opportunities for accomplishment and competence.

Industry vs. Inferiority (6-10 yrs.): Initiative from the prior stage creates the situation where the child will encounter a wealth of new experiences. Developed positively, middle childhood provides a direction for energy in mastering knowledge and intellectual skills. The antithesis, inferiority, engenders a feeling of incompetence and lack of motivation. At this stage schooling and teachers have a powerful influence in showing children that they can learn and accomplish things important to them.

Identity vs. Identity Confusion (10-20 yrs.): The crisis at this stage is for adolescents to discover who they are and where they are going in life. Confusion is normal at this stage and exploration of many different roles within safe parameters is necessary. If parents push an identity, or if the adolescent does not adequately explore many roles in a positive way, identity confusion reigns.

Intimacy vs. Isolation (20-30 yrs.): The crisis of this stage is in forming intimate relationships with others. Critical at this point in life is to have found oneself before attempting an intimate relationship with either a mate or same gender friendships.

Generativity vs. Stagnation (40-50 yrs.): Erikson defines generativity in middle adulthood as the ability to assist the younger generation in developing and leading meaningful lives. Doing nothing to help the next generation is stagnation.

Integrity vs. Despair (60-death): The eighth and final stage involves looking back over our life and designating success or failure. A life well lived leads to satisfaction.

The field of human development is broad and theoretical models abound. Some of those models encompass aspects of psychology, anthropology and linguistics that Erikson's omits. Erickson's stages are comprehensible for the high school student and provide sufficiently concrete examples of interactive behaviors that will allow them to see that dysfunction is a developmental process with layers of complexity influenced by the previous stage. This theory of development also provides a framework to present concepts for analysis and reflective activities. It provides a working vocabulary for discussions and assessment.

Alcohol, Drugs and other Organic Factors Influencing Development:

Violent and criminal behavior has in recent decades been traced to conditions in the womb and even to the time prior to conception. Teenagers need to be shown that the effects of risky behavior have far reaching consequences. In previous years it was believed that the womb provided an effective shield against dangers to the developing child. Improved technology such as ultrasound has produced new information regarding how vulnerable an embryo and fetus actually is, especially the brain and neurological system. Fundamental concepts for this topic are the following:

- *Learning and memory takes place in the womb:* Neuroscientists are telling us that all of the senses are fully installed and test driven prenatally. Biology and health classes provide some of this information so for the purposes of this unit the cognitive and emotional effects will be the focus. Young people are incredulous when informed of the studies that show learning that is occurring for a fetus. Studies have documented that fetuses are dramatically impacted when a mother is shown short clips of a violent movie (Terr).
- *Brain/Neuron Development:* Ultrasound has also shown that in procedures of amniocentesis fetuses were observed to be responding fearfully, pulling away from the needle and defensively covering themselves even though their eyelids will be fused for several more months. This type of learning is now termed cellular memory because specific parts of the body seem to hold and express memory patterns. Neuron proliferation is begun within the first four weeks of development, with differentiation beginning at fourteen weeks of gestation on through the first year of life (Nissen). There are increasing numbers of children surfacing with low I.Qs, attention

problems, impulsivity, poor school adjustment, and processing difficulties. These neurologically related characteristics are frequently seen in violent adult criminals (Morse and Wiley). It is becoming evident that violent behavior and the wide use of alcohol and drugs in young parents have a close connection (Nissen). Exposure to drugs in and of itself is not a strong factor in producing violent children as much as later negative circumstances and experiences; prenatal environment can minimize or maximize healthy development.

- *Drugs/Alcohol and Parental Stress:* Destructive parenting behaviors and abuse in combination practically assure some level of serious deviancy. The combination is directly linked to violent behavioral patterns. A number of substances such as nicotine, lead and cocaine are most toxic for developing fetuses. Some of the teratogens are linked to negative physiological and behavioral changes and some to actual violent acting out (Nissen, 2000). Some of these effects are geographically related to environmental conditions. The most dramatic effects take place when many women are not even aware they are pregnant. It is notable that the greatly feared "crack affected" babies are not seen nearly as much as those infants affected by mothers who consume dangerous amounts of alcohol. Poverty immensely impacts all of these threats and affectations.

Childhood Trauma: This a subject that requires a significant academic foundation to understand. For the high school student, some fundamental concepts are necessary in order to understand the causes of violent behavior. The fields of psychology, sociology, and anthropology have documented evidence that maltreatment during childhood is greatly associated with aggression and violent behavior in later life. This is closely tied to the section on parenting, and some of the same sources will be used. Following are some fundamental concepts that will be given to the students regarding childhood trauma:

- When deconstructing the formation of a violent youth, it is essential to understand the neurological, and psychological, impact of chronic fear, pain, or terror in early life. Abundant research on brain development has shown that violence, imprinted early in the development of a child, can and often leads to an adult becoming a victimizer. With this concept, students can be shown that nature and nurture are united in the brain. All that we experience changes the brain and the brain in turn changes physiological responses in the body.
- The classic "fight or flight" is a response to threat coined by

noted psychiatrist W.C. Cannon in 1929. For infants and young children neither is an option. Instead, the infant brain becomes hyper-aroused or numb (disassociated). These states have corresponding physiological responses. When traumatic events are experienced often enough, imprinting occurs and these states can be reactivated at the slightest provocation. For these children, the fear responses are almost in constant overdrive and are seen as hyperactivity, over-reaction and an inability to concentrate. Psychiatrist B. Perry states that repeated and prolonged traumatic experiences can become "traits" in these individuals.

- By school age (kindergarten) children in healthy environments are cognitively expanding, learning letters, numbers and gain an ability to venture out in the world. The traumatized child is fearful, non-trusting, showing a dulled and/or deviant playfulness. These characteristics create significant barriers to success in school. These children have delayed or stunted development of self-control, empathy, and cognitive learning-characteristics that are essential to productive life in society.
- Deprivation is also a type of devastating trauma and possible cause of violence. B. Perry, a specialist in treating children who have in the first two years of life been neglected, frequently witnesses diminished attachment to the primary caregiver. When this occurs there is a ripple effect upon all subsequent development. This void in human development was identified as "developmental sociopathy" by psychiatrist Antonio Damasio in 1994. Stated in lay terms, the person is unable to feel connected to other human beings. When there is an inability to feel connected emotionally, a type of affective blindness occurs. In a violent individual, this is seen as the inability to feel remorse after such acts as physical assaults or even death.
- The majority of abused and neglected children do not become criminally violent. Most manage to lead relatively productive lives due to a number of "resiliency" factors. Researchers of resiliency have found three factors present. The first factor is fear, or a tendency toward caution or timidity rather than impulsivity. Second is effortful control, which is the ability to inhibit one response, while choosing another. The third is a capacity called "affiliativeness," or the ability to get along well with people. This critical factor is developed when the primary bond (attachment) between infant and caregiver is healthy. Resiliency can be operative when a child's natural strengths are

not overwhelmed by exposure to risk factors in the environment. (Rothbart)

Student Reading

Biographical Profiles of John and Jeffery August: Morse and Wiley 1997. (This is extracted and rewritten from psychological reports in *Ghosts from the Nursery* pp. 3, 19, 49, 101-103, 177-179, 223 –225, 241-246, and 276.) This biography evokes numerous and conflicting emotions from a reader. It describes in objective detail, a series of crimes culminating in the beating death of an elderly man. Jeffery was sixteen years old at the time. This biography, returns the reader to the past in short vignettes. The developmental and psychological concepts described above can be interjected at the appropriate sections or can be presented after the first reading.

Lesson Description

Give students a copy the vocabulary list and the biographical sketch with the following questions for responding. Students are to define words, read, then write. This is approximately on day's work. On the second day a debriefing/discussion should proceed the lecture presentation of Erickson's developmental theory. The students could work in groups to generate ideas on parent behaviors that develop the positive part of each stage. On the third or fourth day, student groups should re-visit the biography of Jeffery to identify and evaluate the parenting and ensuing development Findings should be written on chart paper and shared with the class. Debriefing with the whole group should take place on the final day of this section.

Vocabulary for
reading, writing and
discussion:

bludgeoned	immunity	appealed	psychopathic	sociopath
attachment	resiliency	impulsive	inhibit	affiliation
autonomy	timidity	affect	physiological	psychological
initiative	industry	identity	intimacy	isolation
integrity	despair	stagnation	generative	trauma

Questions for Reader Response

1. Give your reaction to the death sentence of this sixteen year old.
2. Do you feel the same about the sentences of all three who were involved?
3. What is your reaction to the psychologist's report? Provide specific feedback regarding the family background and personality characteristics.

4. What is the youngest age you would agree to impose the death penalty?
5. Are there any factors in a child's life that you would consider in sentencing?

Lesson Plans and Background for Section II

Background Information

This section focuses on the family unit as the place where the human being is nurtured and given the lens with which to perceive self and the world. A popular theory developed by leading experts looks at the family as a system in a multigenerational focus. Children are born into a type of triangulated system, in which they are locked. Family systems theorists state that we cannot understand a dysfunction or dysfunctional person without looking at the family in which they were raised. Systems result from the interactions of each member within that system. Persons within the system have their own unique characteristics as well as a group identity of the family into which he was thrust. This growth system is the place where basic needs are met and where we are given the tools for dealing with the world. For the purpose of a high school classroom, we will use the following list adapted from John Bradshaw to identify what basic needs consist of and to what degree they are being met:

- Self-worth, self-love, self-acceptance and the freedom to be an individual
- Touching, nurturing, mirroring, affection, recognition
- Structure that is safe enough to risk growth and which changes with each stage of development
- Stimulation and challenge to move through each stage of development
- Self-actualization and spiritualization (need to love and care for others, to feel needed and to seek truth, beauty; living for something greater than ourselves)

Additionally, Bradshaw provides good working definition of healthy, basic human emotions. These are seen as vital energies needed cope with difficulties and crises throughout the course of living. The needs and emotions listed are ones the students will use to analyze the characters and their families in the reading selections.

- Fear: Energy that provides discernment to raise awareness of danger.
- Sadness: Energy that provides the emotion to move from the

past to the future, through the ending of the known on to the unfamiliar; it is a type of dying and rebirth and healing.

- Guilt: Energy that forms the conscience; a healthy moral shame that allows us to develop an internal value system. It allows us to form commitments and move into action (absence or over abundance leads to psychopathic and sociopathic behaviors).
- Shame: This the energy that lets us know ere we limited and finite. Through shame we can ask for help or learn to correct errors (source of healthy shame should be spirituality not human).
- Joy: This energy signals all needs are being met and that there is persona growth. This is a revitalized source of energy.

Below is a short descriptive list of characteristics of healthy parental relationships:

- Partners able to delay gratification.
- Each person of the relationship assumes responsibility for himself or herself.
- Each person is committed to telling the truth and dealing with reality.
- Ego needs are made a lesser priority than integrity and spirituality.

Following, is list of characteristics of a healthy family (Bradshaw)

- Family unit provides for the emotional needs of all the members.
- Family unit balances autonomy and dependency.
- Self-esteem is attained.
- Family unit is the place for social and sexual training.
- Family unit is where the children's character and moral values are formed.

Student Reading

The following are entire chapters taken out of published autobiographies. Not only are they a source of good literature, they are authentic case studies that demonstrate the concept of family in developing the individual.

Summary of collected reading from *Nigger* by Dick Gregory: This poignant set of readings from the autobiography, describes a child's memories within his family. Gregory can be viewed as an energetic young man whose main concern is for his mother. The selection allows us to see an unbalanced family system that requires Gregory to

assume the role of mostly absent father. We are allowed to see Gregory confronting a growing rage at his father for his neglectful absences and physical and psychological abuse of his mother and himself. He describes a conflict at other emotions that surface. He is crying out for a father's protection and love, and yet feels shame and rage toward him for his neglect. The selection provides an intriguing look at the emotion of shame. The emotion of shame is one that is not only an emotion assumed for the degradation of his mother, but also because the family must endure poverty even though his mother works long hours.

Summery of excerpt from *Angela's Ashes* by Frank McCourt (p 19-46): This is a humorous account that captures the perspective of a young child. The contrast of the humor and tragedy give an almost exaggerated effect to the stark poverty and the shame the family endures. Similar to the previous reading, the family's suffering is augmented by an irresponsible father. In the McCourt family, however, the father remains with the family subjecting them to the trauma that children of alcoholics experience.

Lesson Description

This unit will begin with a guest speaker from the Center for Domestic Violence. The focus will be on the effects family violence has on children. On day two of this section, students will have the material on meeting basic needs and healthy emotions presented to them in lecture format along with a vocabulary list. Following, students will be presented with a checklist of the basic needs, healthy emotions, and healthy parent relationships with which to evaluate their reading selections. This will be done in small groups to encourage discussion. Results will be shared and discussed with the whole class. The final list, "Characteristics of a Healthy Family," will be the basis for a formal essay to be written by the students to become part of the final grade level writing portfolio. This will serve as the assessment instrument for this section.

Vocabulary for reading, writing and discussion:

acutualization	spirituality	individuation	socialization
equilibrium	functional	productivity	norms
socialization	morality	differentiation	dependency

Lesson Plans and Background for Section III

This section focuses on social service agencies, primarily the juvenile justice system. The goal is to look objectively at both the tremendous over-burden and the responsibility these agencies have in the lives of children. These agencies are charged with protecting and

rehabilitating, and yet those objectives are not achieved to a great degree. They are agencies primarily for poor people of color. Since the 1970's incidents of violent offenses by juveniles has risen by 175% across the country (Humes). This unit will not focus on statistics but rather on the human story. The goal is to encourage the students to consider the costs not only in terms of dollars but in terms of wasted human potential. When the failure of the child protection systems cannot meet the needs of desperate families in crisis, all other related agencies are impacted. The need increases at alarming rates. Across the country the number of children abused, neglected or abandoned doubled between 1986 and 1993 (1.4 million to 2.8 million). The numbers of children who were seriously injured, warranting removal from their biological families, continued to steadily increase (143,000 to 570,000). Children living with relatives because parents cannot or will not care for them are not even known. In 1997, the number of children who died in the hands of caretakers was approximately 2,000 (Schorr). Experts looking at this situation say simply that sheer numbers make it impossible for the job to be done efficiently. Hearings that decide whether to remove a child from their family last an average of ten minutes. The biographical profile of George Trevino demonstrates the worst kind of ineptitude in both child welfare and juvenile justice agencies.

In regard to criminal justice in the U.S., the following is known:

- The U.S. has more people incarcerated than any other industrialized nation.
- 30% of crime is committed by juveniles (8% of the population),
- 14 to 24 year olds commit 14 % of all violent crimes, 50% of all murders, and 25% of all property crimes.
- One child is shot to death every 90 minutes.
- 135,000 children take guns to school every day.
- A child commits suicide very four hours.
- Homicide is the leading cause of death for children under 4 years.
- 1,407 babies are born to teen mothers. (Morse and Wile)

Student Reading

"Summary of George Trevino" (p. 108-119) from *No Matter How Loud I Shout* by E. Humes: This selection begins at a hearing for George that decides if he will be facing court proceedings as an adult. His mother is on drugs and later faces a murder charge. She eventually abandoned George permanently. Social workers kept him moving from one foster home to another. By age eight he was

separated from a sister, who was later killed in a car accident, and a brother who was in prison. When there were placements in stable environments, George thrived. When removed, he again deteriorated. This account details the events surrounding the repeated bureaucratic failures. In the final passages, George is seen to be facing the worst sentence of the four people involved in an auto theft, including the adult who led and carried out the crime.

Summary of Carla B. (p. 120-123): Carla is a committed and vested gang member who learns how to do "good" time, tell authorities what they want to hear, and proceeds to carry out her own justice when she is released.

Summary of Elias (p.181-184): This is a gang member accused of murder in a botched drug deal orchestrated by the Mexican Mafia. These adults use juveniles because they will get lighter sentences than adults and can be manipulated to do most anything asked. Elias thrives in custody, blooms as a writer and when his court hearing finally is scheduled, he is supported by only the school staff who are convinced that he should remain in the juvenile facility instead of an adult prison.

Summary of Carla's story (p. 191-195) from *Ghosts in the Nursery*: Carla, at age 11 is beautiful and intelligent but she steals money from her adopted parents. She has violent outbursts, striking out any anyone around her when she does not get her way. At thirteen months, she was taken to the emergency room with cigarette burns on buttocks and bruises on the torso. Three years later she was finally removed from the home (and adopted) when she appeared again at the hospital with burns in her vagina and torso.

Lesson Plans

The students will be given a copy of George's summary to read. An analysis will be conducted with the whole class, and then followed up with a personal response paper. Students will be asked to include an analysis using concepts presented in section I. The class will be divided into groups and given one of the three profiles summarized above and asked to analyze (as was modeled with George Trevino). Analysis and findings will be shared with the class through informal presentations.

Lessons Plans and Background for Section IV and V

There is a distinct majority of people of color in prisons, far out of proportion to their numbers in the total population. There is now a considerable collection of academic literature on the topic. The

question of why Latinos and African Americans comprise the greatest majority of incarcerated men has been asked frequently. Sociology, anthropology and criminology are increasingly returning to historical contexts in their quest to identify cultural factors in the equation. One perspective by historian and political scientist Rodolfo Acuna, urges us to look at roles of these groups in the economic picture of the U.S. The role of labor is the one mainly relegated to African Americans throughout the southern and northeastern U.S. Latino and Mexican peoples in the Southwest and Midwest fill the same role of laborer. Economic advancement for these groups has taken place slowly. The undeniable institutional racism has striven to keep the source of labor available through erratic immigration policies and segregation as well as poor educational opportunities. The often cited works by Jonathon Kozol, document this alarming situation. The school systems he writes about in his books are without exception schools for African American and Latino students. The deplorable condition of Native American education is not even explored in his book, but we only have to see the disproportionate numbers represented as dropout and in prisons. Economics and under-education are factors that present themselves in almost all of the biographical sketches of this unit. Admittedly, some can declare these factors are perhaps indirect causes of violence and criminality. Some of the more direct are the results of overt racist policies by policing agencies and the criminal justice systems. The police practice of racial profiling is one in which certain groups have been treated differently in our legal system based on race or ethnicity. Profiling is the cause of much unrest in in all of the larger cities in the U.S. An interesting result of this unrest is that greater political participation is occurring. Paula McClain and Joseph Stewart published a comprehensive analysis of this phenomenon after the acquittal of police charged in beating Rodney King. The following provide interesting concepts to consider in regard to culture, and history of criminality:

- Race relations in the U.S. are "power contests" between dominant Whites and subordinate minorities. Power is total resources, and access to them and change in advancement will take place when resources are enhanced (Blalock)
- Pluralism is not succeeding in bringing minorities into the political system because up to now minorities are only marginally included.
- Colonialism is a framework that does not exist legally, but is has been internalized by colonized people. This is manifested as a sense of powerlessness, economic dependence and "de-culturation" (belittling and diminishing of one's culture) of minority people.

Student Reading

Summary of Chapter 1, *Autobiography of Malcolm X* by Alex Haley:

This is the chapter that describes Malcolm's earliest memories. We are given vivid descriptions of the terror he and his family experienced at the hands of the KKK in Omaha, Nebraska. The era is pre-civil rights. Students are all familiar with the life of this leader, most have at least seen the movie of his life. His prison sentence is the catalyst for his transformation into a U.S. leader and hero to people of color in this country. In this chapter are all the factors identified in violent and criminal behavior.

Summary of Chapter 1, *Working in the Dark* by Jimmy Santiago

Baca: This chapter begins with Baca describing an event wherein he accidentally finds a book of Chicano History. He is reminded of classroom experiences of being punished and shamed him for not knowing his lessons because he could not read. The rage and shame creates an emotional response to a reader. Later in the chapter, Baca finds himself in jail, and once again rage has prompted him to steal a book from an attendant. This eventually is responsible for a transformation due to his teaching himself how to read and write. Baca calls this a rebirth.

Summary of poem "The Best of Us" by L. Rodriguez.: This narrative poem tells of the shooting of a young man by L.A. County police. It is interestingly told through the voice of the girlfriend of the deceased. It is a dramatic and emotional chronicle of a woman's grieving for her young son alternated with court proceedings. The contrast of the two perspectives creates the surreal effect of hearing two opposite accounts simultaneously. The racism and injustice surface dramatically as does the grief, rage and injustice.

Lesson Plans

The students will be asked to read these accounts looking for examples of economic and racially motivated acts. They will be asked to chart events within the two factors. They will be given the freedom to document their findings in some comparative method. The students will be grouped and are responsible for presenting only one of the three.

This completes the reading /analyzing portion of the unit. The remainder will consist of a series of guest speakers (social worker, teen father and mother, probation officer, police officer and attorney). The next week the students will identify and choose a research topic, write a formal research paper, and conduct a presentation with a visual aid and an interview of a career professional in a related field. Work

will be presented to the class.

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