

LIFE AFTER LIFE: A NARRATIVE REVIEW OF INCARCERATION
AND REENTRY EXPERIENCES OF CHILDREN SENTENCED
TO LIFE WITHOUT PAROLE IN PENNSYLVANIA

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ABSTRACT

Following the landmark 2016 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Montgomery v. Louisiana*, approximately 2,500 men and women sentenced to mandatory life without the possibility of parole as children (sometimes referred to as “juvenile lifers”) became eligible to be released. As these juvenile lifers re-enter into society, it is important to study their life histories and the consequences of long-term incarceration. Although there have been studies that shed light on prison life and reentry, there is insufficient research using a developmental and life-course perspective to understand the prison life experiences of those confined over the course of their adult lives, and how these experiences shape reentry processes. Specific to adults serving life-sentences, the consequences of long-term incarceration can adversely affect health, education, employment history, and family ties, with consequences for the reentry process. However, given that juvenile lifers begin their incarceration at a key developmental stage, it is unclear how the effects of long-term confinement impacts their maturation process, development, and ultimately, their reentry successes or failures following their release from prison. This concurrent mixed-method study employs both semi-structured life history interviews and life history calendars to examine the effects of the criminal justice system over one’s life course. The study captures the lived experiences of men and women in Pennsylvania before, during, and after serving a mandatory life sentence without the possibility of parole. This study aims to better understand how long-term confinement, which commenced during the critical developmental period of adolescence, shapes human development and reentry processes as well as how children sentenced to life without parole make sense and order their lives and regain normalcy upon release. Findings reveal that long-term imprisonment disordered the normal stages of human development for juvenile lifers and had adverse consequences for other life domains such as

health (both physical and mental), educational attainment, employment opportunities, and the ability to sustain meaningful familial and romantic relationships. Findings also suggest that although the prison environment was not conducive to the development of responsible and mature behavior, juvenile lifers still experienced a series of psychosocial transitions. These psychosocial transitions generally unfolded in various stages, which allowed juvenile lifers to maturely cope to the demands of prison life and achieve significant changes and growth over their life course even before the landmark *Miller* and *Montgomery* Supreme Court decisions. The discussion of the research findings highlights the importance of understanding the dynamic changes that occur for those who experience long periods of incarceration to provide insight into post-release outcomes.

I dedicate this dissertation to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who “has anointed me to proclaim the captives will be released, and the oppressed will be set free” (Luke 4:18).

To Ronald E. McNair (an American Hero) and his brother Carl S. McNair who has been like a father to me. I hope that I can continue to make you proud and keep Ron’s legacy alive.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

During the last 20 years, the prevalence of life sentences has increased substantially in the United States amidst modest declines in prison populations and historic low crime rates (Kazemian & Travis, 2015; Maur & Nellis, 2018; Parker, 2005; The Sentencing Project, 2017, 2018). In fact, the United States represents just 4% of the world's population but holds 40% of the world's life sentenced population (The Sentencing Project, 2017, 2018; Van Zyl Smit & Appleton, 2019). Currently, there are approximately more than 200,000 individuals serving a life sentence—which means that today, 1 in 7 people in state and federal prisons are serving a life sentence (Maur & Nellis, 2018; The Sentencing Project, 2017, 2018). Life sentences include life without the possibility of parole (LWOP), life with the possibility of parole (LWP), and “virtual life” sentences of 50 years or more, which are not evenly distributed across the population.¹ Specifically, the overrepresentation of African Americans is evident among those sentenced to life imprisonment compared to other racial/ethnic groups; nearly half of those serving life sentences are African Americans despite that African Americans make up only 13.4% of the U.S. population (The Sentencing Project, 2017, 2018; United States Census Bureau, 2019).²

Imprisonment can produce psychological, social, behavioral, and physical changes—with certain prison conditions significantly exacerbating these changes during confinement.

According to Sykes (1958), prisons deprive individuals of liberty, goods and services, heterosexual relationships, security, and autonomy. Many state and federal prisons are severely

¹ The number of people serving life sentences: life without parole-LWOP (53,290), life with the possibility of parole-LWP (108, 667), and “virtual life”-sentences of 50 years or more (44,311) (see The Sentencing Project, 2017, 2018).

² The racial and ethnic composition of people serving life sentences: African American (48.3%); White (32.4%); Hispanic (15.7%) Also, at the state level, African Americans are incarcerated at five times the rates of Whites (see The Sentencing Project, 2017).

overcrowded operating at or above 100% of their designed capacity, making prison conditions especially harsh (National Research Council, 2014). Specifically, the prison environment can exacerbate health conditions, such as asthma, hypertension, mental health disorders, traumatic experiences, and stress-related diseases (Fazel & Danesh, 2002; Haney, 2006; James & Glaze, 2006; Mallik-Kane & Visser, 2008; Massoglia, 2008; National Research Council, 2014; Wang & Green, 2010; Wang et al., 2009; Wolff et al., 2009). Overcrowding and solitary confinement are linked with the deterioration of mental health during the course of confinement, particularly for those with mental illness (Haney, 2006; Leigey, 2010; National Research Council, 2014). In extreme cases, some prisoners react to the stresses of imprisonment by taking their own lives (Hassine et al., 2011; Hayes, 1989; Mumola, 2005; Mumola & Noonan, 2008).

The negative consequences of imprisonment extend beyond the prison walls, impacting the social bonds (family, friends, intimate relationships) of those incarcerated (Travis & Waul, 2003). Incarceration is also strongly correlated with negative social and economic outcomes for individuals who are incarcerated and their families (Gust, 2012; Uggen et al, 2005). Extended periods of confinement can have adverse effects on family structures, living arrangements, identity, family relationships, and finances, and can cause significant emotional stress (Clear 2007; Jewkes, 2005; King et al., 2005; National Research Council, 2014; Sampson & Laub, 1997; Travis, 2005; Travis & Petersilia, 2001). It has been noted that individuals who experience incarceration are less likely to marry and more likely to have unstable relationships than those who have never been incarcerated (Uggen et al, 2005; Western, 2006). Also, extended periods of incarceration can create an absence from the labor market which limits job skills and creates sizable gaps in work histories, making finding employment after prison difficult (Festen &

Fischer; Pager 2007; Petersilia, 2003; Sabol, 2007; Travis 2005; Uggen et al, 2005; Visser et al., 2011).

Negative effects of imprisonment are not uniformly experienced by all individuals who are incarcerated (Flagan, 1981; Leigey, 2010; Porporino, 1990; Toch, 2010; Zamble, 1992; Zamble & Porporino, 1988). As a result, the prison experience has different consequences for various individuals (Gullone et al., 2000; Hemmens & Marquart, 1999; MacKenzie & Goodstein, 1985). During the period of extended confinement, some individuals in prison acquire human and social capital by advancing their education, developing skills for employment, or maintaining relationships during their time in prison (Crewe et al., 2020; Johnson & Dobrzanska, 2005; Johnson & Leigey, 2020; Johnson et al., 2016, Irwin, 2009; Leigey, 2015). However, many individuals with adverse childhood and adolescent experiences are less able to cope with prison conditions and do not acquire much human or social capital while incarcerated (Gibson et al., 1999; Leigey & Schartmueller, 2019; Zlotnick, 1997). Moreover, these individuals are often worse off when they leave prison as a result of developing behaviors that are adaptive for survival in prison (Irwin & Austin, 1997; Petersilia, 2003; Travis, 2005). Clemmer (1958) has defined this process as “prisonization”—where individuals who are incarcerated undergo a number of psychosocial changes and life transitions to adapt to the demands of prison life. These coping mechanisms, which are gained in prison, are counterproductive for their personal development and are not easily transferable to life outside of the prison walls (Jamieson & Grounds, 2005; Johnson, 2002; Warr, 2020).

From a life-course perspective, long-term imprisonment disorders the normal stages of development during the life course, which has adverse consequences for other life domains such

as social relationships, health, adult role fulfillment, identity, education, and life skills (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999; Jewkes, 2005; Krohn and Gibson, 2013; Massaglia, 2008; Sampson & Laub, 1993; Siennick, 2011). Life stages are particularly important as developmental theorists contend that each stage of life is characterized by specific developmental tasks that need to be accomplished in order to be well adjusted to the demands and responsibilities of adulthood (Erikson 1963; 1968; 1982; Kuther, 2017; Rindfuss et al., 1987; Schulenberg et al., 2004; Steinberg et al., 2011). Acquisition of human capital and social capital can facilitate success in adult life (Coleman, 1988; Hagan, 1997). However, the route to acquiring what is necessary for the responsibilities of adulthood is difficult while in prison, as it serves as an artificial environment that shares few commonalities with the outside world.

The developmental problems caused by prisonization can complicate reentry success as release from incarceration is often accompanied by stress and anxiety as individuals try to reestablish housing, employment, and social relationships (Petersilia, 2003; Travis, 2005). This is especially the case for those who did not acquire human capital (i.e., the skills, knowledge, and experiences individuals obtain through education and training) and social capital (i.e., the creation of capabilities through socially constructed relationships between individuals and groups) (Hagan, 1997). It has been noted that there are potential criminogenic effects of imprisonment (Jonson, 2010; Maruna & Toch, 2005; Nagin et al., 2009; Nieuwebeerta et al., 2009; Spohn & Holleran, 2002). Also, for those that do not develop human or social capital, they often return to the same social networks and communities; this contributes to their return to the same patterns of criminal behavior (Hipp et al., 2010). Health has important implications for reentry outcomes and reincarceration as well. Physical and mental health states at time of release can impact reentry processes and behavior after prison (Link et al., 2019). For those with serious

health needs, poorer physical and mental health can diminish pro-social bonds with family members (Corrigan & Miller, 2004; van der Sandem et al., 2016), limit employment opportunities (Visher et al., 2008), and lead to increased likelihood of offending (Schroeder et al., 2011; Stoner et al., 2014). Also, for many incarcerated individuals, labor market prospects after prison are almost non-existent. Specifically, those with a criminal record often experience reduced earnings and employment after prison. This is in part due to the legal exclusion from a range of labor market activities imposed through federal and state laws that restrict certain employment opportunities for those with a criminal record (Olivares et al., 1996; Petersilia, 2003; Travis, 2005; Uggen et al., 2005).

These issues are perhaps most clearly seen with individuals sentenced to life without the possibility of parole for acts of homicide³ committed as children,⁴ otherwise known as juvenile lifers. Simply on the basis of chronology, it can be argued that juvenile lifers, whose psychosocial development was incomplete prior to entering prison, will experience the most significant transitions in their life course and in their development as human beings during confinement.⁵ Importantly, these juvenile lifers “skipped” the transition to adulthood outside the walls of prison and thus, are an important population deserving of study. Juveniles have been sentenced to life at alarming rates. In fact, the United States is the only developed country in the world that sentences children to life without parole (Maur & Nellis, 2018; Kazemian & Travis, 2015; Parker, 2005; Van Zyl Smit & Appleton, 2019). Nearly 12,000 life sentences have been

³ “Acts of homicide” is a term used throughout this dissertation to denote that some juvenile lifers (26 percent—see Parker, 2005) are serving a JLWOP for felony murder. Felony murder is charged when an individual participates in a robbery or burglary while a co-participant commits a murder, without the knowledge or intent on the individual.

⁴ Throughout this dissertation the terms “Child” and “Children” denote persons under the age of eighteen—embodying traits such as innocence and the need for protection (Goff et al., 2014; Haslam et al., 2000; Parker, 2005; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2019).

⁵ In 1999 at the age of twelve, Lionel Tate was one of the youngest individuals to receive a life sentence without the possibility of parole (see Nellis, 2016).

imposed on individuals who were under the age of eighteen at the time of their offense (Maur & Nellis, 2018; The Sentencing Project, 2017, 2018). Most shockingly, there are approximately more than 2,000 juvenile lifers serving life without the possibility of parole (JLWOP) or what scholars have termed “death by incarceration,” “America’s Other Death Penalty,” and the “hidden death penalty”—meaning that a JLWOP sentence condemns children to die in prison, since they will spend the remainder of their natural lives there, with no possibility of release (Gross, 2019; Johnson & McGunigall-Smith, 2008; Ogletree & Sarat, 2012; Kleinstuber et al., 2016; Parker, 2005; The Coalition to Abolish Death By Incarceration, 2020; The Sentencing Project, 2018; Villaume, 2005). In other words, imposing a sentence of life without parole on children indicates that they are incorrigible and can never reenter society. Ironically, Sampson and Laub (2005) found that all individuals age out of crime and “crime declines with age even for active offenders ... (e.g., ‘life-course persistent offender,’ ‘superpredator’)” (16-17). In alignment with these findings, researchers contend that juvenile lifers are capable of change and eventually mature (Drafty-Kapur & Zottoli, 2020; Johnson & Leigey, 2020; Nellis, 2012; Parker, 2005). There are also more than 7,000 juvenile lifers serving life with the possibility of parole (JLWP) and another 2,000 juvenile lifers serving “virtual life”— life sentences of 50 years or more (The Sentencing Project, 2018). Specific to JLWOP sentences, disproportionality also exists as the majority of JLWOP sentences have been imposed on African American juveniles (Maur & Nellis, 2018; Mills et al., 2015; Parker, 2005).⁶ Black youth serve JLWOP sentences at a rate that is tenfold that of White youth (Parker, 2005).⁷ Across the nation, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Louisiana account for roughly two-thirds of all juvenile life without parole

⁶ There are more than double the number of African American juveniles (1303) serving JLWOP compared to white juvenile (531) see (Mills et al., 2015 & Appendix A)

⁷ The rate for Black youth is 6.6 as compared to .6 for Whites (see Parker, 2005)

(JLWOP) sentences in the world (Mills et al., 2015; Rovner, 2020). Among all states, Pennsylvania has the largest number of individuals serving JLWOP—521 juvenile lifers statewide, and the majority of these individuals are African American (Drafty-Kapur & Zottoli, 2020; Mills et al., 2015; Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, 2021). Philadelphia County alone is responsible for nine percent of all JLWOP sentences, making its proportion of JLWOP sentences eighteen-fold as compared to the proportion of the total United States population (Mills et al., 2015).

Recently, following the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decisions in *Miller v. Alabama* and *Montgomery v. Louisiana*, between 2,100-2,500⁸ men and women sentenced to mandatory life without the possibility of parole as children became eligible for release (Liem, 2016; Rovner, 2020; Youth Sentencing & Reentry Project, 2019). According to the Defenders Association of Philadelphia (2019) and Drafty-Kapur & Zottoli (2020), we know that approximately 300 juvenile lifers come from Philadelphia, and the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (2021) reports that 474 of all juvenile lifers have been resentenced and of those resentenced 271 have been released back into the community, making Pennsylvania, the nation's leader in the releasing of juvenile lifers (Drafty-Kapur & Zottoli, 2020; Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, 2021). As these juvenile lifers enter society for the first time since adolescence, as middle-aged and older adults, it is important to study the consequences of long-term confinement on individual development and how these translate into reentry successes or failures following release from prison.

⁸ Throughout this dissertation the number of juvenile lifers is approximate, as most Departments of Corrections only track sentence begin date (called “effective date of sentence”) and not offense dates. Unless, otherwise indicated, all references to juvenile lifers in the aggregate will be referred to in the approximate. For more details, see (Mills et al., 2015; Parker 2005).

Although there have been research studies that shed light on the consequences of confinement as it relates to reentry (Appleton, 2010; Heinlein, 2013; Irwin, 2009; Liem, 2016; Mullane 2012; Munn & Bruckert, 2013), there is limited research that examines if these processes operate similarly for other sociodemographic groups, including those who have been incarcerated for long periods of time, females, individuals from different racial/ethnic groups, and those who entered adulthood in the last 20-30 years (Giordano et al., 2002; Liem, 2016). Using a life-course perspective is particularly salient to understand the consequences of imprisonment as life-course research examines how events that occur early in life shape later outcomes by exploring one's life trajectories and transitions (Elder, 1985, 1994, 2018; Elder & Shanahan, 2006). Life course theory has become a major theoretical framework in criminology—used frequently to understand how adolescence is connected to earlier development and life events as well as to understand how circumstances in adolescence are connected to later health and well-being (Elder & Shanahan, 2006; Chen, 2009; Haynie et al., 2009; Krohn et al., 2011; Osler, 2006). However, life-course research has failed to document the various changes (psychological, social, behavioral, physical) that occur during and after periods of incarceration (Jamison & Grounds, 2005; Kazemian & Travis, 2015). Specifically, individuals serving long sentences have been neglected from the life course research agenda due to the fact that they spend a significant portion of the life course behind bars, making study design and access to this offender population extremely challenging (Kazemian & Travis, 2015; Kurlychek et al., 2012; National Research Council, 2014; Vannier, 2018). As a result, Kazemian and Travis (2015) contend that contemporary life-course studies are needed to shed light on the gaps in our knowledge regarding the impact of long-term incarceration. Studying the lived experiences of juvenile lifers provides an opportunity to investigate how long-term confinement that began in

the critical period of adolescent development may alter normal stages of human development, and how this has implications for reentry successes or failures.

This dissertation addresses a critical gap identified above and uses a developmental and life-course framework to examine the implications of criminal justice system involvement over long periods of the life-course for the development of human and social capital. The objective of this dissertation is to use a life-course perspective in order to understand how the criminal justice system affects individuals who have been incarcerated from adolescence to adulthood. A sample of predominantly African American men and women⁹ sentenced to mandatory life without the possibility of parole as children for acts of homicide in the State of Pennsylvania is used to understand the effects of confinement over one's life course. The significance of this study lies in its ability to enable a more comprehensive understanding of the prison life experiences of juvenile lifers, and how these experiences shape reentry processes (i.e., how juvenile lifers make sense of and order their lives, as well as regain normalcy after being incarcerated from adolescence to adulthood). Furthermore, there is considerable potential for this study to serve as an "ideal" instrumental case (Creswell, 2007) to provide insight into the effects of incarceration for all individuals serving lengthy sentences (i.e., life without the possibility of parole sentences [LWOP], life with parole sentences [LWP] and "virtual life" sentences) invariant of age at offense. This is critically important because there is practically no research that documents the life-course experiences of ex-prisoners (Kurlychek et al., 2012). In addition, because juvenile lifers were prosecuted and incarcerated in the adult criminal justice system during adolescence, this study may speak to the experiences of youth who have been transferred to adult court and the extent to which this process has impacted their personal development.

⁹ See Appendix A, for more on the disproportionate number of people of color convicted as juveniles and serving life without parole sentences in the U.S. and in Philadelphia.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Life Course Theory (LCT)

Life course theory (LCT) is an interdisciplinary theory of human development that examines multiple factors (social, psychological, biological) that shape people's lives from birth to death (Elder, 1985, 1994, 2018; Elder & Shanahan, 2006). It focuses attention on chronological age, relationships, key life transitions, life events, and human agency that take place over the entire life span, and situates individual development in cultural and historical contexts by examining the transitions and trajectories of individuals as they progress through life (Elder, 1985, 1994, 2018; Elder & Shanahan, 2006). Life course dynamics can take place over a relatively long span of time (representing a life trajectory) and also over a short time (as individuals experience various life events and life transitions). Trajectories are age-graded patterns of development with respect to major social institutions such as family, school, and work that link various psychosocial states over the life course (Elder & Shanahan, 2006). Importantly, trajectories are interconnected so that what happens along one trajectory is likely to influence the course of other trajectories. Life course dynamics arise in part from the interplay of trajectories and transitions that can be viewed both prospectively and retrospectively. Ultimately, life-course research examines how events that occur early in life can shape later outcomes.

Four major themes or principles that emerge from the life course perspective include historical time and place, the timing of lives, linked or interdependent lives, and human agency in making choices (Elder, 1994). When and where a person is born has a major impact on how they develop over the life course (Elder, 1998). The principle of *historical time and place* states that human development cannot be understood apart from the context in which it occurs

(Dannefer, 1984). The life course perspective also unpacks the effects of life events over the life course. The principle of *timing of lives* states that life events may have significantly different effects, depending on the life stages at which they are experienced (Elder, 1994; 1998).

Additionally, with whom a person is connected to matters, as changes and events in the lives of other people can impact one's own trajectories (Elder, 1996). The principle of *linked lives* states that the ways in which we are linked to others influences trajectories that we enter over the life course (Elder, 1996). Lastly, *human agency* refers to the ability of individuals to shape their own life courses by the choices and actions they take. It is important to note that these choices they make and actions they take are bounded within opportunities and restrictions of historical time and the current social environment (Elder, 1998). At the most basic level, the life course may be conceptualized as pathways through the ages of human of development (Elder, 1985; Sampson & Laub, 2003). Life course theory has been used to understand how adolescence is connected to earlier development and life events, as well as to understand how circumstances in childhood and adolescence are connected to later health and well-being. Life course research also examines how transitions or turning points may lead to changes in life course trajectories (Warr, 1998; Wright & Cullen, 2004). It has become a major theoretical framework in criminology (Chen, 2009; Haynie et al., 2009), especially in work that seeks to understand longitudinal outcomes (Evans et al., 2009; Osler, 2006).

Using a life-course perspective is particularly salient for this dissertation, as its main focus is to understand the interconnections between long-term confinement on individual development. Given that juvenile lifers have been incarcerated from adolescence to adulthood, the life-course perspective provides a broad framework for understanding the dynamic processes at play that occurred before, during, and after serving a JLWOP sentence. Although numerous

studies have highlighted the consequences of incarceration, research has failed to fully document the various changes (psychological, social, behavioral, physical) that occur during and after periods of incarceration (Jamison & Grounds, 2005; Kazemian & Travis, 2015). Often, life-course research tends to focus on pre-incarceration experiences or reentry experiences, but it rarely focuses on changes that occur during the period of incarceration (Jamison & Grounds, 2005; Johnson & Leigey, 2020; Kazemian & Travis, 2015; Laub & Sampson, 2003). As a result, despite advances in prison and reentry research, there remains a limited understanding of what in-prison experiences might mean for post-release outcomes (Cochran & Mears, 2017). While the range of possibilities for in-prison experiences are vast, their importance to those who experience long-term confinement has not been fully documented in the research literature (Cullen, Jonson, & Nagin, 2011; Nagin, Cullen, & Jonson, 2009). Importantly, this issue is perhaps most critical for individuals sentenced to life without parole as children (juvenile lifers), whose psychosocial development was incomplete prior to entering prison. From a life course perspective, imprisonment constitutes a significant life event (Krohn & Gibson, 2013) and can have potential implications for other life domains, such as employment, health, education, and familial relationships (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999; Massaglia, 2008; Sampson & Laub, 1993; Siennick, 2011). As it relates to juvenile lifers, due to their age and long-term sentences, incarceration can significantly impact trajectory entrance, success, and timing, which has consequences for their overall development (Thornberry, 1997). For instance, being incarcerated in adolescence can prevent certain key life events from occurring which can prevent entrance into trajectories such as a marriage or a parenting trajectory. If individuals do enter a particular trajectory (e.g., employment), being incarcerated or having a history of incarceration may affect the level of success they have in completing the typical tasks or activities associated with that

particular trajectory. With regard to development over the life course, the timing (or ordering) of trajectories matters as well (Rindfuss et al., 1987). Incarceration can disrupt the timing of trajectories (e.g., one's employment trajectory may start at age 40 or 50 instead of age 18 or 22), which ultimately disorders the life course. For individuals with different combinations of entrance, success, and timing in trajectories, certain in-prison experiences may have dramatically different effects, and these effects in turn may impact other trajectories over the life course.

Incarceration limits conventional avenues to acquire various forms of capital. This is important as the acquisition of human capital and social capital in adolescence is critical for success in adult life (Bartee & Brown, 2007; Coleman, 1988; Hagan, 1997). Due to their imprisonment, which commenced during the critical developmental period of adolescence, juvenile lifers will have “skipped” the transition to adulthood outside the walls of prison making it very difficult to attain the capital needed for the responsibilities of adulthood. However, it is important to note that during the period of extended confinement, some individuals in prison do acquire human and social capital by advancing their education, developing skills for employment, or maintaining relationships during their time in prison (Crewe et al., 2020; Johnson & Dobrzanska, 2005; Johnson & Leigey, 2020; Johnson et al., 2016; Irwin 2009; Leigey, 2015). In understanding how people acquire human and social capital over the life course to facilitate later success, the life course perspective draws on traditional theories of developmental psychology, which look at the events that typically occur in people's lives during different stages (Hutchison, 2008).

Developmental psychology unpacks the ways in which people grow, change, and stay the same throughout their lives, from conception to death (Kuther, 2017). The periods that reflect major developments include early childhood (ages 2 to 6), middle childhood (ages 6 to 11),

adolescence (ages 11 to 20), young adulthood (ages 20 to 40), middle adulthood (ages 40 to 65) and late adulthood (age 65 through death) (Steinberg et al., 2011). It should be noted that the age boundaries for each developmental period are only approximate (Steinberg et al., 2011); developmental theorists contend that each period of development is characterized by specific developmental tasks that individuals need to accomplish to be well adjusted to the demands and responsibilities of adulthood. Although the life course perspective is stage-like because it proposes that each person experiences a number of life transitions (starting school, finding employment, leaving home, etc.) that tend to be ordered, which gives structure to the life course (Hutchinson, 2008), traditional life-course concepts may not always be “obviously” applicable to those who experience long-term confinement (Sampson, 2016). Prisons serve as artificial environments that share few commonalities with the outside world (i.e., prisoners are separated from their loved ones; employment opportunities in prison are limited): this disorders the life stages of incarcerated people (Crewe et al., 2020, p. 317; Jewkes, 2005).¹⁰ As noted in the literature, this is important because as individuals deviate from the “typical” life stages in a given period of development, it will become more difficult to acquire human and social capital (Krohn et al., 1997, 2011; Wickrama, 2005, 2010).

Despite facing substantial barriers and limited resources, most people serving life sentences for acts of homicide do in fact change in prison (Flagan, 1981; Irwin, 2009; Johnson & Dobrzanska, 2005; Johnson & Leigey, 2020; Johnson et al., 2016; Kim, 2012; Leigey 2015; Leigey, 2010; Maur & Nellis, 2018; Mauer et al, 2004; Sorensen & Marquart, 2003; Sorensen & Wrinkle, 1998; Weisberg et al., 2011; Zamble 1992; Zamble & Porporino, 1988). As it relates to individuals serving life sentences for acts of homicide committed as children (juvenile lifers),

¹⁰ It is important to note that the lives of some juvenile lifers were partially disordered prior to them receiving a JLWOP sentence. For further information see (Drafty-Kapur & Zottoli, 2020; Nellis, 2012; Parker, 2005).

researchers have noted that juvenile lifers mature in prison and experience growth and change as well (Drafty-Kapur & Zottoli, 2020; Johnson & Leigey, 2020; Nellis, 2012; Parker, 2005). However, understanding how juvenile lifers evolve and develop to make significant changes in their lives over time remains limited (Jamison & Grounds, 2005; Johnson & Leigey, 2020; Kazemian & Travis, 2015). According to Cochran and Mears (2017) and Kazemian and Travis (2015), research is needed to identify the dynamic changes that can occur during the period of long-term confinement, as it is not clear whether individuals who experience long-term confinement achieve significant changes and growth over their life course as a result of aging and increased rationality (Shover, 2018), improved social bonds (Laub and Sampson, 2003; Sampson & Laub, 1993), shifts in self-identity (Maruna, 2001), mature coping (Johnson & Dobrzanska, 2005; Johnson & Leigey, 2020; Johnson et al., 2016), or other cognitive changes (Giordano et al., 2002). Understanding how different factors combine to lead to successful change while in prison is crucial for research and policy (Cochran & Mears, 2017; Drafty-Kapur & Zottoli, 2020; Kazemian & Travis, 2015).

Human Development Theory

As it pertains to long-term confinement, identifying specific life events that result in changes in behavior remains a critical task for scholars researching the effects of long-term confinement (Cochran & Mears, 2017; Garabedian, 1963; Maruna & Toch, 2005). The life course perspective implies that trajectories can be better understood if they are viewed within the total context of an individual's life and development. Erikson's (1963; 1968; 1982) psychosocial theory of human development unpacks developmental change and growth across the life span. Erikson (1963; 1968; 1982) has often been considered the first life-span developmental psychologist as he developed the first life-span theory of human development, which states that

human beings progress through *eight* developmental phases. These eight stages (Trust vs. Mistrust, Autonomy vs. Shame, Initiative vs. Guilt, Industry vs. Inferiority, Identity vs. Role Confusion, Intimacy vs. Isolation, Generativity vs. Stagnation, Integrity vs. Despair) present a unique developmental task, which Erikson (1963; 1968; 1982) referred to as a conflict that must be resolved in order to acquire human and social capital over the life course. The term crisis does not denote a negative connotation, but rather is seen as a life stage, which through constructive resolution leads to further development. If an individual successfully deals with a conflict, they emerge from the stage with a psychosocial strength (hope, will, purpose, competence, fidelity, love, care, wisdom) that they will carry forward (Erikson, 1963; 1968; 1982; 2001). If they fail to deal effectively with a conflict, however, they may not develop essential skills nor acquire human or social capital. It should be noted that it is never too late to resolve a conflict, but resolving a conflict from a previous life stage can become more challenging over time as individuals tend to focus on the current psychosocial stage they occupy (Erikson, 1963; 1968; 1982). As juvenile lifers navigate the route to adulthood during extended periods of incarceration, Erikson's (1963; 1968; 1982) psychosocial stages of human development lends context to the normative developmental tasks needed in order to be well-adjusted to the demands and responsibilities of adulthood and serves as a framework to identify dynamic changes that may occur during the period of long-term confinement.

Developmental and Life-Course (DLC) Framework

Ultimately, both developmental and life course theorists are concerned with the physical, cognitive, and socioemotional development of individuals as they transition from adolescence to adulthood (Steinberg et al., 2011). As depicted in Figure 1, the conceptual model for this study examines the three life periods (pre-incarceration, incarceration, and reentry) of juvenile lifers. In

order to understand how long-term confinement affects the development of human and social capital, it is important to understand the interconnectedness of these three main life periods. Specifically, this study investigates whether pre-incarceration experiences of juvenile lifers influences incarceration experiences, and how pre-incarceration and incarceration experiences influence prisoner reentry. To unpack these nuances, the life-course perspective is paired with Erikson's (1963; 1968; 1982) psychosocial theory of human development to understand how juvenile lifers acquire human and social capital over the life course. This pairing is necessary because many of the traditional turning points emphasized in life-course criminology (e.g., military service, marriage) are effectively out of reach for those serving life sentences (Sampson, 2016). Erikson's (1963; 1968; 1982) psychosocial stages¹¹ of development are mapped onto the ages of human development in the conceptual model as they hold implications for each period of the life course (early childhood to death).

Pre-Incarceration Experiences

The first aspect of the study focuses on the pre-incarceration experiences of juvenile lifers. Many juvenile lifers vary with respect to their pre-prison characteristics and the experiences that they have accumulated before entering prison (Visher & Travis, 2003). There are a number of factors (education, family, adverse childhood experiences, neighborhood characteristics, etc.) that could possibly account for juvenile lifers' involvement in acts of homicide, which ultimately led to their long-term confinement; however, this study specifically seeks to examine the effects of schooling experiences (positive or negative) over the life course.

¹¹ It should be noted that although Erikson's (1963; 1968; 1982) theory on psychosocial development includes eight stages, only five stages (Initiative vs. Guilt, Industry vs. Inferiority, Identity vs. Role Confusion, Intimacy vs. Isolation, Generativity vs. Stagnation, Integrity vs. Despair) are presented in the conceptual model. The beginning stages (Trust vs. Mistrust, Autonomy vs. Shame, Initiative vs. Guilt) of Erikson's theory are excluded for recall purposes as they take place before the ages of 5 years old (see Erikson, 1963; 1968; 1982).

Specifically, schools are an important system in our society as most children will have spent approximately fifteen thousand hours in school as they progress throughout the schooling system (Hirschfield, 2018). More importantly, schools serve as one of the primary places for socialization that help shape behavioral orientations during adolescence into young adulthood (Haney & Zimbardo 1975). A main issue in the sentencing of juvenile lifers is the inability of the court and prison system to recognize them as children at the time of sentencing, resulting in the adultification of their behaviors (Parker, 2005). However, it is important to note that the adultification of Black children does not merely exist in the criminal justice setting for African American youth, but often begins in schools and classrooms (Blake & Epstein, 2019; Ferguson, 2001; Rios, 2011; Winn, 2011). The way in which the bodies of Black youth are viewed and interacted with serves as a “connective tissue” between schools and prisons (Fergus & Bennett, 2018). Extensive research has documented that most youth of color are often criminalized and viewed in a dehumanizing manner before they are formally processed in the criminal justice system (Dancy, 2014; Fasching-Varner et al., 2017; Goff et al., 2014). Because Black youth are viewed as less “childlike” and not deserving to be perceived with innocence (Goff et al., 2014; Jones, 2018; Suddler, 2019; Ward, 2012), this has made way for what scholars have coined the “school-to-prison pipeline,” which pushes Black youth closer towards a future in the criminal justice system; critically, this has blurred the distinction between the education and criminal justice systems (Fasching-Varner et al., 2017; Milner et al., 2019; Skiba, 2001). Additionally, schools can have profound protective effects for involvement in offending (Agnew 2001; Cohen, 1955; Hirschi, 1969; Hoffman & Dufar, 2008; Mowen & Brent 2016; Rios, 2011). Lochner and Moretti (2004) found that prevalence of educational opportunities significantly reduces the probability of incarceration for serious criminal activity, such as murder, assault, and motor

vehicle theft. Also, youth who attend school are much less likely to commit crime, both in the short term and in the long term; however, students who drop out of school are approximately three times as likely to end up incarcerated (Lochner and Moretti, 2004; Office of the Surgeon General, 2001). Most importantly, understanding the nature of schooling experiences is particularly salient, as we know that a significant portion of juvenile lifers were enrolled in special education classes, had been suspended or expelled at some point in their academic careers, and were not attending school at the time of their offense (Nellis, 2012). The life-course literature suggests that attachment to educational systems are important for smooth transitions to adulthood (Laub & Sampson, 1993; Sampson & Laub, 1997). As it relates to development, during middle to late childhood, the schooling context is the primary setting where children develop (or fail to develop) a healthy sense of themselves as industrious (diligent, hardworking, worthy); alternatively, this can also be where they develop a sense of self as inferior. However, according to Erikson (1963; 1968; 1982), when parents and teachers fail to recognize children's accomplishments, it undermines industry and children can experience difficulty, leading to feelings of inadequacy and incompetence. To accurately assess the effects of long-term confinement, it is important to understand the educational experiences of juvenile lifers prior to serving a JLWOP sentence (Jamieson & Grounds, 2005). Developmental and life-course perspectives (DLC) have not thoroughly investigated the influence of schools and education (Payne & Welsh, 2014); juvenile lifers schooling experiences might hold important implications for how they are able to cope with the challenges of prison (Johnson & Dobrzanska, 2005; Johnson & Leigey, 2020; Johnson et al., 2016).

Incarceration Experiences

The next aspect of the study is primarily concerned with the incarceration experiences of juvenile lifers. This study seeks to examine the effects of incarceration on the life-course as it relates to the development of human and social capital (i.e., identity change, social networks, navigating the prison environment), the impacts (entrance, success, timing) on other key life trajectories, factors that influence trajectory successes and failures, and the role of physical and mental health over the period of confinement. There is a dearth of contemporary empirical studies that assess the effects of incarceration during extensive periods of time in prison (Jamieson & Grounds, 2005; Johnson & Leigey, 2020; Kazemian & Travis, 2015; National Research Council, 2014). It is critically important to understand which effects impact individuals who have been incarcerated since adolescence and whose psychosocial development was incomplete prior to entering prison as we know long-term incarceration disrupts the normal stages during the life course (Jewkes, 2005; Sampson & Laub, 1993). However, developmentally speaking, there are key tasks that need to be accomplished to acquire human and social capital in adolescence and young adulthood in order to be well adjusted to the demands and responsibilities of adulthood (Coleman, 1988; Erikson, 1963; 1968; 1982; Hagan, 1997). According to Erikson (1963; 1968; 1982), adolescents need to search for a sense of self by experimenting with multiple roles (career, sexual, political, etc.) and it is important that they interact with others to determine what roles they should engage in and which ones they should not. Failure to undergo this transition in adolescence can result in a state of confusion about one's identity and their place in society (Erikson, 1963; 1968; 1982). Additionally, in early adulthood young adults need to develop intimate relationships with others. Individuals who cannot develop the capacity for intimate relationships are vulnerable to social isolation (Erikson, 1963; 1968; 1982). Inquiry into

the incarceration experiences of juvenile lifers will highlight maybe whether and how juvenile lifers acquire human and social capital during confinement. Juvenile lifers also undergo a series of psychosocial transitions to adapt to the demands of prison life and will develop various coping mechanisms while incarcerated. Some of these coping mechanisms gained in prison will be counterproductive for their personal development (Jamieson & Grounds, 2005; Johnson et al., 2016; Warr, 2020) while other coping mechanisms gained in prison will facilitate human and social capital (Irwin, 2009; Johnson & Dobrzanska, 2005; Johnson & Leigey, 2020; Johnson et al., 2016; Leigey, 2015). It is important to note that the effects of long-term confinement are not universally experienced, as there is significant heterogeneity among prisons (Liebling, 2004).

In general, individuals who experience long-term confinement cope maturely; the vast majority of lifers will acquire some human and social capital through opportunities for work, education, and rehabilitative programs while in prison (Flagan, 1981; Johnson, 2002; Leigey, 2010; Mackenzie & Goodstein, 1985; Porporino, 1990; Toch, 2010; Zamble, 1992; Zamble & Porporino, 1988). However, because the prison setting is vastly different from what it was several decades ago due to overcrowding, scarce resources, and limited access to programming, unpacking the prison experiences of juvenile lifers could potentially provide insight into how prison climate has changed over time and how people experience it as they age, which has implications for understanding how incarceration impacts other life trajectories as well as the factors that influence trajectory successes and failures. Additionally, as it relates specifically to physical and mental health, the prevalence of trauma is significantly higher for lifers than those serving shorter sentences (Liem & Kunst, 2013). Further, one in five lifers has a mental illness, as compared to one in six in the general population (Dudeck et al., 2011; Mauer et al., 2004). Although there is greater prevalence of physical and mental health issues for those serving long

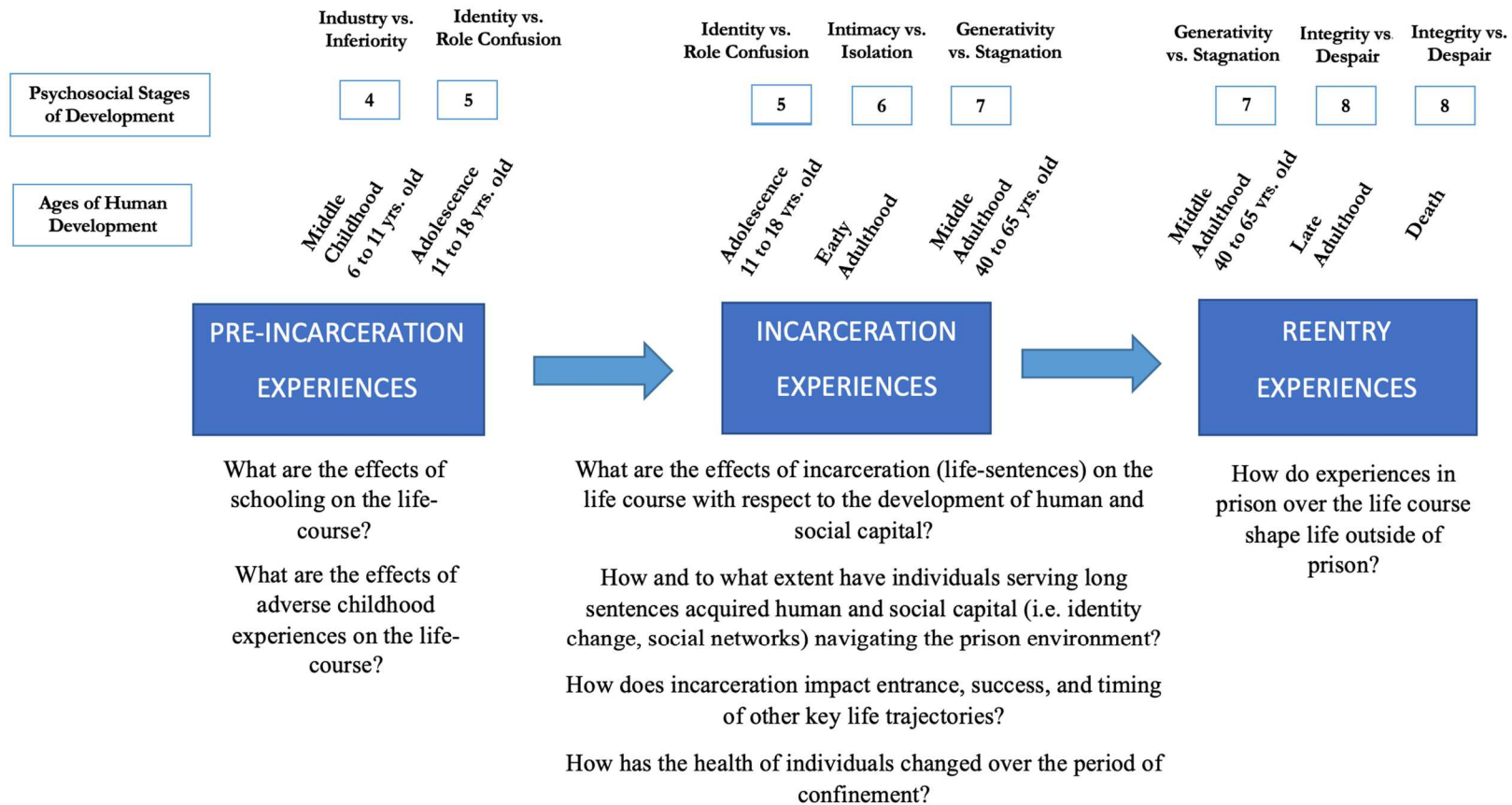
sentences, it is unclear whether long-term incarceration leads to the development of health problems, or whether it exacerbates a preexisting health issue over extended periods of time (Schnittker et al., 2012). Understanding the role of health over the period of confinement will help gain a better understanding of how physical and mental health outcomes for juvenile lifers vary over the course of long periods of incarceration.

Reentry Experiences

The final aspect of the study inquiries into the reentry experiences of juvenile lifers and seeks to understand to what extent experiences in prison over the life course influence life outside of prison. According to Laub and Sampson (2003), there is a paucity of research that examines the distinctive experiences of the very young and the very old after release from prison. Most studies that examine the effects of long-term imprisonment have almost exclusively been conducted in prisons (Jamieson & Grounds, 2005). However, it is important to understand the effects of long-term imprisonment after release from prison from a life-course perspective (Harding et al., 2019; Mears et al., 2013). Understanding the effects of long-term confinement on reentry from a life-course perspective could alter the way in which the effects of imprisonment are interpreted (Jamieson & Grounds, 2005; Mears et al., 2013). For instance, viewed from the life course perspective, how individuals cope while experiencing long-term confinement may seem constructive but may have counterproductive effects when facing the tasks of establishing a normal life after release. Also, studies that have examined the effects of long-term incarceration after release have tended to focus solely on recidivism and general measures of social adjustment, rather than more subtle kinds of psychosocial adjustment and changes (Kim, 2012; Maur & Nellis, 2018; Mauer et al, 2004; Mears et al., 2013; Weisberg et al., 2011). As a result, our understanding of the reentry experiences among individuals serving long sentences remains

limited (Jamieson & Grounds, 2005; Kazemian & Travis, 2015). However, incorporating both the life course perspective and theory of human development can provide some insight into these nuances. According to Erikson (1963; 1968; 1982), it is important in middle and late adulthood that individuals begin to reflect on their lives and what they have contributed to society and accept their past mistakes to make meaning of their lives as they move towards death. If this is not accomplished, adults who focus exclusively on their own lives may experience stagnation and a lack of meaning in midlife (Erikson, 1963; 1968; 1982). Also, older adults who experience discontent with their lives will face difficulty in accepting lost opportunities or mistakes and are vulnerable to despair (Erikson, 1963; 1968; 1982). Inquiring about the reentry experiences for juvenile lifers can unpack the developmental difficulties caused by “prisonization” (Clemmer, 1958), which may or may not complicate reentry success for those returning to society in middle and late adulthood.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model



Juvenile Lifers: Who Are They? & What Do We Know?

No country in the world incarcerates more people in the world than the United States (International Centre for Prison Studies World Prison Brief Online, 2015). In 2013, there were more than 2.2 million people incarcerated in state and federal prisons and jails in the United States (Glaze & Kaeble, 2014; National Research Council, 2014). Additionally, not only have incarceration rates risen, but “three strikes,” tough-on-crime policies, mandatory minimums, and truth-in-sentencing laws have increased the average length of prison terms served since the mid-1970s (Pew Center on the States, 2012). Alongside increasing incarceration rates, the prevalence of life sentences has substantially increased in the United States during the last 20 years as well; this is in stark contrast to other developed nations, in which life sentences are utilized with much less frequency (Nellis, 2013; Van Zyl Smit & Appleton, 2019), or have been deemed unconstitutional in developed nations (Nellis, 2010; Van Zyl Smit & Appleton, 2019). In 2016, the life-sentenced prison population was nearly five times its size in 1984, making the number of people serving life sentences in the United States higher than a combined total of 113 countries in the world (Van Zyl Smit & Appleton, 2019). Those serving life sentences make up 13.9% of the total prison population, or one of every seven people behind bars (The Sentencing Project, 2017, 2018). Consistent with the overrepresentation of Black people in prison and jails, Blacks are overrepresented among those sentenced to life in prison, where nearly half are African Americans (The Sentencing Project 2017, 2018). Overall, the population of those serving life sentences has grown despite declining crime rates during the last two decades, as well as modest declines in prison populations in some states (Kazemian & Travis, 2015; Maur & Nellis, 2018; Parker, 2005; The Sentencing Project, 2017, 2018).

Nearly 12,000 people have been sentenced to life for crimes committed as children (under the age of eighteen at the time of their offense), otherwise known as juvenile lifers (Mauer & Nellis, 2018; The Sentencing Project, 2017, 2018). There are more than 2,000 juveniles serving life without the possibility of parole. There are more than 7,000 juveniles serving life with parole, and another 2,000 juveniles serving “virtual life” prison terms of 50 years or more (Mauer & Nellis, 2018; The Sentencing Project, 2017, 2018). As it relates to those serving life sentences as juveniles, the data reveal that Black youth are disproportionately sentenced to JLWOP when compared to White youth (Mauer & Nellis, 2018; Mills et al., 2015; Parker, 2005). Black youth comprise of 60% of those serving life without parole nationwide while Whites only comprise of 29% (Nellis & King, 2009). The United States has been the only developed nation in the world that sentenced children to life without parole (JLWOP), which directly conflicts with provisions of international law, including Article 37 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child that prohibits life sentences for juveniles (Parker, 2005). However, contrary to international law and procedures, forty-four states have permitted juvenile life without parole (JLWOP) (Parker, 2005, The Sentencing Project, 2017, 2018). Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Louisiana accounted for roughly two-thirds of all juvenile life without parole (JLWOP) sentences in the world (Mills et al., 2015; Rovner, 2020). Among all states, Pennsylvania had the largest number of individuals serving JLWOP sentences in the world and the majority of these individuals are African American (Drafty-Kapur & Zottoli, 2020; Mills et al., 2015; Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, 2020). Approximately 300 juvenile lifers come from Philadelphia, making Philadelphia County responsible for sentencing more children to spend the rest of their lives in prison without parole than any other place on Earth (Defenders Association of Philadelphia, 2019; Drafty-Kapur & Zottoli, 2020; Mills et al., 2015).

Although scholars have noted that sentencing children to life without parole (JLWOP) is a major human rights issue (Butler, 2010; Drafty-Kapur & Zottoli, 2020; Inegbenebar, 2018; Mauer & Nellis, 2018; Nellis, 2012; Parker, 2005), there is limited knowledge regarding the incarceration experiences of juvenile lifers. It is critically important to understand these effects as the pressures associated with the early stages of confinement in adult prison are pronounced for juvenile lifers because of their age and developmental stage (Butler, 2010; Johnson & Leigey, 2020; Nellis, 2012; Parker, 2005). In comparison to youth in juvenile facilities, juveniles incarcerated in adult prisons are five times more likely to be sexually assaulted, and almost twice as likely to be attacked by inmates or correctional officers (Parker, 2005; Redding, 2010). Juveniles are especially vulnerable in adult prisons because of their physical size, their lack of experience in the system, and their knowledge that they will never leave prison (Monahan, 2009). With little hope of release, juveniles sentenced to JLWOP will experience an increased risk of mental health issues during the initial stages of their confinement and are at risk of self-harm and suicide (Parker, 2005). Juveniles in adult facilities are eight times more likely to commit suicide than youth in juvenile facilities (Redding, 2010). In addition, juveniles sentenced to JLWOP often lose important family and pro-social bonds resulting in severe hopelessness (Butler, 2010). Also, during the years when education and psychological development are most crucial for juvenile lifers it is extremely difficult for them to participate in educational or skill-building programs in prison since programming is generally reserved for those who will be released soon (Nellis 2012; Parker 2005). According to Nellis (2012), a significant amount (61.9%) of juvenile lifers either did not participate in rehabilitation programming because of their life sentences, or were incarcerated at prisons without sufficient programming. Unfortunately, most juveniles sentenced to JLWOP are denied opportunities to develop and

reform, as most correctional facilities are not invested in improving the skills and lives of those sentenced to life (Butler, 2010; Nellis 2012; Parker 2005).

It is important to note that in general, most juvenile lifers who experience long-term confinement cope maturely during their period of incarceration and become upstanding members of the prison community despite facing substantial barriers and limited resources (Crewe et al., 2020; Irwin 2009; Johnson & Dobrzanska, 2005; Johnson & Leigey, 2020; Johnson et al., 2016; Leigey, 2015). Although almost all (94.8%) juvenile lifers reported disciplinary actions (disobeying orders, possessing contraband, fighting) against them at some point during their incarceration, much of their serious misconduct, especially violence, was largely limited to the early days of incarceration, and their prison misconducts decreased with years spent in prison (Crewe et al., 2020; Drafty-Kapur & Zottoli, 2020; Johnson & Leigey, 2020; Nellis, 2012). Additionally, during the period of confinement, over 60% of juvenile lifers advanced their education by completing high school or obtaining a GED (Nellis, 2012). Ultimately, while the early stages of confinement are often problematic for juvenile lifers, they eventually become positively engaged over the course of their confinement. Understanding how this change in juvenile lifers occurs in prison is crucial, as there remains a limited understanding of what in-prison experiences might mean for post-release outcomes (Cochran & Mears, 2017; Drafty-Kapur & Zottoli, 2020; Kazemian & Travis, 2015).

Cumulative Disadvantage: Childhood Experiences, Family, & Educational Failure

The cumulative advantage/disadvantage (CAD) framework posits that statuses and life events that occur early in the life course set the stage for opportunities and behaviors that occur later in the life course (Dannefer 1987, 2003; O’Rand 1996). As it relates to criminal justice, Sampson and Laub (1997) have noted that cumulative disadvantage is a dynamic process by

which experiences that occur in childhood and adolescence (i.e., familial relationships, schooling, early justice system contact) can affect future criminality. Cumulative disadvantage is particularly relevant for juvenile lifers as their childhoods and adolescence typically included pervasive exposure to violence, familial incarceration, and learning and behavioral problems in school (Butler, 2010; Drafty-Kapur & Zottoli, 2020; Nellis, 2012; Parker, 2005). Prior to incarceration, most juvenile lifers had been exposed to one or more developmental and psychosocial risk-factors for criminal behavior, with 42% exposed to three or more (Drafty-Kapur & Zottoli, 2020). This is critically important, as Doan et al. (2012) contend that the presence of multiple risk factors during childhood increases the risk for negative behavioral and cognitive outcomes in adolescence, including juvenile offending. Although juvenile lifers experienced multiple forms of disadvantage early in the life course, this does not excuse their acts of homicide; however, their childhood experiences placed them in disadvantaged positions for success, and lends context to the factors that may have shaped their lives before they engaged in the criminal activities that ultimately resulted in life in prison (Butler, 2010; Drafty-Kapur & Zottoli, 2020; Nellis, 2012; Parker, 2005).

Children sentenced to life in prison are more likely than the general population to have been exposed to traumatic life events in childhood, or what scholars have termed “adverse childhood experiences” (Baglivio et al., 2014; Felittle et al., 1998). Adverse childhood experiences describe a wide range of traumatic life events that include emotional abuse, psychological abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, maternal abuse, divorce, household substance abuse, mental illness in the home, and familial incarceration (Felittle et al., 1998). According to Nellis (2012), the majority (79%) of juvenile lifers had witnessed violence in their homes; almost half (46.9%) of all juvenile lifers had been physically abused; and 20% had been

sexually abused. These multiple forms of trauma that they experienced are particularly profound given that only 25-34% of children in the general population have experienced some type of trauma in their lives. Understanding adverse childhood experiences as an important factor in the lives of juvenile lifers is important, as early childhood adversity can impact adult well-being and criminality (Nuris et al., 2015; Reavis et al., 2013).

Prior to their incarceration, juvenile lifers also experienced home environments with minimal adult supervision and high levels of familial incarceration (Nellis, 2012). According to research, parents are critical in the formative years of life; parental support decreases the risk of criminal involvement for children (Cullen, 1994; Hoeve et al., 2009; Wright & Cullen, 2006). More than 25% of juvenile lifers had an incarcerated parent in prison and 59.1% of juvenile lifers had a close relative in prison (Nellis, 2012). Researchers have noted that having an incarcerated parent can be a traumatic experience resulting in antisocial behavior in childhood (Arditti et al., 2012; Murray & Farrington, 2005; Travis & Waul, 2003). Specifically, children can experience cognitive and developmental difficulties, anxiety, depression, and heightened levels of aggression and violence (Hairston, 2007; National Research Council, 2014; Parke & Clarke-Stewart, 2003; Wright & Seymour, 2000). Most interestingly, children with incarcerated parents are not only more likely to become delinquent and incarcerated themselves but also more prone to having difficulties in school, resulting in increased likelihoods of dropping out (Huebner & Gustafson, 2007; Murray et al., 2012; Schrimmer, Nellis, & Maur, 2009).

Besides the family and home environment, another important factor in early childhood for adult outcomes is schooling. Criminologists and criminological theory have implicated schools and the education system as most responsible for crime (Agnew 2001; Hirschi, 1969; Hoffmann & Dufur 2008; Mowen & Brent 2016; Rios 2011). According to Nellis (2012), less

than half (46.6%) of all juvenile lifers were attending school at the time of their crime, and the vast majority (84.4%) of all juvenile lifers had been suspended or expelled at some point in their academic careers. Schools serve as one of the primary places for socialization and crime control (Haney & Zimbardo, 1975; Laub & Sampson, 1993; Sampson & Laub, 1997). This notion has been consistent in the literature as Hirschfield and Gasper (2011) have that found behavioral engagement—measured as time spent on school-related activities relative to leisure activities—predicted delinquency. Also, the work of various economists suggests, in the aggregate, attending school longer and obtaining educational credentials reduces criminal behavior and justice system involvement (Hjalmarsson, 2008; Lochner, 2007; Lochner, 2004; Lochner and Moretti, 2004).

We know that over half (59%) of juvenile lifers received a life sentence for their first-ever criminal conviction and 16% were between 13 and 15 years old at the time they had committed their crimes (Parker, 2005). While the vast majority were convicted of murder, 26% were convicted of felony murder during which a co-participant committed the murder, without their knowledge or without intent of their knowledge (Parker, 2005). Approximately 66% of the murders were unplanned, 10% of the murders were gang-related, and one was classified as a hate crime (Drafty-Kapur & Zottoli, 2020). In addition, in the overwhelming majority of cases, there was one murder victim; in 4% of cases, there were two victims; and in only 1% of cases, there were more than two victims (Drafty-Kapur & Zottoli, 2020). Overall, it is important to understand the lives of juvenile lifers prior to incarceration, as pre-prison characteristics and experiences can contribute to in-prison behavior and treatment needs (Clemmer, 1940; Goncalves et al., 2014; Irwin & Cressey, 1962; Jiang & Winfree, 2006; Leigey & Reed 2010).

Reentry: Life After Life Imprisonment in the Era of Mass Incarceration

Tough-on-crime policies have long been criticized for creating an era of mass incarceration and for potentially worsening recidivism rather than improving it (Cochran & Mears, 2017; Western, 2006; 2018). The massive expansion of the prison population over the past few decades has resulted in more people returning to the community (Western, 2018; Visher & Travis, 2003). Recent estimates indicate that over 600,000 individuals are released from state and federal prisons annually; the number of people who enter and leave jails, including pretrial detainees and those who already have been sentenced, has been estimated at approximately 9 million per year (Carson, 2018; Guerino et al., 2011; Harding et al., 2019; Visher & Travis, 2003; Wagner & Sawyer, 2018, Western, 2018). The complexities of life after prison are often accompanied by stress and anxiety, as individuals try to reestablish—or establish for the first time in the case of juvenile lifers—housing, employment, and social relationships as well as secure formal identification (Harding et al., 2019; Petersilia, 2003; Travis, 2005; Western, 2006; 2018). However, released prisoners carry myriad issues caused by imprisonment and are substantially more likely to suffer from mental and physical illnesses, have a poor employment history, be drug dependent, and have a history of victimization (Lattimore et al., 2010; Harding et al., 2019; Mears & Barnes, 2010; Petersilia, 2003; Travis, 2005; Western, 2006; 2018). As a result, within 3 years, most individuals returning from prison will be rearrested, and half will go back to prison, either for a new crime or for violating conditions of their parole (Visher & Travis, 2003, Western, 2018).

The national movement to end the crisis of mass incarceration has focused almost exclusively on non-violent felony offenders (Drafty-Kapur & Zottoli, 2020; Kazemian & Travis, 2015). Almost no consideration has been given to individuals serving long-term sentences for

violent crimes, even though they make up more than half of those who are in prison. In fact, scholars have highlighted that the collateral consequences of incarceration, are likely to be amplified for those who are released after serving a life sentence (National Research Council, 2014; Kazemian & Travis, 2015; Travis, 2005; Travis & Waul, 2003). Spending decades in prison, those serving life sentences have been removed from social structures that facilitate maturation and development including sources of informal social control, such as education, employment, marriage, and parenting (Jewkes, 2005; Krohn and Gibson, 2013; Liem, 2016; Sampson & Laub, 1993). Most importantly, the consequences of imprisonment can produce lasting problems that persist long after prisoners are released, what scholars have termed “post-incarceration syndrome” (Liem & Kunst, 2013). Specifically, the majority of lifers reported mental health issues post-release including institutionalized personality traits, social-sensory disorientation, and feelings of not belonging in certain social or temporal settings (Liem & Kunst, 2013). Additionally, during the reentry process, lifers will face substantial barriers as they return to the community, including having limited or no access to public housing and being excluded from employment opportunities (Travis, 2005). Most lifers who leave prison will have difficulty finding and securing employment due to their age, as older individuals are more likely to experience age-related discrimination (Kazemian & Travis; Liem, 2016). Also, many lifers have a limited skillset, as vocational and educational programs in prisons are typically designed for those serving shorter sentences (Kazemian & Travis; Liem, 2016; Parker, 2005). Alexander (2012) has noted that certain lease agreements can deny individuals with a felony record from public and private housing. As a result of these restrictions, many lifers find it difficult to secure housing during their initial years back in the community (Liem, 2016). This is problematic as

researchers contend that individuals released from prison without stable housing are more likely to return to prison (LeBel & Maruna, 2012).

Given the difficulties of reentry for adults serving life sentences, according to Liem (2016), recent developments in legislation make the study of juvenile lifer reentry even more important. Following the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decisions in *Miller v. Alabama* and *Montgomery v. Louisiana*, over 2,000 men and women sentenced to mandatory life without the possibility of parole as children became eligible for release (Liem, 2016; Rovner, 2020; Youth Sentencing & Reentry Project, 2019). Due to the fact that juvenile lifers enter prison at a key developmental stage in their lives, it is unclear how long-term confinement impacts reentry processes. However, Pennsylvania, which has incarcerated more juvenile lifers than any other state, has become the nation's leader in releasing them, and provides some insight into the current reentry experiences of juvenile lifers (Drafty-Kapur & Zottoli, 2020; The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, 2021). The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (2021) reports that 474 of all juvenile lifers have been resentenced and of those resentenced 271 have been released back into the community. Preliminarily, we know that six (3.5%) of the juvenile lifers in Philadelphia have been re-arrested; however, charges were dropped in four of those cases and only two cases (1%) resulted in new convictions (Drafty-Kapur & Zottoli, 2020). The remaining juvenile lifers (96.5%) have been living in the community for an average of over 20 months (as of December 2019) without any new contact with the criminal justice system (Drafty-Kapur & Zottoli, 2020). Ultimately, as these juvenile lifers continue to be released from prison and reenter society for the first time since adolescence, it has become critically important to understand the reentry experiences of those who have been confined over the course of their adult lives.

The Present Study

There is limited empirical research on the incarceration and reentry experiences of juvenile lifers and almost no research on the developmental and life-course experiences of ex-prisoners generally, as prisons are challenging to access (Kazemian & Travis, 2015; Kurlychek et al., 2012; Reiter 2014; Stevens, 2019; Vannier, 2018; Wacquant, 2002). The present study is an attempt to begin to fill this knowledge gap. Academic research has explored adult experiences of serving life without parole (LWOP) (ACLU, 2013; Carceral et al., 2005; George, 2010; Hassine et al., 2011; Johnson & McGunigall-Smith, 2008; Leigey, 2015; Lempert, 2016; Paluch, 2004; Santos, 2004; Vannier 2016; Willis & Zaitzow, 2013); however, few studies have examined the lives and experiences of juvenile lifers empirically, as most research on juvenile lifers has been prepared for awareness and advocacy initiatives (Drafty-Kapur & Zottoli, 2020; Nellis, 2012; Parker, 2005). For example, the first ever national analysis of life-without-parole sentences for children was prepared by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International in 2005, who were the first to report that the United States was the world's leader in sentencing children to spend the rest of their lives in prison for acts of homicide (Parker, 2005). The first ever national survey of juvenile lifers was conducted by the Sentencing Project in 2012, where they presented an in-depth overview (family abuse, educational failure, socioeconomic disadvantage, racial disparities) of juvenile lifers' lives prior to their incarceration, as well as descriptions of their lives while incarcerated (Nellis, 2012). Most recently, the first ever analysis of juvenile lifers in the State of Pennsylvania was prepared for the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office in 2020, and examined the resentencing process for juvenile lifers, differences in legal administrations approaches to resentencing juvenile lifers, and recidivism rates of released juvenile lifers and the potential cost savings (Drafty-Kapur & Zottoli, 2020). As a result, the

picture of juvenile life without parole (JLWOP) has become “pixelated,” as few scholarly works (Butler, 2010; Inegbenebor; 2017) have provided an empirically informed understanding of the treatment and conditions of those serving JLWOP sentences, or examined what the long-term consequences of JLWOP sentences mean for life after prison (Vannier, 2018). This is problematic, as Wacquant (2002) has noted that the inattention by researchers to document the prison experience has forced us to rely on the writings of journalists, advocacy organizations, and those who are incarcerated to learn about everyday life inside of prisons in America. The present study moves beyond just a descriptive interpretation of the life experiences of juvenile lifers and seeks draw on rich theoretical frameworks to analyze and make sense of these experiences over the life course.

Generally, life course research has been primarily attentive to pre- and post-incarceration experiences, but inattentive to the experiences that occur during the period of incarceration (Jamison & Grounds, 2005; Johnson & Leigey, 2020; Laub & Sampson, 2003; Kazemian & Travis, 2015). As a result, there is a need for life-course studies to document the effects of long-term incarceration in relation to an individual’s circumstances prior to arrest and after release (Jamieson & Grounds 2005). The present study is primarily focused on understanding how the criminal justice system affects those who have been incarcerated from adolescence to adulthood, as it relates to acquiring human and social capital for individual development. It also acknowledges that while each individual has been similarly sentenced for an act of homicide, their early life experiences may have implications for how they have experienced incarceration and the extent to which they may have been successful in acquiring human and social capital. Using a life-course framework, this concurrent, mixed-methods study employs semi-structured life history interviews and life history calendars to examine the effects of confinement over one’s

life course. Collecting life-histories and life history calendars provides the capacity to retrospectively explore, analyze, and make sense of the narratives and experiences of juvenile lifers who have been incarcerated over the course of their entire adult lives, less the most recent year(s). Understanding these narratives and experiences of juvenile lifers is necessary for making the “pixilated” picture of those serving JLWOP sentences clearer (Vannier, 2018) and to draw attention to the fact that researchers have largely ignored individuals serving life sentences as a research population (Jamison & Grounds, 2005; Kazemian & Travis, 2015; Kurlychek et al., 2012).

CHAPTER 3: THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to examine how long-term incarceration affects life course development and shapes reentry processes for juvenile lifers. Specifically, the study is interested in understanding how incarceration impacts key life domains including relationships, education, family, employment, skills/trades, criminal activity, and health. The study also considers how early life experiences (pre-incarceration experiences) contribute to how individuals experience and cope with incarceration, with an emphasis on schooling and education. That is, this study investigates how differences in early life experiences influence life in prison and thus, maybe indirectly, reentry. In addition, all juvenile lifers included in this study have committed acts of homicide; the study may also be able to provide insight into commonalities (i.e., identify any similarities in life experiences), which could be useful for prevention.

Research Questions

The study seeks to examine the following research questions, which are also outlined in the conceptual model based on the life course perspective and human development (see Figure 1).

Pre-Incarceration Experiences

- 1) What are the effects of schooling experiences on the life course?
- 2) What are the effects of adverse childhood experiences on the life course?

Incarceration Experiences

- 3) What are the effects of incarceration (life-sentences) on the life course, with respect to the development of human and social capital?

- 4) How and to what extent have individuals serving long sentences acquired human and social capital (i.e., identity change, social networks) navigating the prison environment?
- 5) How does incarceration impact the entrance, success, and timing of other key life trajectories (i.e., marriage, employment, education, parenting, etc.) over the life course?
- 6) How has the physical and mental health of individuals changed over the period of confinement?

Reentry Experiences

- 7) How do experiences in prison over the life course shape life outside of prison?

Sampling

To address the research questions, data for this study draws from a purposive sample that captures the lived experiences of 30 predominantly African American men and women¹² before, during, and after serving a mandatory life without parole sentence for acts of homicide committed as children (juvenile lifers) in the State of Pennsylvania. Inclusion criteria for the purposive sample included individuals who were juvenile lifers in the State of Pennsylvania and who had been released from prison during or before December 2019 to allow for a substantial period of time to examine reentry successes and failures. Table 1 provides demographic information of the juvenile lifers included in the final sample ($n=30$). Most of the sample identified as male ($n=26$), Black ($n=26$), and were from Philadelphia County in Pennsylvania ($n=25$). All juvenile lifers were sentenced to life without parole for committing homicide resulting in the death of a victim ($n=30$). However, it is a common misconception, that the sentence is reserved only for the most premeditated and gruesome of murders. Over half ($n=16$) of juvenile lifers were charged with felony murder meaning that they participated in a felony where a co-

¹² See Appendix A, as it relates to the disproportionate number of people of color convicted as juveniles and serving life without parole sentences in the U.S. and Philadelphia.

participant killed someone without them having intended for the murder to occur or without knowledge that the co-participant planned to commit harm. On average, juvenile lifers spent 33 years of their lives incarcerated (*including jail and prison time*) with almost a third ($n=8$) beginning their long-term confinement before the age of 16. Following release from prison almost three-fourths ($n=22$) of juvenile lifers returned back to Philadelphia County in Pennsylvania. Many juvenile ($n=18$) lifers returned to the community in 2017 and have been home free for almost three years (*35 months free*). Also, when interviews were conducted, juvenile lifers varied significantly in age (*42-70 years old*), with the average age being 53 years old.

Table 1. Demographics of Juvenile Lifers

	N = 30	Mean	Range
Age		53	42-70
Years Incarcerated		33	24-49
Months Free		35	13-47
		N	%
<i>Gender</i>			
Male		26	87%
Female		4	13%
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>			
Black		26	87%
Hispanic		3	10%
White		1	3%
<i>Age At Arrest</i>			
14		3	10%
15		5	17%
16		6	20%
17		16	53%
<i>County Charged In</i>			
Philadelphia		25	83%
Allegheny		2	7%
Erie		1	3%

Lancaster	1	3%
Montgomery	1	3%
<i>Felony Murder</i>		
Did Not Commit Felony Murder	14	47%
Committed Felony Murder	16	53%
<i>Release Year</i>		
2017	18	60%
2018	6	20%
2019	6	20%
<i>County Returned To</i>		
Philadelphia	22	73%
Allegheny	2	7%
Charles	1	3%
Delaware	1	3%
Erie	1	3%
Lancaster	1	3%
Lycoming	1	3%
Montgomery	1	3%

Recruitment

This study recruited 30 juvenile lifers over a three-month period (12/2020-2/2021). Participants were recruited via email from a contact list that is maintained by a juvenile lifer support group in Philadelphia—“Life After Life.” This group was initially formed in 2017 out of the Public Defender’s office in Philadelphia to provide reentry resources to juvenile lifers returning home from prison. In my role as senior advisor to “Life After Life,” I received IRB approval¹³ to recruit participants from the contact list, which is an excel file containing key information (email and phone numbers) for approximately 100 juvenile lifers who have already been released back into the community. An email was sent to the entire “Life After Life” group, which included general information about the study and an attachment of the recruitment flyer.

¹³ I have received IRB approval for the recruitment, sampling, and data collection instruments that are used in this study. The IRB approval letter is attached in Appendix B.

Participants were asked to complete face-to-face¹⁴ semi-structured life history interviews and life-history calendars; they were compensated \$25 an hour for their participation in the study, and could earn up to \$75 for completing the study. A total of 37 juvenile lifers were identified from email correspondence; 30 juvenile lifers consented to the study and completed interviews, two juvenile lifers scheduled interviews but decided to not participate so they would not be re-traumatized by talking about their experiences in prison, another two juvenile lifers did not meet the study's inclusion criteria as they were released from prison after December 2019, one juvenile lifer became deceased before interviews took place, and two juvenile lifers were unable to be reached.

Additionally, the study did not use or disclose participants' information. Participants were assigned a pseudonym upon entrance to the study to protect their identities. Subsequent pseudonyms were randomly assigned to each person and used in the final report. All interviews were recorded on a voice recorder with audio files stored on a password-protected/encrypted external hard drive to be locked in the researcher's office. Audio recordings were sent to a professional transcription service (Rev) to be transcribed; this service has non-disclosure agreements and a strict confidentiality policy. When transcripts were received from the transcription service they were carefully reviewed against the original recordings before permanent deletion of the audio recordings. In addition, when transcripts were received, the researcher reviewed them and redacted any information that might be likely to compromise confidentiality (familiar family names, addresses, names of co-defendants, etc.). To secure the data, all electronic files were stored on a password-protected/encrypted external hard drive passport used solely for research and locked in a file cabinet in the researcher's office. While

¹⁴ Due to the ongoing status of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), some interviews were conducted online via Zoom instead of face-to-face to comply with social distancing guidelines set forth by the State of PA.

data were in use, internet connection was disabled. Any identifying information about participants was kept in a separate secure file.

Data Collection Methods

To address the study objectives and research questions, a concurrent mixed-method research design was employed that included the simultaneous collection of both qualitative and quantitative data (Palinkas et al., 2011). The concurrent mixed-method research design placed more emphasis on the qualitative data than the quantitative data for the primary purpose of exploring the personal narratives of individuals as they related to the impact of long-term confinement for those who have been incarcerated from adolescence to adulthood. The data collected for this study included both qualitative and quantitative instruments; specifically, life-history interviews and life-history calendars (LHC) were used to specify timing, capture stories, and probe (ask questions) about salient themes.

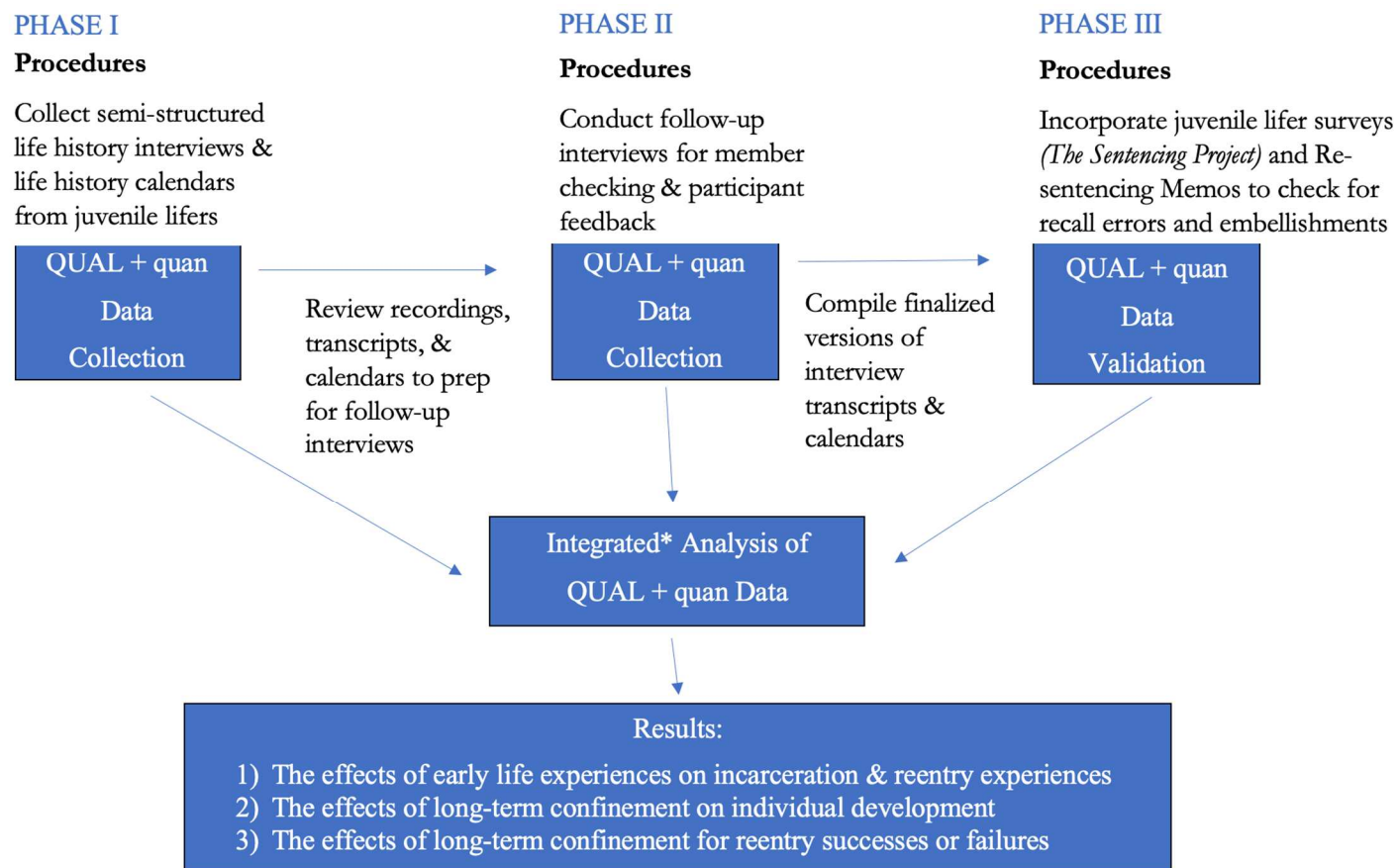
The data was collected at two time points.¹⁵ First, participants engaged in an initial semi-structured life history interview. Collecting life-histories provided the capacity to retrospectively explore, analyze, and make sense of the narratives and experiences of juvenile lifers who had been incarcerated over the course of their entire adult lives. During the initial interview, a life history calendar (LHC) was completed by participants as well. Specifically, an alternating approach (Freedman et al., 1988) between the semi-structured life history interview questions and life history calendars was used to avoid the repetition of timing questions and clarify concepts in the calendar for participants. In addition, incorporating life-history calendars (LHC) using an alternating approach helped to specify timing, sequence, and duration of key life events

¹⁵ See Figure 2. Concurrent Mixed Method Design

(Laub & Sampson, 2003), as they related to how confinement over the life-course shapes reentry processes for juvenile lifers.

After the initial interview, a follow-up interview was completed for member checking and participant feedback. Specifically, the life-history interview transcript and life-history calendar was reviewed with participants where they had the opportunity to review their responses, provide additional information, or to clarify any information they shared. Over the course of two face-to-face interviews there were 3,305 minutes recorded across all interviews (*average interview duration = 110 minutes*) resulting in 1,640 pages of interview transcript (*average interview transcript length = 55 pages*). Once all data was collected, it was validated to help ensure that responses were credible and reliable. Specifically, multiple sources were used to validate participant responses, including official court documents submitted to the Court of Common Pleas (Commonwealth of Pennsylvania) by defense counsel, previously recorded survey responses conducted by *The Sentencing Project* in 2010, and member checking. These sources in particular were triangulated with responses recorded in the life history interviews and life history calendars to discern if all of the sources reached convergence to ensure the data collected was valid (Johnson & Christensen, 2020).

Figure 2. Concurrent Mixed-Method Research Design



***Note:** The analysis of the life history interviews, and sequential analysis of the life history calendars (LHC) were analyzed separately first and then merged together to integrate the data for interpretation and reporting

Life History Interview

The qualitative portion of this study used a narrative research framework, which is useful for intimately studying the lives of individuals and capturing their lived experiences over time and in context through storytelling (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry has become increasingly popular in the field of social science and provides a holistic methodological approach for the collection of personal narratives (Atkinson, 1998, 2007; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In narrative inquiry, participants tell their stories of lived experiences, and researchers inquire into those experiences. In contrast to phenomenology, which places emphasis on understanding the collective essence of a phenomenon or experience, narrative inquiry requires the researcher to work alongside the participant to discern the individual storied experience (Creswell, 2007; Johnson & Christensen, 2020; Miles et al., 2014). Additionally, narrative research also examines macro-level narratives (institutional, social, cultural, familial) in which each participant's experiences are embedded (Creswell, 2007; Johnson & Christensen 2020; Miles et al., 2014).

Life history interviews are a form of narrative inquiry that elicits oral narratives through individual interview directed to understanding how the respondent has developed over the life course (Bertaux, 1981; Olive, 2014). Plainly stated, the method requires each study participant to provide an account of their life over a certain period of time and describe it in their own words. Ultimately, life history interviews serve three important functions: (1) understanding complex interactions between individual lives and institutions, as well as the societal contexts in which they are lived; (2) providing a platform for vulnerable populations to voice their experiences; and (3) telling the stories of individuals in their own words (Cole & Knowles, 2001).

Life history interviews are also compatible with life-course research, and are often used to plot, through time, the significant trajectories and transitions that have occurred in a person's life (Davies et al., 2018). Specifically, life history interviews were used to address the research questions in the conceptual model. Based on the conceptual model, the researcher developed an interview guide with several semi-structured questions about the experiences (pre-incarceration experiences, incarceration experiences, reentry experiences) of juvenile lifers over the life course and the psychosocial transitions of human development to understand how long-term confinement affects those who have been incarcerated from adolescence to adulthood (see Appendix C). In addition, some of the questions in the pre-incarceration and incarceration experience sections were adapted from the Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (ACES) (Reavis et al., 2013) and a survey by The Sentencing Project survey on juvenile lifers (Nellis, 2012). Because life histories are people-centered (Creswell, 2007; Johnson & Christensen 2020; Miles et al., 2014), the life history interviews were conversational and semi-structured, utilizing probing questions only when needed. The semi-structured interview style assisted both the researcher and the study participants in exploring how key events and behaviors shaped individual choices and actions (Creswell, 2007; Johnson & Christensen 2020; Miles et al., 2014). As individuals told their stories through the life history interviews, important events in their lives were mapped over time (Ingelaere et al., 2018), which supplemented the quantitative portion of the study that employed life history calendars.

Life-History Calendar

The quantitative portion of this study used life history calendars (LHC), which are useful for obtaining retrospective information of one's life course and served as a visual aid to

contextualize key life events (Freedman et al., 1998). Life history calendars (LHC) depict a graphical representation of a life course in a calendar format that is filled out during an interview (Belli, 1998). Essentially, life history calendars (LHC) integrate a number of different event histories, that account for (a) time, which is listed horizontally, and (b) life domains (e.g., work, relationships, jobs, family, peer groups etc.), which are listed vertically (Slocum, 2016). Studies show that calendar interviews improve the accuracy of retrospective information, respondent recall, interview and quality, facilitating a more accurate recording of the sequencing of life transitions (Belli, 1998, 2000; Belli et al., 2007; Drasch & Matthes, 2013; Slocum, 2016).

Furthermore, the life history calendar method is particularly useful for gathering data from populations that have chaotic lives, memory problems, and multiple transitions over the life course (Engel et al., 2001; Zahm et al., 2001). Given that juvenile lifers have been incarcerated from adolescence to adulthood, the LHC method served as particularly useful, as participants experienced a significant amount of transitions during their period of confinement. In a general sense, the LHC structures data collection around three basic elements: the recall period, a time unit, and life domains of substantive interest (Belli 1998; Caspi et al. 1996; Slocum, 2016). An abbreviated version of the LHC for juvenile lifers in this study can be found in Appendix D. The recall period is divided into three sections, which include background/pre-JLWOP (life without parole) sentence, JLWOP (life without parole) sentence/incarceration experiences, and reentry experiences. Time units were recorded in years for background/pre-JLWOP and JLWOP sentence/incarceration experiences. For reentry experiences, time units were recorded in months. The life domains of interest included housing, family, relationships, education, employment, skills/trades/volunteer experiences, health, criminal activity, and incarceration.

During the interview the researcher and respondents worked collaboratively to chart when various events occurred in the respondents' lives. Using LHC allowed for a more flexible interviewing style by alternating between the LHC about timing in each domain and semi-structured life history interview questions to obtain additional information about the activities in those domains (Freedman et al., 1988). Using this alternating approach gave the researcher the freedom to clarify and elaborate upon the meanings of questions and resolve discrepancies in respondent responses (Belli & Callegaro, 2009; Belli et al., 2001). It also enabled the researcher to relate and cross-check the timing of events across several different domains and limited the threat of content validity as respondents matured or provide different responses to questions over time (Lauritsen, 1998).

Data Validation

To ensure the qualitative and quantitative data collected in the study were valid, several strategies were employed, including, member checking and participant feedback, multiple data sources, triangulation of the data, and reflexivity. Specifically, during the follow-up interviews¹⁶, data collected from the life history interviews and life history calendars (LHC) in the initial interviews were member-checked, and participant feedback was included. The researcher had discussions with the participants in the study to review the researcher's interpretations of the data collected and to develop a deeper understanding of any concepts or terms that were not clear from the initial interview. After all follow-up interviews were completed, multiple sources of data were used, including resentencing memorandums and previously recorded survey responses from The Sentencing Project to provide context to the data and to better understand how the

¹⁶ See Figure 2. Concurrent Mixed-Method Research Design

criminal justice system affected individuals who had been incarcerated from adolescence to adulthood. Resentencing memorandums are official court documents written by defense counsel to a judge in order to present a more complete picture of the defendant for the purposes of sentence reduction. Due to the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Montgomery v. Louisiana*, all juvenile lifers were made eligible for parole. As a result, they all had to be resentenced to determine their parole eligibility. A sample juvenile lifer resentencing memorandum is provided in Appendix E, which includes information such as childhood and educational background, letters addressed to the judge (family members, faith-based leaders, professional colleagues), accomplishments while in prison, medical care needs, and supplemental information that could convince a judge to provide a reduced sentence.

Additionally, the researcher developed an agreement with The Sentencing Project to access survey data collected in 2010 for individuals who served life sentences without parole for crimes committed as children in the State of Pennsylvania. An abbreviated version of the survey can be found in Appendix F and includes in-depth experiences for juvenile lifers prior to their conviction, as well as descriptions of their lives while incarcerated. Moreover, all data sources (life history interviews, life history calendars, resentencing memorandums, 2010 survey responses) were triangulated, which entailed cross-checking information between all data sources. All data sources were investigated to discern whether they produced convergence—this meant ensuring that there were no major inconsistencies or discrepancies of life events between all data sources (Johnson & Christensen, 2020).

Finally, throughout the duration of the research process, the concept of reflexivity—the continual self-awareness of the researcher’s assumptions, biases, and predispositions, and their impact on the research—was practiced by the researcher (Armstrong et al., 2016; Johnson &

Christensen, 2020). The researcher kept a reflexivity journal where he made entries that spoke to his assumptions, biases, and predispositions as they arose throughout the research process. One of the main principles of reflexivity is to understand how “one comes to the work”¹⁷ (Armstrong et al., 2016; Johnson & Christensen, 2020).

Analytic Plan

Data was analyzed using Atlas.ti (qualitative software) and Stata (quantitative software).

Data analysis incorporated participant’s life history interviews, life history calendars, member checked transcriptions, and recordings. All life history interviews were transcribed and entered into Atlas.ti, which enables the sorting and organization of qualitative data files as well as the discovery and analysis of themes in the data. Interview notes, which are essentially field notes, were uploaded into Atlas.ti for analysis, as well. Specifically, Atlas.ti allows researchers to assign thematic labels (codes) and notes (memos) to certain passages. Texts were coded to identify key themes as they related to the experiences (pre-incarceration, incarceration, reentry) of juvenile lifers over the life course. In addition, analytic memos were written before, during, and after the coding process was complete (Johnson & Christensen, 2020; Saldaña, 2016).

Analytic memos provided opportunities for the researcher to reflect on and write about: problems with the study, personal or ethical dilemmas with the study, coding choices and their operational definitions, emergent patterns and themes, the possible networks among codes and themes, related theories, how the researcher personally relates to the study, tentative answers to research questions, and the final report for the study (Johnson & Christensen, 2020; Saldaña, 2016).

The analysis of the narrative portion of the study primarily used an inductive analytical approach, allowing codes to be identified progressively during data collection. However, some

¹⁷ See Appendix G, for researcher positionality statement.

codes were a priori, based on the concepts set forth in the conceptual model (see Figure 1) (Creswell, 2007; Miles et al., 2014). The transcripts were coded using a two-cycle coding scheme that resulted in a codebook with seven components (see Table 2).

Table 2. Code Book Example

Code name/label	Definition	Inclusion Criteria	Code Frequency	Category	Themes	Theme Frequency
The name of the code itself.	A detailed description of the code's qualities or properties.	Conditions of the phenomenon that merit the code.	The number of times the code appears.	The imposed grouping on coded segments.	A higher-level categorization that identifies patterns in the data.	The number of interviews across participants that contribute to the theme.

In the first cycle of coding, in vivo, descriptive, and process coding techniques were applied to data chunks, which generated a long list of 342 codes (Miles et al., 2014; Saldaña, 2016). For the second cycle of coding, pattern coding was applied to merge existing codes and create higher level codes (Miles et al., 2014; Saldaña, 2016). Pattern coding allows for certain codes that are too broad to be broken down as other dimensions become revealed in the data. They also pull together material from first cycle coding “into more meaningful and parsimonious units of analysis” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 86). Before transitioning to the second cycle of coding where pattern coding was applied, a code mapping analysis was conducted where a three-step iterative process was used to reorganize the 342 codes into a selected list of categories (Saldaña, 2016). During the first iteration of the code mapping analysis, all 342 codes were extracted from Atlas.ti and listed randomly in a excel spreadsheet. The second iteration of the code mapping

analysis sorted the 342 codes by the study's research questions¹⁸ (*RQ1 = 43 codes, RQ2= 87 codes, RQ3= 59 codes, RQ4= 58 codes, RQ5=14 codes, RQ6= 8 codes, RQ7= 40 codes*) which created seven code categories. Once all codes were sorted into seven code categories the third iteration of the code mapping analysis “categorized the categories” (Saldaña, 2016), resulting in 67 main codes¹⁹. The 67 main codes were identified by generating pivot tables in excel that displayed the number of times a code appeared, matched across all participants in each of the seven categories.

To ensure the reliability of the analysis, an audit trail was conducted (see Appendix I). Audit trials are in-depth approaches to demonstrate that research findings are based on participants' responses and explains how data was collected and analyzed in a transparent manner (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Specifically, all data collection and analyzation materials (Coding mapping exercises, Codebook, Transcripts, Table of Themes, Chapter Findings, Interview Protocol documents) were submitted for review to dissertation committee members alongside a narrative description of the procedures that the researcher followed for coding/data reduction and establishing research themes (see Appendix I). Dissertation committee members independently reviewed audit trial materials and verified procedures. They also provided commentary that detailed if findings were grounded in the data, if inferences were logical, and if code categories were structured appropriately (see Appendix I). Ultimately, all the information gathered from the analysis in Atlas.ti were used to “re-tell” and “re-story” the juvenile lifer's experiences into a narrative chronology to make meaning of their stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2007; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). The findings from the narrative inquiry

¹⁸ It should be noted that 33 codes were placed in a miscellaneous category due to the fact their relevance fell outside of the study's purpose, which is to examine the long-term effects of incarceration.

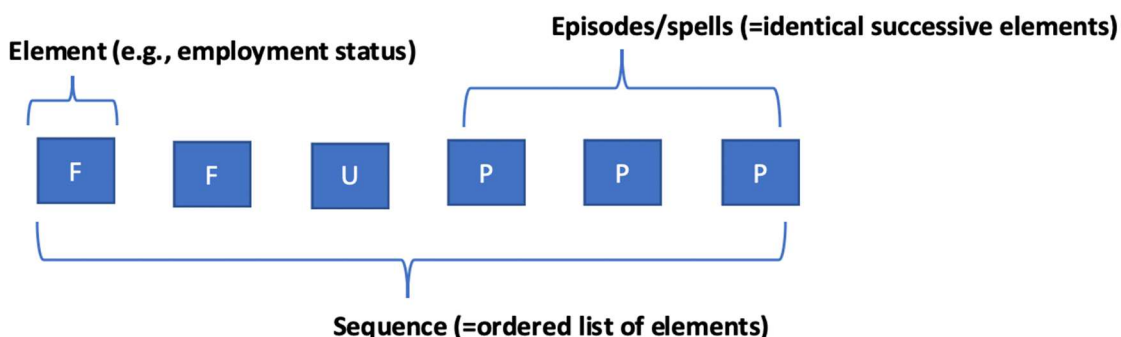
¹⁹ See Appendix H, for abbreviated code book.

speak to the consequences of long-term confinement on individual development. The findings also inform programming and policy recommendations as they relate to prison conditions, reentry, and sentencing legislation/guidelines for individuals who commit acts of homicides as juveniles, post- *Montgomery v. Louisiana*.

All life history calendars (LHC) were entered and coded into Stata, which enables the incorporation of retrospective collection of highly detailed monthly data on several domains germane to the experiences of juvenile lifers, such as health, employment, maintaining family ties, housing, education, routine activities, criminal involvement, etc. This approach allowed for the exploration of sequential quantitative data contained in life history calendars (LHC) of juvenile lifers. Specifically, sequential quantitative analysis was performed by enabling SQ-Ado-files, which are a bundle of Stata programs that include several tools for describing and visualizing sequences from life history calendars (Brzinsky-Fay et al., 2006; Kohler et al., 2016). Rather than designating a specific method, sequence analysis refers to an approach that includes a group of analytic methods that allow for translating concepts from the life-course perspective in a relatively straightforward manner (Aisenbrey & Fasang, 2010; Studer & Ritschard, 2016; Vanhoutte et al., 2018). For example, a life history represents a series of experienced states and sequence analysis allows for in-depth analysis of those states throughout the entire life course. A sequence is defined as “an ordered list of elements, where an element can be a certain status (e.g., employment or marital status) and selected from a finite alphabet Σ ” (Brzinsky-Fay et al., 2006; Studer & Ritschard, 2016; Vanhoutte et al., 2018). Additionally, sequences also capture episodes/spells, which indicate the number of identical successive elements in a particular state (Brzinsky-Fay et al., 2006; Studer & Ritschard, 2016; Vanhoutte et al., 2018). Sequence analysis originates from the field of biology, where it is used to study DNA and RNA sequences (Abbott,

1995), but it has recently been adapted for life course applications to bring personal histories to the forefront of analysis (Aisenbrey & Fasang, 2010; Brzinsky-Fay et al., 2006; Studer & Ritschard, 2016; Vanhoutte et al., 2018). To illustrate, in Figure 10, a sample sequence from a life history calendar (LHC) of employment status (F-F-U-P-P-P; “F-Full time”, “U-Unemployed”, “P-Part time”) over six time points is provided. As it relates to sequence analysis for this study, descriptive and visualization techniques, such as tabulation of sequences, and sequence index plots were employed to describe sequences (Brzinsky-Fay et al., 2006; Kohler et al., 2016; Vanhoutte et al., 2018).

Figure 3. Sample Sequence from Life History Calendars (LHC)



Integrated Analysis

Based on the concurrent mixed method research design (see Figure 2), the qualitative and quantitative data were merged after data collection was complete. Specifically, the analysis of the life history interviews, and sequential analysis of the life history calendars (LHC), were conducted separately first and then merged together to integrate the data for interpretation and reporting (Fetters et al., 2013). The integration approached that was used involved integrating the data through narrative (Fetters et al., 2013). When integrating the data through narrative,

the weaving approach was used, which involves writing both qualitative and quantitative findings together on a theme-by-theme basis (Classen et al., 2007; Fetters et al., 2013).

After integration was complete, the fit of the data integration was assessed. The fit of data integration refers to the coherence of qualitative and quantitative findings (Fetters et al., 2013). To assess goodness-of-fit, results were analyzed to determine if confirmation, expansion, or discordance occurred. Overall, the study's results revealed that confirmation occurred as findings from both qualitative and quantitative data confirmed each other by providing similar conclusions (Fetters et al., 2013). Ultimately, integration through the merging of both the qualitative and quantitative data produced findings that shed light on the consequences of long-term confinement on individual development, the implications of incarceration experiences for reentry, and how early life (pre-incarceration) experiences influenced coping with prison life as well as reentry experiences.

CHAPTER 4: COMPLEX CHILDHOODS: WHO'S TO BLAME?

A Child Is Worth More Than The Worst Mistake He Ever Made (A Juvenile Lifer's Story, 2012 by Antonio M. Howard- former juvenile lifer).

This chapter focuses on the pre-incarceration experiences of juvenile lifers. Many juvenile lifers varied with respect to their pre-prison characteristics and experiences before entering prison. Although the childhoods of most juvenile lifers typically included negative experiences in school and pervasive exposure to traumatic events during childhood, they also described positive experiences growing up. However, there were several key risk-factors (*suspension/expulsion from school, being gang-involved, engagement in adult roles, exposure to violence, physical/sexual abuse, health issues*) that accounted for their decisions to commit acts of homicide, which ultimately led to their long-term confinement.

When unpacking these potential risk-factors over their life course, juvenile lifers noted that just the mere presence of multiple risk-factors alone was not solely responsible for their decisions to commit acts of homicide but involved much complexity. This included the interplay of chronological age, relationships, key life transitions, life events, and human agency during childhood and adolescence. It is important to note that juvenile lifers did not view their experiences in childhood and adolescence as independent or summative but rather intersectional. Intersectional experiences, here, denote that juvenile lifers' social identities and social inequality based on ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic disadvantage, childhood abuse, and educational failure were mutually constitutive, often affecting each other interdependently rather than linearly.

Below I present a narrative account of the complex childhoods of juvenile lifers before entering prison for acts of homicide; this account details the effects of their schooling

experiences (both positive and negative) and childhood experiences (both positive and negative) on the life course.

Life History Calendar Descriptives

Schools serve as one of the primary places for socialization and crime control. Over half (57%) of juvenile lifers were attending school at the time of their crimes; however, the majority of juvenile lifers had been suspended or expelled at some point in their academic careers (*suspended n=13, expelled n=2, suspended & expelled n=7*). Out-of-school suspension increases the likelihood for future criminal offending behavior, and this is especially pronounced for Black youth (Hirschfield, 2018). Most juvenile lifers were suspended at least twice but some were suspended up to 10 times during their academic careers. The schooling experiences of juvenile lifers were challenging even when they did not include a suspension or expulsion. The majority of juvenile lifers never made it past the 10th grade (*8th grade n=2, 9th grade n=4, 10th grade n=7*) and in addition to showing signs of trouble in school, juvenile lifers reported that they were placed in special education classes (26%) or had a learning disability (24%) that went mostly unaddressed throughout their academic careers. It should be noted that many juvenile lifers severely struggled academically (some could not read or write) but were not officially recognized by school personnel as having learning disabilities or needing special education classes due to myriad factors such as overcrowding in the classroom, chaotic learning environments, and disinterest by teachers (see Table 3).²⁰

²⁰ N represents the number of juvenile lifers who responded to the various items listed in the table. It should be noted that some items have missing data (N < 30) as some juvenile lifers had recall issues.

Table 3. *Schooling Experience Descriptive Statistics*

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Suspended or Expelled	29	2	1.11	1	4
Total Suspensions	15	2	2.78	0	10
Grade at Offense	17	10	1.25	8	12
Attending School	30	57%	--	--	--
Learning Disability	25	24%	--	--	--
Special Education	27	26%	--	--	--

Negative Schooling Experiences

When asked about their schooling experiences growing up, most juvenile lifers clearly held feelings of resentment toward school, school personnel, and factors outside of school, which shaped their negative experiences in school (see Figure 5). Anthony, a 44-year-old Black man from Erie, PA, could not recall any positive moments throughout his whole educational journey.

He shared:

Yeah. I don't know that I had any positive experiences...So, if I had to arbitrarily choose a positive experience, maybe they were...Yeah, I can't recall any positive experiences, bro. That's so sad.

Joe, a 63-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, expressed similar sentiments to those of Anthony. When I asked Joe, “Any positive memories come out of school? Anything stick with you, teacher? experiences?,” he replied with a simple “No.” Because juvenile lifers expressed mostly negative interactions at school, it held key implications for their development in childhood. Erikson (1963; 1968; 1982) has noted that the schooling context is the primary setting

where children develop (or fail to develop) a healthy sense of themselves as industrious (diligent, hardworking, worthy). For juvenile lifers, however, the school environment primarily served a place where they developed a sense of themselves as inferior and inadequate. Terry, a 70-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, shared,

So, that's basically all the schools that I was in, I was the dumbest one in the class. All the kids knew me, and it wasn't no secret. I was embarrassed because I didn't know...I had issues in school because I couldn't keep up with the grades. So, when the teacher asked me something, I always came up with the wrong answer and they'd laugh.

Terry's experiences of being ridiculed by his peers in the classroom shaped his perceptions about his academic ability and would be the primary reason for his dropping out of school by the 10th grade. What is particularly interesting about Terry's story is that he went his whole academic career not knowing he had a learning disability. When Terry retrieved his official court records as an adult in prison, he noticed that as a child, he had received IQ testing and was labeled as "mentally retarded." However, school personnel had never informed him of the results, and he was never placed in any special education classes to address his learning disability.

Nolan, a 51-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, also talked about feeling embarrassed in school:

Nolan: "But I got to go back to a time where I felt like it was embarrassing for me to go to school."

Interviewer: "Why so?"

Nolan: "They diagnosed me as having a learning disability, when I was in the third or fourth grade. So, from that period of time, like that time that they put me in the learning...an OB class."

Interviewer: "What does OB stand for?"

Nolan: "I think it's people that's almost retarded. We used to say like 'out of brains.' I was always distracted on other things. Like, somebody say something, I'm quick to fight. You know what I mean? So when they put me in that...Gave me that title

of having a learning disability, that hit home to me. I felt some kind of way about that. I'm eight, nine years old. I'm like, I know I'm not stupid.”

Nolan went through his schooling experiences being told he was slow and could not learn like other children. Nolan was diagnosed falsely by school personnel at an early age. However, by the time he got to middle school, school personnel realized that while he did not have a learning disability, he also did not apply himself; they determined that he should be placed in regular classes. As a result, by the time he was placed in regular classes in the 8th grade, he had already begun to start “hitting the streets more” and, shortly thereafter, he caught his case for an act of homicide before getting the opportunity to start high school. Kevin, a 48-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, mentioned the long-term effects of what it means to feel inadequate in school. He shared:

I didn't make it to any of the high schools that I had applied to and so I ended up just going to a neighborhood high school [name], which was kind of like, it was a lot of stuff going on there, a lot of negative stuff. Drugs, so it wasn't a good situation for me and my grades, for the first half of the year, struggled to get back on deck but then it tanked again for the semester after Christmas and I didn't know what it was at the time why I started feeling so bad about myself and so inadequate, but I just slipped into this abysmal, emotional state, mental state, wasn't very inspired. Wasn't very motivated. Wasn't very hopeful. And this was just, it just engulfed us and so I started meeting up with a childhood friend of mine that I knew since the second grade, and we started commiserating with each other. We didn't know at the time what we were feeling but it wasn't until years later that I was diagnosed, I was actually diagnosed by a psychologist with clinical depression, but we had slipped into, both of us had slipped into depression. I slipped into depression and stuff like that.

Kevin noted this rough period in his educational journey of having to attend the neighborhood high school because he did not receive acceptance to any of the gifted schools he had applied to. He shared with me that dealing with all of the negativity caused him to be completely done with school. During this time, his mother and teachers did not recognize what was going on with him or recognize that he had slipped into a state of depression. This would eventually lead to him to

consume a bottle of aspirin in an attempt to commit suicide. Erikson (1963; 1968; 1982) has noted that it is critically important for parents and teachers to recognize the academic abilities in children; further, in the educational context, a failure to recognize such abilities can undermine children's efforts, resulting in them experiencing difficulty, including feelings of inadequacy, incompetence, inferiority, and hopelessness.

The School-To-Prison Pipeline

Miseducation

Juvenile lifers also talked about experiences where they were funneled out of school through various methods such as miseducation, behavioral issues, and facing abuse from teachers, which pushed them further towards the criminal justice system. Cameron, a 55-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, described how he did not learn in school and was just passed from grade to grade. He shared:

I get that from back in the early-'80s when they start talking about no child left behind, ain't no child thrown away... They started that in the school system, and just was passing you, even though your grades didn't match up for you to really go to the new grade. They said, 'No child throwaway,' I'm like, 'Well they threw me away.' I'm really a throwaway child. You actually just threw me away like I was worth nothing.

A main issue in the sentencing of juvenile lifers was the inability of the court and prison systems to recognize them as children at the time of sentencing. This did not merely exist in the criminal justice setting for juvenile lifers, but often began in schools and classrooms. What Cameron has described is that before being convicted for an act of homicide, he already felt worthless and like a "throwaway child" due to the miseducation he received in school. Brian, a 47-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, described how he was pushed through school throughout his entire educational journey, which led to him eventually spending time in a juvenile placement facility and not receiving a proper education when returning home. Brian shared:

Interviewer: "Why you saying, 'Third grade,' why do you say third grade if you made it to high school?"

Brian: "They just passed me. I've never been to the eighth grade. I didn't get...They just threw me. I went from when I got locked up, I went to a juvenile facility in 1986. I was going to [name] junior high school, up on 50th, I think that was 53rd and Malvern. Out in West Philly. And I was in the seventh grade. School had started in September. November the 14th, believe it or not, the same day that my mother was murdered, I went to a juvenile facility up St. Gabe's. From September to November of '86, that's the only schooling I had in the seventh grade. And I went to the juvenile facility of St. Gabe's up in Albion. I mean, Audubon, Pennsylvania. And when I came out, they put me in the ninth grade. When I came out, they just put me right in the ninth grade. Oh, how old are? We'll put you in the ninth grade."

Brian: "So, we had a lot of speed balling in our communities or whatever. And particularly when you look at the criminal justice system, once you enter, even as a juvenile, it's not about developing or cultivating you as a young man. It's about housing, the warehouse syndrome coming to effect. And that's what they did. So, I came out, they threw me in the ninth grade. From ninth grade, and I believe they just passed me just to get me out of the school."

What is interesting about Brian's educational journey is that he made it all the way to high school but kept mentioning throughout the interview that he only had a third-grade education. Brian detailed the "speed balling" in Black communities, which never fully allowed him a true education. I was curious about the effects that "speed balling" had on Brian's educational abilities and he shared with me that before he went to prison, he could not read. I probed further and asked, "So, would you say you couldn't read at all, you could read a little bit?" He told me that his reading was very limited and when he checked his school records while in prison, he would later learn that he went to prison with a third-grade reading and educational level at the age of 15 years old.

Behavioral Issues

Not only were juvenile lifers pushed out of school due to miseducation, but they were also pushed out of school because of exclusionary discipline practices exercised by school

personnel. Gary, a 63-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, recalled being sent to a disciplinary school for trivial behavioral offenses while only in elementary school. He shared:

Okay. Well, when I was growing up, you know what I mean, I went to school basically like everybody else. I guess I got in trouble like any kid. Do you know what I mean? But, I got in trouble and got kicked out of school in elementary. Yeah, I got kicked out, doing stupid stuff as a kid, right? And, wound up ... I went to Catto you know what I mean? Little kid, I'm going to Catto and then after that, I guess my life just went crazy after that, man.

Gary recalled getting kicked out of his elementary school and being sent to Catto, a disciplinary school. Shortly after being sent to Catto, Gary became a gang member, which led him into the streets. While out on the streets, Gary recalled following behind other people, and as he said, "Once you follow behind other people bad things will happen."

Jerry, a 63-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, remembered trying to stay away from the children in the classroom who were being disruptive, but his request was not adhered to by his teacher. He shared:

And then by me being tall, I remember one time I think I was in fourth grade, and this was right when I got to that school in Southwest Philadelphia, I was trying to ask the teacher, because by me being tall, they had the tall kids in the back of the class and where I was at I couldn't get no peace in terms of wanting to do my lessons. It was always some tomfoolery going on. At one time, realizing that I probably would get left down, so I tried to ask the teacher, 'Can you move me up front?' And she wasn't having it. By that time, she probably was distressed with the kids in the back being disruptive, talking, this that the third. And so, she wouldn't move me and ultimately, I did get left down that year.

As a result of getting left down and being disruptive in the classroom, Jerry was sent to Catto, as Gary was, at the age of 11 years old, which he described as a chaotic environment where he saw some of the same children during his time in prison. Jerry shared:

Look, a lot of kids that I went to Catto with, they started getting in trouble early. Second Street, Glen Mills, the Heights... It's funny though, some of them must have smartened up because I didn't see them upstate, but some of them wound up going from Catto to juvenile delinquency. Then some of them came upstate.

Jerry attended Catto from 11 to 13 years old, and he became a gang member during this time. After only completing two years at Catto, he dropped out of school and the following year, he was incarcerated for an act of homicide. Historically, the Catto disciplinary school consisted of exclusively troubled students. In 1970, the Philadelphia Tribune noted extensive racial disparities in terms of the students that were sent to Catto. Black children were more likely to be sent there than White students due to the adultification of Black children's behaviors in the classroom. In 1970, out of 187 students enrolled at Catto, there were only ten White students, and the school principal noted that there were limited opportunities and resources for Black students. It is important to note that the adultification of the behaviors of juvenile lifers did not merely exist in the criminal justice setting but often began in schools and classrooms. Most juvenile lifers were criminalized and viewed in a dehumanizing manner before they were formally processed in the criminal justice system.

Abusive Teachers

Juvenile lifers also noted physical abuse by teachers; this abuse was usually couched as school discipline, which served as a "connective tissue" between schools and prisons (Fergus & Bennett, 2018). Terry, a 70-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, shared:

Somebody laughed at me [for not knowing the answer], and when the teacher ain't around I'd go punch him. So, the teacher eventually started catching on to me and kept me in the room next to a great, big, old paddle. They get you. They hit you a couple of times and make you stay in the coat room, make you stay in there in the corner, up against the wall with your head up...So yeah, a great big old joint.

As a result of being hit with paddles, Terry told me that it caused him to never go to school. Due to his chronic absences, he said that even when he went to school, he was just there but did not know what the teacher was talking about. Anthony, a 44-year-old Black man from Erie, PA, also detailed his abuse by teachers. He shared:

Well, let's be clear, right? The teachers didn't discipline me, they beat my ass, you know? They fucked me up. And I think it's important as the man that I am, when I speak on behalf of the child I was, I'm not using the language of my abusers at that time. They was choking me unconscious. I was bleeding. I was all of that. And it was still using the word discipline. So I choose not to adopt that language. They abused me, bro. They got it off, man. And I don't want to be complicit in keeping it a secret. I started carrying knives and like any pointy objects and sharp objects to school to prevent teachers from putting their hands on me. Quickly discovered when they realized that I would fight back or stab back, they were less inclined to put their hands on me.

Anthony's abuse by teachers started as early as elementary school. Specially, he recalled waking up unconscious to his teacher dragging him out of the classroom by his neck. He emphasized to me, "You got to keep it in context. We're talking about a grown man against an elementary school student." Because Anthony would fight back, school personnel identified him in the third grade as chronic troubled offender in a school report. His school report was included in his pre-sentence report that established his criminal history when he was convicted for an act of homicide. Anthony's experiences in the classroom illustrate that the way in which the bodies of Black youth are viewed and interacted with serves as an invisible connective tissue between schools and prisons (Fergus & Bennett, 2018).

Outside of School Matters

What was most significant about juvenile lifers' experiences in school is that many of their negative experiences in school were due to factors existing outside of school. Milner et al. (2015) have stated that outside-of-school realities can influence students' experiences and outcomes inside of school. A wide range of "outside of school" life events, including the American dream/desire for material things, racial discrimination in the neighborhood, unexpected family deaths, and gang violence impacted the educational trajectories of juvenile lifers.

The American Dream

One of the main outside factors most juvenile lifers mentioned was the need for money and desire for material things. Jarret, a 46-year-old Black man from Allegheny, PA, shared:

I was more looking at the pressing concerns of life, like I need money. I want to do something, I didn't want to be in school. And it's sad because like I said, I mentioned the shortsightedness of youth. I couldn't understand that that was only a couple of years that would pay dividends for decades, right? And it has its drawbacks and all that, but that was a couple years of my life that would have paid dividends, decades.

The need for money and desire for material things distracted the long-term gratification of what school could provide for Jarret, which eventually led to his dropping out of high school. What is interesting about Jarret is that he noted that while incarcerated, he was reading an almanac about the life chances of Black males going to prison. While in prison during his late 20s, he had realized that receiving a high school diploma significantly decreased the chances of being incarcerated. He expressed to me that if he had had this knowledge earlier and was not so focused on the financial aspects of life due to his circumstances growing up, it would have possibly set him on a different trajectory. Not only was money a primary issue, but most juvenile lifers were confused about how their peers were achieving what Kevin, a 48-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, referred to as “mysterious accomplishments,” commonly known as the American dream, at such a young age. Kevin stated:

And then I started to see young people, my age, my peers, I would say shining with mysterious accomplishments, mysterious accomplishments. Jewelry, fly clothes, expensive clothes, driving cars at my age, mysterious accomplishments and it was mysterious because I was taught that you had to go to school for years, for eight years at least, maybe 12 years, to be able to achieve the American dream, which, and for me, the American dream at the time was house, car, wife, lawn, picket fence, the Brady Bunch kind of thing, you know what I'm saying? Pretty much material stuff. That was it. That was how the American dream was sold, material stuff. And we were told that we had to spend a big portion of our life going to school to be able to... And this is what the purpose of education was for, to achieve the American dream.

Kevin was heavily influenced when he saw children his age having what he identified as the American dream at 15 and 16 years old. It made him critically question the purpose of education because he felt that the “life-consuming, time-consuming, tedious” notion of delayed gratification was a lie and the importance of education started to fade in his memory. Not only was it confusing for Kevin to understand how his peers were achieving the American dream, but he mentioned that his teachers and educational experiences did not prepare him for what he would face outside of school when he returned to his community. Kevin shared:

And I think what education had lacked, what my education anyway and a lot of education lacked was it did not equip us. Our time in the classroom, what the teachers were giving us, was not equipping us with the tools or the armor to withstand the temptations of crack cocaine. And when that person inevitably, when that older person that we always looked up to in the community or in the neighborhood finally came to us and said, ‘Hey, young boy, I got a proposition for you.’ You know what I’m saying? Or, ‘can you take this here?’ Or, ‘Can you do this for me and this is what I give you.’ We were not equipped with the tool. You know what I’m saying? Especially with all that we were being bombarded with. And what was missing in that was that, okay, the American dream is not also about achieving these material things, but it’s also about being an upstanding member of your community. Being someone that is a part of the solution and not a part of the problem, right? And there was no analysis. There was no analysis of crack cocaine at the time that this was this insidious thing that was going to disempower our community. It’s wrong to sell drugs to pregnant women. It’s wrong to sell drugs to people, you know what I’m saying? We weren’t given that, you know what I mean?

Kevin’s educational experiences exemplify why teachers not only have to know and be responsive to inside-of-school realities, but they also must understand outside-of-school issues that have a serious bearing on what happens inside of the school environment (Milner et al., 2015). This was also true for Mario, a 45-year-old juvenile lifer from Philadelphia, PA. Mario’s educational experiences did not ward him against the issues he would face in his community. He shared:

I dropped, they pushed me to the ninth, and I dropped out on the ninth. This is how I dropped out of school. I went to school one day, and a friend of mine, he was young, he was a drug dealer. He lived up the street from me. He was about 16

himself. He had a Fleetwood Cadillac. He was playing F the Police. When he pulled up to the school, we was all in the Fleetwood. He dropped me off, the principal came to the door, saw me get out the Cadillac playing that loud music. He said, 'Go back and get your mother.'

I ain't go tell my mom. I went back home, I came back two days later. He said he saw me walking in the school. He said, 'Didn't I tell you to come back with your mother?' I walked away from that school and never went back. I dropped out. It was like my mom didn't care. It's like she cared, but she didn't care. She just had nine children. She got grown sons that can't even take care of they self, and then she got me. And then I got a sister that's right over top of me. So, the stress on her was as long as she just worried about her kids being safe and eating, and we surviving off welfare. Brother with a mental problem, getting a mental check for him and welfare for me. This is our survival. And then my cousin, his mother passed away. He's slow. The family drops him on her doorstep. So, now my brother succumbed to crack, so my mom's stressed about my brother's on crack. But then she got me on the flip end. One mental brother, three others on crack, that's a problem right there for my mother to handle.

Mario's experiences with his best friend who was a drug dealer affected him in his school environment greatly. The lure of his friend not only resulted in his dropping out of school at the age of 16 years old but becoming a drug dealer himself to take care of his family as his mother was struggling to provide for his siblings and extended family.

Race Matters

Milner et al. (2015) have also explained that geography and social context are important outside factors that can influence factors in school. Most juvenile lifers went to schools in racially segregated parts of the city, which created severe racial tensions. Jose, a 49-year-old Puerto Rican man from Philadelphia, PA, shared:

I went to Jones Junior High School High School, that was in Port Richmond. Port Richmond is known as a racist place. So, there you start learning more of what's going on and stuff like that. Literally, I made friends real quick. So just to give you a little insight, if one was in detention, everybody was in detention. And I'm going to tell you why. If you was in detention, you had to stay at the school. If you didn't catch that bus, you had to get somebody to pick you up because that was such a racist community, that they would beat you up and do whatever. So, let's say a

buddy of mine be getting detention. He'd be like, 'Yo, I got detention,' so maybe 10 to 12 of us just stayed back and we'll wait for him. And we'll walk home together because it was unity in the group. Doing it by yourself you get beat up, a guy will chase you, and all that. So, I mean, that's literally how it was back then. So, if you ain't getting on the bus and you ain't get on SEPTA? You better run home. If you were by yourself.

Jose detailed having to run home several times during his time at Jones Junior High School.

What is interesting is how nonchalant and normalized he framed this: "We got chased a couple of times, but that was our era." He noted that it was commonplace for this to happen, especially in predominantly all-White neighborhoods. Jesus, a 49-year-old Puerto Rican man from Philadelphia, PA, shared a similar experience:

When we go out [went to school] because the area after Front Street, there was a bunch of racists because white and Puerto Ricans go against each other, but it's like I wasn't raised [like] that. I was like, 'No, no, no.' The white guys always go 'The short guy,' so I would defend myself. I went to boxing. I went to karate. I did everything, but like I said, I don't go at nobody unless you come at me.

Jesus told me that he had really enjoyed school until he had to keep defending himself. Jesus, whose feet barely touched the floor while sitting in the office chair during our interview, became exhausted with people always trying to pick on him because of his small stature. This led him to eventually cut school, despite having good relationships with teachers and being one of the more academically strong students in his class.

Joe, a 63-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, also mentioned dropping out of school due to the racial tensions in the neighborhood in which he attended school:

Joe: "And where we lived at, in Southwest, when we went to school, we had to rumble the white boys. And they was turning the trolleys over and all that because they didn't want us to be going to Bartram with them."

Interviewer: "How long you did you stay at Bartram?"

Joe: "Not even six months."

Interviewer: "Because of the racial tensions? Going to school and getting chased?"

Joe: “Yeah, especially back then.”

Not only did these racial tensions outside of school contribute to Joe’s not liking school, but they were also one of the main reasons he only attended high school for a few months. Anthony, a 44-year-old Black man from Erie, PA, described the serious, long-lasting effects of racial tensions he experienced:

Got my first case in a situation where a guy from high school... I think I was in fifth grade. He's like 16 or 17. He was in another school. So a guy from high school was chasing me. A white dude was chasing me. Him and his friends tried to jump on me and it just so happened, I carried a box cutter. They surrounded me, I cut him in his face. I got sent away to Vision Quest indefinitely.

In other words, Anthony’s experiences outside of the classroom set him on a negative trajectory. After being sent to Vision Quest, a juvenile placement facility, he later would go on to another juvenile placement facility called Glen Mills before escaping and going on the run; these placements would take place before he caught his case for an act of homicide. As these examples show, the outside-of-school locations where juvenile lifers lived and the environmental conditions they faced had a profound impact on their experiences in school (Milner et al., 2015).

Gang Violence

Many juvenile lifers attended schools that were situated in gang territory, which made going to school very difficult. Matthew, a 62-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, recalled dropping out during his freshman year of high school due to being picked on by a gang in the local area where he had attended school. When I asked Matthew what was the last grade he completed in school, he shared:

Matthew: “Ninth grade.”

Interviewer: “That was your last grade?”

Matthew: “Yeah, but I had to leave, the gang kept chasing me from there, right? And my mom was scared they might kill me one day.”

Matthew’s school was situated behind a big parking lot, and Matthew’s mother would sit across from it to wait for him. She was so tired of seeing him get chased by the local gang across the lot that she did not make him go back to school, causing him to not complete high school. James, a 62-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, shared with me that although he was in a street crew/gang from West Philadelphia, he was doing well in school until he had to go to school in rival gang territory. I asked James, “Tell me more about the gang thing. So, you're doing well in school. What is it about the gangs that make you want to stop going to school?” James responded:

Well, we was gang warring the guys that lived near the school. It was hard for us to go to school when you was gang warring guys.

James told me that because he had to fight with rival gang members all the time, it made it difficult for him to finish school at “U City” (University City Highschool), which was notorious for gang violence in the neighborhood. Martin, a 62-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, described the environment during that time:

If you research University City High...That's the school that I was assigned to and what happened is, the first day of school, when they opened up, it was a homicide. I mean, a gang homicide. That pretty much set the tone for the rest of the year, for me. We knew what we was working with then. It pretty much set the tone for us. I mean, we went a few times, but the majority of the year, we wasn't there. You know what I mean?

Martin went on to share that this experience caused him to drop out of University City High and stop going to school all together. This was primarily due to the fact that most of his gang was going to another high school, and he only had a few friends that he could lean on for protection as University City High was in different gang territory. Milner et al. (2015) have argued that the locations where students and their families live can influence their schooling experiences. The

environmental situations juvenile lifers faced extended far beyond their and their families' control.

Family Deaths

Outside of the neighborhood context, juvenile lifers experienced the loss of key family members, which also impacted their academic performance while in school. Milner et al. (2015) has noted that parental and family involvement are crucial outside-of-school issues that can impact how students are connected to the academic and social expectations of schools. Terry, a 70-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, shared how the loss of his mother at a young age affected him severely in the classroom:

My school situation was real rough, because, like I said. After my mother died and I was with my grandmother ...I didn't go to school. My sister and my brothers, they went to school. I didn't go to school.

Terry told me that the death of his mother, which occurred when he was six, caused him to stutter so badly that, "You couldn't understand nothing I say." This was problematic because when he went to school, the kids in his class used to laugh at him, which made him not like school. He told me, "I felt embarrassed everywhere I'd go." Similarly, another juvenile lifer, Phyllis, a 60-year-old Black woman from Philadelphia, PA mentioned the loss of her mother, which affected her greatly:

Yeah. And my grades was really good. But after my mom passed away, it's like everything was stuck. I was stuck on stupid. I'm going to be honest with you, I really was. I couldn't concentrate. I wasn't comprehending. And then I just started cutting classes, hanging out with friends, smoking weed, I ain't going to lie. To me, that was like an outlet for me. It wasn't a good one, but it was an outlet for me.

Phyllis, like many other juvenile lifers, faced severe issues in the classroom due to loss of an immediate family member. When I probed further about her academic abilities, Phyllis described herself as a "B, C student," but explained that the weight of the tragic loss of her mother totally

caused her to not be present in school. It becomes critically important for educators to recognize and build a deeper understanding around the factors outside of school, such as loss key family members, which can have a direct influence over what happens inside of school (Milner et al., 2015).

Positive Schooling Experiences

Most interestingly, when asked about their schooling experiences growing up, there were some juvenile lifers who recalled positive experiences in school (see Figure 5). This included enrollment in gifted/advanced classes, strong relationships/bonds with teachers, and participation in extracurricular activities outside of school.

Enrollment in Gifted/Advanced Classes

Kevin, a 48-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, described to me mostly positive experiences in school up until the 8th grade. He shared:

I did very well in school, was always placed in advanced grades and the intermediary school I went to was Philippa Schuyler ISP83, which was the school for gifted and talented in Brooklyn, Busch, Brooklyn, New York. Mos Def went to that school. The rapper Mos Def who became Yasiin Bey. He was in the grade under me, and I knew him very well.

Kevin immigrated to the United States from Trinidad at the age of seven. From his schooling in his home country, he always valued education and that was reinforced by the gifted school he was selected by. It was at his gifted school with the famous rapper, Yasiin Bey, that he believed that he could achieve the American dream and do well for himself to provide for his family.

Although not common, there were a few ($n=4$) juvenile lifers who went further in their educational journeys (past the 10th grade), and this shaped their positive experiences in school as well. Andre, a 48-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, shared:

I actually had a chance to graduate early. Entering twelfth grade, I had at the time, back then you needed 21.5 credits to graduate. I entered twelfth grade with, well

before twelfth grade, I ended eleventh grade with 20 credits. So, they gave me the option, they said, 'You can go to summer school to get that credit-and-a-half, and you're done.' But I didn't, and I chose to go to twelfth grade. I was like, 'A credit-and-a-half.' I took four classes, so I would graduate with extra classes, so it would look good on my college transcripts.

Due to being placed in advanced courses and obtaining extra credits, Andre described having no real challenges in school and mostly positive experiences with his teachers and classmates.

Andre was so academically gifted in school that he was 16 years old in the 12th grade and had one of the highest GPAs in his class, earning him a partial scholarship to Temple University before being incarcerated for an act homicide two months before graduation.

Strong Relationships/Bonds with Teachers

Juvenile lifers also mentioned strong relationships and bonds with teachers in school, which helped them develop a healthy sense of themselves as industrious (diligent, hardworking, worthy) (Erikson, 1963; 1968; 1982) over the life course. Sean, a 47-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, shared with me how his relationships with his teachers shaped his positive perceptions about his educational experiences in school. I asked Sean, "And how would you just describe your educational experiences? Were they positive? Were they negative?" He stated:

They were positive. I'm a fast learner, so there was no challenges for me as far as learning in school or being in school. It wasn't challenging at all...I had a good relationship with all my teachers. I'm going to say when I was in junior high school, I had a... my English teacher, I think her name was Ms. Johnson. Because I liked to write, I liked to read. So, I had a good relationship with her. She encouraged me to write more because I was always a good writer. Out of all my educational experience with teachers that I had, I'm going to say my relationship with her stuck out a lot.

What is important to note is that the positive experiences and relationships/bonds with teachers Sean formed in school extended beyond just the classroom and were extremely instrumental during his incarceration at the age of 14 for an act of homicide. Due to his status as a lifer, he stated, "You're blocked from education. It's a lot of programs you can't get involved with."

However, this did not deter Sean, as his experiences in the classroom before prison made him self-motivated to educate himself while in prison and connect with other individuals that pushed him to further his education. Grant, a 46-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, had very good relationships with his teachers throughout his academic journey, which impacted him during his period of incarceration as well:

Grant: “But I had a really good experience in school. I don't think I have ever been suspended.”

Interviewer: “You was never suspended?”

Grant: “Never got suspended in all those years...I had a good relationship with all my teachers. In fact, even when I had gotten into that situation, my eighth-grade school teacher used to come visit me. I really appreciate that looking back.”

Unlike many juvenile lifers, Grant recalled never having been suspended throughout his whole time in school (K-11th grade) and expressed how his bond with his eighth-grade teacher impacted him. Specifically, he noted that during his period of incarceration for an act of homicide, his teacher visited him multiple times to “stay on top him,” as it was extremely difficult for Grant to participate in educational programs while in prison. Grant stated, “When you have life sentence like me, you're really restricted from participating in a lot of helpful things.” However, his strong relationship/bond with his teacher helped him understand the significance of education when his educational development was most crucial due to Grant going to prison at the early age of 17.

Extracurricular Activities Outside of School

Juvenile lifers also described experiences outside of school where they participated in activities that profoundly impacted their educational experiences over their life course. Jose, a 49-year-old Puerto Rican man from Philadelphia, PA, shared:

I was working with a professor, he was in school. And he would say, ‘Look, you want to come make some money?’ Mr. Robinson's take me to Cape May, New Jersey for the weekend. We used to [do] carpentry. And we used to go away and go

to New Jersey. And we do roofing and carpentry and he was a heck of a carpenter. So he would teach me things. But he took a vested interest in me. And it was like, 'I want you to do this.' And you know, every project he gave me he put a hammer in my hand, and I just started working things out with them. I think that's what got me into carpentry and just the vocation alone.

Jose's experiences outside the classroom really helped shape his perceptions about school. Prior to working as a carpenter, he struggled academically because he needed more hands-on experiences. He said, "I love hands on. I like, I'm a more hands on. We didn't have those outlets [in school]." Jose expressed that working with Mr. Robinson not only provided him with an outlet for more experiential learning experiences but reinforced why school was important. His interest in carpentry, which he began to develop in high school at the age of 16 followed him during his period of incarceration. While in prison, Jose pursued various trades (plumbing, electric, electric shop) and eventually started his own construction company following his release from prison.

Jarret, a 46-year-old Black man from Allegheny, PA, also mentioned the importance of participating in activities outside of school:

Jarret: "But as far as in art instruction, it was real light. Now that I look back on it, it was like making paper-maches and doing little drawings and stuff. So, it wasn't a serious focus on trying to develop me as an artist. But it did give me ...Not to make light of it, it did give me my first foot in the water of, that art is something outside of myself. And that I could experience it in a larger world. And it offered another glimpse into a possibility."

Interviewer: "You are recognized as an artistic prodigy in school?"

Jarret: "Yes."

While in elementary school Jarret was recognized as an artistic prodigy. Being recognized in school early enabled Jarret to get free classes at the Carnegie Museum, which gave him a sense of the breadth of what the museum collection was, and the experience of institutional art at a young age. This impacted his time in school as various teachers in the school would provide him

various art materials to cultivate his creativity. This passion for art inspired through Jarret's training at the Carnegie Museum carried him through his period of incarceration, as well as his release from prison. During his period of incarceration, he worked for Mural Arts, the largest public art organization in the nation. Also, following release from prison, Jarret currently has exhibits displayed throughout various cities in the United States, has had several artist residencies, and has been nationally recognized for his works.

Educational Reflections

Many juvenile lifers made statements where they reflected on their educational experiences during childhood and, in some instances, connected those early schooling experiences across the life course (incarceration & reentry periods) (see Figure 5). The influence of schools and education in developmental and life-course perspectives have not been thoroughly investigated (Payne & Welsh, 2014); however, as juvenile lifers reflected over their life courses, they expressed the effects of schooling experiences on their life course. This included not having understood the significance of education to transcend their circumstances and the potential benefits of attending/staying in school.

Education is Not a Safety Net

As juvenile lifers retrospectively analyzed their educational experiences over their life courses, they expressed the difficulty in understanding how education could help them transcend their circumstances in childhood and adolescence, which often included neighborhood violence, complex home environments, low socio-economic status, and open-air drug markets. Jarret, a 46-year-old Black man from Allegheny, PA, shared:

Even today, I really can't understand why I didn't, because I respect education. All throughout my life I've educated myself when I did have the opportunity to go to Villanova at a SCI Graterford, I took that opportunity and I excelled. So, I always had a tremendous respect for learning and education, but the school system at the

time ... I guess if I could pin one point to it, I think because the way schools operated then and now to a large extent. I know more about then and now, but I didn't understand that you had to really come up from where I was coming from, you had to really propel yourself. The environment wasn't a safety net, you know what I mean? You know, educationally.

Jarret mentioned that the mere presence of education or schooling alone did not serve as a protective factor, or what he called a “safety net,” in his community. He noticed that as he looked over his life and the lives of many juvenile lifers he had met in prison, the reason most of them succumbed to committing an act of homicide was that they could not escape their environments due to a lack of perceived educational opportunities. Jarret noted that the environment in which he was situated caused him to not be able to “recognize the true value of what an education could offer, or what pursuing a high school diploma/college education was really worth.” This was also true for Oliver, a 42-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA. When I asked him why he had dropped out of school, he shared:

Interviewer: “Do you think you stopped going to school because selling drugs was probably more important at that time?”

Oliver: “Yeah, because you have to realize, too, that I didn't think that I had a way out from school.”

Interviewer: “Talk to me about that.”

Oliver: “You see things that you want, things that you think around us is success, so I don't know any doctors, I don't know any lawyers. I don't know any actors, any ballplayers, but what I do know is mutherfuckers that's selling drugs. What I do know is this bull that been out here on this mutherfucking corner got this Benz. You know what I'm saying? I do know that. I do know that he has all the clothes, he has all the girls, he can do what he wants. You know what I'm saying? Whereas when you're saying how did he achieve these things, did he get these things from going to school? You know what I'm saying? Becoming doctors, lawyers, ballplayers, because I don't know nobody that has done that. What I do know is the mutherfucker that's been out here climbing has the opportunity to get this.”

Like Jarret, Oliver recalled trying to transcend his environment through education but eventually dropping out of school in the 9th grade because he realized that a basic education was not going

to be enough. From a young age, he understood that if he wanted to make a better situation for himself and his family, he would have to sell drugs. Growing up, Oliver had no real concrete examples of individuals in his community making it out of their environment through education. He noted, “Am I to keep going to school where I don't know nobody that has achieved it that way.” This would ultimately lead to his following drug dealers on his corner who appeared to be successful and him making what he would later consider the worst decision of his life: robbing someone in his neighborhood with a group of friends, which led to him being incarcerated for an act of homicide at the age of 15.

If I Just Had Stayed in School

Although there were many juvenile lifers who had not viewed education as a safety net during adolescence, as they reflected on their educational experiences as adults during their reentry period, the general sentiment they expressed was about the potential benefits of education had they attended/remained in school. Many criminologists contend that not only are schools important but that they can have profound effects for involvement in offending (Agnew, 2001; Cohen, 1955; Hirschi, 1969; Hoffmann & Dufur, 2008; Mowen & Brent, 2016; Rios, 2011). Nolan, a 51-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, recalled playing hooky from school in order to burglarize a house with his friend and older brother the day he was arrested for an act of homicide. He shared:

Well overall, I'm not going to say that I'm totally innocent. I'm innocent of murder, absolutely. But I put myself in the situation to be falsely accused of murder, at the end of the day. So, taking responsibility for my actions, I have to do that. I put myself in that situation. Had I went to school that day, who knows how my life would have turned out.

Nolan pointed out to me that had he gone to school, he would never have followed behind his older brother to burglarize the house. He explained that his brother “was out there a lot earlier”

than he was in terms of running the streets. Wanting to have his own things, as opposed to relying on his older brother to give him money at his leisure, distracted Nolan from regularly attending school. After 32 years of being incarcerated and earning two GED's (Pennsylvania D.O.C & California D.O.C) while in prison, Nolan realized that had he been persistent in school he would have realized that he possessed the ability to achieve his childhood goal of becoming an architect. Joe, a 63-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, shared the long-term effects of not giving school a chance.

I think I had attention span [issues]. I couldn't sit. Now I can sit there in the classroom and listen and understand. Back then. I ain't look five minutes I'm out. You know what I mean? So, I don't know what that was about. I probably, and I regret that too, until even when I went up state and finally started settling down and ended up getting my GED. I was saying, man, if I just stayed in school.

Joe expressed to me that one of his most significant milestones was obtaining his GED during his period of incarceration. Due to his earlier schooling experiences, he had no real interest in furthering his education. However, after trying for six years, Joe finally obtained his GED and would go on to pursue other educational opportunities, such as his culinary and para-legal certifications, while in prison. I was curious how Joe went from having difficulty in school during adolescence to excelling in school while in prison, and he stated, "I really didn't take [the] time. Some people need a little push and I think that I needed a little push." In reflecting on his 43 years of incarceration, Joe believed that if he would have received this push during adolescence, it would have completely changed his entire outlook on school.

What these educational reflections of juvenile lifers reveal is that attachment to educational systems are important for smooth transitions into adulthood (Laub & Sampson, 1993; Sampson & Laub, 1997). Ultimately, the schooling experiences of juvenile lifers served as salient life course events and were an important domain for their human development. Both the

positive and negative schooling experiences of juvenile lifers revealed that certain school practices can increase the likelihood of offending or cultivate social and academic well-being over the life course.

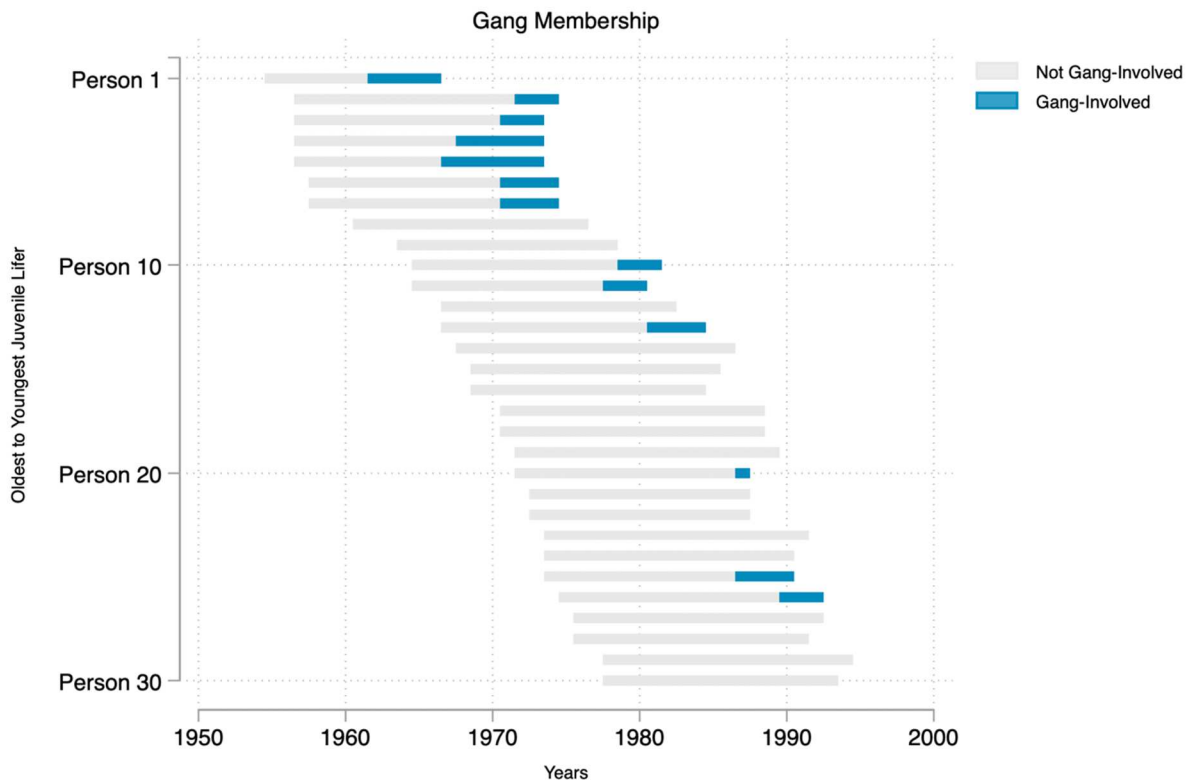
Life History Calendar Descriptives

Experiences that occur in childhood and adolescence can affect future criminality. Prior to their incarceration for acts of homicide, juvenile lifers had been exposed to one or more developmental and psychosocial risk-factors for criminal behavior. Nearly half (48%) of juvenile lifers suffered a head/brain injury that caused them to black out and about a third (33%) experienced a significant health issue in childhood. For most juvenile lifers, their childhoods and adolescence typically included exposure to violence at home and in their communities. Many (64%) juvenile lifers witnessed violence in their homes and nearly half (46%) experienced physical abuse. A few (14%) juvenile lifers reported being sexually abused in their homes as well.

About a third (33%) of juvenile lifers lived in public housing, a proxy for poverty, and were exposed to violence in their communities. Three fourths (75%) of juvenile lifers perceived their neighborhoods to be unsafe, and mostly all (83%) reported seeing drugs sold openly where they lived. The majority of juvenile lifers either saw violence (5.08) or heard about violence (5.15) (*1= Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Once a month, 4=Every couple of weeks, 5=Once a week, 6=More than once a week*) at least on a weekly basis. Not only did juvenile lifers observe violence, but mostly all (86%) juvenile lifers were personally victimized in their communities. In addition to exposure to violence, juvenile lifers also engaged in adult roles in childhood and adolescence. They reported occasional drinking (3.57) and drug use (3.87) (*1= Never, 2=Every once in a while, 3=Once a month, 4=Once a week, 5=Every few days, 6=Daily*).

Nearly a quarter (23%) of juvenile lifers had children before their life sentence and many hung out with delinquent peers (2.27) (*friends who got in trouble with the law 1=No, 2=Yes, but only some of them, 3=Yes, most of them*). Also, almost half (43%) of juvenile lifers were gang-involved or belonged to a street crew/gang for a significant amount of time—19 months (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Gang Involvement Index Plot (Pre-Incarceration)



Although juvenile lifers experienced multiple forms of disadvantage early in their life courses, most were not serious delinquent offenders. Almost three fourths (73%) of juvenile lifers had 1 or less juvenile convictions (*0 juvenile conviction n=13; 1 juvenile conviction n=9*) and they were mostly for non-violent offenses (see Table 4).²¹

²¹ N represents the number of juvenile lifers who responded to the various items listed in the table. It should be noted that some items have missing data (N < 30) as some juvenile lifers had recall issues.

Table 4. ACES Experiences Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Gang/Street Crew	30	43%	--	--	--
Children	30	23%	--	--	--
Health Issue	30	33%	--	--	--
Public Housing	27	33%	--	--	--
Physical Abuse	26	46%	--	--	--
Sexual Abuse	29	14%	--	--	--
Witness Violence at Home	25	64%	--	--	--
Head/Brain Injury	27	48%	--	--	--
Neighborhood Safe from Crime	28	25%	--	--	--
Drugs Openly Sold	23	83%	--	--	--
Victim Of Violence	28	86%	--	--	--
Hear About Violence	26	5.15	1.22	2	6
See Violence	26	5.08	1.26	2	6
Drink Alcohol	30	3.57	2.1	1	6
Use Drugs Pre	30	3.87	2.26	1	6
Friends Trouble With The Law	26	2.27	0.78	0	3
Gang/Street Crew Months	30	19	25.08	0	72

# of Juvenile Convictions	30	1	1.42	0	6
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Complex Childhood Experiences

When asked about their childhood experiences, many juvenile lifers shared the sentiments of Jeanette, a 54-year-old Black woman from Philadelphia, PA, who noted, “Well, my childhood was kind of complicated.” The development of juvenile lifers cannot be understood apart from the many different interdependent parts in their childhoods, which included family dynamics, gangs, peer influence, parenting, childhood health, trouble with the law, and time spent in juvenile placement facilities (see Figure 5). Overall, juvenile lifers did not describe their childhoods in a dichotomous manner (either positive or negative experiences); instead, they spoke about their childhoods in terms of containing many different and connected parts.

Family Dynamics

Elder (1994) has contended that human development cannot be understood apart from the context in which it occurs. Aaron, a 53-year-old Black man, and Cameron, a 55-year-old Black man, both from Philadelphia, PA, talked about their complicated childhoods, which were heavily shaped by the time period they grew up in and the family dynamics they were raised in. Aaron shared:

Well, I mean, I ain't had no bad childhood, you know what I mean? You know like some people be like, ‘Oh yeah, my mom was abusive. My mom was an alcoholic, my dad was abusive.’ No. I didn't grow up in that type of family. I did grow up in a family that you was expected to be hard, you know what I'm saying? My mom's side of the family, not my dad's side of the family. We old school gangsters, you know what I'm saying? But my family was with the Black Incorporated. I don't know if you understood, the Black Mafia?

What is interesting about Aaron's childhood is that he began by talking about positive experiences growing up and noted that he a good family; however, he emphasized that there was an expectation of him to be tough in order to live up to his family name. As I began to try to understand the origins of his family's name in Philadelphia, he prompted me to learn more about Black Incorporated/the Black Mafia. According to Griffin (2005), Black Brothers Incorporated, also known as the Black Mafia, was one of the bloodiest crime syndicates in United States history; it emerged in late 1960's Philadelphia, PA. Over the course of more than a decade, the Black Mafia was responsible for more than forty killings, drug dealing, loansharking, armed robbery, and extortion. Aaron's family had several members who were a part of Black Brothers Incorporated. As a result, Aaron would often engage in fights and admitted to have been a gang member himself. Later, he would engage in an act of homicide that would lead to his life-without-parole sentence at the age of 17.

Cameron also talked about how Black Brothers Incorporated impacted his childhood experiences:

Well actually, my father. My father was caught up in the Black Incorporation. If you look at that book, he had it all in the book. His name's the same as mine. Basically, that lifestyle was real appealing to me. I know plenty of the guys in there. I mean, it was everybody in the book. It was like uncles to me and stuff. They was like my family too. To this day, the ones that's living we still close. [But] Before prison? I mean, I had a good life. I had a strong family, family support and everything. They tried to do everything to keep me on the straight path, and stuff like that, but I just had to get caught up out there in the street. But other than that, I had a good life. I never want for nothing. My mother and father provided for me. Grandmas. I had a lot of support.

Although Cameron received a village of support and had mostly positive experiences in childhood, it was not enough to ward him from the streets or from eventually following in the footsteps of his father. Due to the allure of his father and the Black Brothers Incorporated, he

became a gang member as well and would try to “organize the streets,” which ultimately led to his life without parole sentence for an act of homicide at the age of 17.

Outside of being born into notorious crime families, juvenile lifers also talked about being raised in traditional two-parent families; however, their childhoods were complex as well as they were shaped by their own human agency. Elder (1996) has stated that individuals can shape their own life courses by the decisions and actions they take. Jose, a 49-year-old Puerto Rican man from Philadelphia, PA, talked about the household in which he was raised:

Life before prison was pretty good. And I'm the only boy so always spending time with dad and stuff like that. It was always with a two-parent home. So, it was cool. It was a good childhood I just made wrong decisions, man. I can't say that I was a one parent home and was neglected, I can't say none of that.

Jose recalled having more traditional family dynamics in childhood, but his own choices led him to be convicted of an act of homicide with a group of his friends at the age of 17. He recalled that this change happened when his family decided to move from North Carolina back to Philadelphia. During this transition, his dad had become a minister, spending most of his time in the church. As a result, Jose and his father were not spending as much quality time together and as he stated, “We wasn't going fishing every weekend.” Because he started to feel left out, his friends became his family, and he would spend a significant amount of time hanging out with his friends: “Coming back home at two or three o'clock in the morning and sneaking into the house.”

Victor, a 56-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, recalled childhood experiences that did not include the typical forms of disadvantage many juvenile lifers faced. He shared:

Well, as a young man, I had a mother and father. So unfortunately, my wrongs was my wrongs. I had sisters and brothers that was older than me. That took care of me. I didn't want for nothing, but I chose the corner. I chose around the corner and that was my wrong. I never was hungry, had no clothes. I never not had no heat in my house. And just to be honest with you as a man, I never lived in no project. She [my mother] always had a home.

Despite having both a mother and a father, as well as being raised in a middle-class household, Victor still “chose the corner.” Victor was the youngest out of all his siblings; by the time he was born, his brother and sister were full-grown adults, so it was very easy for him to lie to his parents. His mother did not know that he had become a gang member at the age of 13. Victor noted that he would often “go home, change [his] clothes, then go in the streets.” What is interesting is that Victor’s own choices to join a gang and be involved on the corner led to his being convicted of an act of homicide with his nephew at the age of 16, despite having been raised in a supportive family.

Gang Membership

Many juvenile lifers talked about experiences with joining gangs, which impacted their childhoods, as well. In most instances, gang membership served as a significant turning point in the lives of juvenile lifers, which led to their being involved in violent behavior. However, gang membership also served as a protective factor for some juvenile lifers. Joe, a 63-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, shared his experiences with joining the local gang in his neighborhood:

The gang, well they taught you how to dress. They taught you how to act like a man. It was like you knew where you're supposed to be at. It's not like that today. And this is why these kids act like that. In other words, when you was in the gang. You had pee wees, young boys, juniors and seniors. And the young boys couldn't hang with the pee wees. All the young boys had to hang with the young boys. The juniors, they hung together, the old heads hung together, and the seniors hung together. And you could mix a little bit. But if a young boy told me when I was a pee wee, he told me, ‘get over there and go do such and such, sit on down,’ I had to do it. It was a code. There's no more code, there's no more honor. That's why they don't respect their parents no more. It's no structure.

Joe joined his local neighborhood gang around the age of 10. What Joe remembered most about the gang is that it provided him with structure in his life (i.e., learning how to dress and how to be a man). The structure that the gang provided for Joe was extremely beneficial because his

biological mother had abandoned him at birth. As a result, he and his stepmother never really got along because she showed preferential treatment to her biological children, which caused him to run away all the time because he felt like he did not belong. Before being convicted for an act of homicide at the age of 16, Joe had been gang-involved for six years. Due to Joe's extensive involvement in his local gang, I asked whether he would describe his experience as mostly positive or negative and he told me, "Certainly [positive], because I wasn't with the gang when I did this crime [act of homicide]."

Also, Martin, a 62-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, talked about how being in a gang served as a protective factor when he was growing up:

We started off as 58 Pool Room, then we became 58 Zip Gang. That's what we were. Actually, we started off as Bartram Young Boy's Club. It wasn't supposed to be a gang. It morphed into that over a period of time. But we started off basically a bunch of homies hanging out. There was a pool room, and we used to be up in there shooting pool and... we'd call ourselves the Pool Room Gang.

Growing up, Martin and his friends did not really think of themselves as a gang. However, they eventually morphed into a gang when other individuals from various parts of the city started to come into their neighborhood picking fights and causing trouble. Specifically, for Martin, the gang served as a mechanism for himself, as well as his friends, to protect themselves and their neighborhood. Although some juvenile lifers reported positive experiences with gangs, Melde and Esbensen (2011) contend that most gang-involved youth tend to be disproportionately involved in deviant behavior, especially violence. This was true for Kevin, a 48-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, who joined a Jamaican drug gang known for recruiting kids and locking them in crack houses to sell drugs. He stated:

The initial plan was to go to Texas. Fortunately, we didn't go there because we might've been dead because that was really dangerous at the time. But another opportunity, not to call it an opportunity because it was really, it's really the worst decision ever came up in Philly and we joined a gang in Philly and our adventure

was four months long and we spent that hold up in fortified row homes selling crack cocaine for this gang. And everybody that was working for this organization was runaway children from other parts of the country.

Unfortunately, after only having joined the gang for three months, Kevin recalled an “explosive, and tragic act of violence” that took place in one of the drug houses. There was an argument that broke into a fight between himself and a friend with whom he had run away from home, and another member of the gang, which resulted in Kevin and his friend being convicted of act of homicide at the age of 15.

Mario, a 45-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, shared how gang membership can lead to violence:

Mario: “But prior to all of this, I run into this street organization called the Zulu Nation. This is where it gets interesting. They came out of prison. Some of them was older guys, some of them was from the streets. They say, ‘We're going to take the community back from the Puerto Ricans in the area.’ And they was Muslim. You had to be a Muslim to be in it, or some guys faked like they was Muslim. Some guys knew nothing about Islam. But I really wasn't into the Islamic part, I just was part of it. You see what I'm saying? And then, they started taking all the neighborhoods, and they started wanting us to sell drugs for them.”

Interviewer: “And how old were you when you joined the Zulu Nation?”

Mario: “15 years old when we embraced the Zulu Nation.”

What Mario remembered most about the Zulu Nation was the sense of power they had in Philadelphia. Mario noted that the Zulu Nation would walk up to known drug dealers and tell them to shut the corner down and they would obey their orders. This attracted Mario greatly. He noted, “They've got power, they've got the money, they got the young girls that's chasing them. I want to be just like that.” However, while selling drugs for the Zulu Nation, Mario attended a party with a group of his friends where an individual was robbed who owed the Zulu Nation money. As a result of the robbery, Mario and his friends were convicted of an act of homicide at the age of 17.

Peer Influence

Elder (1998) has stated that the ways in which we are linked to others influences the trajectories that we enter over the life course. To whom juvenile lifers were connected mattered in childhood and significantly influenced their life course trajectories. Sean, a 47-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, recalled having a simple life before being convicted for an act of homicide at the age of 14. He shared

I had a simple, simple childhood growing up. I wasn't incorrigible, wasn't in trouble, just living a simple life as a child, doing all the things that children do and stuff. Yeah, so it was simple. Come from a good family, a middle-class family. No smoking no drinking. Was in a fairly good school, a magnet program...Like right before I went to prison, I could say a cousin. You understand? How I got put in this situation, I had a cousin who I looked up to and he was in the streets.

Sean was extremely close to his cousin who was a drug dealer and who also robbed drug dealers in the neighborhood. What is interesting about Sean is that looking at his older cousin as a role model significantly altered his life course. Before agreeing to help his cousin rob a drug dealer, the incident that led to his life-without-parole sentence, Sean went to a private school and described himself as a "B student" who could easily get all A's when he wanted to.

Grant, a 46-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, also shared how hanging out with older peers can alter the life course. He stated:

I think that I started hanging with an older crowd. The guys that I was hanging with was in their twenties. And I was like 15, 16. They were in their twenties...I was always the youngest. The closest one to me was probably like 18, 19.

Grant, like Sean, had also had normal childhood. Before being convicted of an act of homicide at the age of 16, he had had no juvenile history, never used drugs or drank alcohol, and did well in school. However, Grant spent most of his leisure time with his friends who were significantly older than he was. Grant recalled even babysitting some of his friends' children. One night, after

finishing eating at restaurant, unbeknown to Grant, one of his friends decided to rob somebody, which led to his life sentence.

Childhood Health

Juvenile lifers also reported significant health issues in childhood. Grant, a 46-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, shared his experience with a hereditary health condition, which he developed in childhood:

I had a situation though when I was younger because I had developed cataracts in my eyes. I was like nine years old. They actually had to pull me out of school. So, I was out of school for about three years. I went out in the fourth grade and I didn't come back for like three years. Everything was homeschooled and stuff like that because of the surgeries.

Because Grant developed cataracts at such a young age, he could not get the operations he needed, causing him to be blind for a part of his childhood. Grant recalled having to wait until about the age of 12 to get surgery for his eyes, as doctors had to let the cataracts fully develop. Outside of hereditary health conditions, there were juvenile lifers who reported health issues due to external factors. Tara, a 42-year-old Black woman from Philadelphia, PA, recalled getting hit by a car at 9-years-old, which impacted her childhood:

Yeah, I think I was in a body cast for four months and then it took another two months for me to recover to walk again. Because when they took the cast off, I had a walker, and I was not walking properly. I was like shaky, and it was hard, but, of course, I made it. But it was kind of hard just trying to learn how to walk all over again.

Due to the car accident, it took Tara almost half the year to fully recover. Due to this, she had to stay with her grandmother because the hospital bed she had been sent home with did not fit in her mother's house.

Nolan, a 51-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, recalled getting hit by a car at 5 years old, which led to the development of a significant brain injury. He stated:

When I was five, I got hit by a car, which caused me to have a severe brain injury, and as a result of that, it made, over the years, I don't know if it was because I was acting out. I started being impulsive and acting out. Like angry, having anger issues and not being able to concentrate or whatever the case may be.

Nolan recalled having severe seizures and impulsive behavior in childhood that lasted all the way until he was 10 years old. In some instances, juvenile lifers reported the long-lasting effects a childhood health issue can have on criminal behavior. For example, Andrew, a 51-year-old Black man from Montgomery County, PA, shared about a traumatic bicycle accident he experienced around the age of 13 or 14:

I had a horrific bicycle accident where I flipped over the handlebars and landed on my face and severed my upper lip. So, I had a reconstructive plastic surgery to try to address the deformity, and what ended up happening is I had significant swelling. It was a botched surgery and the swelling just would never subside and scar tissue and all of that. So as you might imagine, teenagers being teased and bullied in school as a result of that deformity. At the beginning, I would just cry. I wouldn't say anything because I was also very quiet, shy, and reserved. So, I just would be on the bus or in school and then just cry and no one would say, or do anything or intervene.

Because Andrew was getting teased in school, he stopped going to school and started to hang out with people who were “18, 19, 20 years old” who accepted him despite of his deformity and never teased him. With this group of friends, he started off smoking cigarettes to look cool and distract others from his deformity. He later would progress to “smoking reefer, drinking beer, playing cards.” Eventually he would get close to one individual in the group who became like an older brother/best friend to him. Their bond formed because he had also been teased like Andrew for being homeless. Because his friend was homeless, Andrew would often allow his best friend him to come stay at his house, as well as to shower and eat there. Due to their both being teased by their peers, Andrew noted, “We were together on a daily basis.” As a result, Andrew’s best friend convinced him to rob an older gentleman, who succumbed to injuries that led to Andrew’s conviction for an act of homicide at the age of 16.

Trouble with the Law

Although juvenile lifers experienced multiple forms of disadvantage early in their life courses, most were not serious delinquent offenders. Most of their early system contact before their life-without-parole sentences were for trivial non-violent offenses. When I asked Mary, a 44-year-old White woman from Lancaster, PA, how many times she had gotten into trouble with the law prior to her life-without-parole sentence, she replied, “Just once.” She stated:

I would say, if I remember correctly, I was about 12. It was a racial type of a situation. It was a comment towards me because I'm from a predominantly white school.

Mary recalled getting in trouble with the law due to a simple fight with some of the children at her school. Because Mary would hang out with students at the predominantly Black school in the district, children from her school would call her a “N lover.”

Jason, a 52-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, recalled engaging in underage drinking and stealing from convenience stores, prior to his life-without-parole sentence:

Disorderly conduct. I think one time I remember me and a couple of my friends I was talking about, we were drinking, and we were going on the subway and banging on the doors, so that was stupid, we did that. I remember I tried to steal some cigarettes out of a store, I think out of...What was the name of the place? It was at 3rd and Oregon too. I'm just trying to steal some cigarettes out of there.

Jason was aged 15 and 16 when engaging in this low-level delinquent behavior before he would later be convicted of an act of homicide at the age of 17.

However, there were a few juvenile lifers in the sample who committed serious offenses during childhood. James, a 63-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, shared:

I had a couple juvenile cases. One was carrying a concealed weapon. One was robbery. Got breaking the parking meters. Yeah, the stolen car. I had a stolen car on my cape, on my jacket. That's the only three that I can remember.

Before being convicted of an act of homicide at 17, James had already been in trouble with the law multiple times. He began his criminal history at the age of 11 by breaking into parking meters; by the time he was 14 years old, he was caught carrying his mother's kitchen knife to protect him from rival gang members, and right before going to prison, he was caught with a stolen car. Also, Daniel, a 46-year-old Puerto Rican man from Philadelphia, PA, shared:

Yeah, I had a gun charge as a juvenile. Two gun charges as a juvenile, and that was it.

Daniel recalled being ensnared in the street life and going after drug dealers to rob them of their money before being convicted of an act of homicide at the age of 17. Because of the lifestyle he chose, Daniel had been shot, stabbed, and kidnapped himself. As Daniel stated, "I'm very fortunate and lucky to be here." As a result, of his time on the street, he received both his gun charges before the age of 16 and would spend a significant amount of time in a juvenile placement facility in Pennsylvania.

Juvenile Placement Facilities

What is most interesting is how juvenile lifers described their experiences in juvenile placement facilities, which significantly impacted their childhoods growing up. Victor, a 56-year-old Black man, described his experiences at a juvenile placement facility in Pennsylvania where he spent six months for a shooting he had been involved in. I asked Victor, "So how old were you when you went to Sleighton Farm, like about? Do you think?" He responded:

I was 13, 14... But that didn't do nothing but taught me how to be badder. It just taught you how to be a better pickpocket. How to be a better con artist.

At this juvenile placement facility, Victor learned how to be "better at evil," which included how to be a better fighter, hustler, and pickpocket. Not only did Victor learn how to be a better at

crime but he learned not to be afraid of the system at a young age because the juvenile placement facility had made him participate in a Scared Straight program. He stated:

Victor: “Scared Straight... I was probably one of the first that experienced Scared Straight at Graterford.”

Interviewer: “So, you went to Scared Straight when you were at Sleighton Farm?”

Victor: “Yes.”

Interviewer: “So, they sent you to Graterford? You were like 13?”

Victor: “14. It was eight of us. They put us on benches. Probably four on the benches. They brought some monsters in there. They talk rough to you. If you had cigarettes, they took it.”

Reflecting on his time in the Scared Straight program, Victor wished that he had taken heed to it. However, he felt as though he did not take full advantage of the program because he knew the men in the prison could not put their hands on him and he thought he was tough himself. As he noted, “Did it make me harder? Did it make me tougher? Yeah, because they sent you to a place that was like, “What is this?” And it was a piece of cake, for real.”

Petrosino et al. (2000) conducted a systematic review of the Scared Straight program and contended that even well-intentioned programs like Scared Straight can have potentially harmful effects on children, including increasing criminal offending. This was true for Victor. As he noted, “I thought I can hold my own. And for real, you couldn't. So how about a few years later, I'm coming through this joint.”

Gary, a 63-year-old Black man from Philadelphia, PA, also shared about his juvenile placement experiences:

Gary: “Yep. I did some time in Cornwell Heights...Forestry Camp.”

Interviewer: “What age, or what year you think you went to Cornwell Heights?”

Gary: "I don't know, but I'm a young boy. I'm thinking when I went to Cornwell Heights, you're going back to like 1969, so I'm still young."

Interviewer: "How was your experience at Cornwell Heights? Was it good? Was it bad?"

Gary: "No. You know, when you go in them places, you got to stand up for yourself, because at that time, gangs, they was out there. I guess you got to prove yourself, show people that you ain't nobody to take advantage of. You got to be a man. I don't care how young you is, but you got to be a man when you're in places like that when it's a bunch of other people around. Because, you don't know. People prey on people. My experiences, I stood up. If something happened, and it came to me, I showed I had some heart. You had to. And it was the same thing when I went to Forestry Camp. It was the same thing. You're talking about 1969, I couldn't been no more than 13, 14 back then."

What Gary remembered most about his time in the juvenile placement facilities was both the physical and sexual abuse that was ever rampant. Because Gary had to constantly defend himself at such a young age in order to protect himself, he carried that same demeanor when he was released back on the street. It was not long before Gary would get into more trouble and finally, was sent to the Youth Forestry Camp where he faced the same environment as that of his previous juvenile facility, Cornwell Heights. Gary described his time at these facilities as setting him on a negative trajectory and noted, "My whole life was like, it was crazy."

Anthony, a 44-year-old Black man from Erie, PA, talked about the long-lasting effects of juvenile placement facility abuse. He shared:

While I was in Vision Quest, I suffered abuse at the hands of grown men staff members beating my ass all the time. Caught another case. Eventually got to sent to Glen Mills. Stayed at Glen Mills for about nine months where they whooped my ass crazy. And as a kid, once again, in there, no one believes your narrative... They crushed us, bro. Day in and day out. If it wasn't me, they was crushing us, man. They have a terminology they call restraining us. Right? Which implies that they are using methods to subdue us because we are out of control. But the reality is essentially they was performing inhumane tactics on kids and practicing that shit, you hear what I'm telling you? Like jumping across the pathways with flying kicks, knocking you to the ground, putting you in choke holds. Right now they have all this exposure about how much abuse was going on and I've been saying it for years, but nobody ever believed it. So every time I got into a physical confrontation or

trying to fight back, my record or reputation would get bigger and bigger. Right? So before you know it, I'm a problem child. Before you know it, I'm a problem child and the word problem eclipses the word child. Right?

The abuse that Anthony faced in the juvenile placement facilities significantly affected him in childhood. Due to the abuse he suffered, he learned that he had to always defend himself and never depend on or trust adults for protection.

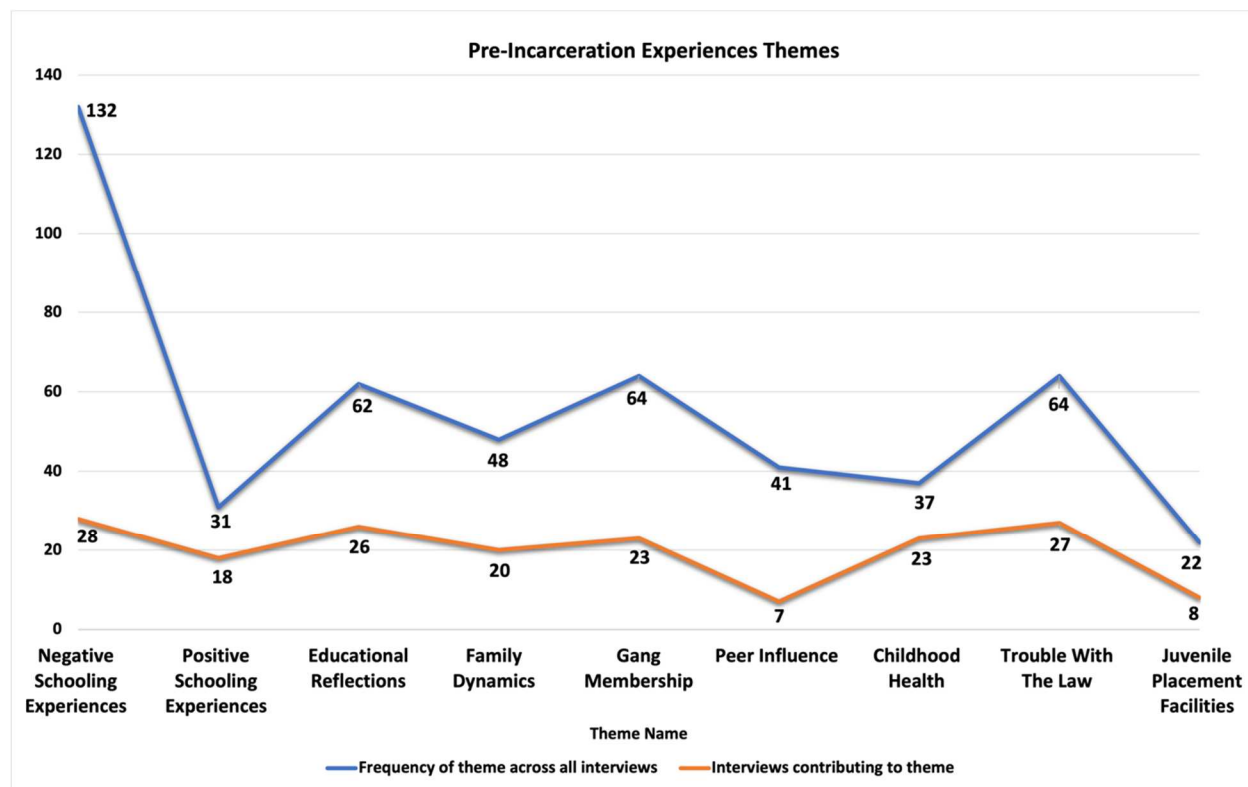
Importantly, the abuse Anthony described was very recently documented in a 2019 investigation by the State Department of Human Services (DHS), which only recently closed the Glen Mills Schools (the oldest existing U.S. reform school) having found evidence that employees beat juveniles and coerced them into silence. Unfortunately, the most important lesson Anthony learned is that as long as his life was subjected to the control of adults, he would never be free. As he noted, “I learned that I was property. I learned that I was a slave just as much as our ancestors railed against slavery and believed that we were free from it, children weren't, bro.” From the significant amount of time Anthony spent in juvenile placement facilities, he was already cognizant to the realities of mass incarceration and how the carceral system functions as a contemporary system of racial control.

Chapter Summary

Overall, the schooling and adverse childhood experiences of juvenile lifers significantly impacted their life-course. There were nine themes (*negative schooling experiences, positive schooling experiences, educational reflections, family dynamics, gang membership, peer influence, childhood health, trouble with the law, juvenile placement facilities*) identified

throughout this chapter that provided context for their decisions to commit acts of homicide, which ultimately led to their long-term confinement (see Figure 5).²²

Figure 5. Pre-Incarceration Themes



When unpacking the effects of schooling on the life-courses of juvenile lifers, nearly all ($n=28$) juvenile lifers mentioned their negative schooling experiences, which included both inside and outside of school factors. Inside of school factors mostly included experiences where juvenile lifers were funneled out of school through various methods such as miseducation, behavioral issues, and facing abuse from teachers, which pushed them further towards the criminal justice system. Out of school factors included the American dream/desire for material

²² It should be noted that although juvenile lifers contributed to the various themes listed in the figure, it does not necessarily imply that they experienced these phenomena. Instead, the number of times a code appeared, matched across all participants simply allowed the researcher to identify major themes.

things, racial discrimination in the neighborhood, unexpected family deaths, and gang violence, which impacted the educational trajectories of juvenile lifers as well. Less frequently ($n=18$) juvenile lifers also recalled positive experiences in school. This included enrollment in gifted/advanced classes, strong relationships/bonds with teachers, and participation in extracurricular activities. However as most ($n= 26$) juvenile lifers reflected on their educational experiences, the general sentiment expressed was that school did not help them transcend their circumstances in childhood and adolescence. Also, juvenile lifers noted how their early schooling experiences were connected to their incarceration and reentry periods. This mostly centered around the potential benefits if they had attended/stayed in school. Additionally, when unpacking the effects of adverse childhood experiences over the life course, juvenile lifers mentioned the various developmental and psychosocial risk-factors they were exposed to. These included family dynamics ($n= 20$), gang membership ($n= 23$), peer influences ($n= 7$), childhood health ($n= 23$), trouble with the law ($n= 27$) and juvenile placement facilities ($n= 8$). However, the mere presence of these risk-factors alone was not solely to blame for their involvement in acts of homicide but involved much complexity that often included the interplay of chronological age, key life transitions, life events, and human agency. Viewed together, both their schooling and adverse childhood experiences placed juvenile lifers in disadvantaged positions for success and lends context to the many interdependent factors that shaped their lives before they began their long-term incarceration.

CHAPTER 5: GROWING UP AND GROWING OUT OF PRISON

*Kidnapped – transported... stripped of our names
and forced to accept new ones. Arrested – transferred... stripped of our names
and forced to accept numbers. Auctioned off auction blocks; bought & sold – prison
stock. Slave ships now busses
with “D.O.C.” painted on the sides. Long rides;
bound in chains,
rusted from the moisture
of our ancestor's bloodstains. They've been replaced
by the newer model: adjustable – one size fits all. Even the bullwhip design
has undergone an overhaul – evolved;
now they're called batons. But they're still black.
And I still got the marks on my back.*

*Education once forbidden;
now permitted but with restrictions.
They got rules against the kinds of books we can and can't get-in.
Prohibition against gatherings
in groups of more than 10 –
back then.
But they've since cut that number down to 5. And we've gone from prayin' to God
to sayin' “we God”:
death to barely alive.
Castration through non-contact visits.
And where contact is permitted
a man can barely get hard to hit it.*

I know all this 'cause I live it.

*Plantations – prisons;
freedom still envisioned.
The word “nigger”, erased.
But it's been replaced by “inmate”;
spoken with the same contempt in every state. Signs that once read “WHITES ONLY”
now read “STAFF ONLY/NO INMATES ALLOWED”. The relevance of a razor-wire
fence...
It's all clear to me now. (Reconstruction poem by Antonio M. Howard-former juvenile
lifer).²³*

²³ This poem was shared with the researcher by Antonio M. Howard, a former juvenile lifer.

This chapter focuses on the incarceration experiences of juvenile lifers. Juvenile lifers began their long-term incarceration during the critical developmental period of adolescence, which disrupted their abilities to experience the normal stages of the life course. Long-term incarceration adversely affected their health (both physical and mental), educational attainment, employment opportunities, and ability to sustain meaningful familial and romantic relationships; it also increased opportunities for predation by both correctional officers and other incarcerated persons. Most importantly, juvenile lifers whose psychosocial development was incomplete prior to experiencing long-term incarceration “skipped” the transition to adulthood outside the walls of prison, making it difficult for them to obtain the human and social capital needed for the responsibilities of adulthood.

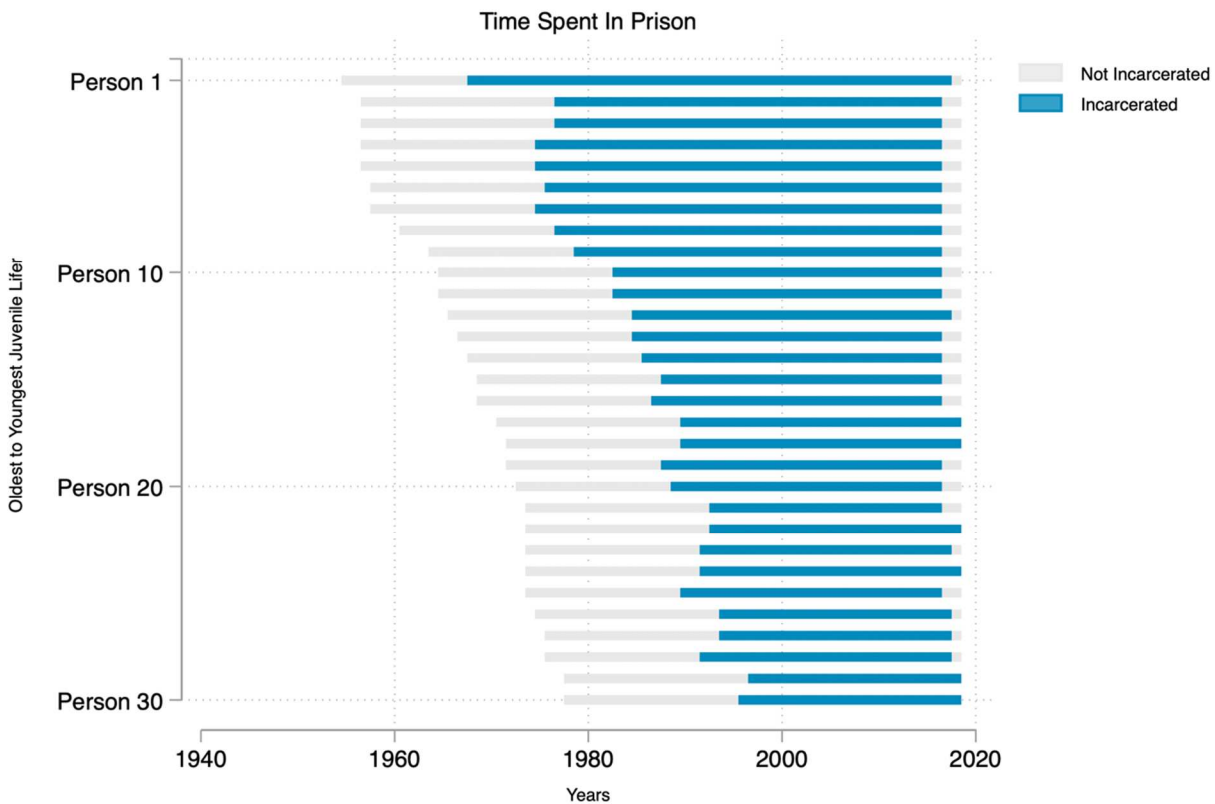
Despite facing substantial barriers and limited access to resources and programming while incarcerated, most juvenile lifers did in fact make dynamic changes to transform their lives even before the landmark *Miller* and *Montgomery* Supreme Court decisions. Although juvenile lifers’ adjustment to prison was turbulent during the early periods of their incarceration, they went through a series of psychosocial transitions to adapt and maturely cope with the demands of prison life. It should be noted that these psychosocial transitions unfolded in various stages (*Pain Stage, Identity Stage, Court Hearings Stage, Old Head Stage, Religion Stage, Afrocentric Stage, Generativity Stage, Redemption Stage*) that tended to be ordered, which provided juvenile lifers structure to the life course while experiencing long-term incarceration.

Below I present a narrative account of the life-course experiences of juvenile lifers while in prison for acts of homicide; this account details the effects of long-term incarceration on their development and maturation processes and how they achieved significant changes and growth while transitioning from adolescence to adulthood while incarcerated.

Life History Calendar Descriptives

Incarceration in the United States has been rising at an unprecedented rate since the 1970s, including for individuals serving life-without-parole sentences. Collectively, juvenile lifers represent 960 years of incarceration and have spent an average of 32 years of their lives in prison (see Figure 6). Almost a third ($n=8$) of juvenile lifers have served 40 years or more behind prison walls with some juvenile lifers serving time in the first penitentiary created in the nation, Eastern State Penitentiary.

Figure 6. Total Years in Prison Index Plot



Given their significant amount of time incarcerated, the lives of juvenile lifers and the experiences they have had in prison tell the story of the rise of mass incarceration in the United States, the history of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, and the unconstitutional practice of sentencing primarily African American children to life without parole. In addition,

the lives of juvenile lifers also provide context to the “super predator” theory, as many juvenile lifers entered prison during the late 1980s (*average year juvenile lifers entered prison = 1985*) around the time when political scientist John J. DiIulio Jr. coined the term.

Interestingly, most juvenile lifers coped maturely during their period of incarceration and were not criminally incorrigible, nor fit the super predator profile. Although nearly all (93%) juvenile lifers experienced solitary confinement for a disciplinary misconduct at some point during their incarceration, most of their prison misconduct occurred during the early stages of confinement. On average, juvenile lifers received their last disciplinary misconduct in 2004. It should be noted that most of the disciplinary misconducts juvenile lifers received typically included trivial offenses, such as unauthorized use of an area, possession of a cell phone, disobedience of an order, or failure of a drug test, etc. As juvenile lifers began to maturely cope with their long-term incarceration, they were intentional about transforming their lives, despite being denied opportunities to participate in rehabilitation programming by prison administration. When they did have opportunities, they generally took advantage of them; all juvenile lifers who participated in this study were pursuing educational opportunities in prison and on average, juvenile lifers completed their GEDs early in their periods of confinement (*average year juvenile lifers completed GED = 1991*).

However, during the years when psychosocial development was most crucial, many juvenile lifers did not have the cognitive ability to comprehend a life sentence. Almost all (93%) juvenile lifers did not understand that a life-without-parole sentence meant that they would spend the rest of their lives and die in prison. Given the serious nature of their life-without-parole sentences and with little hope of release, almost half (47%) of juvenile lifers developed a significant mental or physical health issue during the period of confinement. In addition, juvenile

lifers also lost important familial and pro-social bonds while incarcerated. On average, juvenile lifers only received in-person visits with family or friends every few months (3.72), talked on the phone with family or friends monthly (2.52), and exchanged mail with family or friends on a monthly basis (2.92) throughout the period of incarceration (*1=Never, 2=Weekly, 3=Monthly, 4=Every Few Months, 5=Once a year*) (see Table 5. for Prison Experience Descriptive Statistics).²⁴

Table 5. Prison Experience Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Year Entered Prison	30	1985	7.69	1968	1997
Years in Prison	30	32	7.10	22	48
GED Year Completed	25	1991	8.58	1978	2009
Last Disciplinary Report	23	2004	7.72	1989	2017
In Person Visits	25	3.72	1.14	1	5
Phone Calls	25	2.52	1.00	2	5
Exchanged Mail	24	2.92	0.93	2	5
Health Issue	30	47%	--	--	--
Experienced Solitary Confinement	27	93%	--	--	--
Did Not Understand JLWOP Sentence	29	93%	--	--	--

Effects of Incarceration

Juvenile lifers talked about their incarceration experiences from adolescence to adulthood and provided insight into the effects of their long-term confinement (see Figure 7). Specifically, I

²⁴ N represents the number of juvenile lifers who responded to the various items listed in the table. It should be noted that some items have missing data (N < 30) as some juvenile lifers had recall issues.

asked them, “Given your [many] years of incarceration, what would you say about the incarceration experience? Is it good? Is it bad? Is it nuanced?” Juvenile lifers expressed that the effects of their long-term incarceration could not be summed up as just a merely good or bad experience. They conveyed that the effects of long-term incarceration were very nuanced, including the potential benefits of incarceration, the complex effects of incarceration, and the undesirable effects of incarceration.

The Potential Benefits of Incarceration

It Made Me into the Person I Am Today

When discussing the potential benefits of incarceration, juvenile lifers mentioned how their experiences in prison shaped and molded them into the individuals they are today and how prison saved their lives, serving as a protective factor from their complex pre-incarceration experiences in childhood. Sean, who served 28 years in prison, detailed how he benefited from his long-term incarceration:

First of all, I'm going to lead my answer with...There's a quote in the Quran that says, [Arabic- *فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا*]. And that means, indeed with every difficulty, with every hardship, there is relief. With everything that you go through, with every hardship and difficult experience you have, there's benefit within it. So, there's nothing good about prison, but there's a lot of good in it. For me, it was a lot of benefit. I benefited lot. Like I said, had I not went to prison, I don't know what kind of person I would be today. But I know what that experience done for me. I'm not the best of human beings. I'm not the best man, but I know what kind of person it shaped and molded me into. And I'm certainly not the worst of human beings.

Sean contended that contrary to popular belief, going through trials and tribulations in prison could produce benefits. Sean detailed how he had seen many individuals like himself discover a higher form of themselves while in prison. He stated, “we can name many famous people who went to prison, and they came out, from that experience, a better individual. They came out leaders of millions of people.” Most importantly, Sean believed that the collective experiences he

endured in prison made him into the person he is today; he emphasized that although he is far from a perfect person, he is always striving for perfection in each aspect of his life.

This was also true for Ronald, who had served 38 years in prison. Ronald shared how he would be cautious and hesitant to negate his time spent in prison because it made him into the person he is today, as well:

Let me say this, brother. I wouldn't wish prison on my worst enemy. Now, having said that, looking back on it, prison made me who I am today. So, if you asked me, "Would I go through it again?" The answer is, "Hell, no." But would I give them experiences back? I'm hesitant to say yeah, because they made me. I don't think I could have been who I am. I don't think I could have faced myself. I don't think I could have had the maturity, the courage. You know what I mean? But would I do it again? No. But I don't want to give that back, either.

What is interesting about Ronald is that before coming to prison, he had had a promising educational future. He always placed among the highest percentiles on standardized tests and was involved in special programming for advanced students during grade school. However, Ronald noted that even if he would have gone to college and had a successful career, his “whole value system might have been different.”

Ronald shared that what he benefited most from in prison was developing a value and belief system not predicated on the materialistic aspects of life. In his experience he noticed that, “there are some people in certain positions where their value system, their mindset, has been one of acquiescing to a system so long just to get money.” Not having societal pressures such as “having children, a mortgage, or a car note” allowed Ronald to focus on finding out who he was; through this, he was able to develop his own self-discipline, self-esteem, and moral belief instead of solely focusing on acquiring monetary assets. Not only did prison serve as a benefit for developing a strong value system, but it was integral for understanding the importance of

decision-making, which many juvenile lifers had limited capacity to do since their psychosocial development was incomplete prior to entering prison.

Oliver, who served 23 years in prison, shared:

I think I wouldn't trade it in for anything, because it made me value life. It made me understand that moments matter, and it also made me understand decision making. One small lapse in judgment could be the rest of your life.

Oliver expressed that at the time of his sentencing, prosecutors were seeking the death penalty due to his act of homicide. Although he could not receive the death penalty since he was only 15 years old,²⁵ Oliver was still sentenced to life without parole, which was, in essence, a de-facto death sentence. The gravity and seriousness of his life-without-parole sentence helped Oliver to realize not only that “moments matter” but also that his experiences in prison facilitated the process of him making better choices when faced with adversity. He further shared, “anything that I encounter, I'm not negative, like ‘man, why the hell is this happening to me.’ No, I understand I'm not going to complain. I'm going to do what's necessary. I'm going to accept the challenges.” Ultimately, Oliver’s experiences in prison provided him a framework for understanding that certain actions and decisions can significantly alter the trajectory of a person’s life course.

It Saved My Life

Juvenile lifers also expressed that one of the major potential benefits of prison was the preservation of their lives. Tara, who served 22 years in prison, shared,

Well, in a way, prison kind of saved my life because me, I don't know, I cannot really say. But to me, I just felt like the path that I was going down at the time before my arrest, I could have been dead. Or I could have smoked the wrong thing or I could have ended up somewhere far away because like I said, I was angry, I was hurting, I was a follower and I could have listened to that one, very wrong person and been in Argentina somewhere in a sex trafficking situation. You

²⁵ See Roper v. Simmons (2005)

understand what I'm saying? So, in that sense, as far as my situation is concerned, I think it saved my life.

Tara's childhood involved many years of immense trauma as a result of physical abuse and sexual abuse. When she was 14, her mother walked into her room and found Tara's stepfather sexually assaulting her. However, her mom never talked about the incident or engaged Tara in a discussion about what happened. Tara stated, "she never said like, 'how long has this been going on? are you all right? do you need help, do you need to talk about it?'" Nothing. We never discussed it." As a result of the sexual trauma and further trauma of her mother's lack of response, Tara began to act out and become "very, very, very angry." She started to hang out with an older crowd where she would smoke anything that was handed to her in order to get high because it was the only thing that made her feel better.

Daniel, who served 27 years in prison, shared how prison saved his life:

Okay, I'm glad you asked that question. I believe in life period. Life is what you make it. I don't care how you look at it. Positive or negative, it's what you make it. In there, I can honestly say that me going to prison at the age of 17 was a blessing for me because I wouldn't be alive... It's funny because in court, my mother said to the judge, "I'd rather my son be in prison because I know out here, he's going to be dead." I asked her years ago, "Why in the hell would you say that?" Reading back on the transcripts, "Why would you say that?" She's like, "You're my son. I would rather you alive. Going to jail in there, but you're alive [rather] than you not being alive. I wouldn't be able to live knowing that you died this way."

Daniel recalled that before coming to prison, he migrated from New York to the North Philly Badlands/Hunting Park section of Philadelphia at the age of 10, which he described as a "rough transition" because the area was racially segregated. As a result, he was consistently fighting and became the "go-to kid to fight, and do all the crazy stuff." Daniel always found himself to be "the first one to be on the front line." Although it took some time for Daniel to fully unpack his mother's statement, he eventually would understand her concerns for his life. He further

reflected that he is the person he is today because of the experiences he had while in prison, which made him a responsible person and a person who thinks before reacting to things.

The Complex Effects of Incarceration

Inverted “U-Shape”

Juvenile lifers also talked about the complex effects of long-term incarceration. When reflecting on their time in prison, they acknowledged that while there were some potential benefits of incarceration, there was a point where the effects of long-term incarceration began to produce diminishing returns, profoundly impacting the emotional and psychological well-being of those incarcerated. James, who served 42 years in prison, shared,

Well, I mean it can be an asset, but it can never really be asset if you have to stay so long. I mean, some of the things that you, like you change, your development and all that. That takes place like early, I mean in maybe the middle part, or in the early part. Now you're left to just sit there. Now, all the progress and positive energy, or the rehabilitation, all of that stuff starts, once that takes place you ready to go home, but then you don't go home. You still there. Now, you can easily start to get angry and frustrated and all that.

James detailed that the benefits of prison become counterproductive when people have to remain in prison with no meaningful opportunity for release. In James' experience, the effect of long-term incarceration produced severe nihilism, especially toward the latter portion of a life sentence, causing all the potential benefits of prison to “kind of go away.” What James described is that sentence length influences behavioral outcomes in prison, which can be expressed by an inverted “U-shape” (Toman et al., 2015), meaning that there is a threshold when experiencing long-term confinement; beyond that threshold, incarceration hinders the developmental process and is no longer “helpful.”

In regard to the inverted “U-shape,” Andrew, who served 29 years in prison, shared how the detriment of long-term confinement far exceeds any potential benefits:

So, from first-hand experience, the detriment outweighs the potential benefit. If you could qualify it as a benefit or a necessity, that the detriment outweighs that. And particularly for long-term. I don't at all underestimate or undervalue people's resilience. However, I really do question within my own self and others about what the psychological and emotional toll, notwithstanding being able to excel in certain ways. But I don't think we're fully in tune with the emotional and psychological detriment is, particularly long term, and I do think that that's worth studying.

Andrew shared that the major detriment of long-term incarceration is that no matter what you do to evolve and grow as a human being to give back to your community while in prison, there are no meaningful opportunities for redemption. Over his many years of confinement Andrew would often hear "Man, I wish he was my neighbor" from an officer or volunteer or, "I would love to have you out in the community. You deserve to be out in the community." However, this only added to Andrew's emotional and psychological trauma because he knew that the reality was that he would eventually die in prison.

To add insult to injury, not only did Andrew have to wrestle with his own mortality after making significant changes in his life, but he was also often surrounded by other incarcerated people who frequently cycled in and out of prison, committing serious harm to the community. This only added to Andrew's frustration and anger; as he noted, "you running back and forth four times, five times, six times and I can't get one shot." Andrew's observations illustrate that although prison can serve as catalyst for helping people do things that they otherwise might think were not possible, the detriments superseded any potential benefits that prison could offer.

The Undesirable Effects of Incarceration

Prison is Hell

Overall, there a was a wide consensus among juvenile lifers that prison was an extremely negative experience. Almost all juvenile lifers explained that prison resembled the oppression, degradation, and plantation politics that enslaved Africans endured in the United States. Brian,

who served 27 years in prison, talked about the effects of prison as “Hell,” making connections between slavery and his long-term confinement:

Prison is prison, it's hell. You can't make prison pretty under no circumstances, because it's centuries of oppression. You understand whereas though no matter what, it's not correctional, it's not rehabilitative, not in the United States... It wasn't fun for me as a 15-year-old to hear somebody call me a nigga. It wasn't fun for me as a 15-year-old, well I was 16 when they did this, it wasn't fun for me at 16 when they strapped me down and shot me up with a psychedelic drug called Navane. Because to them, I wasn't trying to be adapting to the lifestyle of prison. I didn't want sports. I wanted out of prison.

From the moment Brian began his long-term incarceration, he never subscribed to the routine activities of prison life, which he detailed as “playing sports, losing focus, [and] believing I'm here to just serve my time.” From the early age of 14, when he received his JLWOP sentence, Brian always viewed the prison as a battleground where he was in direct opposition to the “racist correctional officers” he encountered in all the prisons in which he was housed. Brian detailed that these officers not only tried to strip him of his humanity by constantly reminding him that he was a “nigga,” but made sure he would not notice his oppression by intentionally overmedicating him with Navane. As a result, Brian eventually became addicted to Navane, causing him to be “trapped in the prison,” wanting to resist and fight back but not being able to get up from his hard concrete bed. Brian shared, “and they just laughed. Because to them I was their meal ticket. I was the child's tuition. I was their vacation ticket.” The summation of Brian’s experiences revealed to him that he was living in “Hell,” much like his ancestors before him, whose enslavers profited from their suffering.

Mario, who served 24 years in prison, talked about the effects of incarceration as plantation politics, which he termed, “plantation psychosis”:

It can be a good place, but it's very bad. It's very bad to isolate somebody like that, to program somebody like that. Mosquito in a glass. When you put the plastic over the glass, poke little holes and then you remove it, and they don't even want to get

out. They get what I call plantation psychosis, where they look at their abduction as in the reverse. I know guys in there that don't really want to get out. You got some people that can't function outside of being told what to do because they are so used to being told what to do, when they get out of here, they commit a crime.

Although Mario noted that prison can be a good place, the psychological effect it has on incarcerated individuals makes it a very dangerous place to be situated in. Mario recalled studying the teachings of psychologist Nai'm Akbar with other juvenile lifers, primarily using Akbar's psychological concepts to transform their thinking, break the "psychological chains of slavery," and not be solely dependent on the Department of Corrections. However, Mario noted that although you can make prison tolerable by reading books and practicing mindfulness, it still does not negate the inhumane conditions incarcerated individuals face on a day-to-day basis, especially as it relates to physical and mental health. Mario noted, "I've seen some guys in there just outright die because they couldn't get the proper medical help. Just die. Like it's not good." Here, Mario was pointing to the layered effects of inhumane conditions on incarcerated people.

Kevin, who served 29 years in prison, also detailed the inhumane conditions incarcerated people are situated in, which paralleled similar conditions to slavery in the United States:

And I don't use the term mass incarceration any anymore because it's a very secular term. It's a very statistical and clinical term that doesn't speak to the humanity of our people. It's human warehousing, you know what I'm saying? And we need to call it what it is. It's human warehousing, and we need to indict it and denounce it. Like how Frederick Douglas said, I will denounce slavery. America's greatest sin. He said, I will not equivocate. I will use the severest language I can command. We must use the severest language we can command. That's not mass incarceration, it's human warehousing, you know what I'm saying?

Kevin, who began his long-term incarceration at the age of 15, described his time in prison as being at the "mercy of the wolves," living in dilapidated cell blocks, spending significant time in solitary confinement, experiencing predation by both officers and adult inmates, and suffering from the lasting effects of multiple prison riots. As a result of the aforementioned conditions

Kevin and his fellow juvenile lifers endured, he noted that it is no longer acceptable to talk about the prison system in abstract terms. Specifically, he stated, “No, fuck that. These things are ran by human beings. We're not fighting against abstract machineries. Its human beings against other human beings.” What Kevin’s examination illustrates is that the effects of prison are so deplorable that popular and public language like “mass incarceration” dulls the reality of what is experienced; he called for more precise language that would better describe the severity of what incarcerated people experience.

The Meaningful Life?

When discussing the effects of life-sentences in regard to the development of human and social capital, many juvenile lifers shared the sentiments of Jarret who stated, “Prison is boring as hell.” Jarret, who served 26 years in prison, went on to share,

And let me just add this footnote as well. In 27 years of continuous incarceration, I've learned one thing, and I try to share this with as many people as possible. Prison is long stretches of boredom, punctuated by intense moments of sadness and violence. So, to me I always like to say that real prison is not what people perceive it to be, but in fact it's more insidious on deeper levels. The threat of the pointlessness of life, the meaninglessness of life, being confronted with a life that is meaninglessness, that is filled with meaningless or hopeless[ness].

What Jarret so vividly captured is what Wright (2020) has detailed about prison life—that it is monotonous and repetitive. Wright (2020) has contended that prison life stymies the ability of incarcerated individuals to live a “meaningful life,” which includes being engaged in community and relationships, developing a purpose to serve others, and overcoming adversity. For most juvenile lifers, their long-term confinement functioned as a stumbling block to the “meaningful life,” impacting their ability to maintain significant relationships, health (both physical and mental), positive outlook on life due to their death by incarceration sentence, and their ability to participate in rehabilitation programming (see Figure 7). However, it should be noted that

although the prison environment itself was not conducive to the development of responsible and mature behavior, juvenile lifers were resilient and determined to still make meaning out of their lives.

Family Relationships in Prison

Strained Family Support

Juvenile lifers expressed that having life sentences made it difficult to form and maintain familial and pro-social bonds while incarcerated (see Figure 7). When discussing their experiences in prison, many juveniles noted how their long-term confinement significantly strained their relationships with family. Sean, who served 28 years in prison, shared,

It was a strain, because being so far away, the distance puts a strain on a relationship between family. Not for everyone, but for some people. I know for me it did. I didn't receive a lot of visits and stuff like that from my family. Well, I take that back. My mother visited often. She visited frequently in regards to where I was. She was there, but for the most part, most of my family members, they didn't visit.

Sean, who began his long-term incarceration at the age of 14, detailed how his family's support weaned over the years. He expressed that his family did not write to him often and barely came to visit, as he spent a significant part of his incarceration at SCI Rockview, which is an over 3-hour drive from where his family was located in Philadelphia, PA. The only person who Sean could rely on for support was his mother, who could only afford to see him on a monthly basis.

Tara, who served 22 years in prison, talked about how she felt abandoned by her family during her period of incarceration:

That was the first time I've ever been away from my family. My family was not there for me. Up until, my family didn't start coming around until 2000. It was just like I was alone. There were times I had to watch people eat or watch people get mail and pictures from their family and watch people on the phone with their loved ones.

Tara found her time in prison extremely difficult, as she received limited support from her family. She recalled being very angry and feeling that she was left “completely in the dark” because she was totally oblivious to the fact that her life sentence would make it challenging for her to maintain relationships with her family. When she was first incarcerated, she was housed at the Youth Study Center, a juvenile detention facility she thought would be like camp. Her thought process at the time was, “Wow, this is pretty cool. They give us snacks. I was very, very immature.” It was not until she had spent several years in the state penitentiary that she began to realize, “Why isn't anyone here for me? Why don't nobody care about me?”

Andre, who served 25 years in prison, explicitly detailed the prison system’s intentional process of tearing apart the foundations of family:

This is one of the great hypocrisies about the Department of Corrections. Even in the handbook, they'll say they promote family unity and things of that nature, but the inner workings are the total opposite. Because they'll do the slightest things to put your family through turmoil and try to deter them from wanting to come see you. They make the process so degrading and so they make them go through so much, make them feel like they're locked up. And so it's almost like it's designed for people to eventually give up on you. Like, I can't go through that no more. I can't, I'm sorry. It's too much.

One of the main tools the prison system utilized to create strain on the families of incarcerated individuals was the implementation of the “security phone system.” Andre recalled that when the prison began to use the monitored phone system, one 15-minute phone call cost families over \$15. This fee placed such a burden on the family members of incarcerated individuals that a class action lawsuit was filed by incarcerated individuals all over the country, which eventually lowered the prices. He stated, “I think they lowered them, calls 13 dollars and then they lowered them again, 6 times. And by the time I left, it was under 90 something cent for a 15-minute phone call, which it always should have been.” What Andre’s explanation reveals is that prison

system created institutional roadblocks that stood in direct opposition to supporting family unification.

Good Family Support

Despite facing institutional roadblocks that made it challenging for family unification, some juvenile lifers were still able to maintain meaningful relationships with family members while incarcerated. Jose, who served 29 years in prison, shared,

It was good support. Let me just say that I remember when I first got into Dallas in '91, I felt I wasn't getting any support. So, I see everybody with TVs, street clothes, when we still had street clothes we'd wear. And I knew mom and dad was struggling. I remember writing a letter to my cousin. I said, "Damn, man. They think I'm dead or something? You know what I mean? I'm up here..." Somehow my mom got that letter. Yeah. I ain't going to lie. I don't know how she got that letter, but she got the letter.

Jose's parents were so upset that he felt abandoned in prison that when they came up to visit him, they made a commitment to support him even though they were not in the best financial position to help him mitigate the costs of the items he needed. Jose recalls, "Just like they said, let me know what you need. I'll put it on a credit card." Jose noted that his parent's kind gesture resonated with him so much that it not only strengthened their relationship but gave him the assurance that he was not alone. Martin, who served 42 years in prison, also shared how his family supported him during his period of long-term confinement:

My whole family, they was coming to see me through the whole 42 years. They stuck with me through the whole 42 years. My nieces, my sisters and them, when they had babies, they was bringing them up. I saw them grow up and all that stuff there. So, the family thing, it was no problem with that.

Martin stated that one of the benefits of sustaining relationships with family is that it kept "him strong and focused." He felt as though there was never a time when he could not write to one of his brothers or sisters if he needed some financial assistance, which allowed him to focus on his

personal development and practice his faith instead of work multiple low-paying jobs in prison just to make ends meet.

James, who served 43 years in prison as well, detailed how important it is for individuals who experience long-term confinement to maintain good family support:

Interviewer: Do you think that other people who didn't have family support, there was a difference?

James: You talking about if I didn't have it?

Interviewer: Yeah, if you didn't have it.

James: Yeah, I believe it would have.

James contended that if he did not have good family support, he probably would have become bitter in prison and started to feel bad for himself to the point where he would not have kept up his physical appearance. He emphasized, "I used to take pride in my appearance and staying in shape. I mean, I probably would've gave up on all that." In other words, juvenile lifers who had family support found that it positively shaped their experiences and sense of self while they were incarcerated.

Prison Health

Juvenile lifers also mentioned how their physical and mental health changed over the period of their long-term confinement (see Figure 7). Due to the lack of adequate health care in prison, many juvenile lifers developed significant health issues (both physical and mental), were commonly misdiagnosed or received no diagnosis, or vowed never to receive medical attention or frequent the infirmary, which caused them to not know the true status of their health conditions nor receive treatment.

Physical Health

When discussing the effects prison had on their physical health, many juvenile lifers shared the sentiments of Jerry, who served 42 years in prison. He emphasized, “Basically, man, you don't want to get sick or injured in the prison system.” Tara, who served 22 years in prison, detailed the extreme measures juvenile lifers had to go through in order to receive proper medical attention while in prison.

That's one, medical. You have to be half dead. I mean like no pulse in order for medical to act in a medical response manner. If anybody was like, I'm not feeling good, whatever, we had to literally find something sharp enough to cut them with just so they could see some blood so they can be like, did we see blood, are they da, da, da, da? Just so they could see blood just for medical to respond, because if not, put in a sick call and we'll see you tomorrow.

I was curious if Tara herself had ever used this potentially dangerous method to secure medical attention:

Interviewer: So, have you done that? You've cut yourself just to go to medical?

Tara: Yes. I've cut myself a couple of times just to go to medical, just for them to take me serious.

Not only did juvenile lifers have to self-inflict harm upon themselves just to be “taken serious” and receive medical attention, but Tara also detailed how the lack of proper medical staffing in prison can adversely affect health, as well. She stated,

Well, you see my front tooth is gone. I was like so mad about that. They took my front tooth when I was like 21. I cried about that for like, oh my God for like a whole year. Because I went to the dentist because I had abscess on my gum, and the one dentist was like, he just told me this whole horror story about how it was going to hurt me for years, and I was going to keep coming back and all this stuff, and he was going to do a root canal on it. And I was like, Okay. So, he ended up drilling a hole on the back of my tooth and he was like, he couldn't complete the work because, we can't do it all in one day and all this stuff, so you've got to come back in a week and we can finish, and then we can save your tooth and things will be fine. I was like, Okay. So, a week went by, two weeks went by, three weeks went by. And I was like, Hey. So, I ended up writing a request to the dentist and they ended up telling me, oh, that dentist left the institution, he no longer works here.

We're waiting on a new dentist. And I was like, What? So, mind you, at this time, it was like 900 women there, to one dentist.

Due to the lack of proper medical staffing, by the time Tara got the opportunity to see the dentist again, which occurred 9 months after her initial appointment, she had a hole in her tooth and was on the verge of getting another abscess. As a result, the newly appointed dentist was left with only one option: to remove her tooth.

Similarly, Daniel, who served 27 years in prison, detailed his experience with a botched medical procedure in prison.

I can say... I can give you one bad experience that I went through in there. I had a... Okay, well something happened. I was having these... What the hell you call it? It was through my testicles, and I went to get it checked out, and the doctor went and checked me out, and in the course of him checking me out, he punctured my bladder, but I didn't know that my bladder was punctured until later on. I was in the recovery unit, or the prison hospital at Somerset, and I passed out. The next thing, I woke up, I'm in an operating room with tubes everywhere and all that. Make that all short, I woke up with... I was in the hospital for a month and a half, and I was at the hospital with a catheter and recovering from that puncture in my bladder.

The experience of being hospitalized was so traumatic for Daniel that he expressed that it was worse than the time he had spent in solitary confinement. David noted, "I never felt so lost, vulnerable and scared." While David was in recovery for his punctured bladder, he was not able to provide any updates to his family. Due to his incarceration status, all communication was handled through the prison counselor, which made David feel as though his life was meaningless because he was uncertain if he would make it out of his medical situation alive. As David recalled, "That was the first time I cried, being lonely. It was real difficult. It was very, very difficult." In other words, the inhumane conditions in prisons can exacerbate the physical and health traumas incarcerated people face and can contribute to added emotional trauma as well.

Misdiagnosis and Lack of Diagnosis

Not only did juvenile lifers not receive proper medical assistance in prison, but prison health officials commonly misdiagnosed their health conditions. Nolan, who served 30 years in prison, shared,

Actually, I felt coming home from prison, I was falsely diagnosed in prison with hypertension. And I always felt that I didn't have that issue. But I wasn't in a position to really understand it, or to say that I don't need it, because the medication that they put me on was ... They used it to say, Well, this is the reason why your blood pressure is good.

After consulting with his primary care physician following his release from prison, Nolan discovered that he did not have any issues with his blood pressure. Due to the lack of information that was provided to Nolan, he felt that prison officials just “wanted to experiment on us in prison with different things,” as he was taking medication for a health condition that he did not have. What Nolan revealed is what Hornblum (1998) detailed about the infamous experiments that were conducted on incarcerated individuals in Pennsylvania, in which doctors intentionally exposed prisoners to various drugs, ranging from dioxin to LSD. Prison officials also failed in diagnosing juvenile lifers by delaying diagnosis, especially, for example, as it related to juvenile lifers who had cancer symptoms. Mary, who served 24 years in prison, noted,

Okay the cancer thing. So many people had cancer in that place. It's so sad. We were told they didn't have to tell us until we were stage four. Whereas if I had a one- or two-year sentence, they were going to take me right to chemo. Do you understand? Early detection and stuff like that.

This was the case for Matthew, who served 41 years in prison. He shared how prison health officials failed to diagnose or test him for cancer after he repeatedly expressed cancer-like symptoms:

Matthew: Find out I had cancer and stuff, right?

Interviewer: Did you develop cancer while you were in prison?

Matthew: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: Tell me about that.

Matthew: Well, I didn't know I had it.

Interviewer: You didn't know you had it?

Matthew: Nope. Didn't even know I had it. The doctor didn't understand why I didn't know neither, right? Because she said... This stuff was all around my waist, right? It was all around my waist, all up under my arms. She was wondering...she said, why you wait until now to say something about it, right? And I told her, I said, look, I didn't even know I had it. She said, where you been? I said, jail, right? She said, how long you been in jail? I told her, she said, damn, and they ain't try to do nothing?

Matthew recalled his doctor being so upset during his initial physical examination following his release from prison that “she started cussing and stuff.” Matthew recalled that his primary care physician could not believe that prison officials did not investigate further into the claims he had made about his health. When Matthew was incarcerated, he alerted prison officials that his skin would often turn “rainbow color, orange, red, blue, purple” when he took showers. However, they only provided an ointment and instructed Matthew that “If I didn’t hurt, don’t worry about it.” As a result of years of these issues being unaddressed, Matthew’s primary care physician had to begin radiation treatments immediately because the cancer had spread all over his body.

I Don’t Know

Hearing about the experiences of other incarcerated individuals regarding the lackluster medical treatment they received kept many juvenile lifers from seeking medical treatment themselves while in prison. When I asked Anthony, who served 26 years in prison, how his long-term confinement affected his physical health, he casually stated, “I don't know, I don't know how my physical health is.” He went on to share,

I rarely went to medical. I know I overeat. I imagine there are some medical problems that I'm unaware of, and I don't generally go to doctors, even out here. Racism doesn't end at the medical facility, right? The same shit is going on in the medical facilities, and I haven't figured out how to choose a primary care physician yet. So, I haven't gone to a doctor out here yet and gotten seen. You know what I mean?

What is interesting about Anthony's experiences is that he was so traumatized by the treatment incarcerated individuals had received in the prison system that it not only prevented him from seeking medical treatment in prison, but it also prevented him from pursuing treatment following his release. As a 44-year-old Black man, Anthony has no accurate indication of his physical health and is still vehemently opposed to letting a doctor evaluate him. Not only did juvenile lifers purposely avoid medical treatment while in prison but they were also warned by other incarcerated individuals to not engage with the prison health system.

Similarly, Mary, who served 24 years in prison, shared,

But I remember when I went in there, the MOVE members were still there. In Muncy. And they told me, said, if you stay away from the infirmary, you're going to be fine. And that's exactly what I did.

Mary noted that she stayed far away from any type of medical treatment while in prison, as she had noticed that prison health officials were not trying to remedy the health conditions of incarcerated individuals. Oftentimes, she saw many incarcerated individuals who had been diagnosed with high blood pressure be instructed by prison health officials to just drink water or stop smoking. This lack of concern by prison health officials caused Mary to be extremely cautious of the prison health system and heed the warnings of her peers.

Mental Health

The Verdict Is Still Out

When discussing the effects prison had on their mental health, many juvenile lifers shared the sentiments of Martin, who served 42 years in prison, and shared, "I don't know how it

affected me. I think I'm alright, but I do believe it has some mental effect on me. I can't put my finger on it, though.” Andrew, who served 29 years in prison, termed the phenomenon Martin poignantly described as the “verdict is still out,” meaning that the implications of long-term incarceration on mental-well-being are challenging to discern (see Figure 7). He stated,

And I can say to a large extent, my immediate answer is that faith has assisted me in being able to cope with that. However, I'm also not being naive or disingenuous when I say that the verdict is still out, right because there are certain things that I know exist because they come up sporadically, about things that have been suppressed over the decades, that I know is still in there, right. And so, what the full implications and the impact of that is on my mental health, whether or not there could be anything that could just trigger the whole avalanche, right. I reserve the thought that that could happen at any moment, right because you could talk about therapy and trying to deal with trauma and being in tune with self and your emotions and your thoughts and how to cope with all of that but the reality is that the verdict is still out.

During our interview, Andrew shared with me an example of a memory that recently triggered him. Andrew recalled his father coming to visit him in prison before he passed away. Andrew’s father was wearing his old shoes, which were two shoe sizes too small for him. Andrew noted, “he stuffed his Mississippi mud mashers into my shoes.” When Andrew’s dad saw the puzzled look on his face, he explained, "I'm wearing these because these are the last shoes that my son walked in.” Although this was a sentimental moment for both Andrew and his father, knowing that his father would potentially never see his “baby boy on the other side of a prison wall,” Andrew could not show emotion in the visiting room. He was forced to suppress his feeling so that he would not appear weak. For this reason, Andrew noted that it is difficult for him to fully unpack the psychological and emotional impacts of long-term incarceration.

Along these lines, Mario, who served 24 years in prison, mentioned how he was unaware of the effects prison had on his mental health. He shared, “Now, I don't know if I'm mentally there, but the doctors, the doctors say I'm cool, right?” Although Mario completed a full physical

examination with his primary care physician following release from prison, he shared similar concerns to Andrew that the “verdict was still out.” As a result of his long-term incarceration, Mario noticed his own inability to emotionally connect with others, especially family members, due to him intentionally suppressing his feelings over the many years he was in prison. Consequently, Mario noted that he did not always exhibit the correct emotional responses in certain situations and following release from prison, was still “just learning all of these things.”

You Get Tired

One factor that remained constant about the effects of incarceration was the mental fatigue it produced for juvenile lifers. Grant, who served 24 years in prison, shared, “You get tired, especially when you're fighting your case...they're coming up with one reason to deny you and it doesn't seem legitimate. You just get tired, the whole routine of prison.” Juvenile lifers mentioned how the individuals with whom they were incarcerated became so tired of prison that they took their lives, which subsequently affected their own mental well-being. Andrew, who served 29 years in prison, shared,

I'll get intimate. There's three people who I knew intimately in terms of working together, whether it was in the capacity, in a law clinic or just through the advocacy work on the inside, and all three of them, and different periods, and in some cases, in different prisons, took their lives...Victor Hassine, having conversation with him. I thought he was joking though. He said, if he gets denied on his commutation...And I forgot how many, it might've been his fourth or fifth application at this time said, that's it, I'm done. I ain't doing this no more. He got denied and he hung up.

Victor Hassine's suicide deeply affected Andrew on so many levels. Victor was a prolific author (Hassine, 2011) and prison reform advocate, who had successfully filed several conditions-of-confinement lawsuits resulting in \$125 million in improvements to prison security and health care (Hassine, 2011). His death made Andrew question the value of his own life. Andrew began to ruminate on this experience and ask himself what it meant to be remorseful and make

significant changes in his life yet not be afforded an opportunity for release. Having these thoughts over the course of his incarceration began to take a toll on his mental well-being. As he stated, “nobody can see you for anything other than worth dying in prison.”

Victor, who served 34 years in prison, shared how the suicide of an acquaintance affected his own mental health:

There's a boy, I can't remember his name, but I tell the story all the time. He used to work in the kitchen. We used to get donuts every Saturday, so he had me, you know what I mean? Made sure I had donuts and everything. And he went on a visit, he had three kids by this girl, I think it was his wife. She was coming here and there, but he had double life. So one day he went out there...we were just coming from lunch, put a sheet up. Everybody locked in. When they came up there, they pulled the sheet. He had cut his throat and had hung his self with a hanger. Black, healthy, good shape, good man, but she brings a man up there, [and said] I ain't [coming] to see you no more, kiss your kids now, brutal.

During the period of his incarceration, several incarcerated individuals with whom Victor was connected would die by suicide. Victor expressed that it was extremely difficult on his mental health to “see a dude today and they kill themselves the next day.” He recalled often waking up in the morning for count and hearing, “Sarge, sarge, you got one hanging, cut them down, cut them down, get this body out there” after which prison officials would continue to run the daily operation of the prison like nothing had ever happened. Victor emphasized that these experiences “crushed him.”

Death by Incarceration

Given the serious nature of their life-without-parole sentences and with little hope of release, juvenile lifers expressed that it was challenging for them to create meaning in their lives knowing that they were condemned to die in prison (see Figure 7). Sean, who served 28 years in prison, shared,

You're going to die in there. That what the sentence is meant for; for you to die in prison. There's no out in Pennsylvania, so to wake up with that every morning,

you'd have to experience it to know how a person feels. But it wasn't fun waking up with that reality, and every morning you got to shake it off. Every morning you got to shake that reality off. When you wake up and you look up, sometimes you don't want to get out that bed. How I'm going to do it today. How am I going to do it today? Everybody go through they pain in this world, but when you are serving that kind of sentence, you got a foot and a half in the grave. Matter of fact, a foot and three quarters of a foot in the grave. You got that little out, which is hope of one day of you getting out not dying in there.

What Sean detailed about his life-without-parole sentence is what many scholars have deemed as “death by incarceration” or the “slow death penalty”—meaning that a JLWOP sentence is essentially a humane alternative to state executions (The Coalition to Abolish Death By Incarceration, 2020; Gross, 2019; Johnson & McGunigall-Smith, 2008; Kleinstuber et al., 2016; Ogletree & Sarat, 2012; Parker, 2005; The Sentencing Project, 2018; Villaume, 2005). Because Sean knew he was waiting to die, he was in a constant state of mental and physical anguish during his period of incarceration. As a result, he said there was nothing to look forward to and emphasized that “there’s no reason for you to do anything positive with that sentence because that sentence is not a receptive of anything positive.”

Similarly, Phyllis, who served 40 years in prison, mentioned the debilitating effects a death-by-incarceration sentence can have. She shared,

But it was horrible. It was a horrible experience. It was a nightmare I don't want no one to have to face. Because you're walking dead. It's like the walking dead. To me, that's how I look at it, at that time.

I was curious to know why Phyllis invoked such strong imagery of the walking dead. Phyllis explained that the weight she carried around of knowing that she would die in prison caused her to feel frozen in time, merely just trying to survive the day-to-day realities of her own mortality. She noted, “I was just surviving, existing, to be honest with you. Existing. That's what I really was doing. I felt like the walking dead.” Phyllis contended that having a death-by-incarceration sentence can be disorientating, as it creates much uncertainty for one’s life course.

Aaron, who served 26 years in prison, also added that a death-by-incarceration sentence could produce feelings of immense fear and trepidation:

And that's a lonely thought, man. That's a lonely thought. That's the only thing that I feared while I was in prison. I didn't fear getting jumped. I didn't fear getting raped. I didn't fear getting beat up. I didn't fear none of that stuff. But dying in prison is what I feared the most, you understand?

Aaron expressed that dying in prison can be a lonely experience, as most individuals who experience long-term confinement tend to lose the support of their families over the years. Aaron detailed that most times, when people die in prison, nobody comes to claim their body; he stated, “the prison, the system do what they want to do with you,” which usually included burying incarcerated individuals in unmarked graves in undisclosed locations.

JLWOP Over the Life Course

No Such Thing as a Juvenile Lifer

As juvenile lifers wrestled with their death-by-incarceration sentences, it was also difficult for them to create meaning in their lives, as practically no attention was given to their psychosocial development during their period of incarceration. Sean, who served 28 years in prison, noted, “there was no such thing as juvenile lifers. Everybody [that] had a life without parole sentence, was considered a lifer.” As juvenile lifers experienced numerous significant transitions in their life courses during their periods of incarceration, they had no framework for understanding the human and social capital needed for the responsibilities of adulthood (see Figure 7). Joe, who served 40 years in prison, shared,

We didn't even think about ourselves as juvenile lifers. We were just in there. We knew we were kids when we came to jail and we knew we had to grow up in jail fast because back in those days, things were so serious, Juwan.

Joe detailed that the concept of a “juvenile lifer” did not exist. In fact, most juvenile lifers were immediately thrust into adult roles prematurely, given the dangerous nature of the prison

environment. Interestingly, what Joe highlighted is that the term “juvenile lifer” is fairly a new phenomenon and was not officially recognized until 2005, when Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International conducted their first ever national analysis of life-without-parole sentences for children (Parker, 2005). Their report concluded that the United States was in direct violation of international human rights laws that specifically acknowledged the need for special safeguards and treatment of children due to their diminished culpability, immaturity, and unique potential for rehabilitation (Parker, 2005).

Ronald, who served 38 years in prison, shared how juvenile lifers were not officially recognized administratively as such by prison officials until the latter periods of their long-term incarceration:

A juvenile ain't got nothing to do with, you know what I mean? In there you're doing life. Man, you don't go in there, especially in them days, they didn't have juvenile blocks or some type of designation, in fact, it was best if you just get your business to yourself when you went in there and just ... Because cats in there don't care nothing about you young and to give you a break. It was dog eat dog, so it's best to try to keep your business to yourself. You're a lifer and, in many ways, that works for you.

Ronald expressed that it was not until the landmark Supreme Court decision in *Miller v. Alabama* of 2012 (in which the Court held that mandatory sentences of life without the possibility of parole were unconstitutional for juvenile offenders) that prison officials administratively differentiated between adult lifers and juvenile lifers. He noted, “Before that you just the regular convict, regular number, or regular lifer.” However, after the Miller legislation, Ronald noted that individuals who were incarcerated and sentenced to life without parole as children began to identify and embrace the term “juvenile lifer” because of the potential to be released, the recognition of their humanity, and the implications it had for them to receive rehabilitation programming.

Time Well Spent?

Because juvenile lifers were treated and identified as “regular lifers” by prison officials, they had limited opportunities for rehabilitation programming or were blocked from resources to help facilitate their growth and development for most of their long-term incarceration. Tara, who served 22 years in prison, shared,

And as a lifer, I don't know if Phyllis or Jeanette told you, we couldn't participate in a lot of things. We had to fight to participate in a lot of stuff, because they felt, "Oh, your life or you're never going home. What do you need this for? What do you need to be in this class for?"

Tara recalled trying to participate in the Canine Partners for Life puppy program, one of the premier rehabilitation programs the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections instituted in 2001, where incarcerated individuals professionally trained service and companion dogs. She stated, “I wanted to do the puppy program, because they started a puppy program at Muncy.” However, due to her status as a lifer, she was denied several times. She emphasized, “Every time I want to sign up for something [they'd] be like Tara oh, no, no. She can't.” After many negotiations with the prison administration, Tara was eventually allowed to participate in the puppy program, where she was featured in two newspapers articles for her outstanding service. What Tara revealed is what Wright (2020) has detailed, that time spent in prison is not "time well spent," as the prison experience primarily centers on punishment rather than on opportunities to repair harm, empower people, and change behavior.

Oliver, who served 23 years in prison, also shared how time spent in prison was not “time well spent”:

Some of us, you have the opportunity to educate yourself just a little bit, because when you have a life sentence most groups and classes are governed by your minimums. In our case, we didn't have a minimum, so you really had to fight and fight and fight for the education which you can only go so far because everything was judged by minimums.

Oliver noted that it was extremely difficult to take hold of educational opportunities, as most rehabilitation programs were governed by “minimums”—the earliest date possible for parole. As a result, many of the educational programs offered in prison were slated and prioritized for individuals who were closer to parole release. However, this created a dilemma for juvenile lifers, who did not have “minimums” because they were determinately sentenced to spend the rest of their lives in prison. Oliver emphasized, “Do we act like animals and shit in this mutherfucker, because y'all tell me that I'm not going home? You know what I'm saying?” Like Tara, after many years of back-and-forth with the prison administration, Oliver was able to receive some educational credentialing, including his GED and several correspondence courses for business management. Ultimately, juvenile lifers had to be persistent and create opportunities for themselves that would help them live meaningful lives during their period of incarceration.

Changing in Prison

Psychosocial Stages of Development

Despite facing substantial barriers and limited access to resources and programming while incarcerated, most juvenile lifers went through a series of psychosocial transitions to maturely cope to the demands of prison life and achieve significant changes and growth over their life courses, even before the landmark *Miller* and *Montgomery* Supreme Court decisions (see Figure 7). It should be noted that these psychosocial transitions unfolded in various stages (*Pain Stage, Identity Stage, Court Hearings Stage, Old Head Stage, Religion Stage, Afrocentric Stage, Generativity Stage, Redemption Stage*) that tended to be ordered and which provided structure and meaning to juvenile lifers’ life courses while they were experiencing long-term incarceration (see Figure 7).

The Pain Stage

For juvenile lifers to acquire the human and social capital needed for the responsibilities of adulthood, one of the first stages they had to work through was moving past the pain of receiving a life-without-parole sentence at such a young age. Jason, who served 31 years in prison, shared,

And so my first stage was, I was just going through pain. I needed to relieve that pain. And I cried to God to make sense of this, to guide me, to help me through it. And so that was the first thing.

Jason noted that many juvenile lifers like himself became very angry at the criminal justice system for giving them a life without parole sentence. Even though many juvenile lifers acknowledged their responsibility in the harm they had caused, they also felt their actions did not warrant a life-without-parole sentence due to a host of mitigating factors in each of their respective cases. As a result, in the first couple of years during their periods of incarceration, they grappled with questions, such as "Why me? Why did this happen to me? Am I that bad of a person that I should've been put in prison for the rest of my life as a child?"

Tara, who served 22 years in prison, talked about how she had to work through the pain of receiving a life-without-parole sentence in order to make a change in her life. She shared,

I was so angry when I first got to Muncy. Oh, my God. I got writeups after writeups after writeups and the hole back and forth and the hole stayed and the hole. It got to the point where they were on the radio, It's [Tara]...I think I was 21, 22. Somebody told me to do the House of Hope. I was like, I don't need the House of Hope. They were like, I think you really need to do the House of Hope.

Tara detailed how the House of Hope inpatient unit for sexual and physical abuse changed her life. Given her complex pre-incarceration experiences in childhood, coupled with her resentment of her JLWOP sentence, the inpatient program helped Tara to find out who she was, ultimately changing the trajectory of her life course. She emphasized, "I ended up learning so much about myself, like why do you act out in fighting? Why do you act out in yelling? Why do you do the

things you do?” One of the major benefits of the House of Hope program was that Tara was able to remain in the unit until she felt ready to leave, allowing her to not only process her anger but also but providing her with coping mechanisms to deal with adverse situations.

The Identity Stage

Another important stage juvenile lifers identified as important for their growth and development was the identity stage, in which they developed a sense of self and found an identity. This stage occurred during the earlier period of their long-term incarceration. Jason, who served 31 years in prison, shared,

I think as a young person, you're trying to wrestle with who you are as an individual. You're trying to wrestle with who you want to be as an individual. Because think about you coming to prison at an early age, and so you clearly, you don't have a sense of who you are as a person. So, you're wrestling with that...I'm thinking about Maslow's hierarchy of needs, about what needs come first. The needs that come first is, you develop a certain level of comfort with who you are, developing your identity, developing some level of peace about you.

Jason highlighted, “the most important thing ain’t about the life sentence,” but about trying to understand himself, as he really did not know who he was as an individual because he had entered prison at such a young age. He noted that the earlier period of incarceration “basically centered on identity, what was my identity? So I went through a number of identities too...And I think this was a milestone for me.” Jason further detailed how it was important for him to learn that it was ok to be different and not have to identify with the “in crowd” in prison. Most importantly, Jason learned how to “give up” on the identity that had failed him prior coming to prison, as it was solely predicated on imitating other people.

Sean, who served 28 years in prison, also shared how he developed a stern but soft identity:

So, it's a stark dilemma that you're going through in your heart. And in your mind, you want to be a kid. You want to be a child, but you know you can't act that way

in this place surrounded by these seasoned criminals. You cannot act like a child. So, you have to take on the mindset and the attributes of a man although you're not. Now I wasn't mean, but if you don't know me, you could have perceived me as being mean. I was liked by everybody. I didn't have no enemies in prison because I always had that soft personality, that welcoming personality where you can talk to me about anything. I don't care what it is. I had people confess stuff to me I didn't even want to hear it! Nah, don't tell me. I don't want to hear that man. But that's the kind of dude I was. You can come to me and talk about anything. I was non-judgmental, so people like that, but at the same time, I really didn't smile a lot.

Due to the predatory nature of the prison environment, Sean noted that he could not form a child-like identity but had to take on a more serious persona. He explained, "I didn't play no games. I became this serious, stern individual." Because he began his period of incarceration at the age of 14, Sean noted how his serious demeanor not only protected him so he would not get taken advantage of by incarcerated individuals who were adults, but also allowed him to gain a wealth of experiences in prison, as he had few adversarial interactions during his period of incarceration.

The Court Hearings Stage

Many juvenile lifers were able to make significant changes to their lives by structuring their time in prison around rigorous court deadlines, which allowed their cases to remain in appellate court for review of the procedures and decisions of their direct appeal for their life-without-parole sentences. Grant, who served 24 years in prison, shared,

My milestones was court hearings, and making my way back into court, or waiting for the hearing, and stuff like that. They was a lot of the milestones. Maybe when I turned certain ages, I think when I turned 25 or 21, 30, you just start feeling like, damn, I'm getting older in this place. But in terms of milestones for me, it was making progress in terms of my freedom.

Grant detailed how he aligned his entire life around the court system in order to put him in the best position to reverse his life-without-parole sentence and have the possibility to be released from prison one day. Grant noticed that his maturation processes begin to develop when he began to dedicate his time to studying the law and making a serious commitment to going to the

law library. He emphasized, “I think that one of the best things I've done when I was in prison was learn the law. Because it gave your life more meaning, as opposed to just sitting around, not doing nothing.” Because Grant was fighting to get his case reviewed in appellate court, the law helped him to understand the importance of timing and being prepared. He stated, “In court, you got deadlines. Them deadlines are serious. You miss the deadline, you finished.”

Similarly, Nolan, who served 30 years in prison, highlighted how important court deadlines were. He shared,

A PCRA petition is a Post-Conviction Relief Act petition, which is once you complete your direct appeal, you have one opportunity to come back, and raise claims that your attorney didn't raise on your direct appeal. So that's why they advise to let your attorney handle your direct appeal, because if your attorney don't handle it properly, you can always raise Ineffective Assistance of Counsel on your PCRA petition. So once your direct appeal is finalized, you're allowed to file one PCRA petition. It used to be able to file multiple PCRA petitions, but I think it was in 1996 the federal law changed, and they made a ruling on you're only allowed one PCRA petition, which went into effect in '97. I think either '97 or '98.

As a result of the federal law being changed, Nolan mentioned how many juvenile lifers “woke up” and started becoming focused in prison because they only had one opportunity to file a PCRA petition. He further noted that filing a PCRA petition was time-sensitive, so even if juvenile lifers discovered new claims of their innocence or wanted to raise the issue of Ineffective Assistance of Counsel, if they were not on “top of their game,” the court would deem their cases time-barred on those matters. Like Grant, Nolan and many other juvenile lifers dedicated their lives to studying the law beyond the PCRA process. Supreme Court rulings served as another pathway to have their cases reviewed in court. For example, the Supreme Court ruling in *Roper V. Simmons* was the first Supreme Court case to recognize the diminished culpability of children and to hold that it was unconstitutional to impose capital punishment for offenses committed by people under the age of 18. Nolan stated, “because of the language in the

opinion of that case, it opened the door for lifers, because guys like myself, we didn't actually kill anybody.” Because many juvenile lifers like Nolan received their JLWOP sentences under Pennsylvania’s felony murder statute, they were able to argue that they should be included in the Roper ruling and have their cases reviewed.

The Old Head Stage

Juvenile lifers also expressed that being connected to “Old Heads,” who were usually seasoned long-term incarcerated individuals with deep institutional knowledge of the prison, was integral for providing structure, guidance, and direction for their life courses during their incarceration. Jose, who served 29 years in prison, shared,

So, when I got to the prison, I got to the prison in January 21st, 1991, I got to the jail. I met some older gentlemen, and I always hang around... I never hang around with a lot of young guys, I always hang around with a lot of older men, because I want to get that knowledge, first time being in prison, they give you the ins and outs. They're not into nothing crazy, you know what I'm saying? And I had a couple old heads that were like okay, they dug, they spoke to me, they were like, okay, you're going to a school, get your GED. You're going to take all your drug programs. And so, they guided me in a way. And their whole thing was not if but when you go home, you had this under your belt. You're not going to go home and you're going to be naked, where you don't have nothing. And I thank them for that.

Without the direction and guidance of the “Old Heads” Jose had met in prison, he noted, “I could've went and been a thug for 30 years and never had nothing done anything [positive].” Jose was deeply appreciative of the knowledge he received because the older men in prison gave him hope and never let him lose sight of his goal of someday being released from prison.

Jarret, who served 26 years in prison, talked about the importance of having “Old Heads” as peers during his period of incarcerated. He shared,

Oh, absolutely. Now I'm going to throw some names out there you gone know. But Tyrone Werts. Tyrone, he was more of a role model. Tyrone sort of represented to me how a lifer is supposed to conduct themselves through this experience in his dealings with other prisoners, in his dealings with the institution. In his dealings with trying to secure his freedom, his release, he represented all that to me. And it

crystallized when I seen ... Because he lived a couple cells down from me on the same tier. I was privileged to be on that tier because I had some OGs with me.

Jarret noted that although he was surrounded by many lifers during his period of long-term incarceration, he still found navigating the prison environment challenging. However, Jarret detailed how “Old Heads” like Tyrone Werts, notably one of the most influential life-without-parole-sentenced individuals in Pennsylvania, who served as the president of the “Lifers” and made many significant changes to the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, “exemplif[ied] what a lifer is supposed to be, man to the fullest.” For Jarret, Tyrone modeled for him and many other juvenile lifers how to strategically maneuver the prison administration in constructive ways in order to help secure resources to facilitate their positive growth and transformation. Jarret emphasized, “that shit helped me see, like this is how I walk this path. I can't walk it like him, I've got to walk it like me. But this is the path.” In other words, “Old Heads” were a source of institutional knowledge and personal support for many juvenile lifers.

The Religion Stage

Finding religion was also an important stage in the lives of many juvenile lifers, as it allowed them to rely on a higher power to help them maturely cope with and adjust to the chaotic, dangerous, and nihilistic demands of the prison environment. Martin, who served 42 years in prison, shared,

Well, I think in my maturation, I mean, my maturity kicked in, after so many years. I really began to look around and what I was seeing, I didn't like. Because it was for me, my mental was turbulent for me up there. There was a lot of turbulence there but because I really couldn't comprehend my whole surrounding, basically. But I would observe Muslims, particularly during Ramadan. Know I mean? And how peaceful and calm they were and then how happy they may be and all that, saying to myself, damn, I'm stressed the fuck out. And these cats, they're like, they ain't got a worry in the world.

Martin recalled being skeptical and initially resisting any form of religion during his period of incarceration. As he struggled to adjust to his life-without-parole sentence, he noticed that the incarcerated individuals who identified with the Muslim community in prison were not “acting the way [he] was acting,” even though some of them had life sentences as well and had just as much time incarcerated as he had. As a result, Martin decided to become a Muslim, which he said he took “very serious,” even in the midst of experiencing the infamous Camp Hill Prison Uprising that injured 69 staff members and 41 incarcerated individuals (Freeman, 1997). Martin noted how his faith, alongside the support of his Muslim brothers, assisted him in managing the uncertainty and danger of the riot. He noted, “we was actually all praying and taking time from rioting to pray. And I was offering some sincere prayers at that point.”

Phyllis, who served 40 years in prison, mentioned how her faith assisted her with being able to cope with the prison environment. She shared,

But, as time went on, because my higher power, I depend on him. That got me through a lot, and he's getting me through a lot now. But as time went on, like I told you, I put it in my mind and my heart and my prayers that I wasn't going to be there for the rest of my life. That I was going home. And that's when I start waking up, and coming to reality of what I needed to do, so I can get through that process to get to where I'm at today free. So, all that, and like I said, God. God was the most significant part of my life to stay sane and do what I had to do, and I got out.

Phyllis noted that developing her relationship with God during her period of incarceration was vital for her development because she needed to believe in something bigger than herself.

Having a higher power to look up to changed the trajectory of her life course. Phyllis stated, “I'll be honest with you. I know if it had not been for [God], I don't know. I could have lost my mind up there. Being there, dying in jail.” Given the precariousness of her situation, Phyllis, like many other juvenile lifers, found it important to believe in and be connected to a higher power to counterbalance the debilitating effects of serving a JLWOP sentence.

The Afrocentric Stage

Juvenile lifers also mentioned how developing a strong sense of history was important for their maturation and development as well; for many, this often included a focus on the Afrocentric perspective that allowed for a critical analysis of the treatment and conditions Black people in the United States experience. Terry, who served 48 years in prison, shared,

My joint was the books. I had a little system set up with Afrocentric books. I'd go around and I'd pass books out to young bols. I've got guys, killers and everything else say, damn Terry, my first book I ever read man, you gave it to me man. I'll never forget that book. That's what I was known for, introducing them to my crowd. Most of them were Afrocentric and they would help them come out of the gangs, come out of the nonsense and get more serious and start studying the history and start getting back with their wives and back with their families, cut the nonsense and get more serious and get on the ball.

Terry detailed how the Afrocentric perspective helped him and many other juvenile lifers to change their thinking and grow out of the street mentality, which included, “the gang talk, and the old memories.” Specifically, reading Afrocentric literature helped juvenile lifers develop a framework to understand the broader macrosocial factors that had led them to prison. Terry noted how he gained a deep consciousness after immersing himself in the Afrocentric perspective. He stated, “[The] system is set up, the penal system, the hood, court system, everything around us is set up to keep us with that slave mentality.”

Kevin, who served 29 years in prison, also talked about the importance of the Afrocentric perspective. He shared,

I would finally meet Russell Maroon Shoatz. Yeah. Russell Maroon Shoatz was a former Black Panther. I had heard about him before and I had heard about how he was referred to as The General. I was fascinated about him because unlike myself and even unlike Malcolm, he wasn't in prison for being an enemy of his community. He was in prison for defending his community. We started talking and immediately the conversation went into a talk about the Maroons. Our ancestors the Maroons, who all over the Western hemisphere, ran away. They were defined by their running away or escaping slavery, escaping the plantation, running into these inhospitable

areas. I don't know what made him go there with me, but that's exactly what I wanted to hear about because I started reading about the Maroons.

Kevin's time spent with Russell Maroon Shoatz, famously known for being an American political activist and founding member of the Black Unity Council, as well as a member of the Black Panther Party and a soldier in the Black Liberation Army, created a thirst for knowledge in the Afrocentric perspective. Kevin stated, "I started reading, studying Afrocentricity and Pan-Africanism, reading books by Chancellor Williams like *Destruction of a Black Civilization*. I started to see the importance of this information." For Kevin, the Afrocentric perspective provided him with a framework for understanding his depression in his childhood, which centered around understanding what he termed as "mysterious accomplishments," commonly known as the American dream. Before coming to prison, Kevin noted that "there was nothing that we were learning in our schools to connect us to greatness, and to just show us the paths that our people were on." Kevin further explained that the Afrocentric perspective was important to him and many other juvenile lifers because they entered prison with poor self-image and studying Afrocentricity and Pan-Africanism shifted their points of view.

The Generativity Stage

Toward the latter portion of their long-term incarceration, many juvenile lifers expressed the sentiments of Victor, who served 34 years in prison, that they wanted "to be a helper instead of a hurter. [And] to give back." Many juvenile lifers were able to make meaning in their own lives by positively impacting the lives of those with whom they came in contact during their periods of incarceration and by living vicariously through them.

Joe, who served 40 years in prison, shared,

We'd see a nice young boy that's cool, that's laid back, mind his business, got something on his head, we would scoop him up, hey man, let me talk to, young boy. What's going on with you? We'd go in the library, what you doing? Who you talking

to? You got kids? Stay in touch with your kids. We would do positive stuff like that. I think we was living vicariously through them; I knew I was. That helped me out a lot to see a brother leave, and don't come back. You know what I mean? Taking care of his family and all that. I loved that.

During the latter period of his incarceration, Joe became a mentor to younger incarcerated individuals. Although Joe remained hopeful that he would one day be released, he understood that he had more time behind him than in front of him. To create meaning and keep a positive outlook on life, he often lived vicariously through these younger incarcerated individuals. Joe became an “Old Head” by helping others avoid the pitfalls and mistakes he had made in his own life. Joe stated, “I would strike up a conversation if that person was acceptable and we busted it up. He would see me, ‘Come here, oldhead. Man, what do you think about this? Man, let me see. No. Look, you stay away from that nonsense.’”

Brian, who served 27 years in prison, shared,

And my thing was I wanted to make sure when I became the president while in prison at Dallas for the Lifers Association, I wanted to make sure that nobody ever went out of prison to cause harm.

Like Joe, Brian wanted to pour into other younger incarcerated individuals during the latter period of his incarceration. Although hesitant to take on such a powerful position as president of the Lifers Association due to prison politics, he noted, “the reason that my transformation into the presidency was we're going to cultivate the mind of the men.” Brian noticed that many incarcerated individuals lived with the mindset of no hope, so he made it a personal priority to invest all his talents and energies into those around him to enable “them [to] think better, do better, plan and strategize their lives to get out of prison.” Not only was Brian concerned with making better men, but also with transforming communities so the lives he changed in prison would ultimately “make a meaningful impact once they [were] released out of prison.” In other words, the generativity stage produced impact for juvenile lifers and those around them.

The Redemption Stage

Being restored to good standing was one of the most significant stages in the development of juvenile lifers. This process included taking full responsibility and acknowledging the serious harm they had committed, as well as being forgiven and released from the consequences of the worst mistake they made in their lives. Kevin, who served 29 years in prison, shared,

I think the greatest milestone of all of that, and I was still in prison, was at my resentencing. Yeah, this is when I finally gave my allocution. When I finally came face-to-face with the family members [of my] victim. His father was there, and his sister was there. This was the first time I had ever come face-to-face with them and was able to address them. To be able to address them in the court room and speak, for what I didn't realize was about 15 minutes, or 20 minutes by the time I sat back down. But to speak to them, and to hear his sister say, after me repeatedly apologizing, after hearing her say, I believe you. To hear, and then to learn afterwards that she approached my family and asked for my contact information and gave her contact information in exchange because she wanted to stay in touch.

Kevin detailed how having the opportunity to face his victim's family and be honest about his involvement in the act of homicide was the ultimate recognition of his humanity and his greatest milestone. Kevin recalled reading about his resentencing hearing in the newspaper the following day, where the last words in the article, a statement by the family of the victim, read, "I believe he would come out and do justice in the community." Kevin noted that to hear that vote of confidence from the victim's family validated that all the significant changes he had made in prison were not in vain.

Anthony, who served 26 years in prison, also shared about his resentencing process. He stated,

So, when I went [to the resentencing hearing], I went there and apologized to [the] family[of] the victim in my case. And so, I apologized, right? His nephew got up when it was his time to speak. And main man got a Confederate flag hanging out of his pocket. He burly, barrel-chested white boy with a big white beard walking up to the podium. I'm like, oh man, I know what this is hitting for. You hear me?

And he proceeds to tell the courtroom that after hearing what I had to say in the courtroom today, he thinks that I deserve a second chance.

After Anthony apologized to his victim's family, he recalled that "there wasn't a dry eye in the courtroom, you hear me? Wasn't a dry in the courtroom, bro." Like Kevin, Anthony noted how this was a culminating moment in his life, as the forgiveness of the victim's family, coupled with all he had accomplished during his period of incarceration, proved that the criminal justice system had been wrong when it had deemed him incorrigible.

Entrance, Success, Timing

Although the development of juvenile lifers generally unfolded in various stages, it should be noted that many of the traditional turning points emphasized in life-course criminology (e.g., military service, marriage, jobs) were effectively out of reach for them due to their long-term incarceration, which significantly impacted trajectory entrance, success, and timing. Jarret, who served 26 years in prison, shared how long-term incarceration can prevent certain life events from occurring, which impacted entrance into traditional trajectories. He shared,

So, to me, that's the first thing. So, while I wasn't having the societal traditional moments of getting a better job, getting a first home, a vehicle, all these other things which are extremely important. And those are the rites of passage of life and society, everything was sort of turned on its head. So, I was having experiences like that, but they were internal, they were for my redevelopment and my rehabilitation.

What Jarret's observation illustrates is that many of the significant changes juvenile lifers achieved were mostly developed internally, as there were few traditional turning points to grab hold of in prison. Although he never married or owned a car, Jarret recalled the moment where he began to change, specifically when he met Jane Golden, the founder of the Mural Arts program. Jarret emphasized that working with Jane not only provided him with foundational knowledge of mural making, but also that joining the Mural Arts program was

[a] personal watershed moment of everything that I've just talked about in one personal transformation, met my talent, met good people, met opportunity. It's like it all started to come together into a beautiful ball of possibility, creation, greatness, and giving me the seed of a whole new rebirth in life.

In other words, Jarret was still experiencing life course milestones, though they looked very different from traditional trajectories because of his long-term incarceration.

Anthony, who served 26 years in prison, shared how long-term incarceration disorders timing over the life course for those who experience long-term confinement. He shared,

I ain't got those really, man. I'm sorry to say. I ain't got none of them. That joint is a blur. That's a blur, them years and stuff, and I ... Dates and all that. And then there's this point in my time when you just stop keeping track of time, you hear me? It ain't relevant to people out here who are slaves to the Gregorian Calendar. Your time, it's just ... I don't ... Birthdays and all that. It's like, "What's that?" What day, or year, or holiday is it? If you ask cats, "Thanksgiving, when is Thanksgiving?" "I don't know. I don't know. I don't know."

Anthony expressed that holidays and birthdays have no real significance to individuals who experience long-term confinement. I was curious if Anthony ever celebrated any traditional moments in prison and he shared, "no, I forgot all of them. Even out here, my wife, they got to remind me that it's my birthday, bro. I ain't even going to hold you. These dates ain't relevant."

Anthony detailed that when you have a life sentence, you simply stop marking time.

Grant, who served 24 years in prison, shared how juvenile lifers were still able to maintain a level of success despite experiencing long-term incarceration. He shared,

I remember there was this girl I met. We got cool over the years and she used to write me and come visit me and stuff like that. She wrote me one time explaining to me about Ernest Hemingway... She talked to me about how he used to write a lot about love and war. She said, it seems to me that what he writes about as common parallel to what I see when I come see you, because she said that when he used to write was that he took notice of soldiers who were at war and how they would take chances at love because of the unpredictability of their circumstances. They don't whether they're going to go into a battlefield and get killed. They would do things that under normal set of circumstances, they wouldn't do. That's like what you see in prison. That's how that goes.

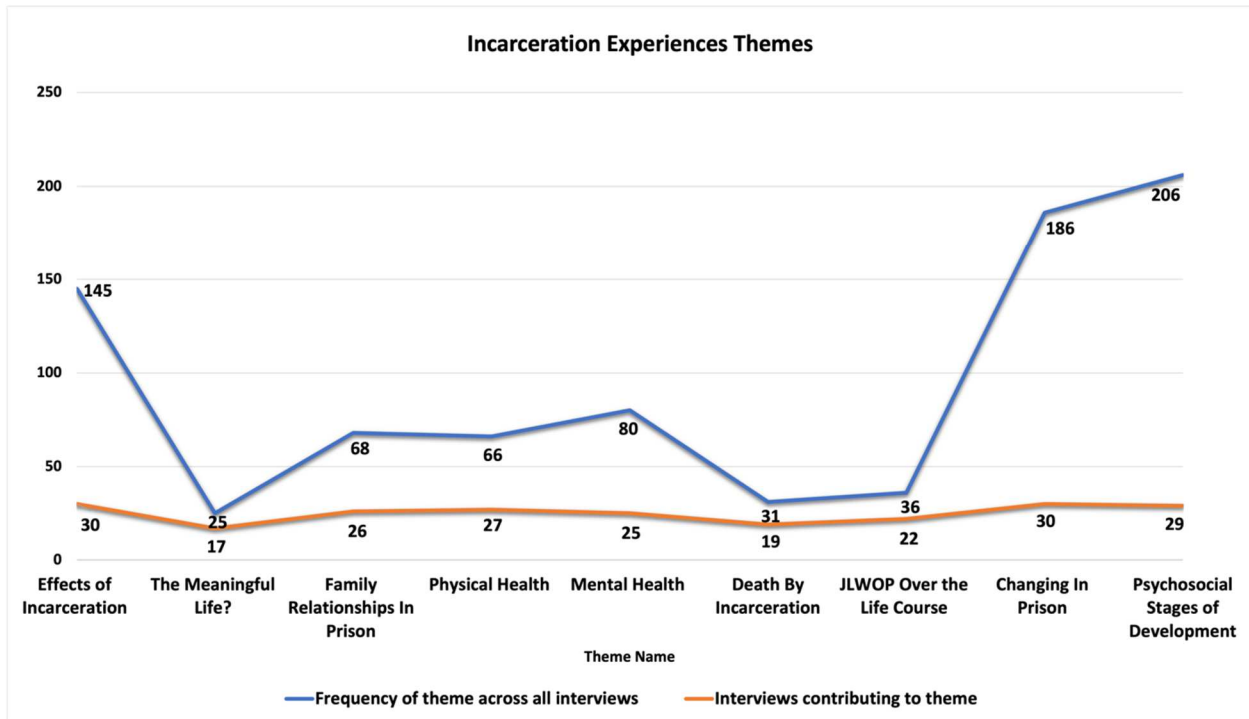
Grant expressed that because of the urgency and the unpredictability of a JLWOP sentence, many juvenile lifers did things in prison they would never do under normal circumstances. While Grant was in prison, he “didn't play no sports, didn't play any games, like card games, chess. I didn't do none of that. It was strictly all [business] for me.” Grant, like many other juvenile lifers, found ways to limit the distractions of the prison environment because they felt as though they were already behind the “8-ball” in terms of securing their freedom and having the possibility of being released from prison one day. Throughout his entire period of incarceration, Grant abided by the philosophy that “nobody's push for me to get out of prison can be greater than my own. Because at the end of the day, at 9:00, I'll be locking in the cell.” Ultimately, this allowed him to achieve much success with regard to his experiencing profound personal transformations while in prison, even though his life sentence was designed to limit his ability to change. In other words, for many juvenile lifers, despite the damaging nature of their life-without-parole sentences, they were able to achieve various levels of success and growth.

Chapter Summary

Overall, long-term imprisonment disordered the normal stages of human development for juvenile lifers. There were nine themes (*effects of incarceration, the meaningful life, family relationships in prison, mental health, death by incarceration, JLWOP over the life course, changing in prison, psychosocial stages of development*) identified throughout this chapter that provided insight into the effects of long-term incarceration and the significant changes juvenile lifers made to maturely cope to the demands of prison life (see Figure 7).²⁶

²⁶ It should be noted that although juvenile lifers contributed to the various themes listed in the figure, it does not necessarily imply that they experienced these phenomena. Instead, the number of times a code appeared, matched across all participants simply allowed the researcher to identify major themes.

Figure 7. Incarceration Experiences Themes



Regarding the effects of long-term incarceration all ($n = 30$) juvenile lifers reflected on their time in prison, and some acknowledged that there were some potential benefits of incarceration; however, there was a threshold where the effects of long-term incarceration began to produce diminishing returns. For most juvenile lifers they mentioned how their long-term incarceration impacted their ability to make meaning of their lives ($n = 17$) and had adverse consequences for other life domains such as the ability to maintain relationships with family ($n = 26$), physical health ($n = 27$), mental health ($n = 25$), positive outlook on life due to their death-by-incarceration sentence ($n = 19$), and their ability to participate in rehabilitation programming ($n = 22$). In addition, although the prison environment itself was not conducive to the development of responsible and mature behavior, all ($n = 30$) juvenile lifers mentioned how they were still able to achieve significant changes and growth over their life courses, even before the landmark *Miller* and *Montgomery* Supreme Court decisions. Also, nearly all ($n = 29$) juvenile lifers detailed the

various psychosocial transitions they went through to adapt and maturely cope with the demands of prison life, which generally unfolded in various stages (*Pain Stage, Identity Stage, Court Hearings Stage, Old Head Stage, Religion Stage, Afrocentric Stage, Generativity Stage, Redemption Stage*). Many of the significant changes juvenile lifers achieved were mostly developed internally as there were few traditional turning points to grab hold of in prison, significantly impacting trajectory entrance and timing. Interestingly, due to the unpredictability of a JLWOP sentence, many juvenile lifers remained malleable, allowing them to achieve trajectory success even though their life sentence was designed to hinder their ability to change.

CHAPTER 6: LIFE AFTER LIFE

Give Me A Shot!!!

*To see the world is a mission of mine
To get a shot at freedom is a goal for me
It's a job that takes a lot of work
A shot I need
Give me a shot to go to the store
A shot to hang with my family and friends
A shot just to be free
I need a shot to shine and smile
Give me a shot to show the new me
The one who knows the right way in life now
The one who loves and cares now
The one who knows the good about life now
Give me a shot and I will be a real help
To the children around me
Those of age and many more people in life.
Believe me (Give Me A Shot poem by Vincent Boyd-former juvenile lifer)²⁷*

This chapter focuses on the reentry experiences of juvenile lifers. As juvenile lifers—now middle-aged and older adults—entered society for the first time since adolescence, they faced many reentry challenges. The effects of long-term incarceration changed juvenile lifers in profound ways, significantly impacting their mental well-being following release from prison. Many juvenile lifers exhibited symptoms of the “post-incarceration syndrome,” which can include posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), institutionalized personality traits, and social sensory disorientation. Juvenile lifers also experienced many challenges to their reentry, the most significant challenge being their release from prison with indefinite parole, commonly referred to as “lifetime parole” or a “life tail.” However, despite facing these challenges during reentry, juvenile lifers were still able to experience success. Many juvenile lifers were able to reconnect with their childhood sweethearts and be formally recognized for their service to their

²⁷ This poem was shared with the researcher by Vincent Boyd, a former juvenile lifer.

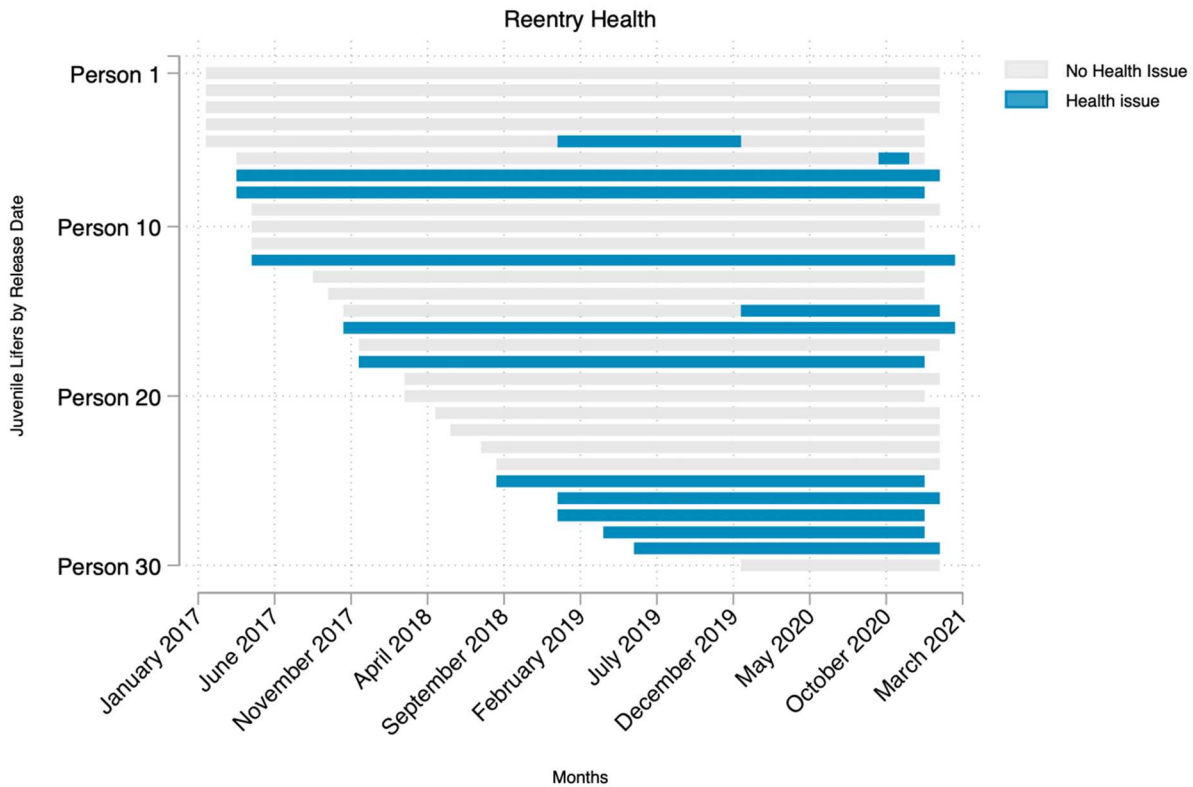
communities. Most importantly, because juvenile lifers had known it was likely possible that they could die in prison, they viewed their second chances at freedom as opportunities to remain hopeful and live meaningful lives after serving a life-without-parole sentence.

Below I present a narrative account of how the prison experiences of juvenile lifers over the life course shaped their lives after being released from prison for acts of homicide; this account details the residual effects of long-term incarceration and how juvenile lifers made sense of and ordered their lives, as well as regained normalcy after being incarcerated from adolescence to adulthood.

Life History Calendar Descriptives

Despite the Supreme Court rulings in *Miller* and *Montgomery* that sentences of life without parole for children were unconstitutional, nearly all (97%) juvenile lifers were resentenced and released from prison on lifetime parole. Many advocate and reform organizations have challenged the legality of lifetime parole, as it mandates juvenile lifers to be subject to parole supervision for the rest of their lives. Of all juvenile lifers who are currently on lifetime parole, only one (3%) was rearrested for a parole violation for which he spent 18 months in prison. As a result of their long-term incarceration, almost half (43%) of juvenile lifers were dealing with physical or mental health issues they had developed in prison (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Reentry Health Issues Index Plot



Also, many juvenile lifers expressed that obtaining housing was challenging following release from prison; however, once they were able to secure places to live, their housing statuses, for the most part, remained stable (*number of housing moves* = 2) over a 3-year period. Most interestingly, after spending multiple decades in prison, a significant amount (40%) of juvenile lifers reconnected romantically and were engaged in serious relationships with their childhood sweethearts (see Table 6. for Reentry Descriptive Statistics).²⁸

Table 6. Reentry Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
# of Housing Moves	28	2.29	1.21	1	6

²⁸ N represents the number of juvenile lifers who responded to the various items listed in the table. It should be noted that some items have missing data (N < 30) as some juvenile lifers had recall issues.

Rearrest	30	3%	--	--	--
Health Issue Reentry	30	43%	--	--	--
Childhood Sweetheart	30	40%	--	--	--
Lifetime Parole	30	97%	--	--	--

The Consequences of Long-Term Incarceration

Many juvenile lifers mentioned how leaving prison after being sentenced to life without the possibility of parole was such a surreal and out-of-body experience. When I asked them, “Can you walk me through the day you were released from prison?,” many juvenile lifers expressed the sentiments of Nolan, a 51-year-old Black man who had been home from prison for 44 months at the time of his interview. He shared, “it was just a mind-blowing experience, walking through that gate for the first time as a free man in 32 years without handcuffs or shackles.” However, as juvenile lifers entered society for the first time since adolescence, they realized that not only had the world they had once known before they had begun their long-term incarceration changed in significant ways, but that prison had changed them in profound ways, as well (see Figure 9). Juvenile lifers pointed out how they had begun to exhibit symptoms of what Liem & Kunst (2013) have described as “post-incarceration syndrome.” These symptoms include posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) from trauma experienced within prison, institutionalized personality traits resulting from the deprivations of incarceration, and social sensory disorientation caused by prolonged periods of limited social interaction outside of the prison environment.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

One of the main features of post-incarceration syndrome is chronic PTSD, which includes hyper-arousal/sleep disturbances and apathetic behavior (Liem, 2016). Many juvenile lifers described their inability to sleep, as well as feeling emotionally numb after being released

from prison, as a result of experiencing many traumatic events during their period of incarceration. Ronald, a 57-year-old Black man who had been home from prison for 46 months at the time of his interview, shared:

I didn't sleep for like two and a half, three weeks when I got out, and that whole time is a blur, to be honest, man. It's hard for me to ... I can remember certain points, but the whole thing, I don't know, was just like, I just couldn't believe [it].

One of the things Ronald wrestled with was how easy it was for him “to just walk out” of prison after being incarcerated with a life sentence at the age of 14 years old. He stated, “I found that [to be] some bull crap, but at the same time, I was happy to get out of there.” Ronald noted that he was so happy that he could not “slow [himself] down” and as a result, he did not sleep for weeks after being released from prison. Ronald recalled getting picked up from prison by his family and making many stops in his hometown of Pittsburgh afterwards. He went to Denny’s, took pictures in Mount Washington, and visited his mom’s house where his family threw him a welcome-home gathering. Although Ronald was enthusiastic for the opportunity to experience so many new things that he had been deprived of while in prison, he noted how “everything was a blur” and mentioned how he experienced many sleeplessness nights, as he was operating outside of the “normal prison routine time structure.”

Not only did juvenile lifers have trouble sleeping, but many also experienced emotional paralysis, as they could not fathom or believe that they were actually free after being released from prison. James, a 64-year-old Black man who had been home from prison for 43 months at the time of his interview, shared:

Yeah, it was an experience. It was something that really your body, your mind be numb. Yeah, mind be numb to really what's going on. You really don't actually comprehend what's going on until, I guess until you get to your house. Then you're like, Wow, this thing's for real, for real.

James, like many other juvenile lifers, felt as though they were living in a dream or a fantasy world after being released from prison. James recalled that it was difficult for him to process all the excitement he felt when his son and grandson picked him up from prison in “one of them nice Lincolns” and took him to see the rest of his family where they threw him a surprise welcome-home party. James noted that he had no framework to comprehend the range of positive emotions he was feeling because he had never experienced them during his 42 years of being in prison. Many juvenile lifers like James noticed that prison had robbed them of knowing what it felt like to experience emotions such as happiness, joy, laughter, etc., which led to their apathetic behavior following release from prison.

Institutionalized Personality Traits

In addition to juvenile lifers experiencing aspects of PTSD, they also described how prison had changed them in profound ways. Many juvenile lifers expressed the sentiments of Sean, a 47-year-old Black man who had been home from prison for 43 months at the time of his interview. Sean stated, “nobody leaves prison unscathed. No one leaves unscarred. You bringing home something with you.” Curious to understand what things juvenile lifers brought home with them after spending multiple decades in prison, I asked Jose, a 49-year-old Hispanic man who had been home from prison for 20 months, to reflect on this:

Interviewer: Give me an example of an adjustment that you had to make or that you maybe are still making.

Jose: I'll give you an example and it's a silly one. Let's say before COVID, I would go eat in a restaurant. I will always pick a seat that's on the wall.

Interviewer: Okay, why?

Jose: Because I know there's nobody going to attack me from behind and I could see both sides. If anything is coming forward to me, I can see. That's the mentality that you have from prison. You put your back to the wall, you know nobody is

going to get you from behind. That's one of the adjustments and I told you it was silly. One of the adjustments is I can eat with having my back exposed.

Interviewer: It feels foreign to you?

Jose: It feels foreign. Right.

Not only did Jose choose seats that were close to the wall, but he would also map out exits and scan people coming in and out of the places he visited, a skill he developed in prison. He noted, "I went into a restaurant while we were in Florida one morning for breakfast. I open the door and I just looked at everybody. I mapped everybody out, where they was at." Jose further detailed that being constantly fearful of new surroundings was one of his most challenging adjustments. What Jose described was that although many juvenile lifers were many months removed from the prison environment, they continued to conduct themselves as if they were still incarcerated.

Because juvenile lifers were so accustomed to the routine of prison, they also developed habits in prison that were extremely challenging for them to undo after release. Anthony, a 45-year-old Black man who had been home from prison for 31 months, shared,

When I was released from prison...I was holding my piss because I had to pee real bad. And I kept shifting in my seat. And my stepdad was like, yo, what's up? You got to go to the bathroom or something? I'm like, yeah. He was like, man, why you ain't say nothing? And it just hit me, during them [prison] trips, you don't usually have that opportunity. You know what I mean? When you going to court and stuff like that. And that's where I was mentally. And so we pulled over and went to this gas station. And it was the first time I walked into a gas station without a sheriff with chains behind me. You know what I mean?

While using the bathroom as a free man for the first time in 26 years, Anthony became extremely nervous because he realized he was taking a long time. He stated, "and so I stopped peeing and went outside and was like, yo, I'm almost done, and went back in to finish the pee." Due to Anthony's long-term incarceration, he thought it would be best to let someone know where he was because, as he noted, "they might come for me." What Anthony detailed was that prison had

significantly altered the way he processed the “free world” and his position in it. This made it challenging for him to abandon some of the routines and safety mechanisms that he had relied on for survival during his period of incarceration.

Social Sensory Disorientation

Due to navigating the prison environment for multiple decades, many juvenile lifers experienced social sensory disorientation after being released from prison; this is the feeling of not belonging or feeling out of place in certain social environments (Liem, 2016). Specifically, I asked juvenile lifers “what do you think [are] the other big buckets you have to work on?” Jose, who had been home from prison for 20 months, shared,

I think with me it's more of, I'm not going to say finding myself, finding a place. I knew my place in prison. I knew where I started at, I knew when I came home, I knew where I was at. Do you know what I'm saying? Here, I've got to find myself again and see where I fit in. Sometimes I feel like I'm an outsider.

Jose mentioned that after his release, when he went out in public, he often felt as though people were looking at him because of the way he might walk and talk, or even because of his physical appearance. He told me that this caused him deep anxiety, as he was always trying to determine if he belonged or fit into society. After spending 29 years in prison, he noted, “I fit in prison life, I fitted in there. Now, it's just an adjustment for here.” Not only did juvenile lifers feel out of place but they also felt alienated, as they found it difficult to keep up with the demands of modern society. Tara, who had been home from prison for 23 months, shared:

So, when I came home, everybody was like, get a job and do this and do that and do this and do that. So, I ended up getting a job at a The Fresh Grocer. So I ended up working there and I felt out of place. I felt so weird. I felt people were talking about stuff and I didn't know what they were talking about. It was up to age stuff, and I couldn't grasp conversations. I felt like an alien. So, I got really depressed and I started getting real bad anxiety, having to go to work. So, I quit, I just quit.

Tara recalled that when she returned to her hometown of Philadelphia, she felt like an “alien” because she could not participate in or understand the modern references people were using. Tara recalled being really anxious and depressed because she did not know “simple things,” which seemed very complex and advanced to her. For example, she noted, “even on a bus. It was like, your next stop, dah, dah, dah. And I was like mom, she was like, what? I was like, the bus just talked. And she was like, Tara, it does that now.” Although Tara tried to catch on as quickly as possible to the demands of modern society, she could not help but think people were thinking, “what is wrong with her?” Ultimately, Tara, like many other juvenile lifers, noticed that because she was removed from society for such a long period of time, it was challenging to “fit in” upon release and reentry.

Reentry Challenges

In addition to exhibiting symptoms of “post-incarceration syndrome,” juvenile lifers also experienced many challenges to their reentry (see Figure 9). These challenges often included learning time management, maintaining stable housing, finding employment, dealing with health issues developed in prison, and managing relationships with the “family” they had left behind while in prison. However, the most significant roadblock juvenile lifers experienced was being released from prison with lifetime parole (see Figure 9).

Managing Time

One of the most immediate challenges juvenile lifers faced after being released from prison was learning time management. Many juvenile lifers shared the sentiments of Daniel, a 47-year-old Hispanic man who had been home from prison for 18 months. He noted, “now I understand what people meant, like yo, man time goes by so fast.” Due to their long-term

incarceration, juvenile lifers felt as though they were in a race with time that they simply could not win.

Similarly, Grant, a 46-year-old Black man who had been home from prison for 39 months, reflected:

So, I was like, I'm running a race, I'm always behind. So, I'm running as fast as I can here, I'm trying to keep up as fast as I can. A lot of people could look and may see like I'm doing things effortlessly but it's really a lot of effort that goes into it.

One of the challenges for Grant, like many other juvenile lifers, was that when he came home from prison, he had to “hit the ground running.” As a result, juvenile lifers had almost no leisure time for themselves, as family members, friends, and romantic partners placed major expectations on their time, especially because to their loved ones, it appeared as though they experienced minimal difficulty reentering society.

As Grant noted, “I know a lot of [juvenile lifers] that come out in the three weeks they got a car and license....so it kind of takes away the excuses from people.” What Grant described was that as juvenile lifers quickly adjusted to the demands and responsibilities of adulthood, more obligations were placed on them, which significantly diminished the time they had to enjoy their freedom. Ronald, who had been home from prison for 46 months, talked about how much effort went into adjusting to the demands and responsibilities of adulthood. He shared,

It was just like, man ... That was a hard thing, trying to acclimate to all of these different things at once. It was like trying to, going to try to get some ID. I had a job lined up, but trying to get ID, and they wouldn't even talk, because you got to start with something like the Social Security card. I was born at home, so I go get the birth certificate from them, and they're like, this ain't enough information. You got to go back, but they keep saying, go get this or that, but I don't have ... They couldn't believe I just appeared on the grid. This is all post-911, brother. There was no, like, back in my day, all this documentation was unnecessary.

Although Ronald had secured employment immediately following release, he still had some trouble gathering all of the necessary documentation required to start working. However, like

Grant, Ronald also noted that even though he had acquired a certain level of success, such as a “job, passport, and being enrolled in college,” there was ongoing difficulty in trying to manage new systems, as well as fulfilling the duties of adulthood, which significantly impeded the amount of time he had to get other things done in his personal life.

Managing Housing

Also, many juvenile lifers expressed that obtaining housing was challenging following their release from prison. I asked Phyllis, a 60-year-old Black woman who had been home from prison for 45 months, “what have been some challenges for you since you've been home?” She shared,

First of all, I had moved around a couple of times. Then, finally, my oldest brother in Georgia, he helped me get my place that I'm in now. So, the struggle of trying to get your own place. Then I got with the Harrisburg, and they paid my rent the first six months when I was living in North Philly. I don't care for North Philly, but that's what was available, so I had to take it. So, I took that. I rented a room there. And then from there, I moved like three times. I was in Chester with my church in Chester. And then, from there, I was living with my sister for a while. Then, I went to North Philly. My last move was this move right here, when I got my own place. That was a challenge. Moving around.

Phyllis was very excited to finally have stable housing during the time of our interview.

However, she noted how difficult it was for her to keep moving from place to place following her release from prison. She further noted, “I was like, dag, I just, come on. I can't keep moving around. This is crazy. I need to be set, stable.” Phyllis, like many other juvenile lifers, expressed the uneasiness and discomfort of surviving many decades in prison just to return home and not be able to secure housing.

Aaron, a 53-year-old Black man who had been home from prison for 36 months, detailed how housing instability affected his mental well-being. He shared,

After I left my dad's house, finding somewhere to live because I ain't going to say from bed to bed because I never slept in a bed. I was sleeping on peoples' couches.

That was horrible for me, man. I'm telling you it got so bad one time, you know how I say I'd get in my head? And a lot of people, I don't tell a lot of people this. Well, I mean, I guess you can use it. I thought about committing suicide twice since I've been home, you understand what I'm saying? The Devil was in my head hard, you heard? And I was down in my godbrother's basement, you know what I mean, rats running all over the place. And I'm like... You know? And I always had this internal clock in my head when it was time for me to bounce. Nobody ever asked me to leave, but once. But always had an internal clock in my head. I see a look and be like, oh, okay, they're getting tired of me so it's time to go. But yeah, I thought about committing suicide twice since I've been home.

Aaron's inability to find housing after surviving 32 years in prison was an extremely rough transition. He recalled that during the process of moving from "couch to couch," he was once thrown out of a person's house who had placed all of his personal belongings by the trash. He noted, "I'm standing by the trash with my belongings waiting for my cousins and them to come and pick me up. That was degrading as hell." Aaron, like many other juvenile lifers, expressed the emotional toll of not having a stable place to stay and not having things of one's own. It caused many juvenile lifers to question the significance and purpose of their own lives, as they found it challenging to learn how to adapt and survive outside of the prison environment.

Managing Employment

Many juvenile lifers also expressed that it was difficult for them to maintain employment, as employers were reluctant to hire individuals with criminal records. Terry, a 70-year-old Black man who had been home from prison for 33 months, shared,

Well, the best job I've had since I came out, [was] at Eighth and Thompson at the wellness center and I was a residential aid, and it was a good job and it's pretty nice. And they let [me] go because they was taken over by another organization. And then they use our past, ex-offenders, juvenile lifer, they use that against [me]. That was the best job that I had, but since then, I had some other jobs that was all right, but a lot of nonsense came with them.

Terry described what Liem (2016) has termed the "felon label," where employers discriminate against formerly incarcerated individuals based on their past criminal history. As a result of this

discrimination, Terry reported that it was challenging to find stable employment. At the time of his interview, Terry was working several part-time jobs to make ends meet but still found himself lagging financially. He noted, “I think I should be right about now with almost three years [out of prison], I should have a much better job or a position than I am and where I'm at now, the money isn't all that good.”

Similarly, Ronald, who had been home from prison for 46 months, mentioned how difficult it was to maintain employment when having a criminal record. He shared,

Well, let's see. I had one, two, three ... a couple of jobs I had, I didn't have long. They want the background check, you know how that go. Then the same thing with apartments and places to live. But in the end, it was good for me because that's when I decided, you know what? I'ma just go back to school. I realized that as a regular person with no credit and all that, you can't get a loan from nowhere. But on the other hand, as a student, they don't even ask you how old you are. They don't ask you nothing. They just throw money at you. So, I was like, you know what? I'm going to get these Pell grants and a couple of student loans. I started at CCAC Community College.

Ronald expressed that because his employment prospects were extremely limited due to his criminal background, it made more sense financially for him to just become a professional college student. Ironically, Ronald was able to secure funds and scholarships designated for returning citizens pursuing higher education, and he used the additional income to help cover his living expenses. Ronald noted, “now [the criminal record is] working for me, when in the regular job market and the regular housing market, it worked totally against me.” Like Ronald, many juvenile lifers had to find creative ways to secure income for themselves, as there were limited opportunities available for them in the mainstream job market.

Managing Health

Juvenile lifers were also attending to mental and physical health issues developed in prison, which further impacted their reentry processes. I was curious to understand how Phyllis,

a 60-year-old Black woman who had been home from prison for 45 months, was dealing with mental health issues she had developed in prison. She shared,

But, since I had been incarcerated, they had diagnosed me with depression, of course. And, bipolar, so they say. And so, I do take medication for it. I don't see him, but we talk on Zoom. I talk to a therapist once a month.

Phyllis noted that she used a therapist to help manage her depression and bi-polar disorder.

Phyllis had spent a significant portion of her incarceration in solitary confinement (with her longest single period of time spent in solitary confinement being 18 months). As a result, some of the things she experienced continued to affect her deeply after her reentry.

Phyllis further noted, “it was horrible...people screaming and howling all night. They was throwing feces on the door, and urine.” Also, while Phyllis was in solitary confinement, a woman committed suicide by hanging herself in a prison cell. Phyllis noted, “we had to witness that, when they took her out on the gurney.” Many juvenile lifers like Phyllis noted how they had to seek out professional help to deal with the traumatic events they had experienced in prison, which carried over even after being removed from prison for many months.

I also asked Jerry, a 64-year-old Black man who had been home from prison for 44 months, if he was dealing with any health issues which had developed in prison. He shared,

Basically, just trying to get my medical on track. I was having polyps on my colon. They were all came back non-cancerous. I had three operations there, three operations on my toes. I had two operations for hernias in my testes, so it was just basically, what's been really setting me back is I needed corrective surgery. I been out 44 months and it's been a slow, ebb and flow. Surgeries, me going to school, me trying to get work.

Since coming home from prison, Jerry's physical health issues were a major setback to his ability to maintain stable employment. He had three jobs, working for PAR recycle, Philly Center City District, and Lowe's. However, Jerry had never been able to work for more than a few months at each of these jobs due to his having to undergo multiple surgeries and needing recovery time

afterwards. He noted, “to me, if I could just get my instability I’m going through dealing with the medical situation behind me, I think I’ll be all right.” Many juvenile lifers like Jerry noted that the physical health conditions developed in prison significantly hindered their ability to be self-sufficient and gain a level of independence.

Managing Relationships

One of the most challenging adjustments for juvenile lifers after reentry was being apart from the surrogate families who had raised them in prison, such as older life-sentenced individuals. Many juvenile lifers expressed the sentiments of Sean, a 47-year-old Black man who had been home from prison for 43 months. He stated, “many of us left our families and came home to relatives.” Jeanette, a 54-year-old Black woman who had been home from prison for 27 months, shared how the transition from being incarcerated to returning to society was her biggest life challenge to date:

Being plucked out of there and plucked out here, that was a hell of a challenge. It was a culture shock. I literally found myself missing, especially my friends to the point where I was depressed. You know what I mean? But I knew I had to show up for them. And for me. I knew I couldn’t become consumed by my depression. But it was a culture shock.

Jeanette detailed that although the friends she had developed in prison were not “blood relatives,” they still knew her better than her biological family did because she had spent so much time around them. She noted, “me, Phyllis, and Tara, we did all our time together. Well, I did 35 of Phyllis’ 40 something with her. She was there when I got there, and Tara did her 27 of my 35 with me.” Because Jeanette was taken from her biological family at such an early age, they did not see her evolve into a woman; they only knew her as the 17-year-old child who had left them.

Like Jeanette, due to chaotic nature of the prison environment, many lifers depended on one another and in the process, became “closer than blood.” Brian, a 48-year-old Black man who had been home from prison for 38 months, talked about the strong familial bonds he had formed with other lifers during his incarceration. He shared,

Brian: A brother called me today from prison. I have two phones, the phone that I'm on with you, and then this telephone right here. This is my prison phone. You understand, this phone is strictly for the prisons. I'll stop everything I'm doing to answer their call. I'll stop everything I'm doing to fulfill their requests.

INT: Why is that it's so important?

Brian: Because when I was in prison, Dallas had not seen a person as the president of the [lifer] association that was sentenced to die, walk out of the penitentiary. So, I walk out of the penitentiary with 2,400 people on my back at that one prison. I saw men leave off the block to come out into the hallway, the corridors, risk themselves getting a misconduct, risk themselves getting into it with a racist white correctional officer, just to come hug me and say that we finally have somebody that's going to go home and remember us and come back. Brian, you represent every last one of us and we know you're going to do it right. So that's what I walked out of prison with.

After serving 27 years in prison, Brain felt a strong moral obligation upon release to not forget all of the individuals who had poured into his life during his incarceration. Brian stated that this was of utmost importance to him because as he noted, “I know the people in the penitentiary better than I know my biological family, only because I grew up in pain with them. I grew up in that affliction with them.” Immediately following release, Brain went to several politicians' offices to lobby for the “family” that he left behind in prison and to inform lawmakers that “rehabilitation is possible” for individuals who had committed acts of homicide as adults.

Although many juvenile lifers like Brain found it extremely difficult to be separated from the surrogate families they had in prison, they also expressed the need to represent and advocate for them, especially those with life sentences who did not fall under the *Miller* and *Montgomery* Supreme Court decisions.

Managing Lifetime Parole

Overwhelmingly, juvenile lifers mentioned that the most significant roadblock they experienced during their transition from being in prison was having a lifetime of parole. Many juvenile lifers expressed the sentiments of Nolan, a 51-year-old Black man who had been home from prison for 44 months. He stated, “yeah, we were blessed to come home, but [they] replaced one illegal sentence with another. Y'all gave us parole, but y'all put us on parole for life.” Phyllis, a 60-year-old Black woman who had been home from prison for 45 months, detailed some of the challenges of being on lifetime parole. She shared,

And then I went to Chester, and I got permission and all, and that was cool. But the parole officer there, he was ridiculous. That was another reason why I had to hurry up and get out of Chester. He was like, he wanted me to do something wrong. He was horrible. He looked like a skinhead, for one. I can't think of his name. But I've still got something written on it with his name on it. He was the most horrible parole officer anyone could ever encounter. This man would come and ring the bell. It was like five o'clock in the morning. He wanted to pay me a house visit at five o'clock in the morning. He was the worst.

One of the things Phyllis pointed out was that she still felt like she was a lifer because of the heavy monitoring of the criminal justice system. Phyllis further noted that she would constantly receive threats from her probation officer. She stated, “and then [the parole officer] told me, when I had met him. He said, you know, this out here, this nothing like Philly. So, you better be mindful and be on your Ps and Qs here.” Despite Phyllis’s continued meeting of all of her parole conditions and staying out of trouble, she still felt as though her freedom could vanish at any moment.

Jason, a 52-year-old Black man who had been home from prison for 46 months, also talked about the uncertainty of being on lifetime parole. He shared,

I will say I have a pretty good relationship, it is lifetime parole. I have a pretty good relationship with my parole agent, but that could change. If the parole agent, which he said, my parole agent planning to retire next year, I get a new parole agent, that

could change. So, I think that's part of the burden that you have to worry about being on parole, is that the potential chance of getting another parole agent and then they want to get acclimated to you, and they bring on more restrictions.

One of the potential issues Jason revealed about having lifetime parole was getting assigned to a new parole officer. Although Jason had not had any problems with his current parole officer, he contended that this did not negate the fact that another parole officer could mandate a host of restrictions that could significantly alter his quality of life. Jason detailed that parole officers could restrict juvenile lifers from going to certain places and subject them to random urine testing. In his interview, Jason shared a recent experience in which his parole officers had randomly asked him to complete a urinalysis. He noted, "it's like really? You asking me to do a urine test. Like I haven't demonstrated anything that would make you worried about me about doing something wrong." Although many juvenile lifers like Jason were following the rules and staying out of trouble, they still felt that there was a level of mistrust among parole officers, which caused immense and ongoing anxiety due to being constantly subjected to a heightened level of supervision and monitoring.

Reentry Successes

Childhood Sweethearts

Despite facing many roadblocks to reentry, juvenile lifers were still able to experience success (see Figure 9). When I asked Brian, a 48-year-old Black man who had been home from prison for 38 months, what had been some of his successes since being home, he shared,

Meeting my wife, my success story, because I met a woman that spoke life into me. And the thing about it, me and my wife knew one another from when we went to Sunday school together at Zion Baptist Church. But what really stuck out was, when they did an article on me that was in, that was titled the young and the ruthless, in the Philadelphia Inquirer magazine, they had a picture of me in there. You know this woman had kept this article. And then we met and the first thing that she said when we met, when we went out on our first date, she just said, you need a hug. I see pain all up in you.

I was very curious about how Brain had reconnected with his childhood sweetheart whom he had met in Sunday school before he began his long-term incarceration. He noted, “we actually, we had met, I mean, I was on social media, she was on social media, so that led towards us starting out dating.” After enduring so many hardships in childhood and during his time in prison, Brain was very grateful to find solace in his childhood sweetheart, whom he married in November 2020.

Victor, a 56-year-old Black man who had been home from prison for 46 months, also talked about reconnecting with his childhood sweetheart:

Victor: She's my childhood sweetheart.

Interviewer: Wow. Your childhood sweetheart. When did you meet? What age did you meet her?

Victor: She was 14, I think I was 15.

Interviewer: Okay, so after you went to prison, you didn't talk to her anymore?

Victor: She wrote one letter. That's that letter I told you we was trying to find. I thought I still had it after 36 years.

Interviewer: How did she connect with you, or you connect with her when you came home?

Victor: A friend of mine. She seen him, I'm working. I'm working there at City Hall at time.

While Victor was on a lunch break, a co-worker put him on the phone with his childhood sweetheart. As Victor noted, “one thing led to another. I'm a happy, married man. You hear me?” Victor noted that having the opportunity to marry his childhood sweetheart gave him some of the childhood back that prison had robbed him of during his 36 years of incarceration. Victor acknowledged that he was also happy to have his childhood sweetheart back in his life to keep him grounded and focused, as she knew him very intimately.

Too Numerous to Mention

When discussing reentry success, many juvenile lifers shared the sentiments of Jarret, a 47-year-old Black man who had been home from prison for 16 months. He noted, “It's been too numerous to mention. It's been too numerous to mention. And for somebody who did 27 years, man, everything is a success.” Jarret further detailed:

I've been blessed. Currently have group exhibits up at MoMA PS1 in Queens, in New York City, as well as having in Philadelphia the African-American museum. That might've come down or it might come down this week. Beyond that, man, being respected almost immediately and embraced by mural arts in Philly, as you know, not just someone they worked with in prison, but someone who contributed significantly to the development of their organization. And then given the opportunities to blossom with that acknowledgement, to be the first resident artist in the Philadelphia district attorney's office, or in any district attorney's office in the country, to have a criminal justice art residency with a national and almost global profile. I did so much media.

One of Jarret's greatest accomplishments since being released from prison was being featured on PBS News Hour, which had always been a goal of his. He stated,

I used to watch PBS news hour. I used to stay in and get locked in a prison cell. They'd be like, you coming out or are you staying in? And I'd be like, I'm staying in, because I would watch [PBS] news hour at six o'clock to see what poet or what artist they're interviewing.

Jarret was extremely grateful to be interviewed by PBS and to be recognized for all of his artistic contributions to the community. He explained that he was constantly pushing himself to do more and felt he had already experienced tremendous success in a very short amount of time. He further noted, “again, it's a dream. It's a dream and I'm humbled.”

Anthony, who had been home from prison for 31 months, also talked about all of the success he had experienced since being released from prison. He shared,

And [although] there's a bunch of difficulties, man, I'm dealing with it, I'm persevering, I'm thriving out here, bro. I can't really have many complaints based upon where my life is right now. I'm really heavy in Erie right now. I'm doing murals for the city. I'm good. I'm really good. Well, the art community out here,

man. I got a bunch of awards, emerging artist awards. Got a lot like mural commissions, doing two of the city right now, just won a commission to do those joints.

Apart from all of the awards Anthony had received, he shared that his greatest success had been developing a relationship and having a standing lunch meeting with the district attorney, who was once vehemently opposed to his release. Anthony noted that the district attorney had publicly stated, “I oppose[ed] Anthony's release, coming out. But now I see him as the example of what reentry looks like.” Anthony noted that he did not expect to be embraced so thoroughly by his community, nor to be surrounded by individuals who would open doors for him beyond what he could ever have imagined.

Life After Life

The ultimate success story that nearly all juvenile lifers talked about was having the opportunity to receive a second chance at life and to not be relegated to spend the rest of their lives in prison (see Figure 9). Specifically, I asked juvenile lifers, “could you tell me what it means for you to have this opportunity to be back in society, going from a death sentence to having life or now living life after life?” Jarret, a 47-year-old Black man who had been home from prison for 16 months, shared,

It means everything. It means everything, man. Let me say this, man. I didn't mention this, but this is how much it means. So, I was living in parallel worlds simultaneously. On one hand, I knew I could die in prison. I had seen it too many times, by natural causes, unnatural causes, and anything in between. And I also knew that I could be released. Under some algorithm, some spell, I could be released. But I also was saving money for my cremation. I had read a newspaper from the Reading Eagle or something and it was this funeral home advertisement. They was like, we'll cremate you for \$1250. And I was like, all right. I'm going to write them, get their brochure, and check it out. So, I started saving money for that as well, because I wanted to make sure that I had that part of my life, if that was going to be the result, I had that squared away as well, to the best of my ability.

For Jarret, life after life meant that he no longer had to fear dying in prison. He noted, “I don't have to worry about cremation as much. That's not on my vision board.” As a result, Jarret stated that he is now able to pursue another chance in society and to live a meaningful life. Importantly, many other juvenile lifers, recognized their second chances as great responsibilities, especially since the victims who had lost their lives in the acts of homicide the lifers had committed could not have the same opportunity.

Jerry, a 64-year-old Black man who had been home from prison for 44 months, also mentioned how life after life was an opportunity for him to remain hopeful and optimistic. He reflected:

To me it means everything in the world. Now that you're out here, this is the chance of a lifetime. This is the chance that you claim that you wanted. Now that you're here, do something with it. But realize, man, everything is not going to go your way. Everything is not going to unfold like snap, crackle, pop. You going to have to be in the pursuit of your own happiness. You going to have to be patient. You going to have to be forthright, you're going to have to be flexible. I think that's how I was able to get out of jail after doing 42 years. I've never come to the point, that if something went wrong, this would be the end of me. You know in your life you're going to be tested. I was flexible. I'm flexible. What I'm looking for once I get out, my life is going to change. It's going to change for the better. The best years of my life are waiting to unfold. Even though I told you I had about... It's probably about nine surgeries, that the best years of my life is still... I'm right there... I'm going to use the analogy of 12 o'clock. I'm right there at 11:50.

For Jerry, life after life represented the ability to have agency over his life and remain positive.

Jerry further noted, “It's 11:50. I got just 10 more minutes worth of adjustments to go through and I will be there.” Despite facing major setbacks during his transition from prison, Jerry was committed to making the best out of his reentry experience and exercising the patience for things to eventually turn in his favor. As he noted, “I'm ready to get me an apartment. I'm ready to get me a car. I just applied for a job.”

Most importantly, Nolan, a 51-year-old Black man who had been home from prison for 44 months, shared how life after life was an opportunity for juvenile lifers to display that they deserved another chance. He stated,

That's a great question. For me, I look at this opportunity as a chance to, and I think you probably heard me say this before, as a chance to change the narrative for us. We can come home and do positive things, if [you] give some of us that's deserving of a second chance, just let us prove that we deserve a second chance. You know what I mean? And come home and represent, so for me I always felt like this opportunity, although I've benefited from it, it's bigger than me, because I want to change the narrative so that the guys that I'm leaving behind, who weren't juveniles [lifers] can also get this opportunity and show that they deserve this opportunity. You understand what I'm saying? Because the first thing this society will say, if any one of us get in any trouble, look at these guys, were kids when they caught their case. And they can't even control themselves, so why should we let y'all out? And y'all weren't kids. You understand what I'm saying?

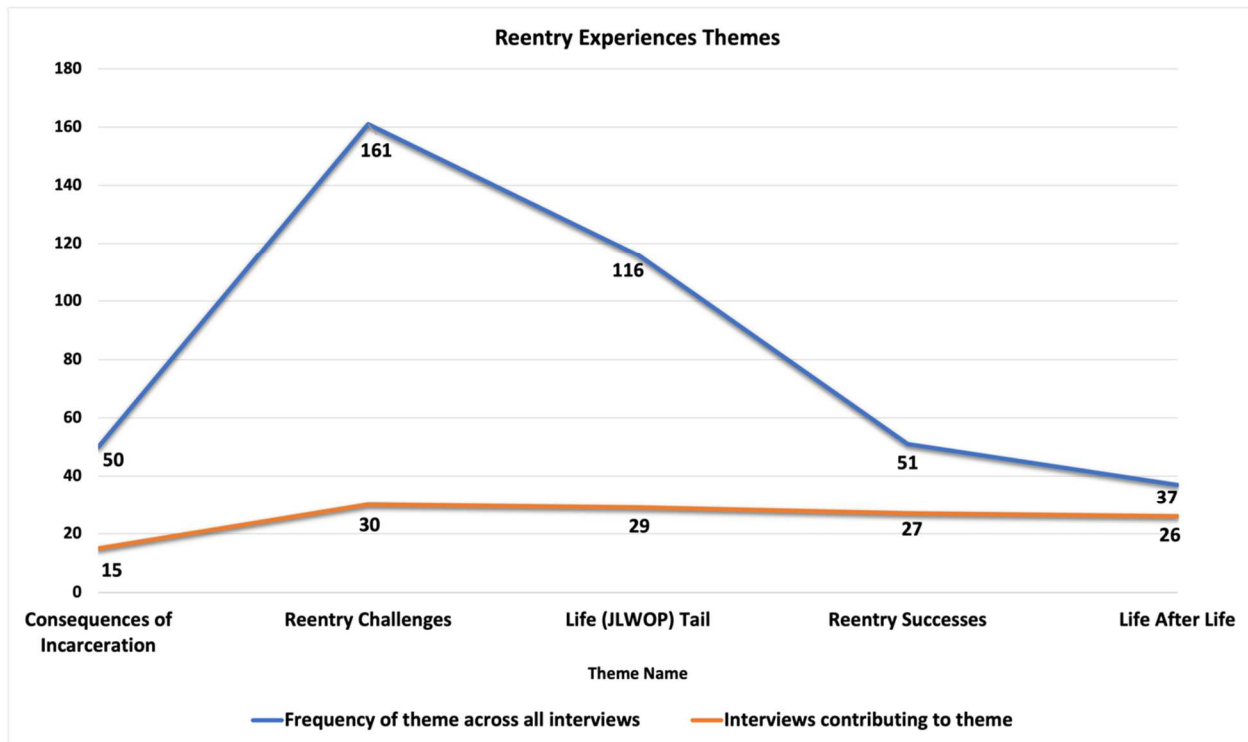
What Nolan illustrated was that life after life was “bigger” than just juvenile lifers proving that they were not incorrigible; it was a responsibility to be “living witnesses” of the growth and transformation individuals can obtain even after committing serious harm. Nolan vividly remembered meeting Brian Stevenson with a few other juvenile lifers, where Stevenson had charged them with changing the narrative for individuals with life sentences. Nolan noted, “to hear him say that was huge for me.” Like Nolan, many juvenile lifers felt that their obligation was to take advantage of the rare opportunity that had been provided to them, not only for themselves but as Nolan noted, “for the people that we say that we love, and we want to see home as well.”

Chapter Summary

Overall, the long-term incarceration experiences of juvenile lifers in prison had profound effects on them following release. There were five themes (*consequences of incarceration, reentry challenges, life [JLWOP] tail, reentry successes, life after life*) identified throughout this chapter that captured the consequences of long-term incarceration and how juvenile lifers made

sense of and ordered their lives, as well as regained normalcy after being incarcerated from adolescence to adulthood (see Figure 9).²⁹

Figure 9. Reentry Experiences Themes



When understanding how experiences in prison over the life course shape life outside of prison, half ($n=15$) of all juvenile lifers mentioned how long-term incarceration produced problems that persisted long after they were released from prison. These problems included exhibiting symptoms of the “post-incarceration syndrome,” which comprised of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), institutionalized personality traits, and social sensory disorientation. Also, all ($n=30$) juvenile lifers mentioned experiencing challenges to their reentry. These challenges often included learning time management, maintaining stable housing, finding employment, dealing with health issues developed in prison, and managing relationships with the “family” they had

²⁹ It should be noted that although juvenile lifers contributed to the various themes listed in the figure, it does not necessarily imply that they experienced these phenomena. Instead, the number of times a code appeared, matched across all participants simply allowed the researcher to identify major themes.

left behind while in prison. Another most significant challenge nearly all ($n=29$) juvenile lifers mentioned was being released from prison with lifetime parole. Despite facing challenges during reentry, nearly all ($n=27$) juvenile lifers mentioned how they were still able to experience success. This included the ability to reconnect with their childhood sweethearts and to be formally recognized for their service to the community. Most importantly, the ultimate success story that most ($n=26$) juvenile lifers recalled was having the opportunity to receive a second chance at life, which they viewed as an opportunity to remain hopeful and live meaningful lives after serving a life-without-parole sentence.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study captures the lived experiences of predominantly African American men and women in Pennsylvania before, during, and after serving a mandatory life sentence without the possibility of parole. Although there have been studies that shed light on prison life and reentry, there is insufficient research using a developmental and life-course perspective to understand the prison life experiences of those confined over the course of their adult lives, and how these experiences shape reentry processes. Life-course research has failed to document the various changes (psychological, social, behavioral, physical) that occur during and after periods of incarceration (Jamison & Grounds, 2005; Kazemian & Travis, 2015). The present study responds to recent calls that contend contemporary life-course studies are needed to shed light on the gaps in our knowledge regarding the impact of long-term incarceration and to assess the effects of long-term incarceration in relation to an individual's circumstances prior to arrest and after release (Jamison & Grounds, 2005; Kazemian & Travis, 2015). By exploring the lived experiences of juvenile lifers, this study contributes to the criminological literature regarding how long-term confinement that began in the critical period of adolescent development alters normal stages of human development, and the effects it has for reentry successes or failures. Furthermore, the present study is the first to consider the early life experiences of juvenile lifers, with an emphasis on schooling and education. As a result, the study provides insights into the similarities and differences in the early life experiences of juvenile lifers, which are useful for prevention for those who maybe at-risk for engaging in acts of homicide (and other serious offenses for which long-term incarceration could result).

Key findings reveal interconnectedness of the three main life periods (pre-incarceration, incarceration, and reentry) of juvenile lifers. As it relates to the pre-incarceration period, findings indicate that the schooling experiences of juvenile lifers served as an important domain for human development over the life course. Many juvenile lifers expressed how educational experiences during childhood were connected across the life course (incarceration and reentry periods). This included not understanding the significance of education to transcend their circumstances and the potential benefits of attending/staying in school. These findings contribute to the limited amount of research dedicated to examining the role of schools and education through a developmental and life course framework (Payne & Welsh, 2014). What is most significant about juvenile lifers' experiences in school is that many of these experiences were due to factors existing outside of school. These findings are consistent with existing literature that details how outside-of-school realities can influence students' attachment to educational systems as well as experiences and outcomes inside of school (Laub & Sampson, 1993; Milner et al., 2015; Sampson & Laub, 1997). The schooling experiences of juvenile lifers revealed that certain school practices can either increase the likelihood of offending or cultivate social and academic well-being over the life course. Particularly, these findings speak to the relationship between education and crime over the life course, which have generally been studied only during the period of adolescence (Payne & Welsh, 2014).

Findings also highlighted that traumatic childhood experiences also known as "adverse childhood experiences" added much complexity to the lives of juvenile lifers before their period of long-term incarceration. Prior to their incarceration for acts of homicide, juvenile lifers had been exposed to one or more adverse childhood experiences, which generally included being gang-involved, engagement in adult roles, exposure to violence, physical/sexual abuse, and

significant health issues. These findings are consistent with ACES research, which has thoroughly documented that children sentenced to life in prison are more likely to be exposed to traumatic life events in childhood (Baglivio et al., 2014; Felittle et al., 1998). However, when unpacking these adverse childhood experiences over their life course, juvenile lifers noted that the mere presence of traumatic childhood events alone was not solely responsible for their decisions to commit acts of homicide. Also, they noted that their experiences in childhood and adolescence were not just independent or summative but rather multifaceted. These findings suggest that to fully understand the pre-incarceration experiences of juvenile lifers, adopting an additive approach may be inappropriate as it implies traumatic life events can somehow be viewed in isolation or ranked (Collins, 1991; Cuadraz & Uttal, 1999; Weber & Parra-Medina, 2003). Although methodologically “thorny”, these findings also suggest it may be time for traditional disciplines like criminology to wrestle with measuring, analyzing, and interpreting intersectional data (Bowleg, 2008).

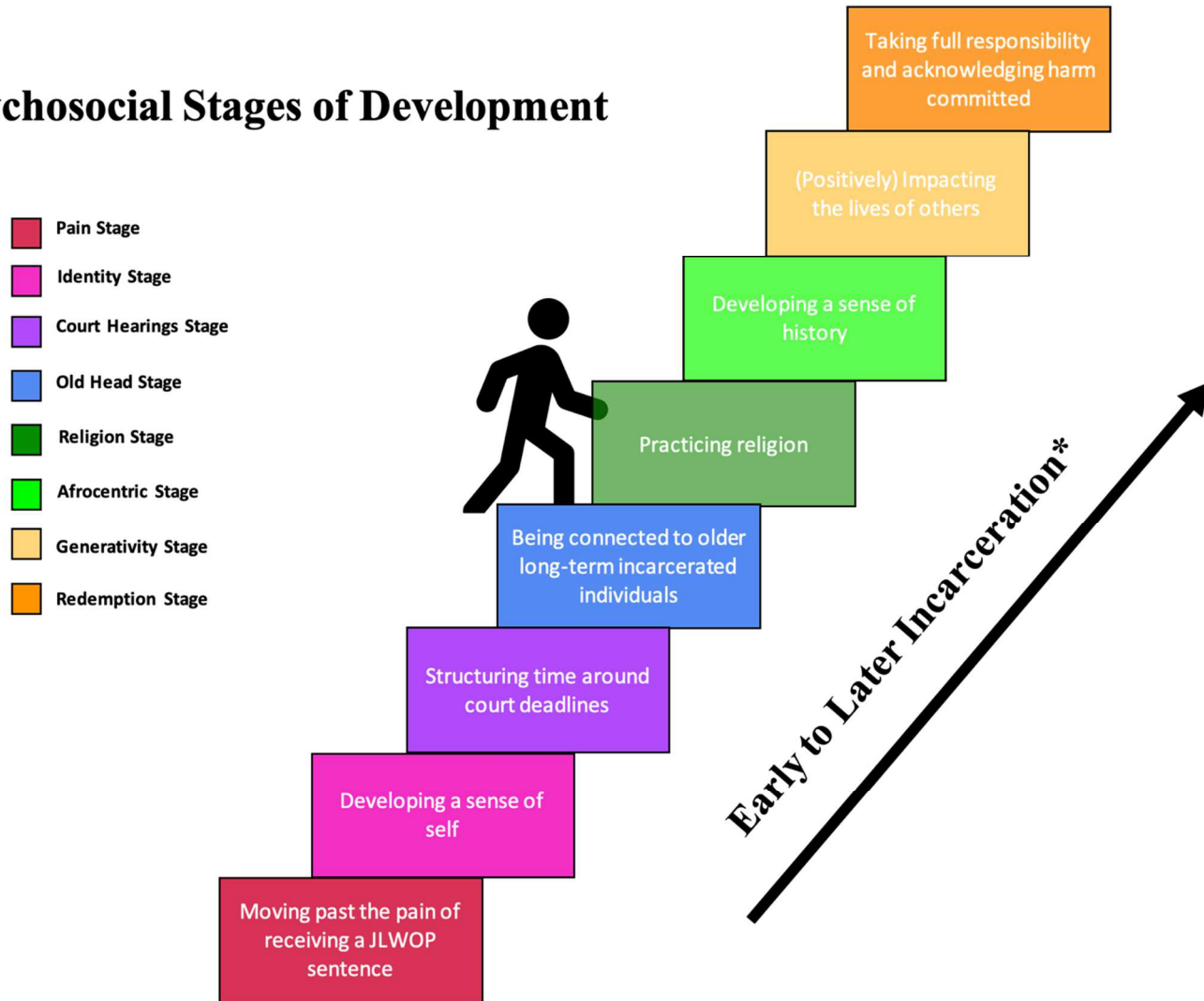
Moreover, findings indicate that there is a wide consensus among juvenile lifers that prison was an extremely negative experience overall. Long-term incarceration adversely affected their health (both physical and mental), educational attainment, employment opportunities, and ability to sustain meaningful familial and romantic relationships. Despite this, some juvenile lifers also reflected on certain benefits of incarceration. These findings are consistent with research which details that the negative effects of imprisonment are not uniformly experienced by all individuals who are incarcerated (Flagan, 1981; Leigey, 2010; Porporino, 1990; Toch, 2010; Zamble, 1992; Zamble & Porporino, 1988). Viewed from a holistic standpoint, findings suggest that juvenile lifers did not view the effects of long-term confinement in a dichotomous manner, but viewed the effects of incarceration as being very complex. When reflecting on their

time in prison, juvenile lifers acknowledged that while there were some potential benefits of incarceration, there was a point where the effects of long-term incarceration began to produce diminishing returns. Similar research has alluded to this relationship as the inverted “U-shape” (Toman et al., 2015) and findings support that it may be time for correctional research to move beyond the “good” and “bad” effects of long-term incarceration and wrestle with the complex curvilinear relationship. Interestingly, although the prison environment itself was not conducive to the development of responsible and mature behavior, findings revealed juvenile lifers went through a series of psychosocial transitions to maturely cope to the demands of prison life and achieve significant changes and growth over their life course even before the landmark *Miller* and *Montgomery* Supreme Court decisions. These findings are particularly salient as they identify specific developmental stages that resulted in the significant changes juvenile lifers made in their lives during their period of incarceration, which has been a difficult task for scholars researching the effects of long-term confinement (Cochran & Mears, 2017; Garabedian, 1963; Maruna & Toch, 2005).

What is most interesting is the psychosocial changes juvenile lifers went through unfolded in various stages (*Pain Stage, Identity Stage, Court Hearings Stage, Old Head Stage, Religion Stage, Afrocentric Stage, Generativity Stage, Redemption Stage*) similar to the stages that Erikson mapped out in his psychosocial theory of human development (see Figure 10). For example, Erikson (1963; 1968; 1982) detailed that during adolescence individuals need to search for a sense of self by experimenting with multiple roles. One of the initial stages juvenile lifers experienced was the “identity stage”, where they tried to develop a sense of themselves in prison by engaging with multiple identities. Additionally, in early adulthood, Erikson (1963; 1968; 1982)

Figure 10. *Psychosocial Stages of Development*

Psychosocial Stages of Development



*It should be noted that although the stages juvenile lifers experienced tended to be ordered, they did not always unfold linearly.

notes that young adults need to develop intimate relationships with others. During their period of incarceration, juvenile lifers developed relationships with older life sentenced inmates they called their “Old Heads,” and joined a religious community which functioned as a brotherhood. Most importantly, according to Erikson (1963; 1968; 1982), in middle and late adulthood it is critical that individuals begin to reflect on their lives and what they have contributed to society as well as accept past mistakes in order to make meaning of their lives. Toward the latter portion of their long-term incarceration, many juvenile lifers made meaning of their lives by positively impacting the lives of those with whom they came in contact and by taking full responsibility and acknowledging the serious harm they had committed.

During the reentry period, findings indicate that the consequences of long-term incarceration produced problems for juvenile lifers that persisted long after they were released from prison. This is consistent with research which details individuals are often worse off when they leave prison as a result of developing behaviors that are adaptive for survival in prison (Clemmer 1958; Jamieson & Grounds, 2005; Johnson, 2002; Warr, 2020). Interestingly, although prison changed juvenile lifers in profound ways, only one juvenile lifer in the sample recidivated, for an offense for which he spent 18 months in prison. However, findings suggest this should not be the only metric for reentry success as juvenile lifers experienced many challenges during the reentry period. These included learning time management, maintaining stable housing, finding employment, dealing with health issues developed in prison, and managing relationships with the “family” they had left behind while in prison. These findings indicate that it is important to not solely focus on recidivism measures but to also take into consideration psychosocial adjustment and changes as well in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the reentry experience (Jamieson & Grounds, 2005; Kazemian

& Travis, 2015; Kim, 2012; Maur & Nellis, 2018; Mauer et al, 2004; Mears et al., 2013; Weisberg et al., 2011).

Implications

Findings from this study have policy, theoretical, and methodological implications for criminal and social justice as they relate to individuals who experience long-term confinement. Individuals who experience long-term confinement represent a unique population that requires special consideration but has been largely neglected by both researchers and policy makers (Kazemian & Travis, 2015; Kurlychek et al., 2012; National Research Council, 2014; Parker, 2005; Vannier, 2018). There are various benefits to developing a viable agenda to provide recommendations for individuals who experience long-term confinement, as they spend a substantial number of years in prison but are eventually released (Mauer & Nellis, 2018; Mauer et al., 2004; Petersilia, 2003; Travis, 2005). In addition, due to recent pending legislation in the State of Pennsylvania,³⁰ we can expect that even more individuals serving lengthy sentences will eventually be released. Below, I summarize how the findings of this study have implications for Pennsylvania's life without parole (LWOP) policies, policies for prison programming, new directions for criminological theory, and methodological considerations for studying individuals who experience long-term confinement.

Policy Implications

This study captures the lived experiences of men and women in Pennsylvania before, during, and after serving a mandatory life sentence without the possibility of parole as children in order better understand how long-term confinement impacts individual development. The United States is the only developed nation in the world that sentences juveniles to life without parole,

³⁰ See Appendix J Life Without Parole Reform.

although neuroscientists and developmental psychologists agree that the culpability and brain development of adolescents is much different than adults—with the adolescent brain continuing to mature into the late 20s (Elizabeth & Steinberg, 2000; Gardner & Herman, 1999; Johnson et al., 2009). When adolescents are given life without parole sentences, it implies that these individuals are incorrigible and irredeemable of change—a lasting judgement that occurs before psychosocial development is even complete. However, most juvenile lifers eventually mature and develop over the life course, and are not the same people they used to be at the time of their crime (Johnson & Dobrzanska, 2005; Johnson & Leigey, 2020; Johnson et al., 2016). The findings of the lived experiences of juvenile lifers speak to the significant changes (life transitions) they made during extended periods of confinement that demonstrates their maturity, remorse, and capacity for rehabilitation. All juvenile lifers in this study have been convicted of murder; however, we know that there has only been an approximately 1% reconviction rate for other crimes (Drafty-Kapur & Zottoli, 2020). As a result, their acclimation back into society serves as a case study for other individuals serving life sentences, and speaks to what we already know from criminology: that longer sentences do not necessarily increase public safety (Flagan, 1981; Irwin, 2009; Johnson & Dobrzanska, 2005; Johnson & Leigey, 2020; Johnson et al., 2016; Kim, 2012; Leigey, 2015; Leigey, 2010; Maur & Nellis, 2018; Mauer et al, 2004; Zamble 1992; Zamble & Porporino, 1988; Weisberg et al., 2011). Specifically, policy makers may want to reconsider the use of lengthy sentences, as those serving life sentences do not pose a significant threat to the outside community. Relatedly, findings from this study may be useful for parole board decisions and resentencing hearings. There are still a significant number of juvenile lifers who are potentially eligible for resentencing and parole but are still incarcerated or not yet paroled. However, findings from this study identified specific developmental markers for

maturity that resulted in the significant changes juvenile lifers made in their lives during their period of incarceration. These developmental markers for maturity could be potentially used as a guidepost in resentencing hearings and parole decisions.

The findings of this study also have implications beyond just JLWOP sentences, including Pennsylvania LWOP sentences. Currently, there is pending legislation³¹ to reform life without parole sentences in Pennsylvania. However, there is much debate regarding the appropriate sentence length for individuals who commit certain acts of homicide (first degree/second degree murder and first degree/second degree murder of law enforcement). By gleaning from the incarceration and reentry experiences of juvenile lifers, policy makers may consider enacting legislation that will extend abolishing life without parole sentences for young adults (those who committed acts of homicide up to 25 years of age). This extension would enable current young adults to have their cases reviewed by a court for reassessment and re-sentencing to a sentence with the possibility of parole. This is critically important, as there are approximately 7,800 people serving life without parole (LWOP) sentences in the State of Pennsylvania (The Sentencing Project, 2020). According to the National Research Council (2014), policy makers must consider early release opportunities for those serving life sentences as maintaining a large population of lifers and those serving lengthy sentences exerts a great amount of financial strain. Specific to Pennsylvania, policy makers must be more intentional about the relationship of policy to the cost of incarceration; for example, a 50-year sentence for a 16-year-old could cost the State approximately \$2.5 million (Henrichson & Delaney, 2012). Also, based on marginal costs of incarceration alone, juvenile lifers who have already been released back into the community will yield \$9.5 million in Pennsylvania State correctional cost

³¹ See Appendix J Life Without Parole Reform.

savings over the first decade (Drafty-Kapur & Zottoli, 2020). Policy makers must count the cost of incarceration and reevaluate sentencing practices beyond the “low-hanging fruit” that represent nonviolent offenses (Gottschalk, 2014).

Moreover, this study also captures the incarceration experiences of juvenile lifers. Due to the capacity for growth and transformation that juvenile lifers exhibited, it is imperative for legislators and prison officials to develop and invest in prison programming, including for individuals serving long sentences. Irwin (2009) and Toch (2010) contend that participation in prison programs can significantly contribute to the transformation processes of individuals serving life sentences. Prison programming is usually designated to individuals who will be released from prison someday; it has not traditionally been designed to address the needs of those serving life sentences. This has largely been the case because policy makers and advocacy organizations have placed greater emphasis on prisoner reentry, which has taken attention away from the quality of life inside prisons for individuals who are not approaching release (Kazemian & Travis, 2015). However, the findings of this study highlight the need to develop and invest in prison programs for all individuals serving life sentences; including those with life without the possibility of parole (LWOP), life with the possibility of parole (LWP), and “virtual life” sentences of 50 years or more, that may minimize the harmful quality of life issues of incarceration, such as extreme idleness, mental and physical health deterioration, the inability to fulfill adult roles, extended periods in solitary confinement, the inability to form family ties, and increased risks of recidivism (Johnson et al., 2016; National Research Council, 2014).

Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study reveal that we need to begin to incorporate ideas from psychosocial theories of human development into life course criminology—especially when

studying long-term confinement. Integrating psychosocial theory with the life course perspective can promote a clearer understanding of how long-term confinement affects individual development as it relates to acquiring human and social capital behind bars. As juvenile lifers navigated the route to adulthood during extended periods of incarceration, psychosocial theory provided insight into the key developmental markers needed to be well-adjusted to the demands and responsibilities of adulthood while incarcerated. This is critically important, as insights from psychosocial theories of human development revealed that these developmental markers unfolded in several stages rather than independent processes such as aging and increased rationality (Shover, 2018), improved social bonds (Laub and Sampson, 2003; Sampson & Laub, 1993), shifts in self-identity (Maruna, 2001), mature coping (Johnson & Dobrzanska, 2005; Johnson & Leigey, 2020; Johnson et al., 2016), or other cognitive changes (Giordano et al., 2002).

Findings from this study also highlight how the life-course perspective can be used to understand more fully how time in prison can be used in a strategic manner to develop an environment that encourages personal growth, improves psychosocial well-being, and diminishes the collateral consequences caused by long-term confinement. Currently, research examining how the prison environment impacts behavior remains limited (Kazemian & Travis, 2015). The prison environment is organized in such a manner that it is incompatible with the outside world, and these differences are experienced most by individuals serving long sentences (Johnson et al., 2016; Kazemian & Travis, 2015). It may be time for life course criminology theorists to think about creating a new subfield, “Life-Course Corrections” focused on understanding how prisons can serve as alternative societies in which individuals could live according to standards that are not vastly different from the outside world. Similar to environmental criminology theorists who

have proposed a new paradigm (“Environmental Corrections”) for improving the field of corrections (Schaefer et al., 2015), the subfield of “Life-Course Corrections” would focus on how the major tenets of the life-course perspective could be adopted to create a “parallel universe” (Schriro, 2000) in which life inside prison would resemble life outside of prison (Johnson et al., 2016; Zamble et al., 1984). This is important, as most individuals who experience long-term incarceration may not be prepared for life outside of prison if they continue to remain for many years or adapt to the dysfunction and mistrust that remain commonplace for those living inside of prisons (Jamieson & Grounds, 2005; Kazemian & Travis, 2015). Plainly stated, prisons need to parallel the outside world and the subfield of “Life-Course Corrections” can be utilized to research how prisons can be arranged in such a way that allows individuals serving lengthy sentences to live as human beings during the course of their confinement, as opposed to being stored in a cell for long periods of time, neglected, or abused (Johnson et al., 2016; Schriro, 2000).

Methodological Implications

This concurrent mixed-methods study employs semi-structured life history interviews, as well as life history calendars, to examine the effects of confinement over one’s life course. Using life history interviews and life history calendars can potentially serve as a model for other life course studies that are interested in understanding the effects of long-term confinement, as they can be used to plot through time the significant trajectories and transitions that have occurred in a person’s life (Davies et al., 2018; Freedman et al., 1988). From a life-course perspective, researchers have largely ignored individuals serving life sentences as a research population due to the fact that conducting studies in prison can be methodologically complex as a result of the challenges of gaining access to correctional facilities for research purposes (Kazemian & Travis,

2015; Reiter 2014; Stevens, 2019; Vannier, 2018; Wacquant, 2002). Specifically, collecting life histories and life history calendars can make study designs more methodologically feasible, as they provide the capacity to retrospectively explore, analyze, and make sense of the narratives of formerly incarcerated individuals. According to Stevens (2019), emphasis is needed to incorporate formerly incarcerated individuals as participants in research in order to circumvent the institutional roadblocks placed by prison authorities to limit the knowledge base of the incarceration experience. In addition, it is important to incorporate the voices of formerly incarcerated individuals, as the effects of long-term imprisonment have almost exclusively been examined during the period of confinement (Jamieson & Grounds, 2005). Further, Jamieson and Grounds (2005) have contended that longitudinal studies need to examine the consequences of long-term incarceration in relation to an individual's circumstances prior to arrest and after release in order to capture the complexities of the prison experience. The methodological design of this study (Figure 1) examines the pre-incarceration, incarceration, and reentry experiences of formerly incarcerated individuals and speaks to how individuals' pre-incarceration experiences (education, family, adverse childhood experiences, social bonds) have implications for human development during the period of imprisonment, and what these consequences mean for life outside of prison.

Currently, there is a pressing need to accurately document the life changes (pre-incarceration, incarceration, and reentry experiences) experienced by juvenile lifers, as few studies examine the lives and experiences of juvenile lifers empirically. Additionally, there is no national repository of data about juvenile lifers' experiences in prison, despite the increasing presence of lifers in prisons in recent decades (Parker, 2005). As a result, there have been two conflicting views of incarceration over the last few decades—the potential benefits of

imprisonment versus the undesirable/criminogenic effects of incarceration—which have made the interpretation of the prison experience dichotomous (Sampson, 2011). There is a great deal of research that concludes that the effects of imprisonment are either good or bad; however, these simplistic views may not truly capture the intricacies of the prison experience and its consequences (Sampson, 2011). Because this study’s methodological design uses both life history interviews and life history calendars, and this study uses a developmental and life-course framework to inquire about the entirety of the prison experience (pre-incarceration, incarceration, and reentry experience) for individuals serving long sentences, it provides insight into and offers further depth and dimension into some of the nuances between these two conflicting views of the incarceration experience.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This dissertation contributes to the criminological literature by using a developmental and life-course perspective to draw upon the lived experiences of individuals who have been incarcerated from adolescence to adulthood; however, this study is subject to several limitations. This study uses a purposive sample, which specifically solicits individuals who are juvenile lifers in the State of Pennsylvania and who have been released from prison during or before December 2019. As the current study explores how long-term confinement shapes reentry processes, it excludes those who are currently incarcerated and those released after December 2019 to allow for a substantive period of time to inquire about the reentry experiences of juvenile lifers. As a result, the potential findings must be interpreted with caution, as the current study may not generalize to juvenile lifers who have not met the study’s inclusion criteria. Future studies should examine the narratives of juvenile lifers who have been released from prison in other states and after the time period of December 2019. Nonetheless, analyzing the narratives of juvenile lifers

in the State of Pennsylvania provides a rich account into the effects of long-term confinement over the life course as individuals serving long sentences have been neglected from the broader life course research due to the fact that gaining access to this offender population is extremely challenging (Kazemian & Travis, 2015; Kurlychek et al., 2012; National Research Council, 2014; Vannier, 2018).

Moreover, there are also limitations with regard to the longitudinal data collection method of the study. Jamieson and Grounds (2005) highlighted the need for longitudinal studies to document the consequences of long-term incarceration in relation to an individual's circumstances prior to arrest and after release. Although it would be ideal to capture the experiences of juvenile lifers prospectively, this was not feasible due to the high costs, practical dilemmas, and the fact that juvenile lifers were expected to spend the remainder of their natural lives in prison, as there was no possibility of release until recent legislation (Gross, 2019; Johnson & McGunigall-Smith, 2008; *Montgomery v. Louisiana*; Ogletree & Sarat, 2012; Kleinstuber et al., 2016; Parker, 2005; The Coalition to Abolish Death By Incarceration, 2020; The Sentencing Project, 2018; Villaume, 2005).³² Also, because the life-course data (pre-incarceration, incarceration, and reentry experiences) is collected retrospectively, it heavily relies on the memories of juvenile lifers, which may be selective or limited. One of the main challenges for juvenile lifers was completing the life history calendars as many of them expressed how "dates don't matter". However, to address these concerns, the current study compiles multiple

³² Prospective longitudinal designs can be very expensive depending upon how the population of interest is sampled and for how many years a researcher collects data for a cohort. As it relates to understanding how long-term confinement affects human development with implications for reentry experiences, a prospective longitudinal design is not practical. A researcher would have to wait decades to collect information from a potential cohort while also navigating administrative bureaucracy from prison authorities and IRB officials to study individuals while they were incarcerated. For an extensive review of longitudinal designs (prospective/retrospective), see Farrington (1979).

data sources (life history interviews, previous survey responses, and official court documents) to validate participant responses; however, recall is still likely to be an issue as it pertains to events that occurred during the pre-incarceration period in the life course, as semi-structured interview questions ask participants to reflect on childhood and adolescent experiences (ages 5-17). Future studies should consider exploring prospective research designs with recently sentenced juvenile lifers given the *Miller* Supreme Court decision.

Conclusion

The present study offered an empirically informed understanding of how the criminal justice system affects those who have been incarcerated from adolescence to adulthood and examined what the long-term consequences of incarceration means for life after prison. Although research has explored the experiences of those serving life without parole sentences, there still remains almost no research on the developmental and life-course experiences of ex-prisoners generally. By using a developmental and life-course framework, the present study fills a critical gap in the life-course literature that informs our understanding of how long-term incarceration affects life-course development and shapes reentry processes for men and women who were sentenced to mandatory life without parole as children. The present study moves forward our understanding beyond the descriptive interpretations of the effects long-term incarceration by empirically investigating and analyzing the narratives of juvenile lifers before, during, and after their periods of incarceration.

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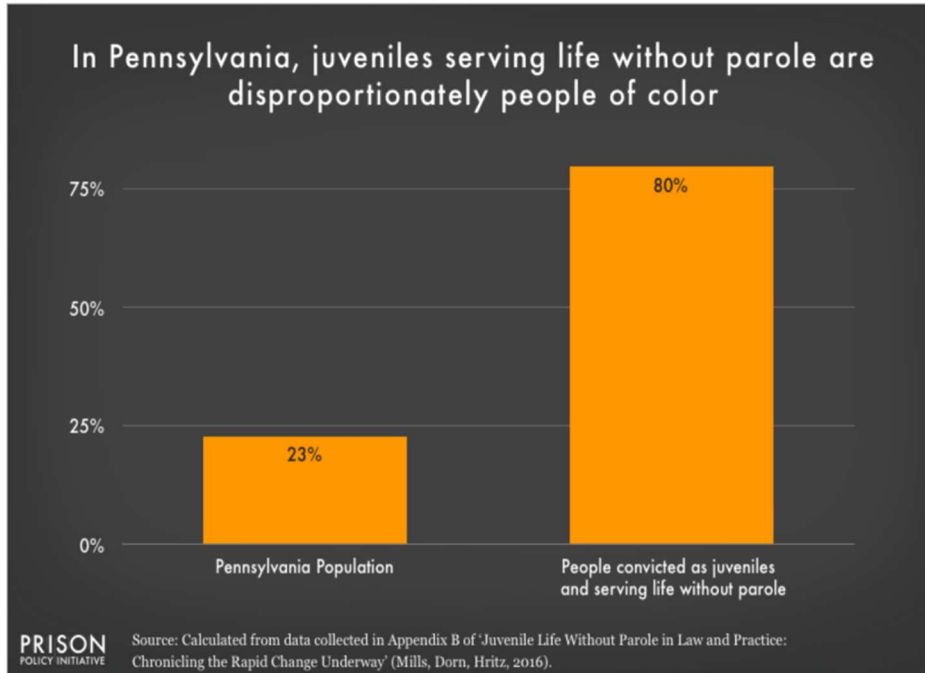
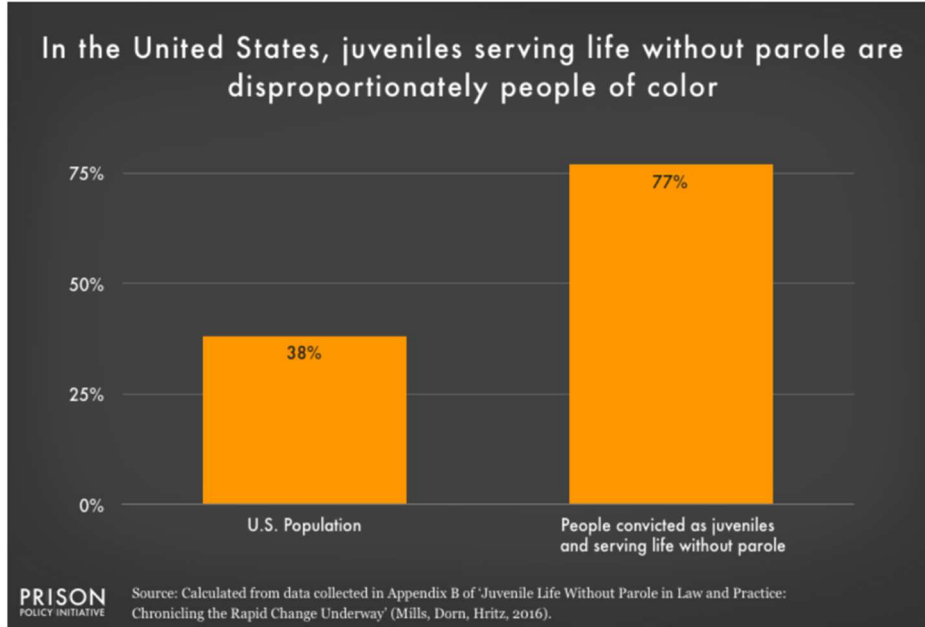
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APPENDIX A. JLWOP DISPROPORTIONALITY



APPENDIX B. IRB APPROVAL



Research Integrity & Compliance
Student Faculty Center
3340 N. Broad Street, Suite 304
Philadelphia PA 19140

Institutional Review Board
Phone: (215) 707-3390
Fax: (215) 707-9100
e-mail: irb@temple.edu



Approval for a Project Involving Human Subjects Research that Does Not Require Continuing Review

Date: 06-Apr-2020

Protocol Number: 26622
PI: WARD, JEFFREY T
Review Type: EXEMPT
Approved On: 06-Apr-2020
Committee: A1
School/College: LIBERAL ARTS (1800)
Department: CLA:CRIMINAL JUSTICE (18350)
Sponsor: NO EXTERNAL SPONSOR
Project Title: Life After Life: A Narrative Review of Incarceration and Reentry
Experiences of Children Sentenced To Life Without Parole

The IRB approved the protocol 26622.

The study was approved under Exempt or Expedited review. The IRB determined that the research **does not require a continuing review**, consequently there is not an IRB approval period.

If applicable to your study, you can access your IRB-approved, stamped consent document or consent script through ERA. Open the Attachments tab and open the stamped documents by clicking the Latest link next to each document. The stamped documents are labeled as such. **Copies of the IRB approved stamped consent document or consent script must be used in obtaining consent.**

Note that all applicable Institutional approvals must also be secured before study implementation. These approvals include, but are not limited to, Medical Radiation Committee ("MRC"); Radiation Safety Committee ("RSC"); Institutional Biosafety Committee ("IBC"); and Temple University Survey Coordinating Committee ("TUSCC"). Please visit these Committees' websites for further information.

Finally, in conducting this research, you are obligated to submit the following:

Amendment requests - All changes to the research must be reviewed and approved by the IRB.

Changes requiring approval include, but are not limited to, changes in the design or focus of the research project, revisions to the information sheet for participants, addition of new measures or instruments, increasing the subject number, and changes to the research funding. Changes made to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects and implemented prior to IRB approval must be promptly reported to the IRB.

Reportable New Information - using the Reportable New Information e-form, report new information items such as those described in HRP - 071 Policy - Prompt Reporting Requirements to the IRB **within 5 days**.

Closure report - using a closure e-form, submit when the study is permanently closed to enrollment; all subjects have completed all protocol related interventions and interactions; collection of private identifiable information is complete; and analysis of private identifiable information is complete.

For the complete list of investigator responsibilities, please see the HRP – 070 Policy – Investigator Obligations, the Investigator Manual (HRP-910), and other Policies and Procedures found on the Temple University IRB website: <https://research.temple.edu/irb-forms-standard-operating-procedures>.

Please contact the IRB at (215) 707-3390 if you have any questions.

APPENDIX C. LIFE HISTORY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL GUIDE

Pre-Incarceration Experiences

1. Who did you live with before you were incarcerated?
2. Growing up, what was your zip code at the home you lived the longest/spent most time?
3. Did you live in public housing/Section 8 housing?
4. How would you describe your relationship with your parent or guardian?
5. What was your childhood like growing up?
6. Were you attending school at the time of your offense? If yes, what grade were you in? If no, why not?
7. What were the names and types of schools you attended (elementary, middle, high school)?
8. How would you describe your schooling experiences growing up?
9. Have you ever been diagnosed with a learning disability (attention deficit disorder [ADD/ADHD], dyslexia)?
10. Did you ever attend special education classes?
11. Have you ever been diagnosed with a mental illness (example: bipolar disorder, multiple personality disorder, borderline personality disorder, conduct disorder)?
12. Were you ever suspended or expelled from school?
13. Did the friends you hung around before your crime get in trouble with the law?
14. Growing up were you ever a part of a gang or street crew?
15. Who would you say you looked up to as a role model (positive or negative) when you were growing up and why?
16. Before your current life sentence, were you ever incarcerated or have contact with the law?
17. Before your current life sentence, did you have any children?
18. Before your current life sentence, did you have any romantic relationships?
19. Before your current life sentence, how often did you drink alcohol?
20. Before your current life sentence, how often did you use drugs?
21. Before your current life sentence, how many juvenile convictions did you have?
22. Before your current life sentence, how many adult convictions did you have?
23. How would you describe your health growing up?
24. Were you physically abused at any time before your incarceration?
25. Were you sexually abused at any time before your incarceration?
26. Did you ever witness acts of violence such as hitting, yelling, shoving, and/or stabbing in your home as a child?
27. Did you ever suffer a significant head/brain injury before your incarceration?
28. Growing up, did you consider your neighborhood to be generally a safe place from crime?
29. Were drugs sold openly in your neighborhood?
30. How often did you ever hear about violence occurring in your neighborhood (Shooting, drive-by, stabbing, fist fights, threats of violence, domestic violence)?
31. How often did you see about violence occurring in your neighborhood (Shooting, drive-by, stabbing, fist fights, threats of violence, domestic violence)?
32. Were you ever the victim of violence in your neighborhood? If so, please describe what happened.

Nature of Crime

1. What is the crime for which you served a life sentence without the possibility of parole? Please be as specific about the offense as possible (example: first degree murder, second degree murder, etc.)
2. Can you explain the events leading up to the crime?
3. In what city and state did this crime occur?
4. Was anyone killed during this crime?
5. If a death occurred, were you determined to be the killer/triggerman? That is, were you determined to be responsible for the actual killing (e.g., shot the gun or used the knife)?
6. How many codefendants/accomplices were involved in the crime?
7. If there were codefendants in your case, what were they convicted of?
8. What were the ages of your codefendants?
9. If there were codefendants in your case, what sentence did they receive?
10. If your crime involved a death, what was the race of the victim(s) who died?
11. If your crime involved a death, what was the gender of the victim(s) who died?
12. If your crime involved a death, what was the age of the victim(s) who died?
13. Were you convicted of felony murder (such as a felony that unexpectedly result in a homicide)?
14. Were you under the influence of alcohol or drugs at the time of the crime?

Incarceration Experiences

1. At the time of your incarceration did you understand that the sentence of life-without parole meant that you would spend the rest of your life in prison?
2. Can you tell me what it is like to serve a life without parole sentence as a juvenile?
3. After your arrest, but before your conviction, where were you housed?
4. After your conviction, where were you housed?
5. How many prisons have you lived in since you began your life sentence?
6. How long were housed at the last prison you were incarcerated at?
7. In total how long were you incarcerated?
8. What significant milestones happened in your life while in prison?
9. Have you received any disciplinary reports while you have been in prison?
10. Have you ever been in solitary confinement while in prison?
11. What is the longest period of time you have spent in solitary confinement?
12. Have you completed high school while in prison?
13. Have you completed any other educational achievements while in prison?
14. What classes or rehabilitation programming were you involved in at while incarcerated? If you were not involved in any programming, why not?
15. While incarcerated were you ever denied programming?
16. What work experiences have you had while incarcerated?
17. What other experiences or awards have you acquired while incarcerated?
18. What external organizations were you involved in with while in prison?
19. Have you changed as a person during your incarceration? If so, what do you credit to your change during your incarceration?

20. Who would you say you looked up to as a role model (positive or negative) when you were incarcerated and why?
21. Describe your experiences with your family while in prison? (parents, siblings, significant others, children)
22. On average, how often did you receive face-to-face visits with family and/or friends?
23. On average, how often did you have telephone conversations with family and/or friends?
24. On average, how often did you exchange mail with family and/or friends?
25. How has your health been affected while incarcerated (physical & mental)?
26. Were you physically abused at any time during your incarceration?
27. Were you sexually abused at any time during your incarceration?
28. Did you ever witness acts of violence such as hitting, yelling, shoving, and/or stabbing during your incarceration?
29. Did you ever suffer a significant head/brain injury during your incarceration?
30. Were you ever the victim of violence during your incarceration?

Reentry Experiences

1. Can you walk me through the day when you were released from prison?
2. How much time did you get to prepare for release?
3. What did you do first upon release?
4. Given your long stay in prison what have been some challenges? (emotional, self, landscape of Philadelphia, relationships). Have there been any successes?
5. How have you prepared to re-enter? Was there a plan?
6. At this very moment how would you describe your health?
7. Do you have any health conditions that have developed a result of your time incarcerated?
8. Can you talk about the re-sentencing and reentry process?
9. How is the parole process?
10. Are there any barriers of being on parole?
11. What does it mean to have lifetime of parole?
12. What does it mean to you to have this opportunity to be back in society?
13. How does it feel to go from a death sentence to having life?
14. How do you have life after life?
15. Thinking about your younger self what contributed to your change?
16. How does this occur?
17. How do you prepare for a sudden release?
18. Are there any programs for Juvenile Lifers?
19. Where do you go for help?
20. Where do you currently live? Zip code?
21. Did you return to the same neighborhood before you were incarcerated?
22. Do you live in public housing/Section 8 housing?
23. Have you been able to find employment?
24. Have you been able to find stable housing?
25. Do you consider your neighborhood to be generally a safe place from crime?
26. Are drugs sold openly in your neighborhood?
27. How often did you ever hear about violence occurring in your neighborhood (Shooting, drive-by, stabbing, fist fights, threats of violence, domestic violence)?

28. How often did you see about violence occurring in your neighborhood (Shooting, drive-by, stabbing, fist fights, threats of violence, domestic violence)?
29. Since release, have you been the victim of violence in your neighborhood? If so, please describe what happened.
30. Are you pursuing or enrolled in any educational or schooling opportunities?
31. Have you got into any trouble with the law since being incarcerated?
32. How would you describe your relationship with your family? (parents, siblings, children)
33. How would you describe your relationship with your friends?

APPENDIX D. ABBREVIATED LHC

AGE YEAR	BACKGROUND/ PRE- LWOP SENTENCE											
	5 1974	6 1975	7 1976	8 1977	9 1978	10 1979	11 1980	12 1981	13 1982	14 1983	15 1984	16 1985
DOMAINS												
HOUSING												
#1												
#2												
#3												
#4												
#5												
#6												
#7												
#8												
#9												
#10												
FAMILY												
Live With:												
Mother & Father												
One Parent												
Siblings												
Childrens												
Other Relative												
#1												
#2												
#3												
#4												
#5												
RELATIONSHIPS												
Maintained Relationship With:												
Mother												
Father												
Siblings												
#1												
#2												
#3												

APPENDIX E. ABBREVIATED RESENTENCING MEMORANDUM

RECEIVED
10/20/2016 06:33:37 PM
ACTIVE OFFICIAL RECORDS
CRIMINAL JUSTICE COURT
By: K. TET

DEFENDER ASSOCIATION OF PHILADELPHIA
BY: Keir Bradford-Grey, Defender and
Bradley S. Bridge
Identification No. [REDACTED]
1441 Sansom Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102
(215) 568-3190

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA : THE COURT OF COMMON
PLEAS
CRIMINAL TRIAL DIVISION

vs.

[REDACTED]
: CHARGES: MURDER, PIC

RESENTENCING MEMORANDUM FOR [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] by Bradley S. Bridge, Assistant Defender, Assistant Defender,
Shonda Williams, Assistant Defender, and Keir Bradford-Grey, Defender, hereby
submits the following resentencing memorandum in support of the resentencing of

I. INTRODUCTION

[REDACTED] with the assistance of his attorneys and his family, submits this
Resentencing Memorandum for consideration by the Court. On February 13, 1986,
when he was just 17 years old, [REDACTED] given a mandatory life sentence without
the possibility of parole for a 2nd degree murder charge. After the Supreme Court
held in *Montgomery v. Louisiana*, 136 S. Ct. 718 (2016) that the bar on juvenile

life sentences without parole¹ applied retroactively, the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office made a resentencing offer of 30 years to life which [REDACTED] accepted. *See Exhibit A*, Offer Decision Form. The effective date of [REDACTED] sentence was September 30, 1985, so he has now served 31 years and is presently eligible for parole. The purpose of this Resentencing Memorandum is to demonstrate that [REDACTED] is an excellent candidate for parole and should be so recommended by this Court. For the reasons that follow, it is our position that [REDACTED] by virtue of his exemplary efforts toward his education, vocational training, and self-improvement, is well-positioned to be a productive and positive member of the community upon his release.

II. HOME PLAN

If [REDACTED] is granted parole, he will live with his sister [REDACTED] prior to finding his own apartment. [REDACTED] resides at [REDACTED] with her two adult children. [REDACTED] would have his own bedroom in [REDACTED] house and would not be expected to pay rent until after he finds gainful employment, at which time he will pitch in monetarily until he is able to find his own place. [REDACTED] would expect [REDACTED] to assist with household chores, although this would be a relaxed requirement since her primary intent is to provide her brother with a safe and comfortable environment.

¹ *See Miller v. Alabama*, 132 S. Ct. 2455 (2012).

III. EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND EMPLOYMENT

During his 31st years period of incarceration, [REDACTED] was a model inmate who took full advantage of the opportunities that were available to him. In 1987 he completed his GED, and thereafter he took courses offered by the Pennsylvania Department of Education including Creative Writing (49.5 hours), Algebra I (48 hours), Algebra II & Trigonometry (52 hours), Business Law (31.5 hours), and Accounting I and II (96 hours). In 2008 [REDACTED] earned an Associate of Arts degree from Villanova University and in 2013 he completed his Bachelor of Arts Degree, also from Villanova, with a major in General Arts and minors in Sociology and Criminal Justice. *See Exhibit B, Comprehensive Achievement List; see also Exhibit C, Diploma Photo.* [REDACTED] one of [REDACTED] instructors from the Villanova School of Business, described [REDACTED] as “a hard-working and dedicated student who grew enormously from his educational and other programs focused on professional development. . . [REDACTED] is fully ready to be released and become a citizen who meets or exceeds his obligations to society. His highly-developed native intelligence, ability to work with others, insights about himself and personal growth, all come together to make [him] a sought-after employee for a variety of positions. Of course, his faculty at VU are more than willing to act as references and will provide numerous leads for jobs as soon as his release date is announced.” *See Exhibit D, Hill Letter.*

[REDACTED] has also been highly involved with the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program, which promotes education in correctional facilities by forming collaborative think tanks comprised of inmates and members from outside colleges and universities. [REDACTED] completed his initial Inside-Out in 2002 and in 2014 he completed an international instructor training course. In his capacity as an Inside-Out instructor, [REDACTED] worked closely with [REDACTED] of St. Joseph's University to design and facilitate workshops and trained other inmates to do the same. As seems to be the case for everyone who has worked with him during his period of incarceration, [REDACTED] was duly impressed by [REDACTED] and noted that "he has added tremendous depth to our endeavors to produce a humanized, more just understanding of society. . . He has used this knowledge to reach out to others inside and outside Graterford to encourage all of us to walk gently and treat others with compassion and dignity." See Exhibit E, [REDACTED] Letter; see also Exhibit F, Pompa Letter [REDACTED] also used his connections from the Inside-Out program to form a weekly book group with St. Joseph's students through the Prison Literacy Project. See Exhibit E, [REDACTED] [REDACTED], see also Exhibit G, Glatt Letter.

In addition to his formal education, [REDACTED] has also worked diligently to acquire practical skills. In 1994 he completed vocational training in plumbing, carpentry, electrical wiring, and bricklaying (1152 hours) and has been employed

in a variety of jobs since the beginning of his term of incarceration. Specifically, [REDACTED] has worked in the following capacities and positions: (1) repairing sinks, toilets, and pipes for the plumbing shop at SCI-Camphill; (2) assisting prisoners to obtain literary and legal materials at the SCI-Camphill library; (3) assisting staff counselors as a "block clerk" at SCI-Huntingdon; (4) collating and preparing booklets for shipping from the printing shop at SCI-Huntingdon; (5) analyzing court transcripts and preparing legal briefs as part of the Para Professional Law Clinic at SCI-Graterford; (6) tutoring reading, writing, and basic math for the Graterford Literacy Council; and (7) providing legal assistance to inmates as a library reference aid at SCI-Graterford. A long list of positive progress reports stand as a testament to [REDACTED] diligence and skill as a worker in a variety of fields. *See Exhibit H, Correctional Plans and Progress Reports.*

[REDACTED] through his extraordinary efforts to attain an education and job training while incarcerated, has positioned himself for success once he is released. While [REDACTED] recognizes that he will need some time to adjust emotionally and socially to living on the outside, he intends to move promptly in the direction of finding gainful employment and continuing his education. He has spoken to a number of organizations about potential employment, and expects that he will have a part time position as a program specialist with Inside-Out soon after his release. *See Exhibit I, Patricia Way Letter.* Additionally, [REDACTED] is working with some of

his professors from Villanova to put together an application to the Master's of Social Work program at Temple University.

IV. SOCIAL SUPPORT AND IDLE TIME PLAN

██████████ has a large family that is ready to welcome him back into the community upon his release from prison. He looks forward to spending time with his brothers ██████████ as well as his sisters ██████████. He is also eager to spend time with his niece ██████████. All of these individuals live in the Philadelphia area and will make themselves available to aid ██████████ in his transition.

In addition to spending time with his family, ██████████ intends to fill his spare time running and exercising and involving himself with social justice organizations. He is especially interested in issues pertaining to juvenile delinquents and their families, and has communicated with groups such as Philadelphia Youth Empowerment Services and the Youth Sentencing and Reentry Project to offer himself as a resource. Indeed, ██████████ experience as a juvenile lifer and his training with Inside-Out make him uniquely well-positioned to work productively in this field. After he finishes his Master's degree ██████████ plans to make a full-time career working with juvenile offenders, at-risk youth, and their families to provide therapeutic support and help them to avoid prison.

V. CONCLUSION

██████████ is an excellent candidate for parole and we expect that he will be a productive member of the community sooner rather than later. Working in ██████████ ██████████ favor are (1) his impressive academic and vocational training record, (2) his strong connections with potential employers and social justice organizations, and (3) a deep family support system. The number of professors and professional contacts that are willing to vouch for ██████████ speak to his exceptional character. By all accounts he has exhibited a positive attitude and improved socialization throughout the period of his incarceration, as evidenced by the fact that he has only two noteworthy misconducts² during his thirty-one years in prison, with the most recent offense occurring nearly a decade ago in 2007.

Over the last 31 years ██████████ has cultivated a powerful focus on social justice and has diligently worked to acquire the skills necessary to channel his passion in a productive manner. The growth experienced by ██████████ is inspiring, and he is a perfect example of the wisdom and justice behind giving certain juvenile lifers a second chance. We hope that this Court will accept the negotiated

² ██████████ most recent misconduct was in 2007 when he was written up for refusing to obey an order. A guard ordered him to take a urine test but ██████████ had recently used the bathroom and was unable to produce a large enough sample. His prior misconduct took place in 1990 after a riot at SCI-Camphill. ██████████ was cleared of all charges related to riotous conduct but he was found guilty of being present in an unauthorized area. See Exhibit J, Juvenile Lifer Packet, Statement of Unit Manager Gina Clark.

sentence and recommend to the Parole Board that [REDACTED] application for parole should be granted.

Respectfully submitted,

_____/S
BRADLEY S. BRIDGE
Assistant Defender

SHONDA WILLIAMS
Assistant Defender

KEIR BRADFORD-GREY
Defender

DEFENDER ASSOCIATION OF PHILADELPHIA
1441 SANSOM STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19102
(215) 568-3190

APPENDIX F. ABBREVIATED JUVENILE LIFER SURVEY 2010

Questionnaire for Prisoners Serving a Sentence of Life without Parole

Today's Date: _____

SECTION ONE: INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

1. First Name: _____ 2. Last Name: _____

3. Prison ID Number: _____

4. State where you are in prison: _____

5. Date of Birth: MONTH: _____ DAY: _____ YEAR: _____

6. Date you entered prison for the current sentence (If you don't remember the exact date, please put the month and year): MONTH: _____ DAY: _____ YEAR: _____

7. What is your race?

___ White

___ African American/ Black

___ Asian/Pacific Islander

___ American Indian

___ Other: _____

8. Are you Hispanic/Latino?

___ Yes

___ No

9. Will you ever be eligible for parole?

___ Yes

If yes, when is your next parole hearing date? MONTH: _____ DAY: _____ YEAR: _____

If you answered "yes," to this question, please stop answering this survey and mail it back to us with your next parole date. This survey is intended for individuals who are not eligible for parole. Thank you.

___ No

THE SENTENCING PROJECT
1705 DESALES ST., NW 8TH FLOOR
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036

APPENDIX G. RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY STATEMENT

The researcher has acknowledged that he is not free of bias or assumptions and came to the work by directly working with juvenile lifers in 2016 as part of the Inside-Out Prison Exchange program at Temple University. The researcher continued to work with juvenile lifers post-release as the senior advisor to a juvenile lifer support group in Philadelphia called “Life After Life.” During his time at the initial “Life After Life” meetings in 2017, juvenile lifers constantly expressed the need to have a platform by which their stories could be told and analyzed for a broader audience. These conversations, which the researcher had with juvenile lifers at the “Life After Life” meetings concerning their stories/lived experiences, inspired the formation of this study. In addition, the researcher has been trained in the Inside-Out tradition, which provides researchers and instructors training to facilitate dialogue across profound social differences. The researcher acknowledges that although he shares similar characteristics with the research participants (Philadelphia native, African American, Male) he has never been incarcerated, nor had any contact with law enforcement in his life. However, in the Inside-Out tradition, it is believed that proximity brings forth growth and transformation.

The researcher believes that being proximate to the narratives of juvenile lifers can provide new insights and possible solutions as they relate to those who have been sentenced to life without parole. Moreover, the researcher’s thinking is highly informed the by the life-course perspective, which is a broad interdisciplinary movement that incorporates viewpoints from various disciplines, including history, biology, psychology, sociology, and criminology. The researcher acknowledges that research about juvenile lifers in the past (early 90’s) has caused deep harm, and believes the life-course perspective is the most appropriate theoretical lens to utilize presently. Life-course theory makes no assumption about human behavior but rather is a

way of thinking about and studying human lives and development. Under this framework, juvenile lifers can be fully viewed as “human,” allowing the researcher to examine and explore their capacity to grow, change, and evolve.

APPENDIX H. ABBREVIATED CODE BOOK

Pre-Incarceration Experiences	
<i>Schooling Experiences Codes & Definitions</i>	
Negative Schooling Experiences	Statements where juvenile lifers spoke negatively about their schooling experiences in childhood, which include adverse experiences in the classroom, in the school building, as well as any outside factors that limited their educational experiences.
Educational Reflections	Statements where juvenile lifers reflect on their educational experiences while in childhood and in some instances connect those early schooling experiences across the life course (incarceration & reentry periods).
Positive Schooling Experiences	Statements where juvenile lifers had positive experiences in school, which include strong relationships/bonds with teachers and school administrators.
Positive & Negative Schooling Experiences	Statements where juvenile lifers expressed mixed feelings (both negative and positive aspects) about their schooling experiences in childhood.
School Demographics	Statements where juvenile lifers mentioned the names of the schools they attended, if they were attending school before their JLWOP sentence, whether they received a school suspension, had a learning disability, and the last grade/school they completed.
<i>ACES Experiences Codes & Definitions</i>	
Gangs	Statements where juvenile lifers mention their experiences with gangs in their childhood.
ACES Questions	Statements where juvenile lifers talk about adverse childhood experiences in their childhood.

Childhood Experiences	Statements where juvenile lifers generally talk about how their childhood was (typical/normal childhood vs. an atypical/ abnormal childhood).
Drug Use	Statements where juvenile lifers mentioned their drug use and how often they used drugs in their childhood.
Alcohol Use	Statements where juvenile lifers mentioned their alcohol use and how often they used alcohol in their childhood.
Parenting	Statements where juvenile lifers talked about their parents (or lack thereof) and the parenting structure they were raised under.
Childhood Health	Statements where juvenile lifers mentioned physical and mental health issues in their childhood and when those physical and mental health issues occurred (onset, duration, and end).
Peer Influence	Statements where juvenile lifers mention their experiences with hanging out with friends, the influence of their friends, and hanging out with older crowds.
Turning Points in Childhood	Statements where juvenile lifers spoke about significant life events that happened in their childhood that altered their behavior in a negative manner and in some instances led to their JLWOP sentence.
Housing	Statements where juvenile lifers talked about their housing status in childhood, which includes various addresses lived at and whether they experienced housing instability.
Trouble With the Law	Statements where juvenile lifers talked about if they ever experienced contact with the criminal justice system in childhood.

Juvenile Placement Facilities	Statements where juvenile lifers talked about their experiences with juvenile placement facilities in PA (either directly or indirectly).
Childhood Family Relationships	Statements where juvenile lifers mentioned their relationship with their families as well as their family dynamics in childhood.
Children Pre JLWOP	Statements where juvenile lifers mention if they had any children, or the relationships maintained with children during childhood.
Incarceration Experiences	
<i>Effects of Incarceration Codes & Definitions</i>	
Effects of Incarceration	Statements where juvenile lifers talk about the effects (good, bad, mixed) of incarceration, including how criminal justice actors play a part in the process.
Name & Number of Prisons Housed	Statements where juvenile lifers listed the various prisons they were housed at during the period of incarceration.
The JLWOP Sentence Experience	Statements where juvenile lifers expressed not understanding what JLWOP meant till later in the carceral experience due to the fact that they were young and were trying to fulfill their basic needs.
Death By Incarceration	Statements where juvenile lifers talk about the life without parole as a death sentence and where they would find out that life in PA means that there was no possibility that they would be able to get out of prison.
Context of PA Prisons	Statements where juvenile lifers mentioned what it was like (conditions, food, staff treatment, prison programming, prison riots, etc.) to be incarcerated at different prisons throughout the state of PA.
Total Incarceration	Statements where juvenile lifers mention that total amount of time they have spent incarcerated as a result of their JLWOP sentence.

Behavior In Prison	Statements where juvenile lifers mention their prison misconducts/disciplinary write-ups in prison and the nature of the offenses they were written up for.
Family Relationships In Prison	Statements where juvenile lifers mentioned their relationship with their families or lack thereof during the period of incarceration.
Romantic Relationships in Prison	Statements where juvenile lifers talked about managing romantic relationships during the period of incarceration.
The Incarceration Experience & AA History Parallels	Statements where juvenile lifers made connections between the incarceration experience and African American history/ the African American experience.
Justice Reimagined	Statements where juvenile lifers make strong critiques of the criminal justice system and offer their opinions as to how the criminal justice should be changed.
Prison Escapes	Statements where juvenile lifers talk about escaping (successful or unsuccessful attempts) from prison.
JLWOP Over the Life Course	Statements where juvenile lifers mentioned some of the advantages and disadvantages of having a JLWOP sentence during the period of incarceration.
Sexual Abuse in Prison	Statements where juvenile lifers mention the prevalence of sexual abuse in prison, which includes both prison administrators and incarcerated persons.
Poems By Juvenile Lifers	Statements where juvenile lifers recited poetry.
Children During JLWOP	Statements where juvenile lifers mention if they had any children during the incarceration period.
<i>Acquired Human & Social Capital Codes & Definitions</i>	

Victims	Statements where juvenile lifers mentioned their victims, their involvement in the crime event, how they have grown to understand their mistakes (as it relates to their victim) over the period of incarceration, and how they could lend this knowledge to help with the current inner city homicide problem.
Changing In Prison	Statements where juvenile lifers detailed how and when they changed as a person over the period of incarceration and who/what they contributed that change.
DLC Stages	Statements where juvenile lifers discussed (either directly or indirectly) significant developmental milestones/markers and certain developmental processes that occurred in their life over the period of incarceration.
Old Heads In Prison	Statements where juvenile lifers mentioned how older men as well as peers (some whom had life sentences as well) helped them make significant changes in their life and developed them into better men/women over the period of incarceration.
Navigating The Prison Environment	Statements where juvenile lifers talked about navigating the prison environment (either directly or indirectly) regarding either facilitating positive growth/change or hindering growth/change over the period of incarceration.
A Meaningful Life	Statements where juvenile lifers expressed making meaning of their own lives by helping or facilitating opportunities for others, over the period of incarceration.
Prison Programming	Statements where juvenile lifers mention their experiences with various programs as it related to helping them grow/change over the period of incarceration.

Interesting People Met	Statements where juvenile lifers mentioned stories of “interesting” people they would meet such as political prisoners, well known authors, artists, respected model prisoners, community members, etc. that they carried with them over the period of incarceration.
<i>Entrance, Success, Timing Codes & Definitions</i>	
Prison Educational Experiences	Statements where juvenile lifers either mentioned having received educational opportunities or talked about educational experiences while in prison.
Prison Work Experiences	Statements where juvenile lifers mentioned working or having employment opportunities while in prison.
Timing in Prison	Statements where juvenile lifers mention how important the concept of time is in prison.
<i>Prison Health Codes & Definitions</i>	
Physical Health	Statements where juvenile lifers mentioned physical health issues in prison (either directly or indirectly) and when those physical health issues occurred (onset, duration, and end).
Mental Health	Statements where juvenile lifers mentioned mental health issues in prison (either directly or indirectly), which can include time spent in solitary confinement, the conditions of being in solitary confinement, prison suicide, mental abuse by correctional officers, and feeling close to death due to JLWOP sentence
Reentry Experiences	
<i>Reentry Experiences Codes & Definitions</i>	

Reentry Challenges	Statements where juvenile lifers talked about the challenges they faced when reentering back into the community from multiple decades of incarceration. Some common challenges include adjusting to a more modern/fast society, managing relationships, finding employment, maintain housing, and COVID-19.
Nemo Resido "leave no one behind"	Statements where juvenile lifers expressed strong emotion for the men the left behind bars and how those men were like family to them. Also, because they left those men behind the juvenile lifers mentioned how it was important to still advocate for these men (mostly lifers) and to use their lives as examples as to why they should deserve a second chance at freedom as well.
Reentry Successes	Statements where juvenile lifers mentioned all the successful moments or accomplishments they experienced after spending multiple decades in prison.
Reentry Demographics	Statements where juvenile lifers stated the various job they had, houses they lived in, and if they were pursuing educational opportunities while returning to the community from multiple decades in prison.
Consequences of Incarceration	Statements where juvenile lifers mentioned the long last consequences caused by multiple decades of incarceration and how being incarcerated for so long has impacted their reentry process.
Relationships Reentry	Statements where juvenile lifers talk about reestablishing relationships with family, friends, and romantic partners after spending multiple decades in prison.

Life (JLWOP) Tail	Statements where juvenile lifers detail their experiences with having a lifetime of parole/ life tail, which include the fees, challenges, the illegality, and certain nuances of the sentence.
Health	Statements where juvenile lifers mentioned physical and mental health issues in the reentry period (either directly or indirectly) and when those physical and mental health issues occurred (onset, duration, and end).
The Reentry Experience	Statements where juvenile lifers talked about their reentry experience, specifically what it felt like when they left the prison for the first time.
Restorative Justice	Statements where juvenile lifers expressed what the term restorative justice meant to them.
Hope	Statements where juvenile lifers described what they were hopeful for.
Life After Life	Statements where juvenile lifers described what it meant for them to have the opportunity to return to society—going from a death sentence to having life/ having life after life and having the opportunity to share their experience with others.
Contact With the Criminal Justice System	Statements where juvenile lifers talked about if they experienced contact with the criminal justice system in the reentry period.
Children Post JLWOP	Statements where juvenile lifers mention if they had any children during the reentry period.

APPENDIX I. AUDIT TRAIL

Audit Trail Verification Checklist

Reviewer: Ajima Olaghere

Dates of Review: January 23, 2022 - January 29, 2022

Date Verified	Initials	Procedure	Source Material	Verified ?	Notes/Comments
Coding/Data Reduction Procedures					
1/23/22	amo	First cycle coding: in vivo, descriptive, process coding completed	Code mapping	Y	Not certain what the color coding scheme means; presumably this differentiates codes in some meaningful way.
1/23/22	amo	Second cycle coding: pattern coding completed	Code mapping	Y	Not certain what the color coding scheme means; presumably this differentiates codes in some meaningful way.
1/23/22	amo	Coding mapping analysis to organize 342 codes into list of categories	Code mapping; codebook	Y	Color coding a part of the mapping analysis
1/23/22	amo	342 codes randomly listed in excel spreadsheet	Code mapping	Y	Most likely the case; the list currently appears to be alphabetically sorted by code

1/23/22	amo	342 codes sorted into the study's research questions	Code mapping	Y	Each research question is an individual tab in the same spreadsheet that holds the initial 342 codes, which is on the first tab. The codes are distributed across the tabs per research question.
1/23/22	amo	Sorting codes per the study research questions created seven code categories	Code mapping		Code categories observed: (1) what are the effects of schooling experiences on the life course? (2) what are the effects of adverse childhood experiences over [the] life course? (3) what are the effects of incarceration (life sentences) on the life course, with respect to the development of human and social capital? (4) how and to what extent have individuals serving long sentences acquired human and social capital (i.e., identity change, social networks) navigating the prison environment? (5) how does incarceration impact the entrance, success, and timing of other key trajectories (i.e.,

					marriage, employment, education, parenting, etc.) over the life course? (6) how has the physical and mental health of individuals changed over the period of confinement? (7) how do experiences in prison over the life course shape life outside of prison?
1/23/22	amo	Categories categorized into 67 main codes	Codebook	Y	The codebook captures these main codes in column C and the total number in column B
1/23/22	amo	Generation of pivot tables to generate 67 main codes, display the number of times a code appeared, and matched across all participants in each of the seven categories	Code mapping	Y	The pivot tables appear on specific tabs, organized by the research question. For example, “RQ 1” is the tab that features the pivot table for the first research question and includes a column for the number of codings and the number of codings matched across participant ID.
1/23/22	amo	For RQ1, 5 categories identified	Code mapping	Y	Categories found on tab, “RQ1_M”
1/23/22	amo	For RQ2, 16 categories identified	Code mapping	Y	Categories found on tab,

					“RQ2_M”
1/23/22	amo	For RQ3, 18 categories identified	Code mapping	Y	Categories found on tab, “RQ3_M”
1/23/22	amo	For RQ4, 8 categories identified	Code mapping	Y	Categories found on tab, “RQ4_M”
1/23/22	amo	For RQ5, 3 categories identified	Code mapping	Y	Categories found on tab, “RQ5_M”
1/23/22	amo	For RQ6, 2 categories identified	Code mapping	Y	Categories found on tab, “RQ6_M”
1/23/22	amo	For RQ7, 14 categories identified	Code mapping	Y	Categories found on tab, “RQ7_M”
1/23/22	amo	Higher level concepts generated using Atlas.ti and produced main level codebook	Codebook	Y	Higher level concepts generated: Schooling experiences; adverse childhood experiences; effects of incarceration; acquired human and social capital; entrance, success, timing; prison health; reentry
1/23/22	amo	Footnote: 33 codes placed in a misc category	Code mapping	Y	Misc category identified; second to last tab, but only counted 21 codes per column A, “number of codes”

Transcription

1/25/22	amo	Created excel spreadsheet with all 30 interviews listed w/length in minutes	Transcripts_Audit Trail	Y	Found the spreadsheet in the main Google Drive folder for the audit trail; 30 interviews identified by participant ID in column D, in ascending order.
1/25/22	amo	Created summary statistics for 30 interviews (max, min, average)	Transcripts_Audit Trail	Y	Identified summary statistics in columns F - H. Max interview length: 211 minutes, minimum length: 55 minutes, average length: 110 minutes.
1/25/22	amo	Used random number generator from Google	Transcripts_Audit Trail	Y	Identified random number generator results in columns J - M.
1/25/22	amo	Numbers generated: 4, 19, 7	Transcripts_Audit Trail	Y	Identified numbers generated: 4 is for the long length interview, 19 is for the short length interview, and 7 is for the medium length interview.
1/25/22	amo	No ID for a female participant came up; completed random number generator for female participants only	Transcripts_Audit Trail	Y	Identified the one number generated for the sole female participant: 11, column M
1/25/22	amo	One number generated for female participants: 11	Transcripts_Audit Trail	Y	

Table of Themes: Findings chapters (4, 5, 6). Each table is coupled with a research question					
1/27/22	amo	Pre Incarceration Experiences	Table of themes_Pre Incarceration Experiences	Y	Identified two tables: one 4x3 table and one 9x3 table. Each table is associated with two separate questions, respectively: (1) what are the effects of schooling experiences on the life course? (2) What are the effects of adverse childhood experiences over the life course? The rows for each table include the themes and the columns, the frequency of the theme across all interviews and the number of interviews contributing to the theme.
1/27/22	amo	Effects of Incarceration	Tables of Themes_Effects of Incarceration	Y	Identified three tables: one 9x3 table, one 6x3 table, one 3x3 table. Each table is associated with one question, except for the first table. The first table is associated with two questions, (3) what are the effects of incarceration (life sentences) on the life course, with respect to the

					development of human and social capital? and (5) how does incarceration impact the entrance, success, and timing of other key life trajectories (i.e., marriage, employment, education, parenting, etc.) over the life course? The second and third table are associated with the following questions, respectively: (4) how and to what extent have individuals serving long sentences acquired human and social capital (i.e., identity change, social networks) navigating the prison environment? (6) how has the physical and mental health of individuals changed over the period of confinement?
1/27/22	amo	Reentry Experiences	Table of Themes Reentry Experiences	Y	Identified one table, a 13x3 table associated with one question, (7) how do experiences in prison over the life course shape life outside of prison?
1/29/22	amo	Table of Themes: Finding chapter 4	CHAPTER 4_Findings	Y	The chapter 4 excerpt from the dissertation focused on

					the first two research questions #1 and #2, or the pre-incarceration experiences overall. Each theme associated with each research question was easy to identify and discussed, as were attributes associated with each theme. The excerpt was a total of 43 pages.
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Audit Trail Review Summary

Overall, the presentation of methodological and analytical steps was transparent and easy to follow. I was able to identify relevant documents and steps as outlined in the audit trail procedures. I was also able to verify the procedures and the outputs of each procedure. I identified a discrepancy on 1/23/22 regarding the number of codes placed in a misc category. The audit trail procedure file indicates 33 codes were placed, but I only identified 21 codes in the file. I will follow up with Juwan to notify him about the discrepancy for clarification. On Monday, January 31, 2022 from 3:00 - 3:22 PM, Juwan explained where the 33 codes were located. All 33 codes were located across three tabs at the end of the code mapping excel spreadsheet: (1) NOC, (2) MISC, and (3) Victims.

APPENDIX J. LIFE WITHOUT PAROLE REFORM



Bill Summary: Life Without Parole (LWOP) Reform SB 135/HB 135 (Sen. Street/Rep. Dawkins)

The bill: SB 135/HB 135 provides parole eligibility to some people convicted of first and second degree murder, depending on their age at the time of the commission of the offense, and the victim (see chart below). The bill also lowers the minimum sentence for third or subsequent crime of violence offenses, and establishes the Life with Parole Reinvestment Fund.

Bill Status: *These bills are not yet law.* They cannot become law until they are approved by committees, passed by the Pennsylvania House and the Senate, and signed by the governor.

If passed, SB 135/HB 135 would provide parole eligibility as follows:

	Under age 15	Age 15-18 years old	Age 18+
First degree murder	25 years to life or life If life, parole eligibility after serving 25 years	35 years to life or life If life, parole eligibility after serving 35 years	Life with parole eligibility after 30 years (including time served in pretrial custody)
First degree murder of a law enforcement officer	25 years to life or LWOP If life, parole eligibility after 35 years.	35 years to life or LWOP If life, parole eligibility after 35 years	LWOP
Second degree murder	15 years to life	20 years to life	Life with parole eligibility after 20 years (including time served in pretrial custody)
Second degree murder of a law enforcement officer	20 years to life or LWOP* If life, parole eligibility after 25 years	30 years to life or LWOP* If life, parole eligibility after 25 years	LWOP

* Under current law, juveniles under the age of 18 convicted of second degree murder of a law enforcement officer cannot be sentenced to LWOP.

SB 135/HB 135 would also:

- Lower the penalty for a third or subsequent conviction for a crime of violence from 25 years to LWOP, to a minimum of 20 years to life.
- Create the Life with Parole Reinvestment Fund, which will reinvest savings from reducing the prison population into victim services, reentry programs, and parole.