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Developing Politics While Detained: How Juvenile Incarceration Impacts Political Participation and Behavior

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ABSTRACT

Carceral contact and childhood socialization matters, but we know little about how early encounters with carcerality mold political socialization. In this study, I examine a) if juvenile detention is a socializing agent, and b) how juvenile incarceration can shape political engagement and participation. I find that those incarcerated in their youth were less likely to be politically engaged but more likely to have negative feelings towards the criminal justice system compared to those first incarcerated as adults. Through semi-structured interviews of 8 people first incarcerated in their youth and 7 people first incarcerated in adulthood from Virginia, this paper analyzes removal from socializing agents like families and schools and juvenile detention's influence. This study implies that juvenile detention can be a non-restorative institution and calls for a focus on civic healing for youth who have learned to be politically disengaged.

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INTRODUCTION

"It was dark moments," Mani tells me, referring to his time in juvenile detention, "I was sad…I couldn't talk to my family or see anyone I cared about." At twelve years old, Mani experienced first-hand the alienating nature of incarceration. Not only did he feel immense depression from being removed from his loved ones, but he noticed a "difference in how white folks were treated compared to black folks" while detained. This experience drove his negative views about the criminal justice system, stating firmly that it is "clearly unjust." While only having been incarcerated once, Mani still maintains his convictions about criminal justice and government in general. Perhaps surprisingly, he does not engage with political institutions nor activism to change the status quo.

Detention can have vast implications for how one navigates post incarceration. In some instances, these experiences can mold a person to believe that they are developed for the better, but many other formerly incarcerated people have more negative takeaways. In this paper, I examine the implications that early incarceration has in people's lives—especially pertaining to political engagement and participation. Through 15 semi-structured interviews, I find that those first incarcerated in their youth are less politically engaged than those incarcerated as adults, but they also had more negative feelings towards the criminal justice system compared to interviewees incarcerated as adults.

This paper begins by reviewing socializing agents in youths' lives: families and schools. I consider how these agents influence youths' development, how influence can be impacted by race and class, and some alternative ways to consider the agents' impacts. Next, I examine what youth lose with adjudication. Their losses range from missing out on quality education to lacking parental guidance, which are replaced with paternalistic practices done by the juvenile detention

center. My literature review ends with examining the carceral state as a political socializing agent. Some scholars argue that carcerality inspires more political engagement while others argue that it can stifle participation.

After interviewing 15 participants (8 first incarcerated in their youth and 7 first incarcerated in adulthood) I found that those incarcerated in their youth have more negative feelings about the criminal justice system but are less likely to be politically engaged. This section delves deep into their responses, analyzing some similarities and differences between juvenile and adult respondents while comparing within these groups. I discuss how these findings can be influenced by youths' removal from early socializing agents, potential caveats to this study, and implications for further consideration.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Families and Schools as Socializing Agents

To understand how carceral institutions could politicize juvenile residents, it is important to discuss how American youth develop political behavior. This process often occurs through the politics of their families and schools. Many scholars have explained how parents can influence political attitudes like partisan allegiance and civic engagement (Jennings and Niemi 1968, Beck et al. 1991, Dinas 2014). Some believe that children grow in response to their parents' political ideologies, developing ideologies that almost completely mimic or entirely reject their predecessors' views. Beck et al. (1991) specifically point towards partisan households' influence on children's views. Children from highly politicized households are most likely to carry those partisanships into adulthood, but are also the most likely to abandon them altogether.

Of course, parents do not always perfectly influence their children's political views. Giving parents' political socialization all the credit naively misses the influences of groups like class peers, the political environment, and the rise of technology. However, parents do play a crucial role whether the child is aware or not (Jennings and Niemi 1968, Hyman 1959). Political socialization from parent to child works best when parents agree politically, politics are discussed in the home, and parents have consistent political views over time (Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers, 2009). Without these factors, parents may not be as influential for their children's political development.

Parents' identities and positionality also influence their children's political socialization. Parents with a higher socioeconomic status are more likely to have children who become politically active as adults. This correlation may be because parents with higher resources are more likely to be active in politics and discuss politics at home (Verba, Schlozman, and Burns, 2005). Parents and families who have been incarcerated can also impact children's views. By witnessing incarceration, children's attitudes and orientations toward the government and their will and capacity to become involved in political life become diminished (Lee et al. 2014). Even witnessing incarceration in families and in the neighborhood could impact political behavior, minimizing activities like voting and signing petitions (Burch 2013). Not only do parents' decisions reflect in their children's politicization, but also structures that they are placed into.

Schools also are considered socializing agents. Their main purpose has been defined to instill ideas from the public to create a successful new generation (Scribner 1994). Education has the potential and the intention to project ideas and feelings into youth. Scholars have examined how education impacts political behavior and engagement, showing how youth with higher-quality civic education are more likely to be engaged in the political process than those with

lower-quality education (Kahne et al. 2006, Torney-Purta and Wilkenfeld 2009, Gainous and Martens 2016). Teachers and peers also have a significant impact in schools. Youth who have a strong attachment to peers are more likely to show major influences on developmental behaviors like depression and sympathy, while strong attachment to teachers—especially in later adolescence—influence achievement and engagement (Laible, Carlo, and Raffaelli 2000, Roorda et al. 2011). Given that youth often spend large portions of time with these groups, a student's motivation, behavior, and competency can be impacted by these relationships (Wentzel 1998, Vollet et al. 2017, Wentzel et al. 2016).

The family's role in a youth's life may look entirely different based on various cultures and backgrounds. In wealthier families, youth are more likely to complete school and have higher self-esteem. Lower-income families typically score lower than wealthy families in self-esteem, school achievement, and emotional wellbeing (Axinn, Duncan, and Thornton 1997; Brooks-Gun, Duncan, and Maritato 1997). Due to the educational and emotional capacity youth have in various economic settings, their families may influence them differently simply because of limitations or freedoms to accessing financial privileges. Families also vary by culture. For instance, many Black families have historically struggled with racist institutions that have made social mobility more difficult. As a result, Black families are more likely to focus on discipline and motivate youth to economically mobilize upward, than white families that focus more on psychological well-being due to being socially secure (Hill and Sprague 1999).

Additionally, the education system is a product of many structural inequities like racism and classism. Some people who hold marginalized identities often struggle with adjusting to schools that do not accommodate their positionalities. As a result, education does not always indicate social mobility and these groups may view schooling as futile. Students and families

who are low-income or persons of color may disengage from interacting with their school, as schools may be viewed as representing white middle-class interests (Cooper 2007, Hands and Hubbard 2011). With this understanding, we should note that engagement with education and its influence on politics could look different in youth that are from adverse backgrounds. This study will aim to take a race/class conscious approach to better understanding these institutions' role in their lives.

Research studying parents' political influence on children has mixed results. As previously mentioned, some studies place parents as more influential while others favor other influences. One 2014 study found that children who are most likely to adopt their parents' political views are also most likely to abandon them later. Their change in views comes from interacting with the world and observing its political implications for themselves (Dinas, 2014). This view gives parental influence in politics less weight because of its ability to waver. Additionally, Jennings and Niemi (1981) bring to light an important issue in parental political socialization that parents *themselves* may not be politically stable. Measuring parents as a consistent political authority could be misleading since their views may change and be influenced by their children.

Some find that schools may also not be highly influential institutions. In a 2011 study, some cases of teacher-student relationships were found to be not as impactful on student behavior as expected. These relationships were found to be more influential for students academically at risk, specifically for students from low-income backgrounds and with learning disabilities. However, these relationships were varied in influence for students not from those backgrounds (Roorda et al. 2011). In another study, peers were found to be influential, but only

in the context of a teacher's relationship with those students. To fully understand a student's relationship with their peers, teachers had to be involved in that examination which complicates how impactful peers truly are (Vollet et al. 2017).

Despite the mentioned contradictions, studying these influences can have value. Even if a young person is not highly influenced by these socializing agents, there still may be a minor impact to examine. Since young people often spend most of their life around family and in school, these factors likely develop youths' behavior in some way. The following section will examine how the *removal* of these influential institutions in replacement of juvenile incarceration could have a profound impact.

Incarceration Replacing Families and Schools

Incarceration has a dramatic impact on the status of a juvenile. After deteriorating a resident's spirit, body, and mind, detention also makes contact with education and families more difficult. Youth frequently struggle to interact via phone, as fees and wait times complicate communication. Sometimes, staff revoke phone privileges as punishment for an infraction a youth made while in detention. Visitation can also prove to be difficult, as there are significantly fewer juvenile centers placed throughout the United States compared to adult prisons and jails, so families may be less likely to commute to visit an incarcerated loved one (Desai 2019; Puzzanchera, Hockenberry, and Sickmund 2022). Access to quality education is also hindered as youth enter incarceration. While Virginia requires juveniles to have some sort of schooling, residents are still left further behind school-wise and struggle to earn credit recovery. Additionally, post-release juveniles often battle physical and psychological stresses that make dropping out of school more likely (Desai 2019).

Being arrested at a young age could also morph a child's relationship with systems of governmental power. Juvenile incarceration as an institution was founded on a doctrine called *parens patriae*, or "parent of the country or homeland." Under this doctrine, a state or court has a paternal and protective role over its citizens or others subject to its jurisdiction (Cornell n.d.). Specifically, this doctrine was made in an attempt to grant protections to juveniles that they did not receive before its existence, and to "mold wayward youths into good citizens" (Ainsworth 1991). Many have argued that this ideology has made juvenile incarceration paternalistic. Milton and Gilman (1976) suggest that juvenile courts acted as "the child's substitute parent" to remove children from urban environments "that [were] the breeding grounds of delinquency." Feld (2017) notes that the courts often juggle between treating juveniles as children who need to be protected, versus individuals who are responsible for their actions. To mitigate this dilemma, Feld argues, judges and legislators often "selectively choose between the two constructs" to "maximize social control of young people." Here, Feld notes that the state is working to maximize its own benefits. In the process, the carceral state plays a more active (and perhaps even a more invasive) role in a youth's life.

Not only does the juvenile justice system invoke paternalism, but it has been argued to *remove parental roles from a child's parent*. Fedders (2022) points to how the courts place heavy burdens upon the parents of incarcerated children. Through fines, fees, and increased monitoring requirements, the state invades the family's authority and privacy. In the process, the state usurps the parents' legitimacy. Goldman and Rodriguez (2022) enhance this argument, claiming that the state acts as an "ultimate parent." The authors look at racial differences in how probation officers give processing recommendations over youth, and find that race influences if officers give tougher recommendations to family. By targeting Black and Brown families, the carceral state

can use its power to remove legitimacy from the family and move it to incarceration. This transformation of legitimacy could potentially shift a youth's development.

Scholars have also considered the bias that prevents certain juveniles from receiving paternalistic treatment within juvenile courts. Goff et al. (2014) argues that since Black people are often dehumanized more than White people, Black boys are often seen as older and less innocent than White boys of the same age. This perception was able to predict associations between police violence against Black boys, furthering the notion that perhaps the government does not act as a parent towards certain juveniles, but as a punitive measure against someone who should be held accountable for their actions. Epstein, Blake, and González (2017) further this notion through a concept called "adultification:" the way race, gender, and class are used to perceive Black youth as less innocent and more adult-like than white peers. Their study examined how the adultification of Black girls has led to harsher punishment against them in schools and in juvenile justice. With this knowledge, it is still important to recognize that incarceration interrupts and replaces the family institution. Whether or not the dentition itself is paternalistic may vary on experience, but the interruption likely has a large impact on a youth.

Arresting and removing youth from families and schools can be detrimental not only to their social growth, but also their political development. Stated by Bulanda and Johnson (2016), "youth who have experienced traumatic experiences are often among those disenfranchised within the community" (p. 20). Youth learn about politics through families and schools; these two institutions work as socializing agents to mold youth into how they view and engage with government and politics. Without these institutions, how does the political development of a child manifest? Some studies reveal that high school dropouts are less likely to be civically active. Those who are removed from schools often have decreased social connections and fewer

ties to the community. This lack of social engagement can cause a decreased sense of responsibility to society (Putnam 2000; Pusztai et al. 2019). Removal from the family could also impact political development, as foster care minors reveal. One study finds that these youth often struggle with balancing many responsibilities at once, and it may make them want to "give up." The study ends by suggesting intervention programs to create civic engagement (Tyrell and Yates 2018). Removing youth from these socializing agents and putting them in juvenile detention could interrupt the normal political socializing process.

The Carceral State as a Political Socializing Agent

In this section, I show how the carceral state, the mechanisms in which people are under state control through policing, incarceration, probation, and other methods, is able to politically socialize individuals. While the literature is relatively small, some scholars have explored the carceral state's impact on politics. Lerman and Weaver (2014) argue that the carceral state's broad reach has contested our meaning of citizenship for certain individuals. Those under its control become second-class citizens through their intentional nonengagement with politics in order to avoid the authorities' attention and to keep a low profile. The authors conclude that not only do these "custodial citizens" lose legal rights (such as voting, certain jobs, and housing), but are denied access to American democracy. Thus, the criminal justice system forms "an important exception to our democratic norms and, in so doing, has undercut the forward trajectory of equality and inclusion" (p. 6).

Other studies support their arguments. In many cases, experience behind bars has led to decreased political participation and mobilization. This decline can be seen in political activities like voting, protesting, and signing petitions (Burch 2013). Incarceration does not even need to last a long time for it to have a politically demobilizing effect on residents. In certain

circumstances, short jail sentences could cause individuals to lose jobs and housing, which could discourage voting (White 2019). An overarching argument behind these ideas is that incarceration politically socializes inmates towards negative feelings about government. Socioeconomic status and race alone do not explain why some people disengage from politics—but incarceration itself produces ideas of political nonparticipation in those under supervision (Weaver and Lerman 2010).

Decreased political participation does not only occur to those behind bars. Events like repeated policing can impact people's desires to engage in politics. By having repeated negative experiences with government through policing, some may choose to remain disengaged from government altogether (Anoll, Epp, and Israel-Trummel 2022; Weaver, Prowse, and Piston 2020). Disengagement can even affect those who are merely related to those who are incarcerated. By witnessing neighbors or loved ones not engage in politics, those close to them sometimes also become disengaged (Burch 2013). This reality points to bigger implications behind criminal justice. By creating an environment where people are deemed separate from mainstream society, those people will likely not participate in mainstream political institutions.

This separation is seen most clearly within marginalized social groups. For recently released Black women, reintegration can be difficult. By having to navigate in a socioeconomic context that does not address their needs, Black women may struggle with obtaining basic necessities like health care, work, access to maternity services, and housing (Urbina 2008; Bailey 2007). If Black women must overcome these hurdles post-incarceration, then political participation may be difficult or even secondary to satisfying more prominent needs. Other specific struggles are seen with immigrants who are under state supervision. Operating in a political context where immigrants are seen as usurping government resources from mainstream

society, they often feel hostility from American government. This hostility is often manifested in encounters with police, ranging from unlawful searches to outright violence. As a result, immigrants may feel hesitation when encountering the criminal justice system—a key mechanism to participating in the democratic process (Armenta 2017).

Simultaneously, sometimes we notice the complete opposite effect on political behavior. Instead of those impacted by the carceral state becoming disengaged with government and the political process, they may be *more* inclined to interact with these institutions. Incarcerated people, for instance, have frequently displayed their dissatisfaction with their detention. Through methods like hunger strikes and riots, prisoners have mobilized against the politics of their confinement and demanded change. These displays have worked towards contesting citizenship's meaning for incarcerated people (Easton 2018). Corrigan (2019) has even argued that prisons were central for Black Power and the Black liberation movement. Through the imprisonment of many key Black liberationists, political analysis and organizational strategies were able to mold from their original form in the Civil Rights era into Black Power. The prison not only aided Black Power's development but was a central feature. In these examples, the prison is grounds for developing political people.

As a result, some people feel more inclined to politically engage after release. After recognizing particularly disheartening and unjust features of the criminal justice system, some may hold anger towards their negative experience and use political action to forge effective change (Walker 2020). Sometimes this activism takes the form of voting or signing petitions, but other versions of activism are more direct like protests or uprisings. Historically, these actions against the system have often been considered senseless or unorganized, but recent scholarship has viewed these engagements as political. By considering them through this lens, more agency

is given to actors who intentionally engage in efforts against carcerality and oppression (Hinton 2020). Studies also reveal that having close ties to those with felony convictions or engaging with civil society organizations are elements that increase political activity (Anoll and Israel-Trummel 2019; Owens and Walker 2018). By interacting with others who battle disenfranchisement, custodial citizens can become mobilized.

While the literature varies in interpreting how the carceral state impacts political behavior, most studies have ignored how juvenile incarceration affects mobilization. Some have interviewed youth under the carceral state to better understand their experiences. These studies often examine the implications of detention or surveillance in their personal lives, but research has not explored how early confinement could influence thoughts around politics and government in adulthood (Rios 2011; Epstein, Blake, and González 2017; King et al. 2011; Henning 2023; Lerman and Weaver 2014; Burch 2013; Goff et al. 2013; Bulanda and Johnson 2016). In this thesis, I will draw upon testimonials from adults formerly incarcerated in their youth and those formerly incarcerated as adults to better understand how they view politics and government. I aim to bridge the knowledge gap between juvenile adjudication and political engagement.

METHODOLOGY

This study focuses on how youths' removal from normal political socializing agents to juvenile incarceration impacts political behavior. I decided to focus on juvenile incarceration separately from adult incarceration because I believed the two groups would have varied results. Since youth are exposed to socializing agents that adults are not as exposed to when they are

incarcerated, their experiences developing political attitudes could look different. Further, juvenile incarceration strengthens the likelihood that one is incarcerated later on in life (Gillman, Hill, and Hawkins 2015). This institution makes escaping the criminal justice system's broad reach extremely difficult.

I interviewed 15 people who have been incarcerated in their past: 8 had been incarcerated as juveniles while 7 were incarcerated for the first time as adults. This will allow a better comparison between those whose first contact was during youth versus those whose first contact was during adulthood. The median length of detention for those first incarcerated in their youth was 11 months and a range of 11 days to 32 years. The median length for those first incarcerated as adults was 5 months with a range of 4 hours to 4 years. All participants were incarcerated in Virginia, mostly in the southeastern region. Virginia is a significant state to study as its history with juvenile incarceration has been particularly of national interest. While juvenile recidivism rates have fallen, youth still reenter detention at 44% in the state. Black youth are more likely to be adjudicated than white youth, which reflects national trends. Also, juvenile detention centers are often ill equipped to be fully rehabilitative, and reentry programs bleakly lack effectiveness (JLARC 2020). Juveniles face particularly challenging barriers while confined in Virginia and this study will examine how these conditions can impact political development and behavior.

I found these participants in various formats. Some were contacted through non-profit organizations that work with formerly incarcerated people, while some others were found through flyers placed throughout Norfolk, Chesapeake, Virginia Beach, and Portsmouth.[1] Most participants were gathered through snowball sampling and personal connections and no interviewees were financially compensated. The snowball sampling method could potentially

[1] See recruitment flyer in Appendix C.

bias results, as some participants knew each other and came from similar backgrounds, and knowing participants personally could influence how they spoke to me and what information was revealed. However, I found that participants seemed more at ease and discussion was more fruitful when I either was referred to them by a peer or they knew me personally. Additionally, not compensating interviewees was intentional to bypass potential bias in my study (Delvin et al. 2022). Under these conditions, participants were willing to answer as much or as little as they wanted for each question without a sense of added pressure.

Participants ranged from age 22 to 54, with the median age being 33.5. All but one of the participants were male with 10 identifying as Black or African American and 5 as white. While this racial makeup in my study does not proportionately represent the racial makeup of Virginia's detention centers, it does allow for an in-depth analysis of various groups who have been incarcerated. By drawing on Black interviewees' experiences in particular, this study can better analyze how racial prejudice within the criminal justice system impacts people's political experiences. Since mass incarceration has disproportionately impacted people of color for generations (Alexander 2010; Pfaff 2017), it is important to study these groups and draw on their nuanced perspectives.

Lastly, each interview was conducted in a semi-structured interview format remotely. I asked questions about their experiences with incarceration, thoughts about government and politics, and ideas about reform, among several other questions.[2] Some conversations took place over Zoom while most were held over a phone call. Some participants could have felt weary about sharing information while knowing that their words were being recorded. This potential hesitancy was mitigated by ensuring them that an alias would be provided and that our calls

[2] See Appendix A.

occurred in a private space. In the next section, this paper will illustrate how participants responded.

FINDINGS

I investigate two questions: can juvenile incarceration be a socializing agent? And if so, how does the replacement of usual socializing agents (such as families and schools) with incarceration impact political views and behavior? My interviews suggest that those who were incarcerated in their youth tend to have a much stronger distaste for the criminal justice system than those who were incarcerated as adults, but those incarcerated in their youth were less likely to engage with politics than those incarcerated in adulthood. In this section, I indicate whether interviewees were first incarcerated as juveniles or adults using parenthetical notes after their name.[3]

Engagement with Politics

When questioned about political engagement, interviewees provided a wide range of responses. Some appeared to be highly engaged with the political process while others reported not caring at all, with variation in between. While each respondent had a unique experience with political activity, I will categorize the interviewees into two groups: politically active and politically inactive. Those who were politically active reported engaging with politics in some manner such as through voting, going to protests, signing petitions, or speaking with governmental officials. Non-politically active participants reported not having any encounter with the political realm. If participants reported being aware of politics but not directly engaging with political institutions or activism, I categorized them as being non-politically active. This

[3] While some interviewees are labeled "juvenile" for the purpose of this study, all were in adulthood at the time of the interview. See Appendix B for more information on each participant.

categorization will allow a deeper examination into why certain individuals interact with politics differently post incarceration.

Non-politically active

Those who had been in juvenile incarceration were less politically active than those who were incarcerated as adults. 25% of those first incarcerated as a juvenile reported being politically active, while 57% of those first incarcerated as an adult reported the same. Almost every respondent incarcerated in their youth reported being politically disengaged, for a variety of reasons. One was Dean (juvenile), a 22-year-old man studying at a Virginia university. He noted that he "stay[s] far away" from voting or participating in activism after incarceration:

> After my experience…I stay far away from politics. I realized that it is a whole system and I do not want to get involved with that…Like I said, the government is a system that wants you to be trapped under its control to pay money and things like that.

Despite his relatively short sentence of 11 days and his educational mobility, Dean avoids politics and views the government as a mechanism of "control." Instead of sensing the government as helpful, in his eyes, it aims to exert its force for its own monetary gain through taxation. Jarvis (juvenile) maintained a similar removal from political interaction, as his voting rights had been removed after a probation violation. Still, he and his friends "talk about politics and different things all the time." At 31 years old and unemployed, Jarvis notes how he still struggles to find work due to probation violations that accrued after his initial juvenile arrest. Economic barriers in addition to legal ones may make political participation difficult.

Dean and Jarvis represent a dichotomy of the political experience that those formerly incarcerated often face—either psychological barriers to political engagement or legal ones. Dean's unwillingness to interact with the "system," perhaps out of distrust, anger, or futility, represents a large portion of people's feelings under the carceral state. Many people currently or formerly under state supervision withdraw from contact with governmental institutions for safety and privacy reasons (Lerman and Weaver 2014; Burch 2013; Weaver, Prowse, and Piston 2020). On the other hand, Jarvis' inability to engage with politics outside of conversation represents a legal barrier that blocks over 4 million Americans from participating in the political process (Porter and McLeod 2023). The economic hardships that manifest from former incarceration could also hinder political engagement, as those who battle societal barriers often detract from politics (White 2019). Perhaps if he were able to vote, he would use that legal right and pursue politics through other avenues.

Similarly to Dean and Jarvis, others incarcerated in their youth reported being disengaged from politics but due to apathy. Henry (juvenile) reported having little "care how things turn out [in politics] as long as I have what I need." Even being very politically aware about gun policy and immigration, Henry chooses to not interact with formal politics and instead asserts his "zero trust for our government." This distrust was sparked from Henry's adjudication over a disagreement about him becoming an emancipated minor, which turned into a judge "claiming that [he] ran away from home." During his time behind bars, he lacked the AP courses that he took in high school and his lawyer advocated for him to have better education while confined. This advocacy battle resulted in Henry's eventual release after six months. For another participant named Lee (juvenile), voting has little meaning for him. He noted that "the government is built against Black men," and chooses not to vote out of its futility. Though

incarcerated at 15, Lee spent eight years behind bars with most of his time being in an adult facility. After I asked Lee to explain how the government targets Black men, he declined to elaborate. In my interpretation, Lee's unwillingness to answer likely shows just how harmful or traumatic experiences with incarceration can be. In this case, Lee's apathy is more towards a system that he believes will always be rigged against him. His lack of faith in government may make interaction with it pointless.

As shown from these four men, not only is the carceral state able to bar those under its custody from political engagement through law and fear, but it can work to distance individuals from engagement entirely (Lerman and Weaver 2014; Burch 2013). Despite having a strong interest in taking AP courses, a common signal of civic engagement (Klugman 2013), Henry still rejects interaction with the political process as long as he has his basic necessities. This alienation from politics may reflect his battle with judicial authority over his emancipation at 16 years old. Henry mentioned that "it doesn't make sense for a juvenile court judge to not need a second opinion." At a young age, he witnessed his own versions of injustice in his adjudication. For some, learning about government and politics through early interactions with the legal system could shape political development. With this newfound political knowledge, some may find systems of power to be unhelpful, meaningless, or oppressive (Lerman and Weaver 2014). In Lee's case, his experience in juvenile incarceration likely worked to color his time in adult incarceration. The combined sentences introduced Lee to systemic structures present in both juvenile and adult confinement, in addition to his court proceedings and interactions with police that caused his adjudication. All of these experiences at an early age could have taught Lee about the political process and how the criminal justice system works against Black men. By choosing to not vote or engage with politics, Lee willingly removes himself from the mainstream political

process. Citizens often refrain from voting when they view that the stakes are lower (Gerber et al. 2017). If Lee learned from his incarceration that activism would not change much about systemic structures against Black men, then he may be less inclined to engage with political efforts.

Notably, three out of eight interviewees first incarcerated in their youth reported being currently or formerly employed with government or politics.[4] Out of the three, two of them reported being politically inactive, both for apathetic reasons. Henry (juvenile) formerly worked in Crisis Intervention as a police officer. His role required him to intervene in security matters when a person presents a danger to themselves or others due to a manifestation of a mental health disability. Despite joining the police force for the goal to "make a change in criminal justice" after having his own negative experience with the system, he eventually saw matters differently:

> I realized that [the government] was not doing the right thing for people who are in the criminal justice system. Police did some shady stuff just to get a pay raise. And people are overly sentenced, especially those with a mental disability. My job really drove me away from policing, honestly.

Henry learned that the criminal justice system had severe flaws. From the ways police operated to acquire a higher salary to the criminalization of mental illness, various facets of the criminal justice system disillusioned Henry. On the other hand, Darnell (juvenile) currently works for the government in the Marine Corps. Before then, he worked as a security guard at a Norfolk

[4] While these participants work within governmental institutions, I do not automatically consider them politically engaged because their work seems to come more from economic necessity rather than from political mobilization.

shopping mall to, similarly to Henry, “help out, since we need more good cops.” After working as a mall officer, Darnell realized that there was even more “corruption” possible with policing than he had previously understood. Joining the Marine Corps was seen as his way “out.” Both cases show how people incarcerated as juveniles may be mobilized to make change after release, but further encounters with government in *collaboration* with their previous experiences incarcerated as juveniles make them reject participation altogether. Though Darnell works for the government again through the Marine Corps, he saw this governmental solution as a way “out” of Norfolk’s policing. In his case, negotiating the removal from one governmental institution required him to join another.

Some of the participants (3 out of 7) who were incarcerated as adults also reported being politically inactive. One was Quinton (adult), a Black man who spent four years in prison. He described the government in a quite negative light and spoke extensively about his disengagement from politics:

> I have no interest in [politics]. The government is corrupted for sure. You have to pay unnecessary taxes on things that shouldn’t even have tolls or taxes. I know first hand because I’ve been experienced the corruption with the government in the system.

Here, Quinton expresses how his incarceration shapes his political behavior and why he does not engage. Since the government is “corrupted,” interaction may prove to be pointless in Quinton’s eyes. Another participant named Rhonda (adult) also reported having little interest in politics. Since she mainly identifies with another country, Rhonda grants little importance to American politics in her personal life:

> I'm not too concerned about politics unless it affects my personal life…I don't watch the news anymore or go to protests either for my mental state. Doesn't mean I don't have an opinion in it, but there are certain things I won't do or perform to show my solidarity…But immigration issues and issues surrounding my home country are close to my heart.

Rhonda articulates how American political activism plays no role in her life. While she does consider American social issues, she feels a stronger tie to another government. In Quinton and Rhonda's examples, we see how incarceration can have a large or absent impact on one's political development. While Rhonda was incarcerated for three hours compared to Quinton's four years, and she feels more affiliated with another country while he has only ever lived in America, these two represent the range of influence on those detained as adults.

Politically active.

People first incarcerated in adulthood appeared to be more politically active than those incarcerated in their youth, as only 2 out of 7 people incarcerated as adults reported political inactivity while 7 out of 8 people incarcerated as juveniles reported the same. Keith (adult) was incarcerated for a few hours, as he was arrested for driving while intoxicated. His short time behind bars, according to him, seemed to not impact his political engagement. Keith mentioned that he "votes[s] in every election," which contradicts what most interviewees incarcerated as juveniles reported, but "hate[s] watching the news" as he finds it too negative. Another participant, Elliot (adult), reported voting and keeping up with politics. His incarceration lasted for three months, and it has pushed him to play an active role in reform:

> It has given me a drive towards change about the way things are being done. It has given me a push towards going to law school to see what kind of change I can make myself instead of waiting around and not doing anything…I am passionate about incarceration in general and mass incarceration. It is getting better but we should try to fix the system.

Elliot's three-month sentence had pushed him to interact more with the political world. Despite having a "difficult time" explaining his jail time to college admission offices, he displays a resilience to make societal progress. In these examples, incarceration appeared to persuade political efficacy less in Keith than in Elliot.

Two other men incarcerated as adults reported working closely with government and politics, and their engagement is noteworthy. For example, Arthur (adult) claimed that he "has no choice" but to be involved in politics due to the nature of his work, as he works with the Virginia Department of Corrections. He also votes and pays attention to the news as forms of political engagement. But he claims that his involvement in government is not influenced by his previous incarceration:

> The way that I thought [when I was incarcerated] versus the way I think now is very different…In regards to what policies I vote on and stand by and my career path is all influenced by my personal experience and my community.

Despite working deeply within the criminal justice system and Virginia politics, Arthur views his engagement as exterior to his multiple encounters with detention as an adult. Instead, other

experiences and his community impact his interaction. Perhaps since he was incarcerated as an adult, Arthur's political development from family and school was not interrupted, thus enabling him to maintain strong political ties to his community rather than to incarceration. Mason (adult) is also involved with politics as he is currently running for an elected position. While this is an extremely rare position to hold—especially after one has been formerly incarcerated—understanding his role in the political arena can still provide much room for analysis. He claims that political engagement is a necessary part of his life and work, and he votes, goes to protests, and does many different forms of activism. Though he slightly diverges from Arthur, as some of his political views seem to be influenced by both his family and his four years in prison. He mentions how he views reform:

> I come from a family that was really involved with politics and really progressive with criminal justice…[I agree with them] for the most part, but I am not a bleeding-heart liberal when it comes to criminal justice reform. I do believe some people deserve to be in[carcerated].

Perhaps his conviction at age 24 influenced his ability to be politically socialized by his family, as those adjudicated in their youth seem less influenced by family. But Mason's more moderate views than his family likely represent how his opinions altered while incarcerated. This example reveals how both political socializing agents are at play, but Mason was socialized to become more engaged instead of disengaged.

Only two people formerly incarcerated as juveniles reported being politically active. Bill (juvenile), adjudicated a week before his 18th birthday, received a grand larceny sentence for

stealing his mother's DVDs and was charged as an adult. His experiences with incarceration influences many of his views about the criminal justice system and his employment prospects:

> When someone runs a background check on me, it's an awkward conversation, which I find useless. I was tried for my crime, I paid my restitution, I did my program, and I have to carry this felony charge with me through life and I have to explain it and get judged over and over again. It's like the Scarlet Letter—I have the red 'S.'

In this instance, Bill explains how his early incarceration barricaded his interaction with the economy more than it influenced his political engagement. Despite these challenges, Bill still reports voting and staying politically informed. Carson (juvenile) reported being very politically active. Among voting, watching the news, and going to protests, Carson also leads a criminal justice reform non-profit and commonly advocates for reform to politicians and wide audiences. To this participant, his criminal justice background severely impacted his political engagement:

> [Being incarcerated and battling probation] has a great influence because I wasn't able to become politically conscious until I went through the criminal justice system. And once I started to understand the politics of my situation from a societal point of view, which was my family…and the pressures they were under of having to beat the allegations of [me] being a sexual assaulter…it still informs me. Even the encounters I had with the prison environment and becoming involved with government programs, I learned.

Carson illuminates how his 32 years behind bars impacted his political knowledge and eventual engagement. Incarceration itself was a catalyst for his political activism and also had an impact on his family's involvement. In many ways, Bill and Carson defy the other participants who were incarcerated in their youth in this study. For one, their families had a direct impact on informing their interaction with the criminal justice system. Bill's mother had reported him to authorities while Carson's family and their struggles with defending him influenced Carson to politically mobilize. Also, Carson was incarcerated on the precipice of adulthood while Bill spent most of his life imprisoned as an adult. Their experiences with adult imprisonment influenced their political engagement.

Views on the criminal justice system

In addition to asking about political engagement, I also asked participants their opinions on the criminal justice system. All interviewees agreed that criminal justice institutions need improvements. However, participants incarcerated as juveniles tended to have more negative views towards the criminal justice system than those incarcerated as adults.

Negative views.

Most participants interviewed reported some negative feelings towards the criminal justice system. Many felt that their experiences leading up to or while incarcerated impacted their views. For example, Bill (juvenile) reported having little understanding about the criminal proceedings and judicial system:

> If we understood our judicial system better than we do at [a young] age, we wouldn't end up with so many spiraled out of control people that just don't have any hope because things happen and it gets worse from there…We're taught to stay quiet in a courtroom—

> if I am being tried as an adult, my voice should be listened. It's like we're limited to a box and once you realize later you had an opportunity to do something, you don't even know it.

Bill seems to be discontent with the judicial system's normalization of youth's a) lack of knowledge and b) silence and complacency while being adjudicated. Carson (juvenile) also had negative views of criminal justice due to his experiences with the system. He elaborates:

> I don't think the government is doing the right thing for criminal justice…The government is more concerned with capitalism versus the true development of all aspects of society. There are biases in all aspects of our system—including in ways it was designed…[Being incarcerated] informed and still informs me, and encounters I had within the prison environment impacts my grasp on the government and everything else.

Here, Carson explains how the criminal justice system "informs" him. While in prison for 32 years, Carson encountered abuse and violence from other inmates and correctional officers. He also spent years learning about political theorists, governmental institutions, and historical figures to "grow political consciousness." As he puts it, these events taught him about the way carcerality works. To him, incarceration was built to favor capitalism rather than societal reform.

Other participants focused more on how their experiences *after* incarceration sparked negative feelings towards the criminal justice system. As mentioned earlier, Henry's (juvenile) experience working as a police officer proved to him that American criminal justice is flawed. However, he may not have come to the same conclusion without his combined history of

incarceration and being a police officer: “I wanted to be a good cop, since I knew first-hand a lot of them aren’t that. And I was. But there were so many problems with bad policing that I knew I just couldn’t deal with it anymore.” Here, Henry shares that in his own experience many police were not “good.” This assumption could have been drawn from his time in juvenile detention and seems to have propelled him to become an officer. But with the problems within policing, doing the right thing may have been difficult and thus gave Henry a bad taste of the criminal justice system altogether. When interviewing Jarvis (juvenile), he also spent more time expressing how issues spawned post juvenile incarceration. Conflicts like small probation violations or being barred from voting were more pressing. “The law isn’t the law when it comes to them,” he says, referring to the criminal justice system. “They are definitely going to do what they want to do whether the crime fits the punishment or not. There is no rehabilitation.” Jarvis appears to believe that his later struggles with the law post incarceration were unjust and were more punitive than restorative.

Some interviewees incarcerated as adults also reported having negative feelings towards the criminal justice system. In Elliot’s (adult) case, his incarceration came after an incident that resulted from his “repeated struggles with mental illness.” He tells me how this impacted his view of the criminal justice system:

> [Having a criminal record] make[s] it so hard to get a job. Especially for people like me who have credentials before these things happen. It makes it difficult for things like employment and when it comes to maintaining our role in society because there is a lot of stigma for having a criminal record. The government can definitely do more.

Not only does Elliot perceive problems within criminal justice, but he expresses that the government has the responsibility to reform these issues. Quinton (adult) reports a similar discontent with the government, seeing the criminal justice system as a "corrupt system" with "a lot of unlawful acts" which is "why many people stand up against its injustices." Even though Quinton does not engage in protests himself, he appears to understand why they take place and blames the government. All in all, those first incarcerated as adults have similar discontents with the criminal justice system as those first incarcerated as youth.

Non-negative views.

While most participants had negative associations with the criminal justice system, some reported having positive feelings about its functions. Only one interviewee incarcerated in their youth reported having overall positive feelings towards policing and prisons. Darnell (juvenile) mentioned how his incarceration drove him to do better in his life, and that without it he may still be on the "wrong path." He explains:

> Having been through it…I think I am a little bit more supportive than the average person. Someone who hasn't been through it doesn't really understand it. And they don't understand why certain things happen. I don't think the criminal justice system is great, but I think I am a little more supportive than the average person.

To Darnell, his experience with criminal justice influenced his support since he understands "why certain things happen." Even though his opinions diverge from most other respondents, Darnell highlights how criminal justice can hold value for some people in the system. One participant imprisoned as an adult also reported having a positive feeling towards Virginia's

criminal justice system. Arthur (adult), a man who works with the Virginia Department of Corrections, favors Virginia's police and prison system after working there.

> Not all police officers are bad, and I think that—from working in corrections—it came with the intent of creating a fearing environment instead of a *corrective* environment… Eventually, my job became less about managing people and was more about managing people. And I know I just said the same thing, but I think that is the best way I can put it. So now I have a better understanding of how the law works. And now I have a stronger passion for it and a better appreciation for it than I did when I was younger. I was able to turn corrections from corrections into *healing*.

For this participant, working with VADOC gave him the opportunity to create a positive change in the criminal justice system. By working to "add educational programs" to better "develop children" and turning a punitive system into a "healing" one, Arthur was able to produce what he finds to be a positive carceral environment. Both Darnell and Arthur worked in law enforcement, which a) may come from having a positive experience with criminal justice, b) may drive their more positive views, or c) a mix of both. Regardless, their experience of carcerality creating a positive, restorative change is an interesting deviation to note.

Some participants in the study had either mixed or no particular feelings towards the criminal justice system. Rhonda (adult) admitted that she did not have much information on criminal justice issues, but her own experience was "not that bad." Contrary to "how police are described," she says, "I was treated quite well. So I can't really say if the criminal justice system is bad or good." Rhonda's knowledge and experience about the criminal justice system could be

influenced by her limited contact with it. Compared to other participants, her stay was significantly shorter (a few hours) than others. Mason (adult), on the other hand, spent four years in prison and also had mixed feelings towards the criminal justice system.

> While incarcerated, I learned that there are some [officers] that are doing it for a good reason, and there are some individuals who are doing it for a bad reason. And it is kind of hit or miss. And the ones who are good, they don't get recognized for being good. And the ones who are bad, you know they are bad. But the ones who are good aren't recognized…I still don't trust the police. But if I see a correctional officer, I trust them because they don't have the same incentives… I come from a family that was really involved with politics and really progressive with criminal justice…[I agree with them] for the most part, but I am not a bleeding-heart liberal when it comes to criminal justice reform. I do believe some people deserve to be in[carcerated].

Mason shows how his views about the criminal justice system are quite nuanced. In some cases, law enforcement act appropriately and deserve to be recognized for their behavior. In other cases, they break the law and even impact his trust with police. Notably, only participants incarcerated in adulthood expressed neutral views towards the criminal justice system. This mixed viewpoint may have arisen from having early positive experiences with law enforcement, while those incarcerated in their youth had early negative encounters.

These sections compare juvenile incarceration to adult incarceration in how they impact political engagement and feelings towards the criminal justice system. Those incarcerated in their

youth tended to be less politically engaged and had more negative views towards the criminal justice system versus those incarcerated in adulthood who tended to be more politically engaged and had less negative views. In the next section, I will discuss why these trends may exist and what their implications could mean for democracy. Then I will also cover crucial limitations to this study.

DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

My findings show that those first incarcerated in their youth were less likely to politically engage and were more likely to have negative views about the criminal justice system compared to those first incarcerated in adulthood. Interviewees referenced several personal experiences that influenced their political and carceral feelings, like unjust interactions with law enforcement, their current or previous occupations, and various belief systems. In this section, I will discuss more broadly why those incarcerated in their youth had different experiences than those incarcerated only as adults, and then end the section with limitations and concluding remarks.

The participants first incarcerated in their youth responded quite similarly. Being arrested and removed from family at a young age could have influenced these results. Families provide crucial support for developing youth, and interrupting this connection through crises can result in negative youth development (Mackova et al. 2019). The negative reactions participants incarcerated in their youth had towards government and the criminal justice system could reflect the crisis of imprisonment's impact on political development, versus adults who were not impacted at a developmental age. Participants may also have felt that their parents' neglect or actions resulted in their young incarceration, which could influence their relationships with family. Incarceration could influence a youth's relationship with several socializing agents.

These same participants could have been influenced by being removed from schools. Peers provide a crucial social network for developing youth. Friends strongly influence youth's feelings and development, even if that friend does not completely relate to the youth (Fine et al. 2016). Also, teachers play a strong role in development. Their teachings, such as in civic engagement, are enough to shape the attitudes of their students (Gainous & Martens 2016). No longer having these bonds, or even a short interruption from these socializing agents, could be enough to reshape a youth's view on various experiences altogether. Similarly to family removal, being taken away from school could result in negative feelings towards criminal justice solely for that removal.

Participants first incarcerated in adulthood had much more varied responses. This discrepancy in results could be influenced by removal from family—especially for those incarcerated at younger ages—in addition to other influences like work, families they help develop, and other networks. Unlike adults, youth typically have similar socializing agents that they could be removed from. Future studies could examine how removal from certain jobs, spouses and children, and other things associated with adulthood could impact political feelings and behaviors.

Additionally, participants could have largely responded negatively towards the criminal justice system, and thus decided whether to engage with the political process, due to policy threats. For many people, interaction with politics comes out of a necessity to override bad policy proposals (Pantoja et al. 2001; Pantoja and Segura 2003). Not only may they vote, but also protest and sign petitions to better aid themselves and the community (Walker 2020). Some of those who were more politically mobilized seemed to act to counter negative criminal justice outcomes. Conversely, these same experiences could cause some to politically retreat due to

societal rejection. Factors like inferiority, depression, low self-esteem, and insecurity could combine and influence political demobilization (Oskooii 2020). Some participants who were less politically engaged seemed to display some of these traits. Experiencing stigmas from society post release—especially from those in political positions—could influence some to disengage from the political process altogether.

Limitations

While this study attempts to accurately represent the experiences of those formerly incarcerated in Virginia to make broader implications, some important caveats are raised in my research. Firstly, this study interviewed no female-identifying people who were incarcerated as a juvenile, nor were individuals of other racial identities beyond Black and White. This lack of data could prove to have inconclusive information for women and other people of color under the carceral state. Women and girls have unique experiences dealing with the criminal justice system. From adultification disproportionately punishing them compared to white girls to the unique kinds of violence they experience behind bars, incarceration for female-identifying people can crucially diverge from male-identifying people (Hood 2023; Richie 2012). Other marginalized groups also have unique experiences with carcerality. Latinx people are the fastest growing group represented in prisons, Indigenous people are vastly overrepresented in juvenile incarceration, and other marginalized groups struggle with appropriate representation in the criminal justice literature (Oboler 2008; Joab 2017; Magsaysay 2021). Studying their position in the carceral state—especially in juvenile detention—could illuminate nuanced perspectives on political engagement.

Another important caveat to this study is that perhaps age is less significant than length of stay behind bars. Some scholars suggest that time spent incarcerated impacts life expectancy, and

that those imprisoned for long periods experience a decay in mental health (Patterson 2013). For this study, the median length of detention for those first incarcerated in their youth was 11 months and a range of 11 days to 32 years. The median length for those first incarcerated as adults was 5 months with a range of 4 hours to 4 years. While the median and range are notably different between the two groups, time incarcerated does not seem to leverage interviewees' responses, as those behind bars for a few hours or even multiple years sometimes had the same experiences, versus some of those who were jailed for similar times had different responses. However, my sampling population could not be fully representative of how people generally experience politics based on their length behind bars.

While this research examines and analyzes participants' experiences, there could be a strong tie between how interviewees responded and their identity. Identities like race, gender, location of incarceration, and sometimes occupation were gathered and discussed; however, positionalities like class, sexual orientation, religion, and other factors were largely not mentioned during the interviewing process. For instance, queer and transgender people are disproportionately incarcerated behind bars, and often struggle with discriminatory violence behind and beyond bars (Smith and Stanley 2011). Dealing with incarceration and its implications compounded with a queer or trans identity can complicate how one views criminal justice and political institutions. Similarly, all participants were gathered from Virginia, which happens to be a state particularly punitive with voter disenfranchisement laws. Currently, the state disenfranchises those convicted of a felony, unless the governor restores their voting rights (Schneider 2023). Criminal justice funding has also skyrocketed and laws seeking to reform the criminal justice system have been vetoed by the incumbent governor (VDCJS; Schneider 2024).

Under these conditions, participants may have responded more negatively about the criminal justice system as Virginia's punitiveness is harsher than many other states.

Some participants reported being politically disenfranchised. Throughout the interview, they may have reported restoring their voting rights or not being able to vote due to Virginia's disenfranchisement laws for those previously incarcerated. However, this fact was not gathered from all participants so their political efficacy could have been lessened if their rights were not restored.

Lastly, interviewing's nature requires the researcher to take the interviewee at their word. Some scholars point towards the leading nature of questions and its ability to produce responses that the interviewer already believes or desires as problematic. In other cases, interviews could cause assumptions to be made about a participant's life that may not be true, which could cause discussion to reflect an inaccurate representation of the participant's true experience (Roulston 2010). Arguments like these are important to study as an interviewer and mitigate when interacting with human participants—especially if they are a part of a vulnerable group. My interviewing style aimed to be as nonleading as possible and to allow participants to guide conversation in whatever manner they chose (i.e., asking if they wanted to answer certain questions, allowing space for them to ask questions, requesting feedback to see if my understanding was correct, etc.). Bias may have inevitably fallen through the cracks and influenced parts of my findings. However, this study aims to highlight a marginalized community's voice in a setting where they are often shunned, and I find the potential for academic growth and insight to outweigh this concern.

All in all, political participation matters. This study reveals that people can construct political efficacies at a young age, and that the criminal justice system can play a large role in whether someone chooses to engage with the political system. Future studies should examine effective political mobilization efforts for youth and engage them with it. If juvenile justice attempts to reform youth into more active and productive citizens, then it is important that this institution does not aim to demobilize individuals before they can even vote. More endeavors should be centered around restorative practices and healing services for youth—preferably beyond carcerality. These restorative institutions should include practices on useful civic engagement and create spaces for youth to recover from negative interactions with law enforcement or confinement. Without these efforts, a vulnerable segment of our population will continue to be silenced in the political arena which will perpetuate cycles of marginalization within criminal justice.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Participants in this study were interviewed based on having previous contact with incarceration. Some participants reported being incarcerated as juveniles while others were only incarcerated in adulthood. To gauge their interactions with the criminal justice system, politics, government, and other factors, the following questions were generally asked:[5]

1. There are many things that we mean when we say "government." What comes to mind when you think about government?
2. What role does the government have in your life currently? What role has it had in the past?
3. Can you tell me about your first contact with the criminal justice system? Whether that was a police officer, security guard, a lawyer, or someone/something else.
4. How many times were you incarcerated?
5. If you care to share, what factors led to your incarceration?
6. If you care to share, what are some of the most memorable moments you have had with law enforcement?
7. What did you learn, if anything, about the government based on your interactions with incarceration/police?
8. Do you believe the government is doing the right thing when it comes to criminal justice?
9. How engaged are you with politics?
10. Do you vote, watch the news, participate in activism (like protests), or do any other form of political participation?

[5] This interview process was semi-structured, so additional questions were asked for specific participants that are not reflected here.

11. How much does your history with criminal justice influence your political beliefs/participation? If at all.
12. What three political issues are most important to you?
13. Do you believe that certain groups in America are more negatively impacted by our government than other groups?
14. What should be done to help these people? If you have any ideas.

APPENDIX B: TABLES

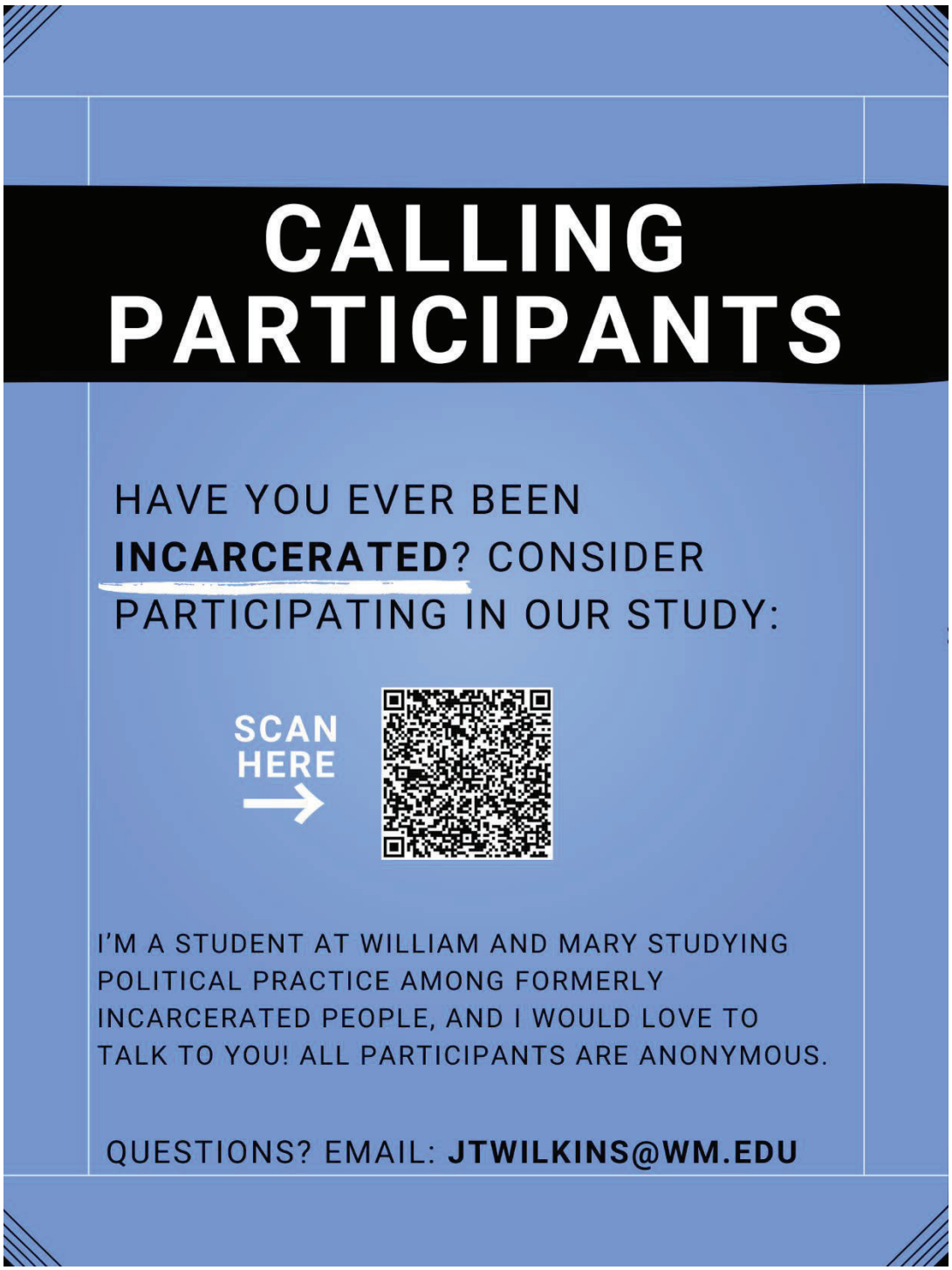
Table 1. Incarcerated as a juvenile.

Name	Race	Gender	Age	Age(s) Incarcerated	Time Incarcerated	Politically engaged?	Criminal justice feeling
Darnell	Black	Male	23	11-12	20 months	No	Positive
Henry	White	Male	34	16	6 months	No	Negative
Jarvis	Black	Male	31	16	2 months	No	Negative
Bill	White	Male	37	17-18	11 days	Yes	Negative
Dean	Black	Male	22	13	10 days	No	Negative
Lee	Black	Male	33	15	8 years	No	Negative
Mani	Black	Male	22	12-13	15 months	No	Negative
Carson	Black	Male	54	15-48	32 years	Yes	Negative

Table 2. Incarcerated as an adult.

Name	Race	Gender	Age	Age(s) Incarcerated	Time Incarcerated	Politically engaged?	Criminal justice feeling
Rhonda	Black	Female	22	19	3 days	No	Neutral
Mason	White	Male	42	24-28	4 years	Yes	Neutral
Anderson	White	Male	45	36-37	6 months	No	Neutral
Keith	White	Male	26	21	4 hours	Yes	Negative
Arthur	Black	Male	36	19-24	4 years	Yes	Positive
Elliot	Black	Male	30	29	3 months	Yes	Negative
Quinton	Black	Male	27	21-25	4 years	No	Negative

APPENDIX C: RECRUITMENT FLYER



APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM

Research Participation Informed Consent Form
Government Department
College of William & Mary

Principal Investigators: Jonathan Wilkins and Mackenzie Israel-Trummel
This is to certify that I, _____, have been given the following information with respect to my participation in this study:

1. Purpose of the research: The purpose of this research is to determine how people who have been incarcerated in their youth interact with politics in adulthood. Contact with the criminal justice system has several implications for political behavior, and discovering a correlation between juvenile incarceration and political engagement would be useful in understanding political behavior.

2. Procedure to be followed: As a participant in this study, I will be asked to complete an interview with a variety of questions. Some questions will ask about past experiences with incarceration, political beliefs and behaviors, and other personal topics. The interview will last no longer than 1 hour.

3. Discomfort and risks: Participants may feel discomfort retelling traumatic events that have led to their incarceration. As a participant, I am allowed to not answer or remove answers previously said to questions that make me feel uncomfortable.

4. Potential benefits. There are no financial benefits of participating in the study. However, my participation in this research will contribute to the development of our understanding about the nature of the study.

5. Statement of confidentiality: My data will be anonymous. My data will not be associated with my name, nor will it be coded so that my responses may be linked to my name in any way.

6. Voluntary participation: Participation in this study is voluntary. I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty. I may choose to skip any question or activity.

7. Incentive for participation: Participants will be able to contribute to an important field in research that has not been heavily explored yet. Additionally, participants will be able to engage in an activity that may prove cathartic as they express their carceral history in a productive manner.

8. I am aware that I must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this project.

9. I may obtain a copy of the research results by contacting Jonathan Wilkins at jtwilkins@wm.edu.

10. Termination of participation: Participation may be terminated by the experimenter if it is deemed that the participant is unable to perform the tasks presented.

11. Questions or concerns regarding participation in this research should be directed to: Dr. Israel-Trummel at mit@wm.edu.

12. I am aware that I may report dissatisfactions with any aspect of this study to Dr. Tom Ward, the Chair of the Protection of Human Subjects Committee, by telephone (757-221-2358) or email (jward@wm.edu).

I agree to participate in this study and have read all the information provided on this form. My signature below confirms that my participation in this project is voluntary and that I have received a copy of this consent form.

_____ _____

Signature Date

THIS PROJECT WAS APPROVED BY WILLIAM & MARY PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (Phone 757-221-3966) ON 2023-10-10.

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