



Mass Incarceration and Recidivism

Darrow Hornik¹, and Jessica Nowlan², Veronica Ensign³
¹Palo Alto High School, ²Young Women's Freedom Center, ³Defy Ventures



INTRODUCTION

Since the “war on drugs,” the black community has been disproportionately criminalized (Drug Policy Alliance, 2017). When President Nixon declared the “war on drugs,” he was declaring a war against the black community. By criminalizing the use of drugs, Nixon was able to discriminate against black people without directly and explicitly doing so.

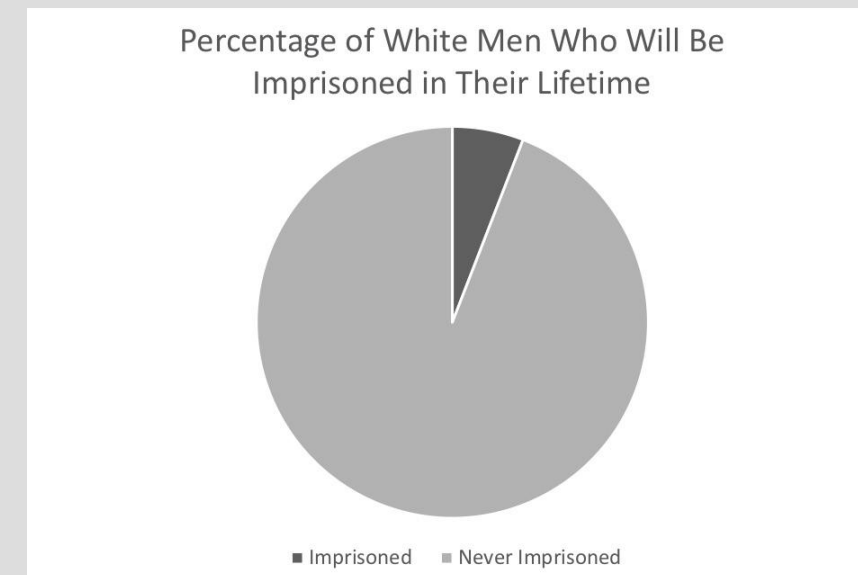


Figure 1

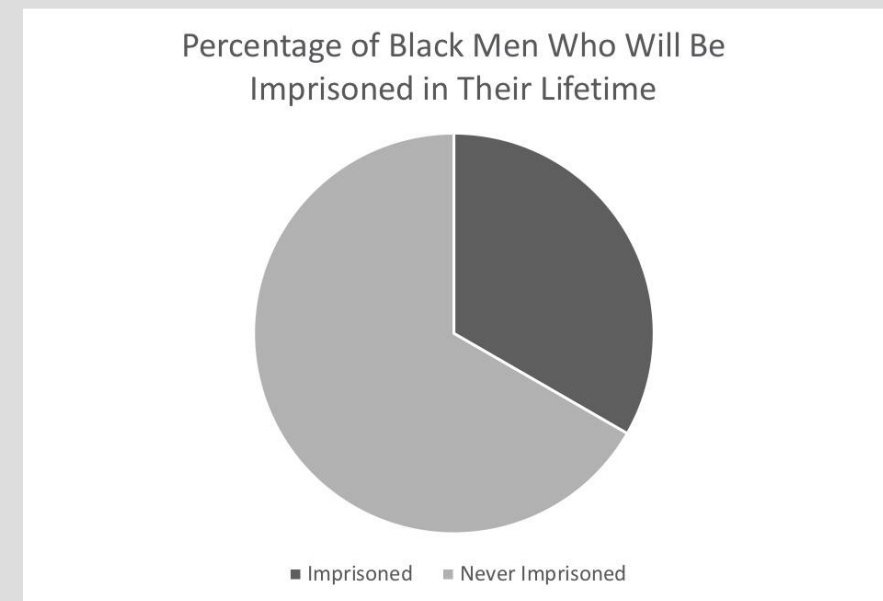


Figure 2

those who are the least educated, those living in poor communities, and those who are mentally ill. (Refer to Figures 1-6 to see a graphical demonstration of these disparities.)

Once a person has been incarcerated and released, the way in which our system is set up

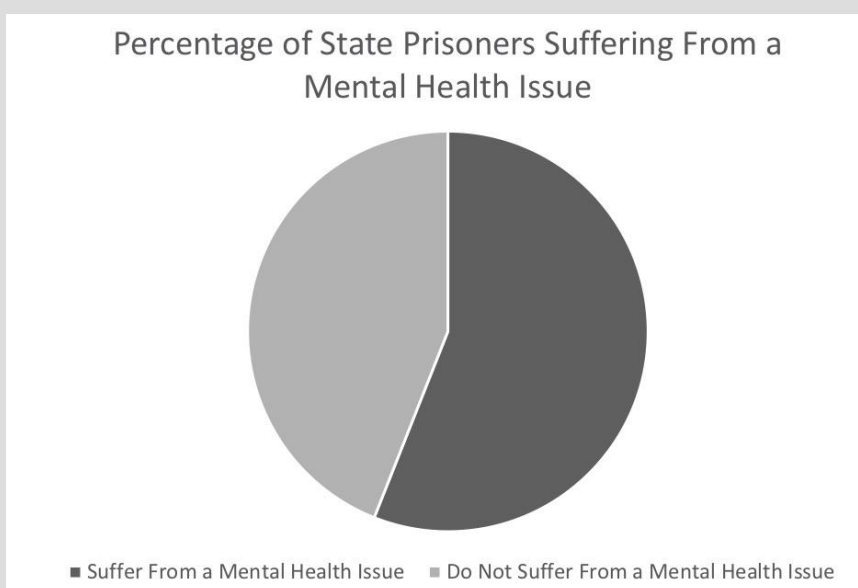


Figure 3

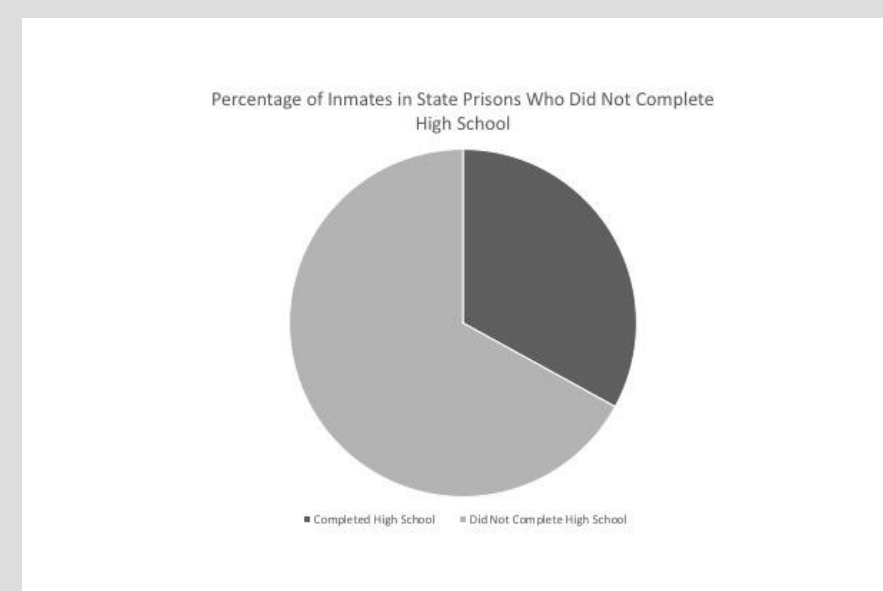


Figure 4

When Reagan came into office, the “war on drugs” continued, and the rates of incarceration skyrocketed. Since this war on drugs, black people have been highly criminalized and convicted, simply due to the color of their skin. Not only this, but those being convicted are also

makes it difficult for those inmates to escape the cycle of incarceration because they are being released into the world with a criminal record, no job, no source of income, no housing, and no stable community in which to live. And that’s where Defy Ventures and the Young Women’s Freedom Center come in.

DATA AND FINDINGS

The data presented in the charts below (Figures 7-15) is an amalgamation of the information compiled through the “Step to the line” activity from the visit to the California State Prison at Solano. The figures in all black represent the EITs, while the figures with a tie represent the non-incarcerated volunteers of the Defy Ventures program prison visit.

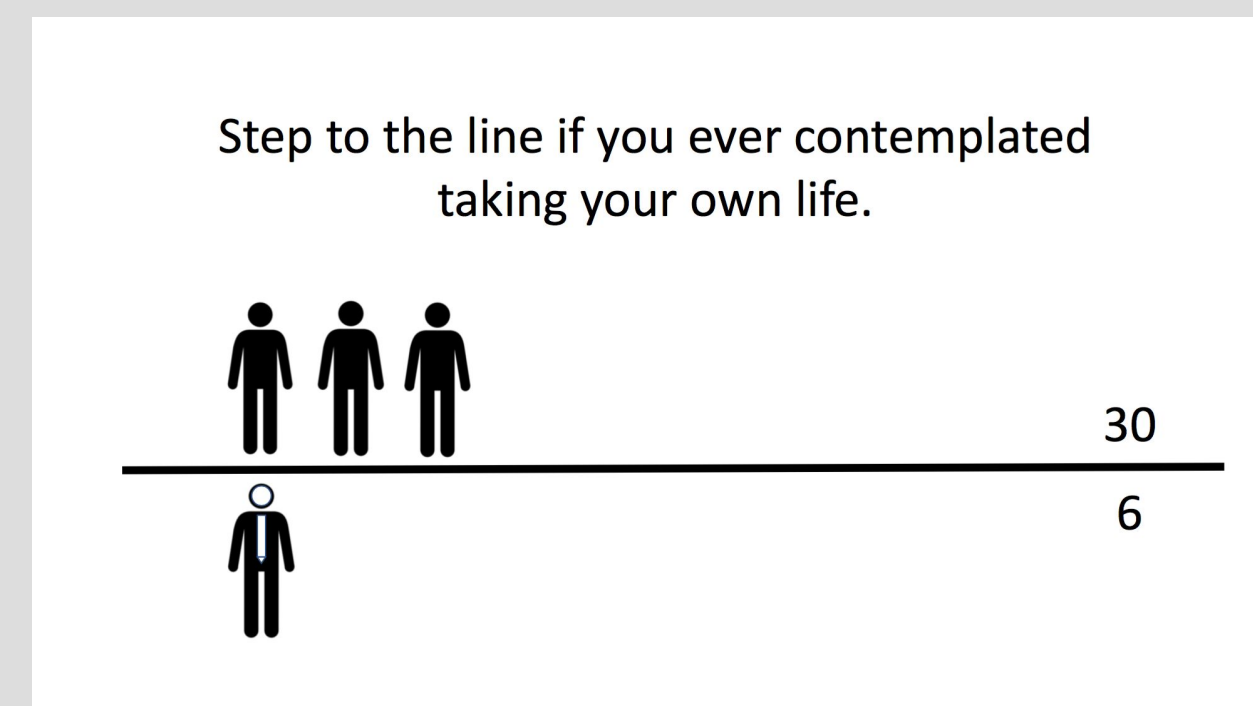


Figure 7

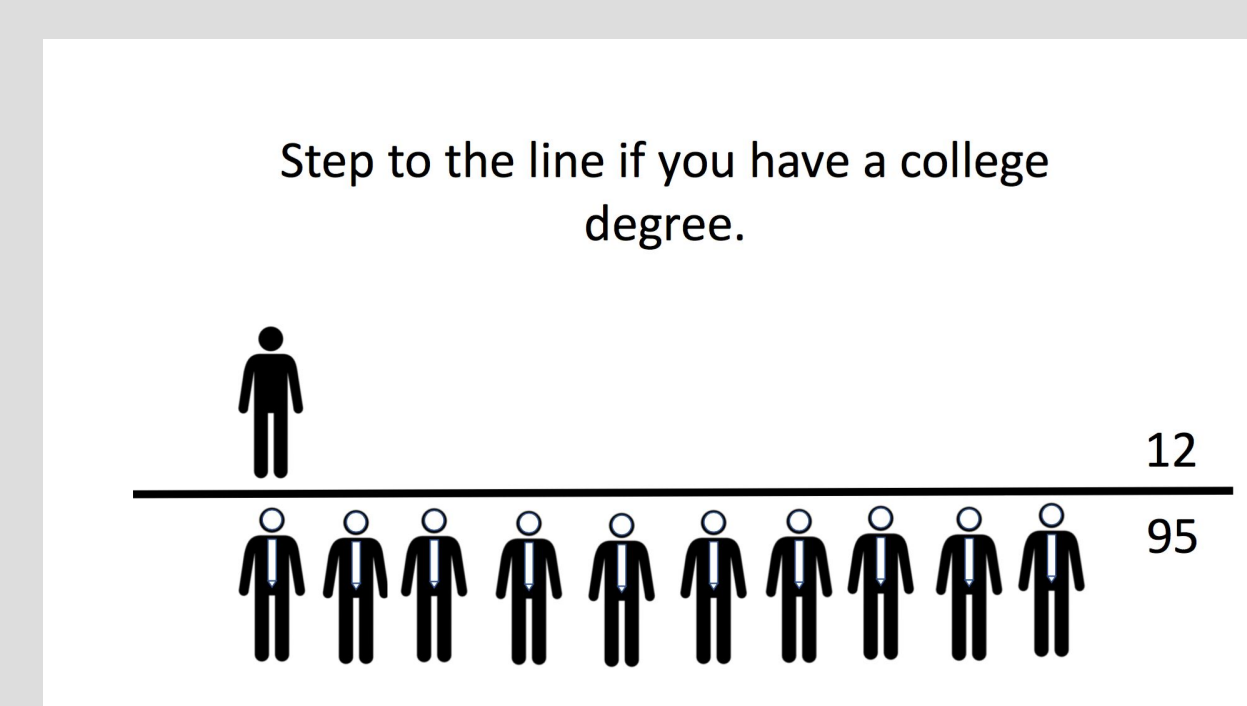


Figure 8

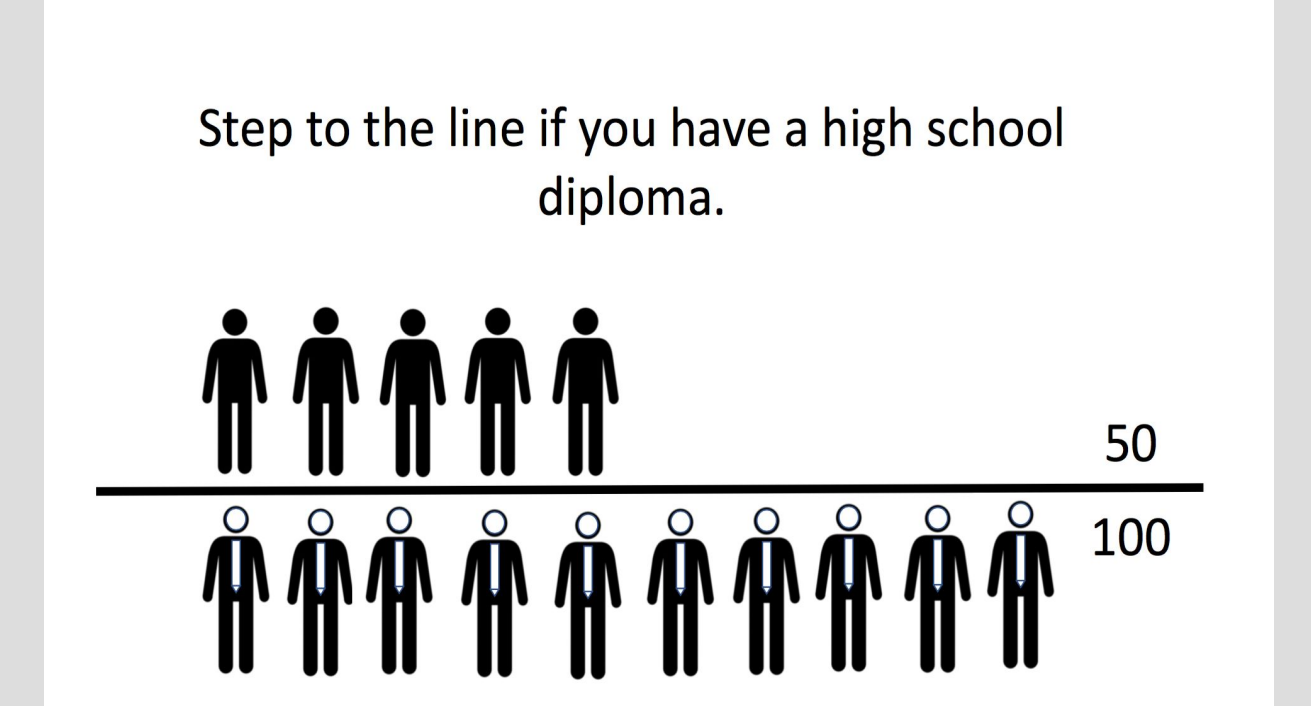


Figure 9

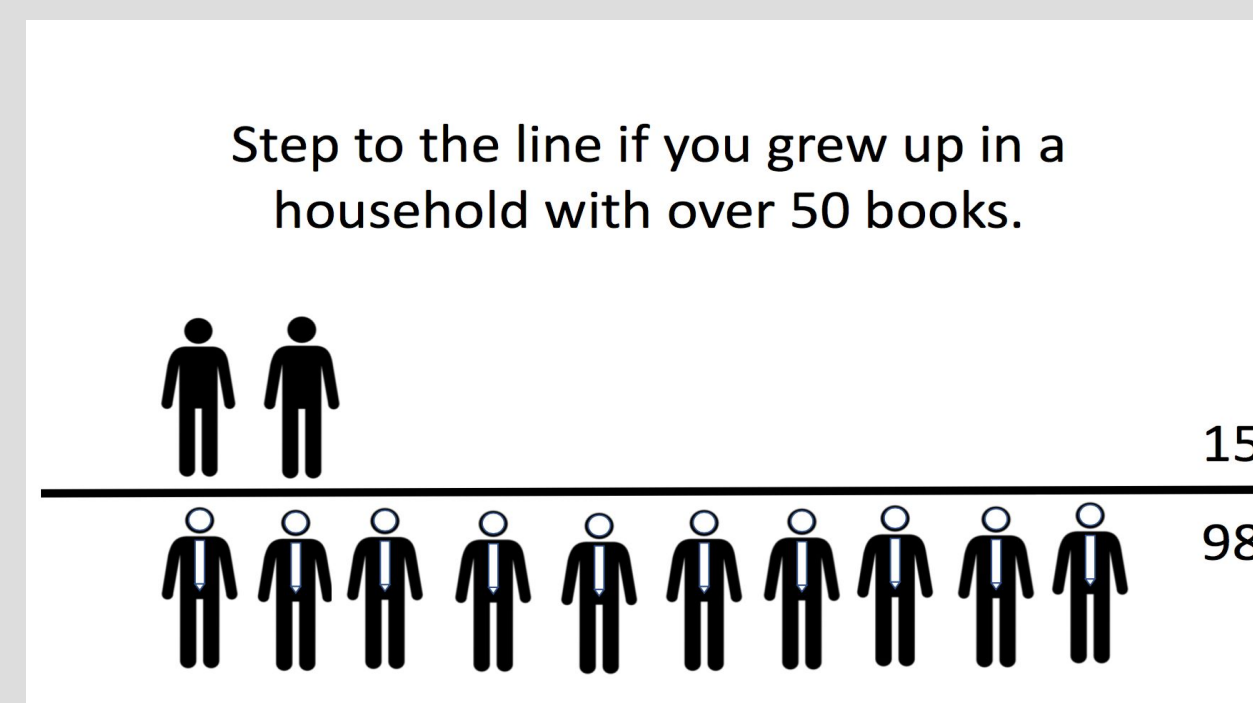


Figure 10

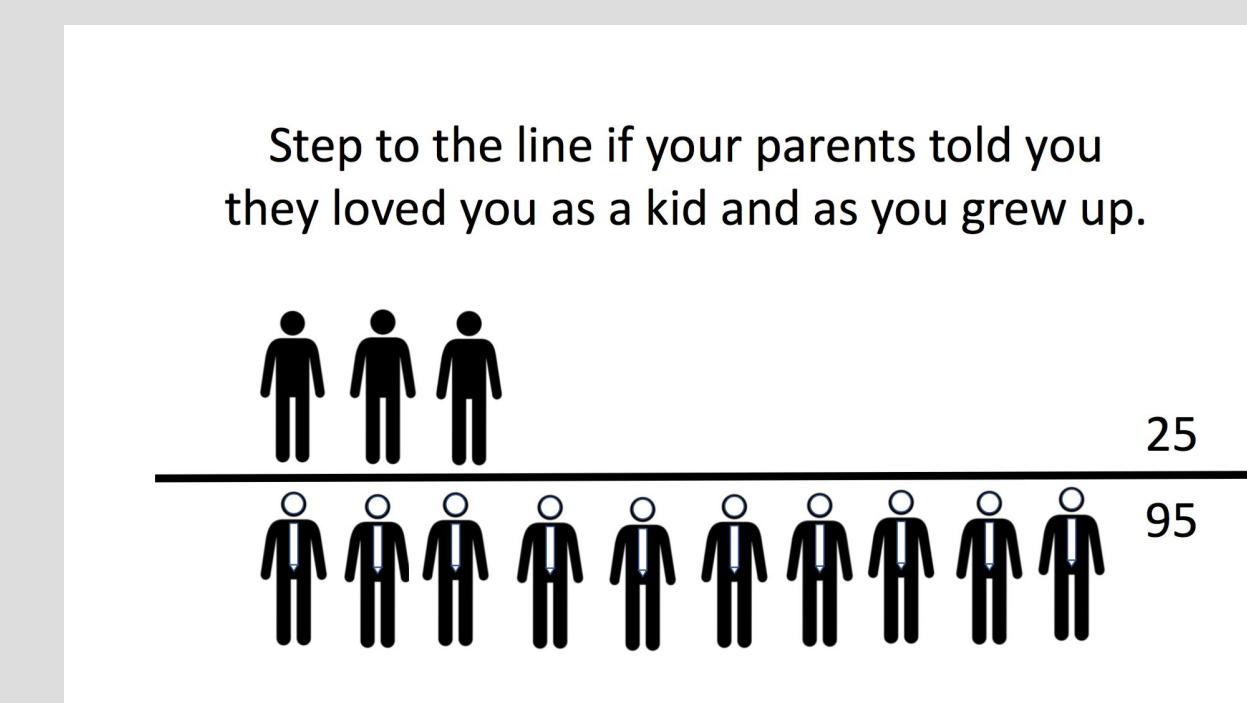


Figure 11

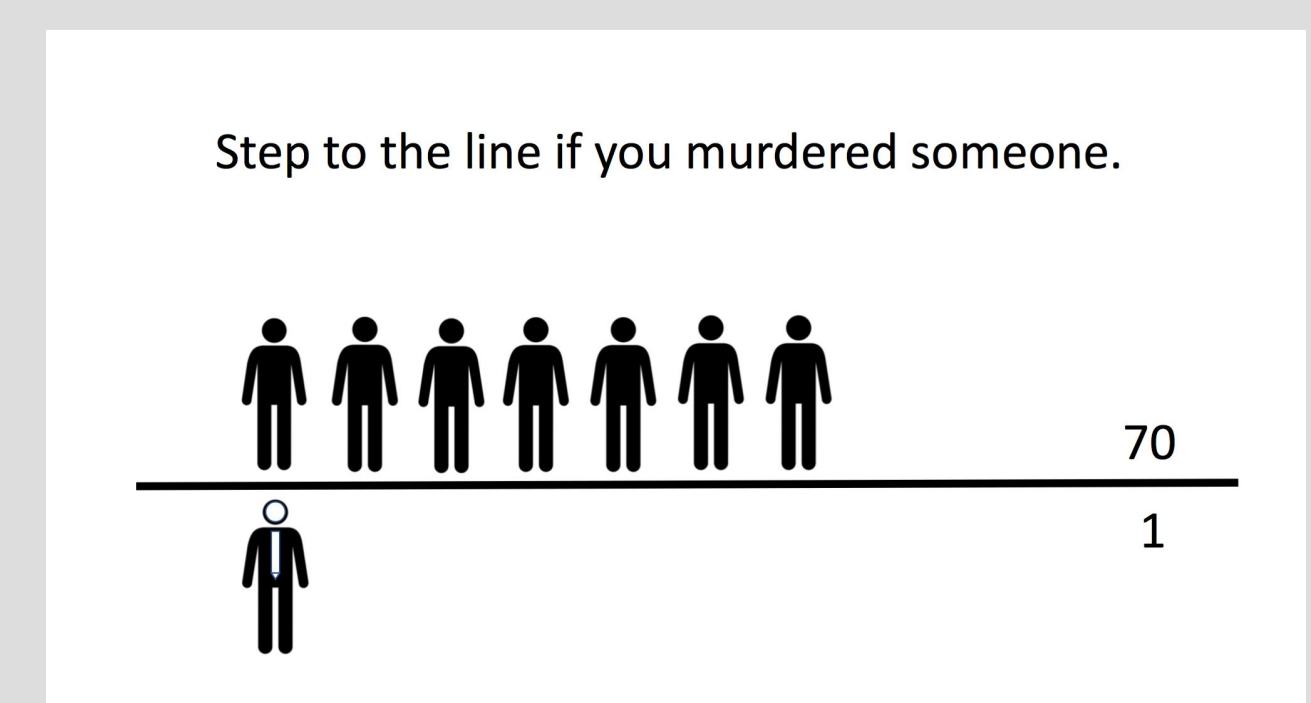


Figure 12

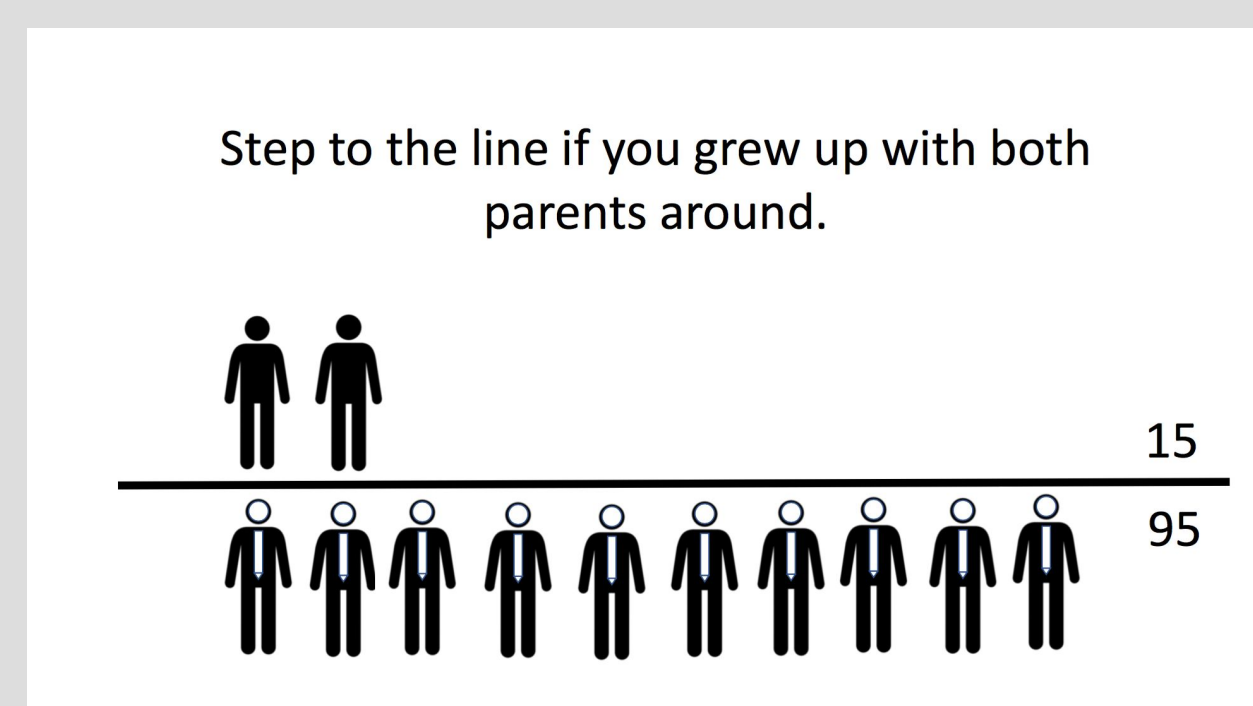


Figure 13

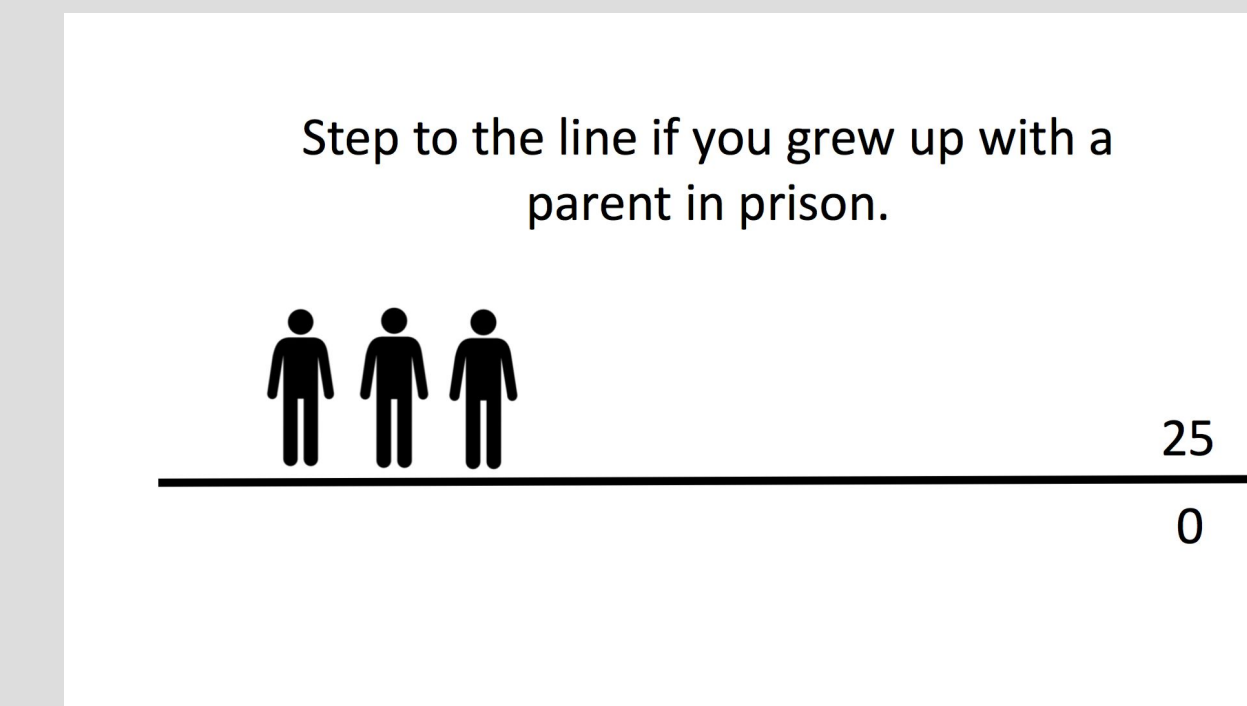


Figure 14

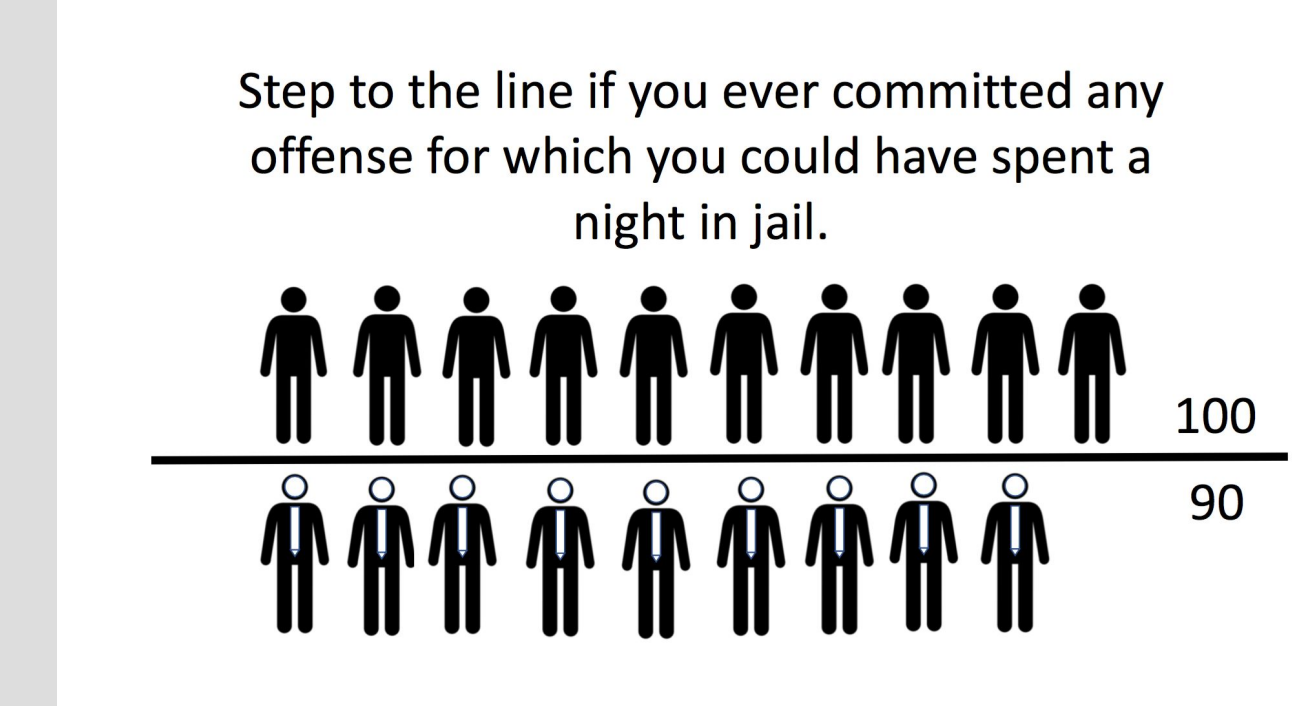


Figure 15

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

As part of the Defy Ventures entrepreneurship program, I engaged in ethnographic research by visiting incarcerated and system-involved communities. I observed the inmates, also known as the EITs (Entrepreneurs In Training), as they worked to counter the challenges that lead to incarceration and reincarceration. The core of my data comes from the “Step to the line” activity that took place during the prison visit to the California State Prison at Solano. The volunteers lined up on one side of the line that was taped on the ground, and the EITs lined up on the other side. Before there was any conversation, it was clear that the EITs were predominantly Latino and African-American, while the volunteers were almost all white. A moderator then proposed a set of scenarios to demonstrate the differences between the two groups:

- “Step to the line if you grew up in a two-parent household.”
- “Step to the line if either of your parents have served time in prison.”
- “Step to the line if you have a high school diploma.”
- “Step to the line if you have ever had a substance abuse problem.”

During the course of this activity, I took careful note of the ethnic, socioeconomic, educational, and mental health-related differences. The data that I collected through this activity can be seen in Figures 7-15 in the “Data and Findings” section.

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND NEXT STEPS

The results and findings from my day spent in Solano State Prison, and the ongoing conversations I am having with Veronica Ensign and Jessica Nowlan, amazingly (yet not surprisingly) were an accurate and direct representation of the research I had done and collected at the beginning stages of this project. Just as the statistics suggest, education, mental health, race, police arrest bias, and income each play a major role in the likelihood of incarceration. Experiencing and seeing these disparities in person and firsthand made it even more clear that these statistics are frighteningly true and that something in our society needs to be done to shrink these gaps. The next steps to be taken to further this research are to focus in on each of the individual factors that leads to incarceration and recidivism. Now that the background and main research on the problem as a whole has been done, there must be a concentration on each factor as its own issue.

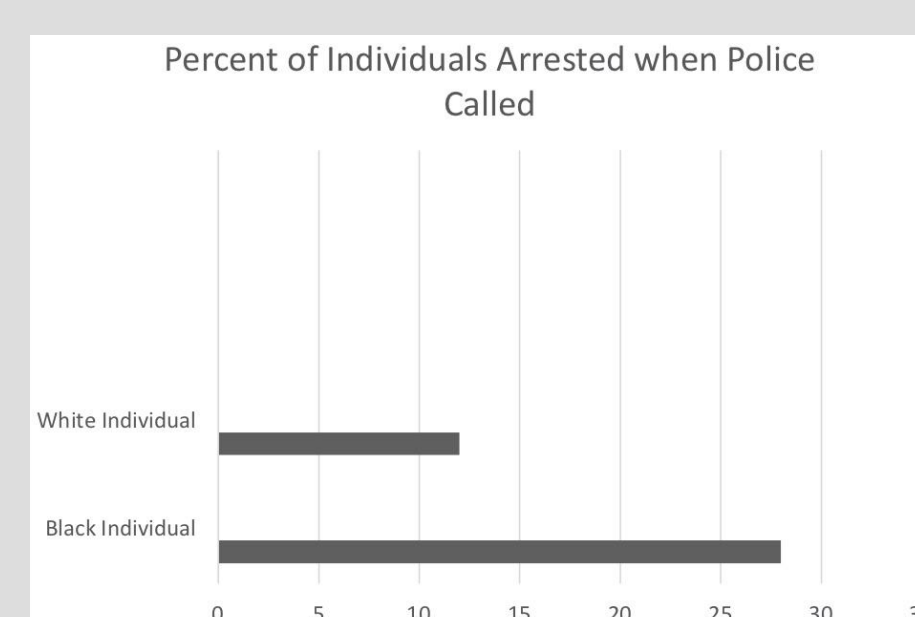


Figure 5

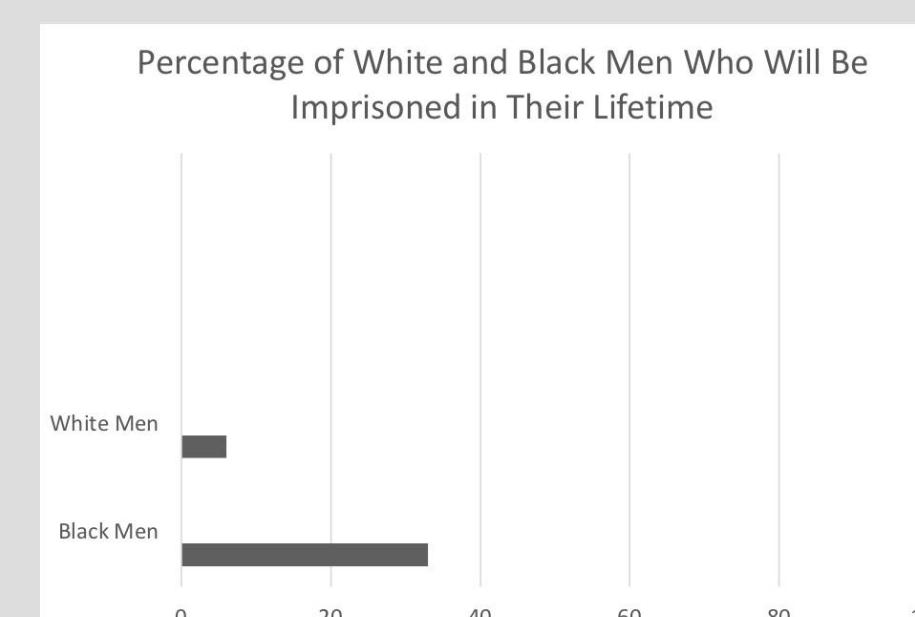


Figure 6

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to Jessica Nowlan and Veronica Ensign for helping to make this project possible.



REFERENCES

- A. (2103, September 12). Crime rates linked to educational attainment, 2013 alliance report finds. Retrieved from <https://all4ed.org/press/crime-rates-linked-to-educational-attainment-new-alliance-report-finds/>
- Breaking out of the prison cycle. (2016, September 13). Retrieved from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/d/brand-connect/breaking-out-of-the-prison-cycle/>
- D. (2017). A brief history of the drug war. Retrieved from <http://www.drugpolicy.org/issues/brief-history-drug-war>
- Dillon, S. (2009, October 08). Study finds high rate of imprisonment among dropouts. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/09/education/09dropout.html?mcu=0>
- Duane, K., & Galloway, K. (Directors). (2016). *The Return* [Motion picture]. United States: Loteria Films.
- James, D. J., & Glaze, L. E. (n.d.). Mental health problems of prison and jail inmates. *PsyEXTRA Dataset*. doi:10.1037/e557002006-001
- Knafo, S. (2013, October 04). 1 In 3 black males will go to prison in their lifetime, report warns. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/04/racial-disparities-criminal-justice_n_4045144.html
- Newman, J. (2010, October 15). Mass incarceration and the cycle of poverty. Retrieved from <http://gmpprogress.org/voices/2010/10/15/15863/mass-incarceration-and-the-cycle-of-poverty/>
- Raboy, B., & Kopf, D. (2015, July 9). Prisons of poverty: Uncovering the pre-incarceration incomes of the imprisoned. Retrieved from <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/income.html>
- Smith, D. A., Visser, C. A., & Davidson, L. A. (1984). Equity and discretionary justice: The influence of race on police arrest decisions. Retrieved from <http://scholarlycommons.law.northwestern.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6418&context=jls>
- T. (2013, August). Report of the sentencing project to the united nations human rights committee regarding racial disparities in the united states criminal justice system. Retrieved from http://www.bing.com/search?IC=344392657A1340B6AED4FD46F2F30616&CID=3E1F57A45CB96CEA07A45CF15D164DDE&d=1&l=cd&bs=NCF96GK9K9GJ35Dq1h62FN-4cy89LD0netUog&v=1&r=http%3a%2f%2fwww.sentencingproject.org%2fwop-content%2fuploads%2f2015%2f12%2fRace-and-Justice-Shadow-Report-UCPR.pdf&p=DevEx_5066.1