

Locked Up, Locked Out: Young Men in the Juvenile Justice System

Anne M. Nurse



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Locked Up, Locked Out follows forty juvenile male offenders, from their first-time admissions to the Ohio system through their incarceration and reentry into the community. The author conducted three lengthy interviews with each of these youth over a period of two and a half years. These interviews bring alive their attitudes and day-to-day prison experiences, as well as the intricate connections between life on the inside and life on the outside.

Status is key to everyday life in prison, and it is often played out in demonstrations of masculinity, misogyny, and violence. Some gangs and some "area codes" (as the old neighborhoods are called) are seen as tougher than others and are given more respect. Even letters from family members and girlfriends are important signs of whether a prisoner matters: one young man says, "I'd write letters every day to people to beg 'em to write me back." Another reports, "There would be people in there writing girls, saying, hey, write me this nasty letter of things we're going to do and things we did. And they'd write back with these letters. And now he'll get to walk around with his letter bragging, like, hey, check this out. These are the kind of girls I got."

Incarcerated youth also work hard at impression management. Coping with prison requires a young man to present one face to fellow prisoners and another to the authorities who will decide his release date.

The author pays substantial attention to the programs youth are offered, including those focusing on education, anger management, job training, and parenting skills. Another section looks at contact between incarcerated youth and the outside world, including a discussion of the impact of incarceration on families.

Based on her extensive knowledge of policies in other states, the author also provides a broad overview of the juvenile justice system nationally, describing how the system is organized, administered, and funded. Readers are taken through the juvenile justice process from conviction through parole with special attention paid to new state initiatives and sentencing structures.

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