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Theories of understanding portfolio #1
Praxis

What control do we have over our future?

Do we, as humans, have inevitable control over our destiny? To what extent can we control our future, or is it all predetermined? When we are young, we hear from adults that we can do anything we set our minds. We create dreams about being famous, an astronaut, or a doctor, but those dreams fade into memories as we age. Only a tiny handful of people get to experience their dreams. With only a minuscule amount of success in the dreams of our younger selves, we must ask what happened. Why do some people end up being doctors, and others end up trapped in the prison system? Nature vs. nurture: what is biologically passed down to us, and how does the environment and the system you grow up in impact your future? People are inherently born evil; it is something that is taught, just like hate. Instead of youth growing up with a world of opportunities and resources in front of them, many youth grow up alone and are set up to be sent to systems embedded with systematic failures and injustice.

The prison and education systems are just two broken systems embedded in each other. Most people likely to end up in the system have felt like the world has given up on them due to injustice and unfair treatment. As youth, we are forced to go to school and go through the schooling system that can fail and leave students who have learning differences, mental health, or home issues. School resources and curriculum are not fairly distributed between students and other schooling systems. The curriculum that schools follow is often that of the white American man, leaving no space for learning about other cultures. Not feeling heard in school is why students may drop out and follow a different path. Schools and policing also go hand in hand. When police are present on school property, youth are more likely to live a life in the system.

Lack of resources and policing often take place in low-income schools, where the schools most often fail their students, leading them to a cycle of being displaced.

Depending on where you live, the resources you have access to, and what you look like, can determine whether you end up in jail or a fancy rehabilitation center. When people are locked up, it affects them for the rest of their lives. It impacts their jobs, mental health, and ability to learn how to care for themselves. Prison systems are not set up to keep people out. They are designed to take people in constantly. Most often, the people they take in need resources and support other than being in prison. Prisons and schools don't teach about conflict resolution, and those schools that do often have the resources not to need them in the first place.

Growing up, I didn't understand how to handle conflict; I was never taught how to converse with people about our feelings. I grew up with yelling and slamming doors, only for the next day, things would be perfect again. I never knew how to handle my emotions. When I was younger, I would scream, hit, and kick when I was anxious or depressed because I didn't know there were any other options. In school, I had undiagnosed ADHD and fell behind. I nearly failed every test given to me, and no one knew how to help me. Never having support and being failed by school, I felt like I was going nowhere. I hated going to school, and I would do anything possible to try to avoid it. I spent my days getting in trouble because I couldn't sit still and didn't understand a noun. Because I failed at school, I didn't think I would be able to do anything with my life. As I got older, I finally reached out for help and got answers, but only thanks to certain teachers who put their necks out for me. If it wasn't for them, I would never have gotten my life together, learned about mental illness, and how to manage and thrive with ADHD. I am lucky because I had people fighting for me, but I know that millions of kids out there felt the same way

as I, ready to give up on school and angry. They deserve the same support and resources. Kids who think just like me and are helpless sometimes end up in the justice system.

Their future is predetermined because the system is set up to benefit people who have money. You will likely be by the system if you have the right money, connections, or people looking out for you. For a prison and education system to support an individual's life, it needs to be focused on the individual and their journey instead of generalizations and money. Every person deserves a fair shot at life, to have equal and just resources, and people who want to see them succeed. Prison systems should be set up for rehabilitation and a new life. Schools should teach students how to get a job, handle emotions, and resolve conflicts instead of stereotyping people. If schools and prison systems focus on individuals and their journeys for rehabilitation and success, fewer people would be within the system. However, both of these systems are embedded in injustices and systemic issues. They are racist and classist and only benefit one community while the rest end up suffering because of it.