

# **Addressing the Gordian Knot of Unemployment, Behavioral Health Problems, and Criminal Justice Involvement in Young Adults**

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# Disclosures

- Nothing to disclose

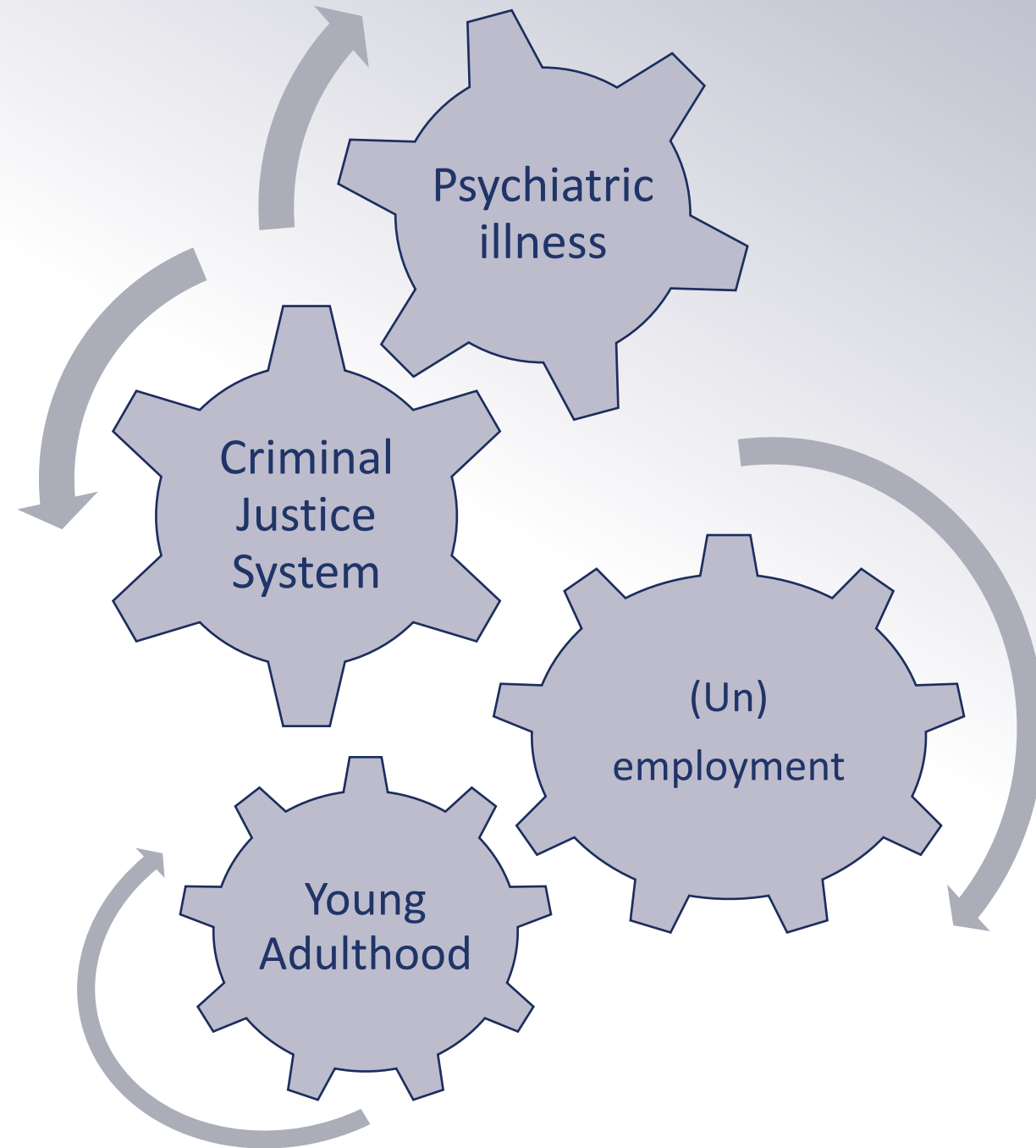
# Acknowledgements

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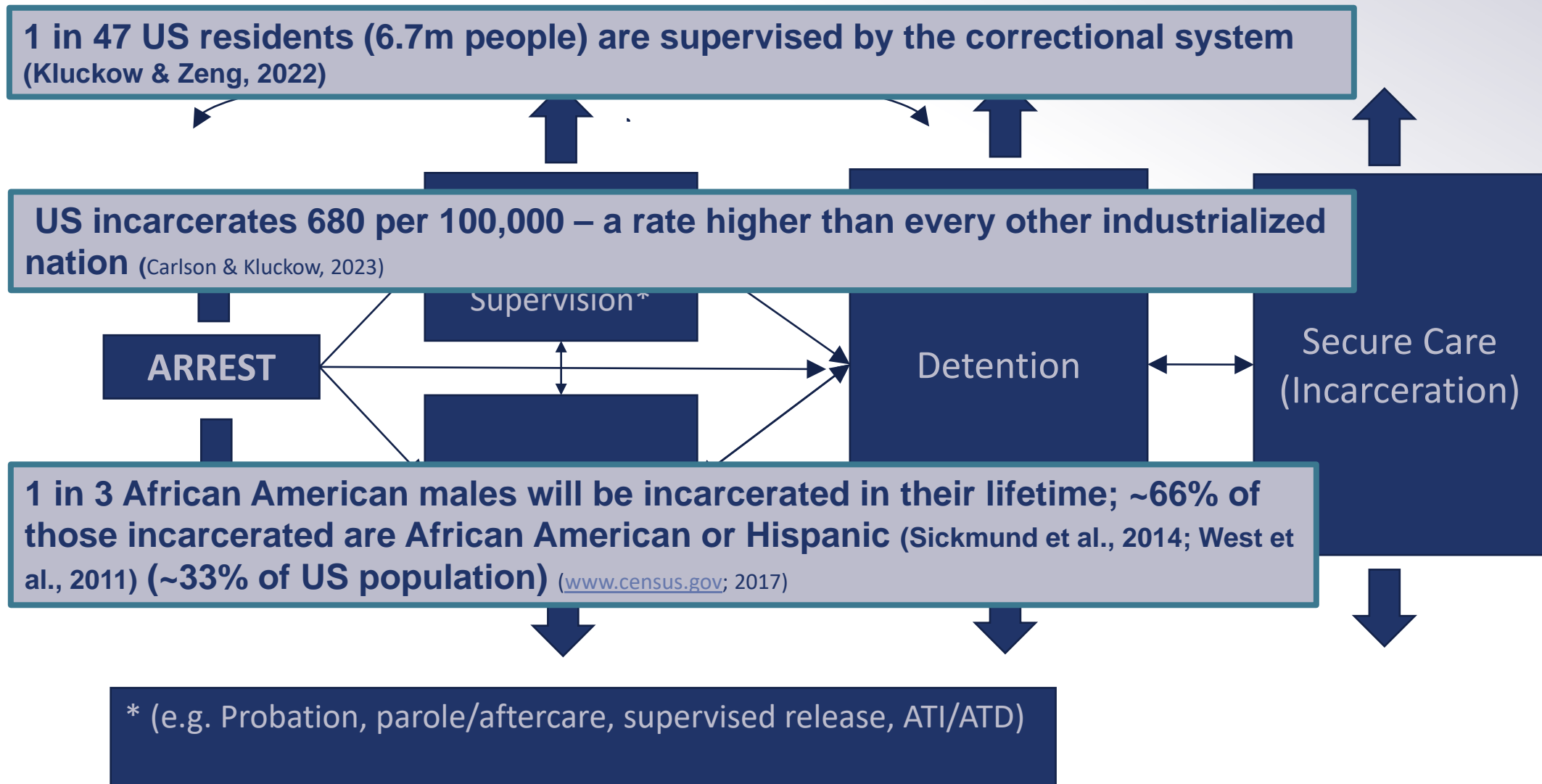


# Overview

- Provide an overview of the criminal justice system (CJS) in US
- Describe the intersection of CJS-involvement, psychiatric disorders, and (un)employment for YAIJ
  - Context of risk for young adults
- Highlight specific employment needs of YAIJ with psychiatric disorders
- Adaptation and integration to improve employment, CJS and psychiatric outcomes

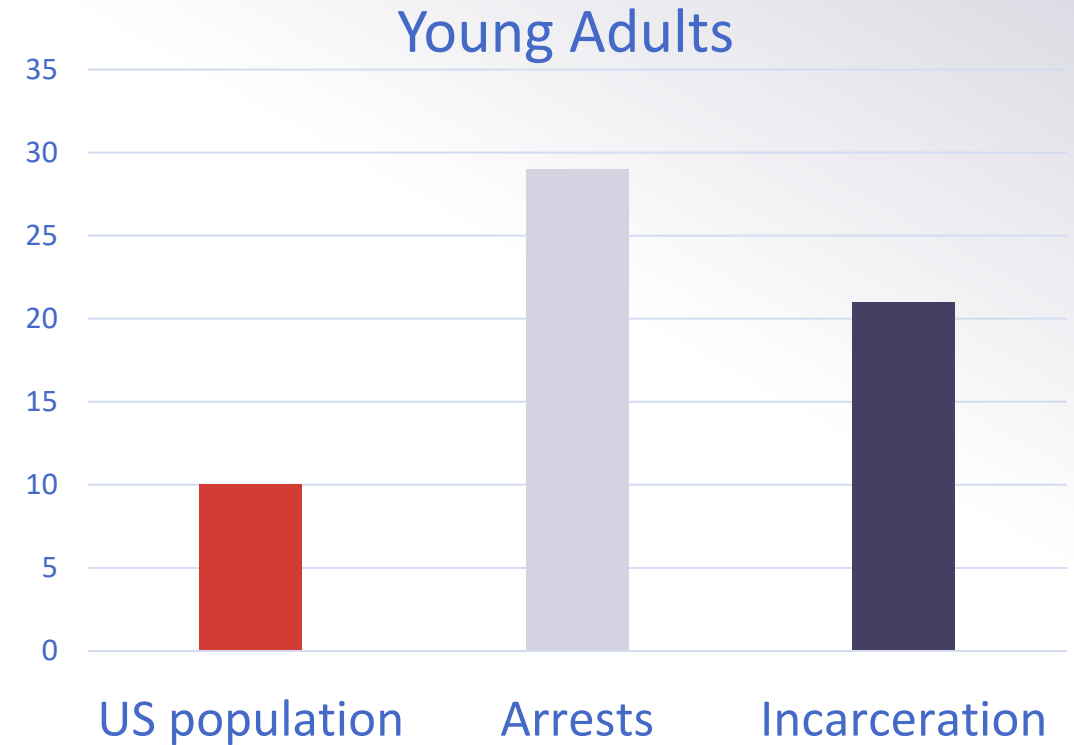


# An Overview of the US Criminal Justice System



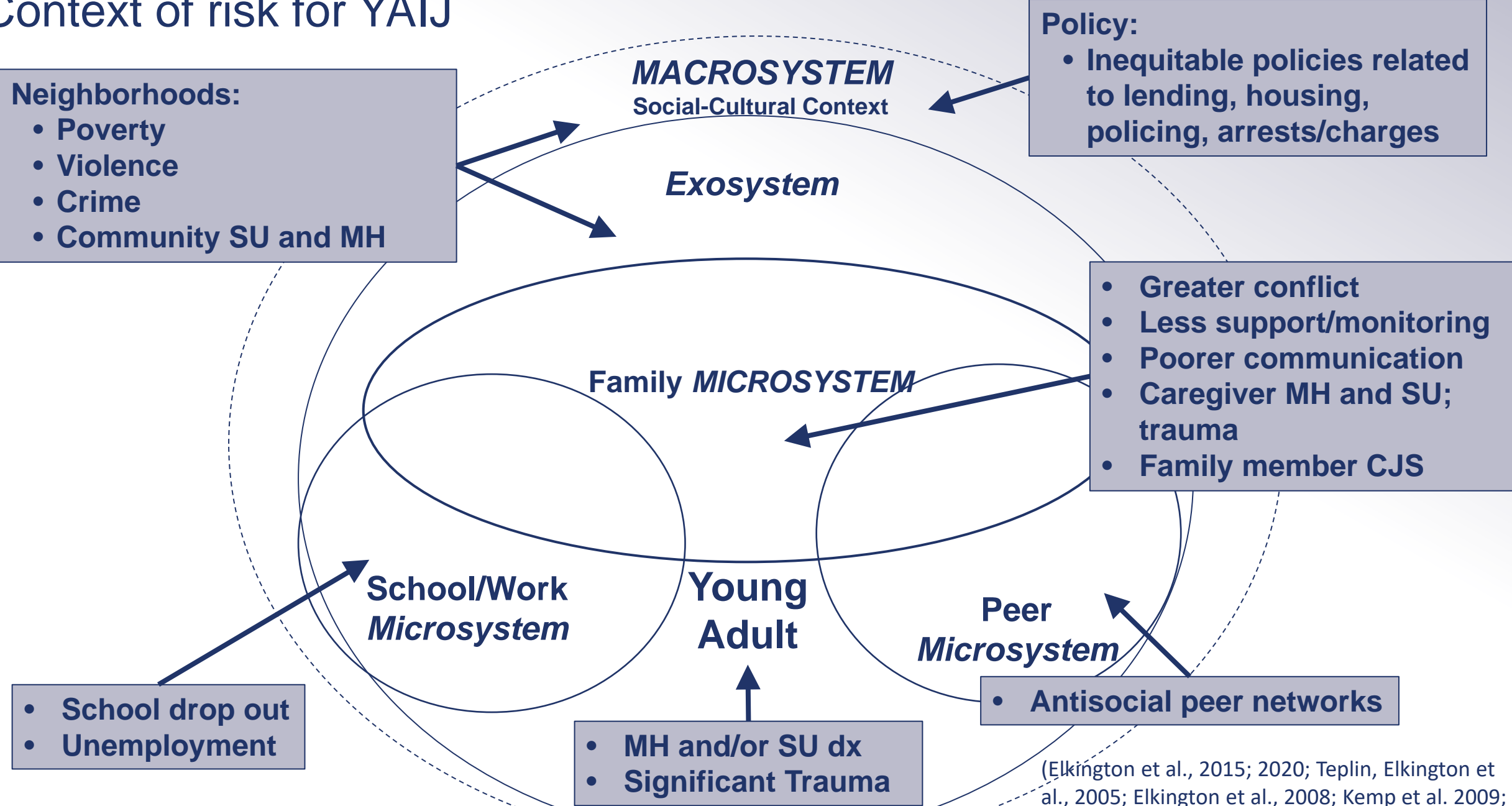
# A focus on young adults in the CJS

- Young/emerging adulthood – 18-25 years (Arnett, 2000)
- Developmental period of significant change: opportunity and vulnerability
- Involvement in CJS can place YA on negative trajectory.
  - YA have highest rates of re-offending (76%; vs 60%-69%) (Carson & Golinelli, 2014)
- Unfortunately, this group has been largely overlooked from CJS programming that addresses their specific developmental needs (Sichel et al., 2020; Perker & Chester).

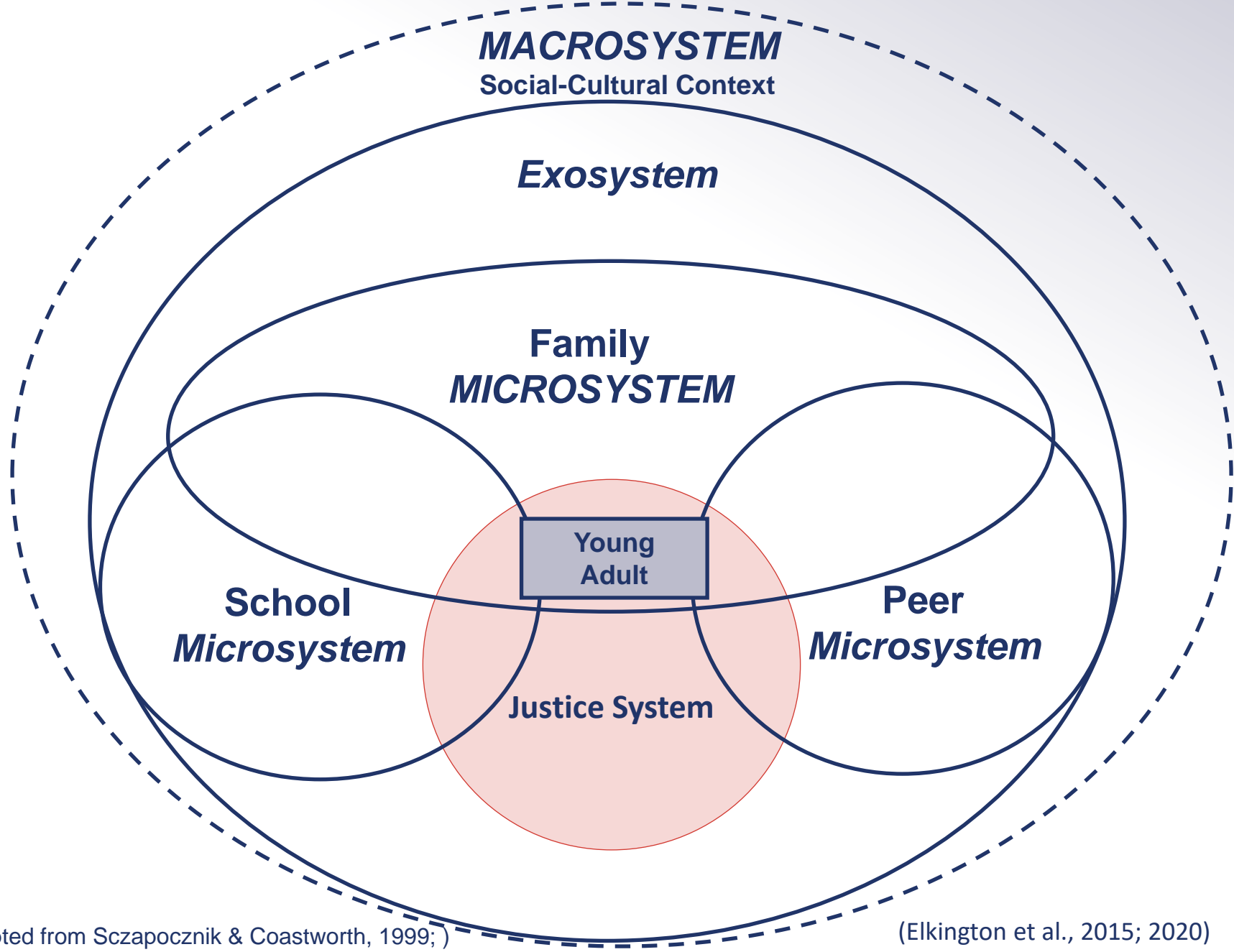


(US Department of Justice, 2013; Carson & Golinelli, 2014).

# Context of risk for YAIJ



# Context of risk for YAIJ



(Ecodevelopmental model adapted from Sczapocznik & Coastworth, 1999; )

(Elkington et al., 2015; 2020)

# Employment as a critical social determinant of reduced CJS involvement\*

- Employment has been identified as **one of the key ingredients** to successful re-entry following prison (Apel & Horney; Decker et al., 2015).
- Various theories explain this through a process of positive social interaction and economic success, promoting positive social behavior and decreasing likelihood of engaging in behaviors that would lead to (re)arrest

(**Social control theory**: Hirschi, 1969; Sampson and Laub, 1993; **Strain theory**: Agnew, 1992; Merton, 1938.  
**Interactionist**: Matsueda, 1992; Mead, 1934; **Learning theory**: Akers, 1985; Sutherland, 1947)

- However, research suggests that it is not just work (yes/no) by itself but the quality and nature of the work and the resulting work bond that are key mechanisms that drive how work can reduce recidivism (Gannt-Howrey et al., 2024).

\* Most research on employment in CJS populations is based on adult populations.

# High rates of unemployment and continued recidivism among YAIJ

Sample	Unemployment	Continued criminal behavior
N=1261; serious youth offenders; ~23 years <i>(Pathways to Desistance followed over 7 yrs; Schubert et al., 2018)</i>	20hrs > 2 weeks, <b>27%</b> of 7 year fu period;	3.98-4.47 mean arrests 29-32% of time spent in secure placement
Sample n=1561 detained youth; ~ 20.6 years <i>(Northwestern Juvenile Project sample; 5 year follow-up Abram et al., 2017)</i>	<b>25%</b> of males and <b>41%</b> of females were employed >20 hrs	15% males and 63% females self report desistance from criminal activity, arrests, incarceration ~ past year (85%; 27% continued)
Sample of n=445 youth initially detained; ~ 22.7 years; 7 year follow-up <i>(Ramchand et al., 2009)</i>	<b>38%</b> working full/part time	71.9% Previous year probation, parole, jail, or detention  3%-46% Self-reported criminal behavior same as at baseline
Non-institutionalized youth, 20-24yrs <i>(Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023)</i>	66.6% >20hrs per week	NA

# Social and contextual factors result in inconsistent employment among YAIJ: exclusion and detachment

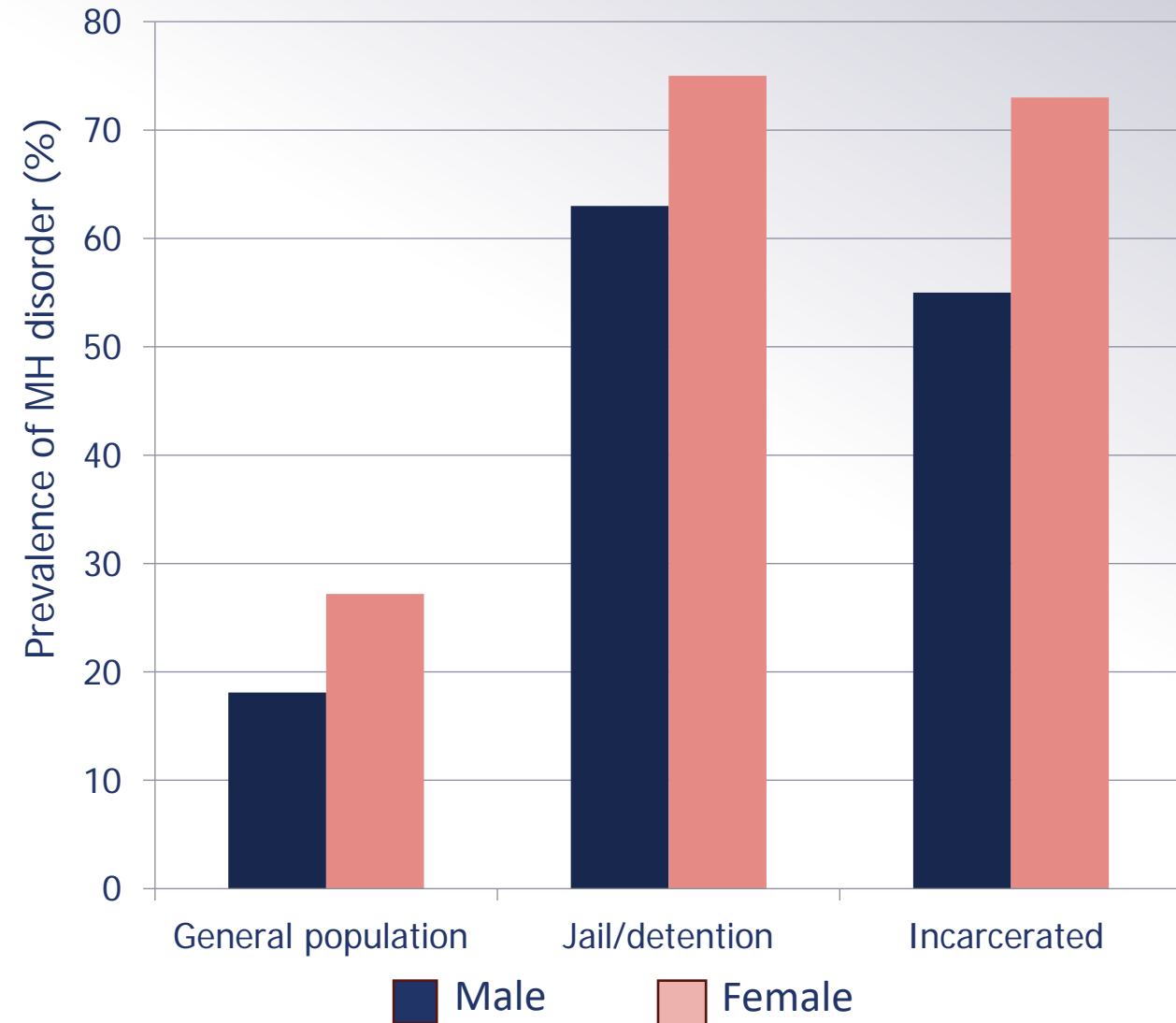
- Societal conditions (social determinants of health) in which JIYA live prior to justice involvement increase likelihood of both unemployment/unsteady employment and CJS involvement.
  - Race, poverty, poor education, residing in areas of high unemployment, which cumulatively result in limited skills acquisition and work history pre-arrest.
- Following arrest, adjudication or incarceration, these conditions remain to make employment incredibly difficult and are amplified by **stigma** associated with justice involvement held by employers serving to *exclude* YAIJ from workforce
  - Impact of CJS involvement is driven by race

# Social and contextual factors result in inconsistent employment among YAIJ: exclusion and detachment

- The confluence of these experiences can result in *detachment* from the labor market due to:
  - Belief that they will not be able to find consistent, worthwhile employment.  
(Steely et al., 2019)
    - People who have been involved in the criminal justice system will have to engage in more extensive searches and apply for more jobs than people without a criminal record due to employer reticence (Pager, 2003) .
  - Avoid institutions that keep them under the surveillance of the criminal justice system (i.e., System avoidance) (Brayne, 2014; Goffman, 2009).

# Adults in the CJS, including YAIJ, have substantially higher rates of psychiatric disorders than those in the general population

- Adults in CJS have much higher rates of psychiatric disorders compared to the general population.
  - Any SMI 5%-50%
  - MDD 34%-45%
  - Psychosis 5%-11%
  - PTSD 4%-12%
  - SUD 41%-51%
- Young adults formerly detained (Teplin et al., 2021)
  - Any disorders: 47% f; 58% m disorder;
  - Comorbid disorders: 18% f; 31.5% m
  - SUD: 21.1% f; 32.7% m
- Young adults general population (SAMSHA, 2021)
  - Any disorder 33%

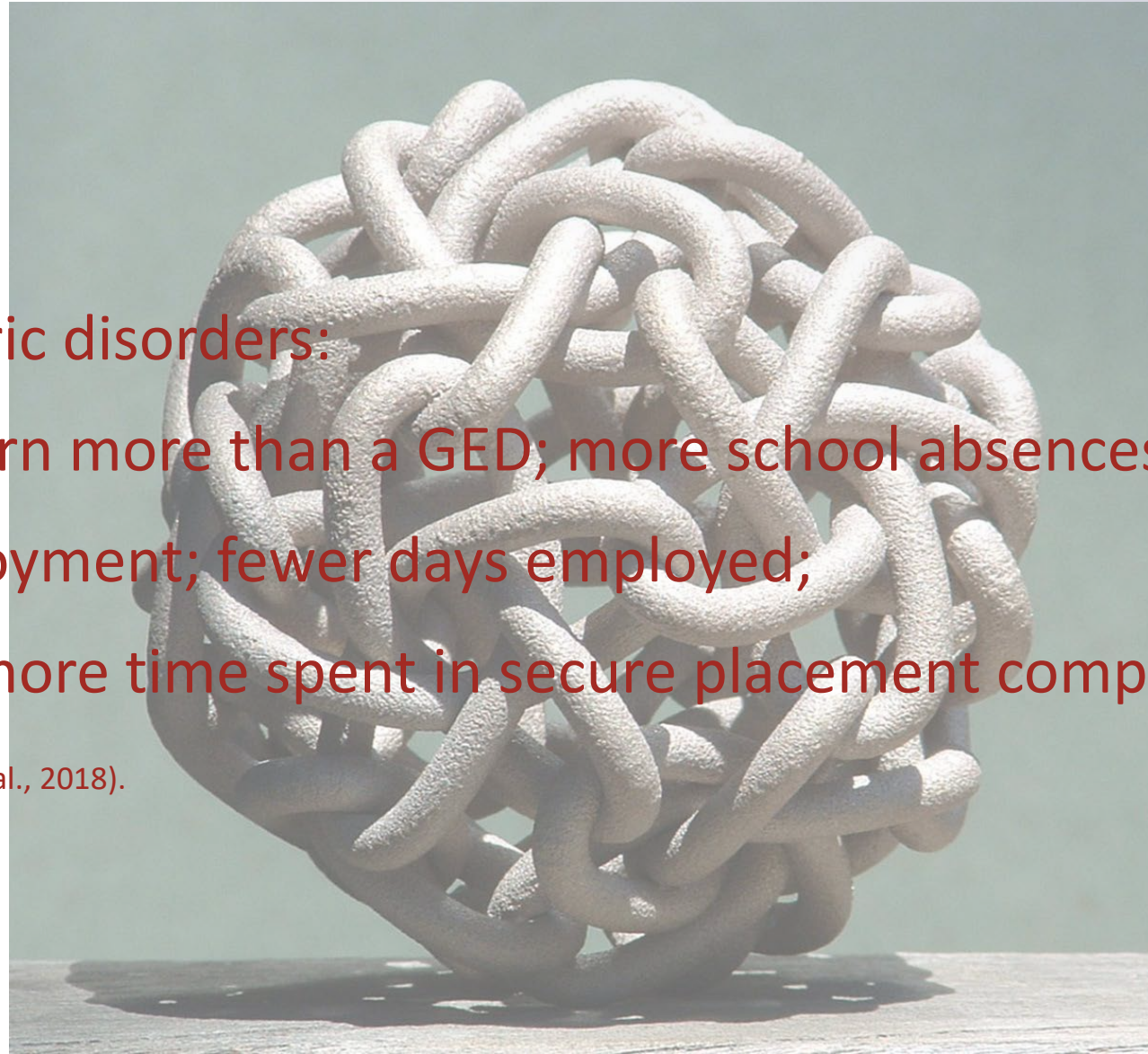


# Psychiatric Disorders among YAJI place them at 'Double Jeopardy' for poor outcomes (Grisso 2006)

- Behavioral health problems among YAIJ are associated with:
  - Higher rates of reoffending and deeper involvement in the CJS
  - Unemployment/poverty
  - Unstable housing/periods of homelessness
- Despite availability of evidence-based psychiatric treatments, YAIJ with psychiatric disorders struggle to remain out of the CJS
  - Low Access: <20% received services; less likely to receive services as they transition (Luna et al., 2024)
  - Low fidelity to original treatment model (Osher & Steadman, 2007)
  - Failure of treatments to also address social determinants of health -- such as employment (Osher & Steadman, 2007)

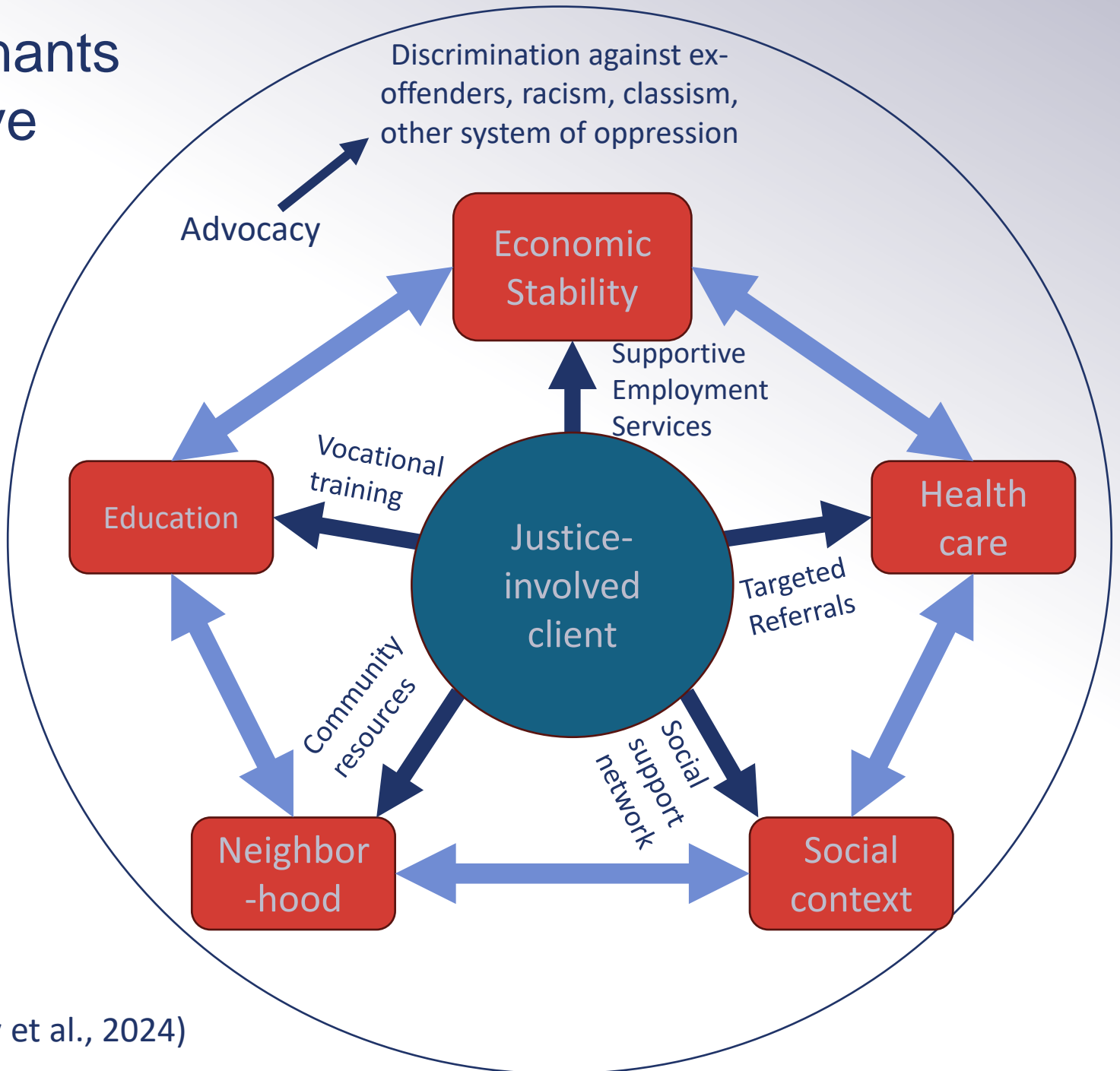
YAIJ with psychiatric disorders:

- less likely to earn more than a GED; more school absences;
  - unstable employment; fewer days employed;
  - more arrests, more time spent in secure placement compared to YAIJ without
- (Schubert et al., 2018).



# Addressing Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) to improve outcomes for JIYA.

- Supportive employment programs are critical to support YAIJ with psychiatric disorders as they transition out of CJS and into adulthood
- Integrate the intersectional identities of CJS, psychiatric disorders, and unemployment and to develop programming that can address all three to increase successful employment, improve mental health, and decrease recidivism.



(Systems Theory Framework; Gannt-Howrey et al., 2024)

# Reviewing the evidence: IPS shows promise for CJS-involved and for YA

## Supportive employment programs for CJS-adults with psychiatric disorders

- Employment programs that work via a step-wised approach to re-entry and employment do not maintain longterm effects for CJS (Connell et al. 2023).
- IPS trial with adults with SMI and CJS found 31% vs 7% control obtained competitive employment; 2x as many days employed
  - No CJS differences; **engagement with the program a significant barrier to employment** (Bond et al., 2012; 2015)
- Military veterans with psychiatric disorders; 46% IPS vs 21% SOC; more hours employed and higher wages (LePage et al 2016)

## IPS for young adults

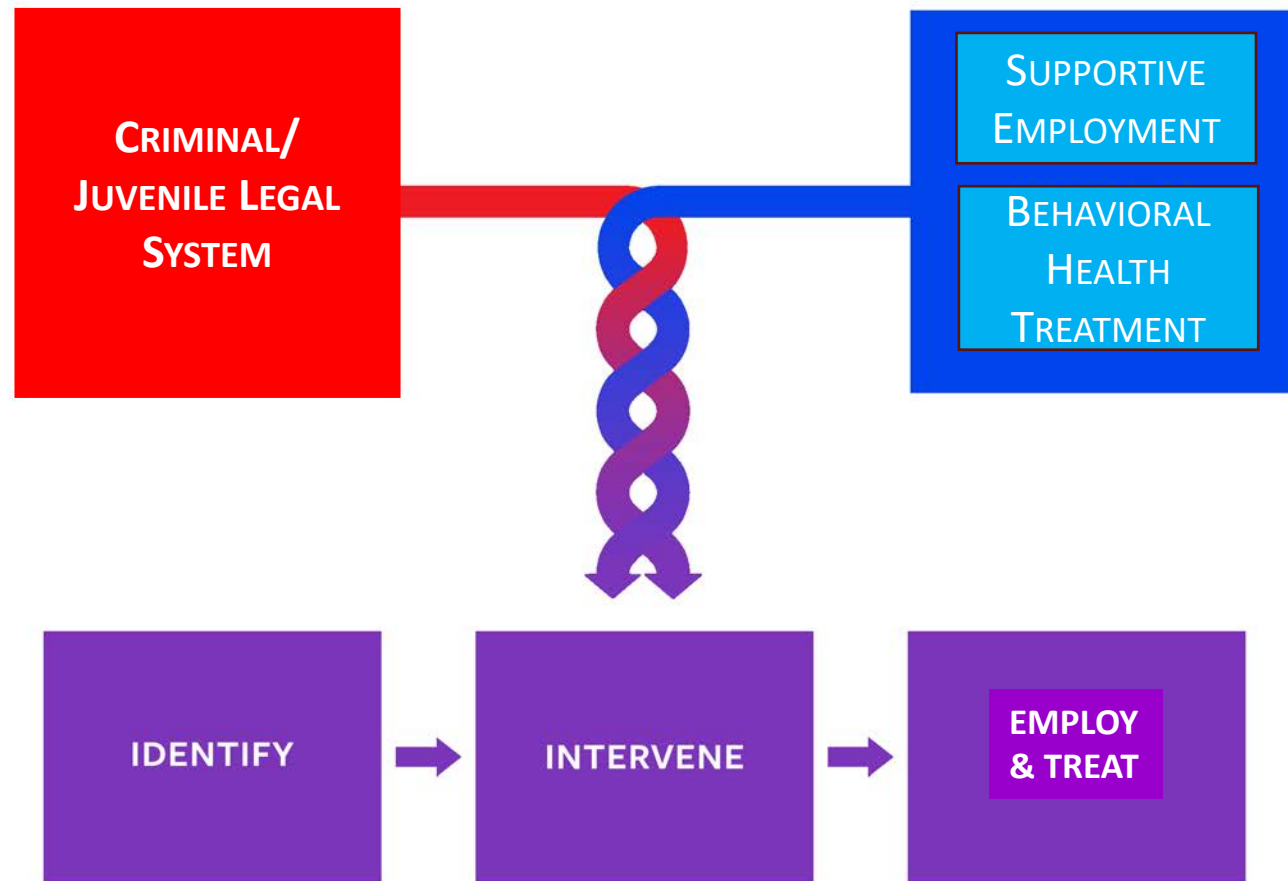
- Meta analysis of 7 studies of YA with SMI: RR=1.69, p=0.01; 58.3% IPS vs 32.4% employed compared to control; significant longer duration of work; RR=1.58, 72.4% IPS vs 43.5% either employed or in education at follow-up (Bond et al., 2023)
- Homeless youth: 85% IPS-A vs 37.5% SOC employed at some point over 10 months; 5.2 mos vs 2.19mos (Ferguson et al., 2012)
- Foster care: 49% enrolled in employment by 1 year (Ellison et al., 2015)
- Schools: 36% achieved employment by 1 year (Noel et al., 2017).
  - Lack of collaboration between systems, competing expectations, and stigma hampered implementation

# Supportive programs that address employment and behavioral health problems for YAIJ

- Address **both** BH problems and employment needs in an integrated fashion at the systems level
- Address the unique needs of YAIJ
  - CJS barriers to employment
  - Key BH issues (substance use, trauma, affect regulation/impulse control)
  - Social support and other SDoH needs
- Successfully engage YAIJ

# Partnership between CJS, supportive employment, and behavioral health systems

- YAIJ with psychiatric disorders are not typically in BH treatment setting
- CJS programs/settings frequently do not have on-site BH programming but many address employment
- Develop innovative integration models using a CBPR approach with all stakeholders
  - Weave BH treatment and supportive employment curricula?
  - Detailed and collaborative referral streams to BH treatment?
  - Delivered by peers/near peers?



(Elkington et al., 2019)

# Augmenting IPS for YAIJ: Specific program targets

## CJS

- Address procedural justice issues if mandated to program
- Address stigma of justice involvement/history -- carefully
  - Build resume and experience with entry-level jobs first
  - Build confidence in “long game” to reduce the belief in “fast money” being the only option
- Understand youth’s criminal history and extent it will impact employment options.
  - Non-corporate or smaller, local businesses

## BH

- Ongoing individual and group-based therapy
- Medications
- Brief treatments for anxiety, depression
- Trauma
- Substance use – secondary prevention
- Motivational interviewing

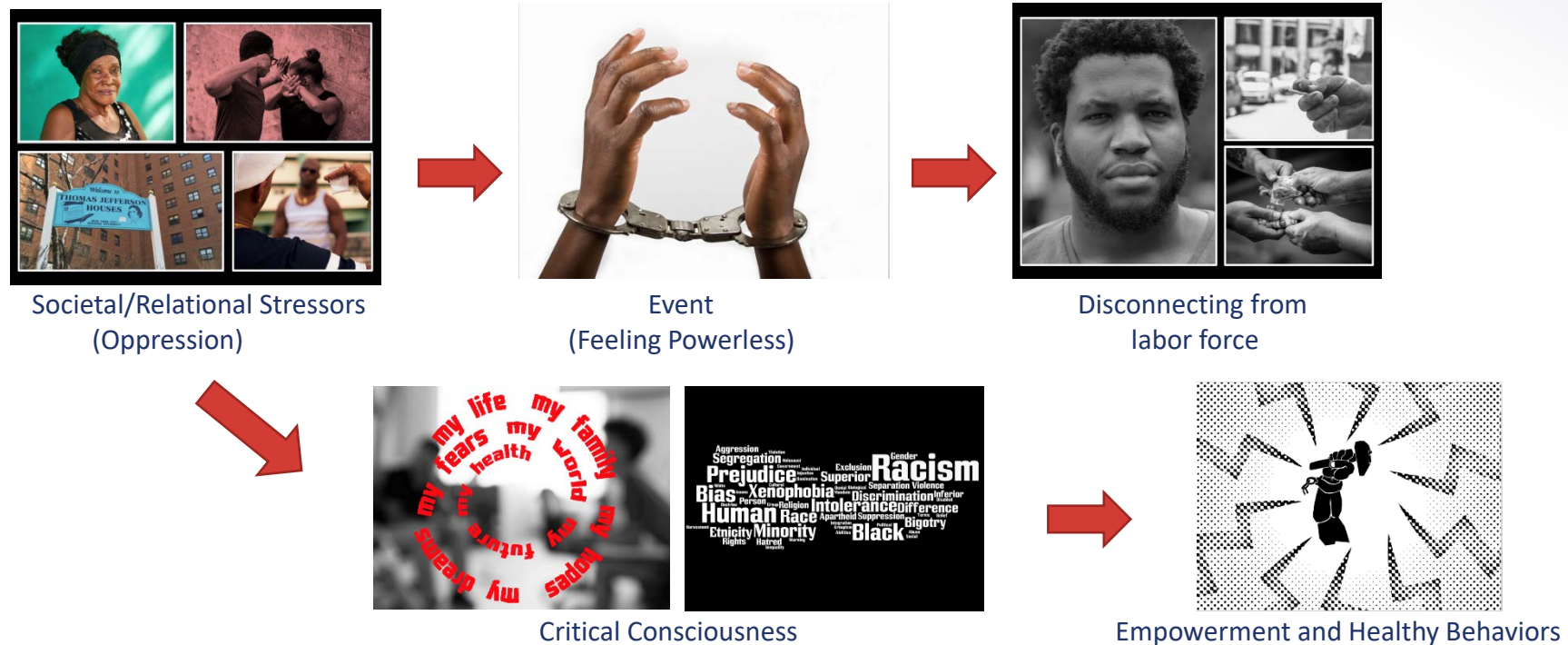
## SDoH

- Address housing
- Insurance/benefits
- Educational deficits (50% did not have HS diploma; SLD?)
- Build additional vocational skills as needed.
- Parenting issues (re-connecting following incarceration)
- Build social support: mentoring/peers

# Engaging YAIJ through Critical Consciousness

## Session Goal: Introduction to Critical Consciousness

- Introduction to Critical Consciousness
- Pathway to Health
- Critical Consciousness in Action



# Critical Consciousness: Oppression and Media



# Conclusions

- YAIJ are a high risk, overlooked population for whom intervention is necessary at a critical developmental period to offset negative trajectories of continued CJS-involvement
- YAIJ have high rates of psychiatric disorders that influence their ability to disentangle themselves from the CJS
- Supportive employment programs for YA with behavioral health problems are effective and can be adapted (and augmented) to serve the unique needs of YAIJ.
  - Reach out if you want to collaborate on this!  
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# Thank you!!

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