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The Lived Experiences of Young Adults Moving From Juvenile Detention Centers to Employment or Education

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Walden University
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Abstract

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Tramyna Bianca Harris

MA, University of the Rockies, 2015

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Forensic Psychology

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Abstract

There are not many young adults who experience a successful turnaround after they leave a juvenile detention center. Many young adults who leave juvenile detention centers are at risk of reoffending and returning to the system due to a paucity of resources. It is vital to recognize the positive and successful experiences of those young adults who do not re-enter the criminal justice system. The purpose of this research study was to understand (a) the different experiences of certain young adults involving their successful turnaround story, (b) why the young adults engaged in criminal activity, and (c) what interventions worked for their success. Using a phenomenological structured interview, nine participants shared their lived experiences regarding successful turnaround to employment or school. The theoretical framework of this study was McKay's social disorganization theory. The research question addressed the lived experiences of young adults leaving juvenile detention centers who experienced significant trauma in their lives. Coding was used after each interview, and responses were analyzed for common themes among the participants. There were multiple subthemes identified during all the interviews, which were categorized into four main themes: disadvantaged neighborhoods, generalization about young adults, reoffending reasons, and effective intervention programs. Participants who had a positive turnaround to education or employment found that positive resources during their childhood would have a positive impact. The findings of this research study have potential to promote positive change by supporting future researchers and practitioners in understanding the factors that help young adults achieve a positive turnaround.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to all the young children all around the world who have faced many trials and tribulations. There is a light at the end of that tunnel, and you will reach it one day. If no one believes in you, I DO!

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There were many people who contributed to my pursuing this doctoral degree and completing this dissertation. First, I would like to thank the participants that made this study possible by sharing their stories. Thank you for allowing me and future readers to capture the successful stories of how one can turn their life around. To my brother-in-law, Nhan, and sister Karen, thank you for taking me in and treating me like I was your own. Because of you, I was able to change my path in a positive way and be where I am today. To my wife, Jamie, your love and support throughout this journey kept me together. Thank you for being my shoulder to cry on and listening to all of my hardships during this journey. When I was not 100%, you were there to be 110%. Thank you for allowing me to escape for hours each day to focus on my dissertation while you cared for the whole household. To my sons, Kamonee and Cravaughn, you two are the reason why I continue to push myself through this. When times are rough, remember there is a light at the end of that tunnel because that is where I found mine. Dream big my boys, the sky is the limit. I would also like to thank my family and friends who played a huge role in my success. Thank you for the motivation and support to keep me sane. To Matt and Karin Dolph, and the VitalCare family, thank you for your support during this roller coaster. It would be impossible to list all you have done to encourage me within the last years. Please know that I am forever grateful for your support. I would like to acknowledge Marissa and Justin who started this journey with me. We started this marathon together and found our way to the finish line. Lastly, I would like to thank my chair, Dr. Lindahl, who supported me through the last years. You believed in me and my study, thank you for your continuous support and ongoing motivation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction to the Study

Juvenile delinquency continues to be a social problem globally (World Health Organization, 2016). The offense rate for young adults under the age of 18 is high, with 80% of young adults having engaged in criminal activity at least one time in their lives (Cacho et al., 2020). Furthermore, the number of juvenile cases continues to rise, which has made juvenile delinquency a prominent issue (Mohammad & Azman, 2018). One reason is that social researchers strongly believe that delinquent behaviors are linked to adult criminality (Ozkan, 2016). Reoffending young adults have a hard time returning to the community due to lack of resources and support from family members (Ozkan, 2016).

Because of these concerns, it is critical that juvenile offenders receive the support they need to prevent recidivism. Many reoffending young adults have a hard time returning to the community due to a lack of resources and support from family members (Ozkan, 2016). The lack of resources for reoffending young adults has caused alarm for many mentors, social researchers, and other community supporters (Jacobs et al., 2019). The risk factors associated with poverty and young adult delinquency have been well documented in the literature: however, the connection between young adults and success after leaving the juvenile detention center has not been thoroughly explored (Shong et al., 2019).

Background

Gaining insight into the experiences of young adults who have already offended and found a positive outcome will further social researchers' understanding of the reasons

why young adults engage in criminal activity. Research shows that a range of factors, from familiarity and easy access to crimes to intellectual disability, are reasons why young adults engage in criminal activity (Cavanaugh et al., 2020; Frize et al., 2008). Social researchers must continue looking into the factors that contribute to young reoffending, which should include the risks that individuals are currently experiencing, lack of resources, lack of a support system, any mental health issues, and how they respond to mental health issues. Cavanagh et al. (2020) argued that young adults lack understanding of the justice system and the consequences of their actions, which may result in young adults engaging in criminal activities again. Cavanagh et al also stated that it is important for youth to understand their legal rights given that their decision-making competency is less refined compared to older adults.

Although there has been much literature regarding young adults' reoffending and the factors that are connected to it, there is a dearth of literature about the lived experiences of those young adults who have had a successful turnaround. Santiago et al. (2013) discussed mental health problems that arise in low-income communities and how well individuals respond when there are mental health services available. If a young adult has access to mental health services such as psychotherapy to meet their psychiatric needs, the chances of their engaging in criminal activity are lower, as they may have a more positive outlook on life (Santiago et al., 2013). Cook's (2013) research on parental controls and support of reoffending young adults also has shown that support can lower juvenile offenders' chances of reoffending. Cook found that young adults with parents who are more involved after they return home from juvenile hall have a higher chance of

staying out of the juvenile justice system. These studies indicate that more support and guidance could help young adults who are at risk of reoffending make better choices.

Ozkan (2016), researched how long it took young adults to reoffend once they left juvenile hall. Blackmon et al. (2016) discussed young adult delinquency and how it relates to urban crime. Kethineni and Braithwaite (2011), researched the implementation of cognitive behavioral skills to help reoffending young adults reduce criminal activity. Ludwig et al. (2001) researched how living in high-poverty areas can be a challenge for individuals desiring to return to work or school after engaging in criminal activity. Kingston et al. (2009) discussed the connection between disadvantaged neighborhoods and young adult delinquency.

Studying juvenile delinquency and recidivism may also address the issue of school dropouts, which continue to increase each year (Christenson & Thurlow, 2004). Dropout rates are significantly higher for young adults who identify themselves as African American, Hispanic, or Native American, or and those who come from a low-income background (Christenson & Thurlow, 2004). Young adults who make the decision to drop out of school early have a higher risk of social, behavioral, and academic challenges; therefore, it is important to keep young people in the school system and provide needed support to prevent negative consequences (Samuel & Burger, 2019). In this research study, I addressed the gap in the current literature to provide an understanding of the benefits of programs that address dropout rates among youth who have committed juvenile offenses. Programs that address the dropout rate among young

adults who have offended can offer additional support and aid in the successful turnaround of this population.

Problem Statement

In the United States, young adults who live in poverty are more likely to commit crimes and are often forced to survive with little to no resources such as health insurance, mental health services, employment opportunities, social activities, and educational and financial support (Cook, 2013). These young adults are at a higher risk of developing and experiencing psychological problems; however, when mental health services are afforded, young adults often respond well and show signs of improvement (Santiago et al., 2013). Conduct disorder can have long-term effects on young adults, such as repetitive negative behaviors, that affect their emotional and cognitive well-being (Aggarwal, 2018). Young adults, on average, have a high risk of reoffending when they leave juvenile detention centers due to mental health problems (Ozkan, 2016). Young adults often exhibit negative behaviors in the home or school, which can have deleterious effects on relationships and academic progress (Aggarwal, 2018). Young adults face a huge challenge to making any progress or engaging in other activities such as participating in sports, creating healthy relationships, being engaged in school, and maintaining mental health and well-being; if they are returning to the same environment, that may influence criminal activity. Young adults may be "sucked" into a world of crime and lose self-control related to engaging in criminal activity once they are exposed to such opportunities (Zemel et al., 2018). Zemel et al. (2018) stated that what happens to young adults and why they engage in criminal behavior are beyond what they can

control; if young adults have poor self-control, they are more likely to use drugs and engage in self-endangerment activities and violence than those young adults who have greater self-control.

Reoffending has been a problem for many young adults in U.S. society as they are released back home to an unhealthy environment (Blackmon et al., 2016). A majority of the current research concerning young adults, and the reasons why they recommit crimes, indicates that there are no effective programs or treatment facilities to attend in urban, low-income communities (Blackmon et al., 2016). While the current literature addresses recidivism, it does not explore the lived experiences of individuals, specifically, young adults, who have successfully completed re-entry programs. The problem presented may be a flaw for young adults who have no support after they leave the juvenile detention center, and I sought to add to the existing literature by interviewing young adults to explore their individual perceptions of what had been beneficial for them.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of young adults who were successful upon leaving juvenile detention centers. Unfortunately, young adults who have been incarcerated have a higher probability of recidivism (Barnert et al., 2015). Factors that may ensure a successful transition include a support system or role model that made a positive impact on the young adult's life (Zemel et al., 2018). This study focused on the lived experiences of young adults from a low-income community who had been successful after leaving juvenile detention centers. The findings from interviews about lived experiences can help other young adults to have a

successful turnaround to find employment or enter school. The challenges that young adults have can lead to low motivation, so this study is intended to shine a light on what works to create success. The negative effects of poverty link to families who are experiencing instability, and low achievement can lead to high rates of young-adult violence (Cross, 2003).

Research Questions

Central Research Question: What are the lived experiences of young adults who have successfully completed their term in a juvenile detention center and who are able to successfully reintegrate into the community?

Sub question 1: What are the lived experiences of young adults who engage in criminal behavior or who continue to engage in it?

Sub question 2: What are the lived experiences of young adults who are involved in an effective program or support system who are successful?

Sub question 3: What are the lived experiences of young adults who experience mental health disorders?

Sub question 4: What are the lived experiences of young adults who previously engaged in criminal activities and have a positive turnaround to find employment or reintegrate into school?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was Henry D. McKay's social disorganization theory. This theory focuses on crime and delinquency, which posits that

young adults commit crimes or become involved in deviant behavior due to stress and instability (Kingston et al., 2009). Those who come from socially disorganized neighborhoods, such as urban, low-income communities, are likely to engage in criminal behavior and activity. In the urban, low-income community, there may be a lack of resources and networks that lead to an unhealthy neighborhood (Kingston et al., 2009). Social disorganization theory describes neighborhoods where the model for young adults is poverty, residential mobility, and racial and ethnic heterogeneity (Kingston et al., 2009).

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was a qualitative and phenomenological study. The intent of this study was to explore what helped young adults turn around their behaviors and be successful in work or school. Phenomenology was the best method to gather information about individuals who had been successful after juvenile detention centers, as it is historically conceptualized within humanistic psychology (Englander, 2019). In-depth questions about successful turnarounds in work or school were asked. As this could have been sensitive information that was being shared, it was important to establish rapport and comfort with participants (Englander, 2019). Participants were only those who had experienced successful outcomes that they wanted to share. The interviews were conducted by using deidentified information to assist in keeping participants' information protected.

Definitions

Disadvantaged neighborhood: An association of a neighborhood with limited food and safety, increased environmental exposure, and health-related factors that is impacted by socioeconomic status (SES; National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, 2018).

Juveniles: Individuals who have experienced trauma from events that are were physically and emotionally harmful or life-threatening and that affected their functioning and mental state (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration–Health Resources and Services Administration [SAMHSA-HRSA] Center for Integrated Health Solutions, 2020).

Juvenile delinquency: Applies to individuals who have not reached the age of 18 and who have committed an offense under existing law. Juvenile delinquency includes a range of behavior disorders of young adults and extends from misbehaviors to crimes (Bobba et al., 2018).

Reoffending juveniles: Young adults who continue to have rearrests, referrals to court, reconvictions, and any sort of reincarceration (Itravia et al., 2017). The term includes young adults who are participating in any diversion, parole, or probation programs.

Successful reintegration: Individuals who have successfully returned to their community upon completion of treatment programs that lead to achieving success (Menon & Cheung, 2018). In order for a young adult to successfully reintegrate back to

the community, they need to have support and resources available for them to connect to (Stephens & Arnette, 2000).

Young adults: Young adults are generally defined as individuals who fit the age group of 18–22 or 18–25 (Young Adult Developmental Project, 2018). Researchers have determined the age groups based on an individual's state of mind, level of cognitive thinking, moral development, and judgment (Young Adult Developmental Project, 2018).

Assumptions

It was assumed that during each interview that responses were truthful and that participants provided accurate information based on their experiences. All participants' information was deidentified, and procedures were in place to protect each participant's confidentiality. Responses varied depending on the different behaviors and level of severity of participant crimes; therefore, responses could trigger unique emotions. Before participating in this study, each participant understood the study, including its voluntary nature. At any time before, during, or after the interview, participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study.

Scope and Delimitations

The purpose of this study was to interview young adults and understand the unique experiences of each individual who had a positive turnaround after leaving juvenile detention centers. This study was not intended to target any one race and cannot be generalized to a certain group because the unique experiences of these young adults could involve factors that are unique to each experience (Cavanagh & Caufman, 2017).

By discovering the unique experiences of each participant, I sought to gain insights that would be impactful to the current literature (Cavanagh & Cauffman, 2017).

Limitations

For this study, there were potential limitations. One of the significant limitations was that the study was targeted toward a certain group of young adults. This study was targeted toward a sample of participants who had been successful with finding employment or going back to school (with a sample size of $n = 9$), and all participants met the requirements of reoffending and having a successful turnaround. The information provided by the participants could be used to help support and understand the reasons why young adults reoffend and what supports them to have a successful turnaround.

The participants in this study ranged from age 18–24 years. Given the age range, there were differences in responses from participants based on their experiences. As a result, every response was unique, as there may have been different levels of criminal activity and different ages when the activity first started. As a researcher, I may have had some personal biases that may have impacted this research study. I experienced engaging in criminal activity as a young juvenile. I understand that there is no single intervention resource to assist with successful reintegration. Therefore, the purpose of gathering the lived experiences of successful reintegration was to determine other factors that supported young adults to have a positive turnaround.

Significance

This research study addressed the gap in exploring the components of successful turnarounds for young adults who leave juvenile detention centers and seek employment

or a return to school. The interviewing process addressed the uniqueness of each individual as they shared the experiences that affected their lives. The results of this research study provide insight into the lived experiences of, and what has been beneficial for, young adults when they leave juvenile detention centers. Insights from this study provide a guide to implementing more positive treatment programs or providing support groups that can contribute to success.

The findings from this research study can inform decision making for the different types of programs, activities, and support systems being offered in high-poverty communities by policymakers and stakeholders. With more effective programs being offered in these communities, young adults are able to engage in these programs for support instead of reoffending (Dopp et al., 2017). The responses from the interviews increase understanding of what is effective and what is ineffective. The results of this study highlight that effective treatment programs and other factors relating to positive outcomes can be ascribed to responses and interactions (Burkholder et al., 2016).

Summary

The reasons that young adults engage in criminal behaviors or why they reoffend continue to be a topic of discussion among researchers (Cavanagh & Cauffman, 2017). Reoffending young adults have a hard time when they return to the community and often struggle with success. It is important that researchers find different interventions and support needed to help prevent reoffending in young adults (Cavanagh & Cauffman, 2017). For Chapter 1, an introduction was provided about the influences on young adults engaging in criminal behavior. Additionally, information was provided as to what support

is needed for young adults to stop reoffending. I also provided research information regarding young adults' reoffending and reasons they engage in criminal behaviors/activity. Chapter 1 included information such as an introduction, background, problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, theoretical framework, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance. Chapter 2 provides a review of literature that is related to reoffending young adults and their returning back to their disadvantaged neighborhoods. The literature review describes the theoretical framework and differentiates the current literature and the gap in this field.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of young adults who are successful upon leaving a juvenile detention center. Unfortunately, young adults who have been incarcerated have a higher probability of recidivism (Barnert et al., 2015). However, factors that may ensure a successful transition include a support system or role model who has made a positive impact on their life (Wallace, 2015). Despite the various actors that are involved in a young adult's life, there is a gap in research on the actual lived experiences of those who have a positive outcome after experiencing a juvenile detention center.

This literature review addresses the reasons that young adults engage in criminal activity and support that can be helpful with behavioral challenges. This chapter reviews the literature related to young adults and the reasons for reoffending after leaving juvenile detention centers. This review also focuses on Henry D. McKay's theory of social disorganization.

Literature Search Strategy

Research for the literature review began with many searches, which included PsycArticles, PsychInfo, SAGE Journals Criminal Justice Database, and Walden Library using the search keywords: *young adults*, *poverty*, *recidivism*, *reoffending*, *delinquency*, *social disorganization*, *mental health in young adults*, and *young adult's trauma.*

This chapter reflects an attempt to read and gather research articles related to the dissertation topic. There are many theories related to this topic; social disorganization

was the main theory for this study. I accessed peer-reviewed articles published in the last 5 years to support this study. Any articles more than 5 years old are considered seminal work relevant to this study.

Theoretical Foundation

Social disorganization theory was the theoretical framework that guided this research study. Social disorganization theory suggests that by understanding the connections between a changing environment and community structures, society can implement what is needed to influence individuals who experience difficulty and hostility (Ciobanu, 2019). The goal of this study was to examine the role of social disorganization among young adults who had a criminal background and experienced a successful turnaround.

Henry D. McKay's social disorganization theory focuses on crime and delinquency and posits that young adults commit crimes or become involved in deviant behavior due to stress and instability (Kingston et al., 2009). Social disorganization theory describes neighborhoods where the model for young adults is poverty, residential mobility, and racial and ethnic heterogeneity (Kingston et al., 2009). An urban low-income community may be unhealthy due to a lack of resources and networks and instead prime for engaging in criminal behavior and activities (Kingston et al., 2009).

The facets of social disorganization theory first emerged in 1942 from Shaw and McKay, who developed this theory (Ciabanu, 2019). This theory first provided a foundation for Shaw and McKay to analytically examine the connection between delinquency and community characteristics (Witherspoon & Ennett, 2011). Over decades,

many researchers have applied social disorganization theory to study how disadvantaged neighborhoods lead young adults to criminal behavior through weakened availability of social activities (Witherspoon & Ennett, 2000). Social disorganization was defined by Osgood and Chambers (2013) as the inability of individuals within a disadvantaged community to realize the common values of those who reside within the community to maintain effective social controls.

There are several theoretical issues that are raised within the context of disadvantaged neighborhoods (Osgood & Chambers, 2000). Over the past decades, there has been a significant increase in crimes related to disadvantaged neighborhoods (Krishnakumar et al., 2014). Researchers have applied different theoretical models that have proposed an explanation that links neighborhoods to crime (i.e., Leventhal and Brooks-Gun, 2013; Krishnakumar et al., 2014). Literature reviews have reported that voluntary organizations that provide enough services in disadvantaged communities will serve a less crime-affiliated neighborhood such as implementing activities, services, and events in the community to provide neighborhood control (Wo et al., 2016). Those within voluntary organizations attempt to provide more meaningful activities for individuals to engage in through two possible mechanisms—(a) providing social activities for residents and (b) providing a social interaction forum for cohesion—so that there is a reduced number of criminal activities in the community (Wo et al., 2016).

Social disorganization theory continues to provide a foundation for research in many areas such as education (Osgood & Chambers, 2000). Shaw and McKay discovered during their research that rates of crime around the world were not evenly dispersed.

However, researchers have indicated that social disorganization is the cause of increased crime rates among young adults (Garthe et al., 2018).

Social disorganization theory describes the disadvantages that individuals grow up with due to the socioeconomic characteristics of criminal activity; reoffending individuals return to a community that is described as having residential instability, inequality, and racial and ethnic heterogeneity (Price et al., 2020). Kotlaja et al. (2020) stated that economic deprivation and ongoing instability within the residential setting is the cause of social disorganization, or how individuals interact with one another in neighborhoods. Due to some of these reasons of low-income, this can cause a challenge for individuals to form healthy relationships, trust one another, and come together to prevent crime.

Social disorganization theory's objective is to identify the factors within a disadvantaged neighborhood (Osgood & Chambers, 2000). Through addressing the factors behind disadvantaged neighborhoods related to young adults, social disorganization theory provides a foundation to research and apply ideology to improve quality of life for young adults living in disadvantaged neighborhoods (Wallace, 2015). This research can greatly influence other young adults who have the same experience to find empowerment and motivation to contribute to positive change.

For this research, the research question is: What are the lived experiences of the young adults leaving juvenile detention centers experiencing significant trauma that occurred in their lives? Young adults from the ages of 18–24 years were interviewed and shared their experiences and reasons behind criminal behaviors. These young adults

discussed the reasons behind why they had a positive turnaround either to school or employment.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts

Juvenile Delinquency

Researchers have found that boys are more prone to engage in criminal activity and disruptive behavior than girls are (Bohat & Singh, 2020). Juvenile delinquency is often due to early childhood exposure related to cognition, poor impulse control, inattention, and aggressive behavior (Aizer & Currie, 2019). Juvenile delinquency has been a challenge in society as more young adults are being arrested (Findik et al., 2018). There is research that indicates the relationship between health behaviors and delinquency; there is a negative association between a good diet and delinquency (Sebenza, 2018). Although there is less evidence that shows the relationship between health behaviors and delinquency, there has been evidence that shows that poor health behaviors can link to delinquency (Semenza, 2018).

Criminal Behavior in Young Adults

Researchers in early studies concluded that there are no theoretical models that explain the path that leads to delinquency and the risk factors that support the increase of young adults reoffending (Ciobanu, 2019). Most researchers insinuated that criminal behaviors in young adults are connected to a mental health diagnosis. Wilson et al. (2016) argued that committing a crime and being a victim of a crime appeared to happen more during the late evening hours and early morning hours. Implementing curfews for young adults allows society to encompass more safety measures and to control delinquency in

neighborhoods. Wilson et al.'s findings indicated that there was no effect of decreasing crime rates when a curfew was implemented; however, they saw a slight decrease in criminal behaviors.

Mental Health in Young Adults

Mental and emotional health disorders are becoming more common in youth 13–18 years of age, and nearly 46.3% report a lifetime mental disorder of some kind (Gottfredson et al., 2018). Findek et al. (2018) found that there is a relationship between mental health disorders and delinquency; the rate at which young adults are diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder is high. There is ongoing attention on young adults who have mental health concerns, and researchers have found it more challenging for young adults to manage mental health symptoms. (Wylie & Rufino, 2018). Young adults who are arrested have higher levels of antisocial behavior, impulsivity, sensation seeking, aggression, parental conflict, and academic challenges than those who have not been arrested (Beardslee et al., 2019). Geerlings et al. (2020) found that there is a connection between psychopathy traits and delinquency and recidivism in young adults, while other researchers such as Lynam et al. (2009) have found stability with those who exhibit psychopathy traits transitioning from young adulthood to adulthood from ages 7 to 17 years.

Ozkan (2016) examined the time that young adults chose to reoffend once they left a juvenile detention center. Wylie and Rufino (2018), wanted to consider that developmental factors such as a mental health disorder diagnosis were factors that influenced young adults to reoffend. Ozkan stated that a young adult who is experiencing

a mental health disorder has a higher chance of reoffending based on their previous offense. Ozkan examined participants from Arizona and Philadelphia. The young adults in this study were between the ages of 14 and 18 years. These participants were followed for 7 years, which included 11 interviews. The purpose of conducting these interviews over a long period of time was that the researcher wanted to observe the timespan over which the young adults would reoffend. The results of this study indicated that the developmental factors were key factors in why young adults reoffend over time.

Frize et al. (2008) stated that intellectual disability has been an implicated factor in reoffending in young adults. In this study, the researchers observed young adults' age, intellectual disability, and indigenous status. Because these young adults were under the age of 18, proper consent was needed from their parents or a guardian from the Department of Juvenile Justice. The inventory Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory was administered to these young adults. This inventory is a 47-item instrument used to assess risk factors. The researchers' sample consisted of 800 young adult offenders who were on community orders. The results indicated that those young adults who had an intellectual disability had a higher risk of reoffending than those who did not have an intellectual disability.

Young Adults and Trauma

Young adults who experience trauma are at risk for a number of mental health diagnoses, such as posttraumatic stress disorder, major depressive disorder, and substance abuse (Wylie & Rufino, 2018). Trauma occurs when individuals have witnessed or experienced a life-threatening event, which can result in feeling extreme fear; repeated

trauma exposure has a significant effect rather than one single trauma event (Rhoden et al., 2019). As more and more young adults are experiencing trauma or being exposed to trauma, there is a need for more organizational interventions to help support needs related to traumatic stress symptoms (Rhoden et al., 2019).

According to Chan and Lo (2016), "social withdrawal, which is referred to as a continuous exhibition of solitary behavioral patterns, has been documented in various international literature" (p. 72). Young adults who are withdrawn from social connections would be described as exhibiting social withdrawal. Chan and Lo conducted quantitative research with 533 participants. Participants were administered a face-to-face questionnaire, which was self-reported. The results proved that young adults with longer social withdrawal were affected by negative experiences.

Disadvantaged Neighborhoods

Coster et al. (2006) discussed different perspectives on the relationship between disadvantaged neighborhoods and crime—constrained residential choices, social capital, and street perspectives—to specify between young adults and the community. In social disorganization theory, theorists Shaw and McKay stated that there are contextual factors such as disadvantaged neighborhoods that are the predictor factors of delinquency; level of poverty and the percentage of single-parent families can indicate greater levels of social disorganization, which are related to crime and delinquency (Vazsonyi et al., 2006).

Gang violence has been a major reason why young adults have been victimized as criminals. Despite many studies having been conducted, little is known as to why young

adults initiate into gangs. There are many different types of gang initiations, which can range from minor to severe violence. In this study, Price et al. (2020) conducted mixed-method research in order to present the nature of gang initiations. There were 54 incarcerated gang members used as a sample. The researchers compared the many different types of gang initiations and how the initiations varied based on individual characteristics. The researchers found three types of initiations: (a) the ego violent event, (b) the crime commission, and (c) the expressive violence toward others. Price et al. (2020) found that young adults being discharged from a facility may return to the same low-income neighborhoods where high criminal activity is in place with few resources to engage in. Therefore, most of these individuals have a high chance of engaging in criminal activity again.

Poverty

Socioeconomic status (SES) has been associated with young adults and delinquent behavior; lack of resources in the community is one of the reasons why people turn to illegal means (Shong et al., 2019). Poverty plays a huge role for family and children in a negative way, as it is a leading factor in why adolescents offend and reoffend later in adult life (Jaggers et al., 2016). Coming from poverty, a broken family, and low education is directly connected to higher delinquency rates (Bohat & Singh, 2020). As a result of stressors, children who are living in poverty may present behavioral issues and have low levels of support. These life conditions may cause challenges in other areas of their life such as school, which could cause early dropout (Jaggers et al., 2016).

Drugs and Alcohol

According to Schmiege et al. (2009), young adults, when under the influence of alcohol, often engage in unsafe sex, which can place them at a higher risk of having HIV or an STD. Schmiege et al. wanted to find out whether detained young adults from three detention centers in Denver, CO were exposed to STDs/HIV. Young adults from these detention centers were given consent from parents to fully disclose about the question of unsafe sex. Young adults disclosed that risky behaviors were high due to the use of alcohol. Harm reduction is used to help individuals avoid committing crimes again and make successful progress towards treatment (Guyer, 2009). Schmiege et al.'s study contributed to an understanding of harm reduction in young adults (Schmiege et al., 2009). The researchers suggested an evaluation in order to conduct interventions to prevent adolescents from engaging in risky behaviors.

Recidivism

Cook (2013) conducted a study to examine the relationship between parental control, support, and reoffending young adults. The study that Cook conducted consisted of a questionnaire administered to young adults' parents regarding the parental controls and supports in the household for the young adults. Young adults are placed on probation by courts, and parents play a significant role in setting parental controls and supporting young adults while they are serving probation time. Therefore, examining the influence of parents in this study was important to explore the reasons why young adults reoffend. The results in this study indicated that probation officers are required to work closely with family members to ensure positive outcomes for young adults. The relationship

between the two helps the young adults feel supported in such a way that they will not reoffend again.

This qualitative research study was conducted to understand the reasons why incarcerated youth experience risk factors for young adults offending. In the United States, more young adults are arrested than in any other country. This population is at a higher risk of mental health needs and requires support. Young adults who have been exposed to previous incarceration are more than likely to be incarcerated again. According to Barnert et al. (2015), "Prior incarceration places youths at greater risk for repeat offending throughout adolescence and adulthood. Within 3 years of release, approximately 75% of young adults are rearrested" (p. 1368).

This study was measured by performing an in-depth qualitative analysis by conducting a series of interviews starting in the month of October to December. Twenty incarcerated youth were the participants who were detained in the city of Los Angeles. These authors in the research found that young adults described their homes, school, and neighborhood to be unsafe. The incarcerated youth stated that when they experience chaos in these areas, they start to seek support in the streets which at times will lead to incarceration. Although these young adults indicated that the positive path which is attending school is achievable, they reported the path to jail is easier.

A quantitative research study was conducted to examine the difference between male and female young adults. In the past studies, it appeared that there were more male young adults then female young adults. With this study being conducted, it appeared that more females are catching up to the male counterparts' number of crimes. According to

Jones et al. (2014), "it becomes apparent that the changing arrest patterns accounting for the narrowed gender gap are not synchronous across crime categories."

This research was conducted by using participants from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). There were 2,369 participants which were 1550 males and 819 females across the counties of New York City. Upon intake, youths were to identify as Juvenile Delinquents or Persons in Need of Supervisions. The authors wanted to examine the gender pathway for female young adults s. The results indicated why female young adults commit crimes that differed from male young adults.

Intervention Programs

There may be a lack of knowledge around the effective interventions for young adults leaving juvenile detention centers. Although there may have been previous research targeting the effectiveness of programs, there is still an unknown factor and which programs is suitable for individuals who have committed a crime (Vries et al., 2015). Vries et al. (2015) found the positive effects were through diversion programs for the youth which incorporated a mixture of behavioral and family-based strategies.

There may be some intervention programs that have benefited young adults as they are leaving a juvenile detention center; However, there may be some programs that are ineffective. For this reason, I do not want to seek an effective program for young adults. Rather, I want to learn more about the factors that contributed to a positive turnaround. As human beings, we all exhibit different factors that support our needs. Each individual participating in this research study will share about the unique experiences they went through. These unique experiences will hopefully deliver a

message to our society that not all tactics will work on all individuals. Depending on each experience, I am hoping to find the reason behind the positive turnaround. Below are a few intervention programs that have been stated in literature that have a benefit to support young adults and criminal engagement.

Therapy

Therapy has been one of many interventions that has been used to those individuals who may be struggling with their mental health and well-being. Therapy may or may not be beneficial to every individual, so we are not able to assume this is an effective intervention. I will use literature to describe the benefits of using therapy with young adults from researchers. Recidivism was measured in a study as a felony, conviction of offenses, or a misdemeanor offense that was committed after a young adult left a detention center. The results indicated a downfall with reoffending when there is implementation of individual and group counseling (Fox et al., 2020). More importantly, it appears that with increased support of the counseling services for young adults in the detention center, the outcome is positive.

Mindfulness

Bohat and Singh (2008) used the term mindfulness as an effective intervention form as it refers to refined skills of awareness, attention, and remembering. Mindful based intervention is a tool to use to help improve with mental health problems in individuals and supporting mood regulation (Bohat & Singh, 2020). It seems to appear that the more these young adults are using mindful based intervention, the less stress they may experience. Young adults may lack the knowledge of mindful techniques to use if

they have never been exposed to it. Therefore, education in mindfulness tools may be beneficial to reduce any stress and anxiety problems in juvenile delinquency. Researchers Bohat and Singh (2008) found in their study that mindfulness meditation practices are a more effective way to help regulate emotions, thoughts, an increased awareness in health and well-being to reduce the stressors that occurs in everyone's life.

Support System

Qualitative research was conducted to examine the relationship between probation officers and their involvement with the youth's parents. A family-based approach indicated that youths feel supported by their parents. The family-based approach was proven to help strengthen the relationship with their youth. According to Maschi and Ristow (2013), "A family-justice approach is family centered and emphasizes how parents can be supported by probation officers rather than being excluded as in the traditional child focused approach," There were 308 probations officers' participants selected to complete an online survey and then completed phone interviews. The survey consisted of behavioral questions and describing the nature of the conditions. The results indicated that parental support to youth is beneficial as it provides youth support with resources, they need to complete their probation period. Machin and Ristow (2013) stated that, "Examples of parental support described by officers included emotional support and encouragement, transportation, following through on referrals, and helping the youth remember their court obligations."

According to Descormiers and Corrado (2016), "individuals who were looking for respect were more likely to be required to perpetrate an act of violence toward someone

in order to get in." Authors in this mixed method research study examined "function of apologies in family group conferences, healing circles, juvenile justice conferencing and victim offender mediation" (Descormiers & Corrado, 2016). Although these are different procedures, authors believed that they are all restorative justice theory. Authors used a mixed method research to gain insight about the participants responses. There were between groups procedures to focus on apology groups as quantitative research. Authors used qualitative data to complement the quantitative results found.

Summary and Conclusions

Young adults who recidivate continues to add increasing rates in the juvenile justice system and raise a concern to the society. Due to the lack of intervention programs and understanding of why young adults recidivate, there may be a continuous growth to the criminal justice system. There can be several reasons why intervention programs are not as effective as they should be. In this literature review, there are some factors that were discussed that can lead to why young adults engage in criminal activity are disruptive behavior.

In this chapter, I reviewed the connection of young adults living in poverty and criminal background and looked at the different factors that caused engaging in criminal activity. Young adults have not had the support living in disadvantaged neighborhoods to engage in positive resources after they leave the juvenile detention center. There is only a handful of research studies on examining disadvantaged neighborhoods and why young adults recidivate. The most important thing that is missing from the disadvantaged

neighborhoods is the lack of neighborhood organizations or resources to provide to the community (Wallace, 2015).

This study addressed the gap and added to the research as I interviewed young adults who were successful in turning around from criminal background. This provides that each individual is unique and may have different support systems to help with a positive turnaround. Limited research has been studied on the positive implications for young adults and disadvantaged neighborhoods. In chapter 3, I outlined the introduction and reviewed the purpose of this study. I provide a review of the research questions and discuss the phenomenon of this study as it breaks down to the chosen tradition. I will carefully be addressed as it is important to discuss this research study will be conducted in order to for possible replication of this study in the future.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

Introduction

The experiences of young adults who had a positive turnaround after they left a juvenile detention center remain unclear in the literature; this is a clearly identified gap. The purpose of this qualitative research study was to be able to connect with young adults (ages 18–24) and gain insight into how each individual found success in employment and education after leaving a juvenile detention center. This qualitative study helped gain insight into the factors that contributed to success in finding employment or returning to school. In this chapter, I explain in detail the methodology that supported participant selection, how participants were recruited, and how research questions were formulated. I also discuss in detail the qualitative data collection and the design chosen that best fits the study.

Research Design and Rationale

Research Questions

Central research question: What are the lived experiences of young adults who have successfully completed their term in juvenile detention centers and who are able to successfully reintegrate into the community?

Sub question 1: What are the lived experiences of young adults who engage in criminal behavior or who continue to engage?

Sub question 2: What are the lived experiences of young adults who are involved in an effective program or support system who are successful?

Sub question 3: What are the lived experiences of young adults who

experience mental health disorders?

Sub question 4: What are the lived experiences of young adults who

previously engaged in criminal activities and have a positive

turnaround to find employment or return to school?

Research Design

The research design was constructed to be thorough and applicable to society.

This study used the phenomenological qualitative method, which was the most

appropriate method as I conducted interviews to understand lived experiences. There are

many factors that affect young adults in their decision making when it comes to

involvement in criminal behavior/activity. There are many societal and personal impacts

that can have positive effects and contribute to young adults having a positive outcome.

However, there is limited research on those who have had a positive turnaround and what

led them to success. For this study, I recruited voluntary participants with whom to

conduct semi structured interviews. There was a demographic survey to determine if

participants met the requirements to be a part of this research study (Appendix A). I

conducted semi structured interviews with nine young adults (ages 18–24) who

successfully returned to school or found employment after leaving a juvenile detention

center.

Role of the Researcher

I took responsibility for obtaining informed consent from each participant who

participated in this study. I conducted semi structured interviews with the participants,

completed a data narrative analysis of each interview, and documented the findings of the study. During the time of the study, I had no connection or involvement with any of the participants. There was no relationship or employment that might result in influence over participants.

The goal of this research study was to maintain professionalism and obtain a competent study based on the strategies being used to conduct the study. It is important to remain professional and be careful to avoid any biases that may potentially be present. Any potential biases were identified prior to this study. I approached the situation in a sensitive matter and reached out to the chair and the committee member for support. No biases were identified that prevented me from completing the study.

Methodology

Phenomenological Qualitative Interviewing

The nature of this study was a qualitative, phenomenological study to have direct contact with young adults and conduct interview questions about past and present history of violence and the reasons the participants engaged in deviant and criminal behavior. Phenomenology was the best method to gather information about individuals who had been successful after juvenile hall as it is historically conceptualized within humanistic psychology (Englander, 2019). In-depth questions about a successful turnaround to either work or school were asked. Because the information that participants shared could be sensitive, it was important to establish rapport and comfort with participants (Englander, 2019). Participants were only those who had experienced successful outcomes. Using deidentified information assisted with keeping participants' information protected. The

intent of this phenomenological study was to explore what helped young adults'

turnaround at either work or school. Not all individuals who leave a juvenile detention

center have the same outcome. Most individuals take longer to find employment or go

back to school due to a high level of stress or low motivation. Not all programs may be

effective, or some individuals may not have the same motivation as others to seek a

successful turnaround (Vries et al., 2015).

Participant Selection Logic

The population of this study was young adults between the ages of 18 and 24,

whom I recruited using a snowball-effect sampling strategy. The participants in this study

were not identified by race. Participants in this study had criminal charges or offenses

under the age of 18 or one or more reoffending occurrences and had success in returning

to school or employment. Participants who were not successful with returning to school

or finding employment were excluded from this study. The goal of this study was to gain

insight into the unique lived experiences each participant went through, with the result

being a better outcome. Working with this population provided a detailed analysis of how

each participant found a positive outcome after experiencing juvenile detention centers.

This also allowed an understanding of why the youth reoffended after leaving juvenile

detention centers.

The sample size of this study was nine participants in order to obtain the needed

information. Saturation was reached by the ninth participant, as there were no new

themes occurring. I started to see a pattern as each participant was done with their

interview. I conducted semi structured interviews to collect the data. The interviews were

completed in quiet places to avoid any possible distractions, including a private room at a library, a coffee shop, and other quiet meeting areas. Because information that was released by participants could be considered confidential information, I was mindful of the setting and meeting place. Interviews took approximately 60 minutes; however, depending on what was disclosed, some lasted longer. Each participant was given a $20 Target gift card to compensate for the time spent on this study.

Recruitment

I had a variety of recruitment processes to help find eligible participants. I posted my flyer on different social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. I am employed at an agency that is well connected to a community that is affiliated with young adults. By using the snowball effect, I was able to connect with my employees who were well known in the mental health community to also post my flyers on their social media platforms to assist with finding participants. The participants are not identified by their names; instead, they are identified using pseudonym coding so that each participant's identity is protected.

Protection of Participants

I deidentified participants by using pseudonym coding that would allow confidentiality to be in place. The data and information collected about the participants will be secure, and the only person who will be able access the data will be me for research study purposes only. Each of the participants was required to complete an informed consent document that laid out the details of the study. All participants were 18 years of age or older, so there was no need for guardians or parents to sign the document.

In the informed consent, a statement about voluntary withdrawal would be included. At any given time, participants could withdraw from the study without penalty. All the data that I collected, such as written notes, audio tapes, demographics, prequalified survey questionnaires, and transcripts, will be protected and destroyed properly in 5 years. Before I started my research study, the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved my parameters.

Instrumentation

Prior to starting the study, I ensure that each participant was provided with a consent form that outlined and explained the purpose of this study. Due to COVID-19, a verbal consent was obtained via telephone prior to scheduling a meeting on Teams software. Once the participant entered the scheduled Teams meeting virtually, I explained the study again and requested verbal consent. The reason for the verbal consent was to ensure that the participant was participating in the right study, was still willing to participate, and knew that they were able to withdraw at any given time they felt the need to. All communication was recorded on an audio tape, which was transcribed after the interview was completed; participants were advised of the recording procedures and agreed to participate. I explained the benefits of being honest during the interview to ensure the most reliable data.

Data Analysis

The questions in Appendix B were used to interview each participant. The semi structured interview was recorded on an electronic device and later transcribed onto paper. Once I gathered all the information needed during the interview, the pseudonym

coding was documented in the recording and saved on my computer device to help keep all communications together and avoid mix-ups. I listened to the recordings later and transcribed them to protect content validity. After the first interview, I listened to the recorded audio to start analyzing the document for any missing data and begin identifying themes. Once all the data were gathered, I grouped all the relevant information together based on relevancy to the study.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

For this research study, the sample size $n = 9$ was determined to be an appropriate sample to collect for saturation. To ensure credibility of the data, I allowed the participants to listen to random parts of the recording to ensure that it was only their recording and that what they stated was taped. Each of the participants was allowed time at the end of the interview to review what was recorded. Once participants agreed that what they heard was what was reported, I transcribed the recording and conducted member checking (Amankwaa, 2016). This allowed the participants to respond with any new information that they wanted to add.

Transferability

I was not able to prove that the data collected in this research study are applicable to other contexts. My role was to provide the possibility that the lived experiences reported could be applicable. Therefore, transferability was provided by using thick description of the phenomenon (Amankwaa, 2016). The lived experiences of all the

participants provided a robust and detailed account of their experiences during data collection to ensure a better understanding of the research.

Dependability and Confirmability

To support dependability and confirmability, audit trails for myself and appropriate steps were taken in this research study (Amankwaa, 2016). All interview questions (Appendix B) had some form of a follow-up question to ensure that all relevant data were collected. Additional information was collected during member checking. Each step was carefully documented for potential replication.

Ethical Concerns

For this study, I addressed any ethical concerns with the chair and with Walden University's IRB. Before the study could start, the IRB carefully reviewed all the components of this study and ensured that this study would be delivered with no ethical concerns. Upon IRB approval, I posted flyers on different social media platforms.

Data recruitment occurred through a snowball sample process to obtain participants. Prior to completing the demographics and prequalification survey (Appendix A) online, participants were required to complete an informed consent document. On the informed consent document, each participant was advised of the purpose of the research study, what was required to be in the study, confidentiality, and voluntary withdrawal. Each participant was advised that there was an option to withdraw from the study without any penalties or consequences against them.

I followed all APA guidelines and the code of ethics for using human subjects for this study. Each participant was informed in advance of the time the interview should

take. Each participant was allowed to share their lived experiences freely and confidently. All the data collected will be kept confidential in secured areas for 5 years and will be destroyed accordingly. Electronic files have been password protected or encrypted, and paper files will be kept under double lock and key until destruction.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I discussed the research design of the study, the role of the researcher, this study's methodology, and issues of trustworthiness. This study was designed to gain insight into the lived experiences of each study participant and the uniqueness of their success. This study was designed to obtain an understanding of why individuals reoffend after leaving juvenile detention centers. Participant selection and recruiting procedures were described in the methodology section in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 describes the results of this study and specific responses from the participants. Data collection will be thoroughly analyzed and explained. Chapter 5 reviews the conclusions of this study and contains recommendations based on this research.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore a deeper understanding of young adults who are successful upon leaving juvenile detention. Unfortunately, young adults who have been incarcerated have a higher probability of recidivism (Barnett et al., 2015). This study's central research question was the following: What are the lived experiences of young adults who have successfully completed their term in juvenile detention and who are able to successfully reintegrate into the community? The results from this study could support future development and implementation of social strategies to improve families and children who struggle with criminal behavior.

In this chapter, I discuss and provide the setting of the study, a brief description of the demographics, and the process of obtaining the collected data. This chapter provides a brief description of the data analysis methods, along with additional information regarding the methods used to address issue trustworthiness by discussing their credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I then conclude the chapter with details for the results and a summary.

Setting

The interviews were completed in my home office at a remove from the rest of the house. Therefore, no other sound was recorded, and no one disturbed the interview. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I had the ability to seek participants across the United States instead of sticking to one state. Remote interactions were the only option that participants felt comfortable with at the time of this study. Therefore, I completed all my

interviews via Teams software. The Teams software provided a couple of minor problems during the interviews. First, a participant joined the meeting during her lunch break outside at a nearby park. This caused challenges as there was background noise such as cars driving by, kids at the park playing, and the wind blowing. The participant did request to go into her car instead, and we were able to proceed with the interview, but it was an interruption. Second, a participant joined with connection issues. This participant shared that their internet had been going out but that they would like to continue with the interview. During our interview, their video was cut out many times. I asked the participant to reschedule due to their internet instability. I had difficulties understanding the participant throughout the interview and the subsequent transcription.

Demographics

To be eligible to participate in the study, participants met the criteria of being between the ages of 18 and 24, having had criminal charges or offenses prior to turning the age of 18, and having experienced success in finding employment or going to school after release from juvenile detention. Participants were required to complete a participant demographics form to confirm eligibility. There was a total of nine participants ages 18–24 ($N = 9$; female = 6, male = 3) from across the United States who participated in the study. Participant demographics are included in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Occupation
W1	19	F	GED
W2	22	F	Part-time student Part-time employee
W3	23	F	Part-time student Full-time employee
W4	21	F	Full-time student Full-time employee
M1	23	M	Full-time employee
W5	21	F	Full-time employee
W6	24	F	Part-time student Full-time employee
M2	22	M	Part-time student Full-time employee
M3	24	M	Part-time student Part-time employee

Data Collection

Participant Recruitment

There was a total of nine participants ages 18–24 ($N = 9$; female = 6, male = 3) interviewed to collect the data. As previously discussed in this chapter, the participants were recruited by using the snowball sampling strategy and by posting recruitment flyers to social media and agencies. Using the snowball sampling strategy, I recruited participants from across the United States who met the criteria (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

By allowing others to share the flyer, the likelihood of recruiting participants was very

high (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Prior to scheduling their interview, participants were asked

to complete a demographics form and obtain consent and permission to continue with the

study via email. Participants then were asked to verbally consent again during the

scheduled interview recording. All participants were over the age of 18, so there was no

need for guardians or parents to give their consent or sign the document. A total of nine

participants were recruited to participate in this study.

I obtained IRB approval (#05-26-22-0662510) on May 26, 2022. Following IRB

approval, I started to share the flyer on social media platforms including Instagram,

Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. I also shared the flyer with current employees so that

they could also share to all social media platforms, thus helping the recruiting process

and obtaining participants from across the United States. Participants were recruited,

contacted via email, and invited to meet virtually via Teams software. Prior to meeting

virtually for the interview, participants were asked to read the consent form and return the

form to me with verbal consent and the completed demographics form. After

documentation was received, the participants and I set a time to meet virtually. Before the

interview was started, the study was discussed in greater detail to support the

participant's understanding of the study and obtaining verbal consent again. The reason

for obtaining verbal consent again was to ensure that the participants were participating

in the right study and still willing to participate. I then explained in greater detail the

importance and the benefits of being honest when disclosing information to allow reliable

data. Finally, participants were advised about voluntary withdrawal from the study without penalty.

A phenomenological design was used to obtain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences for each young adult during the semi structured interview to learn more about the successful turnaround. The interviews were recorded using interview protocols on Teams software that had the capacity to record and transcribe. I also typed notes consisting of relevant information. The recorded video and transcription were downloaded and saved into a password-protected folder on a personal laptop, which allowed me to easily access all recordings and transcriptions.

The length of the semi structured interview was between 60 and 90 minutes, depending on how long each interview went as determined by the responses. Any additional notes that were typed on a separate document and corrections to the transcripts were saved into a password-protected folder. Any other documents, such as the completed demographics, were also saved into this folder. Documents were only accessible by me for this study and were password protected. All collected data will be stored for a total of five years and will be destroyed afterward.

Data Analysis

I used a semi structured interview to meet with participants over Teams software that converted the transcribed audio files to Microsoft Word documents. The data were collected from participants' responses from the interviews that were being recorded and transcribed to obtain physical copies of the transcription for reference. Initially, I wanted to use NVivo software for support with coding and finding themes but found it more

beneficial to read through each interview and identify those themes. I was able to use Microsoft Word and Excel to document additional notes, insert punctuation, correct spelling, look for errors, and organize themes. Once this documentation had been completed, the documents were saved in a password-protected folder. The documentation organization and finding of themes benefited, as it allowed more accurate data by reading the transcriptions thoroughly.

After each interview, I organized the demographics into a table created on Microsoft Word that included each participant's pseudonym, age, gender, and occupation. Then, I outlined significant descriptions and reporting that were meaningful to the participant's story. Coding was the first step taken on the same day as it was fresh in the memory and themes were able to be coded immediately. This step allowed me to read over the data multiple times and create meaning units (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The descriptions and reporting were further analyzed and categorized into relevant similarities, where themes were developed and connected to the study (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Once the data had been formulated and analyzed, themes were grouped together after each interview. After the eight interviews, there were no new themes that occurred to record. To carefully analyze the data, I used Moustakas's (1995) method to obtain emerging themes: lack of resources, lack of support system, family structure, neighborhood, drugs and alcohol, trauma, gang affiliation, mental health, intervention programs, looked at or treated differently, and peer influences. These themes were then grouped into different categories, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Emergent Themes and Subthemes

Disadvantaged neighborhoods	Generalizations about young adults	Reoffending reasons	Effective intervention programs
Lack of resources	Verbal attacks	Family structure	Mental health and counseling
Drugs and alcohol	Looked at or treated differently	Peer influences	Support system
Gang affiliation			

While I was re-reading each transcription carefully and taking notes, I repeated Moustakas's seven steps: horizontalization, reduction and elimination, clustering and thematizing, validation, textural description, structural description, and composite structural-textural description (Merriam, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). Using this method, I was able to analyze each data set as soon as the interview had been completed using the horizontalization that represents a segment of meaning (Merriam, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). These segments emerged into themes that were relevant to this data collection. I list Moustakas's (1994) seven steps in Table 3 in further detail.

Table 3

Categories

Seven steps	Data collection
Horizontalization	This step consists of an analysis of each interview to list and group all reported statements and to treat all reporting with equal value (Moustakas, 1994). In this step, I spent time finding relevant information and identify specific categories. Once the categories had been identified, I started a chart in Excel to keep track of the different categories that emerged (Katsirkou & Lin, 2017).
Reduction and elimination	While reading each transcript, I carefully looked for the most relevant information and ensured that it met the following criteria for this research study (Moustakas, 1994): 　　i. Criminal charges/offenses prior to the age of 18 　　ii. Juvenile hall experience 　　iii. Relevant experiences 　　iv. Successful turnaround 　　v. Capable of being labeled/categorized If the information was not relevant to the study, statements/reporting were crossed out.
Clustering and thematizing	When similar themes emerged, themes were placed in different categories. Each individual theme represents a different meaning (Nuttall, 2006). Once all themes had been identified, I categorized them into different subthemes. For this step, I used Microsoft Teams, Excel, and Word to group the themes. These themes provided the development of deeper understanding of the lived experiences and perceptions of each young adult.
Validation	When the researcher was re-reading each transcript document, the invariant themes were eliminated due to not having relevancy to the research study (Moustakas, 1994).
Textural description	Each of the invariant themes was fabricated into textural descriptions based on each lived experience. Moustakas (1994) stated that researchers should include imaginative variations and verbatim statements in data collection.
Structural description	I used Microsoft Word to organize all the data reported by the participants. By organizing the data based on similarities and commonalities, I was able to find textural descriptions for common invariants (Moustakas, 1994).
Composite structural/textural description	While identifying themes using Microsoft Teams, Excel, and Word, I used selective coding and was able to construct identifiable textural descriptions of the theme's meanings (Moustakas, 1994).

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Establishing the validity of any research study is an important process in defining the truthfulness of the study's results (Amankwaa, 2016). To ensure the credibility of this research study, after each interview I listened to the audio recording while reviewing the transcript to ensure that the reported information was accurate. At this point, if there were any errors in the transcript/reporting, I would edit them immediately. During the interviews, each participant was encouraged to share detailed lived experiences to enable accurate findings. There was no need to contact participants for missing information as each participant provided in-depth and detailed accounts of their lived experiences.

Transferability

To ensure the transferability of this research study, I used thick description to allow accurate findings that are applicable in other contexts in achieving external validity (Amankwaa, 2016). I included thick description to communicate the results to enable future researchers to conduct similar research studies. Detailed of lived experiences were shared in each story to allow a deeper understanding of this study. Even though participants' lived experiences may be different from each other, there are many similarities across participants.

Dependability and Confirmability

Amankwaa (2016) stated that dependability ensures that the results and findings of a study are consistent to allow future researchers to replicate the study. I established dependability by reviewing each audio recording and re-reading the transcripts multiple

times for accuracy. Amankwaa (2016), stated that conformability is defined by the neutrality which each reported lived experience is shared by each participant. To ensure confirmability, I created a tracking trail procedure to document the process during data collection to ensure that each step was taken to complete the collection. All collected data and tracking procedures were stored in a password-protected folder.

Results

Research Questions and Themes

The overall research question guiding this research study was the following: What are the lived experiences of young adults who have successfully completed their term in juvenile detention and who are able to successfully reintegrate into the community? The study used a phenomenological approach to investigate the lived experiences of young adults aged 18–24 from across the United States. Conducting this research study supported the gap in the literature proposed by Ozkan (2016) about the need for future studies to continue with exploring positive resources and support from family members. During the interviews, participants shared their lived experiences and perceptions of criminal activities and behaviors. Moustakas's (1994), seven steps of the phenomenology method were used to study the meanings and themes that emerged from each participant's interview. Four sub questions were identified for this research study:

Sub question 1: What are the lived experiences of young adults who engage in criminal behavior or who continue to engage in it?

Sub question 2: What are the lived experiences of young adults who are involved in an effective program or support system who are successful?

Sub question 3: What are the lived experiences of young adults who experience

mental health disorders?

Sub question 4: What are the lived experiences of young adults who previously

engaged in criminal activities and have a positive turnaround to find

employment or reintegrate into school?

Based on the four sub questions, I developed interview questions (Appendix B).

There were multiple sub themes that were identified during all the interviews which were

categorized into four different themes: disadvantaged neighborhoods, generalization

about young adults, reoffending reasons, and effective intervention programs. These can

be found in Table 4.

Table 4

Themes and Subthemes

Disadvantaged neighborhoods	Generalizations about young adults	Reoffending reasons	Effective intervention programs
Lack of resources	Verbal attacks	Family structure	Mental health and counseling
Drugs and alcohol	Looked at or treated differently	Peer influences	Support system
Gang affiliation			

Theme 1: Disadvantaged Neighborhoods

The theme "Disadvantaged Neighborhoods" focused on the participants

'experiences in their neighborhood when it comes to criminal activity or behaviors. The

participants provided similar connections between (a) lack of resources, (b) drugs and

alcohol, and (c) gang affiliation which emerged as subthemes.

Lack of Resources

All the participants in this research study shared lack of resources in their community or neighborhood. Participants expressed that if there were resources to attend to, this would have reduced the criminal activity in the neighborhood for adolescents. For example, Participant W5 shared that there was not a safe park or activity to attend to: "The parks were dirty and unsafe so there was no reason for me to go. No one was ever there." Participant M2 also shared similar statements: "Literally, there was trash all over the place, and the smell, don't get me started with the filthy smell." Other responses were shared about the resources being far from their home and having no access to them. Participant W4 shared, "if there was a sport that I can attend to, it would be hours away."

Drugs and Alcohol

All participants reported that drugs and alcohol was very significant in the neighborhoods. All of them shared having easy access to obtaining drugs and alcohol even if they were underage. For example, Participant M3 stated that he would go into the a nearby store to buy cigarettes without being asked for identification: "I go to the same store all the time and they just remember me. Eventually they don't ask for your ID anymore, they just sell it to you." Participant W1 described the same experience: "No one ever asked for my ID, so I always get away with it." Three out of nine participants shared that they looked old enough to purchase cigarettes. Participant W5 stated, "I actually looked way older than 15 back then, so I figured I used my looks for the advantage of getting cigarettes." Participant W6 stated, "I guess that was a good part of me looking a little older than my age because I always got away with telling them I was 18."

Gang Affiliation

A total of seven participants shared that they were engaged in gang affiliation in their neighborhoods. Five participants shared that they were "jumped" into the gang. Once they were a part of the gang, there were many criminal activities they attended as a gang initiation. For example, Participant M1 mentioned, "It was crazy because I was told to spray-paint five cars in a nearby neighborhood with bad languages." Participant M3 stated, "I was happy that it was not a hard task because I was scared. They wanted me to throw rocks at a rivalry home."

Table 5

Disadvantaged Neighborhoods

Subtheme	Participant responses
Lack of resources	"The parks were dirty and unsafe so there was no reason for me to go. No one was ever there."
	"Literally there was trash all over the place, and the smell, don't get me started with the filthy smell."
	"If there was a sport that I can attend to it would be hours away."
	"Even if there were activities or sports to go to, we didn't have the money for it. Now, if it was more affordable or free, I am sure my mom will put me in something like that."
	"Well, we had a theater nearby, but you never want to go in there because that was where the gangs hung out at. We would hear shooting and see fights all the time in that area. So it wasn't that safe to go to."
	"Where I grew up, there was nothing that I could go to. If we did, I didn't know about it because it was not by our apartment. I mean I see other kids doing things at school, but I never attended anything like that."
Drugs and alcohol	"I go to the same store all the time and they just remember me. Eventually they don't ask for your ID anymore, they just sell it to you."
	"No one ever asked for my ID, so I always get away from it."
	"I actually looked way older than 15 back then, so I figured I used my looks for the advantage of getting cigarettes."
	"I guess that was a good part of me looking a little older than my age because I always got away with telling them I was 18."
	"The people I hung with would get me and my friend's alcohol all the time."
	"All you had to do was walk up to someone and ask if they can buy you the alcohol. Most of the time, they didn't care to ask how old I was, they would just agree to buy the alcohol for me."
Gang affiliation	"It was crazy because I was told to spray paint five cars in a nearby neighborhood with bad languages."
	"I was happy that it was not a hard task because I was scared. They wanted me to throw rocks at a rivalry home."
	"Even though I wasn't a part of the gang, they treated me like family. I mean I saw them all the time on my block where I grew up. I guess you just become a part of them."
	"I joined the gang way before I became a teenager. You know what, it was basically older kids running the gang for younger kids. It was like they were recruiting younger kids to commit the crimes they didn't want to do."
	"Growing up in a gang taught me a lot of skills that no one else taught me. Have you ever heard of book smart? Well, you can say that I'm street smart because I had to grow up fast ... I knew the ins and outs of keeping myself safe."

Theme 2: Generalizations About Young Adults

This theme emphasized on the participants' focus on how others treated them. The participants provided similar connections between (a) verbal-attacks, and (b) being looked at or treated differently which emerged as subthemes (See Table 4.)

Verbal Attacks

Most of the participants in this research study reported some form of verbal attacks from peers or in a school setting when they returned from juvenile detention. Out the nine participants, six reported that their friends and family members had made comments like, "Stay away from him" or "stay away from her." For example, participant W1 shared, "I will never forget this, one of my best friends came to me and told me that she can't be my friend anymore because her mom didn't want her to hang around me." Participant W3 mentioned, "My cousin told me that his mom wanted us to stop talking" Participant W5 said, "You know it is crazy that once you do something wrong, everyone sees you as this bad person." Participant M2 shared, "When I would walk into a classroom, I would hear them telling me that I need to go to hell for the things I have done which wasn't very nice." Participant W4 mentioned, "This girl came up to me one time and told me I didn't belong to this school." Participant W6 shared, "I was teased a lot when I got out of juvie because I got caught up, they will then disown you and call me dumb this and dumb that."

Looked at or Treated Differently

A total of five participants shared that they experienced different kinds of treatment after they returned from juvenile detention. More specifically, this was in the

school system as peers were making comments and viewing them differently based on what the participants' behaviors and decision making had been. For example, participant W4 mentioned, "When I came back from school after juvenile detention, all of my friends started to treat me differently. They wouldn't even talk or look at me." Participant M1 shared, "It's like they are scared of me or something. I didn't even do anything to them." Participant M2 said, "They start to stay away from you because now I am a bad influence on them. I mean, I get it, but they didn't even check in to see how I was doing at the time. I needed a friend the most during that time."

Table 6

Generalizations About Young Adults

Subthemes	Participant responses
Verbal attacks	"Stay away from him", or "stay away from her."
	"I will never forget this, one of my best friends came to me and told me that she can't be my friend anymore because her mom didn't want her to hang around me."
	"My cousin told me that his mom wanted us to stop talking…"
	"You know it is crazy that one you do something wrong, everyone sees you at this bad person."
	""when I would walked into a classroom, I would hear them telling me that I need to go to hell for the things I have done. which wasn't very nice."
	"This girl came up to me one time and told me I didn't belong to this school."
	"I was teased a lot when I got out of juvie because I got caught up… they will then disown you and call me dumb this and dumb that."
Looked at or treated differently	They start to stay away from you because now I am a bad influence on them. I mean I get it, but they didn't even check in to see how I was doing at the time. I needed a friend the most during that time."
	"Someone tried to throw the race card at me one day. Just because I am black, I am viewed as the troublemaker. I mean I get it, most people who get involved with bad behaviors are black kids. So, I always get the look when I am walking down the hallway in school."
	"Most definitely you get treated differently when you are ruled as the one that always gets into trouble at school. This one time we had to split up to do a group project right? This one girl told me I couldn't be in her group because she had enough. But I overheard her say telling her friends that I was in a gang, and she didn't want to me in the group for that reason."

Theme 3: Reoffending Reasons

The theme "Reoffending Reasons" focused on the participants' reasons for reoffending or re-engaging in criminal activities. The participants provided similar

connections between (a) family structure, (b) peer influences, and (c) school policies which emerged as subthemes.

Family Structure

Most of the participants reported similar responses based on family structure and dynamics. Five out of 9 participants shared that there was no family structure in the household. Participant W2 shared, "My grandparents raised me, so they didn't know what to do with me. I mean they tried, but they didn't know what I was into until I got into trouble." Participant M3 said, "My mom was never home because she was working three jobs to take of me and my siblings." Participant M2 shared, "I didn't have the same structure as I saw with my other friends. My friends ate dinner with their family every night. We didn't." Participant W6 shared, "Now that I look back, I realized we didn't have any of that. I stayed out late for one because my mom was never home. She wouldn't even know."

Peer Influences

Most of the participants reported similar explanations for why they re-engaged in criminal activity or behavior. Participant W2 shared, "Well one of the reasons why I continue with getting in trouble is because I didn't know any better. I went right back to it." Participant M1 shared, "How am I supposed to not get in trouble again when trouble is right outside of my house? Sometimes even if tried, it didn't work at all." Participant W3 said, "It was hard for me to change because that was all I knew. It was like my comfort zone, you know? Who was there to tell me I did wrong? Absolutely no one, so of course I will get into the most trouble." Participant M3 shared, "You look at your friends

and you're like how did he get away with that? So, then you try to do the same thing to see if you would get away too."

Table 7

Reoffending Reasons

Subthemes	Participant responses
Family structure	"My grandparents raised me, so they didn't know what to do with me. I mean they tried, but they didn't know what I was into until I got into trouble." "My mom was never home because she was working three jobs to take of me and my siblings." "I didn't have the same structure as I see with my other friends. My friends ate dinner with their family every night. We didn't." "Well for me and my friends thought we could get away with a lot of things. We got away with many things. Sometimes we get ourselves excited, just the thought of us getting away with something makes us want to do it again."
Peer influences	"As soon as I got out of juvenile, I literally went back to the group of friends I was hanging with. That's all I knew back then was them. I didn't have anyone else. I didn't have someone to tell me to do the right thing or don't do a certain thing again." "Well one of the reasons why I continue with getting in trouble is because I didn't know any better. I went right back to the streets because that is what I know best." "How am I supposed to not get in trouble again when trouble is right outside of my house? Sometimes even if I tried, it didn't work at all." "It was hard for me to change because that was all I know? Who was there to tell me I did wrong? Absolutely no one, so of course I will get into the most trouble." You look at your friends and you're like how did he get away with that? So, then you would get away too."

Theme 4: Effective Intervention Programs

The theme "Effective Intervention Programs" focused on the participants' experiences with successful intervention programs. The participants provided similar connections between (a) mental health and counseling, and (b) support systems which emerged as subthemes.

Mental Health and Counseling

Most of the participants shared that they engaged in some form of therapy after they left juvenile detention because it was a requirement of their probation. The participants all reported similar statements about their initial thought of counseling in school or mental health therapy. Participant W6, shared that "if somebody asked you if

you need help at school, you automatically say no. You know what I mean? You don't tell them about your problems at home or anything like that because then it's a big thing." Participant W6 shared her positive feedback regarding the therapy she received after she left juvenile detention: "I actually went through a lot, so it felt really good to talk about the things that bothered me the most." Participant M3 shared, "I always thought therapy was for people that had mental health disorders like severe illnesses but once I learned what it really helped with, it's an eye opener for sure." Participant W5 mentioned, "Trauma is real. I didn't know that my trauma affected me that much and I can see why I did what I did when I was younger. I think I was hiding from my pain and keeping myself busy with bad things."

Support System

All the participants shared the importance of having a support system by their side to help motivate them. They shared similar responses of their experience of not having a support system compared to having one. Participant W1 shared, "I ran away when I was 12 and my parents didn't want to do anything with me because they eventually didn't care anymore, then when I was 18 years old and started to make positive changes, they came back around to help me." Participant M3, reported that "I had to take care of my younger sibling while my mom was at work. I did the cooking, cleaning, bathing, all of that. Who is going to take care of me, the streets? But when my mom when down from three jobs to one job, she was more involved with me because she didn't want me going back to juvenile. I needed that."

Table 8

Effective Intervention Programs

Subthemes	Participant responses
Mental health counseling	"If somebody asked you if you need help at school, you automatically say no. You know what I mean? You don't tell them about your problems at home or anything like that because then it's a big thing."
	"I actually went through a lot, so it felt really good to talk about the things that bothered me the most."
	"I always thought therapy was for people that had mental health disorders like severe illnesses but once I learned what it really helped with, it's an eye opener for sure."
	"Trauma is real. I didn't know that my trauma affected me that much and I can see why I did what I did when I was younger. I think I was hiding from my pain and keeping myself busy with bad things."
Support system	"I ran away when I was 12 and my parents didn't want to do anything with me because they eventually didn't care anymore… then when I was 18 years old and started to make positive changes, they came back around to help me."
	"I had to take care of my younger sibling while my mom was at work. I did the cooking, cleaning, bathing, all of that. Who is going to take care of me, the streets? But when my mom when down from three jobs to one job, she was more involved with me because she didn't want me going back to juvenile. I needed that."
	"When I returned to high school, I had this one teacher that always looked out for me. I mean she usually spend the extra time with me after school so that I can catch up with my grade. She was a huge positive role model for me because she saw something in me. I stayed in touch with her until this day."

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to deepen the understanding of the lived experiences of young adults ages 18–24 who had experience being in juvenile detention prior to the age of 18 and had success in finding employment or education after leaving detention. A phenomenological design was used to conduct semi structured interviews to collect the data of the study. The participants in the study were selected using the snowball sampling strategy. Participants selected were from across the United Stated who met the criteria for participation. Participants shared their detailed experiences during interviews that provided enough information to identify emerging themes based on the research question. After nine participants were interviewed, saturation was met, and no new emerging themes were developed. In chapter 5, I provide detailed information on the

interpretation of findings, the study's implications for positive social change, and make

recommendations for future replications of this study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

In this phenomenological study, I explored the lived experiences of young adults from a low-income community who were successful upon leaving a juvenile detention center. I believe that findings obtained from interviews about lived experiences can potentially help other young adults to have a successful turnaround to find employment or enter school. The findings in Chapter 4 are reviewed in this chapter. Among mental health challenges, criminal engagement, and lack of support in the home, Barnett's findings show that young adults who have been incarcerated have a higher probability of recidivism than those who have not been incarcerated (Barnett et al., 2015). Wallace's findings also show that circumstances that may ensure a successful transition include a support system or role model who has made a positive impact on the individual's life (Wallace, 2015). Despite the challenges that are involved in a young adult's life, there is a gap in research on the actual lived experiences of those who have a positive outcome after experiencing a juvenile detention center. All the participants in this study reported that their engagement in criminal activity started at a young age between 8 and 12 years old.

Interpretation of the Findings

Based on the literature review, the findings and results of this study confirmed that young adults endure challenges after they leave the juvenile detention system if there are no resources or support for them (Ozkan, 2016). The findings also revealed increased knowledge about the resources that young adults require to be successful and not

reoffend. The lived experiences and perceptions shared by the participants provided insights about how they returned to school or employment after they left the juvenile detention center system. Some participants shared that mental health counseling supported them in processing some challenges in their world. By obtaining mental health counseling, they were able to work through some trauma to prevent them from engaging in criminal activity as a coping mechanism. Others shared about positive changes they wanted to make to have a better life for their children.

The purpose of this research study was to explore the lived experiences shared by young adults who became involved in the juvenile system prior to turning 18 years old and who found success after they left. To conduct my research, I developed one central research question and four sub questions as a means to explore the experiences of each young adult:

Central research question: What are the lived experiences of young adults who have successfully completed their term in juvenile detention and who are able to successfully reintegrate into the community?

Sub question 1: What are the lived experiences of young adults who engage in criminal behavior or who continue to engage in it?

Sub question 2: What are the lived experiences of young adults who are involved in an effective program or support system who are successful?

Sub question 3: What are the lived experiences of young adults who experience mental health disorders?

Sub question 4: What are the lived experiences of young adults who

previously engaged in criminal activities and have a positive

turnaround to find employment or reintegrate into school?

To ensure that my research interpretations did not exceed the data, findings, and scope of the investigation, I used the phenomenological approach to conduct semi structured interviews and interpret each interview based on participants' responses. The participants' responses to the interview questions were similar as to why they had re-engaged in criminal activity or behaviors. The findings from this study indicate that participants re-engaging in criminal activity or behaviors lack the support of a positive activity or resource to connect to when they leave the juvenile detention system. Without positive support or guidance, individuals are more likely to reoffend. According to Mohanan and Skeem (2016), younger people are more likely to recidivate than those who are older. However, participants shared that successful turnaround to employment or education can provide guidance on how to engage with positive resources or obtaining the mental health treatment they need such as counseling. Most of the participants reported a lack of resources in their neighborhood or knowledge about where such resources might be found.

In previous studies, there has been research on what has worked to reduce youth reoffending; however, such research suggests that no one intervention will be beneficial for youth who commit crimes (Pooley, 2020). Gill and Wilson (2017), also found that the effectiveness of intervention programs is hard to specify due to the way such programs are structured to support the youth population. Participants in this research study shared

different reasons why they re-engaged in criminal activity, but for the most part, they indicated similar reasons. The reported themes are mentioned in Chapter 4 and consist of emergent themes and subthemes, as shown in Table 9.

Table 9

Emergent Themes and Subthemes

Disadvantaged neighborhoods	Generalizations about young adults	Reoffending reasons	Effective intervention programs
Lack of resources	Verbal attacks	Family structure	Mental health and counseling
Drugs and alcohol	Looked at or treated differently	Peer influences	Support system
Gang affiliation			

The theme of disadvantaged neighborhoods focused on the participants' experiences in their neighborhood when it came to criminal activities or behaviors. The participants provided similar connections between (a) lack of resources, (b) drugs and alcohol, and (c) gang affiliation, all of which emerged as subthemes. The theme of generalizations about young adults emphasized the participants' focus on how others treated them. The participants provided similar connections between (a)verbal attacks and (b) being looked at or treated differently, both of which emerged as subthemes. The theme of reoffending reasons focused on the participants' reasons for reoffending or re-engaging in criminal activities. The participants provided similar connections between (a) family structure, (b) peer influences, and (c) school policies, all of which emerged as subthemes.

Theoretical Foundation

Social disorganization theory was the theoretical framework that guided this research study. Social disorganization theory suggests that by understanding the connections between a changing environment and community structures, society can implement what is needed to influence individuals who experience difficulty and hostility (Ciobanu, 2019). Based on the participants' lived experiences, I used this theory to help guide my research question to support the reasons why a young adult will recidivate due to lack of resources in their community. All of the participants shared the lack of resources in their community and nonexistent positive support system when they returned home as reasons for recidivism. They reported that it was very easy to return to their usual activities and behaviors because it was what they were comfortable with. In contrast, participants reported that if there was a positive role model in their life who could educate them, they were more likely to make positive changes sooner.

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations that hindered this research study. The first limitation was that given the participants' age range, there may have been differences in their responses as the responses were based on their experiences. As a result, each response was unique, as there may have been different levels of criminal activity and different ages when the activity first started. A second limitation was that the semi structured interviews were conducted via Teams, the virtual software program. Using Teams software may have limited my ability to witness nonverbal cues. The next limitation to this study was my own personal biases. I was exposed to criminal activity as

early as age 10 and was a part of the juvenile system more than once. To minimize personal bias, I processed any emotions in a personal journal after data collection. The last limitation to this study was the veracity of the participants' lived experiences. One of the criteria for participation in this study was having experience with the juvenile detention center and having at least one criminal charge or offense under the age of 18. This research study did not investigate or obtain information on the participants' history. When conducting this study, I asked if the participants' reporting contain true and accurate facts to support a successful result.

Recommendations

The purpose of this research study was to explore the lived experiences of young adults who were involved in the juvenile system prior to the age of 18. While this research study focused on the successful path of young adults ages 18–24, it is essential to understand other age groups over the age of 24 who recidivate after leaving jail or prison. Recommendations for further research include recruiting participants representing age groups over 24 years old or under 18 years old and studying their lived experiences, as well conducting such research face to face to have the opportunity to observe nonverbal cues. (Due to Covid-19, this research was conducted virtually through Teams software.)

Many of the participants who took part in this study shared how their parents were also involved in criminal activity or experienced the juvenile detention center as well. I believe that a qualitative study to understand those parents who also experienced juvenile detention centers or were part of the system should be completed to also understand the

lived experiences of those parents. Studying the lived experiences of those parents can give a different perspective on what is necessary for other parents to do in similar situations. Dealing with a youth experiencing behavioral problems can be challenging for a parent's health; therefore, it is important that parents attend to their own emotional and physical needs to handle stress. Other parents can also understand that they are not alone and can obtain additional knowledge, skills, or even support from others. This can also support parents with the confidence or resources to help their children avoid criminal behaviors.

Implications

The findings of this research study can provide awareness concerning the development and future implementation of social strategies such as community and mental health support for young adults after they leave juvenile detention. The findings show that by having enough resources for those who are leaving juvenile detention, recidivism rates can be reduced. This study provides lived experiences to support the positive impact of resources on those who are under the age of 18. Individuals could also benefit by using the information in this study to obtain a deeper understanding of how someone with a criminal background is able to have a positive outcome with returning to school or finding employment.

The lived experiences shared during the interviews in this study revealed the reasons that the participants returned to school or found employment and may enable others to have a successful turnaround. Providing these lived experiences, both positive and negative, may allow others to have a deeper understanding of their similar barriers

and challenges. Other individuals reading this study may also feel motivated by many successful stories of a positive turnaround.

Conclusion

I found this study very rewarding to undertake as it gave me the opportunity to interview and obtain inspiring stories from those young adults who were able to turn their lives around in a positive way. When their successful stories are heard, their experiences and perceptions might also empower others to turn their lives around. The findings of this study demonstrate that there needs to be continuous support for the younger facing the challenge of interacting with the juvenile justice system and its attendant risks of recidivism. To address the problem of young adults who recidivate, there needs to be effective and positive programs that the young adults can engage in.

In my current role, I am a behavioral health supervisor for VitalCare, a nonmedical home health care agency located in Westminster, Colorado. At Vitalcare, I have had the opportunity along with others to support a new behavioral health program to support clients ages 2–18 with issues of recidivism. On this team, we offer a behavioral health respite for families who are overwhelmed, are stressed, and exhibit challenges with their child/children with behavioral health needs. Our behavioral health providers support clients by involving them in positive resources and activities so that clients can attend to these resources independently. Most families are unaware of available resources or do not have the wherewithal to support their children, which can lead the children to engage in risky and criminal behaviors.

Families that care for children that have behavioral challenges often exhibit their own challenges as well. Some family members struggle with their own mental health disorders and are unable to attend to their needs as they are caring for the children. Some families reported thoughts of suicide in the past due to burnout and feeling significant loss of hope. By having the support from my program, we have observed significant turnaround and positive outcomes for the families. Families reported that they could "see the light at the end of the tunnel" and experience a sense of release because they were able to cater to their own needs with the support of respite services in the home.

I have seen my behavioral health providers have success with supporting the clients to connect them to the outside world where they can engage in positive activities and resources. In allowing this kind of service, we have seen recidivism reduced and successful turnarounds increased. Fortuitously, what I am doing in my current role connects to my research study of positive turnarounds among juvenile youth. The more resources a child has, the less they will engage in negative activities or relationships.

My goal is to continue to support the youth population with positive resources and activities for them to engage in throughout their challenging moments. My vision is to continue expanding and developing this program to underserved cities and states in order to bring awareness to families with young adults who are struggling with criminal behaviors. With this program, young adults would be educated with daily living skills and preparation for adulthood demands such as how to apply for a job or submitting a school application.

The findings of this study suggest that young adults struggling with criminal activity and behaviors require specific support and additional guidance to be successful. Some of these youths may not understand or have skills to find positive activities to engage in. Therefore, they may need someone to support them in doing so. This research study was able to explore what has been helpful to support young adults in transitioning into employment and/or education opportunities.

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Appendix A: Participant Demographics

1. Gender
   a. Male
   b. Female

2. Age - _____

3. Are you currently in school?
   a. YES (If yes, indicate level of education)
      i. High school GED or Diploma
      ii. Associate degree
      iii. Bachelor's Degree
      iv. Master's Degree
      v. PhD
   b. NO
   c. Part-time
   d. Full-time

4. Are you currently employed?
   a. YES
   b. NO
   c. Part-time
   d. Full-time

5. Known mental health diagnosis?
   a. YES
   b. NO

6. Number of criminal charges (while under 18 years of age)
   a. 1
   b. 2
   c. 3+

7. Were you placed in juvenile hall?
   a. YES (Please indicate how many times)
      i. 1
      ii. 2
      iii. 3+
   b. NO

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. How old were you when you first engaged in criminal activity?

2. What are some of the challenges you faced after leaving juvenile hall?

3. Describe the reasons why someone continues to engage in criminal activity.

4. Describe the support system you had in the past.

5. Describe the neighborhood you grew up in.

   a. What was missing?

   b. What changes would you make?

6. Describe the activities and classes you attended.

   a. What was missing?

   b. What changes would you make?

7. Describe how you found employment or school.

8. Describe the support system you have now.

9. Describe the changes you have made in your life.

   a. What factors contributed to a positive turnaround?

   b. What factors negatively impact a positive turnaround?