

2015

Educators' Perspectives on Secondary Education Alternative Placement, Student Recidivism, and Treatment Models

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John Anzalone

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Walden University
2015

Abstract

Educators' Perspectives on Secondary Education Alternative Placement, Student
Recidivism, and Treatment Models

by

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MA, University of Phoenix, 2004

BA, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 2000

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

The recidivism rate for disciplinary offenses has increased during the last 8 years in the secondary student population of a sizeable, urban school district in the southwest United States. Recidivism for this district is the act of committing a second disciplinary offense during a single calendar year following completion of a behavior program. Guided by Erikson's theory of social development, this case study was designed to collect a purposeful sample of 21 educators' perceptions of the impact of recidivism on students' education and the effectiveness of treatment models to reduce recidivism. Data were collected from qualitative semi-structured interviews and field notes. Data were coded to identify common themes. Six themes emerged from the analysis: academics vs. discipline, stigmas, mentoring, social pressures, truancy, and loneliness and isolation. The most effective models for reducing recidivism were identified as restorative justice and teaching-family. In addition, educators believed recidivism lowered overall student achievement. The results of this study are of interest to those seeking an understanding of the impact of recidivism on students' education. This study promotes positive social change by suggesting effective practices, models, and treatments that contribute to improved educational environments that support for all students.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this study to my family, especially my mother, JoAnne, who allowed me to dedicate so much time, energy, and passion into this research. Thank you to Isaac for your inspiration, Dr. Goldman for your vision, and the countless educators who work tirelessly with at-risk youth everyday. It is because of your dedication that someone like me continues to help make your jobs just a little bit easier.

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The goal of this study was to evaluate perceptions on impacts of *recidivism* on students' education and the effectiveness of recidivism treatment models. In this study, recidivism refers to a phenomenon of students committing a second egregious offense within a single calendar year, following successful completion of a behavior or continuation educational program. Egregious offenses are behavior infractions that adversely affect the educational process or safety and welfare of an individual student (Schleifer, 2015). This study specifically examined recidivism by *secondary students* enrolled in Grades 7-12 in a specific school district. To reduce the recidivism rates of Grade 7-12 students committing these offenses in a sizeable, metropolitan school district, located in the southwest portion of the United States, it is crucial that solutions be based on historical and contemporary theories and current data.

Recidivism in this local district implicates many stakeholders and is a problem that has extended to the comprehensive campuses. Each week, comprehensive middle schools and high schools in this district enroll recidivate students who are assigned by the *alternative education* office. These students are rarely successful. Most recidivate students are behind in credits, and are a great distance away from graduation. Many students who enter behavior schools a single time learn their lesson and return to a regular setting and perform well. The problem arises with those students who enroll in behavior and continuation schools multiple times, and cycle through the system routinely. As a school principal, I attend numerous meetings each year explaining why certain students are negatively influencing other students who attend school to learn and succeed.

Background of the Problem

Over the last 3 years, the recidivism rate has steadily risen in the local school district in the study (Schleifer, 2015). The increase has caused behavior and continuation schools to become overcrowded, filling to above-capacity numbers in each of the 3 years and causing a significant local problem. This has prompted the question as to why the educational programs for these alternative schools appears to be ineffective as indicated by rising recidivism rates. Some researchers have stated that reducing recidivism has been a nationwide battle for years, but little is being done at the local level to lower the rate (Chang, Chen, & Brownson, 2003). Although there are three local continuation school sites that serve the most severe and repetitious offenders, and five area behavior schools to provide academic and punitive punishments to rehabilitate misbehaving youth, the rate continues to rise across the district.

In the local school district, students are recommended for expulsion for egregious discipline offenses such as assault to a district employee, arson, drugs, and weapons, or repeated offenses of a lesser degree. At that time, the alternative education division of the local district assumes responsibility for the student's education and determines an appropriate assignment for the child. Students are assigned to behavior schools according to the geographic location closest to home. Behavior schools have security measures in place such as metal detectors and searches, but are less restrictive than continuation schools. Students who are repeat offenders or have committed extremely *egregious offenses* (yet are not incarcerated) are assigned to continuation schools. Both behavior and continuation schools are set up to prevent students from being incarcerated.

The goal for the local district is to maintain an educational setting, with unique restrictions, without the need to fully incarcerate a student. According to Schleifer (personal communication, March 10, 2015), the result of maintaining one-dimensional (non-mental health) solutions, such as the aforementioned school-based model, may promote lower graduation rates, higher dropout percentages, and higher costs to taxpayers in the future. In an effort to decrease the amount of repeat offenders in this study of a sizeable, metropolitan school district, it was crucial that an understanding of specific reasons why students commit numerous expellable offenses be developed. As a followup action, an evaluation must commence to determine if behavior or continuation school sites, and the treatments offered within them, are effective in lowering recidivism rates.

Locally, many alternative schools exist for secondary students with behavior problems, but a relatively low number of treatments are helpful in reducing recidivism (Schleifer, 2015). Currently, the local school district offers a behavioral guideline booklet for secondary students and parents, conditions such as probationary agreements with students and parents that offenders and their parents must follow, and an opportunity to establish a better behavioral record at a new school by improving attendance, behaving appropriately, and producing sound academic coursework (Schleifer, 2015). It is unclear, though, if current treatments within the existing programs are effective from the perspective of teachers and administrators, or if they are contributing to the rise of recidivism rates across the school district. It is evident, though, that recidivism rates for students committing multiple egregious offenses continue to rise across the nation (Schleifer, 2015).

The only district-sponsored treatment, outside of the general academic curriculum, is a 4-hour drug prevention class mandated for students who commit drug infractions (Schleifer, 2015). Currently, 23 offense categories, in which students can be expelled, exist in the local school district. Of the 23 expellable offenses, drug possession with usage and drugs with distribution make up less than 9% of the possible offenses committed in the local district (Schleifer, 2015). The other 91% of the district's offenses involve physical, verbal, or disruptive behaviors (Schumm, 2010).

Table 1

Expellable Offenses and the Frequency of Commitment

<u>Expellable Offense (Top 5)</u>	<u>% of Total Infractions Committed</u>
Drug Possession	6%
Drug Distribution	3%
Physical Assault	48%
Verbal Assault	31%
Disruptive Behavior	12%

Models such as vocational training, anger management, life-skills training, group counselling, gang awareness, and arson prevention classes are models that have proven effective throughout the nation; however, they fail to be offered to all secondary students within this study's local school district setting (Goldman, 2014). Providing secondary students (Grades 7-12) with the opportunity to learn a skill, trade, or occupation that would assist in gaining employment directly following high school graduation may be the motivation needed to maintain enrollment at a comprehensive school (Schleifer, 2015).

The failure of this study's local school district to address the topic of instituting such programs in the middle school setting is a barrier in preventing egregious infractions from occurring. During the 1980s and into the 1990s, this local district offered numerous

vocational programs in the middle schools. Programs such as woodshop, ceramics, and foods were offered to students in Grades 6-8 (Goldman, 2014). Coincidentally, middle school expulsions were significantly lower than in the late 1990s and into the new century. Indicators such as this point to the possibility that vocational studies offered at the middle school level may be a factor in reducing original expulsion recommendations, as well as recidivism. Schleifer (2015) noted that the use of multiple skill trainings, also described as the German model, have resurfaced in many districts across the nation. The German model is a format utilized throughout much of Europe and is a tiered system designed to motivate multiple learning types to be exit-ready following graduation (Schleifer, 2015). This educational model has not been adopted into the middle school curriculum in the district used in this study, but adopted in certain local high schools.

According to Chadd and Drage (2007), students indicated that they are motivated to do well in school if enrolled in classes that have real world application. This study lends itself to the idea that vocational training is an applicable solution for recidivism. If large segments of the regular student body, though, are clustered into vocational skill training at the secondary level, testing should be modified to accommodate for those changes. Based on the principle that students would spend various amounts of seat time in core classes, all students in this district could not be tested using the same assessment(s) (Chadd & Drage, 2007). Moreover, if middle and high schools tracked students into vocational and academic clusters, the guidelines within the *No Child Left Behind Act* (No Child Left Behind, 2001) would have to be factored into the equation and significantly modified (Chadd & Drage, 2007). Currently, the local school district setting

reflected in this study has no specific vocational training in the middle grades (Schleifer, 2015).

Vocational opportunities have also been a suggested solution to increased recidivism rates. Greenwood (2007) suggested the idea of early vocational studies for children disinterested in school. Greenwood's theory suggests that European countries such as Germany, Norway, and the United Kingdom share viewpoints on education that contrast from the predominant views in the United States. These countries believe that not all children are built for the quintessential reading, writing, and arithmetic model. Greenwood suggested that early vocational studies significantly increased student achievement for both the vocational student and the student following the academic path.

Students emotional needs have been researched to provide solutions to this problem. Reed and Rossi (2000) took a more emotions-based approach to studying recidivism and organized their data sets in such a way that the students provided feedback. The three categories, or needs, were hopes, goals, and concerns of middle school-level students. The children's needs were documented as *wishes* in order to gain stronger student buy-in. This proactive approach, combining social skills learning with daily classroom curriculum, is a model that can also be instituted in the eight alternative school settings (5 behavior schools and 3 continuation schools) as well, but is currently being instituted in just 3 of the local school district's 352 schools (Schlinger, 2012). In the local district, behavior schools are designed to enroll primarily first time offenders for a nine-week period, or repeat offenders of less significant infractions for the same amount of time. Continuation sites are reserved for more egregious offenses with an average enrollment of 18 school weeks.

Each of these treatments is offered in the local school district setting where this study occurred; however, the models appear in limited quantities and sporadically throughout the local district. The foundation of the problem, according to Schleifer (2015) is that one solution does not accommodate all students. Schleifer (2015) stated that the local school district is not currently in the fiscal position to provide additional counselors to the alternative programs. Furthermore, there is an inconsistency in implementation of each model and little research that drives which model works for individual students, since one size may not fit for all students. Each alternative site is staffed with one counselor who is inundated with scheduling, orientations of new students, and managing disciplinary obligations (Schleifer, 2015). A therapeutic component of an educational study already enrolled in an alternative setting may be a difficult task to undertake; however, an aftercare model tailored to the recommendation of Schleifer (2015) may be something more fiscally manageable.

The high amount of recidivism within the local school district has numerous negative effects on the school district as a whole. When a student re-enters an alternative site, the staff morale at the alternative site significantly drops (Schumm, 2010). Each staff member invests time and effort in providing personal attention to students who enroll in the alternative sites following the first infraction. When an additional infraction is committed, and the student is assigned to the same alternative site, an obvious emotional effect is noticed (Schleifer, 2015).

Throughout the local school district, the consistent rise in the recidivism rate negatively affects the graduation rate of feeder schools (schools that refer students to the alternative sites) and staff morale at the alternative sites (Schleifer, 2015). The lack of

effective treatments within the alternative sites, especially within the aforementioned behavior and continuation programs, may be a cause of the recidivism increase.

Greenwood (2007) clearly stated the positive impact of proactivity in the early stages of adolescence, as well as the need for mentoring prior to student misconduct. Further description about the different treatments and models, including the lack of mentoring, the minimal amount of early vocational and social skills training, as well as the need of an aftercare program within this school district that may affect the recidivism rate, will be provided in Section 2.

There are many factors that potentially affect the recidivism rate. However, there have been no studies performed in this study's district that set out to discover the reasons why certain students recommit expellable offenses or an examination of students on the effect of recidivism treatment models. The literature review revealed 140 articles on juvenile recidivism in the criminal system, but no similar studies related to recidivism within school-based behavioral schools were found. The deficiency of related articles indicates that the current study is unique and warranted.

Problem Statement

The recidivism rate of students who commit an expellable offense within 1 year of being assigned to a behavior school (a site that serves initial and the least severe offenders) is increasing each year (Schleifer, 2015). Specifically, the problem is that the impacts of recidivism on students' *educational achievements* and effectiveness of recidivism treatment themes and models are unclear.

Teacher and administrator perceptions regarding the impact of recidivism on students' education and the effect of recidivism treatment models were examined.

According to Greenwood (2007), the lack of *vocational education*, mentoring, and budgetary woes may play a significant role in categories of egregious infractions; however, there has been no sufficient empirical study conducted in this study's school district to explore how recidivism interferes with students' educational achievements and educational effect of recidivism treatment themes and models; therefore, there is a need to conduct this study to bring awareness into the individual students' perspectives.

Currently, 25% of Grade 7–12 secondary students are required to re-enroll in a behavior or continuation school prior to the conclusion of the 1-year probationary period (Schleifer, 2015). This one year probationary period is commonly called a *Conditional Enrollment* and is designed to mirror that of a probationary period assigned by juvenile detention. Following a hearing with a designated administrator, students are frequently assigned to a behavior or continuation school for a nine-week period, followed by the one-year probationary period in a comprehensive school. One local solution to lower the rate was the implementation of a pilot program that housed recidivate offenders in on-campus detention centers; however, the recidivism rate continued to rise. This ineffective solution adversely impacted the entire educational community because the academic setting for teachers, students, and administrators was frequently disrupted by behavioral interruptions due to the close proximity to the comprehensive campuses (Goldman, 2014).

Many possible factors contribute to the rise of the recidivism rate including the lack of proactive behavioral modifications in the upper elementary and lower middle school levels, minimal mentoring programs, ineffective follow-up procedures, and reactive rather than proactive solutions. The current expulsion procedure

within the local district begins in Grade 7 (Schleifer, 2015). The school district prohibits administrators from recommending behavioral programs to any student below Grade 6, and students below Grade 7 cannot be expelled (Schleifer, 2015). Another possible factor contributing to the rise in the recidivism rate may be that mentors are not provided until Grade 8 in the majority of schools, and those pairings are not made until a child has performed significantly low academically or has exhibited habitual behavioral concerns. As a result, the lack of proactive behavioral modifications and minimal mentoring programs may contribute to the problem. Schumm (2010) stated that the current behavioral modification system is reactive and takes the approach of punishment and consequence. There is a deficiency in the treatment portion of the current system and the effectiveness of the methods currently being used. Additionally, Schumm (2010) stated that as the alternative education division of the local district works to improve each year, an absence of studies that explore the effects of recidivism on student education remains (Schumm, 2010).

Nature of the Study

The roadmap to reach the answers to the research questions appeared to lie within a purely qualitative study; therefore, a qualitative method using a case study design was used to address the aforementioned research problem that 5 years of documented data indicated that a sizeable, metropolitan school district in Nevada has experienced increased recidivism within its secondary student population. First, I selected teachers from each of the seven behavior and continuation sites, some of which had less than 5 years experience in alternative education and some who had over ten years experience in alternative education. These teachers were able to form an appreciation of the research

problem and main phenomenon of recidivism. I then selected an administrator from each of the seven sites, for a total of 21 participants. Next, I provided invitation letters to the potential participants. This number was determined to allow for equitable distribution among the seven respective sites.

Although three of the participating alternative sites are continuation schools, serving students who have committed statutory offenses, numerous students enrolled have also committed less egregious offenses, which assisted with this sampling technique because teachers and administrators working at these sites can fully understand the research problem and main phenomenon in the study; so, it was determined if the type of offense impacted their perceptions. The other five alternative sites are behavior schools made up of students who are mostly first-time offenders. A purposeful sampling strategy was used to select teachers and administrators from these sites. This method consisted of finding early criteria that differentiated the schools and participants, and then choosing schools and participants that were not alike (Creswell, 2003). Specifically, several teachers and one administrator were selected from each of the selected schools. The teachers were chosen based on years of experience in alternative education. Several teachers from each site had less than 5 years experience, while the others had over 10 years experience in alternative education.

Following IRB approval, a qualitative interview and field notes (see Appendix A), derived from several components of Erikson's (1950) theory of psychosocial development was conducted and recorded. Though the questions were shaped primarily from the findings of Erikson (1950), the actual phrasing of the interview questions (see Appendix A) was inspired by Marcia's (1980) qualitative study. Interviews with each of

the participants were audio recorded and qualitative data from the interviews were transcribed. Qualitative analysis was used by means of an interview that collected teacher and administrator perceptions of the reasons for the effect of recidivism on educational achievement of students and the effectiveness of the programs for reducing those behaviors.

To check the accuracy of the findings, I read all transcripts numerous times to gain an overall impression of the content. For every transcript, important words that pertained directly to the experiences of recidivism were recognized. Meanings were then devised from the noteworthy statements and phrases based on Erikson's conceptual framework. The important concepts were grouped into themes permitting the materialization of common themes and comments. Validity for this study was increased during literature reviews, holding to the case study method, keeping interview notes, using a suitable sample, and interviewing each of the 21 participants. In addition, member checks were employed, and my findings and interpretations were analyzed and gained participant agreement. A general description of participants has been provided to allow for the possibility of applying the results to a population with similar demographics, as well as a clear description of the framework of the study. This will assist the reader in transferability of the results to similar contexts; however, no names, addresses, or identifying features have been disclosed to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

The interview results were then analyzed using the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method discussed by Moustakas (1994). After describing my personal experiences with recidivism, a list of significant statements were developed. Next, I married the statements into larger clusters called themes. Following constructing a short biography of each

teacher and administrator, a structural report was generated. Finally, a description of a combination of all experiences were summarized for any potential readers, such as educators, parents, or alternative education administrators.

I am a comprehensive high school principal who has worked in the school system for 15 years, 4 of which were served in alternative education. Prior to collecting data, a proposal was submitted to the IRB, and I was permitted to conduct research. Further discussion on the research method has been provided in section 3.

Research Questions

Two research questions emerged from the literature review directly focused on the problem of recidivism, as well as from my local school district. The main idea was designed to explore how recidivism interferes with students' educational achievements and educational effect of recidivism treatment themes and models.

1. Based on teachers' and administrators' perceptions, how does recidivism interfere with students' educational achievement?
2. What are perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding the effect of recidivism treatment themes and models on students' educational achievement?

Each of the two research questions have been addressed and answered by the interview results, in addition to data collected from historical documents from the alternative division of the district. The interviews were carefully designed to delve into the participants' perceptions. Interview questions 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 13, 14, and 20, (see Appendix A) specifically addressed Research Question 1, while Questions 4, 7, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19 addressed Research Question 2.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to identify teacher and administrator perceptions on impacts of recidivism on students' education and the effectiveness of recidivism treatment models. If the recidivism rates continue to increase, several components of the United States' educational system, particularly within this local, urban district, will be negatively impacted. Each research question focused on the student, with an objective of finding specific perceptions of teachers and administrators and how recidivism interferes with students' educational achievement, and the effect of recidivism treatment models. I determined that if the perceptions of the sampled participants were to be identified, reoccurrence of an expellable offense may be prevented, while the grand purpose was to explore how recidivism interferes with students' educational achievements and the educational effect of recidivism treatment themes and models.

For example, under NCLB (2001), schools were held accountable for a student's ability to achieve on criterion or norm-referenced tests. Routinely, students in the local school district may miss as much as 18 school weeks before re-enrolling in a comprehensive school. The seat time missed severely impacts student performance, thereby negatively affecting a school's *annual yearly progress* (AYP). By identifying the reasons for this rate increase and, in turn, implementing a multi-faceted program, one that focuses on what the research represents as the key missing components, recidivism rates can begin to decline (Littlefield, 2005).

Conceptual Framework

While the existing literature pointed to the notion that recidivism rates are rising, there is, nonetheless, a scarcity of research on the particular issues of recidivism

reduction strategies and aftercare programs. Currently, aftercare is not a part of the state or local alternative education policy. To speak to this missing piece, this particular study has specifically explored the relationships between this data and the existing programs in which the participants had or had not had access.

I used the Erickson (1950) psychosocial development theory as the foundation of the interview questions to assist me to delve deeply into teachers' and administrators' perceptions and to ground the interview questions in the literature. The qualitative interview (see Appendix A) was based on Erikson's life-stage virtues. Erikson's research was the foundation of several of the interview questions due to the average age and general characteristics of the participants' students. The recidivist students in which the teachers and administrators involved in the study educate each day sort into the self-identity stage of Erikson's (1950) psychosocial development theory; therefore, I assembled the interview questions with this in mind. Virtues such as fidelity and repudiation have proven to be found in the participants' students (Marcia, 1980), and connected to the interview questions (see Appendix A) established in the qualitative interview.

Several of the interview questions were related to the self-identity of students, which may be a reason for their problematic behaviors. Additionally, the field notes and interview protocols (Appendices A & B) were structured to allow each participant to reflect on what they felt their students' sense of belonging to a particular school, program, or group may be.

According to Erikson (1968), the symbolic task of adolescence is to establish one's uniqueness by forming a self-identity. Identity denotes certain comprehensive gains

derived from pre-adult experiences that prepare a child for the tasks of adulthood.

Erikson (1950) suggested that adolescence is a period in which individuals begin the route to creating an adult persona, a distinctiveness that is to provide them with a purpose and a sense of personal limits. This study was framed around Erickson's fifth and sixth stages, fidelity and intimacy vs. isolation. These two virtues, specifically, framed this study because the largest group of recidivists, in the local district, fell into one of the two age ranges (Schleifer, 2015). Erikson referred to the malignant tendency of the participants' age group as *repudiation*. They deny their role in the adult world, and focus on the need for an identity. Some young people choose to blend with a group, one that may be particularly willing to align with an individual's identity, such as the following: religious cults, groups based on hatred, or clusters of people that have separated themselves from the burdens of mainstream society. They may commit negative acts or may have psychotic thoughts (Erikson, 1968).

Additionally, Erikson (1968) categorized students in this group as desiring the need for fidelity. Fidelity means loyalty, or living by certain standards despite their flaws and inconsistencies. Fidelity means finding a place in a group, a place that allows one to feel needed. Each of these two stages reflected the questioning of one's self. Who is it that I am? How does someone like me fit in? What am I going to become? Who do I want to be with? What choices will I make? Will I marry? Erikson (1968) found that if parents allowed their children or young adults to explore their dreams, emotions, and skill sets, they concluded their own identity. If parents repeatedly pushed their teenagers to adhere to their views, the teen faced identity confusion. Identity is basically defined by how a teenager sees him or herself in relation to their group. It is a sense of individuality in their

world and the thought of the future. Role confusion is the lack of identity or idea that teenagers cannot see who he or she is and how he or she can relate positively with the world around them. The teenage stage works hand in hand with adolescence, and the arrival of the sexual compulsion whose non-existence typically replicates the previous stage. Young people struggle to be accepted and to become individuals. This is a major issue, aside from all the other confusions experienced at this stage in life.

The young adult stage has begun to exist longer as this age group chooses to stay in school longer. Intimacy means the practice of forming relationships with family and a partner(s). Erikson (1968) stated that sexual mutuality is the giving and receiving of something physical and emotional such as, support, love, comfort, trust, and all the other emotions. These emotions are usually associated with healthy adult relationships favorable to marriage or life partnering. There is also an expectation of mutual feelings, especially between sexual or marital partners. Isolation, on the other hand, means feeling distant from those one is dating or in loving relationships. This is typically displayed by feelings of loneliness, withdrawal, or simply not being present.

According to Hiller (1998), these virtues can lead to recidivism. Requiring notification of an offense to a perpetrator's respective school leads to bullying, causing social isolation and emotional and physical harm (Hiller, 1998). Parents of other students often complain about an offender attending the school and demanding that he or she be removed. In this situation, it lends an obstacle to the offenders' rehabilitation and being placed in an alternate setting may downgrade his level of education.

To summarize, the conceptual framework was intended to examine the perceptions of alternative educators, living in Nevada. Its purpose was to explore how

recidivism interferes with students' educational achievements and educational effect of recidivism treatment themes and models. The findings would potentially provide community leaders with an understanding and the early identification of those students at risk of recommitting egregious infractions.

Definition of Terms

Aftercare program: A follow-up system that is concerned with the on-going success of the student following a first or second term at an alternative site (Littlefield, 2007).

Alternative education: The system of education in the local school district that encompasses any non-traditional way of obtaining a degree, certificate, or skill. Within the structure of this study, alternative education may refer to a behavior or continuation school designated to a student to complete a consequential term for committing an expellable offense. The behavior school is a less restrictive setting meant for first time or less egregious offenders, while the continuation school provides a more restrictive educational setting, as is meant for repeat offenders or students who commit more egregious acts (Schleifer, 2015).

Annual Yearly Progress (AYP): A federal report card that determines how public schools are performing.

Criterion referenced test: One that provides for converting test scores into a report about the behavior to be expected of a person with that score (Goldman, 2014).

Educational achievement: Students' semester or annual Grade Point Average (GPA) are used as indication of their educational achievement in this study.

Egregious or expellable offense: Defined as any offense in which the school principal deems necessary for removal of a student from school to ensure the safety of the student body at large. In the local school district, five infractions are deemed as Mandatory Expulsion Offenses. These include: assault on an adult, weapons, drugs, arson, and immoral conduct (NRS 392.4655).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB): The federal law that sets a high standard for all students, including measurable goals for all states.

Norm referenced test: A type of test which yields an approximate score, with respect to the concept being measured (Goldman, 2014).

Recidivism: Defined as the act of a person repeating an unacceptable behavior after they have either experienced negative consequences of that behavior, or have been treated to extinguish that behavior. It is also known as the percentage of former prisoners who are rearrested. Within this study, recidivism is also known as the percentage of first time behavior school students who have their conditions revoked within one calendar year (Schleifer, 2015).

Secondary student: Defined as a student in Grades 7-12 (Schleifer, 2015).

Vocational education: Defined as job training courses or schools (Schleifer, 2015).

Assumptions

This work rested on the following two basic assumptions:

1. The information given by the participants was accurate.
2. Developing a concise understanding of teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the current alternative education programs provided a reasonable

first step for establishing proper treatment protocols to lower recidivism among secondary students.

Scope

This qualitative study focused on 21 specific teachers and administrators. Participants were selected from a purposeful sample of alternative educators in a school district in Nevada. The study incorporated teachers and administrators currently working at each of the behavior and continuation schools and instituted data from the local school district. The study did not include students. Alternative programs in this school district were limited to behavior or continuation schools. This research study was restricted to a purposefully selected number of alternative educators living in this local school district in Nevada.

Limitations

I chose several features that affected the study. Purposefully selected educators had similar backgrounds, such as an interest in working at an alternative site. The amount of experience was a limitation, however, due to the wide array of experiences of each educator. The study began only upon IRB approval and was completed within one alternative school semester (18 weeks). No intervention or professional development strategies took place between the participants and me during the research period, as I only sought out information that was of value to the research study.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study may rest in an understanding of educator perspectives and the role the educators play in formulating solutions. The research promoted pro-activity, meaning that the goal to prevent expellable behavior in the

secondary grades should and can exist. Seasoned educators, however, understand the concept that students will continue to commit serious infractions that may result in an expulsion recommendation (Armstrong, 2007). If the pro-active component fails to reach a student, and a student commits an expellable infraction, the secondary goal to reduce the amount of students who will commit a second expellable offense comes into play. Teachers and administrators became the initial audience for this study. More importantly, the students at the comprehensive school, may, potentially, become an interested audience, as their education may be significantly enhanced due to less behavior problems in the classroom.

Parents potentially become a significant audience, as well, because most parents envision their children succeeding and ultimately attending a regular graduation ceremony from a regular school. At the local level, this study will be significant for discipline committees, counselling committees, and alternative education administrators who might be able to apply the findings to future alternative programs in their respective districts. Professionally, a research committee looking for ways to reduce the amount of recidivism or to simply initiate a conversation based on data and research may utilize the findings as well. Overall, the research involved components which included mentoring, vocational studies, and an element of pro-activity stretched across multiple audiences including comprehensive school educators, students, parents, school district data coordinators, and alternative educators researching ways to improve academics, behavior, and recidivism rates, as well as the effects of recidivism treatment models, thus creating positive social change throughout the district.

Summary and Transition

The problem is that recidivism rates have been increasing each year in this school district in Nevada, and factors causing the repetition of expellable offenses among secondary students in the local school district are unclear. To address this problem, a qualitative study was designed and implemented. I selected 21 alternative education educators to participate in a case study. Each participant participated in an audio recorded interview.

I looked for specific relationships among the participants during the analysis portion of the study and recorded similar reasons as to why their students may or may not have recidivated based on interview responses. The goals were to ultimately answer the research questions, while creating positive social change by positively affecting academic achievement across the district due to increased time on teaching rather than discipline in the classroom by investigating solutions to recidivism.

This study was grounded by the key components of Erikson's (1950) psychosocial development theory, and the theory served as the foundation of this study in that it suggested that those most prepared to undertake the issues of early adulthood are those who work most closely with students of this age group. The qualitative interview questions were primarily based on Erikson's life-stage virtues and are listed in Appendix A. The participants' perceptions of alternative program students and students who fell into both the self-identity and love stages of Erikson's theory were aligned; therefore, the interview questions (see Appendix A) were assembled with this in mind. Additionally, several of the interview questions (see Appendix A) provided insight into how much the participants felt their students' self-identity, or the recognition of their potential and

qualities as an individual, impacted their problematic behaviors. Section 2 reviewed the literature related to the research questions, conceptual framework, research variables, comparative studies, and research method, while Section 3 described the research methodology.

Section 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Several researchers have critiqued recidivism reduction models for not decreasing the recidivism rate of juvenile offenders both within schools and inside the juvenile justice system for years (Lane, 2005; Littlefield, 2005; Goldman, 2014; Kingsley, 2006). Rodriguez (2007) found that over half of the children released from jail were rearrested within a year. In metropolitan cities, that frequency reaches up to 76%. Within the local school district, recidivism rates continue to increase at 1% per year (Schleifer, 2015). However, several studies have found that programs that bridge counselling with consequences such as expulsion, suspension, and assignment to behavior or continuation school broaden students' understanding as to why they continually commit egregious offenses; these programs have the potential to teach students how to refocus their negative actions in a different and more proactive direction (Niemeyer & Shichor, 1996; Rodriguez, 2007).

This section includes a literature review, which was conducted through the library catalogue of Walden University, EBSCO (Elton B. Stephens Company), ERIC, and ProQuest databases. The following terms were used as the primary search key words: recidivism, juvenile justice, recidivism reduction, student conduct, adolescents, teenage mindsets, and delinquency. The databases provided peer-reviewed articles on research-based strategies for recidivism reduction. Hard copies of books published within the last ten years and relevant to the research questions were also used as applicable resources. These books were identified through a catalog search at the local library.

Finding materials for this literature review proved problematic. I initially conducted Internet searches for the terms *recidivism in schools* and *recidivism in the juvenile justice system*. These searches returned many articles related to juvenile crime and recidivism, but little on recidivism prevention or reduction in schools. Also, little information was available concerning how recidivism is studied in education statewide or nationwide. Even less information was available regarding the effects in which a reduction in recidivism would create, or on what the impact on society would be if there was an understanding of teachers' and administrators' perceptions.

The Walden University database returned the most relevant articles. An online search of the library catalogue of Walden University also identified several books, which could be used for review. I also conducted several physical visits to the public library and to the library at The University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) which proved to be very rewarding. Each of these provided valuable information and credible research. These searches identified comprehensive research as to the effects recidivism has on adults, but much of this information was not applicable to juvenile offenders in schools. Much of the information available on juvenile recidivism was discovered through an extensive search of state and federal agencies (e.g., DJJS and OJJDP) and from criminal justice journals.

I also contacted several state officials concerning resources available to their respective departments. Schumm (personal communication, June 23, 2010) and Schleifer (personal communication, March 10, 2015) provided copies of their data and information concerning recidivism rates and expulsion data created for the local school district. Schumm (personal communication, June 23, 2010) furnished copies of the local school district's Board Ratified Student List, which identifies all students who have been

officially expelled by action of the local school board. Each of these officials provided relevant information to which they had access. Also, each source suggested resources and national programs that provided pertinent information.

Following the review of research with similar perspectives, I will compare different stances on recidivism reduction, while the following subsection will include credible support of case studies related to the proposed method and literature linked to different methodologies. The literature and research pursuit were guided by the need to understand alternative educators' perceptions as to why recidivism has occurred and the effect of recidivism treatment models. The main emphasis of this literature review is on four recidivism reduction models that are used throughout the world, each based on a specific research approach. These four models are the restorative justice, teaching-family, mentor, and German models.

Conceptual Framework

Erikson (1950) set the groundwork for the earliest approaches of recidivism reduction. Erikson established a list of ego qualities, describing them as emerging from critical periods of development-criteria, by which the individual demonstrates the timetable of the organism with the structure of social institutions (p. 246). Erikson suggested that these ego qualities, formed during adolescence, lead to antisocial behavior and choices that are sometimes repeated with or without consequence.

Erikson's (1950) psychosocial development theory inspired several additional questions listed on the qualitative interviews in my study, particularly those pertaining to choices leading to negative consequences. An inquiry into how the school setting impacted various decisions was addressed with specific interview questions (see

Appendix A), such as Questions 8 and 14. Question 8 was formed to ask participants about social pressures in behavior school, while Question 14 inquired about similar challenges faced in regular school.

Erikson's (1950) eight ego qualities include the author's life-stage virtues, which are the most important aspects of this theory. Positive results of each stage are described as *virtues*, as it relates to remedies. Erikson suggested that people must understand the balance involved within each life stage. When both sides in a life-stage are comprehended and acknowledged, then the most useful virtue will rise to the surface (Erikson, 1950, p. 334). Similarly, according to Erikson, "integrity" and "despair" should be processed in order for "wisdom" to transpire as a feasible resolution (p. 335). The perceptions identified in this study will conclude the virtues held by adolescents and the relationship to the choices made to recidivate.

Erikson (1968) also suggested that adolescents between the ages of 13-17 years of age enter into the fifth quality, fidelity. At this stage, Erikson argued teenagers internally battle their own identity vs. role confusion. Erikson also suggested that the danger of this stage is actually role confusion. Role confusion, moreover, is one reason why students in this age range commit the highest number of expellable offenses, and, in turn, commit the highest amount of expellable offenses multiple times. This concept is corroborated by my professional observations that secondary teachers and administrators consistently interact with this age group and frequently witness this crucial stage. Teachers' and administrators' perceptions about recidivism treatment models are also, according to Erickson, a natural area of exploration for future studies.

The basis for this potential phenomenon lies in Erikson's (1950) psychosocial

development theory that teenagers doubts their sexual identity at this stage, when delinquent and psychotic incidences are not uncommon. If diagnosed and treated appropriately, these incidents, according to Erikson, do not have the same fatal implications that they may have at other stages. Erikson stated that adolescents are clannish and intolerant of those who are different, often with such petty things such as dress and gesture. Erikson stated that the teenage mind is essentially a mind amid two stages and these confusions and inconsistencies lead to routine misbehaviors and recidivism.

Between 2010-2015, the greatest rise in the study's site recidivism rate occurred among participants between the ages of 13 and 15 years. Additionally, the offenses committed over this time period were routinely based on the need to *fit-in* and be included with a specific group of other teenagers (Schumm, 2010). For example, during the 2009-2010 school year, the most frequent expellable offense committed in the local school district was drugs with possession (1,200 cases), routinely a peer-pressured offense (Schleifer, 2015). Moreover, of the 1,200 cases, approximately 935 occurred while the expelled student was with a group of peers (Schleifer, 2015). The research will review the impact peers have on individual students and their need to fit in, according to teachers and administrators.

Erikson (1968) found that secondary students may be inherently programmed to commit negative acts, and without sustained positive programs and trainings, may repeatedly commit such acts:

The teenage mind is an ideological mind-and, indeed, ready to be confirmed by rituals, creeds, and programs that can cause adolescents to commit evil, uncanny, and inimical acts. (p. 262)

This quote signifies that teenagers are influenced by outside factors and, in many cases are seeking some sort of belief, wisdom, or model to follow. I believe Erikson was suggesting that teenagers have the ability to commit infractions to prove something to others. This directly relates to the purpose of this study in that positively impacting the ideological mind is our duty, and this responsibility should not be postponed.

Research Themes

There is a rise in recidivism rates in the local school district in Nevada, which could be directly related to the role confusion of adolescents, punitive rather than therapeutic consequences or after-care programs, a missing mentoring component, and students' lack of exposure to vocational studies at an early age. Erikson (1968) found that adolescents experience role confusion, which can lead to poor choices and lapses in judgment. Wolf's (1967) teaching-family model provided an organized case study approach to study recidivism reduction, one that has been used over the course of 45 years in the United States. This model has shown an estimated 15% reduction in recidivism over time and can be used to lower recidivism in my local school district by empowering parents to learn valuable parenting skills soon thereafter an initial offense is committed.

Theme 1: Community Involvement

One way to help prevent a teenager from committing an additional expellable infraction is service within the community. According to Minor (1999), 70% of the

juveniles arrested were assigned to a community service program, and approximately 33% recidivated within the next year. In other similar models, serving a full sentence was considerably less likely when juveniles were issued community service, and recidivism was considerably higher among those with prior infractions and those who were punished with certain restrictions. Minor implied the need for teen courts and recidivism reduction programs to be based on program development designs that are research-based overriding the panacea phenomenon. Minor focused on time served and teen courts as an alternative to jail, while I focused on the educator's role in reducing recidivism. The difference in approaches is due to the fact that every expelled student is not necessarily charged with a crime. Therefore, community members, such as: advocates, mentors, and teachers, will fill the roles otherwise filled by court appointed staffers.

Theme 2: Follow-Up Care

Follow-up care became a crucial part of this literature review. Minor's (1999) research is most clearly aligned with the current hearing process in which this local school district operates. The themes in which Minor used, i.e., gender, age of subject, prior history, etc., impacted the themes and categories used in this local study. Minor's (1999) study has prompted further exploration of themes that may impact the recidivism rates among students who commit expellable offences.

Minor's (1999) study also set the groundwork for the second theme for this study: follow-up care. Follow-up care is a continual relationship with the student: a relationship that involves academic mentoring, emotional guidance, and life coaching, once the student is released from expulsion status. Such a theme was explored by reviewing several mentoring models used as follow-up care treatment programs.

Current Models Related to the Themes

Punitive model. Historically, the local school district in Nevada has displayed a consistent rise in recidivism rates. Schleifer (2015) conveyed that a form of probation known as conditional or trial enrollment has been implemented since 1987. This form of probation is separate from that of the juvenile justice system, but maintains numerous similarities. In the local district in which this study occurred, once a student is released from a behavioral program, at one time identified as opportunity school, the student enters into a conditional enrollment agreement, which contains a series of conditions in which the student must adhere to. This system equates to that of a probation system.

Schleifer (2015) stated that the main similarity to the juvenile probation system is the supervisory role in which Education Services Division (ESD), formerly Alternative Education (AE), plays in the students' daily life. The goal, according to Schleifer (2015), is to deter recidivism by holding the various conditions over a student's head. This 28 year-old system, however, cannot work in isolation. An effort to seek out the perspectives of participants who participated in this approach was pursued during data collection. Currently, each of the continuation and behavior schools in the local school district utilizes this model; therefore, each of the potential participants was exposed to this treatment.

Current aftercare model. Though strides by the local school district's alternative education program towards recidivism reduction have been made, district recidivism rates continue to rise. According to Schumm (2010), the infrequency of visits by the supervisors of the conditions is a factor in the rise of recidivism rates across the district. Furthermore, 92% of students who had a follow-up visit by their respective hearing

officer during the 2009-2010 school year, at least once during their probationary periods, did not recidivate during that timeframe. Moreover, each of the students who had some sort of follow-up by a hearing officer reported an increase in grades and behavior in school (Schumm, 2010). Currently, the local district employs six full-time staff members whose main function is to adjudicate over 6,000 cases per school year (Schumm, 2010).

On average, each hearing officer will preside over 1,000 cases per year (Schumm, 2010). Of the 6,000 cases heard each year, a number that has only tapered off over the last 2 school years, over 4,000 will result in the student and parent agreeing to a conditional enrollment (Schleifer, 2015). Typically, the student will begin his or her enrollment at an alternative site, and complete the conditional term at a comprehensive school. Technically, the probationary period does not commence until the students' first school day begins at the comprehensive school. The conditional enrollment period lasts for one calendar year from the date of enrollment.

During the conditional enrollment period, each of the 4,000 students currently receives a site visit from his or her hearing officer, who also serves as the supervisor of the conditions, approximately once during the conditional timeframe. Schumm (2010) stated that even this one visit is not mandated by the local school district, the division that supervises alternative education in the local school district, nor district regulation. The majority of the conditional students receive no visitation by a district employee. Moreover, the largest deterrent in which the local school district currently has in place, provides little to no accountability in its fight to lower recidivism (Schumm, 2010). This recidivism reduction approach in the local school district in Nevada has yielded an annual increase in recidivism and an approximate 23% recidivism rate across the district

(Schumm, 2010). This empirical observation further constitutes a need to examine students' perceptions on recidivism and its existing treatment models based on the link between the number of supervisor visits and recidivism rates. With this data in mind, a continued effort to study the themes of community support and follow-up care will support the need(s) in which Schumm (2010) suggested.

In a case where a school rule has been broken, the site administrator(s) needs only reasonable suspicion that an expellable rule was violated. In contrast, as in a criminal case, a more substantial amount of evidence or probable cause must be determined to make an arrest. Therefore, there remains a distinguishable difference between a juvenile criminal and an alternative education student. Though the two lines may routinely cross, a student may be enrolled in an alternative school without ever having committed a crime or subjected to detainment. The commonality remains that, in both cases, these juveniles are educated and are considered students throughout the process. I stopped reviewing here due to time constraints.

Therapy

Therapy, however, is rarely mentioned in current research forums. The term, in regards to working with *at-risk* juveniles, appears to be dated and has been reinvented multiple times. Words and phrases such as *aftercare*, *family intervention*, and *treatment*, seem to have substituted as the politically correct jargon within the pages of the literature. Altschuler (2007) suggested that juvenile aftercare produced promising results amongst children exhibiting behavior problems. In his study, Altschuler (2007) described a program that merged traditional *therapy* with modern *counselling*. Altschuler (2007) observed students soon after exiting a juvenile correctional facility while participating in

a group counselling session. He found that “the aftercare counselling proved effective for most of the routine offenders; however, appeared to have had little affect on the most violent participants-offenders Altschuler described as the new breed” (p. 137).

Given the observation about the inability of the sessions to control the *new breed* of serious juvenile offenders, a particularly ironic problem was that juvenile *aftercare* typically suffered from lack of funds and support and was plagued by a paucity of new, innovative, and experimental program initiatives. In part, this predicament reflected an opinion widely shared by the public, politicians, and many justice practitioners that serious juvenile lawbreakers are already beyond help and will be *graduating* shortly, in many instances, into the adult correctional system (Altschuler, 2007).

Altschuler (2007) described the *new breed* of juvenile offenders as youth entering the system at an earlier age, those who have been adjudicated as delinquent for violent crimes, continued to fail and reoffend, and came from dysfunctional and chaotic backgrounds. One may infer that because the system failed the child, the child may have shut down within the grasps of the counselling circle and may not have opened-up under this type of *aftercare* intervention. Altschuler’s (2007) suggested *group counselling* method was explored with the participants during this study, particularly in question 10 responses (see Appendix A).

In contrast, Armstrong (2007) recently piloted an *aftercare program* in the state of Nevada that combined counselling with *family intervention*. Armstrong’s program treated the most serious, chronic juvenile offenders from the community, beginning at the Nevada Youth Training Center, located in Elko, Nevada, approximately 400 miles from Las Vegas. When deemed ready, the youth were transported to a second, more

conveniently located facility used as a transitional point, whereby all juveniles targeted for this program spent the final thirty days of institutional stay in a special re-entry cottage (Armstrong, 2007). This allowed a far higher level of contact and interaction by these juveniles and institutional staff with community agencies and services, family members, and *aftercare* staff. The *aftercare* system in the local district was examined and the participants' perspectives was determined in this study. Currently, two of the eight continuation and behavior schools are implementing a therapeutic treatment model; therefore, some participants were exposed to this treatment. Armstrong's (2007) *aftercare* model was also explored with the participants involved in my study, particularly concluded from responses of question 10 on the interview.

Family and Community Model

Though Altschuler's (2007) and Armstrong's (2007) programs provided *therapy* for the at-risk participants, Armstrong's *family* approach may have proved to be more ideal in working with students not yet in the juvenile system, but whom struggle to obey rules at school sites or those serving time in alternative settings. The staff involvement within Armstrong's (2007) system also allowed *mentoring* to possibly play a significant role in the *aftercare* component in reducing recidivism. Comparatively, administrators working in alternative education programs, throughout various school districts nationwide, may step into the mentoring role for troubled students. Though this research generally focused on the rehabilitation of youth in juvenile detention, many of the components may be interrelated as this study continues (Armstrong, 2007). Currently, one of the continuation schools in the local district utilizes this model; therefore, participants were exposed to this treatment.

Mentor Model

As Littlefield (2005) presented in his research, mentors help children establish goals, solve issues, and make positive choices. Historically, mentors are paired with students after behaviors are identified. It is crucial that mentors be paired with students early, when behaviors are originally noticed (Littlefield, 2005).

Littlefield (2005) argued that mentoring made a difference when kids enjoyed a consistent, positive endeavor with a grown-up. Nearly 50% of mentored children will begin using drugs, nearly 33% will use alcohol, and just over half are likely to be truant from school (Littlefield, 2005). Mentoring at-risk youths is not a new idea. Mentoring programs have been implemented in hundreds of schools and have been highly effective for thousands of children (Nuttal, Hollmen, & Staley, 2009). Therefore, it is neither the lack of programs, nor the need for mentors, presenting the major issue for troubled youths; it is the timing of the implementation that truly needs to be addressed.

In order for alternative schools and programs to make a difference in the 21st century, mentoring is critical. Mentoring, however, presents several legal and staffing concerns. In light of recent news stories regarding sexual improprieties between teachers and students, it makes sense that teachers and administrators are hesitant to form a one-on-one relationship with students. While mentoring is essential before, during, and after a child misbehaves, asking one to individually mentor a child may be a difficult hurdle to cross. Therefore, mentoring in pairs or in teams may be an option (Maxson & Klein, 2007). In 2009-2010, the local school district in which this study occurred assigned zero mentors to enrolled students or students exiting alternative programs. The district also

offers very little follow-up protocol for students in general (Schleifer, 2015). The role in which mentoring plays does not play in the local district were examined in this study.

The German Model

Internationally, many school districts have followed a tradition of identifying students' interests and possible career paths at a very early age. In Japan, for example, school is only compulsory until Grade 9. Students exhibiting potential to move on to high school are identified in the primary grades, while non-high school bound students are introduced to career and technical skills in elementary school (Amphi, 2008). In Finland, a country in which many experts consider to be near the top in education, primary school is primarily separated into vocational and academic clusters, according to the German model (Schleifer, 2015).

Maxson and Klein (2007) determined that the German model is effective in reducing recidivism; however, over the last five years, this local school district has neither allocated, nor earmarked, any funding for vocational training for students in the primary or middle grades (K-8). The German model supports the community involvement theme because members of the community or experts in the field typically provide vocational training to students. Recently, the juvenile justice system has faced obstacles with an effective reply to offenders and their unacceptable behaviors. The following three divergent categories have emerged for managing these children: (1) treatment, (2) restriction, and (3) stabilization. Using data from over 300 adolescents under supervision by groups in three states, Maxson and Klein's (2007) qualitative study assessed how these differing practices were related to youths' self-concepts. This model was examined in this study and incorporated within the qualitative interviews provided to

the participants. Currently, each of the five behavior schools exposes their students to career and technical education; therefore, participants were exposed to this treatment model.

Vocational Model

Greenwood (2007), a juvenile judge in Florida, suggested the idea of early vocational study for children disinterested in the world of academia. Greenwood (2007) based his theory on international beliefs that all children are not built for the quintessential reading, writing, and arithmetic model. Greenwood (2007) suggested that early vocational study increased student achievement for both the vocational student, as well as the student following the academic path.

A strong rebuttal from parents occurred, suggesting that middle school or even late elementary school was too early for children to decide their feelings on main stream education; however, many parents also had an innate desire for their children to be happy, well-adjusted adults. Since implementing this model, a significant decrease of juvenile offenders has been reported in Greenwood's courtroom (Greenwood, 2007). The first category included wishes such as monetary gain, becoming famous, material possessions, popularity, and anxiety about disagreements in personal relationships, and better family relationships (Reed & Rossi, 2000). The next grouping was *life in school*, with high educational achievements being the most shared wish (Reed & Rossi, 2000). Students wished for straight A's and conveyed a need to join a sport's team, and urban students commonly wished for improved activities after school. The last category was connected to *life and health* and real-life topics such as peace on earth (Reed & Rossi, 2000).

Once a student is placed in a behavior or continuation school in the local school district, the student currently receives very little social skills training. The *reed and rossi model* would clearly target important tools in which students need in order to lower the probability of committing an additional expellable offense. For example, knowledge of basic social skills at an early age proved to be critical to raising academic achievement and the level of motivation during the middle school years, the years in which have historically been the beginning of poor behavioral choices (Reed & Rossi, 2000). Fortunately, students whom have had a break in attendance from their regular site, and have enrolled in an alternative program prior to testing, do not negatively affect a school's AYP data. In this particular case, NCLB does not present a challenge for this proposal; however, other issues remain.

Historically, in the United States, children entering a vocational academy or trade school were labeled as *blue collar*, and were given less intellectual respect by peers and adults in their lives. Greenwood (2007) suggested and later assisted in developing institutions of skill and vocation training for children identified early on as *non-college bound* students (Greenwood, 2007). The vocational model was explored in my study, as well, specifically through the analysis of interview responses, specifically Questions 6 and 16. Currently, one of the behavior schools in the local school district is aligned with a vocational school; therefore, participants were exposed to this treatment model.

Teaching-Family Model

One study that looked at the rise of recidivism, but focused on juvenile criminals instead of school-based infractions, was Wolf, Phillips, and Fixson's (1974) qualitative study on juvenile rehabilitation. Based largely on this research, researchers introduced

Achievement Place: The Teaching-Family Research Project, a model of care for troubled youth. The model has been simulated over 800 times, although not always effective or successful.

In general, behavior modification programs such as the teaching-family model, used in behavior centers or in the real-world environment, have had the largest impact on decreased recidivism and have led to a 15% decrease in recidivism. Though this reduction seems modest, it holds force in the U.S., provided the substantial number of incarcerated people. Increasingly, behavior treatments are being established to model and decrease misbehaviors. This industry is not without cynics, however. The U.S. Surgeon General (1999) advised the need to create clear criteria to admit to residential treatment programs. Within this same report, he called for more current research, as most of the previous studies occurred in the 1960s and 1970s.

This model of care was, and continues to be based on a systematic method to offering humane, effective, and individualized services that are reasonable to patrons and consumers that are cost effective and replicable. The focus is using proven methods of behaviorism known as applied behavior analysis and often referred to as behavior modification to teach and support positive social skills and allow the subject to maintain or advance in his or her setting.

Critics of this approach to recidivism reduction have stated that cost and manpower create obstacles for implementation (Kingsley, 2006); however, despite the critics, Fixson et al. (2007) explained that this model seemed like a substantial amount of work and administrators were curious as to where the funds would come from to recruit and fund specialists. It was also stated that if treatment programs are desired, support

must be offered in return.

The teaching-family model, however, clearly has more supporters than opponents. Erickson's (1997) qualitative study found that the teaching-family (T-F) model was the most thoroughly explored treatment program for offending youths and has stood up remarkably. Erickson (1997) stated that over 100 research papers have been written on the model, including one representing the value of T-F procedures for improving self-help behaviors, social skills, peer relations, and scholastic performance and overall evaluations of this program, such as evaluations of post-release changes of T-F youths versus similar youths placed on parole or placed elsewhere, and that supports this program's results. Erikson (1997) added that, "on any given day, over 5,000 children, families, and adults with special needs in the U.S. and Canada participate in group home treatment and other services, based on the teaching-family treatment program" (p. 199).

Kingsley's (2006) qualitative research on post-treatment recidivism showed that a combination of the T-F model aligned with boot camps have been effective in reducing delinquency; however, adolescents fared better when they were in the home, rather than away at a camp. In general, this type of model takes a behavioral manufacturing approach to decreasing problematic behavior and can create a false reality for teenagers once back in a home situation.

Disability rights bodies, such as the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law (BCMHL), have opposed juvenile placement in boot camps and called into inquiry the suitability and effectiveness of such group placements, the breakdown of such programs to address issues in the child's home and community, inadequate mental health services offered, and inferior educational programs (Bazemore, 1992). BCMHL has promoted

community services such as community counselling and non-residential centers on the basis that they have been considered more effective and less inflated costs than residential placement (Bazemore, 1992). While behavior adjustment programs can be provided, overall community-based centers continue to lack experiential support, in particular, with long-term results for strict cases, not including Hinckley and Ellis (1985). In 1999, the surgeon general clearly specified "...it is premature to endorse the effectiveness of residential treatment for adolescents" (p. 34). Though boot camps are not currently used in the local district in which this study occurred, boot camps are frequently mentioned as deterrents to misbehavior and a potential recidivism reduction strategy. Currently, four of the eight behavior and continuation schools in the local district expose their students to some form of this treatment model; therefore, the potential exists that some participants were exposed to this model.

Restorative Justice Model

In contrast, restorative justice is a model that is based on the theory that criminal behavior impacts people and relationships. This model has reduced recidivism in both juvenile facilities and schools across the United States. (Braithwaite, 2002; McCold, 2004). The model requires victims and affected communities to report all damages, both internal and external, caused by the infraction. The idea is based on the notion that multiple parties are affected by a criminal act; therefore, all parties need to be a part of the resolution. The restorative justice model brings all parties together, face to face, allowing all affected parties to share their feelings and the individual impact they endured. According to Braithwaite (2002), an apology, forgiveness, and resolution are "emergent values" of restorative processes (p. 15).

This approach provides the victim an opportunity to heal, provides therapeutic resolution for the offender, and allows each stakeholder the chance to move forward in life. This model also provides aftercare. The “reintegration method” involves psychological support for both the victim and offender, job training and placement for either party, and education for offenders, to provide more choices for the future (Braithwaite, 2002).

The restorative justice model also connects the worlds of juvenile offenders in criminal justice system with students in alternative education schools. Griffiths (1997) study implied that victim-offender counselling, community panels, family group meditation, and circle sentencing greatly impacted the amount of behavior infractions in schools. The ability for victims to confront offenders in a safe setting had positive results, primarily when the community was present to meet with the perpetrator and his family. Moreover, community panels allow members of the general public a chance to speak with student wrongdoers to discuss how the offense may have affected the community (Bazemore & Umbreit, 2001).

Restorative justice is also a model directly related to Theme 1: Community Involvement. Restorative justice allows the community to assist in the recidivism reduction process and becomes a vital component to this effort. Currently, a very similar model is used in my district. Frequently, victims are issued consequences and attend orientation seminars with the perpetrating students at the assigned behavior schools. During these orientation sessions, students and their families are asked to put ill feelings aside and work together within the school. This model closely correlates to my study in that several components of this model were explored and reflected upon in the qualitative

interviews. Additionally, participants were provided an opportunity to explain their feelings and expectations, particularly in responses provided from Questions 12 and 18, noting if attributes of this model were instituted in their individual rehabilitation process. Currently, one of the behavior schools in the local school district exposes their students to a variation of this treatment model; therefore, a potential exists that participants have been exposed to this treatment model.

This sub-section discussed various qualitative studies, as approaches to reduce recidivism. Supervised probation, the most commonly used option, specifically in the local school district in Nevada, has indicated an approximate recidivism decrease of 10% over time, based on multiple studies and variations of this approach (Schleifer, 2015). The concept of restorative justice, collaboration between victims and offenders, was also reviewed. This reduction approach, not currently utilized in the local school district in Nevada, has yielded positive results in many areas of the United States, though no significant improvements have been reported. One component of restorative justice, circle sentencing, has been piloted with moderate success in the local school district in which this study occurred. Families of the perpetrators are routinely provided facts of various cases, as well as thoughts and emotions in which victims have conveyed to a hearing officer. Though families of both sides are generally not in the same hearing room, feelings are disclosed through a third party. This qualitative method has seen some success, but not in a dramatic fashion.

This literature review also described the most current local approaches to recidivism reduction. The conditional enrollment process was explained and the positive and negative components of the program were identified. The therapeutic approach was

also discussed. Altschuler's (2007) qualitative study, based on the *aftercare* model, was reviewed and proved to have little effect on the *new breed* of juvenile offenders. In contrast, Armstrong's (2007) pilot program was analyzed, proving to be moderately effective in reducing recidivism rates in Northern Nevada.

Lastly, mentoring and vocational training models were reviewed. Littlefield (2007) concluded that mentors assigned to juveniles considerably reduced drug and alcohol abuse, but Nuttal, Hollman, and Staley (2009) showed the greatest impact on recidivism reduction, but proved that mentors need to be assigned early enough to make the greatest difference for children. The German model was introduced as well, indicating that vocational training for students, at early stages in their development, is critical to recidivism reduction. Maxson and Klein's (2007) qualitative study determined that the German model is highly effective in the battle against recidivism; however, obstacles such as funding continue to hinder the inception of this approach. I examined the discussed models and treatments in this study.

Literature Related to the Method

Qualitative research is interpretive and emergent in nature because it examines issues in a naturalistic setting using the texts of everyday life and evolves as the research proceeds (Creswell, 2003; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Qualitative research gives researchers the opportunity to become more experienced with the phenomenon of interest. In contrast to quantitative research, the term *qualitative* emphasizes the qualities of individuals as well as the processes and meanings that are not assessed or measured statistically (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Merriam (2002) noted that qualitative researchers want to know how and why people do things.

Case studies are an idyllic approach when an all-inclusive, detailed inquiry is desired (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991). Case studies are typically seen in other areas, but are increasingly being used in instruction. Yin and Stake (1995) have experiences with this method and have established rigorous processes. When pursued, they will follow methods as well constructed and confirmed as any available. Data collection, no matter the type, and various methods of analysis, can disguise some specifics (Stake, 1995). The case study, though, uses numerous sources of data from the perspective of the participants.

This sub-section discussed the decision to use a case study approach to a qualitative study, with a goal of obtaining information that might lead to programmatic changes to reduce recidivism. Several international and national approaches were discussed, including: supervised probation, the most commonly used option, and restorative justice (a collaboration between victims and offenders). This literature review also described the most current local approaches to recidivism reduction, including: the conditional enrollment process, the therapeutic approach, and Altschuler's (2007) qualitative study, based on the *aftercare model*.

Literature Related to Differing Methodologies

Quantitative Design

Monell's (2005) quantitative study explored a very similar topic as mine, but with incarcerated participants. Specifically, this study examined how these precursors influenced and affected criminal behaviors in juveniles incarcerated at the Preston Youth Facility, within the California Youth Authority. Though this quantitative study provided a strong foundation to emulate, the one-dimensional approach to study prisoners would

prove to be unnecessary. Furthermore, results showed a slight decrease (1-2%), once the prisoners were released.

Lipsey (1992) published a study based on treatments used in probation programs. Lipsey found that children in treatment programs recidivated 10% less than children in other types of programs. Lipsey and Wilson (1998) led another study on some of the most egregious offenders in their area. They found that, typically, misbehaviors were fewer; however, the effectiveness of the programs went undetermined. They did determine that more egregious offenders benefited from non-institutional treatments than less-egregious offenders (Lipsey & Wilson, 1998). Newer studies have found fewer, if any, recidivism decreases among similar programs.

Wooldredge's (1988) quantitative study discovered that supervising offenders longer, with corrective action (about two years), resulted in a longer time before an additional offense occurred. Wooldredge (1998), followed-up with an additional study and implemented a shorter supervision period, without corrective action. The idea was that the supervision time should be reduced to one year because he assumed that lengthier probation increased recidivism, as children became disinterested of supervision and did not respect the process. One quantitative study discovered that children erratically given various amounts of probation and supervision did not display significant changes in terms of infraction, regularity, type, or the time between rearrests (Austin et al, 1990). Additionally, using random assignment and a quantitative design, Barton and Butts (1990) correlated juvenile offenders assigned to rigorous supervision to those assigned to state prisons, but no noteworthy variances in recidivism occurred (see also Barton & Butts, 1991).

The most common model used, historically, to prevent recidivism, inside the juvenile justice system and in schools, has been supervised probation. For more than 500,000 children annually, probation is the harshest consequence after committing an unlawful act (Black, 2001). Though the widespread use of probation is common practice, legislatures and experts have an appetite for knowledge about the success of children in the current system; however, recent published studies gauging the effects of juvenile probation are uncommon (Corbett, 1999; Krisberg et al., 1989, Palmer, 1992). During the 1980s, Whitehead and Lab (1989) led a study to review several quantitative studies that provided treatment for juveniles. The study reviewed several probationary treatment programs, but revealed very little recidivism rate changes.

Sontheimer's and Goodstein's (1993) quantitative study discovered that although Philadelphia's rigorous probation aftercare decreased the amount of unlawful acts, it did not decrease the rate of recidivism for an individual child. Weibush (1993) linked the effects of supervised probation and the mere promise of reincarceration. No major changes in recidivism were found, although many of the participants committed more offenses than regular parolees. Zhang (1996) studied two separate juvenile centers in Los Angeles and looked for differences in recidivism in the two locations in two distinct areas of the city. The study provided evidence that recidivism rates were typically similar despite where the treatment occurred.

Mixed-Methods Design

In a randomized investigation, Minor and Elrod (1990) studied the outcomes of Michigan's Project Explore, a mixed-methods design, which comprised wilderness experiences, parenting skills training, and skills development. Their study revealed few

distinctions between the children who participated in the wilderness program and those who served a more traditional probation. Minor and Elrod (1990) conducted the study again, with different children, and again discovered little differences between the groups. Fagan and Reinerman's (1991) quantitative study compared juvenile offenders who were randomly appointed to routine probation cases in California, but found few recidivism differences. Feinberg (1991) studied juvenile offenders in Pennsylvania, before and after a probationary program, and established funding for a special program. Again, the study found no differences among the offenders using this quantitative study.

Clyburn's (1999) study solidified my decision not to use the mixed methods approach. Results of Clyburn's study addressed the problem of delinquency and serious crimes among African-American male youths; however, Clyburn had a need to distinguish characteristics based on ethnicity. This data was discovered following a quantitative interview, and then later confirmed during a qualitative interview, but did not require groupings of this type to determine viable solutions. Additionally, Clyburn's (1999) study devoted an exceptional amount of time focusing on one sub-group, which was not necessary in this study. The impact on recidivism rates of students in this local school district remains a problem across multiple ethnicities, and focused on the level of infraction, not solely on race or ethnicity. Erikson (1968) did not distinguish a difference in role confusion or identity issues based on ethnicity. He simply stated that issues regarding negative choices and the engagement in egregious acts was an adolescent phenomenon, rather than a racial problem. Therefore, this study can be conducted without the sole distinction of ethnicity.

In comparison, Maxson's (2007) mixed-methods study stated that the adolescent

need for approval may lead to poor choices and repetitiously negative behavior.

According to this research, if these needs are not addressed during the transitional times in an adolescent's life, then it should be expected that decisions, whether positive or negative, might be aimed to seek the attention of peers. If ignored, they will move down the path toward self-harm.

Moreover, the decision to utilize the qualitative approach in this study was based on the findings of multiple studies of various approaches. Most influential to my determination was the work of Erikson (1968) and his ability to pinpoint the natural instincts and characteristics of the age group in which this study was focused and Wolf, Phillips, and Fixson's (1974) teaching-family model. The results of this qualitative model were clear and substantial, decreasing recidivism more than any other model researched.

This section presented literature that expanded on my direction of study. Evidence suggested that the rise in recidivism rates in the local school district in Nevada could be directly related to the role confusion of adolescents, punitive rather than therapeutic consequences of after-care programs, a missing mentoring component, and students' lack of exposure to vocational studies at an early age. Erikson's (1950) psychosocial development theory presented the concept that adolescents experience role confusion, which can lead to poor choices and lapses in judgment. The teaching-family model provided an organized case study approach to study recidivism reduction, one that has been utilized over the course of 45 years in the United States. This model has shown an estimated 15% reduction in recidivism over time.

Summary

Section 2 was a literature review of available research concerning recidivism, the

components of various approaches (historical and modern), and a brief review of Erikson's (1950) psychosocial development theory. In Section 3, specific aspects of the methodology chosen for this study are explored.

Section 3: Research Method

Introduction

This study gave the participants a voice and an opportunity to provide input and their perceptions as to why discipline has continued to be a part of their academic careers, in accordance with Montessori's (1964) suggestion that "Discipline must come through liberty. We do not consider an individual disciplined only when he has been rendered as artificially silent as a mute and as immovable as a paralytic. He is an individual annihilated, not disciplined" (Montessori, 1964, p. 86). This quote suggests that students need a voice in their education and provided an opportunity to advocate for themselves. This study, through the voices of teachers and administrators, will support Montessori's (1964) suggestion.

This section describes the details of the case study method used for this study on how recidivism interferes with students' educational achievements and educational effect of recidivism treatment themes and models. It also describes the participants and presents a synopsis of how the data was gathered and analyzed. The study was specifically designed to address a research gap concerning the how recidivism interferes with students' educational achievements and educational effects of recidivism treatment themes and models. In this study, I attempted to explore educators' perspectives resulting from their working in the alternative education system located in southern Nevada. To comprehend the complexities of the causes of recidivism and the lived experiences of educators employed in various alternative programs, it was necessary to gain an understanding of numerous behavior modification models before data collection.

This study used case study research as the basis of its exploration affecting

whether current district models helped all stake holders understand why they committed egregious offenses multiple times. Case study research is a technique of studying individuals as well as a methodology for organizing and analyzing this research (Creswell, 2003). The choice of utilizing this research method was informed by the research questions and because it permitted me to define and interpret several cases based upon the data collected during the study.

Qualitative Research Methodology

Qualitative research is different from quantitative or mixed-method research in that the researcher interacts within the natural environment in which he or she is studying (Creswell, 2003; Hatch, 2002). Qualitative researchers believe that by participating in the natural environment, they will be able to observe social patterns that cannot be replicated in a laboratory-based experiment (Hatch, 2002). This methodology lends itself to the researcher playing an integral role in the study and taking part in the lives of those who are being researched (Creswell, 2003; Hatch, 2002).

The advantages of qualitative methods include the ability to distinguish individual perceptions of the participants, the flexibility to view reality as dynamic and dependent upon individual perception, the opportunity to develop a theory that can be derived from raw data, the potential to collect extensive and varied data, and the ability to analyze variables according to the particular interactions among participants (Creswell, 2003). Quantitative methodology is different from qualitative approaches in that it presumes that a reality definitely exists and can be researched, tested, and measured depending upon certain aspects of reliability and validity (Creswell, 2003). Moreover, the justification to use a qualitative method in this study corresponded to the need to analyze the open-

endedness of the responses without the restrictions in which a quantitative approach may provide.

Yin (2003) proposed replication is used within the case study design, in which the researcher duplicates the techniques for each case (p. 74). In a randomized investigation, Minor and Elrod (1990) studied the outcomes of Project Explore, a mixed-methods design, which comprised wilderness experiences, parenting skills training, and skills development. Their study revealed few distinctions between the children who participated in the wilderness program and those who served a more traditional probation. Minor and Elrod (1990) conducted the study again, with different children, and again discovered little differences between the groups. Fagan and Reinerman's (1991) quantitative study compared juvenile offenders who were randomly appointed to routine probation cases in California, but found few recidivism differences. Feinberg (1991) studied juvenile offenders in Pennsylvania, before and after a probationary program, and established funding for a special program. Again, the study found no differences among the offenders using this quantitative study. This lack of differences was a determining factor in not selecting the use of a quantitative study.

I chose a qualitative method for this study because there were few scholarly articles that described the recidivism issues as they pertain to teachers and administrators. The qualitative method lends itself to a better understanding of the perceptions in which teachers and administrators have regarding recidivism and the effects of related treatment models. My main goal, though, was to be a note-taker and more importantly an active listener of the participants so as to adequately present their viewpoints and perspectives concerning their reasons for recidivism. With this in mind, a case study was the best

design for this particular study.

The basic philosophical notion at the core of this study was demonstrated by Husserl's (1962) assertion that our experiences are all we know. Inquiries, however, do not involve the sciences of facts because they cannot be undeniable facts; we only can form knowledge of essences (Husserl, 1962). This belief is a central underlying meaning of the experience common within different lived experiences.

Research Questions

This case study design was framed using these research questions:

1. How does recidivism interfere with students' educational achievement, as indicated by their Grade Point Average (GPA), based on teachers and administrators' perceptions?
2. What are perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding the effect of recidivism treatment themes and models on students' educational achievement as indicated by students' GPA?

Research Context

The goal was for the research to be conducted at 7 of the 8 behavior and continuation schools, located in a sizeable, urban school district in the southwest United States. Two of the four behavior sites consist of a series of 12 portable classrooms located on campuses of a large urban high school and mid-size middle school, respectively. These particular behavior schools each serve approximately 1,300 students per school year, and approximately 150 students at a time. Students assigned to these behavior schools have either been recommended for expulsion or directly assigned to the school from their respective comprehensive site. Though these behavior schools serve students

in Grades 6-12, the majority of the students are in Grades 7-9. A near majority of the students (47% during most enrollment periods) are Hispanic. Generally, the other 53% of the population is evenly comprised of African-American, Caucasian, and Pacific Islander students. These demographics reflect the local population makeup.

Only one of these two large behavior schools was used for research due to the fact that I recently supervised one of the schools, generating a potential conflict of interest and the possibility of coercion concerns. The other two behavior sites are similar in demographics to the first two behavior sites, except that they are constructed as brick and mortar buildings. All three of the continuation schools are constructed of portables facilities. The demographics of two of the three continuation schools are consistent with the other alternative sites, while one currently has an enrollment of 53% African-American students and 37% Hispanic, which is consistent with the general ethnicity distribution of the surrounding community. Overall, most students are reading and writing just under grade level, while math scores are, on average, significantly below grade level. This is usually attributed to the poor attendance and lengthy gaps of missed time in a classroom and, on many occasions, due to suspensions and truancy.

It was necessary to study teacher and administrator perceptions of alternative education students from these particular schools for several reasons. The schools are comprised of students who have been given a second chance. Many of the population are first-time offenders; however, a significant amount of the students enrolled in this particular school are recidivates, serving a similar consequence for a second or third time. These schools also represent a cross-section of the city's population who are displaying some of the lowest graduation rates in the nation (49%). Lastly, these particular schools

provided the most convenient and sustainable access to me and offered less challenging locations to reach teachers and administrators, if follow-up interviews deemed to be necessary due to inaudible audio recordings.

Twenty-one willing participants were found from these seven sites, so I was not forced to find participants from comprehensive school sites, who formerly worked in alternative education. Each site was similar in design, demographics, and purpose. The study produced a significant amount of interest from high-level administrators, alternative school leaders, teachers, and community members who consistently debated how recidivism interfered with students' educational achievement. Finding the reason for recidivism would benefit these particular school sites in three specific ways. First, the administration would be able to accurately assess the needs of the students and work to implement the necessary program to positively impact student achievement. Second, teachers at these sites would be positively impacted by the relationships built and self-analysis that took place during the study. Third, staff at these particular sites would be able to clearly articulate the research findings to both the feeder schools and the school in which the students are assigned. This is particularly important due to the fact that there is currently very little, if any, direct alignment between the behavior and continuation schools and the surrounding comprehensive sites.

Ethical Consideration

I submitted a research application to the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and received approval from the IRB committee (03-24-14-0137188) to complete this study. Within my IRB application, I detailed the goals and expectations of the study, described all confidentiality issues influencing participants, delineated the

rights of the participants, and made all of the necessary arrangements to guarantee the safety and well being of the participants. Since gaining IRB approval, I obtained a Letter of Cooperation from my district (see Appendix E), as well as gained permission from the Assistant Superintendent and director who directly supervises the division in which each of the behavior and continuation schools fall.

I sent out an invitation to selected teachers and administrators with the selected criteria (5 years experience or less and ten years experience or more) in a plain envelope with my home address as the return address (See Appendix D). I met with all interested participants, separately, at the local library to conduct each interview. At the interview, I provided each participant a consent form (See Appendix B), and the forms were signed and collected before the interview.

Prior to the interview, I discussed confidentiality issues with each participant, provided a description of the study, described the participants' role in the study, read through the consent forms, and obtained participant signatures. I was the sole researcher; therefore, all information was stored on USB drives and secured in my home office. I concluded that this preinterview discussion allowed the chance for the participants to ask questions and developed a rapport between the participants and me. I also asked the participants what they hoped to achieve by participating in the study.

While interviewing my potential participants, I adhered to all consent forms and guidelines. Individual interviews were held with consenting participants at the local library, and interview responses were both hand-written and audio recorded. At the onset of each interview, I welcomed each participant and thanked each participant for his or her anticipated continuous participation at the end of the interview. All measures to protect

the confidentiality and privacy of the individuals involved were strictly followed and adhered to during this study.

Role of the Researcher

I have been an educator for 15 years, three of which have been spent working as a principal in a behavior school. I have worked with many students who have been recommended for expulsion, some multiple times. Prior to my appointment as principal, I adjudicated over 2,000 cases as a district hearing officer, in which students faced some of the most serious disciplinary consequences permitted by the local school district. Over this time frame, I have witnessed students recognize that changes needed to occur in their respective lives in order to succeed in a comprehensive school. Many of my students have gone on to graduate from high school. Many have moved on to post-secondary institutions or job-skill training programs. With many, however, I have lost touch and have no knowledge of my potential influence on their future. Seeing the positive outcomes of alternative education for students who have committed serious offenses made me realize the all-encompassing effects of alternative programs.

Researcher and Participants' Relationship

I currently serve as the principal of a comprehensive secondary high school. Though I once served as the principal of one of the participating sites, my role in the every day interactions of the students is limited. I am currently serving as principal at a large, comprehensive site, and I have no involvement with any of the participating sites. My current role enabled me to fill the role of the researcher without the fear of compromising the validity of the study. As the recorder in this study, I observed and noted the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding recidivism as it pertained

to their experiences while working in alternative education. Alternative models such as restorative justice, probationary accountability, and mentors do help decrease recidivism, as demonstrated in the literature review, and schools could use these programs to help decrease recidivism rates in their respective communities. My study informed the issue by providing findings based on analysis of data that have yet to be collected in my school district.

Possible Researcher Bias

This study was biased in that I once served as an alternative school principal and chose to view the positive impacts these programs had on students. Several of the following steps were taken to reduce researcher bias in this study: (a) field notes were kept and used to note any potential biases, (b) there was a focus specifically on observable data, and (c) there was a use of follow-up meetings to verify that the information was clear and audible. I used qualitative methodology as a means of giving alternative school educators an opportunity to voice their perspectives on student recidivism and treatment and models in their school district. In order to establish an appropriate researcher-participant rapport, I clearly communicated my intentions as a researcher to the participants prior to engaging in the interview process. I informed them that I was conducting research with the purpose of gaining their perspectives on recidivism and that their opinions were valued.

Participant Selection

The study aimed to inform an understanding rooted in relevant qualitative data about teachers' and administrators' perceptions regarding recidivism in the local school district. The study aimed to explore how recidivism interferes with student educational

achievement and the educational effect of recidivism treatment themes and models. I met with the 21 potential participants, separately, to conduct each interview. Twenty-one participants provided a substantial amount of data; therefore, smaller but focused samples were very effective (Flyvbjerg, 2011). I obtained a list of teachers and administrators currently working at the seven sites. This list contained teachers who fell into the two categories required (less than 5 years experience and more than ten years experience in alternative education). Fourteen teachers and seven administrators were notified by invitation that they had been selected to participate in the study.

I audio recorded each interview and made sure that each participant understood that he or she could, at any time, stop the interview or choose to not answer a question. The participants were told, in person, that their names would not be used, but rather a corresponding code would be used. In addition, no identifying information was given in the written version of their narratives. I reminded the participants of the potential benefits and risks associated in the study, preceding each individual interview. The participants were also told, in person, that they would receive no compensation or other material reward for participating. I also reminded the participants that no person would have access to the audio recordings or other documents (e.g., interview transcripts) after the study was concluded and that under no circumstances would their names be given and used in conversation or in the written dissertation document. The participants were also informed that I would personally transcribe the tapes so that no one else would hear or have access to them.

Data Collection

Bernard (1988) recommended collecting the following three basic types of field

data: field notes, a field diary, and interviews. I used all three types of field data in my data collection. I began by creating field jots whenever I heard something important during the course of each interview. I created these notes on the spot to avoid the problems of forgetfulness and selective memory. My field notes served as a data source. These notes were compiled immediately, so that the data were fresh and other activities did not interfere with recollections. Bernard (1988) suggested spending an hour or two per day collating and integrating a day's field notes and writing in the field diary. The field notes were a precursor to the reports, in which I ultimately compiled.

Lastly, I documented all findings in a field diary, which served as a personal chronicle of how I interpreted the social situation in which the interviews and field notes took place, and it also chronicled the relationship between the participants and me. Later, this diary helped me to more fully interpret the field notes and become alerted for personal biases. The field log related the chronicle of daily events: how time was spent, who was seen, what their names were, what they talked about, who else needed to be seen, and what needed to be asked. Overall, the log helped me keep the data collection organized.

The interview questions (see Appendix A) were constructed as open-ended questions, which allowed participants to freely expound upon their experiences and specifically correlate to Erikson's virtues, as well as models traditionally utilized to reduce recidivism. For example, questions 1-5, 7-11, 13-17, and 20, were based on Eriksonian virtues, while questions 6, 12, 18, and 19, were based on the German model, restorative justice model, and the mentor model, respectively. Moreover, questions 1, 2, 5, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 17, and 20, primarily correlated to Research Question 1, which

centered around administrator and teachers' perceptions of the causes of recidivism, while questions 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 12, 15, 16, 18, and 19, primarily concentrated on Research Question 2, which were intended to examine the effects of various treatments and models designed to decrease recidivism. The initial interviews and any follow-up meetings and field notes, took place at the same location, which was at the local library. The location was the most comfortable location for the participants. I constructed an interview guide that was used during the interview sessions (see Appendix A).

Moreover, I conducted all individual interviews and field notes with the participants myself. Additional follow-up meetings were necessary because there were some unclear audio recordings. Moustakas (1994) developed a process and guidelines for writing effective open-ended questions for gathering qualitative data. Using the guidelines established by Moustakas, open-ended questions were asked and participants were told at the beginning of the interviews that they could decline to answer any question(s) they wished. During the initial interview, participants were questioned about their previous experiences and the effects of those experiences on their current academic successes.

Eriksonian (1968) principles were used to design several of the qualitative interview questions, and an open-ended research environment produced the most informative responses. It was my intent for the participants to lose the least amount of classroom teaching/work time as possible. The interviews, however, were designed to take approximately 45 minutes from beginning to end; therefore, limiting interference with each participant's work schedule. I maintained field notes for the purpose of further academic analysis during the process of classifying and evaluation and as a way of

collecting my data.

The data collected during the interview process was digitally stored on my personal laptop computer. All notes and interview transcripts (raw data) were included in the research study, even if the information did not coincide with the themes that were eventually discovered. The research included all the data for the purpose of finding all potential core categories and themes. Without all of the data, I believe it would have been impossible to locate relevance between the core categories and the themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Access to the laptop was locked and required a secure password that no other person knew. The paper copies of the transcripts, audio recordings, and my notes were maintained in a locked drawer in my office. The consent form, signed by the participants, noted the data will be securely kept for five years. With the exception of myself, no person had or will have access to the key, and the documents will be completely disposed of after five years. Creating a research study that is in compliance with the ethical guidelines concerning human participants has continued to be of the utmost importance.

Data Analysis

Moustakas's (1994) approach was used in analyzing participants' transcripts. All transcripts were numerous read to gain a complete appreciation for the data. Each transcript provided noteworthy statements that derived directly from their individual experiences with recidivism. These statements produced important data and were gathered into themes. The results were then incorporated into an in-depth, comprehensive account of the phenomenon. Once themes were obtained, I approached all of the participants once again to validate the discoveries. The relevant data was included in the

final data table and report.

During this study, I contacted the participants within two weeks, once the initial interviews were checked and coded. This procedure was followed in order to share commonalities, categories, and emerging themes that were found. I did this for the purpose of ensuring that I was looking at the data from the perspective of an unbiased researcher, as well as from the perspective of the participants. As the weeks of analysis continued, I generated more uniform, consistent categories, while reducing information that was not relevant. The ultimate goal was to saturate the data, which generated a theory.

Descriptive Coding was used during the analysis phase, so that I could comprehend the data and compile it into groups of evidence, defined as themes or codes (Creswell, 2003; 2007). The themes were identified as consistent phrases, ideas, or expressions shared among the participants. The codes were labeled in a way that underpinned the theme. Any segment of the data that related to a code topic was coded with a corresponding label. Coding involved close reading of the text. If a theme was recognized from the data, but not quite aligned to the codes already present, then a new code was generated.

As I read through the data set, the number of codes evolved and grew, as more topics or themes became apparent. The code list, consequently, helped to identify the topics contained in the data set. When the data was recorded, read, and reread, I analyzed them using classification and coding (Creswell, 2003). I performed the analysis and categorization with additional input provided by the participants themselves. In anticipation of discrepant cases, I allowed adequate time in the field, coupled with

purposefully looking for any variation in the understanding of the results. Clear variations routinely occurred in both the coding of the interviews and field notes, so I documented those incidents and summarized these occurrences in my conclusion.

Validity

To validate this data, I instituted follow-up meetings. Using follow-up meetings, I asked for teachers' and administrators' opinions of the credibility of my results (Creswell, 2003). This involved reading all of the relevant data and information back to the teachers and administrators so that they could evaluate the precision and validity of the results. As the primary researcher, having participants involved in follow-up meetings helped curb my expectations and biases toward the data (Hatch, 2002). I anticipated themes and relationships that eventually emerged from the interview process. As a theory is never completely developed and is continually evolving, the results of this study represented the conclusions from a singular moment in time and did not necessarily yield a static theory. Follow-up meetings were held to evaluate the credibility of my findings and interpretations of their own data after analysis. I met with each of the 21 participants at public library to review transcripts, notes, and my interpretation of the data. Each follow-up meeting took approximately 10 minutes of each participant' time.

Summary

In Section 3, I presented a synopsis of the research methods, specifically a case study, and a description of its implementation. In addition to the description of the design of the study, an explanation of the population and sample was presented, a description of how the data were collected was provided, and an overview of how the data were analyzed was given. A further explanation of how the qualitative interviews

were used to analyze and code particular data was also included. Measures were also listed to describe how researcher bias was minimized throughout the study.

Section 4: Results

Introduction

Two important findings transpired and will be summarized in this section. The first significant result were the six themes generated from the research. The six themes included academics vs. discipline, academics vs. discipline, stigmas, mentoring, social pressures, truancy, and loneliness. These themes were found through an inductive approach and were finalized through a six step process. The second important finding were the perceptions of the participants. These perceptions became the basis for the study and created the significance I had hoped would occur.

This qualitative study's purpose was to examine how recidivism interferes with students' educational achievements and educational effect of recidivism treatment themes and models. It was specifically designed to identify whether student achievement in the local district was directly affected by increased recidivism or the lack of effective treatments and models. By focusing on feedback directly from teachers and administrators who had the necessary experience to judge the treatments and models utilized in the recidivism programs, the study was intended to use that experience to identify the factors that would be best to build upon. Such a focus was intended to inform would allow for developing reusable treatments and models for reducing recidivism. This section includes a detailed examination of the data collection efforts for this study, followed by a review of the data analysis techniques used on the data collected. It also contains a thorough presentation of the findings, including all themes identified, how the themes relate to the conceptual framework, and how the data supported each answer to the research questions.

Data Collection

This study collected information through field notes, a field diary, and 21 qualitative interviews with teachers and administrators. The interviews lasted between 25 minutes and 45 minutes, depending on the dialogue, follow-up questions asked, and how open the participants were with me. All of the 21 interviews were held in person and were audio recorded.

I maintained a backup of the recorded interviews at all times. The backup was an online backup stored on a second, password-protected server owned by me. Throughout the entire process, I was the only person who had access to the data. Upon collecting all recorded interviews, the interviews were labeled with only a participant number.

Participant Identification

The selection of participants in the study included purposive sampling. Most of the participants were located by contacting the principals of seven alternative schools, and by recruiting the principals themselves. Emails were sent beginning on Monday, April 21, 2013, at approximately 6:30 AM Pacific Standard Time through Wednesday, April 23, 2013, at approximately 5: PM Pacific Standard Time. The email asked for participants who had less than 5 years teaching experience in an alternative setting and participants who had more than 10 years experience teaching in an alternative setting. Approximately two days after the email was sent, I had already scheduled three interviews for the same week, as well as eight more interviews the next week. By Monday of the following week, I had secured the remaining 10 interviews.

Sample

The study design called for 14 teachers and seven administrators, for a total of 21

participants. The actual results of the criterion purposive sampling yielded the exact amount of participants needed for the study. This sample size aligned with Creswell (2012)'s examples of case study research that relied on small numbers of participants. Although Creswell provided extreme examples ranging from a single participant to several hundred, Creswell recommended between 10 and 30 participants, which this sample size matched. While the total number of participants fell within that range, the opinions expressed by both groups were similar enough that all of the data collected could be viewed together, with few examples of any discrepant cases. The participants were all alternative education educators from Nevada.

In addition to the criteria of working in alternative education, the amount of time working in this type of setting was pertinent to examining the perceptions of these educators. As seen in Table 1, eight participants worked in alternative education for 10 years or more, and the remaining 13 participants worked in alternative settings for 5 years or less. The median amount of time working in alternative education was 5 years. Though not a part of the participant criteria, it should be noted that of the 21 participants, the majority were men ($n = 15$). This majority was an incidental fact, and had little impact on the results.

Table 2

Genders, Roles, and Years Working in Alternative Education

Participant	Gender	Role	Years Working in Alternative Education
P1	Male	Admin	12
P2	Female	Admin	11
P3	Male	Admin	10
P4	Male	Teacher	10
P5	Male	Admin	11
P6	Male	Teacher	11
P7	Male	Admin	10
P8	Female	Admin	10
P9	Male	Teacher	2
P10	Female	Teacher	2
P11	Male	Teacher	4
P12	Male	Teacher	5
P13	Male	Teacher	5
P14	Female	Teacher	4
P15	Female	Teacher	3
P16	Male	Teacher	3
P17	Male	Teacher	5
P18	Male	Admin	5
P19	Male	Teacher	2
P20	Male	Teacher	3
P21	Female	Teacher	5

Note. Participants were assigned designators of P1 ('P' for Participant) through P21 on a semi-random basis. Participant 1 is not necessarily the first participant interviewed. This was to ensure an extra level of anonymity when interviewing multiple participants who knew each other.

Data Analysis and Validation

Data collected from the questions on the qualitative interview were based on the two primary research questions used in this study:

- Based on teacher and administrator perceptions, how does recidivism interfere with students' educational achievement?
- What are perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding the effect of recidivism treatment themes and models on students' educational achievement?

Findings revealed educator perceptions about how they feel recidivism and the current treatment models involved in alternative education affect student achievement. Educators who participated believed that recidivism negatively affected student achievement and the current treatment and models lowered student GPA.

To initiate coding, I identified the general themes originating from the survey questions. These questions led to the following six broad categories:

- Academics vs Discipline
- Stigmas
- Mentoring
- Social Pressures
- Truancy
- Loneliness/Isolation

Initial coding resulted in a reduction process. After coding all 21 data sets from the survey, I arranged the data items with the exact same theme by participant into a table. This was the point where I assigned each participant a number to establish confidentiality.

Connection to the Research Questions

As mentioned in Section 3, I analyzed the interview responses using the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method discussed by Moustakas (1994). I used my personal experiences with recidivism to develop a list of significant responses was developed. I grouped these statements into greater units called themes. After summarizing the teachers' and administrators' experiences, I generated a structural description and a summary description of a combination of all experiences for the reader. Additionally, I paired the

interview audio with interview transcripts. A sample interview transcript has been attached (see Appendix F). Handwritten notes from the field notes and the field diary were organized by listing the main topics in the left hand column of a transcript, with definitions and meaning listed to the right.

Data Triangulation

The first three coding repetitions involved looking at the whole of each participant's transcript and creating codes. This is what Moustakas (1994) termed as *horizons*. The horizons in Moustakas's research methods were referred to as such because as researchers came upon new ideas or themes, they unveiled new horizons in the research. Moreover, new ideas were found each time through the participants' responses. In order for each response not to be issued its own code, a limited amount of codes were issued.

For example, some participants identified alternative sites as behavior schools, holding areas, opportunity schools, or detention centers. Although the range of wording is interesting, the variation to describe the *sites* would make it difficult to follow across several layers of coding. Therefore, a single code, behavior schools (B.S.), served to identify those responses. This was done for each response that had multiple words for a single meaning. This is, again, consistent with methods used by Moustakas (1994) when he described his horizontalization efforts. In this case, I chose to group similar responses, review the transcripts three times per interview, and then end the initial coding phase.

Following the initial coding process of reviewing each transcript as an individual entity, I then examined individual sections of the transcript to further identify a more specific set of themes. Table 2 shows the results of the first effort to refine the themes of

the research. The initial themes were a result of the coding process described above. The reduced, secondary themes were a result of focusing on each question for each participant, as the responses related back to the research questions.

Table 3

Themes and Their Reduction: Step 1

<u>Initial Themes</u>	<u>Reduced, secondary themes</u>
Alternative sites	Alternative sites
Apathy	n/a
Prejudice	n/a
Academics vs. Discipline	Academics vs. Discipline
Stigmas	Stigmas
Targets	n/a
Mentoring	Mentoring
Social pressures	Social Pressures
Support	n/a
Proactivity	n/a
Truancy	Truancy
Loneliness/isolation	Loneliness/isolation
Achievement	n/a
Class size	Class size
College/Careers	College/Careers
<u>Effective vs. Ineffective</u>	<u>Effective vs. Ineffective</u>

System of Tracking of Data

I bracketed my experiences surrounding teacher perspectives, administrator perspectives, and recidivism. Throughout the process, I kept a field journal to detail my thoughts on the subject. I made an entry into this journal any time a prejudgment came to my head, after each of the interviews, or when coding the data clouded my judgment. This journal was referred to before conducting the first interview, between interviews, and especially during data analysis.

Findings

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were as follows:

1. Based on teachers and administrators' perceptions, how does recidivism interfere with students' educational achievement?
2. What are perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding the effect of recidivism treatment themes and models on students' educational achievement?

The study was designed to develop an awareness into the perceptions of teachers and administrators of secondary student placement, recidivism, and treatment models currently in place. Each question in the interview served a specific purpose in the process of answering the identified research questions. Some questions, such as Questions 1, 2, and 4 (see Appendix A for a listing of the interview guide), were designed to directly address Research Question 1, whereas others, such as Questions 3, 9, and 15, were designed to prompt further discussion between the teacher or administrator and me, specifically pertaining to treatments and models currently in place, which connected to Research Question 2. Each question was asked during all 21 interviews, in the same tone and with similar inflection. I did repeat the question for those who needed to hear the question again.

Thematic Findings

The six primary themes emerged throughout the qualitative data analysis. Sixteen initial themes were coded throughout the data collection process. Each of these initial themes was listed on the left hand column on Table 2. As the data was reviewed and

recoded, those 16 initial themes were reduced to 10 secondary themes. This process was replicated until the initial 16 themes were reduced to the final six.

Following the first reduction in themes, I examined all coded entries individually and attempted to recode them using the same terms. The target was not to repeat the same codes, but narrow down the amount of codes used. This allowed for some responses to be combined, which helped in code reduction. Table 3 shows the additional effort, wherein certain codes became parent codes.

Table 4

Themes and Their Reduction: Step 2

<u>Initial Themes</u>	<u>Reduced, secondary themes</u>
Academics vs. Discipline	Academics vs. Discipline
Stigmas	Stigmas
Mentoring	Mentoring
Social Pressures	Social Pressures
Truancy	n/a
Loneliness/isolation	Loneliness/isolation
Class size	Class size
College/Careers	n/a
Effective vs. Ineffective	n/a

Themes that were repeatedly found the most became parent codes, and lesser-found themes dropped off. The parent codes were then moved from the left column to the right column. After narrowing down the total number of themes following a more thorough review, I examined the same data from a different angle. To do this, I took the transcript for each participant and examined the responses as they correlated to the research questions. Within each transcript, I reviewed which themes truly related to the research question. This review resulted in two actions. The first action was that several codes were overtaken by other codes. The second action was that other codes were

shifted to a more appropriate place in the final themes. Tables 3 and 4 differ in that the Theme: Class Size drops off because it was found less frequently than the other 6 themes.

Tables 5 and 6 show the final steps in this process.

Table 5

Themes and Their Reduction: Step 3

<u>Initial Themes</u>	<u>Reduced, final themes</u>
Academics vs. Discipline	Academics vs. Discipline
Stigmas	Stigmas
Mentoring	Mentoring
Social Pressures	Social Pressures
Truancy	Truancy
Loneliness/isolation	Loneliness/isolation
Class size	n/a

It was then important to see the progression from beginning to end. Table 6 provides a visual representation of this progression and identifies each original theme in the left column and the final themes in the right column.

Table 6

Themes and Their Reduction: Beginning to End

<u>Initial Themes</u>	<u>Reduced, secondary themes</u>
Alternative sites	n/a
Apathy	n/a
Prejudice	n/a
Academics vs. Discipline	Academics vs. Discipline
Stigmas	Stigmas
Targets	n/a
Mentoring	Mentoring
Social pressures	Social Pressures
Support	n/a
Proactivity	n/a
Truancy	Truancy
Loneliness/isolation	Loneliness/isolation
Achievement	n/a
Class size	n/a
College/Careers	n/a
Effective vs. Ineffective	n/a

The final themes were significant themes for two reasons. The first reason is that they were mostly present throughout all reviews. That is, those themes were prevalent in all or nearly all of the participants' responses. In many cases, participants discussed these themes, without specifically stating that they were personally significant or not. Four of the seven administrators spoke at length about the effects of loneliness, even though they are not directly in the classroom to observe this on a daily basis. The second reason a final theme was chosen was if the majority of the participants specifically stated that something was significant, either personally or for the student. Table 7 shows the final themes.

Table 7

Themes Identified Listed by Participant Responses

Themes	Participants who identified themes
Academics/discipline	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21
Stigmas	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21
Mentoring	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20
Social Pressures	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21
Truancy	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20
Loneliness/isolation	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20

This study was focused on answering questions surrounding perceptions on recidivist students. My primary concern was to be able to answer those questions through the lens of the perceptions of teachers and administrators. Included in the following themes are responses from both of these groups of educators. There is no specific separation of the two for the purposes of this section. Additional discussion on that matter takes place in Section 5. The themes presented here appear in descending order from the most mentioned theme to the least mentioned theme. The title of each theme should be thought of in the context of being a significant step in the right direction to identifying

treatments and models that relate, in some way, to student achievement, or the lack thereof. For example, the first theme is *academics vs. discipline*. In reading the following information, the theme can be thought of as follows: Academics vs. discipline, based on the responses from the participants, were a significant topic discussed by professionals in the field.

An identified theme does not mean it was always a theme that proved to be an effective treatment or model, as it currently exists. Some themes may currently exist as perceptions only and not necessarily treatments specifically aligned to student achievement, as stated in Research Question 2. Some themes would actually require some amount of change to transform them from perceptions, whether positive or negative, to realities. In reporting these results, the voices of the participants will speak to the merits of each theme, while further discussion and interpretation will appear in Section 5.

The examination of perceptions included the identification of failing models and treatments as well. The literature review in Section 2 showed recidivism is a realistic problem, which means there are clearly some things that are not working at the alternative sites. In this findings section, the primary focus is to share experiences of the participants.

Themes Related to Research Question 1

Based on teachers' and administrators' perceptions, how does recidivism interfere with students' educational achievement? The theme of academics vs. discipline emerged from the data in every interview. Each participant referred to the apparent controversy of whether alternative sites should focus on academics or discipline. Each participant perceived recidivist students as low in academic focus, low in performance, and students who needed to gain social skills in order to modify their own behaviors.

Based on the data, educators believed recidivism lowered GPA, and the treatment and models used worked to lower overall student achievement. The consensus was that both types of schools focused primarily on discipline modification rather than academic success. That is, the mandated curriculum was taught, but with much less rigor than in the comprehensive setting and with much of the instruction aimed towards the lower end of the spectrum. One explanation was that this was due to many students performing well below grade level and being behind in their studies. Other explanations included the purpose of the schools were to concentrate on behavior management issues and not student achievement. Participant 9 shared that misbehaving students begin to fall behind early on in the school year and tend to classify themselves as “throw away” students. He stated, “They become a burden to the teacher and the system, are banished to behavior sites, and then adults begin to view them as such.”

Participant 14 shared that “students need to feel positive about school in order to do well and succeed...once positive relationships are built and remain consistent, academic success can then be achieved...going in and out of behavior schools severely limit opportunities to do so.” Participant 14 went on to state that the lack of academic rigor in the behavior setting adds to the disruptive learning environment, which naturally perpetuates the lack of academic focus in the alternative setting.

Participant 12 took a different perspective of alternative academics vs. discipline. In her opinion, the recidivist students had “terrific teachers” who “help kids” and were able to focus on personal and social problems while covering the proper material. She went on to state there is a lack of consistency in the curriculum because students were frequently moving around, but the focus is equally on discipline and academics. She

stated, “I have students who were at learning levels across the board. I help them learn the material while addressing discipline issues at the same time.”

A participant further illustrated the balance between academics vs. discipline, and what the priority should be in regards to recidivists’ education. He responded, “I create my lessons with the theme of better decision-making that focuses on different situations and life skills. I try to incorporate these themes within my subject area.”

Participant 5 shared that academics should take a “back seat” and teachers in alternative settings should focus on behavior modifications rather than strategies and instruction.

Those who have worked in alternative education over ten years seemed to have a disciplinary approach to their teaching than those who have worked in alternative settings for less than 5 years. The commonality among all 21 participants was clear in that the majority of recidivist students come to them at low academic levels and lacking skills needed to succeed. The opinions differed in what the major focus should or should not be, but the sentiment regarding student ability appeared similar. Participants stated that students enrolled in alternative sites have access to most of the mandated curriculum, but advanced courses were routinely not offered. In each facility, different materials and direction were provided. Participant 13 was especially optimistic about the academic focus in his classroom. He said he has good lessons that he uses over and over, since he continually has students enroll in his course. He even referenced several of his lessons that he makes available to students. Others did not share the same sentiment. Participant 14 stated that recidivist students disrupt the learning environment to the point where little

teaching and learning is going on. He went on to state that these students create a negative impact on his day-to-day teaching.

Participant 11 shared that perhaps the problem was not the teacher or administrator focus on either academics vs. discipline, but with the perception of the individual student. His thoughts were:

Students view themselves in a negative light. They avoid being invisible by drawing negative attention to themselves regardless of any consequence. He went on to say that the need result impacts the student's self esteem, which impacts whether they will continue to commit the acts in which they commit.

Beyond the question of whether the focus of recidivist schools should be academic or discipline, the question may be, how do we assist the recidivist student to believe in himself? While some participants believed that behavior modification should be the top objective of behavior and continuation schools, the majority of the participants agreed that once the recidivist student gains the confidence necessary to succeed, it will not matter what the philosophy of the school dictates. There appears to be some significant academic focus in many of the participant's classrooms that would allow for a more rigorous instruction model in the future. This is discussed further in Section 5.

The theme of stigmas also emerged in every response to the qualitative interview. Every participant stated, in one way or another, that stigmas placed on recidivist students, either by an adult, another student, or one self, directly interfered with students' educational achievement. This is important to my study because these responses indirectly answered the research questions, denoting why stigmas impact student

achievement and how the lack of treatment models available to promote student achievement are negatively impacting schools.

The literature showed that stigmas were clearly a critical factor in recidivism rate increases. Section 2 showed that stigmas on students were a vital reason why students continually enter into behavior and continuation schools. Nineteen of 21 participants stated that the stigmas placed on students, and stigmas students place on themselves, were important reasons why they continued to commit expellable offenses on numerous occasions. There were an overwhelmingly amount of strong responses to asking the participants if they thought self-awareness, identity, and the formation of positive relationships were important in studying recidivism. Participants shared that stigmas, primarily negative stigmas, came in many forms and stated that students felt labeled. Participant 10 stated that students become “disconnected” when they are removed from their home school and enroll in an alternative site. He stated that students who enrolled had their identity impeded on and were then provided an identity by somebody else. Participant 11 had a similar response with Participant 10 by expressing comparative insight on stigmas. Participant 17 demonstrated a similar connection to recidivism and stigmas. These participants each noted that stigmas essentially deter students from attending school, and when the students do attend, there is a reluctance to participate and become fully engaged, thus tying back to the decline of their academic achievement.

In speaking with these participants, it was clear that stigmas are constantly being placed on recidivist students and ensuring students are not negatively labeled was a key component to remaining in a comprehensive school. If for not having a negative label on students' backs, several participants felt these students would not have returned to

alternative placements so routinely. The negative label is something that comes with the student either because the recidivist student's discipline history is common knowledge, or because the recidivist student discloses this information, making his discipline history public knowledge. Much like Participants 11 and 17, Participant 7 also discovered a connection with recidivist students. He stated: "Students don't get the same type of educational opportunities at behavior school compared to comprehensive schools. Students get labeled and tend to feel they are receiving a second rate education."

From there, other participants echoed many of the same thoughts. Participant 12 said, "motivated labeled students stay motivated, 'lazy' labeled students stay lazy" when asked about his feelings on identity. Similarly, Participant 14 expressed that "all students are individuals and should be treated as such...some get the drug label and are also treated as such."

Finally, Participant 14 summed this theme up very nicely by offering the following:

All students are individuals, and must be treated as such. I have seen the behavior school start students on the right track, and I have also seen the behavior school serve as a place where students meet new friends who will not serve as positive role models in the immediate future. Some students leave the behavior school striving to be better students and citizens, while other students leave the behavior school with more drug connections than they had before they were expelled from school. Using behavior schools as a consequence needs to be determined on a case-by-case basis, as all students will react differently to the different stigmas placed upon them.

Truancy was also referenced by 17 of 21 participants. Truancy became a theme because it was a key component in which the participants correlated recidivism and student achievement. Additionally, truancy directly relates to Research Question 1 in that nonattendance severely interfered with students' educational achievement. While the majority of recidivist students are also habitual truants, both tend to go hand in hand and serve as obstacles in the students' educational career.

Truancy was a definitive theme based on the overwhelming majority of the responses, and directly related to Research Question 1. Discovering this theme was not a surprise, but the significant amount of responses that contained this theme was a surprise. There was a distinct indication that the administrators understood and agreed upon when it came to truancy. All seven administrators interviewed noted that truancy, attendance, and the impact on being present in class each day has on behavior infractions is monumental to student achievement. That is not to say that these participants blamed truancy as the sole reason why students commit expellable offenses, but they each made the direct correlation between missed school days, falling behind in credits, and then, in turn, the students' disruption of the learning environment.

Participant 17 was very clear that the problems recidivist students face are far greater than the average student. Motivating these students to attend school is difficult all on stakeholders, and as the student falls farther and farther behind, they tend to become more disruptive once the decision has been made to finally attend class. Participant 17 stated the following:

Creating and maintaining relationships with teaching staff and peers whom area positive role models has a healthy, progressive, motivational impact on the

recidivist student. If a student continues to identify with and maintain relationships with peers who don't provide positive models, I don't see how they can develop a desire to make gains academically or personally. They need guidance and reminders to surround themselves among people who are successful. I believe these peers encourage students to give up and stay home. This is usually the beginning of the end to what may have been a success story.

Participant 14 responded similarly (see Appendix G), and though Participant 14 supported the concept of behavior school and its positive impact on truancy, Participant 5 agreed only on the truancy aspect of the school. His responses clearly stated that truancy impacts recidivism, but did not necessarily agree with the overall concept of the current behavior school model (see Appendix G).

Participant 16 summed up truancy in a unique and conclusive fashion. He stated the following:

Students become very comfortable with the setting they are in. They know what they can and cannot get away with. They know they are not held highly accountable in the comprehensive setting when it comes to truancy and being in school everyday. They commit infractions and are sent to behavior school. They come to a structured environment, where some adapt and some do not. The students know how to make students uncomfortable. It becomes a classroom disruption when teachers get the same students over and over for some of the same offenses. They are committing these offenses because they are missing school, falling behind, and then fall into a revolving cycle because they can't catch up. It's a shame.

Themes Related to Research Question 2

What are perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding the effect of recidivism treatment themes and models on students' educational achievement?

Mentoring was a final theme and directly related to Research Question 2. Though mentoring remains in the infancy stage as a current treatment model for this local school district, it was an overwhelming response by all but one participant. The majority of the participants agreed that mentoring is a crucial treatment, though not heavily utilized, and would have a significant impact on student achievement if widely used within the local school district.

Much like stigmas, it is widely known, as shown in Section 2, that mentoring is a success factor for reducing recidivism. Students who have a responsible person of support are less likely to recidivate. When discussing mentoring with the participants, an emerging theme was that very few teachers and administrators knew if students were assigned mentors or viewed themselves as a mentor. Many stated that confidentiality issues came into play or manpower did not lend itself to this intervention. Most of the responses centered on the perception that aftercare of any sort was not a focal point of the school district in which they worked or for the students in which they served.

Participant 19 shared that she had personally kept in contact with some students to monitor their progress; however, no formal mentoring program or opportunity had ever been presented to her. Participant 17, moreover, expressed a similar sentiment.

With each interview conducted, there were similar feelings shared. It was a constant review each time I asked any question regarding mentoring. Nearly all of the participants agreed that mentoring and positive role models greatly impacted recidivist

students. All agreed, as well, that mentoring was nearly non-existent in the current alternative models in this district. Despite being the same information repeatedly, the words and responses of these participants are what matters most. These are individuals who have been entrenched in alternative education for years and experience recidivism firsthand each and every day. The following responses show a strong commentary of this theme.

Participant 12 stated the following:

Due to the fact that the trend in schools now-a-days is centered on the concept of learning communities - students lacking in social skills will be forced to work with their peers on a regular basis, instead of in isolation. This is why schools should have mentor programs in their course structure to help those students lacking social skills so that they don't fall through the cracks of the system. Many students prefer to work independently and are very successful in their academic careers; however, the key to success is individual motivation, goal setting, academic work ethic, and support in the school and home. Participants 13 and 10 shared similar insight.

Nearly every participant shared similar stories. For example, Participant 18 shared that mentoring was essential for student's continued growth, while Participant 20 stated that in order to keep students progressing, and fill in the gaps, a mentoring program must be established.

Loneliness and isolation was discussed in length during the interview process, and appeared to be a result of the lack of relationship building for recidivist students. Seventeen of 21 participants clearly stated that isolation of recidivist students at the

alternative sites directly related to the fact that students are not paired with role models who could help increase student motivation and have a positive impact on student achievement. Social Pressures became a final theme and related with Research Question 2 based on 18 of 21 participant responses. Administrators and teachers stated current treatment models do not focus on counselling or root causes, and do not provide recidivist students enough opportunities to negate the negative social pressures placed upon them. The data also suggested that the current models do not attack the loneliness and isolation or social pressures that are attached to recidivist students. According to the participants, these emotions and pressures directly effect the educational achievement of recidivist students, causing them to become withdrawn, disengaged, and uncooperative in class; therefore, negatively impacting their educational achievement.

With the goal of this study being to examine teachers' and administrators' perspectives on secondary education, alternative placement, student recidivism, and treatment models in a school district, discovering that a prevalent theme in the research was the emotional stability of a teenager might convince researchers to discontinue their research. Loneliness and isolation just may be the most important theme to rise from the research. These emotions are heavily evoked into the conceptual framework, are clearly inundated into the research questions, and are consistently present within the participant's responses. In looking at perceptions of educators, asking them to define student emotions can be a difficult process. Instead, this theme truly provoked the most dialogue and quotations. Recidivists feel just as much as well-behaved students. Educators know this and the participants were not shy to reveal this in their discussions with me.

Although a discussion on this theme appears in Section 5, it is important to reveal how this theme presented itself in the research. The theme emerged in response to a question about loneliness and its impact on a student's education. I was interested in knowing how participants felt about the emotional and psychological component of their students and the impact these emotions had on their choices, education, and rehabilitation. I wanted to know if recidivist students were prepared to re-enroll in a comprehensive school and if the behavior school's current treatment models were having an encouraging impact on the student's secondary school career. Participants stated that it was really a case-by-case basis. Some students took to the character education, while others actually regressed, both behaviorally and academically. Based on the majority of the participant's responses, it appeared as though the behavior schools are addressing loneliness and isolation; however, the comprehensive schools may not be aligned in this regard. Participant 17 stated,

I did see a sense of withdrawal or isolation among some students. While some built short-term relationships with peers or classmates after enrollment for a day, a week, or more, there are also a small percentage of students who fulfilled their entire enrollment commitment without ever having socialized with other peers in the program. I think this anti-socialization behavior was a result of shyness, parent directive, a feeling of inadequacy or lack of self-confidence, or contrarily, a feeling of superiority among other behavior school attendees.

Participant 10 shared a similar statement,

The students who experience a feeling of loneliness and separation are generally students we will identify for counselling intervention. The climate of the school

has to be established as a trusting place to confide in adults. Alternative campuses generally excel in this area. I just hope there is a follow-up component in the regular school. Participants 8 and 9 concurred (see Appendix G).

While the previous responses were focused on the individual student, an examination of the responses made it clear that the smaller class size and overall low student enrollment made it more likely that loneliness and isolation were treated at the alternative sites. The responses, however, tied directly to Research Question 1 in that recidivism interfered with student achievement. Loneliness and isolation were being addressed in alternative schools, but negatively interfered with student achievement and lowered students' GPA. Research Question 2, which asked how teachers and administrators perceived the current treatment models impact on student achievement, tied directly to the responses, in that loneliness and isolation were being treated in the alternative setting. It also appeared that the system is not fully equipped to follow-up on this component of the recidivist student. The responses were correlated, but also contained the sentiment that the regular schools did not care to address these issues; therefore, loneliness and isolation become a key factor in recidivism and its impact on student achievement and GPA. Participant 14 stated that, "I'm sure any student feels isolation when they enter a new setting; nevertheless, this experience is generally short lived. MS/HS students in the behavior and continuation schools are very resilient to change, as we have a transient student population. My worry is when they return to a regular school...will they be prepared?" when he was asked if the regular schools are doing enough to deter and address loneliness and isolation.

Social pressure was the final pertinent theme related to Research Question 2 because of the socialization component of the responses, as well as the connections to the conceptual framework. When examining what would make peer pressure, adult pressure, and self-pressure less influential on recidivism, both teachers and administrators provided responses that nearly mirrored each other. In terms of society's influence on students, many of the participants stated that recidivists focus heavily on their peers and the ideals in which their peers set forth to be important. Both teachers and administrators agreed that outside influences negatively influenced their students, and social norms were very difficult for their students to adhere to.

To illustrate this point, Participant 10 responded by stating that students who committed vandalism have made restitution, and on occasion, written letters of apology. Participant 10 also received letters of apology/remorse often from students who realized they were at fault toward victims—student and adult victims. He stated that this was very difficult for the student to do because he felt pressure from his classmates at the behavior school not to complete this act. Several other students teased this student, ridiculing him for making the “out of the norm” choice to apologize. The pressure from his peers was, in this case, not strong enough to change his mind; however, impacted his decision greatly.

Participant 20 stated the following:

A behavior student has the role of doing time, much like a criminal. In many cases these students have been locked up and have family members in prison. So while they may attempt to be studious their minds are often else ware. The role of these students is to keep up an appearance of being hard and street smart. The recidivist student almost has a duty to adhere to social pressures, not as much for

status, but for survival.

Participant 12 stated the following:

Many students who visit the behavior school several times throughout the school year obviously are not being reformed. These students disrupt the learning environment even at the behavior school, and must be relocated to a more restrictive educational setting. Unfortunately, I believe that they are sent on to the next step of this district's expulsion process, which includes "continuation" schools where very little teaching and learning takes place. Many times, this behavior is exhibited to impress peers or even family members who deem this to be earning "street credibility."

Participant 2 mirrored these responses (see Appendix G).

Participant 17 made an important point with her statement about social pressures and its impact on recidivism. As part of the interview surrounded social pressures and building a stronger character that doesn't give in as easily to social pressures, the participants were asked if their recidivist students were ever exposed to character/relationship-building courses. In nearly every case, even those who previously stated that social norms were not as impactful, the answers were to increase character education, add additional vocational courses, and assist in student's abilities to socialize in a productive manner.

Participant 9 shared his experiences in discussing problems with recidivists. He stated that he started a class on campus called Tools For Success. There was no assigned curriculum for this class. The teacher created lessons for the class, which dealt with better decision-making in difficult situations, life skills, money skills and making better choices

in and out of school. Participant 3, an administrator, shared similar ideas as Participant 9 (see Appendix G). Participant 4 shared several commonalities with the other participants in regards to social pressures and its impact on recidivism (see Appendix G).

Discrepant Cases

Very few cases stood out as immediately identifiable discrepant cases. Under the theme of academics vs. discipline, two participants felt that behavior and continuation schools should focus primarily on academics, seven participants felt that there should be an even balance between academics and discipline, and the remaining 12 participants felt that alternative sites should promote a heavy focus on discipline and behavior modification, while academics fall to a secondary focus. The responses of those who felt the focus should rest with academics, varied from the responses of the other participants. Case study research is designed to capture individual experiences; therefore, seeing a small variation was expected, but not significant enough to stand out as a serious issue in this theme.

For example, Participant 7 clearly felt that behavior schools should act as credit retrieval locations. Participant 7 stated that rather than try to offer diverse behavior modifications, counselling services, and psychological assistance, alternative programs should focus on graduation. He stated, “Credits are key...behavior is a choice.” Participant agreed with Participant 7 by stating the following:

Alternative schools should take the high road and become a positive option for students. Get the students into an academic routine, and those that want to achieve academic success will attend...those who do not, will refuse their right to free and public education.

These two cases were reflections on personal experiences and were the anomaly of the group. These cases remained in the data and were treated as any other data point. It should be noted that even with these two discrepant cases shared much of the same thoughts and opinions when it came to the topic of recidivism, and their answers were very similar in nature.

I did, however, find it incredible to have received such consistency in the responses. Because of the consistency of the responses and low amount of potential areas for discrepancy, it still does not appear necessary to reveal the identification of any of the participants.

Evidence of Quality

The study was conducted as designed and discussed in Section 3. I made every effort to ensure all participants met all specified criteria. There were many efforts to ensure this study would be one of quality. All efforts were successful.

Before interviewing participants, I performed a bracketing effort to single out and temporarily remove any preconceived notions each person had about the topic of study. Maintaining a field journal completed this bracketing effort. I kept notes about each participant, took notes before, during, and after the interviews, and jotted down any follow-up questions I had. Bracketing was a successful and useful component of this study.

Each interview involved two methods of recording data. The first method was through researcher notes. Because of the limitations of writing speed, interpretation, and potential bias, I also digitally recorded each interview. The recordings of the interviews were immediately backed up and copied to secure locations, with the original files being

deleted from the recording device. I then coded each interview, using participants' direct quotations, to support the themes and to represent the experiences of each participant. The interviews supported each theme and were then given names that were general enough to capture the thoughts of most of the participants.

Additionally, I used data triangulation to ensure data validity. The study included both teachers and administrators. The answers were compared to one another, and then compared against existing research. As mentioned in Section 3, data triangulation helped me to identify existing, new, and/or invalid themes. The new themes were used as an expansion of existing knowledge.

In this qualitative study, several approaches were used to confirm the quality of both the procedures for data collection and analysis. The procedure for data analysis was supported by the research design. To confirm the credibility and validity (Creswell, 2003) of the results, the subsequent data validation approaches were used:

- Triangulation,
- Using descriptive language to report the findings,

and Clarifying and biases

Rich Description of Findings

The qualitative data collected from the Qualitative Interview was narrative. Rich descriptions of the findings provided insight regarding teacher and administrator participants' perceptions (Merriam, 2002).

Summary Analyses

Section 4 contained the findings of the study. This study involved interviewing 21 participants and examining their responses to develop themes surrounding the

phenomenon of recidivism. The 16 initial themes identified were reduced to six themes: academics vs. discipline, stigmas, mentoring, social pressures, truancy, and loneliness and isolation. All data were presented in the participants' words, and the research contained both existing and new themes.

Section 5 contains an interpretation of the findings presented in Section 4. Section 5 includes a discussion of how the findings fit within current research, as well as an explanation of the study limitations, recommendations for action, and recommendations for future research. Section 5 concludes with a discussion on the social change implications of this study.

Section 5: Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Overview

The literature review for this study determined that few previous recidivism studies examined teachers' and administrators' perspectives on recidivists in school settings. Identifying this research gap prompted me to look closer at perspectives on secondary education alternative placement, student recidivism, and treatment models in a school district. The current study was designed with a goal of examining those perspectives and doing so in a way that they could then adapt into reusable tools or programs. For this study, 14 alternative education teachers and 7 alternative education administrators participated in interviews. The participants were located using criterion purposive sampling. Interviews consisted of the same set of questions for each participant, with the exception of any related follow-up questions. Interviews ranged from 25 minutes to 45 minutes, depending on the comprehensiveness of participants' responses, and were digitally recorded. Following the interviews, I used a modified case study analysis method adapted from Moustakas (1994).

I used two primary research questions to guide this study:

1. Based on teachers' and administrators' perceptions, how does recidivism interfere with students' educational achievement?
2. What are perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding the effect of recidivism treatment themes and models on students' educational achievement?

In the process of answering these questions, I identified an initial set of 16 themes that I later reduced them to six themes: academics vs. discipline, stigmas, mentoring, social pressures, truancy, and loneliness and isolation. This section includes a summary and

interpretation of the findings, which includes a report of limitations faced, the implications of this study, and recommendations for future efforts.

Interpretation of Findings

The six themes presented in this study were academics vs. discipline, stigmas, mentoring, social pressures, truancy, and loneliness and isolation. Most of these results in Section 4 were expected, whereas others surprising. I hypothesized that truancy would emerge and opinions about academics and discipline would occur, but I did not expect teachers and administrators to speak so openly about loneliness and isolation amongst their students, or delve into the topic of stigmas and its relationship to student success. In comparing the themes discovered, the personal emotions and experiences of the individual participants, and the phenomenon of recidivism, both of the research questions were answered.

The conceptual framework of this study was based on Erikson's theory on the social development of human beings; the results showed that provided a solid foundation for the findings. I identified a clear connection between each of the themes and Erikson's theory.

This study was framed around Erickson's fifth and sixth stages: Fidelity (Identity vs. Role Confusion; teenager and love, and Intimacy vs. Isolation (young adult). These two virtues, specifically, framed this study because the largest group of recidivates fell into this age range. Academics vs. Discipline, Theme 1, is a clear example of one of the most significant battles in an adolescents' life. Because Erikson's theory describes the choices made by adolescents, it is the student's independent choice to become responsible for their academic success or failure and whether to behave appropriately or

not. Whether a behavior program focuses on academics or behavior modification, adults are expecting a certain academic and behavioral outcome.

Theme 2, stigmas, is another opportunity for adolescents to conduct themselves properly, and thus successfully making it through this stage in the life cycle. The fact that all recidivist students have been unable to display the necessary and proper behaviors to successfully complete either comprehensive school or a behavior program suggests that stigmas form, causing the students to become labeled and categorized as troubled students. Themes 3 and 4, mentoring and social pressures, both offer opportunities for recidivist students to grow as adolescents and move into Erikson's next stage of life. By following the strong guidance of a mentor and not falling prey to the negative social pressures in which all adolescents face, teachers and administrators can begin to change their negative perceptions of recidivist students.

The final two themes, truancy and loneliness and isolation, related suitably to Erikson's (1950) social development theory in that personal choices that include responsibility and priorities can be pointed out, worked on, and improved. Working with recidivist students and examining their individual situations results in the ability to improve negative situations. The results suggested that most of the participants knew they had to form stronger relationships with their students in order to evoke social, behavioral, and academic change. Encouraging that change could produce positive outcomes and an overall change in the current system.

Research Question 2: Relationship to Academics vs. Discipline

With the first theme, academics vs. discipline, it was important to distinguish the bold differences between the two philosophies. While the majority of the participants

agreed that discipline should be the primary focus of behavior and continuation schools, two of the participants clearly stated that a focus on academics, credit retrieval, and graduation would inspire the recidivist students to change their outlook on education and the negatives behaviors would be naturally removed. Behavior schools have been a place of behavior modification, with a secondary focus on student achievement for years. The local district has structured these alternative sites as places of reform and not necessarily places of higher learning, however – a one-dimensional approach that has produced an increasing local recidivism rate for at least 5 years. According to Schleifer's (personal communication, March 10, 2015) interview response, the result of maintaining one-dimensional (non-mental health) solutions, such as the aforementioned school-based model, may promote lower graduation rates, higher dropout percentages, and higher costs to taxpayers in the future.

Throughout the local school district, the consistent rise in the recidivism rate negatively affected the graduation rate of feeder schools (schools that refer students to the alternative sites) and staff morale at the alternative sites (Schleifer, 2015). The lack of effective treatments within the alternative sites, especially within the aforementioned behavior and continuation programs, was a cause of the recidivism increase. This study's results showed that the recidivist students who took advantage of both the behavior modification component of the alternative programs, as well as the "catch-up" mentality of the academic component, benefited greatly from the experience and, for the most part, did not return. For those who did not participate, attend regularly, or continued to misbehave, the programs were merely a holding center until a release date and new placement were assigned.

Most participants concluded that the discipline focus was the original intent of establishing these sites. Additionally, students enrolled well behind their classmates, academically, but before any rigorous content could be approached, behavior management had to be addressed. One explanation from the data was that this was due to many students performing well below grade level and being behind in their studies. Other explanations from the data included the purpose of the schools were to concentrate on behavior management issues and not student achievement. This research implies that there is a disconnection between supervisors of these schools and the teachers and administrators who work there.

Schumm (2010) stated that the current behavioral modification system has been reactive and has taken the approach of punishment and consequence within the local district. There has been a deficiency in the treatment portion of the current system and the effectiveness of the methods currently being used. Taking a proactive approach with students and conferencing with them routinely to help them make connections between academics and appropriate discipline, helps students to make sound judgments (Hayes, 2003). Both Schumm (2010) and Hayes (2003) agreed with several of the participants in stating that the current treatment models, correlated to Research Question 2, have been reactive and should have had a firm commitment to academics, as well as to behavior modification.

Research Questions 1 & 2: Relationship to Stigmas

Perceptions in recidivism are strongly tied to stigmas. Studies surrounding the stigmas we place on others and those placed on us have been plentiful. For recidivist students, stigmas have been a part of their academic and, for some, their personal lives

for a long time. In researching these participants, it was clear that stigmas have constantly been placed on recidivist students; as a result, ensuring that students were not negatively labeled was a key component to remaining in a comprehensive school. By having a negative label attached to a student, several participants felt these students would not have returned to alternative placements so routinely.

Several studies have shown that bullying and labeling is increasing at an exponential rate, or at least that the reporting of these acts has been increasing. Whatever the case, associated youth have been typically issued a stigma of some sort at a young age. Altschuler (2007) described the “new breed” of juvenile offenders as youth entering the system at an earlier age, those who have been adjudicated as delinquent for violent crimes, continued to fail and reoffend, and came from dysfunctional and chaotic backgrounds. One can infer that because the system failed the child, the child may have shut down within the grasps of the counselling circle and has not opened-up under this type of *aftercare* intervention. The child may have carried the weight of these issues into school and potentially faced challenges associated with the stigmas created by such backgrounds.

The study findings correlate with the current research on the topic. In the majority of cases, both teachers and administrators stated that stigmas perpetuated the increasing recidivism rate among adolescents in school. Participant 17 demonstrated a similar connection to recidivism and stigmas by stating that the impact was largely related to the type of school identity the student previously had. I think that a student who has attended behavior school multiple times, or who may have a more extensive history of past behavior problems, is not uncomfortable or opposed to being affiliated with behavior

school or having a reputation as a troublesome student. While this may not affect their ability to form an identity, it affected their ability to form a positive or socially acceptable identity at school, as they may have become accustomed to being a notorious troublemaker.

Marcia (1980) agreed in his study, *Identity in Adolescents*. The study identified recidivist juveniles who continuously questioned their own identity and place in society. The connections many of the students made were unhealthy and perpetuated the stigmas that society placed on them, respectively. In this study, the work coincided with the theme of stigmas, and the significance of the perceptions made by teachers and administrators. The findings of stigmas as a theme clearly answered both research questions in that teachers' and administrators' perceptions aligned with the concept that stigmas directly related to recidivism. Additionally, current treatment models have not necessarily focused on the elimination of stigmas or taught students how to ignore negative stigmas. For example, Participant 17 stated that students who enrolled and withdrew, and continued this pattern, found themselves repeating numerous lessons and misbehaved due to boredom and monotony in the alternative classroom. Additionally, Wolf's (1974) study concurred, and found that if students were removed from a comprehensive site, and remained enrolled until the end of an academic term, there was more consistency and less behavior issues due to mundane assignments. Therefore, the research and data directly supported the theme of academics vs. discipline, and has led to further questions pertaining to the need to find a balance in this area. Teachers and administrators perceived similar dynamics in that students' academics have driven their individual behavior, and their behavior directly impacted their individual academics.

Research Question 2: Relationship to Mentoring

This theme drastically stood out throughout the entire data collection and analysis process. Nearly every participant alluded to mentoring, or the lack thereof, as a key perception of the recidivist student. When a student was released to a comprehensive school, the mentoring component was all but forgotten. Failure to have follow-up with recidivist students, for example, was a key commonality among the vast majority of the participants.

Participant 19 shared that she had personally kept in contact with some students to monitor their progress; however, no formal mentoring program or opportunity had ever been presented to her. Participant 17, moreover, expressed a similar sentiment by stating: Creating and maintaining relationships with teaching staff and peers who are positive role models has a healthy, progressive, motivational impact on the recidivist student. If a student continues to identify and maintain relationships with peers and adults who don't provide positive models, I don't see how they can develop a desire to make gains academically or personally. They need guidance and reminders to surround themselves among people who are successful. Unfortunately, I was never made privy to any mentor program or similar component at the behavior school.

Minor's (1999) study also set the groundwork for the second theme of this study: follow-up care. Follow-up care is a continual relationship with the student: a relationship that involves academic mentoring, emotional guidance, and life coaching, once the student is released from expulsion status. Such a theme was explored by reviewing several mentoring models used as follow-up care treatment programs.

Though Altschuler's (2007) and Armstrong's (2007) programs provided *therapy*

for the at-risk participants, Armstrong's *family* approach may have proved to be more ideal in working with students not yet in the juvenile system, but whom struggle to obey rules at school sites or those serving time in alternative settings.

Participants of this study who were teachers stated that mentoring was something they had thought about but never received the guidance or direction to follow-up on these ideas. Participants of this study who were administrators identified budget and manpower issues as obstacles in creating sufficient and consistent mentoring programs. Given those claims and if recidivism is as large of an issue as current literature suggests, perhaps an increase in budget is necessary, and frankly, unavoidable. A call for more follow-up with students, primarily recidivist students, might be the first step in the change process (Littlefield, 2007). Littlefield (2007) mentioned that individuals, who began mentoring students on their own, on a periodic basis, were showing some success. At a minimum, perhaps additional funding could be appropriated to expand on these individual efforts. The research regarding mentoring agreed with the findings for this theme. Mentoring, as a theme, clearly answered Research Question 2, in that mentoring is a current treatment model, yet it has not fully expanded into a district-wide model. Twelve of the 21 participants perceived mentoring as an important issue that is not properly being addressed at this time. These perceptions correlated with Krysik's (2002) study, which stated that mentoring is an empirical validation that can help prevent recidivism. Research Question 2, which focused on perceptions of the current treatment models, directly connected to both the participants' responses and the literature review.

Research Question 1: Relationship to Social Pressures

Changing the social pressures that students face may not be as easy a task as changing the mentoring issue. One cannot simply take away all peer pressure, media influence, and outside forces placed on students. Facing social pressures, and appropriately handling them, however, may not be the insurmountable task in which it seems. This topic was prevalent in the majority of the participants' responses, and it was very clear that the connections to recidivism were present.

Participant 17 made an important point with her statement about social pressures and its impact on recidivism. As part of the interview surrounded social pressures and building a stronger character that doesn't give in as easily to social pressures, the participants were asked if their recidivist students were ever exposed to character/relationship-building courses. In nearly every case, even those who previously stated that social norms were not as impactful, the answers were to increase character education, add additional vocational courses, and assist in student's abilities to socialize in a productive manner.

Erickson's fifth and sixth stages: Fidelity (Identity vs. Role Confusion; teenager and love), and Intimacy vs. Isolation (young adult) are two virtues, specifically, that framed this study because the largest group of recidivists, in the local district, fell into one of these two age ranges (Schleifer, 2015). Erikson referred to the malignant tendency of the participants' age group as *repudiation*. They repudiate their association in the world of adults and repudiate their need for a unique persona. Some adolescents *fuse* with a group, especially groups particularly eager to provide the details of an individual's identity, such as the following: militaristic organizations, religious cults, groups founded

on hatred, or groups that have separated themselves from the agonizing demands of conventional society. They may become entangled in destructive activities, or may withdraw into their own psychotic delusions (Erikson, 1968).

With the current literature indicating that removing the negative environment is often difficult on an individual basis, it would seemingly be impossible to focus on changing the environment for students once they re-enter a comprehensive school. Monell (2007) confirmed the significance of these pressures in a similar study. The study concluded that releasing students to the same pressures they faced before committing the most recent infraction would be a step in the wrong direction. This seems to be a large obstacle, yet it is one that can be accomplished with efforts from both teachers and administrators. It would require an overwhelmingly collaborative effort to accomplish, but it may be worth a try. Research Question 1, which asked teachers and administrators about their perceptions, was clearly answered within this theme. Social pressures, and the impact they have on recidivist students, was addressed and clearly connected to Monell's (2007) study.

Research Question 1: Relationship to Truancy

Participants were clear that absenteeism played a crucial role in student achievement. If students were not in school, they were usually at home or engaged in activities that could be detrimental to their educational careers. Truancy emerged as a final theme because it correlated to numerous aspects of recidivism and the behaviors that recidivist students often exhibit. Secondary students have been required to earn 22.5 credits in this local school district to graduate, and have not been permitted to exceed 10 absences in a semester, or have faced denial of credit. Once a student has exceeded this

amount and considered truant, credit has been lost. When students comprehended that they were enrolled in school for no credit, truancy tended to increase, and the cycle continued.

Participants overwhelmingly stated that students enrolled for no credit became behavior problems when they actually attended class. They routinely became insubordinate, disruptive, and did not achieve success within the classroom. Truancy, therefore, became a root cause of recidivism and directly impacted student achievement. Students, according to several participants, misbehaved when they missed school and misbehaved when they attended school for no credit. Thus the recidivism rate of students forced to attend alternative schools was negatively impacted and the rates, as a result, rose (Shdaimah, 2011). This research clearly corresponded to Research Question 1, in that truancy had a definitive connection that teachers, administrators, and researchers felt impacted recidivism. Participants 3 and 13 each perceived truant students as non-caring and disinterested in academics. They perceived these students as behavior problems, if and when they chose to attend class. Again, Shdaimah's (2011) study determined that attendance in school is a key factor to student achievement. Therefore, the correlation between the participants' perceptions and responses and the literature connected Research Question 1 to the data found in my study.

Research Question 1: Relationship to Loneliness and Isolation

Erikson's (1950) psychosocial development theory, suggested that people prepared to find answers to the calamity of young adulthood are those who have figured out the crisis that comes with adolescence. While each of the qualitative interview questions (see Appendix A) were based on Erikson's life-stage virtues, several individual

questions aimed to delve into the topic of loneliness and isolation. Erikson's research was the foundation of several of the interview questions due to the average age and general characteristics of the participants' students. According to the participants, the recidivist students in which they educate exhibit loneliness and tend to isolate themselves for survival.

Isolation has directly opposed any push for student-to-student collaboration and student-to-teacher interaction, which may have benefited the students and led to student achievement. Participants routinely stated that their recidivist students tended to display a desire to blend in and find their respective place in the school and among their peers. Much like regular education students, recidivist students wanted to belong, but the constant transiency from school to school, caused a loneliness that both directly and indirectly affected their academic successes and social progress. Contrastly, Pullmann's (2006) study disagreed, stating that loneliness and isolation rarely correlated to recidivist activity unless mental illness was a factor. Pullmann's (2006) study clearly opposed the idea that loneliness directly contributed to recidivism; however, the connection between Pullmann's (2006) study and Research Question 1 was present. The need to belong was a clear perception of teachers and administrators, but may not have been as strong a factor in students' choices. Teachers and administrators agreed that student achievement was directly impacted when students were lonely and appeared to isolate themselves from the greater volume of students. The correlation between Pullman's (2006) study and the perceptions of the participants clearly answered the question regarding recidivism and it's relationship to student achievement.

Implications for Social Change

Results of this study can hypothetically force positive social change on multiple levels. Particularly, this study, involving Nevada teachers and administrators who were responsible for educating recidivist students, indicated that several treatments, both already in existence and some still needed, would benefit students and student achievement. The domino affect of these changes could be endless, as students achievement directly results in higher test scores and academic productivity, which correlates to an increased graduation rate, which then expands the marketability of students going to college and entering the job market. Community members have been open in stating that the work force is lacking in skills, and colleges have stated that the amount of students needing remediation has grown exponentially. Students need to show up to school, attend everyday, and behave appropriately, and with proper social etiquette.

Data from the Qualitative Interview provided commentary regarding how teachers and administrators felt about recidivist students and the interference and impact on their achievement. On a singular level, teachers might participate in the mentor process in a more distinguished level and school administrators might develop more creative ways to improve students' academic progress. District officials might learn how to improve the balance between academics and discipline in the alternative sites and find ways to allow students to participate in group counselling sessions without breaking confidentiality or privacy laws or regulations.

It is clear that the literature provided substantial support that connected recidivism with student achievement. Major's (2002) study identified numerous ways in which proactive interventions could help prevent recidivist students from falling behind

academically. Furthermore, teachers and administrators who participated in this study clearly identified with both research questions. Thirteen of 21 participants expressed strong sentiments that the current treatment models are not promoting student achievement and connected recidivism with poor academics, misbehaviors, and an overall disinterest in school. Participants 2 and 5 agreed that students, who continually enrolled in alternative settings, displayed negative behaviors, appeared isolated, and constantly fought stigmas placed upon them. Participants 6 and 18 repeatedly stressed the importance of attendance and the negative impact that nonattendance has on student achievement. Again, the themes were grounded on consistent participant responses and the literature.

Recommendations for Action

This study's results and conclusions will be documented in an Executive Summary Report and sent electronically to the research department of the school district correlated to this study. I anticipate having an opportunity to present my findings to the Associate Superintendent of Alternative Education, and the alternative program principals. Data results collected from this study indicated an increase in student achievement when academics and discipline were balanced within the alternative setting, were provided adult mentors, and the opportunity to counsel with peers in a group setting. Alternative education teachers could find value from reflecting on how frequently they prejudge recidivist students and perpetuate stigmas brought on by adults and children. They could plan lessons that integrate social scenarios into the course content. Similarly, administrators could look more deeply into the social arrangements students create for one another in the cafeteria or during group work in class. They could identify students

who appear lonely or isolated, and finds creative ways to rectify these situations. Also, ideas presented in the qualitative interview might inspire teachers and administrators to explore creative techniques with their students and improve the learning environment for recidivists and nonrecidivists. Contained within, may be the need to obtain more resources or areas of focus. District-wide, modifications could be necessary to the conditions established for students enrolling in alternative sites, and curriculum and instruction leaders might plan character education programs that expose students to different life strategies. These changes may transform into students with increased access to rigorous instruction and higher achievement in the classroom.

Recommendations for Further Study

Duplication of this study would be intended to assess the effect of offering students the group counselling sessions, and an organized, structured mentor program. For example, I would like to ask the same participants their individual perceptions regarding group counselling and a potential mentoring program, and their impact on students' academic achievement. This study also gathered perceptions regarding the interference of recidivist students on overall educational achievement. Given the limited population for this investigation (14 teachers and 7 administrators), studies involving more student participants would highly meaningful data and may escalate the validity of the results. A current analysis extension would compare results of regular education classroom teachers and administrators, and their perceptions of recidivist students once they re-enter a comprehensive school. Such a study would provide thought-provoking awareness of the overall impact of alternative education and the current treatments and models in the local school district.

Reflection

Attaining consent for my qualitative research study, applying to collect data, organizing occasions for data collection, and analyzing and interpreting results have impacted the way in which I value the steps involved in leading a qualitative research study. The development was much lengthier than I anticipated; however, I recognize that each step was essential to guarantee the confidentiality of the participants and to maintain the integrity expected from a scholarly study.

As a former alternative educator, I have realized that educating students who are behind in their studies, have negative stigmas placed upon them, and exhibit inappropriate behaviours, place teachers and administrators at the bottom of a very steep, uphill battle. Though many of the educators I interviewed portrayed an optimistic forecast for the future of alternative education, many seemed to paint a bleak picture of the current system, its treatment models, and affects on student achievement. It is my hope, though, that the interview process will open up some discussion and leave the participants thinking about ideas that could improve the current system.

Conclusion

As the recidivism rate continues to rise, inconsistencies exist regarding the treatment themes and models used in each of the alternative sites in my local district. Though there are numerous commonalities, and worthwhile approaches being used in each of the respective schools, none appear to be used in all of the sites. Alternative educators also have mixed results considering the impact of the current expulsion process on student achievement. Moreover, a limited amount of published studies on these topics

have occurred in the United States. This study facilitated an effort to fill any gaps in the United States' secondary school research on recidivism.

Using the foundation of Erikson's (1950) Theory of Psychosocial Development, investigating teachers and administrators' perceptions on impacts of recidivism on students' education and the effectiveness of recidivism treatment models, was the major focus of this study. Despite the increasing rate of recidivism among secondary students, teachers and administrators need to be critical as they look to balance behavior modification with student achievement. Although one might expect that teachers and administrators who felt as though recidivists interfere with student achievement were against the current treatment models, it appeared as though many want to help improve the system. Therefore, this study confirmed that teachers and administrators are frustrated, but are hopeful that if some research-based changes occur, students may benefit greatly from alternative education. These results might inspire academic policy makers to discover how to improve or add models to engage recidivist students in secondary schools, both comprehensive and alternative. Leading similar investigations will inform the work of school district officials, as they consider the themes found in this study. Based on the findings, teachers and administrators across the United States might discover the potential of student achievement, including that of recidivist students.

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Appendix A: Qualitative Interview Questions

1. What are impacts of recidivism on your students' educational progress and do you feel recidivist students face identity issues after returning to a comprehensive campus?
2. What are impacts of recidivism on your day-to-day teaching in the alternative setting and do you consider potential role confusion of your students in your teaching strategies?
3. Has receiving additional support regarding identity issues from either alternative education services or the regular school affected your students' educational achievements? If so, please explain.
4. Has the self-awareness of the typical alternative student changed over the years in which you have worked with this population? If so, please explain. If not, why do you think it has not changed?
5. Do you feel that consequences of attending behavior or continuation school have played a role in your students' education? If so, do you think those consequences have affected your students' ability to form an identity at the school?
6. In the past, have the alternative sites in which you have worked provided any vocational or job skill training? If so, what grade and age of student were served in this capacity? If so, how did the training affect your students' educational progress?
7. In the past, have the alternative sites in which you have worked provided, offered, or assigned counselling support? If so, how did it affect your students' educational progress?
8. What is the general role or identity of the students who enter your classroom who have been expelled multiple times?
9. Do you feel that the current alternative education programs offered in this district are positively impactful for your students' academic future? If so, how has their enrollment in behavior or continuation school enrollment impacted their educational goals and allowed them to find their respective role in your classroom/school?
10. What type of additional support (Aftercare Model) has been offered following your students' enrollment and how has this additional support affected their educational progress and/or identity in the classroom?
11. Describe the level of involvement you have had from your students' parents or guardians since your employment at a behavior or continuation school.
12. For those students who committed an infraction involving victims, have any of them had the chance to create a written apology to the victim(s) or members of the victims' family for any actions in which your students believe they were at fault? If so, what type of effect has this had on your students' educational progress? For those who did not have victims, have any had the chance to pay restitution of any sort.
13. Have your students experienced loneliness as a result of recidivism and has loneliness ever been a contributing factor in your students' education? If so, please explain.
14. Do you attribute intimacy or isolation issues to the success or lack of success in your students' education?
15. Do you feel that regular schools are doing enough for students in terms of pairing recidivist students with good peer role models to prevent isolation?
16. Have your students been exposed to character/relationship-building courses or vocational education while enrolled in behavior or continuation school? If so, do you think this will have an impact on their ability to socialize? If they have not been exposed

to character/relationship-building courses or vocational education, how do you think it could impact student's ability to form relationships?

17. Does your school offer any special support to improve your students' ability to form positive relationships that will improve their educational experiences? If so, please explain. If not, what could be offered in your opinion?

18. Have your students ever been provided an opportunity to speak with someone negatively affected by their decision-making? If so, what affect has this had on your students' education?

19. Have your students ever been assigned an adult mentor? If so, explain the outcome on your students' education and discipline progress.

20. How will your students' ability or inability to create positive relationships potentially stand in their way of academic success?

Appendix B: Invitation Letter

Study Title: Perceptions on Impacts of Recidivism on Students' Education and Effectiveness of Recidivism Treatment Models

Dear Educator,

My name is John Anzalone. I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements of my degree in Educational Leadership. The purpose of my study is to explore how recidivism interferes with students' educational achievements and educational effect of recidivism treatment themes and models.

The research will consist of a qualitative interview of 21 participants. Participants will be alternative education teachers and administrators. Each participant will remain anonymous and will have the opportunity to leave the study at any time.

The interview will take place at the public library at a jointly agreed upon time and place, and should last about 45 minutes. The interview will be recorded so that I can accurately reflect on what is discussed. I will be the only person reviewing the recordings and I will be the only person to transcribe and analyze them.

I hope that others in the community/society in general will benefit by identifying the themes and models that work well in alternative school sites. Participation is confidential. Study information will be kept in a secure location at my home. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings

If you have any questions about your privacy or your rights as a participant, you may email IRB@waldenu.edu.

Thank you for your consideration. If you would like to participate, please indicate this by signing the consent form provided at this interview and hand it to me before we begin.

With kind regards,

John Anzalone

Interested participant name:

Phone number:

Appendix C: Letter of Cooperation

August 31, 2012

Dear John Anthony Anzalone,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Perceptions on Recidivism Treatment Models within the Education Services Division of the Clark County School District. As part of this study, I authorize you to use purposeful sampling to recruit participants, conduct a qualitative interview, and prepare field notes to collect data. You are also authorized to conduct follow-up interviews within two weeks if necessary and use coding to analyze the data. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: the director of continuation/behavior schools and the principal of each school, using the public library and using an audio recorder. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the research team without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Assistant Superintendent

Appendix D: Script for Interview Instructions

Thank you for considering your participation in this research study. Over the next two weeks, I will schedule a time at the local library to interview you. This interview will focus on your individual perspectives on the current alternative programs in the school district and your independent experiences while working at a behavior and/or continuation school in this school district. Please keep in mind that no names will be used and the confidentiality of each participant will remain private. In addition, all notes and audio transcripts will be secured in a secure place in my home. Please allow for approximately 45 minutes for your interview to be completed. Also, if any of your responses are unclear at the time of review, I may ask for a follow-up interview. Are there any questions? Participants will then receive time to ask any questions and concerns will be addressed at this time.

Appendix E: Participant Consent Form

<p>Purpose: To explore how recidivism interferes with students' educational achievements and educational effect of recidivism treatment themes and models</p> <p>Procedure: If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Answer 20 interview questions while being audio recorded. 2. Participants may be invited to participate in a follow-up meeting if clarification is needed. <p>The total time required to complete the study should be approximately 45 minutes.</p> <p>Benefits/Risks to Participant: Participants will explore their perceptions and share inpiut re: recidivism and current treatment models in alternative education. This study presents minimal risks to your wellbeing.</p> <p>Voluntary Nature of the Study/Confidentiality: Your participation in this qualitative study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to complete the study at any point, or refuse to answer any questions with which you are uncomfortable. You may also stop at any time and ask the researcher any questions you may have. Your name will never be connected to your results or to your responses on the questionnaires; instead, a number will be used for identification purposes. Information that would make it possible to identify you or any other participant will never be included in any sort of report. The data will be accessible only to those working on the project.</p>
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Contacts and Questions:

At this time you may ask any questions you may have regarding this study. If you have questions later, you may contact John Anzalone at xxx-xxx-xxxx, or his faculty supervisor, Dr. Mansureh Kebritchi at Mansureh.Kebritchi@Waldenu.edu. If you have a question about your privacy or your rights as participants, they can be emailed to IRB@waldenu.edu.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked any questions I had regarding this qualitative study and they have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to participate in this study and am at least 18 years of age. (Note: The participant must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study).

Name of Participant _____ Date: _____

(please print)

Signature of Participant _____

Thanks for your participation!

Appendix F: Samples – Interview Response Transcript

1. What are impacts of recidivism on your students' educational progress and do you feel recidivist students face identity issues after returning to a comprehensive campus?

The factor that has the biggest impact would be the transitional period between withdrawal from one school and enrollment in another, and the time period each student needs to acclimate to a new setting, new teaching staff, structure and daily procedures of new teachers. I think while many students are able to do this rather effortlessly, for others it is a longer period of adjustment that can impact their academic performance. I do not generally think they face identity issues.

2. What are impacts of recidivism on your day-to-day teaching in the alternative setting and do you consider potential role confusion of your students in your teaching strategies?

Recidivism has impacted my day-to-day teacher in the following ways: some students might have previously completed or participated in activities or lessons either in my classroom in a previous year, or at their previous school earlier in that grading period, making the classwork redundant for them. They may find it too easy or repetitive, and then instruction and assignments should ideally be specialized for that student. It is challenging to provide alternate assignments for multiple students within a class period. Additionally, whole group instruction might then not be applicable for that/those students and they would require small group instruction at some other time during the class period.

3. Has receiving additional support regarding identity issues from either alternative education services or the regular school affected your students' educational achievements? If so, please explain.

N/A

4. Has the self-awareness of the typical alternative student changed over the years in which you have worked with this population? If so, please explain. If not, why do you think it has not changed?

I don't see a change in the general self-awareness of the typical alternative student. Having never worked in a comprehensive school, I don't have a great idea of the general reputation of the alternative school or the alternative school student in the comprehensive setting. If staff/students at comprehensive campuses view alternative programs as becoming more /less stringent, more/less common, only then would I say that the self-awareness of the alternative student has changed. They may feel embarrassed or proud of their attendance at behavior programs.

5. Do you feel that consequences of attending behavior or continuation school have played a role in your students' education? If so, do you think those consequences have affected your students' ability to form an identity at the school?

The impact is largely related to the type of school identify the student previously had. I think the student who has attended behavior school multiple times, or who may have a more extensive history of past behavior problems is not

uncomfortable or opposed to being affiliated with behavior school or having a reputation as a troublesome student. While it may not affect their ability to form an identity, it affects their ability to form a positive or socially acceptable identity at school, as they become accustomed to being a notorious trouble-maker.

6. In the past, have the alternative sites in which you have worked provided any vocational or job skill training? If so, what grade and age of student were served in this capacity? If so, how did the training affect your students' educational progress?

I don't recall any vocational or job skill training. I remember letting upperclassmen use the computers in the lab to complete online job applications or look for employment, upon request.

7. In the past, have the alternative sites in which you have worked provided, offered, or assigned counselling support? If so, how did it affect your students' educational progress?

n/a

8. What is the general role or identity of the students who enter your classroom who have been expelled multiple times?

These students generally have a sort of counterculture identity when it comes to the academic setting. They may at first appear to be somewhat reclusive, avoiding developing a relationship with any type of student whatsoever. They also have a general distrust of authority, probably a result of having been penalized multiple times, regardless of their own wrongdoing in past events. I think some of these students tend to feel like they'd been targeted by authority, and they have a hard time accepting responsibility and taking blame for their actions.

9. Do you feel that the current alternative education programs offered in this district are positively impactful for your students' academic future? If so, how has their enrollment in behavior or continuation school enrollment impacted their educational goals and allowed them to find their respective role in your classroom/school?

I do not believe that alternative programs are positively impactful in terms of a student's academic future. I think the behavior programs overall offer subpar academic challenges, not necessarily in the delivery of instruction, but the rigor of the assignments, the pacing, and the overall accountability of both teachers and students.

10. What type of additional support (Aftercare Model) has been offered following your students' enrollment and how has this additional support affected their educational progress and/or identity in the classroom?

I am unaware of support systems in place for a student subsequent to their attendance in a behavior program.

11. Describe the level of involvement you have had from your students' parents or guardians since your employment at a behavior or continuation school.

I had limited interact with parents or guardians of students attending behavior school. I think parents' view it as a temporary placement, which it is, and therefore have less concern about the day-to-day operation and success of their student, since they will be returning to a comprehensive school in a short

amount of time. In a five year time period, I had approximately 1-2 parent/teacher conferences, and spoke with parents via phone typically only when I initiated the contact.

12. For those students who committed an infraction involving victims, have any of them had the chance to create a written apology to the victim(s) or members of the victims' family for any actions in which your students believe they were at fault? If so, what type of effect has this had on your students' educational progress? For those who did not have victims, have any had the chance to pay restitution of any sort.

I recall the English teacher having students write a reflective letter upon the end of their term at behavior school. I don't know the criteria for the letter's content, but I assume at this point a student could choose to write an apology, an explanation, or some other contact intended for victims or families of victims. I think this practice would offer closure to both parties.

13. Have your students experienced loneliness as a result of recidivism and has loneliness ever been a contributing factor in your students' education? If so, please explain.

I did see a sense of withdrawal or isolation among some students. While some will build short-term relationships with peers or classmates after enrollment for a day, a week, or more, there are also a small percentage of students would fulfill their entire enrollment commitment without ever having socialized with other peers in the program. I think this anti-socialization behavior can be a result of shyness, per parent directive, a feeling of inadequacy or lack of self-confidence, or contrarily, a feeling of superiority among other behavior school attendees. I don't know whether loneliness affects education positively or negatively.

14. Do you attribute intimacy or isolation issues to the success or lack of success in your students' education?

I would attribute isolation issues to a lack of success in education.

15. Do you feel that regular schools are doing enough for students in terms of pairing recidivist students with good peer role models to prevent isolation?

I don't know that there is a way to intentionally "pair" recidivist students with positive peer models, unless the school staff is actually assigning mentors as a part of a re-assimilation program that they're implementing on behalf of recidivist students. I think students just re-enroll at the comprehensive program and are urged to begin with a clean slate and to view their enrollment as a fresh beginning. I think most likely, students reunite with friends they associated with prior to their expulsion.

16. Have your students been exposed to character/relationship-building courses or vocational education while enrolled in behavior or continuation school? If so, do you think this will have an impact on their ability to socialize? If they have not been exposed to character/relationship-building courses or vocational education, how do you think it could impact student's ability to form relationships?

Yes, students have been exposed to character building courses and I think they glean from these courses what they are willing to put in to them. If students are unwilling to acknowledge faults, mistakes, or shortcomings, I don't think

they're capable of improving their socialization skills or their inclination to make sound choices.

17. Does your school offer any special support to improve your students' ability to form positive relationships that will improve their educational experiences? If so, please explain. If not, what could be offered in your opinion?

I think the Tools for Success program was designed to assist students in their ability to form positive relationships and to become better community citizens upon release from the behavior program. I think this courses' success is largely contingent upon the teaching style of the instructor and his/her ability to effectively reach their students.

18. Have your students ever been provided an opportunity to speak with someone negatively affected by their decision-making? If so, what affect has this had on your students' education?

I've seen students attend assemblies where former gang members or affiliates speak about their past involvement in gang activity and its repercussions on their personal lives. I believe the assembly concluded with the opportunity for students' to ask questions, but I don't recall any follow-up communication with these guest speakers. I think the students were receptive to this type of guest speaker because of their credibility, but I don't know that it had any long-term impact.

19. Have your students ever been assigned an adult mentor? If so, explain the outcome on your students' education and discipline progress.

n/a

20. How will your students' ability or inability to create positive relationships potentially standing in their way of academic success?

Creating and maintaining relationships with teaching staff and peers who area positive role models has a healthy, progressive, motivational impact on the recidivist student. If a student continues to identify with and maintain relationships with peers who don't provide positive models, I don't see how they can develop a desire to make gains academically or personally. They need guidance and reminders to surround themselves among people who are successful.

Appendix G: Participant Response Samples

Participant 10 on Stigmas:

Attending a consequence school in itself creates a disconnect for students from the comprehensive schools. They feel labeled and have difficulty connecting to the regular school to form an identity. I personally believe that a contributing factor is the practice in our district of students typically not being allowed to return to their zoned school after being recommended for expulsion. Removing a student from his/her neighborhood / area school impedes identify formation, particularly at the middle school level.

Participant 11 on Stigmas:

Consequences of attending behavior or continuation school certainly play a role in a students' education. Those consequences will certainly affect a students' ability to form an identity at the school or simply impact them forever. The example I commonly share regarding whether I asked you to remember what happened during the 5th week of school, in your math class, when you were in the 10th grade. The chance that you remember what you learned or what happened would be unlikely. Likewise, if I asked you about a major project you did that year, or something serious that happened to you that year, there is a strong chance you would recall it as it impacted your life. Likewise, the consequence of alternative school or the inappropriate choice the student made impacts the student's identity both in and out of school.

Participant 17 on Stigmas:

The impact is largely related to the type of school identity the student previously had. I think the student who has attended behavior school multiple times, or who may have a more extensive history of past behavior problems is not uncomfortable or opposed to being affiliated with behavior school or having a reputation as a troublesome student. While it may not affect their ability to form an identity, it affects their ability to form a positive or socially acceptable identity at school, as they become accustomed to being a notorious troublemaker.

Participant 14 on Truancy:

The positive impact of a behavior school must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. I have witnessed many students over the past ten years who successfully complete the behavior program and leave with a new focus on their lives and education. I have also witnessed students who are introduced to drugs at the behavior school, hence leaving with a bad habit that did not exist before their enrollment at a behavior school. Additionally, I have witnessed students who upon their release from behavior school committed horrific crimes. One student murdered his toddler nephew, and then murdered his cellmate. Two other former behavior school students murdered their music teacher after befriending him. Several students have also committed suicide after being released from the behavior school. Although the majority of the previously mentioned students successfully completed their consequence at a behavior school, it is difficult for them to continue their success after withdrawal from the school. Many of these students attended the behavior school because they knew it was a stipulation to be released. There was not a similar motivation once they re-enrolled in a

comprehensive site. Therefore, they did not attend regularly, and instead resorted to criminal behavior. In this case, behavior school prevented on-the-street expulsion, but only lasted as long as the program kept the student enrolled.

Participant 5 on Truancy:

As currently structured these schools are largely ineffective. Currently they seem to segregate behavior problems from their more appropriate acting peers for the benefit of the regular schools. This is done without any thought as to how to modify the behavior of the alternative students to enable them to be successful in a traditional setting. The traditional settings are the norm, but allow the freedom to walk out of the building, essentially whenever the student chooses to do so. The alternative sites maintain a closer guard of the doors, but do not work to modify other behaviors. Responding to truancy is a good first step, but there are many steps along the way that are going unsolved.

Participant 17 on Mentoring:

Creating and maintaining relationships with teaching staff and peers who are positive role models has a healthy, progressive, motivational impact on the recidivist student. If a student continues to identify with and maintain relationships with peers and adults who don't provide positive models, I don't see how they can develop a desire to make gains academically or personally. They need guidance and reminders to surround themselves among people who are successful. Unfortunately, I was never made privy to any mentor program or similar component at the behavior school.

Participants 13 and 10 on Mentoring:

Participant 13:

That question answers itself...positive relationships will, potentially, improve academic success, inability to create positive relationships will potentially harm academic success. Mentorships are essential pieces of this puzzle.

Participant 10:

I have implemented mentor programs, involving trained community volunteers that have been problematic. The challenge has been students being temporarily assigned to consequence schools and leaving at various intervals throughout the school year. One successful strategy has been assigning staff as mentors, especially as contact persons for truant students.

Participant 9 on Loneliness/Isolation:

Absolutely. These students, regardless of the offense, are removed from their regular campus and not allowed to make contact with an adult who may be a comfort for them or a mentor. Whether it be a counselor, coach or favorite teacher, most students have an adult somewhere on campus that they respond too. Now, the student is removed from campus, most often for good, and distanced from the adult who may best be able to work with them through this difficult period. This creates loneliness, which at the behavior school, we try to decrease. We cannot impact what happens when they leave here.

Participant 8 on Loneliness/Isolation:

I would say loneliness may be a main contributing factor for them being in the behavior setting, and a factor after they leave...but not while they are here. So it may be a root cause for recidivism.

Participant 2 on Social Pressures:

The more a child returns to an alternative setting, the behavior issues tend to escalate. I never had to change my strategies to adjust for any issues due to recidivism as I ran a very structured environment. My colleagues, though, have had to make several changes due to the lack of fear of consequences and the need in which many of the students have to do what is socially acceptable in their circles.

Participant 3 on Social Pressures:

I believe that if implemented effectively these types of curricula can be of value. If progress is correctly monitored, not only can we build character, but take away the enormous negative impact social pressures have on our students.

Participant 4 on Social Pressures:

It is natural to assume that recidivist students face severe social pressures when returning to their comprehensive campus, because they have now been labeled and are deemed to be problem students at both campuses. While their low self-image is a potential motivation factor for some of the behavioral issues the school is deals with on a regular basis, some students may decide to game the system by thoroughly learning the policies in an effort to facilitate a bounce back & forth between schools whenever they

feel the need for a change. They learn to adapt rather than make a positive impact. This way, it is easier to assimilate and please their peers.